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Dismantling Human Supremacy

Ecopedagogy and Self-Rewilding as Pathways to Embodied Ethics and Cross-Species Solidarity

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the urgent need for a transformative shift in environmental ethics education, specifically challenging the pervasive ideology of human supremacy that shapes contemporary pedagogical approaches. Following ecopedagogy and the critical pedagogy movements, it critiques current educational frameworks that implicitly reinforce human dominance over the more-than-human world. The paper explores the ethical consequences of disembodied, human-centered education, which alienates students from ecological realities and perpetuates environmental degradation and social inequities. In response to these challenges, the paper proposes an alternative ethical framework grounded in cross-species solidarity, relational ethics, and embodied learning. Utilizing approaches such as wild pedagogy and self-rewilding, it emphasizes the importance of immersive, hands-on educational practices that cultivate empathy, multispecies kinship, and ecological consciousness. By fostering these connections, the paper advocates for a reimagined education system that not only dismantles human supremacy but also nurtures more just, regenerative relationships between humans, other-than-human species, and ecosystems. This reorientation in environmental ethics pedagogy offers a critical pathway to confronting the interconnected ecological, social, and cultural crises of our time, while promoting long-term multispecies justice and ecological flourishing.

Keywords: cross-species solidarity; ecopedagogy; embodied ethics; empathy; environmental activism; environmental ethics; human supremacy; multispecies justice; self-rewilding; wild pedagogy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Alternative and critical pedagogies have entered the academic discourse surrounding environmental education over the last few decades. The

ecopedagogy movement, which builds on the work of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, calls for the development of ecological consciousness by critically addressing systems of inequality as well as the assumption of human domination over nature (Torjussen 2022). Wild pedagogies seek to rehabilitate notions of wildness through methods that resist the tendency toward control and domestication that Western educational models have inherited (Jickling *et al.* 2018). Additionally, care ethics (Garalnik *et al.* 2012) and posthuman ethics (Kopnina 2022) are being integrated into the theory and practice of environmental ethics. These approaches recognize that cultural and ethical changes are necessary for ecological and environmental justice to be enacted and urgently call for education to attend to the agency and autonomy of the more-than-human world (Abram 1996) in this present moment of climate crisis.

This paper contributes to the growing body of scholarship engaging with alternative environmental pedagogies by specifically addressing Western [1] environmental ethics education and its commitment, however unintentional, to upholding human supremacist worldviews through disembodied, abstracted, and unsituated methods. While it is common for articles and books on environmental education to begin with the premise of the Anthropocene (Capitalocene) [2], we assert that the underlying worldview from which this designation arises must be deconstructed. Human supremacy in the context of education has profound consequences that must be investigated: it not only justifies ecological degradation but also entrenches a distorted understanding of our place in the world. In both formal and informal educational settings, this ideology is perpetuated through disembodied teaching practices that further separate humans from the more-than-human world and reinforce the notion that the natural world exists merely for human use and consumption. Injustices for humans and other-than-humans must be addressed through intersectional liberatory movements. However, educational methodology today is often left to ricochet between social constructivism and scientific realism. These frameworks, while they have their place and purpose, leave little room for the more-than-human world to matter in education. We propose a radical shift from environmental ethics

[1] We are both scholars situated within the Western framework, yet one of us brings the perspective of an Italian academic background and the other of an American. This paper reflects our situated knowledge, shaped by these distinct cultural and academic influences.

[2] Jicking *et al.* 2018; Paulsen *et al.* 2022.

pedagogy rooted in human-centered frameworks to ecopedagogies that are grounded in embodied ethics and nurture skills in students aimed at cross-species solidarity.

We begin this shift by addressing, in section 2, how human supremacy manifests in environmental destruction, analyzing the ethical implications of placing human interests above ecological resilience and flourishing. We explore how this worldview naturalizes the disconnection between humans and the more-than-human world, creating multispecies intergenerational cycles of environmental degradation and injustice. Importantly, we connect these environmental consequences with the ways in which human supremacy is reinforced within educational systems, showing how disembodied learning and human exceptionalism are perpetuated.

In section 3, we turn toward an alternative ethical framework – cross-species solidarity and embodied ethics – as a means of disrupting human supremacy. We argue that empathy is not a purely intellectual exercise but emerges from our material, intercorporeal connections with other species and the ecosystems we share. We explore how fostering empathy and relationality through embodied, multispecies engagement can reorient our ethical commitments away from domination and toward solidarity with the more-than-human world. Drawing on examples from environmental activism and animal liberation movements, we show how cross-species solidarity is not an abstract ideal but a lived practice that can challenge the foundations of human supremacy.

