
COMMUNITY OF CONTRIBUTION

A NON-PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSITION

Asmund Havsteen-Mikkelsen

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To the memory of Alan Havsteen-Mikkelsen (1938-2002)

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*'The world, globally, and the phenomena that are local, whether they either are close or at distance to us, have been given to us: it would be unjust, an imbalance, if we received this given for free, without ever giving something back.'*¹

(Michel Serres)

*'If we were all to dial down our demands a bit, there would be enough space for our fellow creatures.'*²

(Peter Wohlleben)

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PROLOGUE
GNOSIS IN ZOONOSIS?

Zoonosis is the transfer of a virus (but also bacteria, fungi and parasites) from animals to humans, which is believed to be the cause of Covid-19. This truly global pandemic – killing hundreds of thousands and affecting billions, locking societies into standstill and causing the world economy to crumble – is thought to have been caused by a virus jumping from a bat at a wet-market in Wuhan onto a human – perhaps using another animal as an amplifier host. For the first time, I have experienced a global state of crisis, where national borders have been shut down and the public sector reduced to its critical functions. It is not a fight against ‘them’, but ‘it’: an invisible pathogen that is highly contagious and lethal if you are already challenged with other illnesses.

As a civilisation, we have, with this pandemic, been confronted with the dark side of nature, its indifferent virulent aspect. It is not an altogether unknown guest: these viruses have haunted us before. Just after WWI, 50 million were killed by the Spanish Flu, also originating from an animal, and in the 21st century, we have already had SARS, MERS and Ebola. All these diseases are forms of zoonosis.

A number of researchers into virology and planetary health systems have warned for years that pandemics of the magnitude of Covid-19 are the consequence of our own actions as human species.³ Through our socio-economic systems, we move into wild habitats to extract natural resources, and in the process we come into contact with wild species carrying viruses against which we have no protection. In the wet-market in Wuhan, all kinds of wild and farmed animals were traded, killed and dismembered in unhygienic circumstances. A form of trading now officially banned by the Chinese government, it is still in use all over Asia and Africa (the next pandemic just waiting to happen).

Zoonosis will haunt us for as long as we continue to destroy natural habitats and use animals for food. What you are about to read – a theory of a ‘Community of Contribution’ – is an attempt to re-think this equation. It has been written during the last year, with the climate crisis bringing new extreme weather manifestations (bushfires, floods, hurricanes, droughts, rising sea-levels), loss of biodiversity and public demonstrations for a ‘Green Revolution’ as its backdrop.

What at a first glance seems independent of the climate crisis is actually intricately connected to it. Covid-19 – which is related to other forms of influenzas stemming from animals raised as livestock, such as bird flu or swine flu – testifies to two things: these pathogens creating zoonosis arise from our entering into wildlife habitats, and from the killing and farming of animals.

As this book makes its way into print, the pandemic is unfolding. The full scale of human loss and social devastation is at this point unknown. Whatever the outcome, there is still gnosis to be found in zoonosis: if we want to reduce the risk of future pandemics, we must use the insight and knowledge gained from the crisis to end our destruction of wildlife, nature and farmed animals. A community of contribution designates this endeavour.

0.
CONDITIONS

0.1. A HUMAN SPECIES FACING THE SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION

0.1.1.

In *Generic Singularity* (2014) I wrote: ‘*From nature, mankind has taken everything he needs to sustain his own life on earth. Through the exploitation of natural resources, the destruction of animal habitation, the pollution of the oceans, the lakes, the rivers, the soil, the air: human presence on earth can be felt as an intervention and transformation of the natural. [...] It is time to give nature back what we have taken from it. A community of contribution would be the name for such an attempt: to give, instead of taking; to share instead of owning; to redistribute instead of accumulating; to have a plural nature instead of mono-nature; to reuse instead of making new; to protect wildlife instead of killing it.*’⁴

0.1.2.

The definition of a ‘community of contribution’ takes its lead from this paragraph, which was written more than six years ago in a different context. Now, at the time of the all-pervasive climate crisis, it has become more urgent than ever before to formulate a *new moral ethos* for the 21st century that can reverse the ways in which we humans have treated nature.⁵ A community of contribution is the name for this attempt. It is time to give nature back what we have taken from it. It is time for plural nature instead of mono-nature. It is time to respect and not kill non-human nature.⁶ It is time for rambunctious gardens.

0.1.2.1.

To develop a new moral ethos for oneself is to take up a position, defining a point from which to view and act in the world. An ethos is an effort to live and think in the world according

to a norm based on moral values in which you as a person believe. The aim is therefore to formulate the norm set forth by the principles of the community of contribution and attempt *to live* by them. It is a movement, a process, a new form of life defined by the ideal inherent to the community of contribution as a spirit. To participate implies a rupture with what has hitherto been daily life within the matrix of the *Western welfare self*.⁷

0.1.3.

The concept of a community of contribution is based on three premises. Together they constitute the foundation upon which I attempt *to think of a new mode of individual and collective co-existence that can lead to the re-emergence of a wild non-human nature*.

0.1.3.1.

First premise: that a human being belongs to the species of *homo sapiens* that evolved as a primate alongside the other great apes. We share approximately 98% of our DNA with chimpanzees and bonobos, and only 40,000 years ago we mixed our DNA with the Neanderthals.⁸ *The human species evolved within nature* simultaneously with millions of other species (evolutionary continuity⁹) and only recently (taking the great time span of the planet into consideration) did we rise to our current position as a geological agent influencing all other species on the globe.¹⁰ The ‘Great Divide’¹¹ between humans and other species (designated as ‘speciesism’¹²) that sets us apart from and above non-human nature is thus both a recent phenomenon and a cultural construction that falsely legitimises our dominion over other sentient beings.¹³ This is today manifest in the fact that 96% of all land-living vertebrates consist of humans (32%) and our livestock (64% of pigs, cattle, poultry, horses and sheep). The last 4% consists of wild animals.¹⁴

0.1.3.2.

Second premise: confronted with the sixth mass extinction¹⁵ of non-human species (inflicted by human activity and the largest since the fifth mass extinction 66 million years ago) we humans must acknowledge the unsustainability of our current way of living through the burning of fossil fuels and the *industrial-agricultural-food complex*.¹⁶ Not only does the burning of fossil fuels lead to global warming and extreme climate manifestations, but the whole natural landscape has been transformed by human activities. The three main activities intervening in natural habitats are the use of land to grow crops for humans and their livestock (deforestation, monoculture fields, fences around crops, unrestrained introduction of invasive species), the urban built environment and the infrastructure of transportation (roads, highways, rail tracks, canals, bridges, tunnels), energy supply (wind farms, solar farms, power plants, dams) and extraction of resources (digging for soil, minerals and stone, and oil drilling and gas fracking). As a totality, these forces interfere with the natural habitats of wild animals.

0.1.3.3.

Third premise: we are moral agents.¹⁷ Moral agency manifests itself as a value-based compass enabling us to navigate through the social web of life. In the 21st century, our moral frameworks¹⁸ must be based on an ethical awareness of our planetary responsibility.¹⁹ This changes the notion of our freedom and how it is conditioned by our rights as democratic citizens. Our freedom is thus both embedded (as in the choices we make on a daily private level as consumers) and abstract (expressed in democracy as an institution and in our constitutional rights). This points towards at least two lines of conflict where our moral habitus becomes visible in relation to an ethical awareness of our responsibility: on the private level, the actions I can take as an individual (as a consumer of products) and on the political level, those politicians I elect to regulate the systems that govern our collective social reality (my democratic right as a voter). The moral ethos inherent to a community of contribution transforms how I become a moral agent in these two aspects: what I consume (considering non-human nature in my choices) and whom I vote for (the political party who will support the transition into the *sustainable state*²⁰).

0.1.4.

From these three premises, a community of contribution has arisen as the attempt to formulate a new involving narrative, the narrative being a way of grasping our lives, giving sense to it and enabling us to ‘*project our future being*’²¹ (Taylor). Who is to be involved in the narrative? Who must change their worldviews and ways of acting? The main beneficiary of the material affluence causing the climate crisis: the Western welfare self. This conceptual persona²² designates the typical middle-class consumer who constitutes the population of the *Western welfare state*²³ as developed around the Northern hemisphere after 1945: US, Europe and Japan. To these nations we must add the now rising middle-class populations of China, India and Brazil, who are also adhering to this model of the self. I, you, they, the others – we, as a totality of consumers, contribute the highest amount of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere and use the greatest amount of land for the industrial-agricultural-food complex that sustains the bodily metabolism of all these populations. The use of energy by the Western welfare self happens broadly through three different kinds of consumption: private and public transportation; the energy needed for housing, factory production of commodities, the public sector, entertainment and leisure; and finally, the energy needed by the industrial-agricultural-food complex for farming and raising of livestock. Through these patterns of energy consumption, a historically high level of ‘welfare’ (material affluence) is produced and made available on all levels of existence. In section 0.4, I will outline the main characteristics of the Western welfare self and the expectations of the ‘good life’ embedded in this way of living. In section 2.3, I will go deeper into the concept of the sustainable state as that democratic state-formation that will *challenge* the hegemony of both fossil-based capitalism and the industrial-agricultural-food complex sustaining the Western welfare self.

0.1.4.1.

A community of contribution is an alternative to these possibilities of consumption and modes of life ensured by the prevailing complex of capitalism, science and the narratives of human superiority over all other living species on this singular planet. This complex is a hybrid of the *Capitalocene* and *Plantationocene*²⁴ which are different aspects of what is labelled the *Anthropocene* by geologists and cultural historians.²⁵ The Anthropocene is an age in which humans have become geological agents, thereby defining a new stratum in the evolution of the earth, designating a period when the geological time-scale and human history merge together. There has been – and still is – dispute²⁶ about when exactly this new age began, or whether humans even have this capacity to alter the surface and the climate of the earth, but I will not elaborate further on this issue here. Anyone who questions the impact of humans should study the data revealed in the earth-system trends²⁷ that clearly show a slow increase of carbon dioxide from 1784 onwards, which after 1945 increases exponentially. This increase in carbon dioxide as the main greenhouse gas causing global warming must be seen in relation to the explosion of all earth-system trends after WWII. Whether it is the amount of methane in the atmosphere, the rise in surface temperature, the acidification of the oceans, tropical forest loss, altering of the nitrogen-cycle, combined with a socio-economic rise in the global and urban population, water use, energy consumption, transportation, international tourism, telecommunications, use of fertiliser, the explosion in all these trends is designated the ‘Great Acceleration’.²⁸ A simple way of sensing the empirical evidence of the Great Acceleration in regards to *terraforming* is to make a quick journey on google.earth and see the effects of agriculture and urbanisation all over the world from Europe and the US to the Brazilian rainforest and the landscapes of China. Vast stretches of land have been transformed, leaving very little space for other sentient beings. This journey through satellite images will also reveal the thousands of ‘sacrifice zones’, where land has been mined, drilled, deforested or polluted in order for humans to extract natural resources, but not the ‘dead zones’ of no oxygen or bleached coral in the oceans from pollution, overfishing and higher temperatures of sea water. All in all, the Anthropocene must be seen as a *shock* to the natural non-human world, the total disruption of all life forms on planet earth.

0.1.5.

A community of contribution is a moral framework based on an ethic for the Anthropocene.²⁹ This ethic arises from the meta-awareness that humans have become responsible for global warming and the sixth mass extinction, thus endangering not only the lives of future generations of humans, but all the other living creatures with whom we share life on this planet. A community of contribution is the moral framework on a day-to-day basis, but its values are derived from an ethical understanding of what the Anthropocene *means* for the earth and all its inhabitants – human and non-human.

0.1.5.1.

The Anthropocene ascribes both agency and responsibility to all humans, but in doing so distorts the fact that not all humans have contributed to or benefitted equally from the burning of fossil fuels.³⁰ There is a disproportionate relation between those nation states who have benefitted from the burning of fossil fuels (the global north) and those who will mostly suffer from it (the global south). The Anthropocene ascribes moral responsibility to humans, but it is the Western world – Europe in the 19th century and the US in the 20th century – that, as global empires, imposed upon the rest of the world a fossil-based capitalism, and thereby created the current socio-economic difference between the global north and the global south (a difference that is visible in the infrastructure capable of dealing with the future negative impacts of the climate crisis). This placement of responsibility is relevant when it comes to the question of *carbon justice* (who has the right to increase their carbon consumption in order to establish basic infrastructure and who should decrease their use of fossil fuels before they are phased out). *The Anglocene* would be a more precise concept in terms of capturing those who hold the historical responsibility for the climate crisis, a term that rightfully ascribes responsibility to the US, which per capita currently (but also historically through the accumulated burning of fossil fuels) has the highest emissions of carbon dioxide. At the recent COP25, this nation demonstrated its unwillingness to take on responsibility and agree to curb its emissions. The presidency of Donald Trump testifies to the tragic fact that the ethical dimensions of the Anthropocene are not universally acknowledged.

0.1.6.

Yet a community of contribution has wider and more serious concerns than the dispute about what to call the epoch in which we are living, or who is to blame for the climate crisis: the lives of those farmed animals raised to feed the majority of the population of the Western world (and all those striving to become Western in lifestyle and dietary habits). We humans have under our control billions of sentient beings that are being mutilated in their condemnation to ‘*the non-expression of their senses*’³¹ (Pelluchon) and whose lives will end in premature, violent deaths. Perhaps it will be the acknowledgement of the climate crisis and the threat it poses to the conditions for life on this planet that will finally break the thousand-year-old spell that has haunted humans since the dawn of the agricultural revolution: that of domesticating, dominating, manipulating and killing other sentient beings for the metabolism of their bodies?³² Perhaps the climate crisis will be so all-pervasive, so catastrophic, so unprecedented, that as a civilisation we will be ready to rethink all our relations to the animal world. Perhaps the climate crisis will be *the* redemptive event that will unlock the chains that are forcing animals to exist within the industrial-agricultural-food complex as our food-bone-milk-and-skin slaves. As I see it, we cannot solve the climate crisis without solving our relationship to animals.

0.1.7.

A community of contribution is an invitation to think about ourselves as part of something larger and it presents a way to face the climate crisis. As a narrative about who we are and what we can become, it not only involves you and me as humans, but also non-human sentient beings, and places us on a large temporal horizon (that of evolutionary continuity within deep-time). It is an *empowering narrative* because it tells the story of how every individual can contribute through very simple actions that, when scaled up to a planetary level, can lead to a new balance between man and nature. Stories, not facts, change people's way of living in the world. Stories create new meaningful frameworks. To live through the community of contribution is to live through a principle of hope (Bloch). It is a *recovering of agency* in light of the current systemic failure to properly and promptly address the fundamental problems of the climate crisis. As will be presented later, the action to begin with is saying a simple 'no' to meat from farmed animals.

0.2. WE ARE ALL EFFECTUATIONS OF FOSSIL FUELS

*'The Anthropocene is characterized by an unprecedented upsurge in energy mobilization: first with coal, then with hydrocarbons and uranium, which increased energy consumption by a factor of forty between 1800 and 2000. This leap in energy has served to transform the planet with multiplied power, to plough up, urbanize and domesticate ecosystems.'*³³

(Bonneuil and Fressoz)

*'We are citizens and subjects of fossil fuels through and through.'*³⁴

(Szeman and Boyer)

0.2.1.

Frozen sunshine is stored in the materials of coal, oil and gas. The sun radiates the earth with energy, and has done so for billions of years, creating deposits of compressed carbon hydrates from biomass generated in the distant geological past. Once humans mastered the technology to release the energy immanent to fossil fuels through combustion, it became a *material agent* that allowed for a whole new range of activities and modes of existence. Transforming fossil fuels into motion-energy enabled a revolution: *industrialisation*. Simultaneously with the revolution of the modes of production, transportation, energy supply and the development of chemical compounds, vaccines, antibiotics and higher yields from crops, industrialisation of the world enabled the ten-fold multiplication of the human population within just 250 years. Such an unprecedented historical increase in population reveals the scale of the climate crisis as a civilisational problem, since it is not the singular individual causing the climate crisis, but the combined activities of 7.8 billion people, of which the vast majority are dependent on

fossil fuels. Our global existence is powered by fossil fuels. As either coal, oil or gas, fossil fuels are used today alongside a number of other sources of energy such as nuclear power, renewable energy (solar, wind), bio-fuels and hydro-power, yet it is still fossil fuels that are the most widely used. I will focus my attention on them, because it was fossil fuels that, through science and capitalism, enabled the Industrial Revolution, and thereby created an expectation of a life based on access to abundant energy. Through the extended and constantly expanding use and burning of fossil fuels, a luxury trap has been created for the Western welfare self, which today determines what we understand and expect from a 'modern life'. If such an expectation were fulfilled for all humans, we would need two and half planets in terms of resources.

0.2.2.

Mankind has been using fossil fuels for millennia, but initially only for their heating and lubricating effects. The invention of the steam engine (a more efficient and reliable version of earlier steam-engines) by James Watt in 1784, however, revolutionised everything. By effectively transforming steam into motion, a *new physical power* could be accessed that expanded the range and amplitude of human activity. It enabled the acceleration of the already emergent industrialisation of the British Isles (until then, waterpower was the prime mover).³⁵ Productivity, speed, but also the dislocation of the transported object along with its energy source, became possible. Railways, steamboats and later motorised vehicles (cars, trucks, tractors, buses) are all based on an energy source that moves together with the object it powers. Fossil fuels are therefore independent of the physical constraints of time and space (independent of natural fluctuations of wind, water, temperatures and geographical conditions), but also social constraints: fossil-fuel energy can relocate and displace itself according to whatever social conflicts might arise against it. When technology allowed fossil fuels to become a prime mover, it was intimately related to the social dynamics of capitalism, transforming the latter into a fossil capital that through the British Empire imposed itself upon the rest of the world. Fossil fuels altered power relations, modes of warfare, the extraction of resources and gave rise to modern-day globalisation.

0.2.2.1.

Today, fossil fuels have enabled a vast intertwined infrastructure system that connects almost all populations of the world, because planes, vehicles, ships and trains can transport us to wherever we wish to go. Our sense of temporality and distance is mediated by our burning of fossil fuels, because we can travel so far and fast around the globe. Fossil fuels have aligned our bodies with speed and movement, creating tracts of smooth space that allow for frictionless movement.

0.2.2.2.

The machines powered by fossil fuels have become extensions of our bodies, but there have been consequences for non-human nature: what were once huge expanses of wild nature are now intersected with transportation channels, and the pollution from the energy consumption is causing global warming. Pollution from the burning of fossil fuels is cumulative and has been absorbed mostly by the oceans, leading to the growing acidity of the water and rise of carbon dioxide in the air, increasing the temperature of surface water and the atmosphere. On top of these environmental degradations we must add the continuous depletion of topsoil, and erosion caused by intensive farming made possible by fossil-fuel-driven tractors.

0.2.3.

To the mechanisation of power we must add the chemical potential of fossil fuels: the petro-chemical-industrial complex that allowed for the development of modern pesticides and fertilisers (the Haber-Bosch process). The exponential growth in the yield of crops through the use of both fertilisers and pesticides has rendered it possible to feed both the growing world population and all the animal food slaves sustaining the bodily metabolism of humans. Together with the invention of vaccines, antibiotics, hygienic environments and the advances in modern medical science, a huge number of people are granted life by the amount of food produced.³⁶ From a human viewpoint, this is an astonishing accomplishment; from the perspective of non-human nature, domesticated and in the wild, it has had a devastating effect.

0.2.3.1.

When considering the effect of fossil fuels as a material agent, it is often overlooked that they have allowed the production of explosives such as dynamite through combining nitroglycerin with absorbents and stabilisers. Dynamite made it possible to extract metal and minerals through mining. Without access through explosives to the vast amounts of iron and copper stored beneath the earth's crust, the modern world, with all its electric lights, its bridges, high-rises and automobile industry, would not have been possible. And, from a different perspective, but related to extraction processes, the cheapness and abundance of fossil fuels *'enabled many activities that otherwise would have been uneconomic and would not have happened, or perhaps would have happened but only much more slowly.'*³⁷ Activities from deep fishing, to mining in remote mountains, to container-shipping of vegetables half way around the world, to weekend flights, to chainsaws cutting down rainforests are made possible by fossil fuels.

0.2.4.

Writing in 2020, the effects of fossil fuels are all around me, from the plastic (one of more than 85,000 different kinds) that protects my organic apples, to the gasoline made from petro-diffusion that fuels the truck that transports them from Italy, to the energy that powers my refrigerator and the lights I turn on in the evening, to the bus that takes my kids to school. As a modern citizen, I am immersed in a space where electricity is running everywhere and

objects are moving because of fossil fuels. It has become a 'second nature', naturalising itself to the point of being the definition of a modern landscape. Most citizens of the West move through worlds where everyday life depends on fossil fuels.

0.2.5.

Subsuming fossil fuels to the logic of the combustion engine had political implications. The ground-breaking work by Timothy Mitchell (b.1955), *Carbon Democracy* (2011), reveals how the rise of carbon-based energy transformed the political sphere. As he states: '*Modern mass politics was made possible by the development of ways of living that used energy on a new scale [...] The ability to make democratic political claims, however, was not just a by-product of the rise of coal. People forged successful political demands by acquiring a power of action from within a new energy system.*'³⁸ One of these 'power of actions' was the ability of workers to go on general strike and thereby to make new demands for better wages and social rights. Especially the modern ideology of Socialism (Liberalism and Conservatism originating much earlier than the advent of fossil fuels, yet paving the ideological way for fossil capital as the legitimate right to – and search for – a constant increase in profit) can be seen as the attempt to redistribute the material abundance generated through constant economic growth based on fossil fuels. This redistribution also aimed to work against the innate tendency of capitalism to concentrate power, money and luxury. Socialism wanted to improve the dehumanising conditions of the working classes by offering them better lives. It is welfare for the masses that elevates the individual through collective sharing; it is a value-based response to a world permeated by a new explosive energy. Fossil fuels are the energy resource of modernity, the power that discloses the individual and society in a completely new way, and thus redefines what it means to be human. The tensions and conflicts within the political realm testify to this battle over the definition of man, because fossil fuels set the world in motion, *expanding* and *increasing* our ideas of what is possible. They are the driving force behind the acceleration of all life-worlds within modernity, and how we as bodies move through time and space. They are behind our material sense of freedom and the belief that life should be 'rich' in experiences. Fossil fuels enabled our development as modern individuals.

0.2.5.1.

Once we come to realise how fossil fuels have acted upon us as something with a material agency, we must ask: *are we not all effectuations of fossil fuels?* Effectuations as being subjected to the material power of fossil fuels, but also becoming free citizens in a modern sense. Without them, there certainly wouldn't be as many of us (who of us would actually be here?), and many of those who would be here, would presumably still be working in the fields, driving horse-drawn carts on bumpy roads within a radius of ten miles of our houses. Fossil fuels have made life so much easier because we have placed machines between us and the hard physical labour of extracting food and energy from nature or moving objects and bodies across space.

0.2.5.2.

Fossil fuels have enabled a specific physical socio-economic infrastructure that functions as an *arena* for our existential idea of freedom: the roads are there to be driven upon, the shops are full of goods to be bought, the global space is saturated with holiday destinations to visit and the TV channels abundant with entertainment to watch. This arena also concerns our understanding and expectation of time: fossil fuels and all the machines they are powering have freed up time so we can educate ourselves, enjoy leisure, reading, playtime with our kids, sports activities, and go on holiday all over the world. We cannot imagine ourselves without this infrastructure powered by fossil fuels. It has given us a new sense of entitlement: the belief that we can express our freedom through consuming. But this freedom based on fossil fuels cannot last forever. We know that the emissions from fossil fuels have to stop in order to avoid the worst-case scenarios of climate tipping points, such as altering the Gulf stream through the melting of the North Pole, rising sea levels, droughts, floods, forest fires and scarcity of water. This raises the question of whether democracy as a political form is the most efficient and adequate state formation to bring about the changes needed in the Western world. Democracy necessitates that its citizens vote for change, but the majority of constituencies have not yet voted for politicians who will implement this change. We can imagine the end of the world, but not the end of that system that powers our freedom: capitalism.

0.2.6.

From a speculative vantage point, it makes sense to grasp the *seductive force* of fossil fuels once they have been subsumed into the logic of the machine – whether in the form of a steam, diesel or jet motor. What is it that makes humans demand fossil fuels? Once they were harnessed through the combustion engine, they became a power that increased the *being-ability*³⁹ of the industrial capitalist, the nation state and the individual human by generating *energy* in its pure virtual form. There is nothing pre-determined about what fossil fuels are used for. The energy they generate through combustion can be put in the service of all kinds of possible uses, thereby opening up a space of power for even the humblest individual. Energy aligns capitalism and the masses with a tremendous external force that has weaponised the world and changed the infrastructure of how we escape it (from holidays to leisure to mass-media entertainment).

0.2.6.1.

Being a prime mover, fossil fuel has become an externalisation of power translated into motion, physical force or chemical substance. It is a power that is external to the individual who masters it, but necessitates both a smooth surface in order to increase its speed (railway tracks, the hard surface of the highway) and some kind of protection in case of collision against its motion. A vehicle, for example, is powered by an engine enabling a speed that could destroy its master, thus necessitating a shield against it. This shielding of those who are transported also creates a distance between the person moving and the surrounding nature – a distance that makes nature ‘flat’, like something moving past on a screen. The metal shield becomes a

kind of new skin, transforming the car into an extended, permeable body for the driver. On the inside of a vehicle in motion as a driver, and on the outside as a pedestrian, the human consciousness becomes weaponised in a very specific sense. As the driver, I am able to seriously injure or even kill other people with my car. Thus I am constantly alert for pedestrians, but also on the lookout for other vehicles coming too close to me. Driving a car, I am inside a bullet of violence. As a pedestrian, I always have to watch out for cars behind my back or in front of me. Any collision with a car, and I will be the physical loser. Here, my consciousness is weaponised in the sense of being alert, afraid and fearful of traffic.

0.2.6.2.

In our relations to domesticated animals, fossil fuels have made possible what I will designate the *externalisation of violence*. Until 250 years ago, most people lived in close proximity to the animals they lived off, thereby at least having some sense of their presence and their individual personalities. Fossil fuels transformed the agricultural world and the lives depending on it. They pushed a large number of humans from the rural into the urban realm on an unprecedented scale, making the lives and deaths of farmed animals invisible, but simultaneously creating a differentiated life for the city-dweller. Today, billions of animals are slaughtered in massive death factories. In Denmark alone, approximately 149 millions animals are slaughtered annually.⁴⁰ Behind these staggering numbers is an infrastructure based on fossil fuels: from the energy used in the enclosures in which they live, to the energy powering the slaughterhouses and the machines cutting up the carcasses, to the energy used for transportation and the tractors and combine-harvesters working the fields for their nutrition, and finally, the fossil fuels used in producing fertiliser and pesticides in growing their food.

0.2.6.3

In this new modern realm, a philosophical transition from symbolic space to abstract space took place, aligning the rationality of science with a new force: reducing nature to objects fitting the abstract grid. René Descartes (1596-1650) famously reduced both nature and animals in his *Méditations Métaphysiques* (1641) to a pure *res extensa*, an object without life or a consciousness of its own. Fossil fuels mechanised this viewpoint, but with a force unknown to the French philosopher. Things became quantitative – numbers to be extracted. The individuality of the craftsman or the specificity of the material or object were subsumed into the logic of mass production. It was scientific understanding and the technological advancements throughout the 16th and 17th centuries that enabled fossil fuels to become a material agent powering the Industrial Revolution. Without knowledge of geological strata, the extraction of iron and construction of machines, the energy embedded in coal and oil could not have been transformed into motion energy.

0.2.7.

Fossil fuels – this energy source ‘*bequeathed to mankind by other living beings*’⁴¹ as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) once said – are the manifestation of a material that represents *deep-time*. The compressed remains of vegetation and dead animals dating back 150–350 million years, it emerges as a non-renewable energy source that we use for our own needs. In order for oil to be usable in a diesel engine, it has to be heated through a petro-chemical process. The different elements of the liquid are separated out, and the heavier part becomes a thick, tar-like oil. Mixed with sand and small rocks it is used for asphalt on roads. Imagine your life without asphalt. Whenever you step out of your door, it is there to secure the free movements of wheels. Yet it is deep-time right in front of you. Once you start to look for fossil fuels, you realise they are everywhere, from the plastic in your smartphone to the fuel used in the transportation of your food and the social fabric of modern urban life. Almost everybody living on the planet is dependent on access to fossil fuel. Fossil fuel is the past exploding into the present, giving modernity its ephemeral, but also dynamic quality. It is now literally setting the world ablaze, heating up the planet and making it uninhabitable.

0.2.7.1.

A community of contribution can be seen as the attempt to free ourselves from what fossil fuels have done to us; to undo this effectuation of our lives by diminishing those aspects that come with the burning of fossil fuels: industrialised animal food production, the unlimited transportation of objects and humans, and the unsustainable ideology of individualism based on consumption. Through the burning of fossil fuels, the Western world has established a wide and complex infrastructure that allows for all kinds of activities that present themselves as legitimate because the setup is there: the highway to be driven on, the light to be switched on, the heating system to be ignited, the airport to fly from, the television to watch movies on, the shops to buy new objects from. The infrastructure is a phenomenological given: it presents itself as a second nature that instils entitlement in humans (we made it, it is for us, it is sized to accommodate our scale), but it does not present us with its negative impact on the environment and non-human nature. A community of contribution is the conscious movement away from this established infrastructure towards a different kind of being in the world – a being that attempts to minimise the effects of fossil fuels and allow for a re-emergence of non-human nature.

0.3. ENACTING NON-PHILOSOPHY

*'True philosophy is non-philosophy – which is to enter into the profundity of experience.'*⁴²

(Merleau-Ponty)

*'Our state of non-philosophy – Never has the crisis been so radical.'*⁴³

(Merleau-Ponty)

0.3.1.

Fossil fuels, transformed into a force of motion, released an energy into the world that enabled a certain transition into modernity. It was a motion with a power that swept everything away, from social relations to religious beliefs. The constant revolution of the instruments of production created a new era in which: *'All that is solid melts into air,'*⁴⁴ as Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friederich Engels (1820-1895) famously wrote in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) about the Industrial Revolution. For millennia, kingdoms, dynasties and empires had ruled the world, but once fossil fuels had permeated all sectors of society, the individual sensed that the true ruler of the world was he who mastered movement and constant change. With fossil fuels, the new citizen destroyed the old God, becoming the human-god of the bourgeoisie who travels at the speed of trains, automobiles and aeroplanes with the help of science. In the late industrial age, kingdoms still remain as symbolic figures, but they are without political power.⁴⁵ In nation states with cultures based on liberal traditions, the people, as the beneficiaries and masters of fossil fuels, demand representation through a democratic parliament.⁴⁶

0.3.1.1.

Not only did absolute monarchy fall victim to the energy unleashed by fossil fuels, but classical philosophy also came to an end. It is noteworthy that G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), the last philosopher to complete – and believe in the supremacy of – a philosophical system, emerged at the dawn of fossil fuels, paving the way for industrialisation. After Hegel, philosophy became scattered, unable to build a system that could contain the explosion of energy into all dimensions of society that followed from its use. Fossil fuels unleashed a space of virtuality unknown to previous systems of thoughts. French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) designated this new situation as that of *non-philosophy*⁴⁷: the point where every individual is confronted with a world that is constantly changing, forced to develop a truth and experience from his particular viewpoint on life. With non-philosophy, the absolute has to be thought from the immanence of a singular existence; from within the immersed situation of a life in flux. Non-philosophy enters into the 'profundity of experience' that in modernity means experiences of shock, rupture and dislocation,⁴⁸ but also demands self-development,⁴⁹ as if our personalities and psychic apparatuses must become as fluid as the new energy that moves the world. It is as if the black substrate of fossil fuels mirrors the modern sense of nihilism, a black void inside the human, unleashing him into a nothingness. The 'non' added to

philosophy is thus a new way of expressing the negation after Hegel, because it points to the incarnated flesh of the thinker activating itself into the thought process and thereby disturbing and distorting the space of reasoning. There is, according to Merleau-Ponty, no absolute coincidence between mind, thought and the world, with all its oppositions (the trap of the Hegelian absolute); rather, there is a thinking based on a chiasmus, a reversibility between the seer and the seen, the sensing and the sensed. Non-philosophy designates the encroachment of perceptual flesh into the realm of thinking, a 'non' because the situated existence of the thinker is acknowledged as a part of the equation.

