From hauntology to a new animism? Nature and culture in Heinz Kimmerle's intercultural philosophy

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Abstract: Derrida has proposed a new spectrology in an attempt to deal with the ghost of Marx. Kimmerle shows that Marx has forgotten nature, and enquires about Derrida's forgetting Marx's forgetting. With specific reference to African culture he asks whether a new animism should not be explored within the framework of a new spectrology. Derrida uses the concept animism, but not in terms of the being of things in and of themselves, which could positively be thought as animated. Kimmerle proposes a way in which Western philosophy could be opened to African philosophy in order to understand the problem of animated nature more adequately. African philosophy has a concept of the universe of spiritual forces, in which nature and its powers are completely integrated. This paper explores these issues in dialogue with a number of African philosophers, while linking them to certain contestations within environmental philosophy and ethics, especially Murray Bookchin's critique of spirit-talk in Deep Ecology. Kimmerle's work on the relationship between Africa and Hegel sets the scene for an elaboration of his re-evaluation of animism which is compared to the ground-breaking hypothesis of Bird-David. A relational epistemology is understood in ethical terms, and it is implied that such an epistemology would be more adequate for a new humanism that would be new in going beyond the western tradition, and in the process gain a more inclusive concept of "person" and "community".

Keywords: animism, spectrology, hauntology, nature, culture, humanism, environment.
Subjects: Philosophy, Intercultural Philosophy, Ethnophilosophy, Ecophilosophy and Environmental Ethics, Development Studies, Cultural Studies, Deep Ecology, Social Ecology, Anthropology.

1. Introduction

Heinz Kimmerle's approach to intercultural philosophy is characterised by his insistence on the equality of cultures, as a consequence of the

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concept of difference with which he operates. This leads him to propose that we drop the concept development and replace it with 'dynamic equilibrium'. This proposal takes seriously the ecological insight that economic development as we know and practice it, is a pyramid scheme.

In this article, which was conceived within the framework of the question regarding a New Humanism,[1] I first explore Kimmerle's struggle with the legacy of the exclusion of Africans as belonging to nature from cultured European humanity. This exclusion is the consequence of the dominance of a particular rationality that has been found to be inadequate for solving the problems of our time. Kimmerle proposes intercultural philosophical dialogues as a more appropriate approach to knowledge production in our time. He has published fine examples of such dialogues in practice. Some of these have been brought together in a Dutch language publication entitled *Mazungumzo: dialogen tussen Afrikaanse en Westerse filosofieën* (Kimmerle 1995).[2] His intention is to break with the tradition of limiting oneself to the study of Western philosophical traditions in searching for answers to the urgent questions of our time, and to take counsel from the philosophies of other cultures. Although he does not expect problems that seem to have no solutions in the context of Western thinking to be solved in dialogue with the philosophies of other cultures, *he is convinced that the intercultural dimension of doing philosophy unlocks an enhanced problem-solving potential* (Kimmerle 1995:10-11). The problematical issues addressed in this book are truth, time, community, development, socialism and democracy, aesthetics and morality, spirits, and death.

I will deal in more detail with one of these, entitled, in translation "The invisible world of spirits in Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* and in African thought". This is the article in which Kimmerle develops further Derrida's political interpretation of spirits. Derrida calls for a new 'spectrology' (or 'hauntology') to address the political and social injustices in the world. Kimmerle says the logical consequence is to also explore the possibilities of a *new animism*, to address humanity's destructive relationship to nature, as a consequence of the dominant ontology in Western philosophy, the ontology of presence. The issue of spirits poses a serious challenge to a New Humanism that wants to be new in the sense of being inclusive, and still a humanism in the sense of being secular and rational.

Kimmerle's subsequent contribution to this theme is an essay entitled *Entgeistert. Ein Essay über den Verlust des Geisterglaubens und den Wirklichkeitsstatus der Welt der Geister* (2001), in which the above-mentioned article has been taken up as the last chapter. In this essay he re-appropriates the Kantian insight that the fact that we cannot reasonably know anything about the reality of spirits does not imply that they do not exist (Chapter 1). An alternative concept of rationality

would judge differently (Chapter 2). The present absence (or as Mark Taylor (1993:80) formulates, the non-absent absence) of spirits is attested in the Western tradition particularly in works of fiction ('poetic descriptions'), but also in some philosophical texts (Chapter 3). The matter-of-fact way in which (some) African philosophers presuppose the reality of the world of spirits might be a fruitful starting point for the formulation of a new animism, one that does not restore a pre-critical 'believe' in spirits, nor an uncritical concept of reality (Chapter 4).