Finally, in section 4, we present practical approaches to implementing ecopedagogy through wild pedagogy and self-rewilding. We argue that these hands-on, immersive educational practices offer concrete pathways for cultivating ecological consciousness and relational ethics. By moving beyond traditional classroom settings and encouraging direct engagement with the world, wild pedagogy fosters a deeper understanding of our interdependence with the natural world. We emphasize that self-rewilding, both as a personal and collective process, is crucial in reshaping our relationship with ecosystems and other-than-human species, ultimately creating educational models that nurture multispecies empathy and justice.

Together, these sections highlight the critical importance of rethinking education as a tool for dismantling human supremacy. By integrating embodied learning, cross-species solidarity, and ecopedagogical practices, we propose a transformative shift toward more regenerative and just ways of being in the world, where human beings recognize their

interconnectedness with all life forms. This reimagined education can play a pivotal role in shaping future generations' understanding of, and responsibility toward, the more-than-human world.

2. Human supremacy: the embodied ideology of ecological wreckage

Human supremacist ethics promote a worldview that places human interests and desires above all other life forms and ecosystems. This ideology legitimizes the exploitation and domination of the more-than-human world, positioning humans at the pinnacle of a moral hierarchy that renders other-than-human life inferior and disposable. American STS scholar Eileen Crist (2017) argues that this complex is not an inherent feature of humanity but rather a socio-culturally conditioned worldview. In both formal and informal educational settings, we are instilled with the beliefs that "the Earth [only] belongs to humanity; that the planet consists [solely] in resources for the betterment of people; and that human beings are 'obviously' superior to all other species" (Crist 2017, 62). Given the pervasiveness of human supremacy, we argue that environmental ethics pedagogy must first recognize and acknowledge this ingrained worldview as part of actively dismantling it. In this section, we begin by exploring the environmental consequences and ethical implications of human supremacy. We then demonstrate how human supremacist worldviews are intricately tied to disembodiment in current educational philosophies and practices. Recognizing the roots of human supremacy within our educational systems allows us to understand how deeply entrenched this worldview has become in shaping our relationship with the environment. This acknowledgment is the first step in dismantling the ethical framework that has justified centuries of environmental degradation.

Human supremacy functions like an invisible puppet master, manipulating human behavior and shaping how we interact with the world. Under this illusion of control, humans imagine themselves omnipotent, directing the more-than-human world to serve their needs while blinding themselves to the broader consequences of their actions – consequences that include degrading ecosystems, disrupting the delicate web of interdependencies that sustain life, and accelerating climate change and species extinction. This destructive cycle manifests in extractivist practices such

as deforestation, industrial mining, factory farming, and mass-scale fishing. The suffering and destruction of species are rationalized as necessary costs for human benefit. Moreover, human supremacy exacerbates multispecies injustice by denying other-than-human species their rightful place in the biosphere while perpetuating environmental inequality. Marginalized communities, particularly Indigenous peoples, disproportionately bear the brunt of resource extraction, pollution, and habitat destruction, while wealthier societies reap the rewards.

The response to these consequences is predominantly one of denial. If ecological destruction is addressed, it is usually through shallow techno-optimist and eco-modernist solutions that fail to address the underlying ethic of domination and mastery over the more-than-human world (Plumwood 1994). These solutions continue to prioritize short-term economic gains for human interests while neglecting long-term planetary health. Over time, this worldview naturalizes disconnection from the more-than-human world, normalizing environmental degradation across generations. This process, known as the "shifting baseline syndrome" (Vera 2010), leads each generation to perceive a progressively diminished environment as normal, erasing individual and collective memories of past ecological richness.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of human supremacy is its perpetuation of multispecies intergenerational injustice. By prioritizing present-day human desires, it jeopardizes the futures of both human and other-than-human species. The environmental destruction wrought today – through biodiversity loss, climate change, and ecosystem collapse – severely limits the potential for future life on Earth. In this sense, human supremacy is not only a framework for exploiting the more-than-human world but a blueprint for depriving future generations, humans and other-than-humans, of the possibility to co-inhabit a thriving planet.