0.3.1.2.

As a methodological programme, non-philosophy is based on the situated existence of the non-philosopher,⁵⁰ which means to begin thinking from both the experience immanent to the body and the context from which a view of the world is possible. Non-philosophy is openness towards new sensations, but also those experiences that go against the already acquired understanding of the world,⁵¹ in which humans, objects and relations are constantly being pushed around and expanded by fossil fuels. In this accelerated space, non-philosophy is thinking for oneself, as in: 'What am I thinking?', not 'What should I think?' or 'What do others think?' Non-philosophy thus becomes a kind of personalised, invested thinking that feeds on the life of the non-philosopher. It is an art of transfiguration: a circular movement of thinking from the concrete space of existence to the abstract space of reasoning and back again. As Merleau-Ponty states: '*No human being can receive a heritage of ideas without transforming them through the sole act of knowing them; without injecting into them his own, always different, way of being.*'⁵² In other words, non-philosophy arises the moment a reader of, for example, phenomenology begins to practise phenomenology, begins to question the meaning of his or her own experience in the world and create new concepts that can grasp the event of that experience. Entering into the profundity of experience, injecting one's own way of being into the systems of thoughts, is what makes non-philosophy a variation of Existentialism, since it is based on the idea of human subjectivity being incarnated. It is an Existentialism that does not pose the subject, defined by its absolute freedom, *above* the world but *in* the world and *of* the world. For Merleau-Ponty, non-philosophy is what enables the thinking mind to relate to the world in a more corporeal way, placing itself in a experiential space (the flesh) before the Cartesian split of the world into two distinctive ontological regions. It is in light of this that non-philosophy can be seen as a symptom of a radical crisis: that of modern man's disconnection from his natural world.⁵³

0.3.1.3.

To enact non-philosophy from the position of an individual is possible because of the emptiness of the metaphysical knot.⁵⁴ We are framed by the forces of own being (the body), given being (the social) and final being (temporality) that are transcendental dimensions of our lives as humans, but the centre is empty.⁵⁵ There is nothing that predetermines us, and this makes

the content of our relations open. We can actively reflect upon our relations to our bodies, the social world and how we exist in time – and choose to live differently. The metaphysical knot cannot be undone (as if someone could exist without a body, a social world or in time), but how I manifest my body, what kind of moral framework I live by or how I relate to time is not predetermined. The metaphysical knot must be seen as a speculative possibility: always to be able to think a human existence from the perspective of the body, the social and time.

0.3.1.4.

Non-philosophy is the constant production of propositions attempting to follow the flights of the mind. Fragmentary and abrupt, adding themselves onto chains of thoughts, their formal quality reveals the process by which they come into being: as flashes appearing suddenly in the flux of life. Propositions are approximations, the constant attempt through writing to express thoughts, to delineate the contours of concepts with which to understand and live in the world. Thoughts gravitate and evolve around a centre or a topic, become strings of thoughts that traverse a plane of immanence: a thinking from an embedded position in life restricted by what is possible to think. Non-philosophy neither attempts to be scientific nor is against science; rather, it places itself in-between the knowledge produced through scientific truth procedures and the actual historical existence of the thinking mind. Non-philosophy is the distortion that happens when abstract reasoning meets the trembling of the physical flesh. It is private non-institutional thinking, designating how we as individuals have the possibility to translate theory into our own lives, thereby distorting but also expanding whatever existing theory to which we might be exposing ourselves.

0.3.1.5.

A community of contribution as a book is a non-philosophical proposition.⁵⁶ As a concept, a community of contribution is a proposition, a thought-space that is proposed to the world, but from the position of a non-philosopher. It is has emerged from the immanence of a life (the life I am living) attempting to grasp the forces of this life, and yet reconfigure these forces in order to alter my self-manifestation. The concept has been created as the attempt to formulate a new ethos by which to live. It is non-philosophical because it is this movement of interacting with thoughts in a reversible way: I have been proposing these thoughts, attempted to see the world through them, but also to live through them. Living through thinking is what makes non-philosophy an *experimental thinking in action*, because it transforms one's own existence into a *testing site* for new ideas, ways of perceiving and engaging with the world. A non-philosophical proposition is thus not the attempt to produce scientific truth propositions concerning matters beyond the life to be lived; rather, it is the attempt through thinking to transform one's existence. *Non-philosophy is self-othering. Non-philosophy is enacted.* To write this book has been a journey of self-exploration: of how far I am able to transform myself in order to participate in the community of contribution.

0.3.2.

To Merleau-Ponty, the act of non-philosophy is traversed by a sense of urgency: the necessity to think a situation, because it needs a new response. Non-philosophy is thus *positioned thinking* that happens in a space of conflict. This book, *Community of Contribution*, has emerged from such a conflict: that of the climate crisis, the sixth mass extinction of species and the unkindness with which we treat farmed animals. It is written in the tradition of Enlightenment thinking stemming from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) that believed thinking should actualise itself in the present, become part of and influence its own historical time.⁵⁷ This is what *Community of Contribution* as a thought-space wants to become, but it is also part of a different context: that of my previous non-philosophical writing. In *Generic Singularity* (2014) I presented in very short form the first outlines of a community of contribution in the closing section on *systemic modernity*.⁵⁸ Here, the first sketch of the community was part of several *primary ecstasies* through the dimensions of own, given and final being. This book is to be seen as the first investigation into what I believe are joyful ways of existence that are transcendental. Its publication, as the next book in the non-philosophical programme, was announced in *Endurance* (2017). *Community of Contribution* is my positive answer to *Endurance*, a way of overcoming estrangement from both the natural and the industrial world (and thereby adding a new understanding to endurance). Even though we might be forced to endure the natural and human disasters that are coming in the future, a community of contribution gives a new sense to this endurance: a meaningful horizon of action against the impending planetary climate catastrophe.

0.3.3.

A community of contribution is a *speculative opportunity* in the sense that I, a non-philosopher, will speculate upon this idea of a community based on generosity as its fundamental principle. The act of speculation is important, because as the history of the word implies – derived from the Latin verb *speculari* – it means to ‘spy out’ or ‘to examine’. *Speculari* is derived from *specula*, which means ‘lookout post’ and ultimately ‘to look at’. In light of these meanings of ‘speculation’, this book can be seen as a *thought-space* from where I both ‘examine’ as a concept and ‘see’ a vision of a community of contribution. And on a further level, the act of speculation is highly necessary, because it is what enables us to include non-human nature in its widest sense into the realm of the community of contribution. Speculation is that state of mind through which we can move beyond the great divide separating humans from nature. Speculation is what allows us to think of a completely new world beyond the current system determined by the industrial-agricultural-food complex. Speculation is what allows us to depart from our cultural and religious norms that, for example, prescribe meat at our rituals, and from certain national identities tied to being meat-producers (as if it were a manifest destiny that Denmark should be a ‘farming nation’). Speculation allows contingency to become part of the equation: the world is, and has been for thousands of years, inside the Agricultural Revolution, but it does not have to be this way. Things in the world could be different.

0.3.4.

Being speculative has practical consequences. I speculate in order to alter my confrontation with the material setup of the world. A community of contribution is at once a speculative vision, yet also a very practical community, consisting in a whole new bodily engagement with the world. In section 2, I will explicate the practical dimensions of the community of contribution, the steps to take in relation to farmed animals, fossil fuels, self-sustainability and wilding the world. The practical dimensions – what to do – can be seen as a way of translating but also experimenting with the ideas immanent to the community of contribution. What we do in practice is how we show the extent to which we believe in the words we say.

0.4. THE WESTERN WELFARE SELF

‘Cold War Keynesianism gave consumerism a moral and political meaning, linking it with national prosperity and civic virtue, as well as with competition with the USSR and the defence of freedom. Mass consumption was presented as an alternative to Communism: the United States would beat the Soviet Union at its own game by effacing the traditional barriers of class society.’⁵⁹

(Bonneuil and Fressoz)

‘Preventing energy abundance involved the rapid construction of lifestyles in the United States organised around the consumption of extraordinary quantities of energy.’⁶⁰

(Timothy Mitchell)

0.4.1.

Who is invited to participate in the community of contribution? The Western welfare self! I, you, they, we, the others – all who constitute the populations of the global North. The Western welfare self is a crucial concept in this theory of the community of contribution, because it designates a mode of existence that we have to leave behind; a way of living that is blocking participation in the community of contribution. The Western welfare self emerged after WWII as the generalised mass consumer (as a mode of existence) buying into a standard of living expressed in a middle-class consumption pattern inspired by the ‘American way of living’. It is a self that manifests a certain *variance* of being; a self (a structure mediating the monstrous body⁶¹) within a capitalistic order determined by the social-liberal welfare state. Thus, a Western welfare self designates a certain human – in my case, being a Dane, male, middle-aged, urbanised and higher educated; having an income from work, owning property and depending on goods available in grocery stores; relying on healthcare and a well-functioning public infrastructure. The Western welfare self’s expectations of life are manifold – from taking holidays abroad to living a long and comfortable life. For the majority, it is a life without any direct contact with nature in its wild state, since the Western welfare self neither

grows, forages nor kills for its own food. It is a self that is shielded from nature by the screens inside the objects powered by fossil fuels (cars, buses, trains, planes) or the screens through which it is entertained or communicates with the world (TV, computer, tablet, smartphone).

0.4.1.1.

It is 'Western' because it most forcefully manifests itself through the citizens of the Northern hemisphere all living in Westernised nations – broadly speaking, the US, Great Britain, the EU, and Scandinavia – and in Asia, the nations of Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand – and on the rise, the growing populations of China, India, South America and Africa. And it is 'welfare' because it is a self that expects to live within a certain material setup: with unlimited and reliable access to electricity, running water, heating, healthcare, higher education and freedom of choice regarding consumer products and mobility. It is a self that believes it is entitled to all these luxuries and thus elects leaders who on a political level protect these 'rights'.⁶² A Western welfare self is a 'consuming self' engulfed in desires fabricated by advertisements, immersed in a throw-away culture with the planned obsolescence of objects and an ever-increasing mountain of garbage as its shadow. As a body-self, its metabolism is governed by a meat-rich diet, making its belly a tomb for dead animals.

0.4.1.2.

The Western welfare self is a *systemic effect* brought about by a totality of discourses, material possibilities and technological developments that transforms what it means to be an individual. It is a self that is *protected* by the welfare state, but also *consumes* the welfare generated within the state. I did not invent this configuration of society, the welfare state, but I have profited from it. It made the world available to me through an infrastructure with fossil fuels as its prime mover. Acknowledging the climate crisis as a consequence of the accumulated burning of fossil fuels of which the welfare states of the global North have burned the most, I no longer see the Western welfare self as a legitimate mode of being or something towards which humans should strive as a utopian society. Instead, the time has come to understand its problematic consequences (the 'externalities' of non-human nature) and counteract its worst impact by developing a new mode of being. Participation in a community of contribution is a conscious move away from the lifestyle of a Western welfare self.

0.4.2.

To grasp the role and function of the Western welfare self within the general theory of the community of contribution, it must be seen as a 'conceptual persona', in the sense that Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Félix Guattari (1930-1992) defined it: '*Conceptual personae carry out the movements that describe the author's plane of immanence, and they play a part in the very creation of the author's concepts. [...] They indicate the dangers specific to this plane, the [...] movements that emerge from it, and they will themselves inspire original concepts.*'⁶³ Thus, the Western welfare self can be seen as a conceptual persona in my thinking, my term for an average life form in this

historical moment in which we have all participated – and still do. As such, the Western welfare self and its movements represent a danger because of the direct – and indirect – effects it has on nature. It brings about through its mode of existence certain types of events with a high carbon footprint, and is at the same time the locus of necessary transformation: the existence that has to undergo a change in worldview and moral ethos in order to participate in a community of contribution. As a conceptual persona, it delineates a new territorium for thought: *‘The role of the conceptual personae is to show thought’s territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations.’*⁶⁴ So in this context, the Western welfare self is a way for me to think of contemporary Western existence as embedded in a specific variant of the state (the welfare state situated in a territory), and yet also that collective form of existence beyond which we have to move (a community of contribution as a deterritorialisation of the welfare state into a sustainable state – the latter process being a reterritorialisation).

0.4.2.1.

Thinking the Western welfare self happens in a thought-space, upon a plane of immanence, designating a certain instantiation of the metaphysical knot where the relations to own, given and final being are constituted in a specific way. It receives its ‘life contents’ through the matrix of the welfare state as a mode of social and economic organisation. It is the average person in a statistic in which I as an individual participate – an average Dane is responsible for the emission of approximately 14.5 tons of CO₂ per year.⁶⁵ By not flying to holiday destinations, by growing my own plant-based food, installing solar panels for electricity and heating, always cycling to my destination and wearing second-hand clothes, I can minimise my personal carbon footprint substantially, but I will still have a carbon footprint, because the infrastructure of Danish society in all its manifestations (from public institutions to schools, hospitals and libraries; from street lighting to police and fire stations and military complexes etc.) still uses energy.⁶⁶ Included in the 14.5 tons of CO₂ is the energy that factories use, and the energy used by the agricultural-industrial-food complex. Thus a Western welfare self has a high carbon footprint through the life that is lived in a highly efficient, wealthy and well functioning state, Denmark having the fifth highest CO₂ emissions per capita in the EU. On a global scale, Oxfam estimates that *‘the world’s 10% richest produce half of the world’s carbon emission, while the poorest 3.5 billion people account for just a tenth,’*⁶⁷ which translates roughly into 780 million people living high-consuming lifestyles emitting half of all carbon-dioxide, approximately 3.5 billion middle-class people consuming 40%, and the remaining 3.5 billion people living in dire poverty and only responsible for 10% of carbon-dioxide pollution. Obviously, the empirical correlate to the Western welfare self is to be found among the 10% responsible for half of all global carbon emissions and among the wealthier part of the broad middle class.

0.4.2.2.

250 years ago, the Western welfare self did not exist, because the access and ability to burn fossil fuels in combustion engines was not yet available. Looking at the general data-sets behind socio-economic and earth-system trends, it becomes obvious that the Western welfare self emerges from the 'way of life' and consumption patterns generating the 'Great Acceleration' within the Anthropocene – an acceleration of suburbanisation, private home-ownership and motorisation during the Cold War. Developing the welfare state was seen – as Bonneuil and Fressoz remark in the paragraph quoted above – as the strongest bulwark against communism and spurred the competition between two ideologies that both had nature and fossil fuels as unlimited resources built into their foundation. Today, the welfare state is a collective luxury trap on a systemic level, with devastating consequences, because in its current form – and as a model – it is unsustainable on a global level, yet it seems impossible to exist outside of it. As a species, we are incapable of imagining a world without our current use of energy.

0.4.3.

Behind the Western welfare self is the liberal ideology of freedom: freedom of thought and consumption. This is the ideology that powers expectations of the 'good life'. It is a way of living where I do what I want, to which I am entitled, insofar as I do not harm others (Mill). The liberal ideology is humanist, since it only takes into consideration humans, not animals or nature. In its neo-liberal hedonistic form, it is the desire to exist in the most intense way as an individual – 'intense' meaning rich in experiences that are often dependent on a high consumption of fossil fuels (e.g. flying anywhere I want to go in the world).⁶⁸ A Western welfare self believes in the right to enjoy experiences, and to experience oneself as a nucleus of experiences. This is the narcissistic loop within phenomenology that is paired with the 'society of spectacle' (Debord)⁶⁹ or what can also be designated the 'experience economy'.

0.4.3.1.

A right to consume without limits is the explicit ideological message of neo-liberalism. I am constantly bombarded with advertising images and messages that assign to my current existence an inferior value: only through acquiring the newest model, or by travelling far away, will I become fulfilled. The market launches new models, trends and travel destinations each year, and in order to ensure this machine of desire, the appearance of the self and the background powering this self (the frame making it visible as a phenomenon) is embedded into a logic of what could be called an 'ideology of newness': through the constant consumption of new technology, objects, clothes, furniture and experiences, the self is presented as up-to-date, modern and vanguard.

0.4.4.

It is important to grasp the violence inherent in the existence of a Western welfare self. It is a violence that is visible in the machines that are working on behalf of it, but also invisible as

the production of death inside the factory-sized slaughterhouses, where the lives of millions of sentient beings are brought prematurely to an end in order to feed the Western welfare self. It is an ‘out of sight’ violence that splits but also numbs the self, making it insensitive to the suffering and mutilation of farmed animals. It is a violence that is accepted, because it concerns the metabolism of the self, or rather: the preservation of the body-self. The Western welfare self exists because of an *externalised violence* in two ways: A) the violence unleashed upon animals in domesticating them, manipulating their pregnancies and ability to lactate, and finally by killing them; B) the violence unleashed on nature through growing monoculture crops to feed the animals, but also the humans. This violence is externalised to the industrial-agricultural-food complex. In short: *I do not have to kill the animal myself to get hold of its flesh, bones, milk or skin*. No relation to the actual slaughtering of the animals is necessary, nor to the monoculture fields that are grown to feed them. These fields (or more correctly ‘desert wounds’) are an ultra-violence to wild nature: they allow for only one crop and nothing else. On fertile soil, nature is multiplicity, and before agriculture burned, cleared and ploughed the earth, most fertile land was home to dense forests. Today, monocultural land is the greatest threat to habitats and biodiversity. This ignorance and unawareness of the brutality against animals and nature is a mode of false consciousness characteristic of the Western welfare self.

0.4.5.

I myself have since my birth been living within the matrix of the welfare state and profited from the healthcare, social security, free higher education and abundance of food it has provided. But after taking sides with non-human nature from a speculative viewpoint by feeling empathy and pity for the animals living inside the industrial-agricultural-food complex, I have begun to see the dark side of the welfare state. From the perspective of Danish cows, pigs, chicken, mink and sheep, the welfare state has been a huge machinery of death and exploitation.

0.4.5.1.

To sum up: the purpose of describing the Western welfare self as a subject living with a high carbon footprint and an externalised violence against animals and non-human nature is to raise awareness of the effects of our way of living. Let me clear about this: I want to dismantle the Western welfare self as a legitimate mode of being. It is a question of expropriating the substance of the Western welfare self⁷⁰ and re-calibrating it through a new mode of co-existence with non-human nature in its wild state of being. I do not wish to do so as a movement back (as if we could return to an original mode of being), but as a new mode of being, where we basically ‘dial down our demands’ (Wohlleben) in order to create more space for our fellow creatures. I believe this change is possible, because part of the self as a structure is the possibility of *self-reflexivity*,⁷¹ which enables us to actively change our relations to the body, the social and time. Nobody is locked forever into their worldviews and fundamental belief-

systems and unable to modify them. It is a question of initiating a new way of thinking and relating to non-human nature. Then the world will change. In section 2, I will consider the ‘margins of actions’ that are possible for the Western welfare self to transform its mode of living in and perceiving the world.

0.5. JEVONS PARADOX - THE SECRET FORCE OF REBOUND EFFECTS

‘It is a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth.’⁷²

(William Stanley Jevons)

‘The suppressed active component of the world of things manifests itself in unintended side effects.’⁷³

(Bernd M. Scherer)

0.5.1.

At least since the 1960s, there has been a growing awareness that the Western world as a life form has a devastating effect upon wildlife and nature, the average global temperature, the quality of water and the numbers of species going extinct. A breaking point in this awareness was *Silent Spring* (1962) by marine biologist Rachel Carson (1907-1964), who drew attention to the negative effects of using DDT in agriculture to kill insects (which weakened the eggshells of birds, thereby destroying them before they could evolve into chicks). Concurrently with the increasing environmental awareness spurred by Carson there have been attempts to limit or change the impact of post-war industrialisation. Scientists were warning as early as the 1960s that global average temperatures might rise to more than two degrees Celsius before 2050. All these critical voices constitute a ‘grammar of environmental reflexivity’⁷⁴ immanent to the Western Welfare State and its citizens, and face us with a serious question: since the critical consciousness of the West has been aware that the problems we now are facing would arrive unless something were done, why is it – after all these years of introducing renewable energy, becoming more energy-effective, recycling, producing organic food, introducing a circular economy etc. – that global warming and the destruction of the rainforest have not been averted? Why is it that the Western nations have been unable to reduce their negative impacts? In 2018, Denmark as a leading ‘green nation’ broke its own record with emissions of 84 million tons of CO₂ and in 2019 purchased the highest number of SUVs ever.

0.5.2.

To understand the difficulty we are facing as a human species – acknowledging the embedded nature of an economic system based on capitalism and a view of nature as an unlimited

resource for man – we also need to understand *the secret forces of rebound effects*.⁷⁵ This phenomenon was first noted by economist William Stanley Jevons, who in 1865 published *The Coal Question*, in which he described the unintended side effects of introducing more efficient steam engines. Instead of leading to a decrease in demand for coal, a more efficient steam-engine led to an increase, because the efficiency made energy cheaper and more available. Efficiency means we will put the engine, device or new possibility to even greater use, creating a rebound effect. In the case of coal, this meant that while it was originally mainly wool mills that were driven by steam engines, other areas of the production sector quickly followed. Soon, steam engines were powering saw mills, corn mills, steel factories, railways and steamboats. The efficiency led to an increased use of coal in domains not previously foreseen. This paradox that efficiency leads to an increase in consumption is called the *Jevons Paradox* and can be seen and studied in the rebound effects within and behind our lives as Western welfare selves.

0.5.2.1.

Let me give some examples of rebound effects. In the transportation sector, the increased number of highways reduces the amount of time spent in getting from A to B, but the rebound effect is that we will do it more often because it's easier, so more people will drive their cars, increasing the amount of pollution. Better roads between geographical distances make it possible to have a second home, which in turn also needs to be built and equipped with household appliances – the holiday home itself often being a low-cost pre-fab house, which was originally conceived to produce easily constructed cheaper housing for working-class people. In the private household, the invention of the washing machine made it easier to wash your clothes, so instead of doing so once a week, you do it every day, which means the amount of water, energy, chemicals and time spent on washing clothes increases. 30 years ago, each household in the West had one phone lasting for many years, but today we have at least one per person (if not two) and buy a new one each year. Making the phone pocket-size and mobile is more efficient in terms of communication, but has led to the increase in minerals, plastic and energy used per person for telecommunications. The more we invent, make cheaper and energy-efficient, the more we use it and make it available to many people, whether refrigerators, automobiles, televisions or heating systems.⁷⁶

0.5.2.2.

The internet was originally designed as a military communications system that had no centralised entity (and therefore could not be destroyed by an enemy), but today it is used for all kinds of activities, from emails to shopping, entertainment, data-storage, telecommunications and social-media platforms. From being a decentralised circuit between a limited number of entities, it is now a globally interconnected system using enormous amounts of energy to power all the data centres that host its many platforms.

0.5.2.3.

If we look at the general health condition of the population, the invention of antibiotics and vaccines reduced child mortality, viruses and infections, thus enabling people to live much longer, but has (together with the use of fossil fuels and the increase in yields from crops, public sewage and hygienic progress) also been a significant factor in the doubling of the world's population in just 70 years – from 3.5 billions inhabitants in 1945 to 7.8 billion today. And this rebound effect now feeds back into the welfare state as a problem, because an ageing population with high expectations of healthcare is a threat to public budgets. Additionally, when people become more wealthy and live longer, they tend to increase their carbon footprint and to eat more meat (which increases the demand for more agricultural land). This will most likely be the rebound effect of lifting the billions of people in Africa and Asia out of poverty into Western modes of life. In other words, the rebound effect of the Western welfare self is that it acts as a template for what to desire from modern life.

0.5.3.

That efficiency (the development of new technology) leads to increased use can be seen as a warning against any naive ideas about salvation through technology or new inventions.⁷⁷ As Bernd M. Scherer (b. 1961) states, the suppressed active component of things manifests itself as the unintended side-effect. The things we put into the world have a hidden side to them: their future unknown use and interaction with other objects. Inventing and manufacturing the automobile not only led to speed and freedom on the road, but also to the pollution of cities, traffic accidents, road kill, congestion, the enormous amount of space needed for parking lots and the interstate highways obstructing animals' free movement in the landscape. Thus rebound effects that we do not take into account at the moment of realisation will always follow from our inventions. Confronted with the current ecological crisis, we must prepare ourselves for the rebound effects of all our attempts to solve the crisis through new technology.

0.5.3.1.

Thinking about rebound effects is important, because our current climate crisis can also be seen as the totality of consequences of thousands of rebound effects. No one person or social system (even though Western capitalism and its benefactors are the main culprits⁷⁸) can be said to be responsible for the climate crisis, because it effectuates itself on so many levels with so many complexities intertwining with each other. We exist under the influence of at least five revolutions (the cognitive, the agricultural, the scientific, the industrial and the digital⁷⁹) that are saturated with rebound effects that have made us into a planetary force as human agents. Our current world is not the result of the deliberate intentions of those who initiated the Agricultural Revolution 11,000 years ago, nor of those scientists who, during the Renaissance, began to explore the secrets of nature through scientific methods.⁸⁰ Yet these two revolutions are behind the Industrial Revolution, and all three sustain the Digital Revolution. We

are in this mess as a consequence of disclosures no one was able to anticipate: the unintended side effects of previous revolutions.

0.5.3.2.

The Jevons Paradox makes me sceptical about the possibility of a ‘technological fix’ for the climate crisis. There might arise a new smarter energy source, a ‘safe’ form of geo-engineering, or a general consensus to rely more on nuclear energy (since it is cleaner), but the new energy source will most likely be used to power the transition to electric cars and battery-driven vehicles. Energy consumption is also rising with the need to power the data centres behind the internet and all its services – from clouds, to apps, websites and online streaming activities. So there is a great risk that the new technological inventions – whether new energy resources or a more efficient use of existing energy – will be used to power an increase in the demand for energy for purposes we already know and purposes we do not yet know. I see possibilities for unlimited energy consumption in the future, because all our electronic devices can be put to use in forms we have not yet anticipated, thus worsening our future energy prospects.

0.5.3.3.

Rebound effects are a paradox of the technology that sustains our reality. Its forces must be added to the already known causes of the climate crisis: the expansive force of capitalism and its depletion of resources in an on-going search for new and more efficient solutions in order to maximise profit; human vanity and the desire to be recognised through the display and ownership of objects; insatiable greed and our natural inclination for hedonism, comfort and relaxation. Instead of relying on technological redemption, I think we have to see ourselves in a historical perspective. Our current Western lifestyle with all its possibilities and conveniences, is a recent invention. We do not have to eat meat from farmed animals, live with such high energy consumption, nor subject ourselves to the logic of mass consumerism. In the following sections, I will sketch out the first steps towards participation in a community of contribution, whereby we can give ourselves differently to the world simply by withdrawing our effects upon it.

1.
INTRODUCTIONS

1.1. COMMUNITY OF CONTRIBUTION

*'The capacity for thoughtful residence, for experiencing community with nonhuman others, is a requisite for ethics as any capacity for human self-actualising.'*⁸¹

(Holmes Rolston III)

1.1.1.

The question raised by the concept of a community of contribution is first and foremost: *what is the ability of the Western welfare self to contribute to the re-flourishing of non-human nature?* Within this question we find three basic aspects that delineate the horizon of the community of contribution: the Western welfare self, the act of contribution and non-human nature. A Western welfare self is a self formatted into a specific mode of being in the world. This world (in which every being is a particular one) is in need of a non-human nature to re-emerge in its wild, rambunctious state.⁸² By giving ourselves to the world differently through our being, we can establish a community of contribution. A theory of a community of contribution is developed from this perspective: that we must create a new environment for ourselves within nature together with the lives of non-human entities. Through a community of contribution, we can shift from an imposed form of mono-nature to a new state of plural nature. If we achieve the latter, nature in all its dimensions will flourish again and a new, more just balance between man and the nature from which he lives can be achieved.⁸³

1.1.2.

A community of contribution is first and foremost a *conceptual event*⁸⁴ that *invents* a new space

for thinking about the *common, the community*.⁸⁵ The common means that which is shared, what is between people – a meaning that lies at the centre of a community of contribution. Yet what is radical about a community of contribution is that it extends itself towards non-human nature and thereby moves beyond the limits of a traditional *human* community, because it attempts to *include* the life of non-human entities within the sphere of the community. A community of contribution is thus larger than the relations that appear between a group of people who are localised in time and space, and it arises as a specific sense of being together, as humans *and* non-human nature, on this planet (not necessarily contiguously in time and space). It is a community based on the act of contribution, which means to pay tribute to the ‘common’ – what we share with other living beings: to be *part of* and *dependent upon* nature. Thus, a community of contribution means to pay tribute to nature in all its multiplicity through the act of giving. What is given through the community of contribution? A new way of giving myself over to the world as a Western welfare self. To participate in a community of contribution is thus to give with the aim of contributing to nature in its wild state of being. A community of contribution seeks a thoughtful residence on earth based on an ethical understanding of the epoch in which we are living: the Anthropocene.

1.1.3.

A community of contribution is a new model for a self that acknowledges evolutionary continuity between its own bodily incarnation and other non-human entities; a self that acknowledges that a Western mode of life is destructive for other living species and wildlife habitats on this planet. It acknowledges the uneven relation between the amount of singularities within *one* species at the cost of the multiplicity of all other species.⁸⁶ A community of contribution is thus a new concept for a way of being *as a human* in the world together with non-human nature.

1.1.3.1.

Every Western welfare self exists within the armature of a state, whether a welfare state, or more recently, a competitive state.⁸⁷ Both these two state-formations, in whatever form they have, are in my opinion obsolete, since they are both built upon a paradigm of unlimited economic growth based on the free access to and consumption of natural resources. Neither the welfare nor the competitive state has accounted for their external effects on nature: the sixth mass extinction of non-human species, the killing of billions of farmed animals, and global warming through the burning of fossil fuels. A new concept of the state is needed: that of *the sustainable state*. The sustainable state will still be able to secure the fundamental human rights,⁸⁸ yet will strive towards ending the production of farmed animals for food, freeing itself from the use of fossil fuels and attempting to return as much space as possible to wild life and nature. The sustainable state is a *courageous state*, in the sense that it challenges both the hegemony of the industrial-agricultural-food complex and the mode of being of the Western welfare self. It is a state that intervenes on behalf of nature and limits the neo-liberal freedom

of consumption. I will in section 2.3 circumscribe more closely this necessary evolution of the sustainable state as a concept, since it designates a new direction for and purpose of the state.

1.1.4.

A community of contribution is the attempt to conceptualise a new way of attuning to the world through a new form of life arising in the process of *giving myself differently to the world*. To give is to contribute, yet it is a giving in the form of a *withdrawal* from the current system of mass consumerism generated by the *Capitalocene*. By withdrawing myself from the normalised mode of eating, consuming and travelling, I will reduce my damaging effect upon the world. *My giving consists in withdrawing myself, thereby allowing wild nature to flourish*. This is the speculative aspect of a community of contribution, since to withdraw as an individual at this historical moment does not bring back the lost rainforest in Central America, Africa or Asia, nor does it bring to a halt the incessant slaughtering of farmed animals. Rather, the act of withdrawal must be seen as a *template for a new movement*. If it became global, it would have an impact, because through a collective *boycott* of all agricultural products based on farmed animals, these activities would become economically unsustainable. The act of withdrawal must be seen as a gesture that signifies awareness of the planetary catastrophe happening right now and the willingness to take responsibility for endangered nature in all its manifestations, from the species going extinct to the farmed animals soon to die. The act of withdrawal is the first step in the revolution that has to begin with ourselves while we attempt a systemic change on all levels. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) said it most poignantly: *'That man will be revolutionary who can revolutionize himself.'*⁸⁹ A community of contribution is an existential rethinking that is revolutionary because it is the configuration of a new relation between human beings and non-human nature in all its modes of existence.

1.1.4.1.