In the present essay I follow Kimmerle's argument, culminating in his suggestion regarding a new animism. In order to show the problems surrounding this way of thinking, I juxtapose the arguments of two African authors concerning belief in spirits. I subsequently trace the main objection to 'spirit-talk' to a debate in environmental ethics, the debate between deep ecology and social ecology. I do not intend to directly enter into that debate, but try to find a way to re-assess animism, avoiding the standard projections of Tylor who made the term (in)famous. For this re-evaluation I rely on the pioneering paper "'Animism' revisited" by Bird-David. In the process I try to establish how new animists might relate to the environment, and whether new animists could be new humanists, and vice versa.

2. Hegel and Africa

2.1 Identity-Thinking

There is a particular concept of reason that has problems with conceptualising its other without replacing the other with itself. Adorno's (1980) description of this 'identity-thinking' remains potent: identity is the identity of that which is understood and the concept of this. But this is mere pretence of identity, as it is imposed by the subject. Form is violently imposed on content. The particular has no place in the general. It is a matter of exercising power. The principle of identity is the principle of domination (Adorno 1974). Reason violates the object under the pretence of knowing it (Adorno 1980). Totalitarian rationality is historically dictated by the threat of nature. Identifying reason, in subjecting nature by objectification, continues the principle of domination and as such remains a function of nature from which

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1   See H Kimmerle, "The world of spirits and the respect for nature – some reflections on a complex relationship" in *TD The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa,* 2(2), December 2006, pp. 249-264.

2.   Mazungumzo – Swahili for dialogue - dialogues between African and Western philosophies

reason was supposed to liberate itself. It becomes itself object, or as Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) famously wrote in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: history (freedom!) returns to mythology. They added that mythology was already enlightenment.

2.2 Deconstructing Hegel

Heinz Kimmerle (1994, 1995, 2000) has linked the philosophers of difference, especially Derrida, to Horkheimer and Adorno's pioneering insight into the importance of the other of reason. The expression 'the other of reason' refers to the forgotten and repressed side that reason had in the Enlightenment, as has been revealed in a psycho-analytical study of the deep dimension of this thinking (Kimmerle 2000:39). Deconstruction, which for Derrida is also the deconstruction of Hegel, presupposes that in critique or destruction the new, something constructive, is already implied. Derrida's deconstructive reading of Hegel has revealed the mechanisms of exclusion not only in Hegel, but also in Eurocentrism (Kimmerle 1994:106-107). It is nature, myth, the other of reason that is excluded. Hegel's 'treatment' of women as analysed by Derrida in *Glas* shows that Hegel could think of a woman only as the opposite of a man, for instance in Hegel's interpretation of the Antigone tragedy in his *Phenomenology*. As a sister, Antigone moves on the borderline of reason, but as a woman she is excluded from it. Her important role in the family, which indirectly contributes to the order of the state, notwithstanding, she is incapable of fulfilling a true moral task. The latter presupposes working within the spheres of civil society and the state that are the true moral spheres. Unlike the son, the daughter does not leave the home to enter these spheres. She stays in the home of her parents until she transfers to being wife and mother in her own home, never leaving the sphere of the home. She is thus not truly human, in the sense of not being a citizen.

2.3 Hegel and Africa, Africa and Hegel

We are reading Hegel's exclusion of Africa as representative of how Africa has been, and still is, excluded from history, particularly the history of the West. The same mechanism of exclusion that Derrida has revealed in his deconstruction of Hegel's view of women is at work here. The colonies were open spaces into which civil society had to be extended, according to the dynamics of the historical process. But colonialism is not historical, as history is restricted to the history of states. This is one reason why Africa, for Hegel, has no history, and does not participate in world history. Hegel was badly informed about pre-colonial Africa and argued that Africa had never been an agent of

the world spirit. The other reason is geographical: the spirit just cannot get the better of nature in Africa South of the Sahara – once again a notion stemming from faulty information. Kimmerle (1994) summarises the issue well by saying that we learn from Hegel much about the European view of the continent but nothing about Africa itself. Nature as the other of reason and the exclusion of the other is at work in Hegel's characterisation of African religion as being on the first level of natural religion (wizardry). This is not authentic religion, just as Africans are not authentically human.