We visualize human supremacy as a glass fortress. Constructed on assumptions of human exceptionalism, this metaphorical fortress separates humanity from the more-than-human world, reinforcing the illusion that humans are distinct from and superior to the more-than-human world. From within the fortress, the world outside seems distant and distorted, making it easier for humanity to ignore the consequences of its actions. However, this structure is fragile. Every tree felled, every polluted waterway, and every factory emitting carbon is a hammer blow to the glass, creating cracks in the illusion of separation. As these cracks multiply, the ecological damage becomes increasingly visible, threatening the collapse of the fortress and exposing humanity to the full consequences of

its behavior. The collapse of this glass fortress represents not just a failure of infrastructure but the end of the illusion that humanity can dominate the more-than-human world without suffering the consequences, forcing us to confront the devastation we have wrought. As the illusion of separation becomes increasingly untenable, the collapse of ecological systems forces humanity to reckon with the consequences it has long ignored.

In many ways, educational institutions and practices reside within and further reinforce the glass fortress. Buildings and classrooms materially separate students from the rest of the biosphere, and educational practices condition students to adopt disembodied human supremacist postures in the world. From an early age, students are taught to see themselves as masters of the natural world rather than as embodied participants within it. For instance, science education often reduces and categorizes the more-than-human world into a collection of resources to be manipulated for human consumption, while history curricula glorify colonial expansion and industrialization, omitting the environmental devastation they left in their wake. In this way, education becomes a distorted mirror, reflecting only the human face while casting the more-than-human world into a shadowy background (Plumwood 1994), perpetuating the illusion that human dominance is the key to progress and success while obscuring the complex interdependencies that define ecological resilience and flourishing.

This self-involved focus has become deeply embedded in current learning and teaching methods, the product of centuries of honing educational humanism and its goal of producing responsible, rational human citizens (Snaza 2015). Educational humanism, which we identify as one expression of human supremacy, can be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman models concerned with separating the human from their inner "beast", as Socrates famously put it, and "taming the animality of the human" (*ibid.*, 22). This process involved controlling the affective and embodied aspects of human existence while privileging the development of abstract, logical thought. During the Enlightenment, human reason was further elevated, deepening the split between humans and animals, mind and body, and entrenching assumptions about human superiority that still permeate educational goals and curricula (O'Loughlin 2006). Many philosophers have critiqued the Cartesian divide between mind and body, identifying it as a foundational belief system employed to justify human control over the material world (Plumwood 1994; O'Loughlin 2006; Adams and Gruen 2022). Yet, despite these critiques and advances in our understanding of human cognition and its dependence on our embodied positioning in the

world (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), as well as an expanded understanding of other-than-human animal cognition in its many diverse forms (Bekoff, Allen, and Burghardt 2002) these dualisms persist.

The resulting normalization of bodily control in education is no small matter. The inherited Enlightenment belief that a fully developed human is only possible through the cultivation of cognitive reasoning relegates human bodies to the background alongside other-than-humans. We identify a correlation, then, between human supremacy and human disembodiment in education that must be addressed. This becomes even more crucial as Western models of education have spread around the globe through colonialist and capitalist expansion.

The illusion that the mind and body are separate entities is clearly evident in educational assumptions concerning knowledge production (that this is solely a cognitive activity), mental attention (that this is controllable and measurable), the body's role (that it is to be passive and disciplined), and "proper" learning spaces (that we need to be separate from the world to learn objectively about it). These assumptions manifest in myriad ways, such as teaching practices that view students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge via the banking method (Freire 2000), classroom spatial configurations designed to control bodies and limit relationality, and the over-privileging of visual and linguistic learning while ignoring other senses and modes of knowing and learning (O'Loughlin 2006). Human supremacy and disembodiment in education thus create a violent feedback loop of control and exploitation of both humans and other-than-humans.

Even in "progressive" teaching methods more embodied and engaged pedagogy continues to perpetuate human supremacist logic. For instance, social constructivists argue that learning and meaning, as well as cognition itself, is developed through social interactions with other humans (Vygotsky 1978). This approach has importantly led to a more diverse range of human perspectives being shared, as well as the implementation of more engaging classroom activities that often involve collaborative group work. Additionally, it emphasizes fostering social and emotional skills, especially in younger students, to gain social competency and literacy (to be successful in the economy of humans). Despite these benefits, there are many drawbacks and limitations. We see social constructivism as a product of human supremacy and neoliberalism, in which human-to-human interactions, particularly those that are verbal and economically driven, as being given precedence over all other interactions. In the following sections we will offer an alternative and expanded understanding of interactions

shaping humans, our environments, and co-inhabitants to address the limitations of social constructivism.