A community of contribution can be seen as a *regulative idea*⁹⁰ in a Kantian sense, as a guiding point to use in the empirical (concrete) sense, as when I am acting in the world.⁹¹ It is a way of seeing how I can reduce my negative impact on nature by withdrawing myself from the system generated by the Capitalocene and Plantationocene. It is the attempt to reverse the impact on wild nature by withdrawing from the modes of consumption and thereby our demand for specific animals, crops and products. It directs my mind towards a specific aim: *a new relation with nature*. It is a *focus imaginarius*, something that guides my imagination. For many, it can seem impossible to imagine a different world beyond the urban fabric, yet this is what we must do. Instead of seeing desert-like monoculture fields, we must see a wilderness; instead of animals confined inside factory farms, we must see animals roaming freely in the wild; instead of bare roofs in cities, we must see urban gardening; instead of monochromatic lawns, we must see wild flowers for bees; instead of plantations of trees in straight lines, we must see a thick maze of biodiverse plants; instead of a Brazilian soya-bean field, we must see

a rainforest. We need to immerse ourselves in the verticality of the culturalised landscape before our eyes, imagining both what it would have look liked before human intervention and what it could become again as nature in its wild state of being. A community of contribution is the name for such an eco-topia, the pathway to the realisation of inhabiting the earth in a new way.

1.2. SITUATING THE COMMUNITY

*'Community life means mutual possession and enjoyment, and possession and enjoyment of goods held in common.'*⁹²

(Ferdinand Tönnies)

1.2.1.

A theory of a community of contribution places itself within a long tradition of *thinking* about the community within modernity.⁹³ And here, I am not referring to communism as a political ideology (even though communism shares the same root of the communal – of that which is common), but of the community as a concept designating a specific *variant* of the social. A starting point in this conceptualising of the community is the ground-breaking work of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), who in 1887 published *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. In this highly complex analysis, the community (*Gemeinschaft*) is understood as the dialectical opposition to society (*Gesellschaft*). The community designates the relational forces between people who experience facial contact, beginning with the mother and child, and extending to the community of a village. Society is the abstract armature of the nation state and economic relations based on contracts and personal interests. The first is based on personal relationships and a sense of belonging to a group (people I know); the latter is based on anonymity and official representation (a system of abstract institutions) or the rules of law ensuing the right to pursue private wealth (as in having a company).

1.2.1.1.

In the community, there is a *common will* (*Wesenswille*) that permeates the group, because the community not only holds but also enjoys goods in common. To protect these common goods, the communal will forces the individual to act on behalf of the community and in compliance with its values. In society, the rules are explicit and based on abstract law, thereby granting the individual the possibility to pursue his/her own goals (which Tönnies calls *Kürwille*). This means that: *'Everyone is out for himself alone and living in a state of tension against everyone else.'*⁹⁴ In society a certain instrumental quality permeates human relations, which are generally based on monetary transactions.⁹⁵ To sum up these two sociological categories, Tönnies writes: *'Community means genuine, enduring life together, whereas Society is a transient and superficial thing.'*

*Thus Gemeinschaft must be understood as a living organism in its own right, while Gesellschaft is a mechanical aggregate and artefact.*⁹⁶ Here we see the affective differentiation immanent to the distinction between the community and society, which explains why the community is viewed as ‘warm’, ‘positive’, whereas society is ‘cold’ and ‘alienating’. It is this affective valorisation that aligns the spirit of the community with its redemptive force. It is seen as a social framework for a genuine life in togetherness where there is ‘*enjoyment of goods held in common*’.

1.2.2.

Tönnies sees these two polarities as *typologies*. By typologies he means formal *structures* shaping human relationships in the modern world as a functional totality with many levels in its fabric. They can be seen as ‘*two contrasting systems of collective social order.*’⁹⁷ Tönnies presents an analytical apparatus that differentiates between the close bonds in families and rural life and the more abstract relations in city life. In real life, they are intertwined, establishing themselves on many levels – for example, the neighbourly spirit in a housing block in the city – and not just restricted to the dichotomy between countryside and city life. I exist within different types of communities that range from my intimate relations with my family, friends and neighbours, to the more abstract nature of society, where I can establish a company, pay tax, have citizen’s rights, and move across the city space through the public infrastructure. In both ways, these are my givens: my life-world and the systemic modernity that is intertwined in a functional whole.⁹⁸

1.2.2.1.

The sense of being situated within a community is thus a primordial experience for every human (in principle), because it begins with being born into a family structure (having parents). For millennia, this was the primary social world for humans and it defined their tribal or religious identity, and later on, their placement within a class or sense of belonging to a place. It was with the radical transformation brought by industrialisation that all these community structures were challenged and partly dissolved. The rapid urbanisation and massive population growth caused a new sense of estrangement, of no longer feeling or being part of a community. Instead, a number of ‘surrogate communities’ arose, especially the ideology of nationalism that operated as an ‘imagined community’⁹⁹ (Andersson) connecting vast numbers of people separated in time and space (and thus ready to sacrifice themselves for the nation).

1.2.2.2.

After Tönnies laid the groundwork, we find the figure of the community returning to critical discourse as a redemptive mode of social organisation that can overcome the estrangement produced by modernity. In the totalitarian discourses of the 20th century (fascism and communism) we find it elevated to a political principle (which I will deal with in section 2.4 on the limits of the community), but we also find it in the concept of the ‘life world’ within the

phenomenological discourse and later in Jürgen Habermas' (b. 1939) critique of the instrumental reason that permeates intimate relationships between humans. During the last part of the 20th century, the spirit of community returned in the communitarian discourse that defended cultural and religious values located in specific settings. Here, the primary aim was to defend the right to a community based on a Christian faith or on belonging to a neighbourhood. The community was founded on strong markers of exclusions and inclusions, which in its most extreme form led to gated communities. A community of contribution is something radically different, because it is not based on a fixed binding to a territory, religious belief, race or national marker.

1.2.3.

An interesting development of Tönnies' work can be found in the writings of French philosopher and anthropologist Georges Bataille (1897-1962), who developed the concepts of *heterogeneity* and *homogeneity* to describe aspects of human relations similar to those found in the differentiation between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.¹⁰⁰ For Bataille, heterogeneity is the sphere of intense communication, where there is facial and bodily interaction, as in festivity, transgressions and a manifest otherness of existence. According to Bataille, the space of heterogeneity is the space of true communication, because we as humans have the possibility of *self-effusion*. Within heterogeneity, I can effuse my individuality, lose myself, and gain access to a state of being that is beyond society: the forbidden, the erotic, the transgressive and the religious sacrifice. Thus the heterogeneous becomes for Bataille: '*elements that are impossible to assimilate*.'¹⁰¹ Heterogenic zones of existence open towards an experience of the limit, exposing the self to the outside, ripping it apart, and in this process opening it as a singular being towards the totality of being.¹⁰² Opposed to heterogeneity, Bataille's concept of *homogeneity* refers to the organising principles of institutions and norms within a society (*Gesellschaft* in the words of Tönnies and what I designate 'systemic modernity'). It is the judiciary body, laws and binding contracts, the universalising principles of science, the institution of marriage and private property rights. Homogeneity is based on the rule of work: of postponing what the principle of joy would prefer, that of instant gratification, for a future reward. Homogeneity is the abstract forces of society that bind the citizens together in a collective belief in authority, hierarchy, and justify the uneven distribution of wealth, power and status. Homogeneity is the accumulation of wealth, whereas heterogeneity opens the space of squandering surplus values.

1.2.3.1.

From several perspectives, a community of contribution can be seen as the development of Bataille's concept of heterogeneity, and the sustainable state that of a new form of homogeneity. A community of contribution designates a manifestation where a body-self moves towards the transgression of its current Western welfare self. It is to give myself differently to the world and thereby participate in the community. I give myself to the world through a new

mode of being and thereby alter my communication with it. Ultimately, I am *giving myself differently to allow for a non-human nature to appear*. To open up space for biodiversity to appear is also to let go of control of nature. It is to saturate nature with nature, to move from mono- to plural nature. This way of being in the world allows for a new, intense communication with the natural world: it is listening to the music on all levels of the universe, from the high-pitched tonalities of swallows darting to catch their prey with exquisite deftness, to majestic waves rolling onto the shore from the horizon, to the silence of a frozen encounter with a deer. It is to walk through meadows and forests burgeoning with wild life; it is to contemplate a tree or an animal running across a pathway; it is to sympathise with non-human creatures as part of a continuous process of evolution.

1.2.3.2.

Bataille himself did not dream of a new connection to wild life, but a completely new disclosure of existential space for modern man. Faced with the reality of the totalitarian ideologies of fascism and communism, he found a valid solution in the destruction of anything that could ground the community on a rational basis. He called this the *negative community*¹⁰³ or *headless community*: a community of pure excess without any rational constraints. It was a community that through new myths would open man to a more primordial existence, even including human sacrifice.¹⁰⁴ Bataille attempted to create a community for those without any community, for those who shared the experience of the limit (becoming like an ‘ocean’¹⁰⁵), yet were unable to present the experience in a rational form.¹⁰⁶

1.2.3.3.

It is important to understand that a theory of a community of contribution must *not* be seen as a continuation of Bataille’s *negative community*. I can understand the fascination of such a community, exploring space without rational constraints, yet faced with the question of how to organise a new balance between mankind and nature, I think we have to acknowledge the necessity of thinking the community from a pragmatic perspective. It must be able to do something specific: *increase the biodiversity of nature and limit the destructive impact of humans on the environment*. We are not in need of a headless community, but of a community that is generous towards non-human nature.

1.2.4.

By reinvigorating the concept of the community, I am situating myself within that discourse of modernity that has critiqued the negative aspects of industrialisation on nature and human relationships. This is a line of thinking that searches for other modes of being together beyond the framework defined by individualism and capitalism. To think the community in the 21st century, it is therefore critical to understand both its redemptive power in the 20th century and why it failed. We can only return to the community as a concept if we avoid the latent dangers inherent to it as a social formation. Yet returning to the community is also an

act of promise, because the community as a spirit still represents the most primordial of all human relations: that of an affective bond between me and something greater than myself; a bond of bodily resonance, warmth, care and protection. The radical power of a community of contribution is to take these positive values and internalise them so that they determine our being towards nature and non-human animals. We have to transfigure the impact of the community on nature through the act of generosity. We have to become corporeal in our way of giving ourselves differently.

1.3. INCLUDING NON-HUMAN NATURE IN THE COMMUNITY

‘A poetics of kin-making starts with the dynamic of life itself: its capacity to swerve toward relation, its collaborative impulse.’¹⁰⁷

(David Farrier)

1.3.1.

Including non-human nature in the figure of the community is the most radical aspect of this theory, because it expands and transforms the traditional concept of the community. The community is no longer reserved only for humans. It is no longer territorial, based on race, gender, identity, social class, tribe or religion. It is a speculative inclusion, bypassing the previous attempts to align non-human nature with juridical rights. The strong case for animal rights made by especially Peter Singer (b. 1946) and Tom Regan (1938-2017) have not been fruitless. They have accomplished higher standards of welfare for domesticated animals during their lives (in itself a huge improvement). But they have not secured their right to exist on their own terms, a right to a life of freedom or a right not to die an unnecessarily premature death. The world is now killing more domesticated animals than ever. This does not prove that the case for animal rights is wrong, but that it does not seem of interest to humans, who define the law, to include the interests of animals in that law. ‘Animal rights’ are still bypassed by the interests of humans who rear them for the sake of the meat, bones, skin and milk products with which they service us. That animals are ‘subjects for a life’ with ‘an interest in living that life’ is still of no concern to the industrial-agricultural-food complex and the consumers who buy their processed products.

1.3.1.1.

The difficulty faced by the animal rights movement, and a reason why it might never succeed in obtaining the fundamental right of animals to live, is the revolution it is challenging. All domesticated animals today are the result of the Agricultural Revolution that took place approximately 11,000 years ago in the fertile crescent of the Middle East.¹⁰⁸ Instead of roaming freely in the wild with temporary territories, bands of humans began to settle and

grow crops, thus claiming and defending land and its yields as property. The oldest system of writing that we know of, cuneiform, invented by the Sumerians in Ancient Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC, was a simple pictogram used for accounting. To account means to sum up, organise and measure what you own as legal property. The first symbolic letters emerged from the sphere of law, and made natural land and all its yields, livestock and its built environment property for man. With law came ownership of the territory and everything living and standing upon it. There were still commons, but with the Agricultural Revolution, nature as something in and for itself disappeared, because humans began to ascribe rights to what they had transformed (the cultivated land belonged to whoever had invested time in growing crops) and to that which was within the sphere of human interests (having slaves and animal livestock was of interest to the landlord – both as workforce and as food – thus bypassing the interests of the slaves, whether human or non-human). To challenge this revolution and the culture it generated is to take on the most fundamental governing metaphysical system that we know of: that natural land and animals can be the private property of man. Its power is sedimented into religion, nation states, private ownership and our sense of social order. A community of contribution, however, chooses a different path. Instead of including non-human nature in the sphere of law, it includes non-human nature in the sphere of the community.

1.3.2.

As such, the community of contribution represents a shift in my own understanding of the community. For several years, I have been attempting to write a theory with the aim of reconstructing the welfare state from the perspective of the community: a way of redistributing wealth and positively engaging with the human community, including heterogenic existence. Yet over the last year, I have come to see the welfare state (especially its Scandinavian variant) as part of a movement in which all modern Western states have participated since the early 1950s, with the US as the driving force behind the implementation of a new lifestyle based on fossil fuels. Today, I view the historical welfare state as a planetary catastrophe, since it invented new modes of living dependent on burning fossil fuels and the high consumption of meat, spurring the Great Acceleration. The welfare state was seen as a bulwark against communist expansion and part of a massive arms race of nuclear weapons. The time – and my outlook – has changed. We must move beyond the welfare state that permits the killing of farmed animals, towards a sustainable state that strives towards the re-flourishing of non-human nature.

1.3.2.1.

Our historical moment calls for a movement beyond the humanism inherent to the welfare state. We have to adopt a speculative viewpoint including not only humans, but all species of non-human origin. This is what philosopher Donna Haraway (b. 1944) calls 'kin-making': allowing ourselves to be 'entangled' or 'knotted' with non-human nature. To accept non-

human nature into the community is to ‘*embrace our own essential dispossession – that we are not separate but fundamentally co-constituted through others*,’¹⁰⁹ as David Farrier (b. 1980) points out in his *Anthropocene Poetics*. A community of contribution represents such a dispossession of human sovereignty in relation to dominance and control of non-human animals and nature. On a day-to-day level, this does not mean that I will ask a dog whom it would vote for, but from a speculative point of view, I will attempt to allow non-human nature to exist on its own terms. I will acknowledge that animals are also subjects of life and that this life is of interest to them. I will include them in the community as an act of generosity, and because of that inclusion, I will attempt to give them as much space as possible by withdrawing my disruptive interference in their lives and habitats. ‘*The task is multispecies recuperation*,’¹¹⁰ as Haraway puts it. A simple way to do this is to abstain, as a consumer, from the meat and dairy products of the industrial-agricultural-food complex (since it both kills animals and destroys multispecies habitats). Including non-human nature in the community is based on an awareness of their suffering: behind the manifestation of a Western welfare self there is externalised violence upon a nature that is out of sight for an urbanised gaze, but visible when in the countryside.

1.3.2.2.

Opening myself towards non-human animals is an opportunity to enjoy, appreciate and learn from the myriad ways of existence that are happening parallel to my human life. It is to stop in front of an animal and see what is behind its eyes, trying to grasp the consciousness of that life that is not equivalent to mine, yet is still a life. Scientific evidence indicates that non-human mammals share similar physiological and neural structures to humans, and that they have the same conditions for self-awareness, mental imagery and emotional reality as humans.¹¹¹ There is continuity, but a ‘difference in degree’, as Charles Darwin (1809-1882) proposed in regard to our common emotional and intellectual capacities. In experiments, a trained pig displays cognitive capabilities equivalent to a three-year-old child, has empathy, a sense of space, is investigative and playful.¹¹² Unfortunately for the pig, it is born as an ‘animal of use’ and thus denied any right to exist on its own terms (in accordance with its evolutionary needs) and to die naturally. It is the flesh, milk, skin or bones that are the ‘end-product’ of farmed animals’ existence, not their lives as individuals. Thus, to include them in the community of contribution is firstly to allow them to live; secondly, if possible, it is to stroke and caress them, talk to them and express friendliness. To include non-human nature is to admire and wonder, to be curious and amazed by the complexities and variations that exist outside the human world.

1.3.2.3.

Adopting a speculative viewpoint allows us to not only see the world from the perspective of farmed animals, but also to listen to them. If a spokesperson could speak on behalf of all the pigs living on the earth right now – and all those that have disappeared already – what would s/he say? From the perspective of animals, the welfare state has been a catastrophe, because during the last 70 years, the increased industrial production (made legal through various So-

cial Democratic and neo-liberal governments) has created terrible (and short) lives for them. Animals are living in horrendous conditions as our food slaves, denied their inherent needs and ability to express themselves.¹¹³ We humans are not the only sentient beings with the ability to enjoy the rays of the sun. From a speculative viewpoint, it is obvious that there are all kinds of lives to be lived, not only human lives, and animals deserve better than what we have imposed on them. Animals also have interests. Their lives matter to them. Our might as human beings is not our right. A community of contribution is a community that includes the life of non-human animals by aiming towards ending the tyranny that is imposed upon them. For me, the climate crisis is basically a crisis in relation to animals – farmed and those living in the wild – and only by creating a new relation of respect towards animals can we solve the climate crisis: *By transforming farmed land into wildlife forest, we can reverse the sixth mass extinction and capture the carbon we have emitted, thus stopping the rising global temperatures.*

1.3.3.

Reading *Humankind* (2017) by Timothy Morton (b. 1968) has confirmed my belief in the necessity to include non-human nature in the redemptive figure of the community. Morton, who holds a strong position within ecological thinking (which takes place on the grounds of object-oriented ontology), wants human beings to be *kind* towards other living beings. His book is a call for ‘solidarity with nonhuman people’. And solidarity here means: ‘*human psychic, social and philosophical being resisting the severing*,’¹¹⁴ where the ‘severing’ is another name for the great divide between humans and animals powering speciesism as a belief system. I completely agree with Morton that we must be kind to non-human creatures and show solidarity with all the animals trapped within the industrial-agricultural-food complex. In his *Being Ecological* (2018), he evokes a ‘spectral hospitality’ to those to whom one could not imagine being hospitable, thereby opening up for the inclusion of the ‘strange stranger’ in our world. That we exist on the same evolutionary continuum as other beings (*‘If you go back far enough, you’ll find that one of your very, very distant grandmothers was a fish’*¹¹⁵) is the first premise upon which a community of contribution is based as a theory. But even though Morton has an impressive way of thinking beyond the correlational paradigm of post-Kantian philosophy (taking into consideration all forms of life – what he calls the ‘symbiotic real’ – extending from bacteria in the intestines to hyperobjects), he does not correlate the impact of the Western welfare self upon nature; nor does he establish the political framework for ‘kindness’ as an ethos. He evokes communism (because it is based on the principle of solidarity), but without understanding communism as a force of the community based on an excluding essence (universal equality). This is where my community of contribution differs: the community of contribution is situated within the sustainable state. There is a macro-perspective from which to see the community of contribution that I believe grants it a wider possibility of realisation. In other words: a social movement towards a community of contribution could be actualised if people voted for the political framework that would support it and in very simple steps learned to live by it. Morton’s work is impressive in invoking the symbiotic real as a return to

a mode that existed before the Agricultural Revolution (which instigated the severing or the Great Divide), but as humans living in 2020, we have to acknowledge our moral obligations as the first ground upon which a change must take place. Non-human nature can flourish again if we simply want it enough as individuals and as a society living through the moral ethos of a community of contribution.

1.3.4.

I am by no means the first who has attempted to take into consideration the interest, emotions and suffering of animals and place them within a philosophical discourse. The history of thinking about the life of an animal is rich and varied – from Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who placed the question of suffering as the central concern to be discussed, to Charles Darwin, who proposed that animals also had feelings, to Peter Singer, who wrote *Animal Liberation* (1975), sparking a movement that campaigned for animal welfare and against the suffering of farmed animals. From the feminist strand of philosophy, Haraway is perhaps the philosopher who has most strongly advocated for a new kinship with animals (what she calls ‘the Chthulucene’). But, while we can detect a passionate sensitivity towards animals among some thinkers of the last 200 years, it is with great sadness that we have to acknowledge the devastating attitude of canonical philosophers to animals. From the metaphysical system of Aristotle (384-322BC), who placed humans on top of the scale of creation, to the ideas of Descartes, who saw animals as mere automata, to Kant, Hegel and Heidegger (1889-1976), we find the view that animals are inferior, have no feelings, no ability to think, are ‘worldless’ and exist for the pure benefit of humans.¹¹⁶ By including non-human nature *within* the community as something that belongs to it (and not subjected to the exploitation and violence of humans) I am thus attempting to break the spell of philosophy that has ignored it. A community of contribution is therefore also a kind of *atonement* for the cruelties towards animals authorised by historical philosophy. Every thought on behalf of animals is an attempt to make good what canonical philosophy has wronged.

1.3.5.

The community of contribution has become a *topical event*¹¹⁷ in my life, written out of an inner necessity to address the fundamental problem of the world I live in: the crisis between humans and non-human nature. It is a response to the lack of fairness in how we treat sentient beings through the industrial-agricultural-food complex that is both subjecting billions of animals to a life of suffering and driving the sixth mass extinction through its use of land for crops. A community of contribution can be seen as ‘due care’ in order to change the direction in which we are moving as a global anthropogenic force, because it takes into consideration not only humans, but also the well-being of all living creatures of the earth. It is a model for a new systemic organisation of our world that I hope can serve as a source of inspiration. It represents a new telos for the horizon of human existence, a new utopia for the 21st century. It is a necessary fiction (an imagined community based on generosity as its ontological mode

of being) for our collective existence here on this earth. I hope it can inspire a new relationship to nature, a new sense of being socio-ecological.¹¹⁸

1.3.5.1.

A community of contribution is a constructed concept. The function of such a concept, according to Deleuze and Guattari, from whom I have taken my lead regarding philosophical activism, is to promise a future event. '*The concept is the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come.*'¹¹⁹ A community of contribution arises as a saturated event on the horizon, its phenomenological potential exceeding what is possible to grasp on a purely cognitive level. It is a model of a way of living with greater respect for animals (farmed and wild) and nature in all its dimensions. It is an ideal, something to strive towards, for all humans to participate in, since it is a something that every individual can adopt in those ways that are possible for him or her. It colours the future as the dawn makes the world visible again. It is a new way of being, full of promise, and so much more just and peaceful than our present treatment of nature.

2.
PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS

2.1. LEARNING HOW TO GIVE

*'If one gives oneself, it is because one "owes" oneself – one's person and one's goods – to others.'*¹²⁰
(Marcel Mauss)

2.1.1.

We must learn to give ourselves differently to the world. This different self-manifestation is our contribution to the community. A new way of giving ourselves differently to the world is what allows the community of contribution to arise as a moral horizon for our life and death on this singular planet. It is a generous giving that is fundamentally different from the current mode of existing as a self within a Western welfare state. On all levels of human manifestation, this giving must change – from the individual to the business to the state. It must be learnt in a similar way to how we acquire a new skill, become a master of a craft or simply learn something about the world, because giving myself differently to the world entails new modes of doing, seeing and perceiving things. It is a new being-ability. Thus a community of contribution is also an individual and collective re-schooling of the private and public realm. A community of contribution entails a new pedagogy: *learning how to give*.

2.1.2.

How can we learn to give ourselves to the world in such a generous way that we become participants in a community of contribution? We must look into the act of giving, what it means to receive a gift, and how a reversible bond arises between s/he who gives and s/he who receives. We must look at the different aspects of the gift, the giver and the receiver¹²¹ if

we are to understand the social structures of exchange. It was anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) who in *Essai sur le don* (1925) first analysed and interpreted the formal structures of the gift within archaic societies and how the mode of transaction surrounding the gift extended into the modern world. For Mauss, the gift took on a meaning within a 'system of total services' based on reciprocity between the giver and the receiver in terms of honour and the power of generosity.¹²² In archaic societies, the gift established bonds between collective groups (not between individuals) and thereby was a way of creating alliances and preserving the friendly state of peace between tribes. In certain instances among native North American, this act of gift-giving became agonistic in the form of the potlatch – an excess of giving to the point of giving everything away. For Mauss, the act of giving was based on generosity, which was seen as the pathway to goodness and happiness, because it established a bond of '*mutual respect and reciprocating generosity*.'¹²³ In what and how I give, I display my respect to whom I give, and in return, the receiver gives me gifts. Generosity begets generosity. Yet giving does not come naturally, according to Mauss. It entails education: it has to be taught as a virtue in an Aristotelian¹²⁴ manner (not as an action limited to specific occasions, but as a force that we allow to permeate our whole being). The same is true of a community of contribution – the act of contribution through which we adhere to the community. We have to practice as we would in acquiring a skill, learning to give ourselves differently to the world.

2.1.2.1.

The first step in learning how to give ourselves differently is to acknowledge that we have received life as a gift. We have been given life and we live from the conditions for life that are immanent to the natural world: the correct amount of atmospheric oxygen to breathe, clean water to drink, nourishment for our bodies and protection from the weather. This view, that life is fundamentally 'living from' the natural world we find in the major work *Totalité et infini* (1961) by Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), who states that life in its primary condition is enjoyment of the simple fact of being alive, our awareness of being able to live life through our bodies.¹²⁵ All this pre-conditions the self, and is anterior to any intellectual division between a subject and an object. I see these conditions for life as a gift from life itself. It is a gift from life that we have received along with millions of other species. We are from the beginning immersed in a structure of giving to and receiving from something that is larger than ourselves. We are immersed in life as finite beings, living in the time between our birth and our ultimate unknown date of death.

2.1.2.2.

Let us try to analyse the act of giving from a purely formal perspective. An act of giving is both directional and reversible. The giver presents a gift to the receiver. A gift is given with the intention that the gift will be received. If it is accepted by the receiver, the gift establishes a bond of obligation between the giver and the receiver. The receiver has been given something, and this giving shifts the relation between the giver and the receiver. The balance of

neutrality, of non-relation, has been disturbed, because something that once belonged to the giver now belongs to the receiver. The giver gives something away and thereby enlarges the receiver with the gift. This increase in the being of the receiver is due to the giving, and explains why to receive a gift means accepting the obligation inherent in the gift: an obligation to return this enlargement of being. The receiver cannot give exactly the same gift back, but must give something else, something of the receiver's being that also will enlarge the giver. These movements of giving, enlargements of being through the gift and the obligation to give something back, are purely formal aspects of the structure of gift-giving.

2.1.2.3.

Thus rejecting the gift is a double avoidance: avoiding the social aspects of mutual obligation embedded in the act of giving, and avoiding the actual object of the gift, which is why rejecting a gift happens so seldom. Not to be part of a structure of gift-giving is a reduction of our being. Gift-giving enlarges our being, because having strong social relations based on giving and receiving creates and confirms alliances and displays respect. Giving and receiving are also acts of joy and affection: through the gift, emotions are displayed and made public, the meaning and value of personal relationships are stated and acknowledged. Generally, receiving a gift releases positive emotions within me. The size and value of the gift displays the giver's generosity – the extent to which the giver is prepared to dispossess himself in order to enlarge the receiver. Gift-giving and gift-receiving are therefore central to the social coherence of groups and the dynamics that exist between different formations of power. Gift-giving confirms alliances and social status, but is also an act of affection.

2.1.3.

Let us investigate further the dimensions of *life as a gift*, because it is central to the argument presented. From a speculative point of view, we can regard 'life' as something that has the power to give. We can say: I have been given a life *from* life. If I see my own life as a gift *from* life (and not just a gift from my parents or the society that supported and protected me) I am entangled in a first obligation towards *life* – an obligation that is beyond the systemic worlds in which I currently exist, an obligation to the fact of being alive. I am able to live at all because from life come the conditions to live a life: my body is a functional biological entity that is made for this world, there is the correct amount of oxygen for me to breathe, I can digest food, there is clean water etc. From this originary givenness (that human life became possible through evolution and the conditions for life produced by the biosphere) I have been given life. My life is there to be lived, because a gift was given to me *by* life. Thus I owe my life to life, and I must return this gift by giving life to life. I am *obliged to give life*. I received the gift, life, and now I must return this gift, by giving life back to life. Or in the words of Michel Serres (1930-2019): '*It would be an injustice, a disequilibrium, for us to receive this given free, without ever rendering anything in return.*' Thus I must, in an act of generosity, give to life something that enlarges life, that affirms the reciprocity of this originary givenness. What does this mean, to

give life? It means first of all, *to refrain from the unnecessary destruction or limitation of life*. I give life by not killing life.

2.1.3.1.

The biologist and anthropologist will object to this analysis, since predation of life is immanent to many forms of non-human nature. A plurality of eco-systems depend on animals eating animals, so to follow this logic would be to go against the fundamental principles of evolution itself. It is absolutely true that humans have been dependent on eating other animals for millions of years, and our closest relatives, the chimpanzees and bonobos, also kill animals in order to eat their meat. The first premise for a community of contribution is evolutionary continuity. Yet here I will evoke the second premise, namely that the industrial-agricultural-food complex is destroying a plurality of eco-systems and subjecting billions of sentient beings to a short but horrendous life, ending in a violent death (far away from their evolutionary needs, natural habitats and temporal possibilities). The third premise is that we are moral agents, and thus have the freedom to refrain from the killing of life for our metabolism. To take the life of non-human nature might be part of our ancestral past, but it does not authorise future actions. The argument is also incommensurable with environmental impact and technological means: approximately 7 million humans living as hunter-gatherers before the Agricultural Revolution with spears and axes versus 7.8 billion people today feeding themselves through the annual industrialised killing of approximately 70 billion farmed animals.¹²⁶

2.1.3.2.

Then the doctor will say, we need meat for its nutrients. It contains the protein, minerals, vitamins and fatty acids we need in order for our bodies to function. But, by taking specific supplements, it is possible to maintain healthy levels of nutrients. Based on scientific knowledge,¹²⁷ a plant-based diet is possible, so we can live well without killing animals. It is not easy (but could be more healthy, since high consumption of an animal-based diet can lead to cancer, diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular illnesses), yet it can be learned (when it is part of a new pedagogy). It is thus necessary to re-educate the public. Just as I have been educated to prepare meals with meat as the main ingredient, I can be educated to eat a plant-based diet. To help the general population, the sustainable state should provide food and nutrients as supplements that can compensate any deficiency that might occur. In other words, the nutrients in animals needed for our nervous systems and central organs can be obtained through a varied diet, but a diet that needs new kinds of foods and an education in order to cook differently. Right now, the knowledge and the food products are there, but are not supported by the multitude. It is the responsibility of the sustainable state to re-school its citizens and support the infrastructure that allows for a plant-based diet. There is a way of living a life as a human that does not involve the unnecessary killing of life for our own sustained existence. To not take a life for the sake of one's own life is an act of generosity.

2.1.3.3.

Then the cultural historian, the religious person or the populist politician will say that eating meat is part of traditions, rituals and national identities. How can all those people who affirm their identities by participating in these communities express their sense of belonging and of commemorating past events when they are no longer allowed to eat meat? To eat meat creates a specific bodily experience important to these communities. Here, I will counter that there are many substitutes, such as plant-based products that imitate the structure and taste of meat. Secondly, all these communities – whether based on culture, religion or nationality – are historical, thus subject to the force of time. They too, have emerged and evolved, and have thereby been subject to change and development. No identity is static over time. The same holds for the bodily experience through consuming meat. Today, in a Western world, it is not necessary. A new experience of eating plant-based food will arise and over time replace the craving for meat.

2.1.4.

To sum up how giving can be taught: giving is taught by observing the fundamental act of being given life from life. If I begin to analyse, grasp and understand my dependency on nature, and that I have been given a singular life on this singular planet, then I will also learn from this. Nature itself is an overflowing of life, a multiplicity of life forms, of modalities that can co-exist – the human species being just one of millions receiving the gift of life from the generosity of nature. Wherever we look, there is generosity in nature and there is generosity in humans. We are given and we give ourselves to the world. Without humans absorbing and transmitting generosity, there can be no community of contribution, since it is the first principle behind the community, powering the ethos of the participant. *I am generous, therefore I am*. Thus, in order for a community of contribution to become real in an ontic¹²⁸ space (as that which manifests itself as a phenomenon through our relations to being) generosity has to become the fundamental force in our ontological relation to being. Simply put: *we have to become generous in the way we exist in the world*. Generosity has to permeate our fundamental relationship to our body (our metabolism), our social world (our consumption of objects) and our temporality (how we engage with deep-time).