Kimmerle's (1994, 1996) explanation for Hegel's justification of slavery is particularly relevant. For Kant (the thinker of reason and freedom, the messenger of human rights, world citizenry and peace) Africans make particularly good slaves, as they are physically strong, but lazy. They must be punished for this laziness (and for being the plastic expression of the evil of human nature) through slavery, which should be seen as a form of education. According to Hegel (with his 'Philosophy of concrete freedom') the fact that Africans commonly consume human flesh (an assumption not supported by evidence) is indicative of the disregard for, and worthlessness of, human beings in Africa. This, according to Hegel, explains why in Africa slavery is the basic form of the law. It is therefore justified for Europeans to engage in slavery in the context of Africa, although it is wrong in principle. According to Kimmerle one can explain this view within the system of Hegel's thought only if one realises that Africans, to Hegel, are not fully human. They seem to have no religion and no state. Yet, they are not animals, as they do have something that resembles a state and some religion. But they are not free human beings, and the real humans (who are European, male citizens of a constitutional state) are allowed to make slaves of them and sell them like goods. Thus, Africa is situated outside of history as it does not manifest spirit (for Hegel, a decidedly European spirit), and Africans are on the borderline of humanity, somewhere between animals (nature) and humans (reason).

Kimmerle (1994) remarks that Hegel's thesis concerning the end of history (that goes hand in hand with the erasure of time) seems to have been fulfilled after the realisation of the constitutional state, although not in the way foreseen by Hegel. Instead of deepening itself, the European spirit with its corresponding economic and political structures has spread all over Africa and other parts of the world. It determines historical events in a universal planetary sense. Note that it is still 'spirit' and thus the exclusionary mechanisms intrinsic to it that is spreading. This leads to the major contradiction of universality without self-realisation, which is the flipside of self-realisation at the expense of universality. This is why Kimmerle opposes this kind of looking, by sending a reminder of the spirit of Africa that was excluded and left behind by the self-realising world spirit. This reminder is not

in the first place directed against Hegel, but against Europe, which is in the process of spreading all over the world, and against the manner of the spreading. In Hegel the object of his thinking, Europe with its view of history, its spirituality and its attitude towards politics and economics, is under critique.

Hegel defined philosophy, and thus also his system of thought, as the thought and feelings of an age made self-conscious, as the development of concepts that are adequate to grasp a particular historical period. According to Kimmerle (1994), Marx and Adorno's critique of Hegel aims to keep Hegel's project going. Hegel's conceptualisation is modified and rescued in such a way that it proves itself to be adequate for understanding Europe under the conditions of advanced industrial society.

Kimmerle (1996:102), in reference to the title of his favourite 'book' by Derrida, *Glas*, interprets this undertaking as producing a glass, like the lenses of spectacles or a pair of binoculars, through which the reality of a period can be seen for what it is from a philosophical point of view — more focussed, clearer than in ordinary perception. Hegel's lenses developed cracks in the next historical period, as it became inadequate as a means of revealing clearly what was happening — for instance the growing antagonism between rich and poor in capitalist society, a development that revealed the contradiction of civil society. In Hegel's philosophy civil society was supposed to be a form of the subjective realisation of universality. The crack in Hegel's glass caused by Marx in his reversal of the priorities, turning philosophy from standing on its head to standing on its feet, in a paradoxical way enabled a sharper view.

Adorno's take has been polished by Marx's analysis, and he looks through the cracks caused by the experience of national-socialist barbarity (Kimmerle 1994:104-105). The negative, critical instruments of dialectical thinking are now more adequate – there is no reconciliation in sight, no identity to be had in a whole that is not the truth. It is not possible to see the whole through cracked lenses. But the cracks shift the focus to the particular, the non-identical.