In this section, we have shown that human supremacy is not an abstract philosophical belief but a lived reality that shapes our politics, economy, and culture. Moving away from the glass fortress and distorted mirror requires more than policy reforms or regenerative (sustainable in a multispecies sense) initiatives. It demands a radical reimagining of humanity's place within the world, a shift from domination to interdependence. This transformation will only occur when we shatter the illusion of separation and recognize our interconnectedness with all life. We understand the process of education to be an integral part of this shift. To move from educational models that elevate humans, understood as rational subjects, above all other life, toward a framework that recognizes humanity as embedded in and always participating with the material world, we must scrutinize how human supremacy infiltrates teaching and learning practices, and then replace these with more ecological and embodied approaches that nurture cross-species solidarity and empathy with the more-than-human world.

3. Embodying ethics through empathy and cross-species solidarity

In this next section, we ground environmental ethics in the fertile ground of cross-species solidarity, developed through embodied, situated, and cooperative processes that prioritize accountability to the rest of the biosphere, not to humans alone. Cross-species solidarity demands an ethical recalibration that recognizes humans as participants, not masters, within the broader ecological web. To reorient ourselves toward a more complex and multispecies worldview, we draw on examples of environmental activists who engage in cross-species solidarity, arguing that this is exactly the kind of lived, embodied ethic we must cultivate when teaching environmental ethics. Following Blenkinsop, Morse and Jickling (2022), we reconceive the role of the environmental ethics instructor as that of an activist, whose teaching embodies and anticipates present and future more-than-human solidarities.

We begin by developing an understanding of empathy as an embodied experience, only possible because of our specific corporeal positioning within the world, which then foregrounds the emergence of lived

ethics. From this starting point, we present cross-species solidarity as an empathetic process and ethical approach that is far from an abstract ideal; it is deeply embodied, lived, and practiced through environmental activism and animal liberation movements. These movements offer compelling examples of how theory must intersect with lived practice, where the ethics of solidarity are performed through direct, physical engagement with the more-than-human world. Environmental activists give us a glimpse into what it looks like when one moves from a recognition of relationality toward specific and embodied ethical action to combat multispecies and ecological injustices. While this may seem like an unlikely place to draw inspiration for pedagogical theory and praxis, we find that these examples spur us to consider how we might cultivate students who are in touch with their corporeality and able to move ethically in the world from this posture.

3.1. *Empathy and embodied ethics*

Empathy is not simply a thought experiment. The experience of empathy – of caring for others by considering and relating to their perspectives and experiences – arises for humans as a result of both affective and mental conditions and processes. O'Loughlin (2006) describes empathy as "intercorporeality", explaining that "awareness of corporeal connection" (*ibid.*, 138) is key for empathy to emerge in the first place. Put another way, to "feel with" is possible because we are "feeling" beings, in both senses of the word. Our emotions, however, can also get in the way. As O'Loughlin explains, "The blindness to commonality and the simultaneous fear of difference that characterize much of social interaction is inimical to empathy" (*ibid.*, 133). These affective responses are even more pronounced in our multispecies interactions. Simply consider the myriad instances in which we exterminate animals labeled "pests" without a second glance, ignorant of our entangled existences and reacting out of fear of creatures that society has deemed out of place, useless, and therefore killable (Brookshire 2002). Our intercorporeality emphatically calls us shift away from this disconnected way of approaching other living beings, and to recognize humans not as independent superior subjects but as intersubjective participants within a multispecies community.

Acting empathetically thus emerges out of our shared and mutually affecting material existences. These interconnections are visible in English metaphors about touch, for example, "I was touched by the plight of the

animals whose habitat was destroyed by the construction of new neighborhoods". In their extensive analysis of metaphors, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) explain how primary metaphors are embodied, often instilled in us when we are young, arising out of the conflation of subjective judgments and embodied experience. Furthermore, cognitive science reveals how mirror neurons in the brain make it possible for us to be empathetic (Lakoff 2017). For children, this may result in physically mirroring someone's facial expression, but for all ages, mirror neurons allow us to be emotionally affected by others (*ibid.*). These neurons, found in both monkeys and humans, have evolved over time, meaning that being able to understand and care about others is deeply embedded in who we are as a species (*ibid.*). Embracing our capacity for empathy has the potential to initiate a caring ethical response (O'Loughlin 2006). However, in our current epoch, this initiation is not automatic, and the shift from feeling to acting requires effort – simultaneously resisting the status quo and reaching toward justice.