2.1.4.1.

My first and primary gift to the community of contribution is to give myself differently to the world – not in one singular act of giving, but in the transformation of my being, in the manifestation of my self-giveness. It is not just a question of paying ‘extra tax’ one year, but of fundamentally altering the mode of how I give myself as a phenomenon to the world. This means to break away from the mode of existing embedded in a Western welfare self and to refrain from consuming the animal-based products of the industrial-agricultural-food complex. This giving myself differently is an act of withdrawal, a conscious reduction of the modes through which I access the real through the dimensions of the body, the social and

time.¹²⁹ Thus, to withdraw as a Western welfare self is to stand back from a certain way of using and destroying non-human nature and to push for a new content of the food products needed for our existence.

2.1.4.2.

'*So much reduction, so much givenness*'¹³⁰ (Marion). The function of the phenomenological reduction (the epoché) is to achieve the given – that which manifests itself as a phenomenon. Through the reduction, I can intuit the given in its pure givenness. Or, at least, this is the ambition: to access the real by bracketing (the reduction) the daily assumptions of how the world manifests itself as a phenomenological reality. The reduction aims to reveal the underlying conditions for the world to appear, to uncover the transcendental consciousness that upholds the structure of reality. The principle of reduction is to make the given visible, to allow it to appear as a phenomenon that shows-itself-in-itself. By reducing (cutting away) my preconceptions of what the given is or should be, I can access the given as it manifests itself upon me as a consciousness (crashing into me like an object smashing a screen). But could we transform this principle into a principle for the community of contribution? Then it would be: '*So much givenness through reduction.*' Reduction here refers to the modes of withdrawal whereby the participant in the community of contribution helps achieve the re-emergence of nature. The more we withdraw our impact, desires, demands and modes of consumption, the more nature will flourish, return and re-wild itself. Put differently: nature will give itself differently if we reduce our impact upon it.

2.1.5.

The community of contribution is based upon our potential to become generous regarding our self-manifestation as consuming Western welfare selves. Yet once this transformation has taken place (the self generously giving itself differently), this generosity opens up a new space. Being traversed by this generosity (as in the refusal to participate in the externalised violence against non-human nature) I begin to see the world as something existing on its own terms (not just as means to human ends). This generosity redirects my attention and compassion towards non-human nature. It wants the non-human other to manifest itself, to exist on its own terms. My generosity becomes the dispossession of myself. This means: let the non-human other become an existence in itself, and not a useful object for my rationality.

2.1.5.1.

To learn how to give ourselves differently is to activate all the aspects of generosity that surround and permeate us: from life as gift to the ability to give oneself differently. Generosity is the central ontological principle powering the community of contribution, and the question is what happens when we elevate generosity to a political level. As mentioned previously, one of the political lessons of the 20th century was this: that any notion (race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, universal equality) grounding the community elevated to an essence leads

to a totalitarian world. Only a concept of the community based on generosity can avoid the pitfalls of both sides of the totalitarian spectrum, because generosity enlarges the space of existence for both the giver and the receiver. Generosity promises to include more than the giver imagines beforehand; it floods the space of visibility with the unexpected and unknown, and it feeds back to those who give as a new reality to be perceived. Generosity as a modality blurs the limits of the community; it extends and expands the limits to include that which is beyond the human community in the modern world because those who give become larger through the world they create with their gifts. But generosity must not only flow through the individual, but also through the state institutions ordering the systemic realities of our common world. The political structure enforcing, supporting and protecting the community of contribution is thus the sustainable state, a state formation based on generosity. Generosity is the ontological principle that can bring about the transformation of the welfare state into a new way of being a state – where it is no longer at war with nature – a generous state giving itself to nature in a way that allows nature to re-flourish. It is a state where the reciprocity of the gift, of what nature gives back, returns nature to its wild state and where its loss of biodiversity is brought to a halt. The sixth mass extinction is an unfolding tragedy, but through our generosity we might be able to reduce the scale of the destruction of species.

2.1.6.

After considering the more speculative aspects of the gift, I will now investigate the *practical* questions of what it actually means to give oneself differently to the world, from the individual level to the sustainable state. This giving entails a total transformation of the ‘contents’ through which we live out our relations to being.¹³¹

2.2. STEPS TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY OF CONTRIBUTION

‘In my manner of consuming and of inhabiting the earth, I reveal who I am and the place that I accord to other living beings, human and non-human.’¹³²

(Corine Pelluchon)

2.2.

Participating in a community of contribution – allowing it to become a force in one’s own life – can be seen as a gradual process with many steps of action, levels of participation and circles of inclusion. It is a movement, an imaginary focus, a way of being in the world. It is a different kind of self-manifestation. A community of contribution is not a fixed number of people who belong to a culture, tribe, religion, nation or territory – it is an ethos for living life in times of the impending climate crisis. As stated, it is based on an ethics for the Anthropocene. First and foremost, it is the attempt to undo the effects of capitalism and the

industrial-agricultural-food complex, which together with fossil fuels have created a massive luxury trap in which we, as Western welfare selves, are ensnared. In the following I will outline the various *actions* and *self-transformations* that are possible from within the fabric of everyday life.¹³³ Many of them are simple choices that are possible as *acts of negation*: of not-doing things as an individual.¹³⁴ They are actions of resistance in the form of *boycotting*. Later on, in section 2.3 on the sustainable state, I will discuss the systemic changes that are just as necessary for the realisation of the community of contribution. I call it 'steps' as in walking up a mountain where the top is invisible behind a cloud. We are all somewhere in a process of transformation, attempting to act from within our own margins of action. We all walk with different distances between our steps, so we will not arrive at the same point simultaneously. To participate in a community of contribution is to endure these differences that emerge between people attempting to change themselves. The steps I am proposing are beginnings, signalling to oneself and to others that a change has taken place, a reflexive awareness is happening, obligating the self to do things differently. To experiment with one's transformation for a day is possible, but to remain within a new sphere of action is much more challenging. There is social coercion built into our ways of eating, clothing and transporting ourselves within consumer society and to question these patterns is to leave behind a 'safe' way of living with others. To participate in the community of contribution demands a rupture with what has until now been a habitual mode of existing and consuming, and for many, it will be accompanied by feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. But, as Corine Pelluchon rightly observes, it is in how I consume and choose to exist in the world (as a self manifesting itself) that I reveal what I am and '*the place I accord to other living beings*.' Our bodies are political. To be part of the community of contribution is to internalise this awareness, allow it to expand and instil courage within oneself, so as to challenge the social norms that keep you within the normalised space of a Western welfare self. I have outlined various trajectories, which will be well known to the reader, since my proposals are neither original, new nor revolutionary. They are rather a synthesising of the already existing knowledge present in the critical discourse of climate activism.¹³⁵ The significant difference from existing theories is that all these actions that we as individuals can carry out are inscribed in a positive, involving narrative of the community as a generous space of co-existence between humans and non-humans. A community of contribution aligns every action an individual takes in the right direction with a framework, a meaning, that acts as a catalyst for further actions. It unites and brings together disparate people, because it is a speculative viewpoint from which to see a solution to the crisis between humans and non-human nature.

2.2.1. STOP EATING FARMED ANIMALS

*'In choosing to kill or buy body parts, mammary secretions, and eggs from other animals, we support the exploitation and slaughter of living, breathing, sentient beings, who would prefer to live out their natural lives peacefully in their own communities.'*¹³⁶

(Lisa Kemmerer)

*'To speak of eating meat is to face the death of the animal that was raised for its flesh, and the killing of which was planned from its birth. To eat meat is to accept that we are killing a being whose life is as important for it as our own is for us. It is to know that the animal is afraid when we lead it to the slaughterhouse, that the smell of the blood of fellow members of its species tells it that something terrible is taking place, that it knows anguish, and that, to the end, it resists, because it wants to live and because the impossibility of fleeing causes it to panic.'*¹³⁷

(Corine Pelluchon)

2.2.1.1.

From one perspective, there are basically three categories of non-human vertebrates: domesticated, liminal and those living in the wild. Today, on a planetary level the first group outnumbers the third by billions, and the second are those that thrive in our Anthropocene age (rats, mice, crows, pigeons etc.) which for now I will not take into consideration. My main focus here will be the lives and deaths of those we have under our dominion. The distribution in quantity between the first and third group has not always been this way, but after the Industrial Revolution these numbers began to change dramatically towards the current condition, with the third group made up of approximately 1.4 billion cattle, 1.9 billion sheep and goats, 980 million pigs and 19.6 billion chickens¹³⁸ – thus accounting for 64% of all land-living vertebrates in terms of body bio-mass. The effects of this demand for meat are devastating for the animals themselves and the environment. First, I will consider the lives of the animals, and thereafter the negative effects upon nature of raising livestock.

2.2.1.2.

Just because cows, pigs, sheep and chickens are reared in billions, does not mean that they, as industrialised animals, have no mental experiences. Following the premise of evolutionary continuity, we must acknowledge that they too have feelings, that they can sense their situation, that they are aware that their offspring are taken away from them, that they are unable to fulfil their innate drives towards playing, socially relating and expressing their feelings of kinship and caring.¹³⁹ Their lives are important to them, as Corine Pelluchon states, echoing animal-rights activist Tom Regan. To understand this is an act of empathy and feeling of pity, situating oneself in the condition of an animal existing inside the factory farms of industrialised food production. As I see it, the life of industrial animal live stock is 'inanimal' (as

congruent to ‘inhuman’). They too feel pain, sorrow, angst, stress – in short, emotional distress, by being objectified as human food slaves: speed-fed, inseminated, removed from their offspring, living in overcrowded conditions and when reaching ‘production limit’, slaughtered.¹⁴⁰ As sentient beings they are subjected to living conditions that are far away from their natural evolutionary *Umwelt*. Their life is in many ways miserable and painful, and ends in a premature death.

2.2.1.3.

The life and death of the billions of sentient beings inside the industrial-agricultural-food complex has been called an ‘Eternal Treblinka’. This formulation, ascribed to author Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902-1991), was used by Charles Patterson (b. 1935) as the title of his book of 2002 that maps the many origins of the Nazi Final Solution – from the idea of the master race, to anti-Semitism, eugenics and use of demeaning language. An overlooked but important inspiration for the Nazis was the infrastructure and rationality of Henry Ford’s automobile factories, with their division of labour and use of the conveyor belt to speed up production. Ford himself was inspired in instigating these procedures by visits to Chicago slaughterhouses. Both ways of organising the production – either of meat or cars – served as inspiration for the Nazis to organise the infrastructure of their death camps. These efficient factories, systematised through the division of labour and meeting daily quotas, reveal the inherent insensitivity of humans towards other sentient beings once they become numbers behind officials goals and statistics. Patterson provocatively writes: ‘*The road to Auschwitz begins at the slaughterhouse.*’¹⁴¹

2.2.1.3.1.

Today’s industrial farming and slaughtering of sentient beings is not only an ‘eternal Treblinka’, but also the manifestation of an inversed logic: instead of being exterminated as a species, factory-farmed animals are infinitely multiplied; instead of being starved, they are overfed; instead of dying from their illnesses, they are over-medicated; instead of being cremated, every bit of them is used; instead of being hidden away, the production is visible: animal factories are all over the landscape and their meat is in every supermarket. Their final destiny is the slaughterhouse, but the production of the meat and milk, the skin and bones, is the purpose of their existence, a purpose that has made them invisible as sentient individual beings. They are seen as ‘production units’ in the sphere of human interest, cross-bred and selected for specific traits in order to maximise revenue. Subjected to the logic of rational production, their non-representational subjectivity disappears. They are only useful insofar as they serve the purposes we have defined and thereby are denied any rights to live a life of their own. Their silent disappearance into a food system was developed throughout the 20th century and is now all-pervasive. This system legitimises itself through the demand of the consumer – a meat-eater whose belly is the tomb of a being with a face and sense of being alive. Through the endless cruelty and lack of respect for other sentient beings manifested in factory farming, we

uphold a violent way of being in the world. Meat consumption is only possible through the production of death. We owe all factory farmed animals our deepest apologies.

2.2.1.3.2.

And just as there is green-washing there is ‘meat-washing’. Producers and consumers try to cover up the violence inherent to the factory farming of animals by calling it a ‘domestic contract’ or a ‘mode of cooperation’. They argue that the animal only lives because of humans, is protected and fed, and in return must deliver its milk, eggs, meat, skin or bones. But the animal never asked to be born into a life of industrial farming and never agreed to a contract. A contract presupposes the consent of both parties, and the possibility of being relieved from it. As Corine Pelluchon (b. 1967) rightly observes: ‘*The animals cannot break the contract, since domestication is irreversible.*’¹⁴² All farmed animals are led to the slaughterhouse long before they would naturally die, which makes it irrelevant to speak of a contract, which must involve symmetry, equality and reciprocity to be fair and justified. It is equally nonsensical to speak of ‘cooperation’, because obviously the animal has no means of escape or freedom of choice to live in the wild. To speak of cooperation when the animal is narrowly confined, unable to play freely, has its offspring removed against its will (and if they are male they are killed shortly after being born because they are deemed useless), and, when its productivity declines, is itself slaughtered, is ‘meat-washing’ at its worst. It is simply ignorance of evolutionary continuity regarding basic mammalian physiological and psychological needs. ‘Meat-washing’ is speciesism in action.

2.2.1.4.

According to the moral ethos of the community of contribution, it is no longer justified to subject animals to this kind of life inside the industrial-agricultural-food complex. The primary reason is obvious: that the animal being mutilated is also part of the community. By abstaining from eating meat, I am manifesting my respect for that ‘invisible’ member of the community that exists inside a factory farm somewhere in the world right now. In other words, the first step towards a community of contribution is simply *to stop eating farmed animals*. By not eating factory-farmed meat, you will not support the industry that gains economic revenue from raising, feeding and killing animals. To not eat meat means to become a vegetarian: the first step on the path towards participating in the community of contribution. Yet the ultimate aim is to live on a plant-based diet, because of the violence exerted upon the cow and the chicken to obtain milk and eggs.¹⁴³ What we eat is a moral act, because it testifies to our self-awareness of how our bodily metabolism depends on nature. Our eating makes our bodies political.

2.2.1.5.

To become vegetarian – and ultimately shift to a plant-based diet – out of respect for the life of an animal is perhaps the most important step, yet what should also be taken into

account is the externalities of animal food production: the impact on the environment. First of all, the faeces and urine of livestock pollute the groundwater, the fresh-water reservoirs and the oceans. Today, a large amount of ocean water lacks oxygen due to the high concentration of nitrates and phosphates from agriculture, and therefore become 'dead zones'. Secondly, livestock uses enormous amounts of fresh water, thereby depleting natural resources. Thirdly, livestock consumes huge amounts of crops that take up land, which is cultivated with pesticides and fertilisers (which also pollutes the fresh water basins and oceans, spurring the production of algae and leading to oxygen depletion). To produce 1 kg of beef, you need 15,445 litres of water,¹⁴⁴ 6.5 kg of crops, 330 m² of land and 16.4 kg of carbon dioxide.¹⁴⁵ To feed all these billions of animals, fertile land is needed, both for grazing and for the production of soya for the livestock in the US, China and Europe. This demand for soya is driving the deforestation of the Amazon in South America, both creating zones of monocultural land where once primal forests reigned, but also producing vast areas of 'desert-like' fields in the Western world. Approximately 80% of crops produced are used for feeding animals. We are now in the perverse situation where a handful of species are bred at the expense of millions going extinct. By abstaining from meat-consumption, this land and water could be freed up for wildlife habitats and nature parks instead of being 'dead' monocultural landscapes. Fourthly, eating meat is seen as a status symbol for the emergent middle class in Asia, Africa and South America. If you stop eating meat, you will no longer support the promotion of this status symbol.¹⁴⁶

2.2.1.5.1.

It is said that the mother of all life on the planet is the oceans, and to many, they represent a vast and unlimited food resource: fish in all their manifold manifestations. Does a community of contribution also include fish – farmed or caught in the wild? I think it does. First of all, just because they cannot scream does not mean that fish are insensitive to pain. They are sentient beings with a capacity to suffer fear and distress, as well as a sense of well-being, and thus also natural members of the community of contribution. And, since overfishing, destruction of sea beds by trawls, and side-catching through the use of huge nets are destroying and depleting the oceans, eating fish is just as problematic as eating meat from farmed animals.¹⁴⁷

2.2.1.6.

What about animals caught and killed in the wild by hunters or as wild game?¹⁴⁸ Here, the animal has at least lived a life according to its evolutionary needs and its own desires. And, being in the wild, it is subject to its position in the food chain of that specific habitat. What is the difference if it is killed by a wolf or a human? Natural predation takes out the sick and the elderly and thereby helps keep the healthy alive. Through evolution, a system of checks and balances emerges, allowing the different species to adapt and to create individual niches for themselves. But what about overpopulation of deer? Should they not be culled by hunting? It is true that certain species are no longer being kept in balance by their natural predators (wolves and bears) and therefore their numbers increase until diseases cull them. Here, I

believe in the re-wilding of the habitat (putting wolves back into nature to limit the deer) or in contraception. To resort to our ancestral past as hunter-gatherers as a naturalisation of the sport of hunting is to conceal the uneven relation between the hunting equipment of our forefathers and modern firearms. An animal in the wild is also subject to a life and is part of its own community in which it would prefer to live, instead of being killed.

2.2.1.7.

The destruction of the Amazon is the main driver of the sixth mass extinction unfolding right now. Adding to this catastrophe is the disappearance of the rainforest in Indonesia to make way for monocultural palm-oil plantations. A closer look at the ingredients of many sweets, cookies, cakes and ice creams that nourish and give pleasure to Western welfare selves, especially in their early years, reveals the use of palm oil. It is what gives the food its juicy fluidity. The insatiable demand for palm oil for food (and also bio-fuel) is destroying vital habitats for some of the world's most vulnerable and unique species found in the Indonesian rainforest. Thousands of orangutans and other primates have disappeared. It is perhaps not as obvious as soya-bean production, but producing palm oil for the industrial-agricultural-food complex is just as harmful and should be avoided. It does not fall under the category of vegan, and yet many vegan products contain palm oil, so paying attention to the small print on packaging is vital.

2.2.1.8.

To sum up, the first step in participating in a community of contribution is to stop eating farmed animals – out of respect for the animal (and its right to live) and as a member of the community. Through a plant-based diet, you as a consumer are refusing to participate in a system that is causing pain, suffering and premature death to farmed animals. From an environmental perspective, vegetables and crops only for humans demand much less space to grow, thus freeing up enormous amounts of land for wildlife parks, and a massive reduction in polluting activities.¹⁴⁹ If the whole world lived on a plant-based diet, wild forests could grow back and the pressure on soya bean production in the Amazon would disappear. These aspects are the *focus imaginarius* of a plant-based diet, because there is no direct causal connection between changing one's diet today and ending the exploitation and killing of animals inside the global industrial-agricultural-food complex, nor transforming agricultural land back to forests. In Denmark alone, approximately 80% of agricultural products are exported, so even if Danes were to stop eating them, they would just be sold to other European or Asian markets. To achieve a real change is a question of scale, of reaching a tipping point where enough consumers will refrain from buying the products, and will vote for politicians to enforce systemic change. Every journey towards a new political goal begins with the decision to make a first step that will inspire others. Living on a plant-based diet will hopefully one day become the new normal. A community of contribution is the narrative that inscribes all these changes into a synthesising structure giving meaning to the necessary transformation of how we nourish ourselves.

2.2.2. MINIMISE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

*'Right now my freedom is limited by your unlimited freedom to fly and pollute. That is deeply unfair.'*¹⁵⁰
(August Lund)

2.2.2.1.

Fossil fuels have effectuated a specifically Western way of becoming modern. Nearly all humans today are forced to live in a world influenced by this prime mover. The effect of globalisation – the free movement of humans, objects and information around the globe – mirrors the fundamental quality of fossil fuels as an energy resource: a dislocation in both time and space. But this freedom of mobility comes at a price. Burning fossil fuels leads to emissions of carbon dioxide that have accumulated over the past two centuries and are now causing rising global temperatures. The wildfires that consumed large parts of forests in Australia and California during 2019 and 2020 are the manifestation of what will become an uninhabitable earth. We have to stop extracting and burning fossil fuels as quickly as possible,¹⁵¹ and it is the sustainable state that carries the greatest power and responsibility to curb and bring carbon emissions to a halt. The fastest and safest way is to introduce a *carbon tax* on all extraction and emissions processes, with the aim of reducing unnecessary activities involving fossil fuels.¹⁵² But as private citizens, we also hold responsibility and can – as the next step on the path towards a community of contribution – refrain from the use of fossil fuels when possible, and consider the visible and invisible carbon footprints of our lifestyles. How can we minimise our carbon footprint?

2.2.2.2.

The first step is to refrain from all unnecessary flights. For many, flying to warmer locations seems the natural thing to do, without realising it is a possibility that emerged only within the framework of the welfare state. Mass tourism based on chartered aeroplanes was made possible by the commercialisation of the jet engine (invented by Germans during WWII) in the 1960s. It is seen as an 'escape' from the grey everyday of white-collar workers. But it is not a necessity to fly to one's destination, and nor is it a human right. Not to fly can be seen as a major limitation to our freedom, but instead of thinking of it as a hindrance, it can be viewed as an opportunity: *to explore the local*. For companies, flying can be integral to their activities, but there are now new technological tools allowing for video conferences, thus diminishing the need to meet in person. The next step is to refrain where possible from driving a car: use public transport instead, or car-share when commuting. Better still is to ride a bike or walk.

2.2.2.3.

Abstaining from fossil fuels in transportation is also a way of returning to a *temporality* of the body: producing the distance with your own body. In this *slowness*, a different sense of

space and time emerges that allows for the registering of details, experiencing the weather, the scenery and having a possible encounter with wild animals. Whether I am in a car, a bus, a train or a plane, my body is protected from the wind and from other vehicles by a shield. This shield is a kind of skin that envelops me, protecting me from the friction of space to be traversed. Nature is thus something seen through a screen. By abstaining from fossil fuels as a prime mover, I am removing the shield that hides nature from me. If I walk or cycle, I move slowly, *interfacing* with nature: I can actually stop, watch a bird and listen to it. To this feature of moving slowly must be added the fact that I do not represent the same threat to the environment as I would when driving. Instead of being a weaponised object and a danger to other humans and animals, I am now part of nature. I am *with* nature instead of *above* nature.

2.2.2.3.1.

Slowness opens up a space of resonance between me and nature – but also fellow companions. Walking with another person is an act of emotional and intellectual co-productivity, where I am sharing my thoughts, but also silent in the act of listening. This is one of the positive side effects of a community of contribution: by bringing people together in a new way (making a conscious decision to walk instead of driving a car) the community enables humans to give themselves differently – to each other and to nature.

2.2.2.4.

Consider the carbon footprint of the energy that feeds into the preservation of your bodily metabolism: how locally and seasonally produced is what you eat? Just by reading the text on the plastic wrapping I can discern the carbon footprint and how this or that product is part of a larger destructive force (the Plantationocene). The globalisation of the food economy is a double movement: food products from all over the world are available to me, and every food product contains ingredients from all over the world. The main reason for this is that the international system of container shipping is so effective and cheap. Before this international trade system – the refrigerator container, plastic wrapping and chemicals ensuring freshness – people ate what was produced locally and seasonally. Today, all food is available all year round, independent of time and space (mirroring the nature of fossil fuels). There is a complexity to the carbon footprint of our food, however, because growing tomatoes locally in a heated greenhouse could use more energy than growing them in Spain and shipping them. But as a general guide, the food we consume should be grown locally in accordance with the seasons.

2.2.2.5.

Another category of objects necessary for human subsistence is *clothing*, which can come with hidden carbon and social footprints. Not only is it transported from far away, but also entails huge environmental costs in the use of water, chemicals and materials for its production. Added to this are the labour conditions for the people in developing countries who produce

it, at low wages and with health risks. Here, to participate in a community of contribution would be to abstain from buying new clothes and only wearing second-hand clothing. If buying anything, buy high quality that lasts and care for it well. If clothing is expensive, we tend to mend it more often and look after it better. With regard to footwear, refrain from buying anything made of leather, since it will continue the demand for the slaughtering of animals – vegan shoes are available. Altering our self-manifestation as visibilities to others is a new form of displaying status: I find joy and honour in knowing that the objects through which I become visible are made with a minimal impact on the environment and have not involved the unnecessary killing of an animal.

2.2.2.6.

To minimise my carbon footprint, I have to use renewable energy as much as possible. As a private citizen, I can install solar panels, ground-heating systems or buy energy from a wind farm. As a business, I should attempt to use conference calls instead of meeting in physical space, or reward those who travel by train instead of planes. All these activities should be supported by the sustainable state through taxation, but also economic incentives. If my energy source is based on fossil fuels through the oil heating of my house, then I could minimise my energy consumption by considering which rooms to heat. If my electricity comes from a coal-power station, then I should reduce my use of lighting and electric devices. As a participant in a community of contribution, I should aim to minimise my carbon footprint in all dimensions of my life.

2.2.3. AIM FOR SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

*'If you are fearful of the destruction of the environment, then learn to quit being an environmental parasite.'*¹⁵³

(Wendell Berry)

2.2.3.1.

Abstaining from animal products, buying locally produced food, and 'going slow' in your geographical movements are major steps towards participating in a community of contribution. Imagine the impact if all Westerners suddenly decided not to eat meat, cycled instead of driving, stopped booking cheap flights, refrained from buying new clothes or products 'Made in China'. A massive decline in carbon emissions would instantly be seen.¹⁵⁴ To achieve this demands a conscious effort to change our habits of sustaining our metabolism and ideas of self-imagery in society – simply put: to eat, move, dress and buy differently.

2.2.3.2.

These first steps are movements away from the end products of the industrial-agricultural-food complex and what fossil fuels have done to our modes of transportation and consumption. The next step in the movement towards a community of contribution is related to the complex phenomenon of *urbanisation*. Ever since the dawn of the Neolithic revolution, humans have gathered in settlements that have evolved into complex urban realms, from the first cities in Mesopotamia to the skyline of New York today. And all that we call civilisation has emerged in urban settlements, from legal institutions, to mathematics, poetry, architecture and ultimately democracy as the highest form of political ideology. Yet a common feature of urban life is its dependency upon the products – food and materials – from the agricultural system, allowing for the differentiated life of the city-dweller. Today, to become urban generally means to increase your carbon footprint, because your food and objects are transported from distances far away. Additionally, easy access to the airport, transportation hubs and the massive presence of advertisements that seduce you into a differentiated kind of self-imagery are likely to increase your carbon footprint.

2.2.3.2.1.

To become urban (90% of Danes lives in cities) is to become dislocated from nature (as the place from where you nourish yourself). Yet a way as an urban dweller to connect to the production of one's own food is 'urban gardening' or 'vertical farming', depending on the scale. Here, vegetables are grown in the city using the knowledge from permaculture, where nutrients, water and energy are recycled to the benefit of the plants. This form of plant-based production should be supported by the sustainable state, since it represents a step towards taking the environmental pressure off the countryside and a reduction in carbon emissions. These 'city farms' could be places where local people could work a few hours a week, growing vegetables for their own consumption, and where food could be shared collectively. They could contain workshop facilities to mend, build, redesign and refashion things and clothing. Urban gardening can happen on rooftops, on the street or in a backyard.

2.2.3.2.

A different opportunity to be urban, yet to support ecological farming, is to buy a share in a co-operative farm. Here, you support a collective or farming family to grow vegetables in a sustainable, unconventional way, and in return you can visit the farm and collect food for private use. Unlike the food appearing from the abstract generic space (from 'inside' the industrial-agricultural-food complex) of a supermarket, this way you will know where it comes from.¹⁵⁵

2.2.3.3.

But let us push the idea of self-sustainability in a new direction. If the regulative idea behind a community of contribution is to reduce our impact on nature to a minimum (to stop being

an ‘environmental parasite’), the next step would be to relocate oneself to either an already existing self-sustainable village or create one yourself.¹⁵⁶ A community of contribution is in its ideal social form built around self-sustainable villages whose inhabitants live primarily from a plant-based diet. Such villages would be organised collectively around producing the necessary plant-based diet for the sustenance of the community. It would be a community in which transport miles were reduced to an absolute minimum and where electric cars would be shared. Energy would be provided by solar power, a small windmill and ground-source heat pumps. Sewage would be cleaned by willow systems. Such a community of contribution organised around a small village would be ‘slow’. It would never be ‘rich’ in the sense of the accumulation of economic wealth. Yet it would be ‘rich’ socially and environmentally – ‘rich’ as in self-sustainable, ‘rich’ as in being in contact with nature, ‘rich’ as in freeing up space for the wildlife surrounding it. It would be a new way of communicating intensely with nature and those engaged in living with it. It would be a social world that is part of the solution, not part of the problem. Of course, it would not be possible for everyone, but it would be a positive alternative for some as a new way of inhabiting and living from the earth.

2.2.3.3.1.

Living in self-sustainable villages is not without problems and conflicts, and depending on the number of inhabitants and their being-abilities, the democratic set-up, the power structures, the available technology, the geographical conditions and the economic resources, the experience and success will vary greatly. As a systemic solution, these self-sustainable eco-villages should be supported by the sustainable state. This support could take the form of start-up grants, expert help and a citizen wage obtained by taxing carbon extraction and carbon emission. Those who abstain from fossil fuels should receive a monetary incentive and all the help needed to do so. I have no illusions regarding living in an eco-village: living *of* and *in* nature is hard work and it is not easy to try to do it alone. But a community of contribution could power those who attempt to do it. From working together comes mental energy, laughter and enjoyment, since the activities of the group are directed towards a shared goal. A community of contribution can become a social ecstasy if it happens together with other humans and with the companionship of non-human animals, the latter not being food slaves, but fellow creatures co-existing in the community of contribution.

2.2.4. WILDING THE WORLD

*'Single-crop farming does not take advantage of the principles by which nature works; it is agriculture as an engineer might conceive it to be. Nature has introduced great variety into the landscape, but man has displayed a passion for simplifying it.'*¹⁵⁷

(Rachel Carson)

*'Rewilding is restoration by letting go, allowing nature to take the driving seat.'*¹⁵⁸

(Isabella Tree)

2.2.4.1.

The ethos of the community of contribution aims for the re-emergence of non-human nature. This is the *focus imaginarius*, the regulative idea behind the community, and manifests itself first and foremost in a withdrawal from animal-based products and modes of transportation that are harming wild nature – either as pollution or by transforming nature into monoculture. The purpose of withdrawal is to stop the monoculture and to allow wild nature to return. This process of restoring lost eco-systems is called *wilding* and is possible through human intervention, because we know how to re-establish the biodiversity of nature.¹⁵⁹ It is a *'self-willed ecological process,'*¹⁶⁰ a multi-faceted operation where all aspects of the eco-system will return: from plants and insects to trees and the mega-fauna of herbivores and carnivores. Wilding is a process of *healing the land* by returning the previous life forms to it, but also of generating sustainable forests that capture *'carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and lock it up as living matter.'*¹⁶¹ To actively re-wild is to transform the desert-like flatlands of monocultural agriculture into habitats for multi-species activity. Through human intervention (such as planting trees, caring for the land) social communities can also arise, thus re-establishing a link between the forces of life immanent to nature and humans.

2.2.4.2.

Wilding the world can happen on many levels and is possible for anyone who owns land, from the smallest allotment to the private garden to the huge estate. It is to allow nature to be wild.¹⁶² It takes time, but in terms of natural deep-time, it is fast. Depending on the local climate, the quality of the soil (and how it has been treated) and the kind of mega-fauna that is present, wild nature will return if left alone (but can also be supported by the planting of wild seeds). The more agricultural land is converted to wild nature, the better it will be for the insects, the pollinators, the birds, the herbivores and potentially for the carnivores.

2.2.4.3.