The cracks in the looking glass correspond to cracks in society. With Derrida, however, the cracks become so many that the glass shatters. Seeing through it therefore becomes impossible. Paradoxically this is again adequate: the fact that we cannot see and understand our world any longer through the lens of Hegel's philosophy, representing Western metaphysics, characterises the situation of Western seeing and understanding. The new, constructive element in deconstruction is the acceptance and affirmation of the negative, of the necessity to destroy the tradition of exclusion. The negative provides orientation in this endeavor.

The negative is the excluded, as Adorno has already shown. Hegel's exclusion of women from humanity is merely an instance of the exclusion of nature. Nature is excluded from having a right of its own and an enduring meaning alongside the spirit that works through human history. In Hegel's system the last vestige of nature, time, is finally, in the ultimate movement of the dialectic, erased or deleted. For Derrida the Jew, this erasure of the 'rest' conjures up the terrifying vision of the Holocaust, which, in spite of being the most negative consequence of Western thinking, still contains positive knowledge (Kimmerle 1994). This 'positive', in my interpretation, would be, apart from revealing the deadly nature of exclusion, something like 'never again'. And yet, Hegel has been proved right also in characterising history as cruelty and suffering. According to Kimmerle (1994:112) with this insight philosophy, particularly also when it wants to be intercultural, constitutes itself as critical theory, and sides with those who work to diminish this cruelty and this suffering.

Hegel is therefore not yet played out. Kimmerle formulates his continued relevance in a controversial thesis:

> Hegel's philosophy means everything for Europe and nothing for Africa (1994:111).

It can thus be fruitfully used to understand the Westernisation of Africa. But it cannot contribute to understanding the Africanisation of the West in Africa and the significance of this process for world history. For this understanding new approaches to a dialogical intercultural philosophy are needed. One of the most controversial topics in this dialogue is the belief in spirits.

3. A new Spectrology?

Kimmerle (1995:192) links Enlightenment thinking with exorcising ghosts and spirits - an exorcism that spans a whole historical period. But the so-called exorcised, and presumable rendered absent, seem always to be present, in language at least, even though in Enlightenment language as negation: they are not, do not exist. They have a *mere* 'metaphorical meaning' represent something in our own subconsciouses. Thus, we speak on the basis of an ontology of presence (an ontology that proceeds from the presence of being in entities) that tries to negate the absent, in stead of thinking it in its co-existence with the present.

Kimmerle traces Derrida's further development of Heidegger's insight into truth as an event of simultaneous opening and closure. The same goes for presence and absence. The other of reason is absent in what is rendered present in Enlightenment discourse. Notions of ghosts,

spirits or phantoms serve the thinking of a radical form of absence in the present, something presumed by the dominant discourse as totally absent, unreal, hallucinated. Kimmerle formulates the dilemma: how can the presences of the absent be thought, without restoring a 'belief in spirits', or re-introducing an uncritical concept of reality (critique here in the sense of Kant's critical philosophy)?

Derrida attempts to prepare the way for an answer to this question by looking for elements of a new spectrology, or hauntology, in texts of Marx and Shakespeare – in order to put an end to the exorcism project of Enlightenment thinking. Kimmerle (1995) sorts through and arranges these elements to give as much shape as possible to this new spectrology, this hauntology as non-ontology, with its own logic, the logic of the phantom.

The key scene in Derrida's exposition is the appearance of the ghost to Hamlet in Shakespeare's immortal work. The ghost informs Hamlet that his father had been murdered and that he has to revenge him: 'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder' (1/5/25). This hangs together with Hamlet's observation: 'The time is out of joint' (1/5/188). And he must restore it, join it together again: 'O curséd spite / That ever I was born to set it right!' (1/5/188-189). This is then an element of the new hauntology: The interwovenness of a personal fate with a general situation and the appearance of a spirit confronting with a task from the invisible world of spirits (Kimmerle 1995:154).

In revenging the murder of his father, Hamlet will simultaneously remove the concealed injustice upon which affairs in the state of Denmark are based. Denmark here represents the world. The world is out of joint, so fundamentally that time itself is out of joint, even if people do not yet see it. The sheer abundance of injustice creates a situation of fundamental out-of-jointness of the relationships between people, which translates into an out-of-jointness of time, of what Kimmerle typifies as the relationship between being (what is) and time (how it is what it is). The out-of-jointness of time includes the way in which time is thought, and has to do with the inadequate way in which the relationship between the present and the absent is thought. Thinking this relationship anew would at least be a first step on the way to thinking time differently, in such a way that the out-of-jointness is addressed and even remedied. The remedy would have been found if what is and how it is would be conceived in a way that what is would not be in such a way that it is not. I am referring specifically to the exclusion of Africans as what is absent from discourses of what constitutes humanity, as described by Ramose (1999). Another element of hauntology: The out-of-jointness of time is a condition for contact with the invisible world of spirits (Kimmerle 1995:155).