To foster empathy-driven ethics, it is crucial to understand that the ways we think and feel about the world are formed largely through our experiential interactions with the world (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). As intersubjective participants, we and our knowledge are always co-constituted with the world; our very ability to organize, think about, and act within the world emerges out of the specific ways our bodies interact with the environment (Gallagher and Lindgren 2015). Likewise, as ecofeminist Lori Gruen (2015) reminds us, our ethical decisions are driven by a combination of emotions and cognition which are in turn informed by these place-based, multispecies interactions. Yet, environmental ethics is often unidirectionally focused on human impact, typically assumed to be negative, while foregoing the innumerable ways humans are affected by our ecological situatedness and interactions. This approach seems antithetical to even the most general aims of ethics, given what we understand about how our attitudes, which influence our actions, are actually formed. Therefore, we must reorient environmental ethics toward serious consideration of our corporeal posture within and vulnerability to the more-than-human world and move toward the cultivation of embodied ethics.

What we have laid out thus far has profound implications for environmental ethics education. There can be no learning detached from our interconnections, only distancing and disembodiment, which inject us with a false sense of separation and a false claim to objective knowledge. As mentioned in section 2, Western education has long aimed at the

development of rational and independent subjects. This has resulted in students being trained from a young age to work alone, hide their answers, prove their knowledge single-handedly, compete with their peers, and receive accolades for being successful individuals. Shifting toward educational models and practices that acknowledge, support, and cultivate intersubjectivity among human and more-than-human co-inhabitants is essential for nurturing embodied ethical approaches. Embodied ethics can then in turn act as a compass with which we can identify and rectify multispecies injustices and more toward cross-species solidarity.

3.2. *Cross-species solidarity*

Empathy builds bridges between human and other-than-human interests. In *Rewilding Our Hearts: Building Pathways of Compassion and Coexistence*, the American biologist Mark Bekoff (2014) refers to these as empathy corridors – pathways of mutual understanding and care between humans and other-than-human species. For Bekoff, empathy is not just an emotional response; it is a practice of cross-species solidarity, where humans learn to understand the emotional worlds and sentient lives of other-than-human animals in order to respond accordingly. Timothy Morton (2017), in *Humankind*, refers to this practice as "solidarity with nonhuman people", a sentiment long expressed within Indigenous philosophies and ways of life. Morton argues that true ethical relationships must transcend species boundaries, recognizing other-than-humans as "people" with agency and intrinsic value, challenging the human-centered perspective that privileges human needs over the lives of other-than-human beings. This embodied, long-term commitment is reflected in the work of Donna Haraway (2016), who, in *Staying with the Trouble*, advocates for making kin with the other-than-human world. Haraway (2015) argues that humans must confront the ecological crises of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene-Plantationocene by building relational ties with other-than-human species. She urges humans to stay with the trouble – to remain engaged with the complex and often messy realities of living on a damaged planet. Uprooting our human supremacist worldview and beginning to engage in cross-species solidarity is no small matter and can be an intensely affective and life-altering process. In this section, we develop cross-species solidarity as a practice of embodied ethics which is inherently empathetic.

Sarah Pike (2017), in her ethnography *For the Wild*, provides a vivid portrayal of young activists who engage in radical environmental actions driven by eco-anxiety and biophilia. Eco-anxiety refers to the fear, grief, and frustration that many young people feel in response to environmental degradation and climate crises. Biophilia, a concept developed by E.O. Wilson (1984), describes humanity's innate love for nature, a deeply ingrained emotional connection to the natural world. Pike highlights how this combination of anxiety and love motivates youth to engage in radical forms of activism, ranging from participating in climate camps to tree-sitting and land occupation – actions that physically embed activists in the ecosystems they seek to protect. These activists illustrate how the interplay between our intersubjectivity and emotional and cognitive capacities for empathy can lead to radical environmental action and change.

One example of this kind of radical resistance is the *Ende Gelände* movement in Germany, where thousands of activists occupy coal mines and block railways to disrupt coal production (Selkälä 2020). These direct actions not only protest the destruction of ecosystems but also serve as embodied demonstrations of cross-species solidarity. The protesters, physically placing their bodies between industrial machinery and the land, act in defense of the other-than-human world. The movement challenges the anthropocentric logic that views nature as a resource to be exploited, instead enacting an ethical commitment to the ecosystems and species under threat.

In the United States, similar forms of embodied activism were evident during the *Standing Rock* protests, where Indigenous and environmental activists gathered to protect water sources and sacred lands from the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Many of the Indigenous protesters, often women, acted as water protectors, emphasizing their role not just as human stakeholders but as defenders of other-than-human life and the elemental forces that support all life (Estes 2019). By living in resistance camps on the land, enduring harsh conditions and violent opposition, these activists embodied their ethics, demonstrating the interconnectedness of human and other-than-human flourishing.