To re-wild the world means to actively support the return of bio-diverse nature to those parts of nature over which you have control. It has very different consequences if you are a private

person living in suburbia as opposed to a civic servant working in the city park department. The first can transform his/her private garden into a haven for insects by growing flowers that provide nectar from April to October, or creating watery areas in which they can lay eggs and thus become food for birds. The second can decide to promote more wild nature inside the city; initiate campaigns to persuade private citizens to allow their gardens to become wild; transform monocultural park landscapes into wild nature; push for more vertical farming or rooftop gardens. Our margins of action are not the same.

2.2.4.4.

Private or public funds can also be used to transform agricultural land into wild nature by buying land and then allowing it to grow naturally or actively reforesting it. Just as we can put the chainsaw to use, we can go in the opposite direction and plant seedlings. From a speculative point of view, let's imagine if the sustainable state of Denmark forced the agricultural sector to phase out its annual production of 149 million sentient beings, and instead reduced its activities to supply its own citizens with vegetables and corn. The space that was no longer needed could return to wildlife nature parks.¹⁶³ One could imagine a national campaign where every citizen had to plant trees as a civic duty and as atonement for past emissions of carbon dioxide.

2.2.4.5.

A farmer working with conventional agriculture can – with the help of the sustainable state¹⁶⁴ – transform parts or all his/her land into a wildlife sanctuary by not growing products for the industrial-agricultural-food complex. As an action, this goes against any traditional idea of what a farmer is or should be, but it transforms the farmer into a participant in the community of contribution. By giving up on conventional farming, the farmer is giving her or himself differently to the world, thereby allowing for the re-emergence of wild nature.¹⁶⁵

2.2.4.6.

Since the margins of action are unevenly distributed, it follows that those with the greatest responsibility are those with the largest economic resources at their disposal. Landowners, wealthy people and nation states with large territories have the greatest responsibility to preserve what is left of wild nature and to re-wild what has been destroyed. This responsibility also applies to stopping the extraction of resources in nature that is disturbing natural habitats and fragile eco-systems. We, as individuals and participants in a community of contribution, can only make a ripple, but a community of contribution becomes a tsunami of change once it becomes a new norm in the political realm, forcing the system of the agricultural-industrial-food complex to change.

2.2.4.7.

Wilding as a return of nature to former monocultural land can be seen as the evidence of the barbaric principle of nature that F.J.W. Schelling (1775-1854) evoked in his *Naturphilosophie* and which later Merleau-Ponty called ‘raw being’.¹⁶⁶ If left on its own, nature in its wild state will return, but it is a return conditioned by which animals, insects and birds are able to survive in the regrown trees, shrubs and plants, and how the soil has been treated. In instances where the topsoil has been completely lost due to erosion or intensive farming resulting in deserts, nature will not return easily. Here, the return of wild nature will depend on interference from humans through the active planting of new trees, watering, protection from mega-fauna and climatic conditions. Nevertheless, wild nature does take over abandoned human settlements, such as the nuclear disaster area around the Chernobyl power plant, which has become a haven for wildlife. Trees will grow everywhere – on rooftops and through cracks in the asphalt. Nature knows how to heal itself when left alone.

2.3. TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE STATE

‘Protection of the biosphere, its beauty, the possibility that present and future human beings are able to enjoy life, and the concern to not impose on animals a diminished life that condemns them to the non-expression of their senses are the new duties of the state.’¹⁶⁷

(Corine Pelluchon)

2.3.1.

The Anthropocene is a moment of crisis with ethical implications. This crisis is designated the ‘climate crisis’ and encompasses three conflicts: global warming through the burning of fossil fuels, the sixth mass extinction of non-human species, and the continued subjection of farmed animals inside the industrial-agricultural-food complex. I can understand these conflicts as an individual, but I am unable to change them on my own. They are global and systemic, and far beyond my sphere of influence as a singular person. Yet to participate in a community of contribution is to develop a moral ethos where I take a position in relation to the climate crisis as a totality. As a Dane, my positioning happens as a citizen within a larger framework: that of the nation state as a producer and protector of welfare. Being embedded as a critical self into a systemic structure that is causing the climate crisis, and how this systemic structure must change, is discussed in the following section.

2.3.2.

The Danish state is a welfare state – and I am participating in a certain variance of being such a welfare self (produced and protected by the state). The welfare state is based on a utilitarian programme of maximising economic wealth and the redistribution of this wealth to the

many. In its Scandinavian variance, it seeks to establish a framework for a good life for the welfare consumer. Yet to designate the good life as the absence of poverty in material means is a skewed equation, because the impact of our wealth on nature has not been considered. The degradation of nature is the *externality* that has been taken out of the equation – our material wealth at the expense of the poverty and destruction of nature.

2.3.2.1.

To understand the problem with the welfare state we need to look at the central concept behind its fiscal policies: economic growth. It has been the central aim of the welfare state since WWII to both stimulate and expand the sphere of economic activity in order to secure its own foundation. From both the social-liberal and neo-liberal perspective, economic growth is ‘positive’ because it means more jobs, higher earnings and prosperity for the state so it can pay for the welfare of its citizens. In the space of a globalised economy, this means objects and humans circulating on the international trade market. Every welfare state of the West is dependent on goods from outside its territories – from food, to clothing to electronic devices – creating zones of monoculture and the extraction of natural resources in former bio diverse habitats. From the perspective of nature, the welfare state as a social setup for ensuring the material affluence of its citizens has been a catastrophe, not to mention the perspective of the billions of farmed animals who only exist either to produce or end up as energy for the bodily metabolisms of its citizens. All Western welfare states have a high consumption of products from the industrial-agricultural-food complex, Denmark being the nation in the world with the largest production of animals in regard to its size and population. It is a production system that is supported and authorised by the welfare state.¹⁶⁸

2.3.2.2.

Due to the ethical implications of the Anthropocene, the welfare state as an ambition and goal for the state has not only become obsolete, but also illegitimate. From the moral perspective of a community of contribution, it is no longer legitimate to annually kill 149 million sentient beings on Danish territory. A community cannot be based on the continued exploitation and slaughtering of its members. Instead, we have to ask: which kind of state would provide the best conditions for supporting the moral framework of the community of contribution? How can the state support my desire to be part of a community of contribution? What kind of state could create the necessary infrastructure around my food consumption, my modes of transportation and ability to live in a self-sustainable fashion? Which kind of state would intervene in the industrial-agricultural-food complex on behalf of farmed animals to stop the unnecessary exploitation and killing of these sentient beings? Which kind of state would rewild the most suitable of its territories? It is in answer to these questions that I will propose the concept of the *sustainable state* instead of the welfare state.¹⁶⁹ What we need is a new ideological armature to support and actualise the full potential of the community of contribution.

2.3.3.

A community of contribution calls for the general will of the public to be incarnated in the power of the state, because *the sustainable state represents the ability to implement systemic changes on a national level*. We can revolutionise ourselves, we can join small local communities adhering to our beliefs, but the real change (with the strongest impact) comes from changing the systemic structures through legislation, taxation and value-based public education. The *sustainable state* is therefore a surpassing of both the welfare state and the competitive state. The latter is an evolution of the historical welfare state into a new position of global competition between nations, each state being benchmarked against itself and its competitors. The competitive state is still a welfare state, but the welfare is produced with the aim of being competitive in a neo-liberal world order with the opportunistic individual as the primary focus.¹⁷⁰ Common to both state formations is their inherent speciesism: the belief that humans have the right to kill and exploit animals for the sake of their interests. The sustainable state is the first formation of a state that attempts to end the reign of speciesism.

2.3.3.1.

Let me briefly clarify some of the main points regarding the definition and complexities of this new concept of the state. The modern state emerged in the 16th century as an extension of the monarchy into the absolutist state with the king as the sovereign ruler who protected the citizens through law. The state was defined by territorial limits or borders. Each state developed its own administration and legislative bodies. After the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution in the 18th century, the state moved towards its current constitution, securing individual freedom. Each state lays down the fundamental principles whereby the individual is protected from violations of the state. Central to the theories, from Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Hegel that aligned the state with legitimacy was the view that it was a *social contract* between the individual and the state, the former sacrificing some of his freedom to obtain the security provided by the latter. As Rousseau writes in his classic *Du Contrat Social* (1762), the central question is to: *'Find a form of association that will defend and protect the person and goods of each associate with the full common force, and by means of which each, uniting them all, nevertheless obey only himself and remain as free as before. This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract provides the solution.'*¹⁷¹ Every state thus has the monopoly on violence,¹⁷² meaning the right to protect its citizens from invading forces from the outside (through the military)¹⁷³ and destructive forces on the inside (through the police). Hegel, continuing Rousseau's thinking, but aligning it with a philosophy of history, saw the state as the highest form of political body, because through democracy it ensured the freedom of the individual. It was the evidence of history moving in a specific direction (as a teleology of reason) and completing itself in absolute self-consciousness. Democracy in its modern version was the meaning of human history. It represented the 'end' of history where the rational coincided with the real.

2.3.3.2.

Today, there are globally 206 states recognised by the UN (but only 193 nations, since several states are under observation), each defining geographic territories, ethnic, cultural and national identities and with various degrees of democracy, levels of industrialisation and implementation of human rights. Common to all states is that they participate in a globalised capitalist order, with goods, information and people crossing borders in infinite ways. It is in light of this understanding that the sustainable state must be seen. It is still a state ensuring the fundamental democratic rights of its citizens, situated in a globally intertwined world, but with a new contract between its members and the public armature of the state.

2.3.4.

The change in contract reveals itself in the change of aims for the state. Where the welfare state aims for the redistribution of wealth among its citizens, free education and medical care, the primary aim of the sustainable state is to support the community of contribution as a way of living for its citizens and to return as much land as possible to wild nature. This will happen by transforming the industrial-agricultural-food complex as a sector, by re-educating the public, and through taxation. Food will still be produced, but it will be different: plant-based and locally produced, instead of farmed animals and products imported from far away. A sustainable state is bio-political: it has to educate and nudge its citizens towards a plant-based diet, for all the reasons already mentioned. The new contract between the sustainable state and its citizens is based on the awareness of the Anthropocene as an ethical crisis and the moral ethos embedded in the community of contribution.

2.3.4.1.

The sustainable state must power the green revolution by investing in and encouraging all forms of public transport, car-sharing and electric automobiles, and placing a progressive tax on all carbon emissions and on all foreign-imported goods that are based on crops grown on primary rainforest land. This tax could be used both to compensate Danish farmers for loss of land to nature parks, to create incentives for planting new crops, but also for a citizens' wage for those who live in eco-villages. As a sign of global responsibility, this income from a carbon tax could also be given to farmers in Brazil and Indonesia to revert their land back to wild nature. The effects would be double: more wild nature locally and more wild nature in tropical regions.¹⁷⁴

2.3.4.2.

Let me expand on the reasons to end the regime of the industrial-agricultural-food complex¹⁷⁵ as we know it today, because by many it will be seen as the greatest interference with their personal freedom. From a neo-liberal perspective, this is true: to impose a diet change is an interference with personal freedom. But this is only a problem because neo-liberalism as an ideology is limited to humans. Once non-human nature is included in the equation (as

being part of the community), neo-liberalism in its consumerist version becomes illegitimate, since the external damage to nature – both the killing of sentient beings and damage to wildlife habitats – is not taken into consideration. Thus the sustainable state will have to interfere in the patterns of food consumption, but it is an interference based on an ethics of the Anthropocene and the moral framework of the community of contribution. It interferes due to a new responsibility: *not to impose a diminished life on animals and non-human nature*.

2.3.4.3.

Ending the industrial-agricultural-food complex based on exploitation and killing of sentient beings necessitates the promotion and development of new solutions to feed the population. Therefore the sustainable state should support the move towards a plant-based diet through research into products not containing meat, eggs or milk from sentient animals. We would have to experiment with new forms of food to ensure that the proteins, vitamins and fatty acids that humans need are provided. This could happen through new kinds of hybrid food products containing all the vital nutrients, but also through eating algae and wild plants instead. The technology to produce cultured artificial meat could be developed to soften the transition for those who wish to continue eating meat. To live on a plant-based diet demands new kinds of food products – leaving some menus behind and welcoming new ones into the shared space of the community of contribution.

2.3.5.

A sustainable state is not communist, because it does not subscribe to the ideology of universal equality or the abolition of private property. But it does not endorse unlimited individual freedom at the expense of nature or other sentient beings. It is a state based on the ethos of a community of contribution where there are degrees of responsibility with various margins of actions depending on who and what you are. The main difference from the communist and capitalist systems, which both depend on the extraction of natural resources, is that the key objective of the sustainable state is to make its citizens ‘step back’ as geological agents, which first and foremost means to reduce the negative impacts of the Capitalocene and the Plantationocene. Where both communist and capitalist systems compete in maximising profit and increasing production by extracting resources, the sustainable state aims to reduce its impact. The sustainable state attempts to withdraw from the two primary modes (capitalism and agriculture) of producing objects based on non-human nature and exchanging them on a global market.

2.3.5.1.

The sustainable state is the abstract armature supporting the building of the community of contribution. It is a new ethos within the state apparatus that thinks the climate crisis through on all levels of government and manifests itself in new legislation for private corporations,

the food industry and the citizens of the sustainable state. It is a *focus imaginarius*, designating a new *telos* beyond the welfare state. It is an armature that supports the flourishing of the community of contribution both as an individual act and as a way of organising social communities around plant-based food production and forms of life with minimal carbon emissions. It does not yet exist in its pure form – but we are beginning to see small steps in the right direction, as when states invest in green technology or put carbon tax on flight emissions. (So far, only Canada has endorsed an almost plant-based diet as its national health recommendation to its population, but maintains the massive extraction of fossil fuels as part of its economy.) Thus the sustainable state must be seen as a regulative idea (similar to the community of contribution) within the state apparatus as that point of aspiration towards which the state should move.¹⁷⁶ We will have to depart from our previous conceptions of economic growth and instead begin to search for and implement *ecological growth*.

2.3.6.

Since most of us are ‘Western welfare selves’ – including me – the question arises: *what do we become when we are no longer living inside the welfare state but the sustainable state?* Put differently: what kind of self does a sustainable state produce? A *generous Western self*. What are the contours of this new self? And why is it still Western? Would it not be wiser to discard the Eurocentric use of the word ‘West’ and all the connotations of supremacy and Enlightenment it carries? Is not the ‘West’ (as a negative word) a rebound effect of classical philosophy and Christianity that as metaphysical forces were able to conquer all other cultures in the world with their great divide between humans and animals, the belief in rational thinking and exploitation of nature, and the way of organising social space through empires? Certainly, but even if I attempt to dismantle the position of the ‘West’, it is still an active force behind every one of us. By using the word ‘West’ I also take on the responsibility of what the West has done to the planet (at the expense of non-human nature). I add ‘generous’ to the West, however, to describe a new, more giving and dispossessed form of self that emerges *inside* the sustainable state.

2.3.6.1.

A ‘generous Western self’ is a conceptual persona, a new existential modality that traces out movements and actions in opposition to its counterpart, that of the Western welfare self. It is a self that has learnt to give itself in a new way, abstaining from objects produced by the industrial-agricultural-food complex, that strives for a minimal use of objects, and attempts to re-wild as much of the world as possible. It is a self that votes for those political parties that attempt to implement the sustainable state. It is a self that is permeated by generosity, guided by the moral framework of the community of contribution, attempting to achieve intense communication with non-human nature.

2.4. LIMITS TO THE COMMUNITY OF CONTRIBUTION

*'Tact is the readiness to respond to the finest vibrations of a situation; the willing openness to see others as they are and momentarily to forget oneself; to judge others by their own standards and not one's own. Tact is the constant awareness and respect for the other soul.'*¹⁷⁷

(Helmut Plessner)

2.4.1.

A community is warm; society is cold. Throughout modernity, the community has been a critical figure with the redemptive power to overcome the estrangement of industrialisation. Making use of spatial metaphors from architecture, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017) declares in his classic *Community* (2001): *'It is like a roof under which we shelter in the heavy rain, like a fireplace at which we warm our hands on a frosty day.'*¹⁷⁸ A community is intimacy: it protects and cares about you. Within *'a community we can count on each other's good will.'*¹⁷⁹ Within a community, I am connected to all the members constituting the community. In society, I am isolated, left on my own, atomised. The community, whether based on class, geography, religion, values or gender, is a force that connects and binds people together if they *adhere* to the community. It establishes sameness, but also difference. The community gives security because it distinguishes between *us* and *them*. Through this distinction between including and excluding, it becomes operative, 'puts itself to work'. Every community must draw a limit, because a community does not exist that encompasses *all* members of society. As Bauman observes, it is here that the community becomes *oppressive*, since every assertion of a community is based on the necessity of exclusion: a demarcation against those who are beyond its limits and against those who think differently from the community.

2.4.1.1.

We need to reflect on how these demarcations become a social force within the community. But let us first return to the context for its emergence in modernity. Here, I will define modernity as the intertwining of a set of forces that transform our relations to nature and other humans into a totality of critical discourses. This totality, existing today as a planetary force, I call *systemic modernity*,¹⁸⁰ thereby aligning the force of modernity with a systemic aspect: it has become a self-perpetuating reality that exists as a collective superstructure independent of its individual participants. As a complex development, modernity entails a number of consequences. It is based, firstly, on a new way of regarding nature as a scientific object (the nominalist revolution¹⁸¹); secondly, on a new way of regarding human rationality (as 'enlightened' scientific discourse); thirdly, on a new way of organising labour and consuming energy (industrialisation and the use of fossil fuels); fourthly, on a new way of organising the social (the modern state with its administrative apparatus, institutions and democratic politics of power¹⁸²); fifthly, on the circulation and exchange of capital, objects, services and humans on

a free market (capitalism); sixthly, it is permeated by mass-communications systems on all levels (from private telecommunication to public media channels). Taking each domain and viewing them separately as social systems, we find intricate trajectories with national and regional differences. Modernity as industrialisation did not happen simultaneously in Europe, and nor did the constitution of democratic parliaments. In the early days of modernity, we find local differences, and we still see these differences manifested today. All the systemic differentiations that constitute our contemporary modern world evolved throughout the last two and a half centuries in the Northern hemisphere of the globe – and define the axes between North and South, East and West. Today, with the global presence of the internet, they all appear as ‘trans-historical necessities’. These systemic differentiations are the ‘reality’ of our lives and it is – as in every point in history – difficult to see their historical contingency, or that what a human life is could be different, since other armatures could support our lives.

2.4.1.2.

The community has accompanied modernity since its beginning as its utopian counter-ideal. It is from this perspective that we must see the question of the community – and in this context, the community of contribution. Modernity is the force that extracts humans from their embeddedness in families, traditions and local rootedness in places, histories and sense of belongings.¹⁸³ Modernity is a force that not only melts everything solid into air, but also differentiates society into complex social systems, becoming its own ‘second nature’ (Adorno). Against this dilution of social bonds and creation of abstract social systems, the community becomes a redemptive figure that will return man to a sense of safety and belonging in a constantly changing world. As indicated by the subtitle of Bauman’s essay – *Seeking safety in an insecure world* – the community is a raft for the shipwrecked in a hurricane. Throughout modernity, the community has been seen as a different way of thinking and believing in the social, because through the community a shared space of belonging emerges. Yet there is a negative side to it: that of exclusion and the violence of the communal will. This permeates its members and allows the community to differentiate itself, establishing an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’ to which it can push its members if they do not conform to the communal will. The will unites the members, giving the community force, a sense of consensus, a feeling of belonging and a clear indication of who is part of the community and who is not. The communal will subsumes its members to its power, but grants them identity and security through their participation in the force of the communal will. We find this force within religious, tribal, ethnic, rural and national communities. Everywhere a community asserts itself, it does so with an excluding power.

2.4.2.

It is not without problems that the communal will manifests itself through the members of the community. One of the first to see the dangers of the community as a spirit and as a redemptive force was German anthropologist Helmut Plessner (1892-1985), who in 1924

published *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*. In the following I will summarise some of his insights in light of my own community of contribution, because in order to ensure my concept as valid, I need to investigate its limits. Where does a community of contribution begin and where does it end? Whom does it include and exclude? What are the dangers of the communal will inherent to the community of contribution? In short, what are its limits?

2.4.2.1.

According to Plessner (following Tönnies), it is a characteristic of the community that in order to become a social framework it needs some kind of *internal force* that unites its members. In its most primary form, there is the question of *blood* (Blut-Gemeinschaft), where ethnic (racial) qualities are most important. Another form is the question of *love* (Liebe), where those who form the community have strong affective relations to each other (e.g. the relationship between a mother and an infant) and a third form is that of the *content* (e.g. the working community of scientists or the proposition of equality between all humans). And then there is the question of the *territory* – of living in a local village, a neighbourhood or a nation. In this latter instance, it is the commitment to the limited territorial space that defines the bond of the community.

2.4.2.2.

Plessner saw these various ‘internal forces’ at work within the totalitarian ideologies of his own days: those of fascism and communism. He anticipated the dangers of these ideologies, because they were built upon the community as a redemptive force. ‘*The idol of this age is the community,*’¹⁸⁴ he writes. The extreme ideologies of right-wing fascism and left-wing communism Plessner labels ‘social radicals’ because they both share an aggressive, revolutionary attitude, wanting to establish a future community as a way of overcoming the alienating industrial society through the *destruction* of democratic-liberal society. Plessner warned against these movements, which he especially associated with the youth of the time. Both movements were prepared to use *physical violence* in their attempt to attain the ‘universal’ community. Common to both worldviews was that they placed the community above society (Gesellschaft). In the right-wing critique of the bourgeois society, the Nazi movement wanted to destroy the existent order in favour of a new community based on race (Aryan supremacy) and the commitment to a specific version of an archaic (German) culture. In the left-wing critique of the bourgeois society the communists wanted to destroy the capitalist society and its individuals by creating a new community where individuality and the right to private property were abolished. Both radical positions envisioned the community in different ways, and both were extremely critical of any kind of public order or sphere connected to respect for basic human rights, democracy or free speech. In light of these dangers inherent to the community as a redemptive figure, Plessner argues for the necessity of *limits to the community*. It is a danger if the community is based on blood (race or tribal), a privileged position of birth (cultural or territorial) or on a universal rational concept of man (communist equality). In all

these instances, the community becomes exclusive and violent, because it is *based on an essence projected onto those included*: those who participate in the 'will' of the community. It is through this postulated essence and the idea of a communal will that the concept of the community becomes an *operative political discourse: it acts through social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion*. Against this absolutisation of the community, Plessner argues for a limit to the community, because at the 'end' of the community begins society as that legal armature that ensures *human dignity* above and beyond its relation to any community.

2.4.2.3.

As an anthropologist, Plessner had a sensitivity to the inner lives of human beings and their need to protect their souls, as well as that infinite possibility that each human being entails. The problem with the community as a formation is that it expects its individual participants to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the group. Plessner argues that we are in need of society, because in society we are allowed to play roles and to protect ourselves behind a veil of conventions: '*Man generalises and objectifies himself through a mask.*'¹⁸⁵ The mask (as in the uniform and the official position) is what protects the civil servant (e.g. the judge who has to convict a criminal) and allows him to maintain public order.¹⁸⁶ It allows its bearer to play a role, to divide the individual into a public and private person, and by having such a role, receive recognition from the ordinary citizen. One of the many forces of civil society is that it produces a space for individual dignity and the possibility of *resonance*¹⁸⁷ in the public sphere – resonance being a distinct attunement to the other as different, yet allowing this other to vibrate within me. The conditions for this to happen are *tact* and *diplomacy* in the interactions between human beings (as the virtues of civil society and bureaucratic administration). Following Plessner, it becomes obvious that a community of contribution must be able to preserve the abstract forces of society: the fundamental right of the individual to be different and to have this difference protected by the sustainable state. A community of contribution as a model for our relationship to non-human nature cannot exist without the sustainable state.

2.4.3.

Now, let us return to the central questions of concern: what is the communal will *permeating* the community of contribution? With what essence does it want to communicate? What are the limits to the community? It is in the answering of these questions that we realise the force, but also potential dangers, of the community. *It is a will that wants the re-wilding of nature and the end of slaughtering sentient beings for the purpose of our metabolism and our material needs.* This will powers the moral ethos of the participant, because it is based on an awareness of the three premises outlined at the start. *The communal will manifests itself in the actual behaviour of the individual and in the actions of the sustainable state.* This is where the will manifests itself, articulates what it wants, and by stating it, the demarcations between the inside and outside become visible. Those who do not want the re-wilding of nature nor to end the slaughter of sentient beings for the purpose of our metabolism and material needs are not part of the

community of contribution. This is where it becomes excluding, imposes itself as a force, dividing the social between ‘us’ and ‘them’. But, as a community having generosity as its ontological principle, it cannot become violent (‘radicalised’, as Plessner would say) in its manifestation. The proclamation of generosity as the powering force behind a community of contribution comes with an obligation and duty to be *tolerant*, *patient* and, as noted by Plessner, *tactful* and *diplomatic*.

2.4.3.1.

Important to consider is first and foremost that participation in the community of contribution can happen on many levels through the actions of the individual and of the state in supporting the community. We therefore find participation in the community of contribution in many areas already: those who are vegetarian and on the path to nourish themselves only through a plant-based diet; those who have reconsidered their carbon footprint and stopped taking unnecessary flights, started to wear second-hand clothes, eat locally grown vegetables and who vote for a political party that will support the sustainable state. In short, those who participate in the community of contribution have begun to manifest themselves differently to the world (and some have done so for a long time). They are *giving* themselves differently as an act of generosity towards non-human nature and thereby attempting to break away from the mode of existence characteristic of the Western welfare self. These actions are signs of a consciousness that is acknowledging the suffering of farmed animals, the unfolding of the sixth mass extinction, the devastating impact of the industrial-agricultural-food complex upon the environment, and the polluting effects of fossil fuels upon the planetary climate.

2.4.3.2.

Is there a fundamental aporia in the relationship between the community of contribution and the sustainable state? If the latter is the stabilising and supporting systemic force behind the community of contribution, how far should we allow for the sustainable state to interfere in the life of a Western welfare self that *does not* want to take part in a community of contribution? Is there a fixed essence of the community of contribution that leads to a communal will as an excluding force? A person who eats a lot of meat from farmed animals, who flies around the earth in a private jet, who invests in cutting down the rainforest to develop palm-oil plantations, who votes for political parties supporting the continued extraction of fossil fuels – this person does not participate in a community of contribution. This modality of existence is not ethically legitimate in the age of the Anthropocene. In other words, there is a mode of existence that excludes itself from a community of contribution: *that which nourishes itself with dead sentient beings and enforces through the power of capitalism the violence upon non-human nature*. This kind of extreme form of non-participation in a community of contribution is of course limited to a few individuals. Yet within the spectrum of not-belonging to the community of contribution, we do find the Western welfare self as that mode of existence that needs to be recalibrated. What to do? Here, the community of contribution offers itself with

many existential modalities through which it is possible to participate in the community of contribution. A margin of actions is possible within a wide spectrum and each and every one of us must decide which to take for ourselves. As a means of action, the sustainable state has the possibility of taxation to ‘nudge’ its citizens in a specific direction (using economic incentives as ways to alter behaviour) or to enforce legislation on the industrial-agricultural-food complex.

2.4.4.

Once again, let me be clear about this: a community of contribution is a space of generosity – a generosity towards non-human nature in which all humans can participate due to their givenness. We have all been given life as a gift, and are thereby already within a structure of receiving and giving life. A community of contribution is not a restricted community exclusively for the chosen few or a membership regulated by a committee deciding who is in or out. All previous excluding markers of the community do not comply to the community of contribution (if you were Jewish you could not participate in the Nazi community; if you were bourgeois you could not participate in the Communist Party). As stated, a community of contribution is not based on a territory, a race, religion, nation or a social class, but is an ethos for existence based on generosity. By giving myself differently (in an act of generosity) in the way I engage with food, physical space and time, I can participate in a community of contribution. And I can do this in several ways, because the communal will of the community of contribution has many manifestations; each participant has his/her own intensity and force. Yet it still has an imaginary focus uniting all its participants.

2.4.4.1.

How to respond to conflicts that arise over the question of food (serving meat for dinner) or moving through space (flying off for a weekend holiday)? How to enter into these spaces of dissent, antagonism and disagreement? Here, as mentioned, Plessner recommends the social skills of *tact* and *diplomacy* as necessary in the conflicts with the mode of existence of the Western welfare self. When arguing with those who do not adhere to a community of contribution – still eating meat, travelling the world on vacation, not considering their impact on the world – tact and diplomacy are needed. It is a question of considering when to speak up and when to wait for the right moment to pose critical questions, such as: *‘Have you considered that the flesh you are eating belonged to a sentient being that would have preferred to remain alive?’* It is important to understand the scale of the problem, the history and origin of speciesism. You alone cannot take on the burden of altering the metaphysical system underpinning the Agricultural Revolution. It is important to have friends and family, and not to exclude oneself (be tolerant) or become frustrated that changes are not happening fast enough (be patient). The ‘green revolution’ is on its way. I hope the 21st century will be an endgame for the industrial farming of sentient beings.

3.
NEW TEMPORALITIES

3.1. LIVING BEYOND THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

*'Companies stage an experience whenever they engage customers, connecting with them in a personal, memorable way.'*¹⁸⁸

(Pine and Gilmore)

3.1.1.

At the turn of the millennium, a new economy arose: an economy based on staging the experience of consuming. It was a way of engaging with the consumer (the Western welfare self) with a strong focus on service, but also the memorability of the experience. Buying became an event in the life of the consumer, enabling him/her to transform through the act of purchasing an object, a service or an entertainment. This active focus on the transformative power of the experience enabled capitalism to create a whole new relation to temporality: immersive spaces of pure presentness and narcissistic loops where the consumer was absorbed in the moment and confirmed in their own identity. Experiencing within the experience economy is an affirmation of the self affirming itself. It is a way of staging time that obliterates the past and considers only the future as a space for memories of the present. Through this staged present, the consumer is cut off from the surrounding world and the environmental impact of the act of consuming. Does this affirmation of the experience have a philosophical counterpart? In the following, I will attempt to trace the nihilism that arose during the late 19th century and in which we find similar views about the act of experiencing and affirming human life in all its multiplicity.

3.1.2

The transition into modernity in the 19th century was also the completion of the process of secularisation initiated by the Enlightenment. Modern man was seen as he who could unshackle himself from the religious and philosophical constraints of the church. A process backed by the energy unleashed through the burning of fossil fuels led to the ‘The Death of God’.¹⁸⁹ It was not that God ‘died’ (to which the continued existence of religious communities testifies), but that the emancipated individual declared God’s death as the means to decide his own disclosure of what he wanted to be.¹⁹⁰ God is dead, and man finally becomes free to decide the values by which he wants to live. This was the central point of nihilism,¹⁹¹ which was widespread among the European intelligentsia from the 1880s on, with proponents among Russian, German and British thinkers and writers. With Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) publication of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883) the death of God was given a more complex philosophical treatment, because it was aligned with a new existential figure, that of the *Übermensch* – ‘Overman’ – a conceptual persona who incarnates ‘*continual self-overcoming*’.¹⁹² Nietzsche saw in nihilism the active creation of values in the aftermath of Christian culture that had repressed and constrained European culture for centuries; a new creation of values that was an affirmation of a life to be lived in finitude. It was ‘*A yes-saying to Life itself*’,¹⁹³ where life was seen as an infinite realm of possibilities to explore for modern man – this life on earth, and not living for the sake of an afterworld. With nihilism, a nothingness appears in the modern world (the black hole arising after the departure of God), since there is no transcendental signifier to stabilise the order of the world. There is a nothing at the foundation, and at the end of life a nothing awaits the body-self. Against this limit of life that ends in darkness, modern man lives his life as a singularity. Death is the inevitable horizon for my existence: I only have this one life to live, thus I will live it to the fullest. Nietzsche wanted to force modern man to embrace life in all its multiplicity, to affirm life by saying ‘yes’ to life. Modern man should not abstain or say no to anything that would enhance his life or give him a new experience. To ensure this, he introduced the concept of the ‘eternal recurrence’, a reminder to modern man that he will be forced to re-live his life again and again forever. ‘*Was that life? Well! One more time!*’¹⁹⁴ So, in order not to die of boredom, he should live life as interestingly as possible, affirming *being different* and *exploring difference*.¹⁹⁵

3.1.2.1.