The acknowledgement of the spirits could be a condition for an

alternative politics, of memory of generations of phantoms and their legacy, including Marx and Chris Hani. This would happen in the name of righteousness. The Greek word *dikè* also means to be correctly joined. To remember the phantoms, to revenge the injustice they were subjected to, contribute to bringing justice into being. The third element thus has to do with limits, the ultimate boundary between life and death. Memory of ghosts renders porous this boundary. The dead who have suffered injustice return and ask for revenge, to be put in the right, contrary to an unrighteous time. To learn to deal with ghosts includes learning to speak about them, speak against them, and to let them speak – to learn to listen. Derrida (quoted in Kimmerle 1995:156), with characteristic flair, coins the word ''injonctions' to refer to what ghosts say (command, claim) when the time is out of joint. The third element of hauntology: deal with spirits, stop ignoring/negating them.

A fourth element, closely tied to the previous, is the terrifying aspect of the appearance of a ghost. Our defence mechanism is to deny its reality. People experience ghosts as haunting them. They desperately try to get rid of them, or to stay out of their way. Another defence is religion, in which ghosts are hunted, as happened when religion joined forces with all the other powers of old Europe in a holy hunt on communism (Kimmerle 1995:156). But, if ghosts appear when the time is out of joint, they will only disappear, and the haunting will cease when religion ceases, as well as all ideological veils and fogs that conceal reality. For Marx history is not made by the spirit, but by human beings' labour in and at history, led by the proletariat's leaders, the communist party. Leninism and Stalinism can be traced back to some of these features in Marx's thinking. If the revolution becomes reality, is ceases to have a mere ghostlike existence, when its ghost disappears, so does its spirit. Derrida thus thinks a revolution against the revolution, in which the spirit of revolution is preserved (Kimmerle 1995:157-158).

Marx participated in the exorcist-like spirit of the Enlightenment in his critique of the fetish character of commodities. Money and exchange value have ghostlike existences, independent of the intention of the producers of commodities. Marx opposes this by thinking the value of commodities without ghosts or spirits. And the question poses itself, also in reference to the use value of commodities: how to think a positive relation to the 'invisible world of spirits'? Marx wanted to overcome the ghostlike character of things with regard to their exchange value. Derrida is *en route* to a way of thinking in which one can hold on to the spirit of things in the midst of their utility value. Kimmerle (1995:159) asks: Would the obvious thing to do in this situation not be to look at other cultures (e. g. African culture) when you ask what the things are in themselves, what their own spirit, phantom or ghost might be?

Within the Western tradition of thinking the question concerning the being real of ghosts/spirits/phantoms must remain undecided. Kant's 'cannot know' with regard to the big metaphysical questions is valid here as well (Kimmerle 2001). According to Kimmerle (1995:158-159) this attitude can at least be nuanced when a text of KA Appiah (1992), for instance, is brought to bear on it. Appiah, born and bred in Kumasi, Ghana, educated in Cambridge, retains an 'invisible ontology' alongside his critical scientific thinking. SB Oluwole (Lagos) (1992) is looking for a framework in which the seemingly opposite/antagonistic positions of Western science and African spirituality can both be accommodated. The matter-of-fact way in which African thinking maintains the presence of spirits of ancestors in the world of the living might mean something for Western thinking concerning ghosts/spirits/phantoms.

4. A new animism?

Kimmerle (1995:160-162) goes so far as to ask whether a new spectrology could be the framework within which a *new animism* can be thought. This question arises within an intercultural philosophical dialogue in which an aspect of 'African culture' has been considered as positively contributing to a viable form of life, and not as something backward from the point of view of a normative 'rational', "developed" or 'progressive' position. A new animism would entail reconsidering the question concerning ghosts/spirits/phantoms, in conjunction with the immense disturbance of Western humanity's relationship to nature. It would attempt to think the being of a thing, its 'soul', or spirit, in openness to African thinking concerning spirits.