There are also many specific instances in which actions are taken in defense of and solidarity with specific animals. The recognition of animals as other-than-human people underpins much of the work done by organizations like the *Animal Liberation Front* (ALF), whose members engage in direct actions to liberate animals from laboratories, fur farms, and factory farms. These acts of liberation are dangerous and illegal, but

they reflect a deeply lived ethical commitment to ending the exploitation of other-than-human animals. *Sea Shepherd* is another movement responding to specific violence against animals. Activists move beyond intellectual reflection on multispecies relationality by putting themselves at great personal risk to protect marine life from illegal whaling and overfishing. Their actions represent a form of kinship with the oceans and their co-inhabitants, recognizing that the well-being of marine ecosystems is inseparably linked with that of humanity. This recognition inspires empathy, and, to reiterate, requires an intentional shift toward more embodied, lived ethics.

Pierre Hadot's (1995) interpretation of "philosophy as a way of life" similarly argues that ethics must be lived, not merely theorized. Hadot believed that philosophy should guide everyday actions, shaping how individuals engage with the world around them. This lived practice of ethics is also at the heart of Leonardo Caffo's work on animal liberation. Caffo (2022) argues that philosophy should not remain confined to theoretical debates but must be enacted through daily choices that anticipate a more just future. In his discussions on veganism, Caffo suggests that abstaining from eating animals is a form of anticipatory ethics – a way of living the future now by embodying the ethical principles of nonviolence and solidarity with other-than-human animals. For Caffo, the refusal to consume animals is not just a personal choice but a political and ethical statement that challenges the structures of human supremacy.

Ultimately, empathetic cross-species solidarity and anticipatory embodied ethics offer a powerful response to the ecological crises we face today. These frameworks challenge the disembodied rationalism of traditional ethics, emphasizing the importance of lived, physical engagement with the natural world. Activists who participate in direct action and animal liberation movements are enacting a form of philosophy that is deeply grounded in their bodies, emotions, and relational ties with other-than-human species. Through this embodied ethic, humans can cultivate deeper relationships of empathy, care, and solidarity with other-than-human species. These are not simply reactions to ecological degradation but are also ways of reimagining our place in the world. As we continue to confront the environmental challenges of the Anthropocene (Capitalocene), cross-species solidarity offers a path toward a more just and ecologically harmonious future, one where humans and other-than-humans alike can thrive. We assert that these responses should radically affect and infiltrate our teaching practices, our classrooms, and our educational goals for ourselves, our students, and our institutions.

4. Anticipatory ecopedagogy and self-rewilding

In this last section, we consider practical and aspirational pedagogical methods that can support the future-oriented work of embodied ethics and cross-species solidarity that we have outlined. This is a shift from methods that uphold human supremacy toward ecopedagogies that foster more just ecological futures. This transformation can take many forms: from teacher as expert to teacher as activist; from disembodied learning to situated experiences; from objective information to emergent and embodied knowledge; from human as superior subject to human as intersubjective participant who recognizes our entanglement with other agencies in the biosphere. We begin from our situated perspective as PhD students and instructors in U.S. educational institutions where students are systemically framed as customers and viewed as data points, and learning is commodified. After offering specific pedagogical approaches that anticipate a future outside of these capitalistic constraints, we present wild pedagogies and self-rewilding practices that can lead us further into this future of planetary solidarity.

4.1. *Anticipating cross-species solidarity through ecopedagogy*

A crucial aspect of this pedagogical transformation is the instructor stepping into an activist role and modeling for students what the path toward cross-species solidarity might look like. While some become environmental activists through intense experiences or moments of epiphany that cause dramatic shifts in lifestyles and worldviews, leading to embodied ethical actions, for most, this process requires effort, guidance, and patience. This is in large part due to the pervasiveness of human supremacy and the ways that worldviews are entrenched and often invisible in our educational practices. Anticipatory ecopedagogy involves building awareness and dismantling this worldview through the process of identifying and questioning our assumptions. Instructors can model this and foster a class culture that welcomes the process, transferring the pedagogical focus from teaching information to teaching skills and practices, and ultimately more ecologically regenerative habits. Because human supremacist assumptions are embodied, often invisible, and lived out in our day-to-day decisions, actions, and interactions, they must be addressed when teaching environmental ethics. This practice is slow and arduous for many students, as most have not been asked to do

this before. This awareness can also be upsetting and may have unpredictable consequences in the classroom, such as students becoming defensive or shutting down. These affective responses remind us that, first, we are embodied and emotional beings, and second, that instructors engaging in ecopedagogy will have to release some of the perceived control they have over their classrooms and their students' responses.