It is against this background of a Nietzschean philosophy of life based on affirmation that I want to problematise a basic aspect of the current experience economy inherent to the Capitalocene. The experience economy is based on the assumption that a good life is a life lived as interestingly as possible through the accumulation of ‘wonderful’ and ‘exiting’ experiences. The consumer is constantly made aware through advertisements and social-media platforms (through the ‘curating’ of holiday snapshots) that authentic ‘new’ experiences are the meaning of life. The tourist economy – as a major part of the experience economy – offers these experiences constantly to the Western welfare self, from themed hotels, to cruise ships and

island holidays in exotic locations. The experience economy wants to engage the viewer, but this invitation is also an imperative with a problematic side: the fact that I have to see certain objects, sceneries, cities or events creates a *lack* in my own consciousness. The lack is interpellated upon me (in an Althusserian manner), by presenting a part of the world that is phenomenologically available to me, and only by experiencing it through my own body do I fulfil myself as an individual. The problem is twofold: behind the staging and realisation of the experience there is a massive carbon footprint and it is happening on a mass scale with millions of people seeking the next ‘phenomenological fix’.

3.1.3.

In order to escape the massive carbon footprint behind our ‘vacation industries’, constantly seducing us into the airport, we have to ask ourselves: how can we live beyond the experience economy? How can we exist beyond the specific affirmation of finitude powered by fossil fuels? It is in the answering of this question that I believe a new temporality can arise, a new way of establishing temporality within myself that is different from the one described above and inherent to the philosophy of affirmation.

3.1.4.

First of all, it is to say ‘no’ to all those forms of holidays, vacations and activities, both standard and individualised, with a high carbon footprint. Yet saying ‘no’ also means saying ‘yes’ to something different – a difference located in a kind of withdrawal from the commercial experience products of the market. It means saying ‘yes’ to a different kind of time, a slower, self-engendered time.

3.1.4.1.

Let us begin with the relation between time and space, and how this relation is transformed by the systems of transportation allowing for bodily movement through flying, taking a train or driving a car. Through these modes of transportation, the physicality of space is eclipsed, since I only see it passing through a screen, either remotely or close by. If I refrain from these modes of transportation and use my body instead, a new temporality arises because space changes. I have to produce the distance myself. Time becomes physical, because traversing a space involves your whole body and sets limits to how much you can carry and how far you can move.

3.1.5.

Instead of affirming constant difference (always exploring new exotic places), we could consider affirming sameness by returning to the same place within close proximity of our home. What happens to our sense of temporality when we travel to the same place year after year? First of all, by returning to a place previously visited, you not only return to the place, but

also to the experience in the past. The return marks a moment in the present that allows for a remembrance of the biographical past, of what has changed and what has remained the same. In returning to a space, I can contemplate what I was in the past and what I have become. This inner self of a past lived and yet still alive becomes, through its active contemplation, a *temporal thickness* within myself – a thickness that is also a kind of resilience. Contemplating my own movement through time, of what I have been, of what I have become, of what I want to become, is an act of self-confrontation. To confront myself through the depth of time is to grasp how past, present and future are part of my finitude as interconnected dimensions of my life.

3.1.5.1.

Beyond the experience economy, we find *self-engendered time*: when I myself produce my own experience of time through my active commitment and engagement with time by going for a walk in the landscape, playing with my kids, writing a diary, reading a book or inviting friends over for dinner. Self-engendered time is different from staged time, because it is not commercialised and demands greater attention and concentration. It is time, not as something underpinned by a third party, but as something whose depth and intensity I have to create myself. It is living beyond the experience economy.

3.2. VERTICAL BEING OR DEEP-TIME SENSIBILITY

*‘Nature is the primordial – that is, the nonconstructed, the noninstituted; hence the idea of an eternity of nature [...]. Nature is an enigmatic object, an object that is not an object at all; it is not really set out in front of us. It is our soil – not what is in front of us, facing us, but rather, that which carries us.’*¹⁹⁶
(Merleau-Ponty)

*‘As we swerve toward or away from the creatures with whom we share coevolutionary histories, we reach into deep-time, either deepening connections or severing them.’*¹⁹⁷
(David Farrier)

3.2.1.

After the great dinosaurs disappeared in the last massive extinction at the end of the Cretaceous age, 66 million years ago, small four-legged mammals evolved into different kinds of life forms. Today, along with the creatures that have taken other evolutionary pathways (reptiles, birds, insects, aquatic life forms etc.) they inhabit the earth (approximately 8.6 million different species (*homo sapiens* just being one) as manifestations of evolutionary multiplicity. We humans are the result of the evolutionary success, first of mammals, then of primates, diverging from our closest relatives – the chimps – around two million years ago. Yet the next mass extinction is rapidly unfolding – not because of a gigantic meteorite, but because of

human activities. Thousands of species are disappearing. Our agriculture, commercial hunting, infrastructure, bio-chemistry, use of plastic and burning of fossil fuels is threatening the survival of numerous species on earth. It is happening as a silent scream. Of great concern to scientists, who are observing that the rate of extinction is thousands of times higher than average background extinction, it leaves much of the general public indifferent. And no wonder, since most people have never had any direct contact with the disappearing species in the wild. How can you lament something vanishing forever, when you don't even know what it is? What happens to our planet when a species goes extinct? It means we lose a thread from the past, interwoven into eco-systems like a temporal 'carpet' of past and present life on earth. The sixth mass extinction is the approach to a 'flat time', where very few threads will be left from our evolutionary past.

3.2.2.

A sense of deep-time is necessary as a resistance and alternative to the experience economy's present mode of producing temporality. It will help in understanding the necessity of a community of contribution that if we do not change the course upon which we are headed, all the wonders of evolution will go extinct and will not return again. In millions of years, new species might evolve – we just do not know whether the multiplicity of species will be so great. Presumably it will not, because '*the output of heat from our star [the sun] is too great for life to start again,*'¹⁹⁸ as scientist and progenitor of the Gaia theory James Lovelock (b. 1919) warns. The current biodiversity of the earth is what we have inherited, but we are rapidly destroying it by diminishing the wild habitats allowing for the non-human life forms to exist and evolve according to their own evolutionary trajectory. The extinction of a species is a superkilling of a unique mode of consciousness embedded in that specific mode of being. In the words of environmental ethicist Holmes Rolston III: '*Extinction shuts down the generative processes, a kind of superkilling. Extinction kills forms (species) beyond individuals, kills collectively, not just distributively. [...] To superkill a particular species is to shut down a story of many millennia, and leave no future possibilities.*'¹⁹⁹ In other words, the sixth mass extinction is a superkilling of many stories millennia old.

3.2.2.1.

By developing deep-time as a sensibility, I begin to see myself as part of a much larger framework. I begin to view this manmade world as a nanosecond in the history of the earth. Within that short period, we have utterly transformed the crust of the earth, made it into monoculture and an *abstract space*²⁰⁰ available for capitalist interests, destroying it for so many other life forms, so many other forms of intelligence unknown to the human imagination.²⁰¹ Deep-time sensibility is to contemplate the homology between my evolutionary body and all the animals with whom I share a common ancestor. There are in our bodies remnants of this 'common ancestor', what F.W.J. Schelling called a 'first nature' (*erste Natur*), which Merleau-Ponty describes in the following way: '*This erste Natur is the most ancient element, "an abyss of the past",*

*which always remains present in us and in all things.*²⁰² It is a barbaric principle, a terrifying excess of being over consciousness, an ‘over-being’ that permeates all living entities.²⁰³ Instead of being mystifying (to which it certainly lends itself), it can be understood as an invitation: a new way to sense my own evolutionary past (as deep-time) in the faces of fish (they have lips like us), the hands of chimps (how they communicate with them), or the eyes of a pig (expressive and attentive). Deep-time is something within us – understanding my body as the result of millions of years of evolution – an evolution I share with numerous other species. Those senses that constitute my functional bodily space of experience (seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, touching) and the cognitive ability to understand them, I share with a huge variety of other living beings, especially mammals. We live in a space of co-evolutionary existence and when we are contemplating this, we are deepening our connection with nature in all its myriad manners of manifestation. Merleau-Ponty designated this primordial interconnectivity with the natural world before any cultural objectification as ‘vertical being’: the sense of a deep-time within me. Our verticality is our upright standing body, but especially the depth of time of which my body is the evolutionary manifestation. Vertical being means understanding that the same life pulses are running through me, expressing the same desire to live a life free of pain and in the company of close relatives.

3.2.3.

Deep-time sensibility is first and foremost the awareness of the past that has gone before me, but also of future generations to come.²⁰⁴ This is the inter-generational aspect of the climate crisis: that our current living is distorting the future for unborn humans and non-human nature. If we do not act now, the world of the future will become uninhabitable. Just as we are inheriting the problems of the generations before us, such as politicians’ inability or lack of courage to curb CO₂ emissions, so future generations will pay for our current excessive way of living. We have for generations been pushing the ‘bill’ on to the next generation to settle. To break free of the ‘present’ and to include the perspective of future generations into our own situation is to alter the quality of time. From being a pure present it becomes temporal thickness: within my own time, I am adding the presence of previous and future generations. To develop deep-time sensibility is to take on responsibility not only for the wonders of our evolutionary past, but also for the beings to come.

3.2.4.

Deep-time sensibility is a kind of imaginative time travelling: standing in front of a metropolis and imagining the landscape before humans settled there, the wild animals that traversed the landscape, birds flying through the sky, the ocean full of fish.²⁰⁵ Vertical being is sensing this past before human civilisation, creating a temporal thickness that allows me to dream of a future: a return to wild nature.

3.3. CONVERSION OF ONESELF TO ANOTHER

*'At each instant, the ancient sage was conscious of living in the cosmos, and he placed himself in harmony with the cosmos.'*²⁰⁶

(Pierre Hadot)

3.3.1.

If a community of contribution involves a different way of living, and if I want to participate in a community of contribution, I must change. My participation thus demands a self-transformation. I have to become something other (permeated by generosity as an ontological principle), an other to myself and to the world. A community of contribution is thus an othering of me, from a *Western welfare self* to a *generous Western self*. Taking the 'welfare' away from the Western welfare self means I will have to go against the materialistic values that have until now prevailed in the Western welfare state. And it is welfare that permeates not only the state, but also the private world of consumption. As a generous Western self, I think and live differently – as a generous self able to give myself differently to the world. My generosity powers a conversion of my whole being, enabling me to participate in a community of contribution, because I subject myself to a new communal will: that of withdrawing myself from the space of the Western welfare self. It is a withdrawal as a reduced form of self-manifestation with the aim of the re-emergence of wild nature. Thus, to participate, to become generous, I need as an individual to translate the moral ethos of the community of contribution into a way of being. I have to enact my own non-philosophy.

3.3.2.

That 'to philosophise' involves self-transformation and a rupture with daily life is central to the philosophers of Antiquity. According to Pierre Hadot (1922-2010), Ancient philosophy was fundamentally an exercise in self-transformation. It was to become a sage, and this enabled a different way of existing in the world. Within the Stoic philosophies it meant distancing oneself from all the 'public values' of the world and instead focussing on being present in the cosmos. It was an attention to – and perception of – the world governed by Logos. As Hadot writes: *'The exercise of wisdom entails a cosmic dimension. [...] The sage never ceases to have the whole constantly present to mind. He thinks and acts within a cosmic perspective. He has the feeling of belonging to a whole which goes beyond the limits of his individuality.'*²⁰⁷ In a similar way, the person who participates in a community of contribution, does so with a sense of a totality that exceeds his or her own life. This feeling can be described as a mode of 'cosmic consciousness', based as it is on a greater awareness of the self taking part inside a 'double-whole'. The first whole is our vast evolutionary past and the second our existence within the Anthropocene. The two 'wholes' are intertwined, inescapable as frameworks for our lives, yet the latter is destructive of the first. My singular existence is part of this second destructive whole, the age of the Anthropocene, but becoming aware of it, I can act upon it. This awareness is what

generates an ethics for the Anthropocene. A community of contribution is the moral framework that guides the day-to-day actions by which I respect and attempt to preserve as much as possible the wonders of the first whole.

3.3.3.

In Antiquity, the act of attuning to wisdom was attempted through exercises. Just as in gymnastics exercise leads to strength and mastery of a physical movement, a philosophical exercise leads to mental and spiritual strength. Following the insights of Hadot, this aspect inspired Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in his development of a care of the self as a new aesthetics of existence, involving writing and the acquiring of certain attitudes.²⁰⁸ In a similar way, the transformation of existence necessary for participation in a community of contribution, can be seen as actively enforcing a change of oneself. But there is a difference. Where Foucault aimed at liberating the self from limiting discourses of power, discipline and truth systems towards a more playful relationship with erotic nature, the imaginary self of a community of contribution aims towards a new intense communication with nature in all its dimensions. So what could be possible exercises in the process of building a moral ethos inside oneself? There are several possibilities for attuning to a community of contribution as a moral ethos and cosmic outlook. In the following I mention some possibilities to experiment with – they can be seen as a new way of intensely observing and interacting with nature (as a heterogenic communication following Bataille).

3.3.3.1.

Find an uninterrupted viewpoint ‘inside’ nature (surrounded by trees, looking out over a landscape or an ocean) and then close your eyes. Breathe deeply, focusing on exhaling and inhaling. Open your eyes and look again at the landscape. Try to contemplate nature as a phenomenon existing as something in its own right – as a world that was there millions of years before your arrival. Think of what you see as a time portal. Travel as far back in geological time as you can. Listen to the sounds of chirping birds, the wind blowing in the trees, the waves crashing against the beach, the water falling from a rock. Notice the vibrations in your body and your resonance with nature.

3.3.3.2.

Find an old tree in your vicinity, a tree that has existed for centuries. Contemplate this living organism, how it has lived through time, was there when history was different. Consider the fact that there are other temporalities to life that are beyond a human life span. Consider that you share approximately a quarter of your DNA with that tree (consider the difference and similarities between a tree and your body).

3.3.3.3.

If the situation is safe, try to look an animal directly in the eyes. Contemplate this singular animal's existence.²⁰⁹ Try to grasp its own mode of existence as part of a system of equivalences with its surroundings (its *Umwelt*). Attempt to understand the animal's difference from and similarity to your own body. Try to comprehend the animal's sense of self-awareness. Contemplate what it must feel like to be that animal. Try to communicate with that animal with a soft voice and gentle gesticulations. Be friendly. Begin a conversation with that animal; caressing, stroking and feeding it if possible.²¹⁰ Instead of just seeing a dog or bird that is inferior to your being, think of it as someone with its own right to exist, living with its own peculiar mode of consciousness, being just as intelligent as it needs to be.

3.3.3.4.

These exercises can be seen as moments of creative contemplation, because in the quiet act of contemplating the temporality of a landscape, a tree, my own body or an animal in front of me, I am producing an imaginary space in which my thoughts engage in a double movement that will both intensify the present and expand it towards deep-time. My focus will be the non-human nature right in front of me, yet through my imagination, I am creating an opening into the deep past that has conditioned its phenomenological manifestation.

4.1. A NEW PEACE WITH NATURE

*'What can we give to the world that gives us the given, the totality of the gift? What can we give to the nature that gives us birth and life? A considered and balanced answer: everything that we got.'*²¹¹

(Michel Serres)

4.1.1.

I knelt down and observed the difference between an industrial field of crops and, next to it, a meadow left to its own devices. The first displayed only one colour, with no weeds, flowers nor insects. It was 'dead', subjected to the forces of contemporary agricultural chemistry: GM-crops, fertiliser and pesticides. It was reduced to monochromatic monoculture. In the meadow, insects were buzzing away, a myriad of flowers thrived, spider webs glistened in the sun. It was 'alive'. The basic difference between mono- and myriad culture was displayed right before my eyes. As James Lovelock once stated in an interview: we intuitively grasp life when it's there. Life has a feel to it: it pulsates, temporalities are intersected, life forms are enmeshed into each other, all actively playing a part in the eco-system. When nature is alive, it's an invitation for many forms of life to co-exist.

4.1.1.1.

It is time for plural nature. A community of contribution aims to minimise our individual and collective impact on nature. It happens through steps in several directions: first and foremost, by ceasing to exploit domesticated animals for their meat, eggs, milk, bones, skin and fur. Then, reducing the direct and indirect consequences of our modes of consumption – whether

through being mobile and eating food transported from far away (burning carbon fuels), buying new clothes (involving high water consumption) or building new houses (expending energy and materials). Here, we must, in acts of generosity, give ourselves differently to the world. Such generosity extends right to the point of re-wilding whatever plot of land I have ownership over. A community of contribution is a moral framework that inscribes these new existential modes of withdrawal into a larger narrative, a framework that is grounded in a systemic awareness of the devastating impact on nature by humans and the responsibility that comes from being a geological agent. A community of contribution is based on an ethic for the Anthropocene.

4.1.2.

In his treatise on nature, *Le contrat naturel* (1990), Michel Serres tried to rethink the classical question of the social contract with regard to nature. He wanted to establish the conditions for thinking of nature as a legal subject in its own right, thus enabling a sense of justice between what we humans have taken from nature and what we are obliged to give back. If nature could attain legal status, we would have to respect it in the same way we respect a person with legal rights. Serres had a sense of the sweeping transformation of nature that had happened through the scientific and later Industrial Revolution. Humans have reversed the power relations with nature: from being a force that overpowered humans (through plagues, famines and high mortality rates), nature has been overpowered by humans. Today, it is humans who are responsible for what is going to happen to nature and the climate that make earth inhabitable. The problem with modernity is that it *continues to stage a war against nature* – the war being the destruction of nature and its inherent multiplicity. According to Serres, we have to achieve *a new kind of peace with nature* on a local and a global scale, based on a sense of justice and mutual recognition of the human force and the forces of nature. Peace would arise if we stopped warring with nature. This war with nature is visible in the similarity between the military tank and the tractor enabling the farming of monocultural land. A tractor is the civilised equivalent of brute military force bent on conquering, flattening out and harvesting the photo synthetic energy produced by the soil.

4.1.2.1.

Following Serres' plea for a new peace, I ask: what does it mean to no longer fight nature? *It means to stop constantly reducing nature to monoculture*. Nature in its pure form is diversity, which in its philosophical form reads as *multiplicity*. To stop warring with nature means to return the landscape to its wild state. This process is called *wilding*. In order to achieve this, we must change our way of living, but also actively promote the establishment of protected natural parks where nature can flourish. A community of contribution is the opening of this path, because it withdraws from those patterns of consumption that uphold the economic incentive to continue the war with nature.

4.1.2.2.

How to achieve this new state of being, where I am no longer waging a constant war with nature through the products I consume in order to sustain my bodily metabolism and to conform to the image produced by the spectacle? I must become non-philosophical, achieving the total conversion of my inner and outer being. I need to be able to reject the chemical substances in my brain that direct me towards a specific mode of consumption, and simultaneously create new ways of consuming (new desires, new objects). To decline the offers and reject the tastes that I have been brought up with demands *self-control* and a *focus imaginarius*. I have to keep the ethos of a community of contribution in mind whilst controlling my impulses to buy this or that. This mode of being is a non-philosophical way of being; it belongs to the origins of philosophy *as a way of life* (Hadot), because the aim is to break away from the Western welfare self.

4.1.3.

To attain a new peace with nature, I must develop a new kind of ‘sustainable phenomenology’ where what I experience has no or minimal carbon footprint. This means to take joy in simple nearby nature – not travelling thousands of miles to indulge in my own narcissism or my hunt for unique experiences. These experiences have been made available through the infrastructure of airports and airliners, cruise ships and ferry ports, holiday resorts and travel companies, but their true costs are not reflected in the price we pay for our tickets. A sustainable phenomenology leads to an inner and outer peace. An inner peace, because I will de-authorise the power of the experience economy forcing me constantly to ‘hunt’ new experiences. An outer peace, because I will no longer be part of this externalised violence against non-human nature.

4.2. AN ECO-TOPIA

‘If we adopt a plant-based diet, hundreds of millions of acres can be returned to wildlands – forests and grasslands and prairies – an environmentalist’s dream come true.’²¹²

(Lisa Kemmerer)

4.2.1.

Allow me to imagine a community of contribution becoming real in Denmark on both an individual and national level. It is my *focus imaginarius*. I want to dream of a different Denmark. Like every dream, it is infused with desire, hopes and aspirations for a different world. It is a non-philosophical speculative vision on behalf of humans and non-human nature, an absolute disclosure of the full content of a community of contribution.²¹³ It is based on the three premises outlined at the beginning of this book – our evolutionary continuity, the sixth

mass extinction caused by our way of living and the fact that we are moral agents. The ethical horizon is based on an awareness of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch in which humans are responsible for what is happening to life on earth.

4.2.2.

The dream begins with a phasing out of the industrial production of animals and the monocultural violence wrought upon the Danish landscape. No animal factories, no slaughterhouses, no GM crops, no pesticides. By doing this, we would first of all stop the suffering and unnecessary death of all the animals subjected to our dominion, and secondly, we would free up space for wild nature parks (approximately 80% of current agricultural land; the remaining 20% should be used for food crops such as corn and vegetables). In the dream, we have become a nation living on a plant-based diet with a whole new way of producing and consuming food and thereby creating new jobs for those in the agricultural sector. Massive nature parks would be distributed over former monocultural landscapes. Trees would be planted anew – and others would grow by themselves. A national people's movement would involve everybody taking part in healing the land. Asphalt would be removed in scarcely populated areas, roads would be blocked, declining villages expropriated and new, larger mammals would be introduced, herbivores and carnivores, together establishing their own kind of checks and balances. Wetlands would return and with them flocks of birds, insects and mammals. We would abandon manmade edifices in order for wild life to live in the ruins.²¹⁴ In the dream, I see a new kind of nature in Denmark that would allow non-human nature living in the wild to flourish. It would not be a return to a pristine landscape before the Ice Age, but an enormous rambunctious garden where non-human nature would manifest itself in all kinds of ways. From this change, other positive effects would follow: massive capture of carbon dioxide from growing trees, increased biodiversity, cleaner water for aquatic life forms and better physical and mental health conditions for the population.²¹⁵ My dream is to allow nature to return in its wild 'free' non-productive state of being.

4.2.2.1.

My dream continues. Not only am I dreaming of ending the cruel treatment of animals by the industrial-agricultural-food complex, but also of a new way of living off the earth by becoming more self-sustainable. I imagine cities where there are huge store-houses with vegetables being grown in vertical farms; cities where cars are forbidden on certain days of the week; cities where people cycle or use public transport as a primary mode of movement; cities where the stress from dangerous vehicles has been substituted by 'gentle' traffic. And outside the cities, amidst the huge nature parks, I dream of eco-collectives where small communities thrive through a low-energy lifestyle; where manufactured things last longer and are shared among many people; where living with less is actually living with more.

4.2.2.2.

And my dream extends into the suburban realm of private houses and public leisure parks that are all re-wilded: allowed to grow with a multiplicity of plants and insects, increasing biodiversity and enabling whole new biomes to appear. They are spaces where people grow vegetables, where permaculture is the new norm, and gardens are wilded on purpose.

4.2.3.

This vision of a community of contribution implemented in the state of Denmark (as a sustainable state) is a dream. But it is not blurry, vague or impossible. It could happen if we wanted it to. Yet we are very far away from it. Currently (2020), the nation's industrial-agricultural-food complex is making more profit than ever, due to the Chinese demand for Danish pork. Only a completely new government based on the vote of the population could change this. If the Danes wanted things to be different, it could happen.²¹⁶ For this dream, on behalf of the farmed animals in Denmark and wild life nature, to come true, the idea of the community of contribution would have to spread like wildfire. Currently, it is young people who are most active in fighting climate change, and who have realised that what they eat is a moral question. They are going to inherit the future, and know that to eat animals is to eat the earth. Veganism is the new avant-garde.

4.2.3.1.

A community of contribution implemented on a national level is a saturated event waiting on the horizon as a possible consequence of our altered self-manifestations. It saturates the future, because it will exceed anything we have ever seen: vast stretches of farmed land returning to wild nature again. It is a saturated event, because a new being will be in excess: non-human nature.

4.3. THE ECSTASY OF A COMMUNITY OF CONTRIBUTION

*'Everyone is connected, in their lives and through their use of food, to other human beings (past, present, and future) and to other living beings.'*²¹⁷

(Corine Pelluchon)

*'Community, or the being-ecstatic of Being itself? That would be the question.'*²¹⁸

(Jean-Luc Nancy)

4.3.1.

To become aware of the ethical dimensions of the Anthropocene and of oneself as a Western welfare self can be a terrifying realisation. To act upon it – adopting the moral outlook pro-

posed by participating in a community of contribution as a Western welfare self – can be seen as a limiting and restricting way of being, denying oneself access to all the wonders of experience offered by a carbon-based economy, from flying to remote exotic locations, to enjoying specific forms of food, to presenting oneself with a quality of newness through clothing and objects. Yes, a community of contribution does entail a new way of self-manifestation with regard to how I give myself as a phenomenon to the world. It is an act of withdrawal in terms of how I consume and nourish myself from the world, yet it is also about intensifying my perceptual awareness of the world. It is a withdrawal from one matrix of being in the world, that of the Western welfare self, and an affirmation of a new sensibility towards the world based on our natural powers of perception and affective capabilities. In this new space, we affirm our connectedness to the world through our senses and emotions. It is an affirmation of the world that is different and which demands a new kind of sensibility, a new kind of ecstasy that the following thoughts will attempt to circumscribe.

4.3.2.

What are the ecstatic dimensions of a community of contribution? Returning to the opening paragraph, the quote from *Generic Singularity*, where I first outlined the idea of a community of contribution, I want to clarify my idea of the ecstatic. As a preliminary definition, very much inspired by Spinoza (1632-1677), I use the ecstatic as the designation of those feelings that lift me up, fill me with joy, give me power to exist in a generous way. And we find ecstatic forces of life in many places. In my investigation into the dimensions of own, given and final being in *Generic Singularity*, I tried to point towards aspects of life where the force of the ecstatic could be found, such as in health, love, language, friendship, generosity, memory, social reproduction and in a community of contribution. I see these ecstasies as primary modes of being in the world that guide us towards realisation of certain values to live by. Basically, they are *experiences of joy*: the love of life, of being present to life through the body, the social and time. I see the community of contribution as such a social ecstasy, because it lifts me up, gives me power to exist and a sense of belonging to the world.

4.3.2.1.

I am not the first to think about the ecstatic. Several philosophers in the 20th century placed the ecstatic at the centre of their thought. Heidegger saw in temporality an ecstatic revelatory power: the force of time to unveil itself, present itself as an event, in which something radically new could emerge. The possibility of *Dasein's* self-transcendence is grounded in the ecstatic quality of time. Jean-Luc Nancy (b. 1940), following the Heideggerian pathway of attacking Western metaphysics, considers the ecstatic as that moment where Being itself, as that which grounds our ontic relations to the world, dissolves, becomes dispossessed. It is a moment where Being leaves itself behind, steps out of itself, and thus opens a new space of co-existence (the community) between humans where identities are no longer at work around a fixed essence, but accept the flow of interpretation, of always being displaced by the

exuberance of meaning produced by language. Bataille, on the other hand, places the ecstatic in the transgressive movement of eroticism, of that exploration of heterogeneity within own being where the limits of the body are dissolved. For Bataille, ecstasy is a mystic experience of continuity with Being, effusion of the self and the rational cogito.

4.3.2.2.

It is from these lines of thought that I am inspired to think and grant the ecstatic such a central role in our lives and in the community of contribution. The community of contribution is in my view such an ecstasy in relation to our possibilities of self-transcendence, in the potential of redefining our relationship to being, of creating a new form of co-existence with non-human nature, and finally, as a new form of experiencing continuity with being (though not on an erotic level).

4.3.2.3.

To move away from animal-based products is an ecstasy in a Heideggerian sense, because I step out of myself, away from that Western welfare self that has been living off products from the industrial-agricultural-food complex. Through my ecstasy, I embrace a different form of being, a new form of self-manifestation: a generous Western self. In my relationship to the surrounding world, the ontic relationship I have to nature, there is an ecstasy to be found in actively seeking out the sensation and contemplation of non-human nature: looking at trees, plants and animals; listening, studying and relating to non-human nature; searching for my evolutionary continuity with these forms of life. Once a mind begins to enquire, there are wonders everywhere: nature has created a multiplicity of species, each living and adapted to exist in its own peculiar way.

4.3.3.

Building a community of contribution is based on the premise that we are social beings and that there is ecstasy in being social. It is a community that is not about being different through consuming, but through participating in the collective communication with nature. It is all about consuming as little as possible and finding joy in non-material relations. The ecstasy of a life to be lived can be mediated with little impact on nature – going for a walk in the local forest with your family, listening to birds instead of travelling thousands of miles to eat oysters in a restaurant.

4.3.4.

To be part of something greater than oneself is a source of meaning, fulfilment and hope. A community of contribution is the groundwork for such a movement in which everybody is invited to join, participate and change the world. A community of contribution is a social ecstasy, something that receives its full force when we do it together.

5.
AFTERWORD

RESISTING APATHY

*'Keeping the future open, refocusing humankind on the specter of futurity: this is the key task of ecological politics.'*²¹⁹

(Timothy Morton)

5.1.

Once you start reading about the consequences of the climate crisis and its historical origins, you run the risk of becoming overwhelmed. The future scenarios resulting from the impact of the continued burning of fossil fuels and the industrial-agricultural-food complex are devastating.²²⁰ It almost seems impossible to do anything considering the amount of people living through the matrix of the Western welfare self on the earth right now, and the lack of political will to counter the systemic causes of the climate crisis. The impact of my own actions seems meaningless in the face of what needs to be done. Yet there is a danger to this kind of thinking, because it is to allow oneself to be 'drowned' by the data and the inadequacy of the political systems, and thus to succumb to the apathy lurking dangerously on the other side of climate consciousness: the risk of continuing as if nothing can be done and as if we cannot alter the direction towards planetary catastrophe.

5.1.1.

On the other side of critical climate consciousness there is also power and existential force to be discovered, because understanding my own role and complicity in the climate crisis, I am faced with a choice: *I can either continue* or *change my way of living*. The prospect of actively

changing myself, of becoming an other to that Western welfare self that has dominated my way of being and thinking, is also self-empowerment. It is to unfold resistance deep inside myself. It is to become a warrior *against myself*. It is to enact a new kind of revolution: against the ‘law’ (of speciesism), which acts like a king who has to be dethroned. The enemy is outside (the Anthropocene as a tragic fact), but also inside (the belief in our right to kill farmed animals). To constantly work against, ‘staying with the trouble’ (Haraway), defending the lives of animals and wild nature, is for me a new kind of Existentialism. It is existence in a community of contribution together with non-human nature. Living *with* and *in* a community of contribution is like a whisper inside the head, or a voice in the novel *The Overstory* (2019) by Richard Powers: ‘*This. What we have been given. What we must earn. This will never end.*’²²¹ To commit oneself to a community of contribution is to acknowledge what we have been given, and that we can earn it back again through a new form of self-manifestation. It will never end.

5.1.2.

Over the past year, I have been experimenting with how far I can go in altering my behavioural patterns. I have exercised non-philosophy as a mode of existence, because I have wanted to see how far I can transform myself in a new direction. I cannot change the world if I cannot change myself. What I ask of others, I will have to be able to do myself. I have opted for actions that correspond to my words. The premise of this book has been my starting point, and I have tried to live accordingly. I have discovered that it is actually possible to abstain, to say no, to develop new ways of engaging with space and time and my bodily metabolism. It is possible to explore new ways of eating, consuming and travelling. To eat has become an ethical question, powered by a completely different moral framework: that of a community of contribution. After my change to a plant-based diet, I have begun to see and feel the animal behind the product in the supermarket. I see its fearful eyes looking out of the small opening in the truck, nervous, full of anguish and sadness. In which conditions was this specific food extracted from an animal? Which animal had to die for the meat to be on the plate? Ask these questions, use your imagination and then follow your right to say no.

5.1.2.1.