In this regard the radical immanence of transcendence must be emphasised (Kimmerle 2001:74). In this point African thinking differs from the Christian and Islamic conceptualisation of spirits. For Africans the invisible world of spirits belongs entirely to this earthly and human world. The Supreme Being is far away and difficult to approach. Spirits and 'gods' have a mediating function. Some persons are more sensitive to the world of spirits than others, and are required to mediate in the contact with this world. But this does not mean that this world is remote. It is an immanent transcendence. In this world different spirits and gods relate to each other as interacting forces. According to Gyekye (quoted in Kimmerle 2001:74) their relationship (at least in Akan thought) should not be conceptualised in terms of a fixed pyramid-lik hierarchy, but as a dynamic whole in which the hierarchy is determined by the interaction of spiritual forces present (or rather active, I propose) at a given time.

To this spiritual universe belong also natural things, saturated by life-force. There are forces behind storms, rain, rivers, seas, lakes, fountains, etc. Nature is animated. Kimmerle is adamant that this

kind of religiosity is absolutely equal in status to the so-called 'great' religious traditions, or 'world religions'. This, of course is a fundamental revision of Tylor's animism theory. One can venture to say that Kimmerle is engaging in language politics by provocatively retaining the thoroughly discredited (on the basis of its evolutionary trappings) term 'animism' to refer to African religion. He uses the term 'tentativ, nicht ohne Ironie, mit bewusster Provokation', says Kimmerle (Personal communication 14.10.2002). 'Animism' is equal to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Taoism and Buddhism (Kimmerle 2001:75). Belief in spirits might be problematical in radically critical Western thinking. But the idea of nature being animated is increasingly plausible on the basis of recent developments in physics and evolutionary biology.

In Western philosophy, too, there are important points of contact with this kind of animism. Kimmerle (2001:75-76) identifies the thought of Nietzsche as coming the closest to the conceptions of this kind of animism. For Nietzsche 'life' is a fundamental category. He proceeds from the conceptualisation of a field of forces that is constituted by the 'will to power', and always in the process of being re-organised. However, even in Nietzsche nature is not the foundation of the universal force-field in the same matter-of-fact way as in African thinking. But Nietzsche might be a good starting point for a widening of the emerging new spectrology to include a new animism, as an attempt of addressing the out-of-jointness of our time, as caused by the destruction of our relationship to nature.

This project, however, will also have to remember Marx, especially the Marx of the Parisian Manuscripts, written in 1844. In these Marx describes the work through which we as humans produce and reproduce our material existence as natural force. Work, as natural force, relates within nature to other natural forces. In *Capital* nature becomes mere 'thing', to be utilised by human beings according to their own goals. The dormant potencies in nature, the interaction of natural forces, are subjected to human measures. This later view, says Kimmerle (2001:76) makes impossible the idea of an animated nature in which humanity must find its proper place. And it is on this point that African thinking represents an alternative view. Even if Western thinking cannot follow this alternative view, to postulate the equality of this view is not foreign to Western thinking. Postulating the equality of animism, and African thinking generally, flows from the openness that belongs fundamentally to Western thinking as a thinking of the radical question:

> Wer fragt, hat ja nicht bereits die Antwort. Wer radikal fragt, vermeidet es, eine mögliche Antwort zu präjudizieren. Er wird für Unerwartetes, gerade auch im Gespräch mit Andersdenkenden, offen sein" (Kimmerle 2001:79). [*The person who asks does not already have an answer. The person who asks in a radical way, avoids prejudging a possible answer. He will be open to the unexpected, specifically in conversations with different points of view.*]

In a personal discussion with me Kimmerle has somewhat revised his call for a new animism, after becoming aware of the persistence of prejudice and conceptual mistakes surrounding the term. He said that he would not answer his own question (a new animism?) directly with a 'yes'. What we need is not a new animism, but a new evaluation of animism. He continued:

> Was wir im Kontext einer ökologischen Ethik wirklich brauchen, ist eine neue Naturphilosophie. Diese kann in interkultureller Perspektive von einem Dialog mit dem Animismus Wichtiges lernen: die Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben konkret und ernshaft aufzufassen (personal communication 14.10.2002). [*What we need in the context of an ecological ethics is a new philosophy of nature. This can learn something important within an intercultural perspective from a dialogue with animism: to regard the respect for life seriously.*]

But first: The call for a new animism can indeed lead to serious misunderstanding. I now confront a 'positive response' with a 'negative response' by African scholars, and then show how this division is also to be found in environmental ethics.