Recognizing complexity and staying with the trouble of environmental issues is another key component of our ecopedagogical approach to environmental ethics. Students are trained to solve problems, and they will be tempted to seek out quick solutions, easily drawn to reactionary ecomodernist and techno-optimist fixes that perpetuate human supremacy. Alternatively, if the issue is too large (i.e. the climate crisis), they may defer to their individualistic purchasing and voting power (particularly in the U.S. context) as the only possible way to enact change or disrupt the status quo. Pedagogically, we can address this by including learning materials that reveal the complexities and intersections of ecological injustice, but even more importantly is how we model the struggle of grappling with these issues and giving oneself time to fully unpack and respond. This can be practiced with students through exercises that build over time and circle back to connect to previous experiences and concepts. Resilience for this kind of engagement comes with time, but we have found that students who feel seen, heard, and taken seriously will stick with the process.

Based on what we know about meaning-making and the way experiences with our environments form human thinking, feeling, and behavior, we conceive that another pedagogical shift is necessary – one that takes seriously this expanded understanding of human development. If our cognitive and affective dimensions are formed not just by interactions with humans, as social constructivism intuits, but also by interactions with the more-than-human world, then educators must give their students chances to engage in dialogue with and about this expanded realm of interactions.

We recognize the limitations of most learning institutions in giving students opportunities to step outside traditional educational spaces. In the meantime, however, students can reflect on the ethical, philosophical, and practical dimensions of their interconnectedness with the environment through simple assignments that ask them to engage in embodied experiences outside of class. For instance, students may pay attention to their own daily food or plastic consumption or their relationship to "waste", or they might spend time observing the habits and interactions

of an other-than-human being, reflecting on how their own behaviors entangle with and affect other species. Within these exercises, students are practicing embodied learning. Instead of relying solely on textual or theoretical knowledge, students are encouraged to engage their senses, emotions, and physical bodies through prompts and questions offered by the instructor. For example, besides observing other animals, students can be invited to empathize with another species by taking on the perspective of that species, to the extent our embodied capabilities allow. This perspective-taking invites creative imagining, which can evolve into expressive reflections, such as through performance and other artistic methods.

Experiences such as these guide students toward becoming more attuned to the rhythms and needs of the ecosystems they co-inhabit, thus fostering understanding and a deeper sense of empathy and solidarity with other species. These assignments then open up space within the classroom to draw further connections, challenge assumptions, and imagine the future more expansively. This approach challenges the human-centric focus on knowledge as something to be controlled or mastered, instead fostering an understanding that knowledge is relational, emergent, and deeply intertwined with the natural world.

4.2. *Self-rewilding as embodied learning*

While we acknowledge and advocate for the idea that all human beings should have access to vibrant outdoor spaces near their homes, schools, and communities – an essential goal of the broader rewilding movement – we also recognize the environmental injustices that disproportionately harm certain groups due to structural barriers limiting access to nature. Nevertheless, when possible, there are practices that could offer an even more radical approach to environmental ethics by fostering an embodied pedagogy that engages directly with the natural world.

One such practice is that of self-rewilding. Self-rewilding is a key component of wild pedagogy, focusing on the personal and collective process of reconnecting with the wild aspects of one's own more-than-human world and rejecting the domesticated, controlled aspects of modern human life (Feltrin 2024). Self-rewilding practices are immersive, experiential activities that help individuals and groups reconnect with the more-than-human world by fostering embodied learning and ecological awareness. These practices encourage hands-on engagement with nature,

cultivating an understanding of human interdependence with ecosystems by getting our hands dirty, and confronting both the comfort and discomfort of being in touch with otherness. Activities such as forest bathing, wild food foraging, walking barefoot, and shelter building are central to this approach, each offering unique insights into ecological relationships. Many more practices fall under the umbrella of self-rewilding, but these are some of the most widespread and adopted.

Forest bathing (*shinrin-yoku*), originating from Japan, involves immersing oneself in a forest environment while engaging all five senses. By walking slowly and attentively, participants reconnect deeply with the ecosystem, allowing the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest to promote mental and physical well-being. This practice goes beyond relaxation, teaching participants to acknowledge the richness of the multispecies world and fostering relationality. It creates an awareness of one's place within the ecological web and offers practical lessons in humility and the complexity of co-existence with the more-than-human world.