I believe this ability to change the content of my life is inherent to the human self – it comes from the ‘emptiness’ of the metaphysical knot. There is nothing ‘inside’ the human being that predetermines it, yet everybody is forced into a relation to the body, the social and time. We cannot escape the transcendental, yet how we allow our existence to manifest itself through the transcendental dimension of own, given and final being is something that we can influence ourselves. We are moral agents, situated within moral frameworks, and this gives us freedom but also responsibility. Adhering to a community of contribution – imagining oneself as a participant – aligns these actions of abstaining with a moral force. They are no longer isolated acts, but are part of a larger framework. A community of contribution is such a moral framework that gives meaning to these individual day-to-day actions of negations and refusals, but

also affirmations and new ways of being in the world with a minimal carbon footprint. A community of contribution is an involving narrative that changes, because it is ultimately a story of how humans decided to give themselves differently in order to allow non-human nature to flourish again and thereby avoided the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

5.2.

One day, I will (as part of a generation) be judged by history: What did I do? How did I develop new modes of existences? What sacrifices was I ready to make? How did I make a positive contribution to the world? There is a vector within history that gives modernity a certain weight: the constant attempt to progress, though knowing that you might not succeed. From where I stand in history right now (2020), this book is the answer I have presented as a possible solution. It has become a vector in my life, making me change, but also making me demand a change from the social systems enforcing the climate crisis upon humans and non-human nature. My proposition is to think the climate crisis through the critical figure of the community as a space of generosity – including not only humans, but also non-human nature. We have to extend our generosity beyond the human sphere towards non-human living beings and wild nature. I hope – and believe – that this solution is also valid for future generations. *Community of Contribution* as a speculative non-philosophical proposition is what I want to be judged by.

5.2.1.

All humans living at this historical moment are witness to the tragedy of the commons: the awareness that we have not been able to avert the climate crisis. Within the last half year of writing, the Bahamas have been destroyed by the fierce tropical storm Dorian, the North African desert has encroached on Southern Spain, the Greenlandic ice cap has been melting faster than anticipated, Australia has been scorched by immense forest fires killing over a billion wild animals and its coral reefs are suffering from yet another mass bleaching, Denmark has been flooded by the heaviest rainfall in February ever known and Covid-19 is killing hundreds of thousands of people. The climate crisis is no longer a dark sky on the horizon. It is a storm blowing through our front garden. We are living amidst an unfolding tragedy, and sometimes I am haunted by the thought of being just another voice in the tragic choir: a meta-awareness describing what is happening and what needs to be done, but unable to change the mind of the political powers or stop the slaughter of billions of animals worldwide. Nevertheless, I do not want to succumb; I keep going, pushing these thoughts, as well as my artworks, insisting that change is possible. The most important thing, as Timothy Morton rightly notes, is the *'refocusing of humankind on the specter of futurity.'* We have to insist on *'keeping the future open.'* Our greatest danger as individuals, corporations and nation states is to accept apathy as a justified form of existence.

5.3.

This book is dedicated to my father, Alan Havsteen-Mikkelsen (1938-2002), who died suddenly from a heart attack 18 years ago. He established the framework for our childhood home that became the site for a number of interactions with animals and wild nature. Situated in the midst of an undulating landscape with a view of the ocean, it has been my primordial entrance point to a life lived in proximity with nature. It was an act of will: he wanted his children to be close to nature. One of his last projects was to make a small orchard on a plot of land close to our house. He called it 'The Garden of Fragrances'. He intended us to walk there and enjoy all the various differences in scents between the trees and bushes. Today, it has been left to its own devices and has become a wild habitat for birds and insects. It is almost impenetrable. There is something wonderfully quixotic about this garden, and it reveals a generous aspect of my father's personality: he believed in the beauty and force of wild rambunctious nature. This generosity extended to his belief in the community as a spirit, being himself a 'pillar of society', engaged in creating institutions of learning and always ready to help other people in need. It was his community ethos that inspired me to create a new concept of the community as a space of contribution. He believed in kindness towards animals (following the proto-Kantian²²² Indian proverb: *He who is not kind to animals is not kind to humans*).²²³

5.3.1.

This small orchard of his has become a delicate piece of re-wilded nature. In the same way, I see this book as a kind of 'wilded thinking' that has attempted to create a new moral framework through which to think our presence in the world. By reading and internalising the premise and following the actions it proposes, you are also allowing yourself to be wilded: establishing a new relation to wild nature and non-human animals amidst your daily life. Your participation in the community of contribution will be the beginning of a new adventure – for you, and for the world. It is time to respect non-human nature.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, p. 90.
- 2 Peter Wohlleben, *The Secret Network of Nature*, p. 126.
- 3 See David Quammen, *Spillover*, where he in the concluding chapter sums up the factors and causes behind zoonotic diseases (and thereby also the cause behind the current Covid-19 pandemic). Allow me to quote at length, because of the complexities involved: *'The experts have alerted us to these factors and it's easy enough to make a list. We have increased our population to the level of 7 billion and beyond. We are well on our way toward 9 billion before our growth trend is likely to flatten. We live at high densities in many cities. We have penetrated, and we continue to penetrate, the last great forests and other wild ecosystems of the planet, disrupting the physical structures and the ecological communities of such places. We cut our way through the Congo. We cut our way through the Amazon. We cut our way through Borneo. We cut our way through Madagascar. We cut our way through New Guinea and northeastern Australia. We shake the trees, figuratively and literally, and things fall out. We kill and butcher and eat many of the wild animals found there. We settle in those places, creating villages, work camps, towns, extractive industries, new cities. We bring in our domesticated animals, replacing the wild herbivores with livestock. We multiply our livestock as we've multiplied ourselves, operating huge factory-scale operations involving thousands of cattle, pigs, chickens, ducks, sheep, and goats, no to mention hundreds of bamboo rats and palm civets, all confined en masse within pens and corrals, under conditions that allow those domestics and semidomestics to acquire infectious pathogens from external sources (such as bats roosting over pig pens), to share those infections with one another, and to provide abundant opportunities for the pathogens to evolve new forms, some of which are capable of infecting a human as well as a cow or a duck. We treat many of those stock animals with prophylactic doses of antibiotics and other drugs, intended not to cure them but to foster their weight gain and maintain their health just sufficiently for profitable sale and slaughter, and in doing that we encourage the evolution of resistant bacteria. We export and import livestock across great distances and at high speeds. We export and import other live animals, especially primates, for medical research. We export and import wild animals as exotic pets. We export and import animal skins, contraband bushmeat, and plants, some of which carry secret microbial passengers. We travel, moving between cities and*

continents even more quickly than our transported livestock. We stay in hotels where strangers sneeze and vomit. We eat in restaurants where the cook may have butchered a porcupine before working on our scallops. We visit monkey temples in Asia, live markets in India, picturesque villages in South America, dusty archeological sites in New Mexico, dairy towns in the Netherlands, bat caves in East Africa, racetracks in Australia – breathing the air, feeding the animals, touching things, shaking hands with the friendly locals – and then we jump on our planes and fly home. We get bitten by mosquitoes and ticks. We alter the global climate with our carbon emissions, which may in turn alter the latitudinal ranges within which those mosquitoes and ticks live. We provide an irresistible opportunity for enterprising microbes by the ubiquity and abundance of our human bodies. Everything I've just mentioned is encompassed within this rubric: the ecology and evolutionary biology of zoonotic diseases. Ecological circumstance provides opportunity for spillover. Evolution seizes opportunity, explores possibility, and helps convert spillovers to pandemics', pp. 515-517.

4 Asmund Havsteen-Mikkelsen, *Generic Singularity*, p. 204.

5 I will throughout this investigation use various concepts of nature – 'nature', 'non-human nature', 'non-human animals', 'earth', 'planet', 'biodiversity', 'ecology', 'evolution' – all pointing towards different aspects of how we are surrounded by an environment that is both the planet upon which we are situated and the eco-system on which we depend for our survival. There are some who believe we must rid ourselves of any notion of 'nature', because any such notion is inscribed into a binary logic that puts culture against nature as if they could be divided. Others argue that 'nature' suggests an ideal essence, as if nature today exists beyond human influence and alteration of its processes. The way 'nature' will be used here is to suggest a multiplicity of modalities of living and dying, in which we humans are just a fragment (but a very influential one). As will become clear in my use of the Anthropocene as a concept, it is more appropriate to state that there are human systems with natural eco-systems embedded within them. Thus, if it becomes possible to change human systems, it will become possible for the eco-systems to flourish again.

6 I use the term 'non-human species' or 'non-human nature' to designate the multiplicity of species (approximately 8.4 million, of which *homo sapiens* is just one). As primatologist Frans da Waal points out, it is important to understand that other species should not be defined as 'lacking' humanness, in the sense that dogs are not just 'non-human', but also non-cats and non-birds etc. Each species is what it is, with its own way of being.

7 I will define this concept in more depth in section 0.4. *The Western welfare self*. As will become clear later, to participate in a community of contribution is to withdraw from the matrix of the Western welfare self based on excessive consumption and a high carbon footprint. It is to transform oneself almost as a philosopher would attempt to transform into a sage in Antiquity. In section 3.3. *Conversion of oneself to another*, I will go more deeply into this necessary existential transformation.

8 Recent scientific research into the complex hybridity of the human genome reveals traces of DNA from Neanderthals alongside a huge number from other species. Even

though it does not suit our self-image as a human species, we have to acknowledge that we are a mixture of primates now extinct. See Peter K.A. Jensen, *Da Mennesket blev Menneske*, for an overview of how we emerged in our current form from evolution.

9 This concept of evolutionary continuity has been evoked by Donald Griffin, who in *Animal Awareness* proposes that animals have awareness of themselves and are able to unfold cognitive processes through mental imagery, symbols and consideration of which actions to pursue. Instead of seeing an insurmountable divide between animals and humans, it would be better to follow the thoughts of Charles Darwin, who stated that there is consciousness everywhere among animals, but in a different degree to humans. Instead of Aristotle's hierarchical organisation of beings, we must see the relationship between humans and animals as being part of a 'tree of life'. In the words of Anne Benevenuti: '*The tree of life image suggests a more contemporary scientific understanding of the relationships amongst animals (including humans): that of kin who exist in a context of evolutionary continuity*', *Spirit Unleashed*, p. 17.

10 This agency ascribed to us as a species has been given various names designating the framework from which to see it, from the 'Anthropocene' to the 'Plantationocene' to the 'Capitalocene' – concepts that I will expand upon below.

11 Another term designating this split between humans and non-humans is 'Severing', used by Timothy Morton in *Humankind – Solidarity with Nonhuman People*. See the chapter 'Severing', p. 15, where he writes: '*The Severing is a catastrophe: an event that does not take place "at" a certain "point" in linear time, but a wave that ripples out in many dimensions, in whose wake we are caught*', and p. 16: '*The Severing is produced at the expense of actually existing biospheric beings and their relations.*' According to Morton, the Severing produces a trauma within the human, because it alienates him from intimate contact with the multiplicity of nature and other sentient beings. After the Neolithic revolution, humans were forever severed from arcadia and deemed to live in a 'desert landscape' – that of an imposed monoculture. The central question for me is whether a community of contribution will be able to establish a new kind of pact with nature by withdrawing from it in a materialistic sense (abstaining from a specific mode of consumption based on animal food production and the burning of fossil fuels) and instead open up a new access to nature.

12 Peter Singer defines speciesism in *Animal Liberation* as follows: '*Speciesism is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species*', p. 6.

13 To grasp the scope of our planetary force as a human race, it is important to understand that we exist within at least five revolutions – the cognitive (myths, social narratives and imagination), the agricultural (territorial rights and domestication of animals), the scientific (accumulation of evidence-based knowledge), the industrial (fossil fuels powering production and mobility) and the digital (data-information powered by algorithms and mobility of data). It is the totality of these revolutions – all at work simulta-

neously within the mode of capitalism (as the economic system of distribution) – that sets us apart from other species and whose consequences today manifest as the climate crisis and the sixth mass extinction. See section 0.5. *Jevons Paradox – the secret force of rebound effects*, where I reflect further upon human existence within the totality of these five revolutions.

- 14 See Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, p. 7.
- 15 See the recent UN survey documenting the disappearance of approximately 1 million species due to deforestation and destruction of natural habitats. The transformation of the Brazilian rain forest into agricultural land is the main threat to the biodiversity of the planet. See: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/
- 16 This neologism is inspired by the farewell address of US president Dwight D. Eisenhower on 17 January 1961, who warned against the industrial-military complex, an alliance between congress, the Pentagon, the US military and the defence industry. I use ‘the industrial-agricultural-food complex’ as a term to designate the relationship between contemporary animal production, the industries supplying crops and fertiliser, the lobbyists from the agricultural association, the politicians supporting state subsidies and finally the national food recommendations encouraging populations to consume its products. As a complex, it is international both in the scope of its markets and in its dependency on supply for feeding its livestock; and it is cultural, embedded into national identities as a ‘natural’ right to cultivate the landscape. Denmark, for example, still sees itself as a ‘farming nation’ even though the amount of people working in the sector is less than 5% of the total workforce and as an economy it contributes approximately 2% to the Danish GDP. As a consequence of the strong position of the industrial-agricultural-food complex, Denmark is the largest producer of meat in the world in relation to its size and population.
- 17 On this premise, I follow the line of thinking in Charles Taylor’s *Sources of the Self* and Lisa Kemmerer’s *Eating Earth*. Both view the self as situated within a moral framework. Taylor says it very clearly: ‘*My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the framework or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand*’, *Sources of the Self*, p. 27. That we are moral agents in relation to what we eat will become obvious in section 2.2. *Steps towards the community of contribution*.
- 18 To understand the power of a framework such as a community of contribution allow me to quote Charles Taylor: ‘*A framework incorporates a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us*’, *Sources of the Self*, p.19. It is the moral framework that allows the participant in a community of contribution to make ‘strong evaluations’ of different possibilities for

action within the material setup of the world. When going to the supermarket, for example, I can either choose to buy meat or vegetables for dinner. Here, the moral framework of the community of contribution guides the action to be taken: buy vegetables!

19 See *Prinzip der Verantwortung* by Hans Jonas, who in 1979 was already thinking from the perspective of what rising temperatures caused by the burning of fossil fuels would do to the climate and how deforestation of the rainforest would become a threat to biodiversity. His primary concern was to acknowledge the human responsibility to protect a vulnerable and precarious life on earth – a threat that must be seen in light of total annihilation through an atomic war between the US and the USSR.

20 In section 2.3. *Towards the sustainable state*, I will develop in more depth what I mean by this concept of the state. A sustainable state has already been suggested by others, including sociologist Rasmus Willig, who in the chronicle www.information.dk/debat/2018/08/spiser-lige-saa-koed-gennemsnittet-dine-boern-godt introduces the concept as a new response to the climate crisis. My own idea of the sustainable state (beyond the welfare state) will be described throughout the book, and shares some viewpoints with Willig, such as advocating a green diet for the population and taxing all carbon emissions.

21 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 47.

22 The term ‘conceptual personae’ is used by Deleuze and Guattari to designate the incarnation of concepts into persons, thereby aligning those concepts with an existential force. In *Generic Singularity*, 1.A.2. *Philosophical activism*, pp. 14–17, I describe in more depth my understanding of the conceptual personae. See also Deleuze and Guattari, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*, 1.3. *Les personnages conceptuels*, pp. 60–81. In section 0.4. *The Western welfare self*, I will elaborate further on the idea of conceptual personae.

23 The history of the Western welfare states is manifold, with regional differences and levels of welfare available to its citizens today. One of the first to push the state towards a welfare state (as we know it today) was Bismarck, who implemented the German *Sozialstaat* to secure proper housing, education and health conditions for the poor. One also finds religious ideas behind the care and protection of the precarious classes. As will become obvious, my main focus here is the formation of the welfare state after WWII, based on a high consumption of fossil fuels.

24 The Capitalocene designates how capitalism sees natural resources as available for mankind to extract and circulate on a market. For a further description of this concept, see Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, Chapter 10, *Capitalocene: A Combined History of Earth System and World-systems*, pp. 222–53.

25 See *ibid.* for the best introduction to this complex discursive formation I have read and how it is related to a specific mode of consuming the earth. The survey is an intellectual tour-de-force through all the aspects of the Anthropocene and is highly recommended as a data-driven understanding of what has happened over the last 70 years of human history.

- 26 Currently, there are at least four possible ‘points of entrance’ to the Anthropocene – the Agricultural Revolution approximately 11,000 years ago, the global system of capitalism and colonialism emerging in the 16th century, the patenting of the steam engine in 1784 by James Watt, and nuclear testing and atom bombs from 1945. The dispute about where to ‘fix’ the Anthropocene is interesting, because it asks who is to be held accountable. Was it agriculture (which brought deforestation, the domestication of animals and the building of cities) that marked the threshold? Was it capitalism and the constant search for cheap labour and natural resources that initiated the Anthropocene? Was it the use of fossil fuels as energy (the unlimited growth paradigm, the increase in speed and power) influencing the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide? Was it nuclear activities increasing radioactivity? For a more in-depth analysis of the debate around these different thresholds and entrance points, see Eric C. Ellis, *Anthropocene*.
- 27 For an overview of these 24 ‘Great Acceleration’ indicators that are both socio-economic and earth-system trends see www.thenaturalstep.de/challenge/planetary-dashboard/
- 28 See J.R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration*, which focuses primarily on this aspect of the Anthropocene: the exponential growth in earth systems and socio-economic trends. The book shows how after WWII, the United States ‘set the precedent in terms of scale and cultural weight’, p. 121 in regard to mass motorisation and suburbanisation, leading to pollution, increased consumption of fossil fuels and cities requiring an ‘enormous amount of resources from every part of the globe’, p. 123. My concept of the *Western welfare self* must be seen as the correlate to this increased consumption based on fossil fuels that was perpetuated by Western welfare states after WWII.
- 29 See my article: ‘Aesthetics of the Anthropocene’ in *Handbook of Business Legitimacy – Responsibility, Ethics and Society*, Springer Verlag where I set out the ethical dimension of an understanding of the Anthropocene.
- 30 See Andreas Malm, ‘Hvem Tændte Denne Ild?’ pp. 10–43, in *Ny Jord*, an article that explores the historical evolution of ‘fossil capitalism’ and how it was imposed on the rest of the world.
- 31 Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment*, p. 141.
- 32 Emerging as a ‘Black Swan’ to the world, Covid-19 has caused the most serious crisis to the global economy since WWII. Until now climate catastrophies have been seemingly local – and therefore also not been able to act as catalyst for united actions against curbing carbon emissions. As a difference, the Covid-19 crisis is affecting the world at the same time. Alone in the US, 26 million people (April 2020) have lost their jobs because of Covid-19. Perhaps, the corona-crisis will be the event that can trigger a global change in our view of killing animals and destroying wildlife – simply because the social and economic damages to our societies from pandemics are too severe.
- 33 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, p. 9.

- 34 Imre Szeman and Dominic Boyer, *Energy Humanities*, p. 1.
- 35 See Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital*, for a in-depth analysis of the shift from water power to fossil fuels as the prime mover in the early industrialisation of Great Britain during the 18th century.
- 36 One of the many achievements of modern city development has been the installation of sewage and fresh water supply in the urban realm, thereby establishing safe environments for humans.
- 37 J.R. McNeil and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration*, p. 11.
- 38 Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 12.
- 39 See *Generic Singularity*, 2.A.1. Excursus 1: *Heidegger and Dasein*, pp. 52–55, for a further elaboration of the being-ability of a human.
- 40 These numbers are made publicly accessible by the main organisation supporting the industrial-food complex in Denmark – ‘Landbrug og Fødevarer’ (Agriculture and Food). The approximately 149 million slaughtered animals consists of 18 millions pigs, 17 millions mink, 114 million poultry and half a million cattle. See <https://lf.dk/tal-og-analyser/statistik>
- 41 Quoted from Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 6. Originally stated in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. 1., *Theory of Practical Ensembles*, London, Verso, 1977, p. 154.
- 42 Maurice Merleau-Ponty: ‘*Philosophie vraie est non-philosophie – entrer dans la profondeur de l’Erfahrung*’, ‘*Philosophie et non-philosophie depuis Hegel*’, in *Notes de cours*, 1959–61, p. 312 / *Philosophy and Non-philosophy since Merleau-Ponty*, p. 46.
- 43 Maurice Merleau-Ponty: ‘*Notre état de non-philosophie – La crise n’a jamais été aussi radicale*’, *Le visible et l’invisible*, p. 219 / *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 165.
- 44 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 16 / www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf
- 45 It is interesting to contemplate the various manifestations of democracy in the Western world in relation to fossil fuels, but in the Middle East we also find non-democratic states based on kingdoms, Islam and an abundance of fossil fuels. In Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait the access to fossil fuels has enabled ‘modern’ states – in the technological sense, but not in the emancipated, ideological democratic sense. Here, women are oppressed, classes are segregated and dictatorships prevail due to religion and tribal culture.
- 46 As remarked above, this does not necessarily mean that fossil fuels as a prime mover lead to democratic societies. After a resurgence in democratic states following the Cold War, there has been a renewal of non-democratic state-formations.
- 47 I use the term ‘non-philosophy’ following Merleau-Ponty and it is not to be confused with the position of François Laurelle (b. 1937), who has developed his own definition and understanding of non-philosophy. I discuss the difference between Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Laurelle in *Non-philosophy and Contemporary Art*, Section 2.1.1. *Excursus: François Laurelle and Non-philosophy*, pp. 41–44.
- 48 An interesting account of how fossil fuels altered the perceptual modes of being in

the modern world is Robert Hughes' *The Shock of the New*, which maps out the different aesthetic responses to the industrial modern world. Here, the new that shocks is the various artistic movements of modernism, especially Impressionism, because of its loose handling of the painterly brushwork. It is a way of painting that can be seen as the adequate response to the way in which, in a modern world, perception becomes fleeting and happens in motion and transition.

- 49 See Marshall Bermann, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, where he describes how industrialisation and urbanisation changed the self-understanding of modern man. As he so eloquently writes: '*To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are*', p. 15. Later in the book he continues his description of this new existential mode of being: '*What kind of people does this permanent revolution produce? In order for people, whatever their class, to survive in modern society, their personalities must take on the fluid and open form of this society. Modern men and women must learn to yearn for change: not merely to be open to changes in their personal and social lives, but positively demand them, actively seek them out and carry them through*', pp. 95–96.
- 50 See my *Non-philosophy and Contemporary Art*, pp. 17–58, where I present Merleau-Ponty's view on non-philosophy and relate it to the activities of contemporary artists.
- 51 See Jørgen Dehs, *Reflexion og Erfaring*, where he discusses Hegel's idea of experiences of ruptures, and my introduction to *Non-philosophy and Contemporary Art*, pp. 19–20, where I specifically evoke the significance of ruptures for the evolution of new artistic positions.
- 52 Maurice Merleau-Ponty: '*Un homme ne peut recevoir un héritage d'idées sans le transformer par le fait même qu'il en prend connaissance, sans y injecter sa manière d'être proper, et toujours autre.*' 'L'Homme et l'adversité', in *Signes*, p. 365 (own translation).
- 53 In the first endnote of *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 219, we find Merleau-Ponty's sketch for a new ontology. Three topics designate this fundamental crisis: the subject-object question; the question of inter-subjectivity; the question of nature. From a certain viewpoint, a community of contribution can be seen as a 'solution' to these questions.
- 54 See *Generic Singularity*, 1.B.1. *The transcendental and the metaphysical knot*, pp. 27–31, for a further discussion of these dimensions and the metaphysical knot.
- 55 This emptiness is often depicted as a black void, a nothingness inside human existence. Could this darkness be a depiction of fossil fuels? Looking into the abyss of oil, I see nothing but compressed energy just waiting to release its compressed energy.
- 56 See my *Non-philosophy and Contemporary Art*, where I go in depth into the position and method of non-philosophy, pp. 52–58. See also my foreword to *Endurance*, pp. 14–17, where I develop further aspects of non-philosophy.
- 57 See Immanuel Kant, *Oplysning, Historie, Fremskridt* for a selection of his critical articles concerning the need for enlightenment as the trust in our own faculty of reason ('sa-

pere aude’). Confronted with the massive scientific evidence of the unfolding climate crisis, and the solutions proposed by the scientific community, we are more in need than ever of a new ‘environmental enlightenment’. We are, just as Kant was in his own time, faced with an immense ignorance and lack of trust in scientific reason, manifesting itself in climate scepticism and populist movements refusing to tax carbon emissions.

- 58 See *Generic Singularity*, 3.B.3.3. *Community of Contribution*, pp. 201–04.
- 59 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, p. 165.
- 60 Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 41.
- 61 See *Generic Singularity*, 2.A.2., *The Monstrous Body*, pp. 57–64, for a further elaboration of this concept.
- 62 At the recent COP25 in Madrid, the political leaders of the most polluting nations refused to curb their emissions.
- 63 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, p. 62.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 65 See the article <https://videnskab.dk/naturvidenskab/danske-husstande-har-eus-femtestoersted-co2-aftryk>, which maps out the various domains of a Dane’s carbon footprint. The data reveals huge regional differences within Denmark with regard to food, transport and housing. The figures vary depending on whether they are calculated for private individuals, including the activities of the state and private companies in Denmark, or take into account all the international economic activities of Danish companies contributing to Denmark’s BNP.
- 66 It is interesting to consider Denmark’s public infrastructure for its 5.8 million inhabitants. The following numbers are from the National Danish Institute of Statistics (www.dst.dk). Regarding learning institutions there are: 2,185 primary schools, 301 A-level institutions or foundation courses and eight universities. Regarding nursery care, there are 9,680 institutions. For the general healthcare of the population there are 70 hospitals (and 19 private hospitals). For public physical fitness there are in total 10,728 sports facilities – with 1,856 football pitches, 378 swimming pools and 1,620 large sports halls. There are also facilities for badminton, tennis, riding, golf, curling, skating, shooting and athletics. Regarding public administration, there are 98 municipalities structured across five regional centres, all with large architectural complexes housing public servants. Added to this sector are all the ministries working for the state administration (financial, economic, social, foreign policy, environmental, educational, infrastructure, technology etc.). Then there is public safety, with 56 police stations, 16 military complexes and 24 public city courts, plus the High Courts of East and West (Østre, Vestre Landsret and Højesteret). Regarding access to knowledge, books and cultural experiences there 416 libraries, 320 museums and at least 13 major concert halls. Regarding infrastructure of roads, there are 1,000 km of motorways, and 74,500 km of public roads. There are eight major airports, with Copenhagen being an inter-

national hub for global airlines. 52 ferries between islands and the mainland ensure free passage across seas and fjords. The rail system covers 3,476 km of tracks – and both roads and trains enjoy free passage over more than 2,200 bridges and tunnels, where 44 are major bridges and six are large tunnels. On top of this comes all the electric lighting during nighttime, the sewage installation ensuring the hygienic transport of human waste products, the installation of fibrenet for internet communication and the large number of public employees. Currently (2020) approximately 824,000 people are producing the ‘welfare’ for the state – from teachers to administrative staff to healthcare and cleaning personnel. What becomes obvious through this list of ‘public infrastructure’ is the amount of energy and material it has taken to build it and then to keep it functioning. Together, all these institutions in Danish society produce the architectural framework around the welfare self and inform our sense of the public and what it means to be a modern Danish citizen. We, the beneficiaries of this material affluence, have already built our ‘environment’. The challenge is that it has become the model of ‘the good life’ for the rising middle classes of Asia, Africa and South America – a question that relates to carbon justice and who in future will be allowed to use energy for the building and sustaining of their public infrastructure.

- 67 See www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-richest-10-produce-half-carbon-emissions-while-poorest-35-billion-account for the discussion regarding the distribution of consumption amongst the world’s populations.
- 68 During the recent political election in Denmark (June 2019), Social Democratic politicians proclaimed it was the right of every Dane to fly on vacation to the Mediterranean at least once a year. This statement came as a response to a proposal to tax flying. Insisting on ‘the right to consume’ reveals how embedded the benefits of the Welfare state have become – seen almost as human rights.
- 69 See *Generic Singularity*, 3.B.2.1. *The Spectacle, the Media*, pp. 176–9 for a discussion of Guy Debord’s theory of how capitalism is intertwined with commercials and modes of self-presentation that determine the objects and forms of desire.
- 70 See Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, p. 197 for a description of this process whereby a collective is deprived of its identity – in this case, the identity of a Western welfare self.
- 71 See *Generic Singularity*, 2.B.2.6. *Self-reflexivity or: the reflexive subject*, pp. 118–21, for further elaboration of self-reflexivity as the ability to distance oneself in order to see the world (and oneself in the world) in a new way.
- 72 William Stanley Jevons, *The Coal Question*, p. 123.
- 73 Bernd M. Scherer, ‘The Monsters’, in *Grain Vapor Ray*, p. 129.
- 74 See Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, Chapter 8. *Phronocene: Grammars of Environmental Reflexivity* for a further description of how environmental consciousness has been part of public awareness at least since the 1960s. The official account of limits to economic growth came from the famous Club of Rome, which in 1973 published *The Limits to Growth* – thereby pointing towards planetary

boundaries. This story is important to understand in light of the recent climate crisis awareness. We have known all the time, but have failed to act accordingly. The force of rebound effects could be one of the reasons why we have not succeeded in curbing carbon emissions.

- 75 Rebound effects were first brought to my attention by Mike Berners-Lee, who in *There is no Planet B*, warns against any easy solutions through smarter and more efficient technology. See pp. 82–3, where he discusses the Jevons Paradox in relation to energy efficiency. See also the more in-depth *The Jevons Paradox and the Myth of Resource Efficiency Improvements* by John M. Polimeni (ed.) that gives the empirical evidence for the Jevons Paradox, as well as presenting a historical overview and explaining the challenge it poses to scientific analysis.
- 76 See also J.R. McNeil and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration*, for a similar observation regarding refrigerators: ‘*The environmental benefits of the improved refrigerators, in fact, became a key part of the marketing strategies of the major manufactures and contributed to higher global sales. Eventually even a fivefold reduction in energy use per refrigerator was offset by the growing number of refrigerators in use, boosting total energy consumption*’, p. 141.
- 77 James Lovelock has in *Novacene – the Coming Age of Superintelligence* (2019) advocated for this redemptive power of new technology and believes that a new and more intelligent life form will solve the climate crisis, because future cyborgs will ‘*in their own interests [...] be obliged to join us in the project to keep the planet cool*’, p.106. I am highly sceptical of this belief, because it acts as a legitimisation of our current mode of life and deflects us from our responsibilities. To rely on technology as salvation is to postpone the moment when we acknowledge that we must create new values that allow for a shared co-existence with other sentient beings on this earth.
- 78 According to economist George Monbiot in the Danish national newspaper *Information*, 12 October 2019, p. 2, the 20 largest oil companies have been responsible for 35% of carbon emissions since the 1960s and are currently planning to invest 5,000 billion dollars into further extraction of oil around the world. The oil companies have been aware of the devastating environmental damage and the climate change that follows from their continued extraction of oil at least since the 1960s and yet they have not stopped or tried to minimise the amount of oil being consumed. Instead, they have lobbied against all state interference in their activities, funded anti-environmental campaigns and hired retired scientists to raise doubts about the impact of carbon emissions on the climate. In other words, in the moral question of who is responsible, there is no doubt that certain large oil companies are more responsible than others. Right now, an increasing number of pension funds are withdrawing their investments in oil companies as an ethical action against these major polluters.
- 79 See Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens* (2011) and his more recent *Homo Deus* (2015) for a description of the impact of these revolutions.