5. Contestations

5.1 The spectre of 'philosophic racism'

In describing the relationship to spirits in 'traditional Africa', Kimmerle relies heavily on Parrinder, who has done most of his research in West Africa in the middle of the previous century. The problem here is whether Kimmerle is guilty of 'an uncritical repetition of the tradition of philosophic racism in Western philosophy'. This is how Ramose (1999:58) typifies De Tejada's characterisation, in an article published in 1960, of the fundamentals of Bantu law. Ramose agrees with De Tejada's 'suggestion that the musical conception of the universe can result in two interpretations of the musical rhythm, namely the rational and the emotional'. He, however, 'definitely disagree[s] with his ascription of the "emotional" as a distinctive feature of Bantu law, and, by extension, African philosophy. … His not infrequent use and appropriation of 'unsere Logik' [our logic], 'unserer rationalen Logik' [our rational logic], coupled with his express ascription of Bantu thought to the 'magical' and the emotional, speak to an exclusivism which is psychologically more revealing'.

From Kimmerle's conceptualisation of intercultural philosophy it should be clear that nothing would be further from his intention than to describe other cultures in a way that would open him to the kind of charge made by Ramose against De Tejada. His own proposal shows similarities to systems thinking as employed by Ramose:

> Understanding thought as a system means recognising it as a whole-ness which includes not only the indivisibility but also the mutual dependence of the 'rational' and the 'emotional' (Ramose 1999:59).

Kimmerle criticises Western thinking for repressing/ignoring/absenting the 'other of reason' and is convinced that a remedy should be sought in opening Western philosophy up to African philosophy in which this reduction has not occurred in equal measure. From his interpretation of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* it would seem that his argument also implies an opening up to the result and consequences of the Western reduction for other cultures, a result that is equally repressed. A consistent theme in Kimmerle's thinking is the attempt not to think in terms of development/progress. He does this on the basis of his conceptualisation of difference. Kimmerle (1997:101) prefers to interpret various evaluations of other cultures (for instance) not in terms of development/progress, but as shifts in which emerges a more adequate evaluation of other cultures within the framework of the general world situation. This position relativises his own conceptualisation of intercultural philosophy: an evaluation of a culture "from an intercultural perspective" is in his view adequate/fitting with regard to the present world situation. This being adequate to the situation simultaneously implies a critical verdict over it. Here, too, the equality principle is fundamental. Philosophy and art, with regard to the core of their expressions, know no 'development/progress', only shifts, a becoming different/other, that is conditioned by their relation to the general world situation.

This is a crucial point that cannot be emphasised enough, especially in view of the problematic nature of discourses on cultural difference with regard to the themes of rationality, science, 'belief' in spirits, etc. Ramose argues that since Aristotle reason has been recognised as 'the distinctive and decisive criterion of the definition of a human being (1999:13). The colonial 'quest for sameness' meant indifference to cultural differences as if these were not obstacles to colonisation and Christianisation, and concentration on those differences that were. Ramose (1999:14) speaks of the 'epistemological dominance' assumed by colonisation and Christianity, unilaterally conferring on themselves the right to 'define the meaning of experience, knowledge and truth on behalf of the indigenous African'. The strategy here has been to deny 'the other' rationality, and hence to exclude him/her/them from being human. Ramose refers to Locke, Hume, Kant and especially Hegel in delineating 'the genealogy of racism as an aspect of the struggle for reason', and concludes that 'there is neither a moral basis nor pedagogical justification for the Western epistemological paradigm to retain primacy and dominance in decolonised Africa'. He says '[t]he independent review and construction of knowledge in the light of the unfolding African experience is not only a vital goal, but it is also an act of liberation' (1999:35-36).