Often intersecting with forest bathing is walking barefoot on natural surfaces such as soil, grass, or sand. This practice, also known as "earthing", helps individuals ground themselves in both a literal and metaphorical sense, recognizing their physical connection to the Earth. By sharpening bodily perception and heightening awareness of the ground beneath one's feet, walking barefoot reduces the artificial separation between humans and the environment, reminding us of our direct physical ties to the land and promoting a sense of belonging within the natural world.

Foraging for wild foods returns us to a primal mode of being. It moves us beyond the capitalist abstraction of the "consumer" to reframe our existence as ecological beings – eating and being eaten. Foraging involves understanding species, habitats, and seasonal cycles, encouraging careful observation and knowledge of the environment. This practice fosters a grounded sense of sustainability, not as a slogan but as an embodied awareness of the struggle and pleasure of being alive, with bodily needs and an ongoing quest for sustenance within the broader multispecies entanglement. It teaches responsibility and balance in the use of natural resources.

Building simple shelters, like huts or lean-tos, emphasizes the idea that humans are participants in, not masters over, nature. Constructing these shelters from natural materials reinforces the necessity of working with, rather than dominating, the natural world. This hands-on activity cultivates an understanding of sufficiency and ecological co-stewardship, reconnecting individuals with a primordial way of co-inhabiting space

with both biotic and abiotic elements. Shelter-building teaches the significance of living *with* the elements, moving beyond a mere passive presence or consumer of space to someone engaged in the dynamic process of dwelling.

It's essential to approach these practices not as forms of superficial entertainment but as engagements coupled with a philosophy of reciprocity and relationality that opposes human supremacy. Self-rewilding practices not only provide tactile, meaningful experiences but also help reshape ecological consciousness. By engaging with nature through these embodied actions, individuals internalize ecological principles, moving beyond theoretical knowledge to foster a deeper, more responsible relationship with the environment. These practices are crucial for cultivating embodied ecological ethics grounded in direct, lived experiences with the more-than-human world.

One powerful example of practicing wild pedagogy and self-rewilding can be found in rewilding initiatives that engage students in ecological restoration projects. In such initiatives, students work directly with damaged ecosystems, participating in activities like habitat restoration, reforestation, or species reintroduction. These hands-on experiences not only teach students about ecological science and conservation but also cultivate an ethical awareness of the interconnectedness of all life. As students participate in the rewilding of ecosystems, they may simultaneously undergo a process of personal rewilding – reconnecting with their own wildness and recognizing their place within the more-than-human world.

Incorporating wild pedagogy into educational systems not only enhances students' ecological literacy but also addresses the root causes of environmental degradation by challenging the mindset of separation and domination that underlies human supremacy. As students learn to recognize themselves as interconnected with the broader ecological community, they begin to shift away from an exploitative relationship with the more-than-human world and toward a more reciprocal and caring ethic.

Ultimately, wild pedagogy and self-rewilding offer practical pathways for realizing the goals of anticipatory ecopedagogy. By prioritizing embodied, experiential, and relational learning, these practices cultivate a deep ecological consciousness that challenges the destructive ideologies of human supremacy. Through direct engagement with the more-than-human world, learners develop the skills, empathy, and ethical awareness necessary to build more just and regenerative futures. In doing so, education becomes a transformative process, not just for the individual but for the ecosystems and species with which we share this planet.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that dismantling the deeply embedded ideology of human supremacy necessitates a transformative shift in how we approach education. Wild pedagogy and self-rewilding offer meaningful strategies for reconnecting with the more-than-human world, challenging anthropocentric models that have perpetuated environmental harm. By fostering embodied learning practices and nurturing cross-species solidarity, we can begin to address the root causes of ecological degradation, encouraging lived ethics based on mutual care, solidarity, and a profound recognition of our interdependence with the ecosystems and species that sustain life.

However, this transformation raises important questions for further exploration: how can these alternative pedagogical practices be integrated into existing educational systems that are often resistant to change? What challenges might arise in encouraging learners to rethink their roles within the ecological community, particularly in an era driven by technological advancement and urbanization? And, perhaps most critically, how do we ensure that this shift toward ecopedagogy remains inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of diverse communities, both human and other-than-human?

These open questions leave us with a trajectory for ongoing inquiry and dialogue. By envisioning education as a collaborative, multispecies endeavor, we can push the boundaries of traditional pedagogical frameworks and begin cultivating a future where humans are not positioned as masters of the more-than-human world but as integral, responsible participants within a larger ecological web. The challenge ahead lies in how we continue to evolve these practices to not only shape our ethical responses to environmental crises but also transform our collective understanding of what it means to live justly and sustainably in a more-than-human world.

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