- 80 For an interpretation of how the scientific nominalist revolution came about through the collapse of scholastic thinking, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*.
- 81 Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 340.
- 82 We need more wild nature for several reasons: first of all, to allow for the re-emergence of all the life forms that used to inhabit the earth and that have their own intrinsic right to exist as species on this planet; secondly, because bio-degradation will ultimately harm us too, since all the activities of wild nature are important for our own survival, from the production of oxygen to the pollination of fruit trees.
- 83 A community of contribution is part of a larger attempt to address the climate crisis and will be followed by the books *Hybrid Atmospheres* and *(Dis)Closure* – an attempt to think of the ‘closure’ of modern individuals through the dimensions of own, given and final being.
- 84 As a conceptual event, it happens upon my plane of immanence as the answer to a problem: how to think utopia in the 21st century. See my *Generic Singularity*, section 1.A.2. *Philosophical Activism*, pp. 14-17 for a further discussion of my understanding of the plane of immanence and my use of *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* by Deleuze and Guattari as a way of doing philosophy.
- 85 See Deleuze and Guattari, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* for the proposition that philosophy consists in the creation of concepts, and that each concept is the promise of a future event to come.
- 86 See Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten* for a further description of this new structural possibility within our current mass consumer society that allows for the self-curating of one’s life, and making it visible on social-media platforms. The double-bind between a fossil capital that constantly produces objects, experiences and services together with the technological means of display allows for this ‘society of singularities’. My own work, *Generic Singularity*, is different from Reckwitz’s, because my focus is the will to become a singularity within an artistic field – that of a contemporary artist – a process that is very different from that of the ‘singular consumer’.
- 87 See the groundbreaking work of Ove Kaj Pedersen, *Konkurrence Staten* (2011), that convincingly argues for the transformation of the welfare state in Denmark into a competitive state.
- 88 In Denmark, the fundamental human rights are expressed in the constitutional law, which grants the state-citizen a number of rights in relation to basic income, education, freedom of speech and rules for parliament. This law is the foundation of the Danish democracy, but does not necessarily only lead to a welfare state (even though it secures these rights). A point to be further explored with regard to the transition into the sustainable state is whether the constitutional law should be re-written from the perspective of including non-human nature.
- 89 Ludwig Wittgenstein: ‘*Revolutionär wird der sein, der sich selbst revolutionieren kann*’, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, p. 45 / *Culture and Value*, p. 45e.

- 90 See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, part 2, p. 565, where he evokes the function of the regulative ideas as a *focus imaginarius*. They are a guiding point beyond the faculty of understanding created by reason, giving the first a direction and a unity in areas where knowledge cannot be obtained on a secure foundation. Nevertheless, this should not stop us from trying to explore these areas – such as knowledge of the world or the meaning of history. In the same way, a community of contribution can be seen as a unifying principle for all the day-to-day actions to be taken. See also Claus Bratt Østergaard, *Kants Kritik af Den Rene Fornuft*, pp. 270–81, for a further discussion of Kant’s regulative ideas.
- 91 We find a different way of understanding a regulative idea in the works of Charles Taylor, who sees it as a horizon of meaning for our daily lives.
- 92 Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 36.
- 93 During the 1980s, there was a renewed interest in the idea of the community in especially French thought, starting with Jean-Luc Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*, followed by Maurice Blanchot’s *The Unavowable Community* and taken up later by Giorgio Agamben in *The Coming Community*. Common to these was the attempt to ‘unwork’ the community from any essence, thereby dismantling it as an operative political concept.
- 94 Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 52.
- 95 Sociologist Georg Simmel developed these ideas in his famous essay *Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben* (1903).
- 96 Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 19.
- 97 *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 98 See *Generic Singularity*, 3.A-3.B *Given being*, pp. 125–205, where I analyse the double aspect of the social as consisting both of life-worlds and systemic structures.
- 99 See Benedict Andersson, *Imagined Communities*, for a description of how nationalism was created as an imagined community through mass-media communication systems including books, prints, and later radio and television.
- 100 See Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*, p. 35, where he traces the inspiration for Bataille’s distinction back to Tönnies. The figure of the community has played a central role in Continental thought in the 20th century, extending from Bataille, Blanchot, Nancy, Agamben to Esposito.
- 101 Georges Bataille, ‘The Psychological Structure of Fascism’, in *Visions of Excess*, p. 141.
- 102 For an in-depth analysis and presentation of Bataille’s concept of the inner experience and how this constitutes a community of those ‘without a community’, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, pp. 1–42.
- 103 Due to the negative aspect of a community (since it excludes by definition) a whole generation of French thinkers discarded the idea of any kind of ‘operative’ community. This can be seen in the attempt of Jean-Luc Nancy to develop an ‘inoperative community’ that ‘un-works’ all attempts to ground the community in an essence. As I see it, the community is still a valid critical figure as a mode of sociality that creates human resonance between people. In order to preserve the community, I believe we need to

- ground it in an ontological principle: that of generosity. A community of contribution is a generous community.
- 104 See the preface to the English translation of Maurice Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community*, where he responds to Nancy's critical assessment of Bataille and presents his own idea of a community based on love. For a further presentation of Bataille's attempt to found a new community around Acéphale, see the article by Mikkel Bolt 'Fraværet af et projekt', in *Fællesskabsfølelser*, pp. 15–38. Also see Stuart Kendall, *George Bataille*, chapter 11, *Acéphale*, pp. 129–38.
- 105 See George Bataille, *L'expérience intérieure*, Chapter 3, *Principles of a method and a community*, pp. 22–41, where he describes this possible community of those who share the experience of the limit.
- 106 See Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, for an investigation into the genealogy of the community as a figure within the philosophies of Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Heidegger and Bataille. Esposito's thinking is highly influenced by Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* and can to some extent be seen as the 'formal endpoint' of this deconstructive tradition of thinking the community without any essence and based on a nothingness.
- 107 David Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics*, p. 121.
- 108 For a description of the consequences of the Agricultural Revolution, see Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, Part 1, *The Great Divide*, pp. 3–26 and Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens*, Part 2, *The Agricultural Revolution*, pp. 87–178.
- 109 David Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics*, pp. 93–4.
- 110 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 27.
- 111 See the ground-breaking work by Donald R. Griffin, *The Question of Animal Awareness*, where he proposes the concept of evolutionary continuity between mammals with regard to the physiological structure of their brains. He writes: 'If we take for granted that our own mental experiences are real and significant, it seems more likely than not that because the central nervous systems of other animals are basically similar, they will share with our brains the capability of making possible at least some kind of mental experience', p. 167.
- 112 For a further overview of the scientific literature on this topic, see the article 'Thinking Pigs: A Comparative Review of Cognition, Emotion, and Personality in *Sus domesticus*', by Lori Marino and Christina M. Colvin at: www.farmsanctuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TSP_PIGS_WhitePaper_vF_2.pdf
- 113 During the history of the welfare state, industrialised farming has reached new levels of productivity and efficiency. As already mentioned, today approximately 149 million animals are slaughtered annually in Denmark, raised by approximately 36,000 farmers.
- 114 Timothy Morton, *Humankind*, p. 18.
- 115 Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological*, pp. 182–3.
- 116 See Oxana Timofeeva, *The History of Animals*, for an attempt to highlight the role that animals have played for philosophers throughout human history as a negative counterpart to human rationality and participation in higher reason.

- 117 The concept of the topical event is derived from Georges Bataille, who believed that writing had to emerge out of an inner necessity. Through writing, an intense communication needs to take place because writing is seen as a denuding of the subject. One writes because one has to, and because one cannot stop doing so.
- 118 As such, it represents a different approach taken by many visual artists from the 1990s on, who attempted to produce models for utopia through their work. Perhaps my approach is more Hegelian: a belief that the highest truth is conceptual. Presenting utopia either through social situations or visual representations has to be supplemented by a new mode of conceptual thinking. In order to change the substance of the real, the revolutionary has to work conceptually. But this does not mean that visual art has no impact. In my article 'Aesthetics of the Anthropocene', I have attempted to map out the various artistic trajectories that raise awareness of the Anthropocene and the ethical responsibility that follows from this awareness. As I see it, the crucial role of contemporary art is to create involving narratives based on both emotions and critical knowledge.
- 119 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: *What is Philosophy?*, p. 32.
- 120 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 59.
- 121 I will do this from within the phenomenological tradition of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion. Even though this line of thinking extends through to the work of Jacques Derrida, I will not go into the finer details of difference between these three thinkers. For a more in-depth analysis, see Rosalyn Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity*.
- 122 See also, Tor Nørretranders, *Det Generøse Menneske*, which investigates the powers of generosity in relation to courtship, altruism and social status, based on the many psychological investigations into and experiments on the benefits of sharing and displaying generosity. It is highly recommended in order to understand the wide scope of generosity as a way of being in the world. Like much literature on the topic, however, it remains within a human sphere of interest, not considering generosity towards non-human nature; nor does it consider the fundamental aspect of life as a gift that must be returned.
- 123 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 106.
- 124 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, pp. 49–53, where he considers generosity as a virtue as part of his complex analysis of what constitutes the correct ethical attitude in order to achieve happiness. Generosity, when enacted appropriately, in consideration of one's own means, and offered to the right people at the right time, is what follows from a virtuous character. According to Aristotle, generosity is to give, but depends on the right context in both time and space – thus generosity can also become a vice if it is exceeded, wasted or unconsidered (and is a lack, if one is mean and miserly). All virtues follow from the ability to display fairness and act in harmony with the middle way, depending on the situation. In his own words: '*The generous person will both give and spend the right amounts for the right purposes, in small and large matters alike, and do this with pleasure*', §24, p. 51. While Aristotle considers a number of virtues in his *Ethics*, with generosity

being one of many, I am identifying generosity as an ontological principle powering the community. Thus I place our generosity in our ability to alter our self-manifestation (and not to follow the logic of consumer society). This generosity is different from the Aristotelian virtue, because it entails withdrawal from our destructive impact upon nature.

- 125 See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infinité*, part III. A. 2., where he places the relation to life as a basic enjoyment of food. It is this chapter that forms the foundation for Corine Pelluchon's *Nourishment – A Philosophy of the Political Body*, which develops the thoughts of Levinas in regards to how we are to live on the earth in the times of the climate crisis. What makes Pelluchon's work especially pertinent is that she places her ontological insights within a wider political and juridical theory regarding a new society.
- 126 See www.worldanimalprotection.org/our-work/animals-farming-supporting-70-billion-animals for an estimate of the current production of animals within factory farms on a global scale.
- 127 For a science-based recommendation of a plant-based diet see clinical dietician Maria Felding's *Plantebaseret Kost* and *Gronne Spirer*, which presents up-to-date research regarding how adults and children can live on a plant-based diet.
- 128 See *Generic Singularity*, 1.B.4. *The relations to being*, pp. 37–41, where I discuss in more depth the difference between the ontic and the ontological with regard to Heidegger.
- 129 The act of withdrawal can be viewed from several perspectives. From one point of view, it is an acknowledgement of the necessity for each citizen to manifest him/herself differently (reducing my own carbon footprint). From a different point of view, it can also be seen in relation to carbon justice: that by reducing my carbon footprint there is – in principle – more for others, whose needs are more justified (as in building the necessary infrastructure so that they can withstand the climate changes of the future).
- 130 See *Generic Singularity*, 3.A.1. Excursus 2. *Jean-Luc Marion and Being Given*, pp. 132–4 for a further analysis of Marion's radical thoughts on phenomenology, the saturated phenomenon and a being in excess.
- 131 See *Generic Singularity*, 1.B.4. *The relations to being*, pp. 37–41, where I outline the various components feeding into the relations to own, given and final being, such as the rationality and intentionality embedded in the way we relate to the dimensions of the body, the social and time.
- 132 Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment*, p. 342.
- 133 The practical steps I propose are not original, and can be found in a number of other books dealing with the issue of living in a more environmental and 'earth-friendly' way. See, for example, Mike Berners-Lee, *There is No Planet B*, for a data-driven analysis of the various actions to be taken with regard to food production, energy consumption and transportation in order to avoid the worst-case scenarios. A critical objection, though, is that Berners-Lee considers the world primarily from a human perspective, and does not take into consideration the lives and deaths of farmed animals from their perspective.

- 134 No one individual is responsible for the climate crisis or the sixth mass extinction; it is the totality of systemic forces that over time have accumulated themselves as social realities governing the patterns and legitimations of human behaviour. Yet just because the ‘total infrastructure’ of the Western world is at work, this does not take away our responsibility for our individual actions. I still have a moral choice to actively withdraw from what is presented to me as a consumer.
- 135 The steps to take are primarily concerned with day-to-day actions with regard to a life as a Western welfare self: how to reduce impact on non-human nature and the environment through consuming. There are no recommendations on how to organise climate demonstrations, to intervene in the industrial-agricultural-food complex, or how to carry out eco-activism.
- 136 Lisa Kemmerer, *Eating Earth*, p. 139.
- 137 Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment*, p. 136.
- 138 See www.fastcompany.com/3031945/a-massive-global-map-of-where-all-the-cattle-pigs-and-other-livestock-live for a global account of where the livestock of the world is situated, according to species and geography. This number accounts for what is alive currently on the earth right now, but the number of annual killings is higher, since chickens only live three months and some piglets only six months (which is why the total number of animals slaughtered annually across the globe is approximately 70 billion). Excluded are all the male chicks that are killed straight after hatching and the approximately 150 million tonnes of seafood, made up of trillions of individual fish and shellfish). See also www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/chart-of-the-day-this-is-how-many-animals-we-eat-each-year/ for more details and the development of this destructive pattern of consumption.
- 139 See Jeffery Mason, *The Secret Lives of Farm Animals*, for a description of the discrepancy between what the farmed animals would really like to do and those conditions under which they are forced to live.
- 140 Also see Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, which in describing farmed animals’ terrible living conditions initiated the debate for better animal welfare.
- 141 Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, p. 53.
- 142 Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment*, p. 120.
- 143 I was shocked when I realised how the milk of the cow is extracted and the side effects of humans drinking milk: the calf is taken away from the cow to keep it lactating; once its production of milk declines, it is re-inseminated; if it gives birth to a male cow, the calf is killed immediately after being born, because it is of no use; after three to four years, the performance of the milk-producing cow will have peaked, whereafter it is sent to the slaughterhouse. There is a tremendous violence inherent to the production of milk (and all the products that are based on milk – butter, cheese, ice cream, yoghurt), which is why choosing a plant-based diet is the only right thing to do out of respect for the individual animal. Eco-feminism is right on this point: the subjection of

- women is related to the subjection of the female animal in order to control its reproductive cycles. See Lisa Kemmerer, *Eating Earth*, p. 141.
- 144 See the report from the IME – Institute of Mechanical Engineers, www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/jan/10/how-much-water-food-production-waste. This list contains an overview of the resource footprint of all sources of food. See also Mike Berners-Lee, *There is No Planet B*, which maps out the different costs of producing various kinds of food and what governments and individuals can do to minimise the impact of food production on nature.
- 145 See <https://greentravelife.com/the-production-costs-of-1-kilogram-beef/>
- 146 The transition to a plant-based diet presents the community of contribution with a problem inherited from the industrial-agricultural-food complex that places itself as an aporia of our morals and ethics. What to do with the billions of animals living right now? We humans have simply produced too many cows, pigs, sheep and poultry. What should we do with all these billions of sentient beings under our dominion? A community of contribution is morally against killing other animals (whether in the wild or farmed), but from an environmental and ethical position, we need to drastically reduce the number of farmed animals by phasing out as quickly as possible the whole industrial-agricultural-food complex based on animal food production. Such phasing out of existing factory farms would demand the help of the banks and the sustainable state for the debt relief of farmers in Denmark.
- 147 See Lisa Kemmerer, *On Eating Earth*, Chapter 2. A Fishy Business, pp. 51–89 for a devastating description of what happens as a result of industrialised fishing of the oceans and aquaculture.
- 148 For a more thorough discussion of hunting as sport, see Lisa Kemmerer, *Eating Earth*, chapter *Hunting Hype*, pp. 90–138.
- 149 See the discussion published by *Science* that reveals that if the world’s population lived off a plant-based diet, we could reduce the amount of agricultural land by 75%. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/360/6392/987>. See also the discussions of the Danish think tank Concito regarding the environmental benefits of changing to a plant-based diet. https://concito.dk/sites/concito.dk/files/media/document/Klimavenlige%20madvaner%202019_rev1.pdf
- 150 Title of an interview (own translation) with former managing director of Goldman Sachs, August Lund, who in the Danish national paper *Politiken* of 1 February 2020, accuses politicians and liberals of not acting fast enough in reducing carbon emissions.
- 151 See Mike Berners-Lee’s arguments for keeping fossil fuels in the ground in *There is no Planet B*, Chapter 3, *Energy*, pp. 59–98.
- 152 In order to achieve its goal of a 70% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, the Danish Climate Panel presented in March 2020 an ambitious plan to meet these targets. Among the many proposals was a high taxation on all activities causing green house gases, from carbon dioxide to eating red meat. Unfortunately, these have no binding

force – they are recommendations and advice to the government, which at the present moment seems unwilling to implement the ideas due to classical welfare-state concerns: fear of losing jobs and how such a tax would punish the poor. At no point did the climate minister express any concern for the lives of farmed animals.

- 153 Quoted from Sébastien Marot, *Taking the Country's Side*, p. 123.
- 154 In Sweden (2020), there has already been a 10% decline in domestic flights within the last year – the reasons being ‘fly shame’ and a tax on flying. This decline testifies to the fact that we as a collective – on a private and systemic level – can change, due to both a shift in our moral consciousness and through state interference.
- 155 In Denmark this is already happening. See www.andelsgaarde.dk
- 156 An example of this new way of living is ‘Permatopia’ just south of Copenhagen, with 90 houses built as low-energy units and with its own sewage system, local farming and communal dining. See www.permatopia.dk for further information.
- 157 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, p. 27.
- 158 Isabella Tree, *Wilding*, p. 8.
- 159 See *ibid.*, which describes the ‘return of nature to a British farm’ over a period of 15 years.
- 160 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 161 Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, p. 169. Quoting this animal rights manifesto nearly 50 years since its publication awakens a tragic feeling within me. All the solutions that we consider today – shifting to a plant-based diet and reforestation so as to capture carbon – have been known to the general public for decades. The unfolding climate crisis is a tragedy, because we know what to do, but are unable to break away from our ‘Western fate’. Today, scientists estimate that if an area the size of India were reforested, enough carbon would be captured to stabilise the rising global temperatures.
- 162 See the organization www.vildmedvilje.dk, which actively promotes owners of private gardens to re-wild their gardens.
- 163 According to www.concito.dk, as much as 90% of Danish farmland could be reverted to wild nature if the remaining 10% was farmed intensely and only for a plant-based diet.
- 164 Not only the sustainable state – but also the banking sector – has the possibility of helping this transformation, because of the accumulated debt inside the farming industry. Many farmers are caught in a system that forces them to continue conventional farming, because ecological farming does not make the same profit. All this could change with a new taxation and subsidy system encouraging the plant-based production and consumption of food.
- 165 After years of struggling to make a profit through conventional farming, my mother decided to give up the farming of our land and with the help of subsidies from the EU, organised neighbours into creating the Aeroe Nature Park. The effect on the recovery of wild life has been significant – among other species, two eagles succeeded in breeding in the summer of 2019.

- 166 A question I will develop further in section 3.2. *Vertical being or deep-time sensibility.*
- 167 Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment*, p. 343.
- 168 The Danish welfare state evolved within the historical framework of Denmark as an agricultural nation due to its ability to export high-quality animal-based food products such as butter and bacon to especially the UK. From the 1950s on, the agricultural sector went through a massive industrialisation that increased the production of animals, from small local farms to factory farming. During the same period, the state officially supported food campaigns that recommended a high intake of animal-based food products, such as eggs, fish, milk, cheese, beef and sausages.
- 169 For me, the sustainable state is not the state that supports the ‘business as usual’ paradigm. Instead, the sustainable state is a revolt against the relationship between neo-liberalism and the welfare state that is based on products from the industrial-agricultural-food complex.
- 170 See Ove Kaj Pedersen, *Konkurrence Staten*, for a presentation of the differences between the welfare state and the competitive state. Unfortunately, Pedersen does not see the planetary environmental consequences of the welfare state, nor the externalities with regard to non-human nature that are immanent to the affluence imbedded in the welfare state as a lifestyle programme.
- 171 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, pp. 49–50.
- 172 Except for the American constitution, which was formed as a rebellion against the British Empire and thereby granted the right of individuals to take up arms against the state. ‘The Second Amendment’ reads as follows: ‘*A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.*’ This legal right is today the main problem in limiting citizens’ ownership of weapons. As a consequence, deaths related to firearms in the US are much more frequent than in any other Western nation.
- 173 At the time of writing (March 2020), Denmark has for the first time since WWII closed its borders to all foreigners in order to protect its citizens from coronavirus. The military (with the aid of the police) is enforcing this closure, thereby manifesting the sovereign right of the state to decide what to do in a state of emergency (Carl Schmidt).
- 174 Danish farmers alone import 1,7 million tonnes of soya produced on former South American forest land (an area approximately quarter the size of Denmark) to feed its production of cattle, pigs and poultry. See the discussion of Danish NGO *Verdens Skove* that maps the direct consequence of soya production in South America: <https://sojoudenskov.verdensskove.org/>
- 175 One of the most persistent and strongest voices against the Danish industrial-agricultural-food complex has been journalist Kjeld Hansen, who in 2019 published: *Farvel til Dansk Landbrug*. Here he presents a strong case for why this kind of farming is degrading for animals, the countryside, the environment, public health, and unsustainable from an economic perspective.

- 176 In September 2019 the Danish state and the lobbyists representing Danish Industries have agreed as a ‘joint venture’ to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses by 70% by 2030. This means that Denmark, after years of neo-liberal government, is heading towards being a sustainable state regarding emissions. The greatest challenges in the years to come, however, will be to implement the necessary transformation of the industrial-agricultural-food complex that is so pervasive and integral to the Danish national self-identity.
- 177 Helmut Plessner, ‘*Takt ist die Bereitschaft, auf diese feinsten Vibrationen der Umwelt anzusprechen, die willige Geöffnethet, andere zu sehen und sich selber dabei aus dem Blickfeld auszuschalten, andere nach ihrem Maßstab und nicht dem eigenen zu messen. Takt ist die ewig wache Respekt vor der anderen Seele*’, *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*, p. 107 (own translation).
- 178 Zygmunt Bauman, *Community*, p. 1.
- 179 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 180 See *Generic Singularity*, 3.B.2. *Systemic modernity*, pp. 169–93, where I outline some of the basic components feeding into this concept, such as capitalism, the media world, democracy, nation states and institutions. As part of the non-philosophical programme, I will develop my concept of *systemic modernity* in a future publication.
- 181 As already mentioned, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, for an exploration of this fundamental revolution of the human thought-space that happened with the collapse of scholastic philosophy in the Middle Ages.
- 182 What Michel Foucault calls ‘bio-politics’ and which emerges with the formation of modern nation states as a way of controlling and disciplining populations.
- 183 See Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens*, where he writes: ‘*The Industrial Revolution brought about dozens of major upheavals in human society. [...] Yet all of these upheavals are dwarfed by the most momentous social revolution that ever befell humankind: the collapse of the family and the local community and their replacement by the state and the market*’, p. 398. For an analysis what this means for the individual – to no longer exist within the safe limits of the community – see the article of Henrik Kaare Nielsen, *Fællesskabets Posttraditionelle Vilkår*. Especially the ‘loss of meaning’, but also the disclosure to individual freedom are central to his analysis.
- 184 Helmut Plessner: ‘*Das Idol dieses Zeitalters ist die Gemeinschaft*’, *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*, p. 28 (own translation).
- 185 Helmut Plessner: ‘*Der Mensch verallgemeinert und objektiviert sich durch eine Maske*’, *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*, p. 82 (own translation).
- 186 The mask designating the totality of the uniform and the architectural setting granting him or her authority to judge on behalf of the constitutional law.
- 187 The notion of ‘resonance’ has lately been developed by sociologist Hartmut Rosa as a criticism of contemporary accelerated society. It would be interesting in a different context to explore the similarities and differences between Plessner and Rosa. What is also worth considering is that Plessner locates resonance within the public servant – thereby giving civic society a warm role – where it would be more natural to see the

space of the community as the place for resonance. This should probably be seen in the light of how violent the community could become once elevated to a totalitarian principle: within the community the participant ‘shuts out’ the outsider, becomes hostile towards those who do not belong to it (what is still seen in today’s tribal warfare but also within the ‘European Community’ – outside its borders thousands of refugees of African and Middle Eastern origin are kept in camps, living an impoverished life with no future relief in sight).

- 188 Joseph B. Pine II and Stephen Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, p. 3.
- 189 See Martin Heidegger’s, ‘Nietzches Wort “Gott ist tot”’, in *Holzwege* for a further analysis of what the ‘Death of God’ meant for continental philosophy.
- 190 Nihilism arose in modernity as a general shift in spiritual outlook that can be seen as one of the many consequences of urbanisation. During industrialisation, the relation between rural dwellers and urban citizens shifted, thereby emancipating the majority of people from agricultural work. Since the Neolithic period, most humans had been engaged in tilling soil, feeding livestock and living off the earth, thereby existing within the biblical sphere of mythological self-understanding: to be a peasant was to live, according to the words of the Bible, condemned by God to live outside of Paradise. To move to the city was to free oneself from this condemnation – thereby proving God wrong. The city was a new space of human self-defined freedom. Moving to the city meant freeing oneself from the constraints of the rural community and the embedded meanings of life inherent to this life form. But it also came with an existential cost: living in the city was isolating and was for many also a loss of meaning.
- 191 See Inge Houmann, *Nihilismen*, for an in-depth analysis of the linguistic dimensions of nihilism in terms of the freedom to become creative through language.
- 192 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo / Why I am so Wise*, p. 22.
- 193 Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Das Ja-sagen zum Leben selbst’, *Götzendämmerung*, Alt. 5. (own translation).
- 194 Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘War das das Leben? Wohlan! Noch Ein Mal!’ *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p. 199 (own translation).
- 195 The re-reading of Nietzsche by the 1960s generation of French philosophers – Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze – can be seen as the search for a new philosophy of difference.
- 196 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature*, p. 4.
- 197 David Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics*, p. 121.
- 198 James Lovelock, *Novacene*, p. 12.
- 199 Holmes Rolston III, *A New Environmental Ethics*, p. 135.
- 200 See Henri Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, for a differentiation between absolute and abstract space – a distinction taken up by Andreas Malm in *Fossil Capital*: ‘Abstract Space [is] where capital tears material components from their natural beds and heaps them up in places of its own choosing. Instead of going reverently to the mountaintops and rivers and establishing

businesses there, as some temples on holy ground, capital carries away what it needs and pours it out in places where the production of more exchange-value can best proceed. Capital produces abstract space, as a matrix of nodes and arteries that evolve not through their revealed biophysical attributes, but through the circuits of capital itself, p. 301.

- 201 See Frans de Waal, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?*, where he explores the various cognitive abilities of animals for rational thinking, co-operation, anticipation of future events, feigning intention, using tools and displaying a moral sense of fairness.
- 202 Merleau-Ponty, *Nature*, p. 38.
- 203 See also *The Barbarian Principle*, ed. Jason M. Wirth with Patrick Burke, containing articles exploring this theme from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty and Schelling. Another book exploring the same question, but using Alfred N. Whitehead to ‘unlock’ Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of nature, is *Nature and Logos* by William S. Hamrick and Jan van der Veken.
- 204 The force of Greta Thunberg – and with her, all school children who go on climate strike – is that she breaks the silence concerning the possibility of life for future generations. She is protesting on behalf of a future self that is not yet there to speak up. Thus, from a speculative viewpoint, Thunberg is from the future – almost like a sci-fi movie where she has been sent back to the past (our present) to warn current political leaders of the impact of the climate crisis. By engaging herself in the climate crisis on behalf of her future self, she is able to change the future (by forcing the politicians to respond to her demands).
- 205 For an interesting account of what the world looked like before humans began domesticating and transforming wild nature according to their interests – and how it might return to wild nature again – if we suddenly all disappeared, see Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us*.
- 206 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 266.
- 207 *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- 208 See Michel Foucault, *Ethics*, vol. 1, for the many essays that deal with this question, especially ‘Self Writing’, ‘Technologies of the Self’ and ‘The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a practice of Freedom’.
- 209 As an entry point to the act of observing and paying close attention to the lives of animals, I recommend Jeffrey Masson’s *The Secret World of Farm Animals*.
- 210 What Donna Haraway calls ‘kin-making’, in which an attempt to communicate with non-humans takes place.
- 211 Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, p. 90 (translation slightly modified).
- 212 Lisa Kemmerer, *Eating Earth*, p. 32.
- 213 See Michel Foucault, *Dream, Imagination and Existence*, for a brilliant analysis of the power the dream holds over our existence, and its ability to disclose ourselves and confront us with the world. He writes: ‘*Man has known, since antiquity, that in dreams he encounters what he is and what he will be, what he has done and what he is going to do, discovering there the knot that ties his freedom to the necessity of the world. [...] In the dream, the soul, freed of its*

- body, plunges into the kosmos, becomes immersed in it, and mingles with its motions in a sort of aquatic union', p. 47.
- 214 The exclusion zone surrounding the former nuclear power plant of Chernobyl is a great example of how nature thrives once it is left on its own – both vegetation and wildlife have returned, but unfortunately with higher frequencies of cancer among mammals.
- 215 There is scientific evidence that contact and engagement with nature increases mental health, reduces stress and anxiety. See the overview of literature on the topic here: www.artikleromsundhed.dk/er-naturen-helbredende/
- 216 Currently, only one small political party represented in parliament, Alternativet, has as part of its programme a challenge to the consumption of meat and the industrial-agricultural-food complex. The Vegan Party (www.veganerpartiet.dk) is still attempting to receive enough support to run for parliament. This is the only party whose explicit political goal is to abolish the industrial farming of animals in Denmark.
- 217 Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment*, p. 249.
- 218 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 6.
- 219 Timothy Morton, *Humankind*, p. 152.
- 220 See David Wallace-Wells, *Uninhabitable Earth*, for an overview of warnings in scientific literature – from irregular climate patterns to how climate change is creating geopolitical disturbances and conflicts around the world.
- 221 Richard Powers, *The Overstory*, p. 625.
- 222 Immanuel Kant held the same position, since he noticed that people who were cruel to animals extended their violence to humans. Regrettably, he did not consider kindness to animals a value in itself, regarding them as inferior beings without feelings or the faculty of reason, and existing solely as means for human ends. This is very explicit in the article 'Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte', in Immanuel Kant: *Oplysning, Historie, Fremskridt*, pp. 76–93.
- 223 My father was also a great meat-eater, and preferred his car to a bicycle, so unfortunately he was not an ideal participant in my vision of a community of contribution.

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Project for Vejle Floating Art Festival, Denmark

23 June - 2 September 2018

5 x 10 x 15 m, plywood, acrylic glass, styropor, 5 t.

A 1:1 mock-up of a corner of Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier partly submerged. The work was intended as a critical comment on the 'sinking' of the public sphere through the use of new digital technologies and psycho-metric profiling in the elections of Trump and Brexit. After an article in ICON EYE on 27 of July 2018, the project went viral internationally.

The image shows me launching the sculpture, having just released the cable. Shortly afterwards, it was tugged to its position in the fjord. After the massive heat wave of that summer I changed my interpretation of it, and now see it as a portent of the impending climate crisis. From this perspective, it looks like a melting iceberg. From the front, it looks as if a house has been washed away by a huge flood.

See www.asmundhavsteen.net/projects for more information, interviews and overview of all the articles about the project.



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For decades, we have been aware that the climate crisis we are facing right now would inevitably arrive unless something were done. So why is it – after all these years of introducing renewable and efficient energy sources, recycling garbage, producing organic food – that global warming, the destruction of the rainforest and the sixth mass extinction have not been averted?

It seems that as a species, we are incapable of imagining a world without our current use of energy. But nobody is locked forever into their worldviews and unable to modify them. It is now more urgent than ever to formulate a new moral ethos for the 21st century that can reverse the ways in which we have treated nature. It is time to give nature back what we have taken from it. It is time to undo the effects of capitalism and the industrial-agricultural-food complex, which together with fossil fuels have created a massive luxury-trap in which we are ensnared. It is time to respect non-human nature.

A community of contribution is the name for this attempt. A community of contribution is a moral framework based on an ethic for the Anthropocene: that we are responsible for the climate crisis, thus endangering future generations of humans, but also all the other living creatures with whom we share life on this planet.

A community of contribution is an invitation to think about ourselves as part of something larger. As a narrative about who we are and what we can become, it places us on a large temporal horizon of evolutionary continuity within deep-time. It is an empowering narrative because it tells the story of how every individual can contribute through very simple actions that, when scaled up to a planetary level, can lead to a new balance between man and the environment, an eco-topia in which, above all, we respect non-human nature.