I read Kimmerle's tentative exploration into an alternative 'epistemological paradigm' as congruent with Ramose's project of constructing knowledge in the light of the unfolding African experience. And yet, such is the quicksand of discourses on cultural difference that considerable differences of opinion exist on the usefulness or not of the characterisation of African culture in terms of a particular relationship with and view of the invisible world of spirits, as is evidenced in the following two views.

5.2 African spirituality affirmed

PA Kalilombe (1994:115), in his description of African spirituality, defines African religion as 'a way of living in the visible sphere in relation with the invisible world'. This goes hand in hand with the basic holistic and integrating nature of African culture. Kalilombe (1994:116-118) does address the question concerning the specifically African nature of African religion, and he acknowledges the profound effects of the revolutionary changes that African culture is currently undergoing. Yet, he finds it possible 'to isolate some basic trends and orientations that form the deeper underlying foundation against and over which the ongoing transformations are struggling' (1994:118), because the past is the more determinant (1994:119). One such basic trend is the notion that

> (T)he world of realities consists of two interrelating spheres, the visible and the invisible, of which the visible is in some ways dependent on the invisible (1994:120).

In spite of the controversy surrounding the *force vitale* theory of Tempels, he finds that

> (T)he idea of interacting forces is an enlightening intuition for a proper understanding of this question of the invisible (1994:124).

He thus holds that

> (T)here is a mystical interaction of forces and wills between the two spheres [visible and invisible] (1994:120).

He defines the presence of God, which is of a special type, in terms of this interaction:

> God's presence asserts itself through the interaction of ... the visible and the invisible" (1994:121, italics his).

He emphasises the absence of a radical dualism in the way of thinking. The interaction-of-forces ontology explains why the community as interdependence through relationships is the central concept of humanity (1994:122). The primacy of community and cooperation can also be explained in terms of this ontology:

> (T)raditional African life was based in a simple technology with a minimum of 'scientific' knowledge of and mastery over the rest of the universe. We should perhaps state it more clearly. The relationship between the human community and the rest of the universe was not conceived of as a project of struggle where human beings would look at the world as an object or an adversary whose nature and working should be investigated and reduced to formulas so as to master and exploit it. Rather the universe is seen as a common heritage, its diverse components as potential partners in the shared project of existence. There is, therefore, a feeling of mutual dependence among the different parts: human beings, the animal world, vegetation, the elements, the heavenly bodies, the departed as well as the diffuse forces, visible and invisible, that circulate all around.

> Success in living depends very much on how well these different parts interact, negotiating carefully and 'respectfully' the common resources available to all. There is a certain awe, something like a religious attitude, in this interaction: it is as if the whole universe possessed personality, consciousness, sensitivity, and 'soul'. (Kalilombe 1994:123)

The governing principle of this whole complex of thinking is the distinction between the visible and the invisible, the latter being that what is beyond the range of ordinary perception. Kalilombe distinguishes this category of the ordinary from what he terms the Western notion of the supernatural, as behaving contrary to the laws of the mechanical universe. The background notion of the African concept of the invisible is that the whole world of realities (spirits, persons, objects, words, gestures) are bearers of thought and efficacy at two levels: the ordinary, visible one that can be managed without access to special power; and the special mystical one that can be perceived and manipulated only with an enhanced perception and power – what he calls invisible. As forces from the invisible realm influence events in the visible, knowledge of the invisible and the power of dealing with it are of crucial importance for the community (Kalilombe 1994:124-125).

The spirits of the dead are the central area of the invisible, on account of their superior knowledge of the rules and art of successful living, and their identity formation role. They are also nearer to God, and to 'the bush', the realm of the forces of nature, and can thus influence both on behalf of their living relatives (Kalilombe 1994:126). Conversely, and importantly for 'hauntology', the spirits are dependent on the living. They are 'fed' through rituals of remembrance. Once forgotten they are cut off from the living and linger around as frustrated beings prone to mischief and harm (Kalilombe 1994:127). Kalilombe identifies two characteristic elements of African spirituality:

> (F)irst, the consciousness that individuals and the community are committed to an ever-present struggle against menacing evil if life is to be worth living; and secondly, that in this struggle the decisive key is the availability of assistance from the invisible (1994:128).

This is a good exposition of 'the kind of spirituality that one can deduce from African traditional culture' (Kalilombe 1994:130) in its standard form. But to understand the present state of African spirituality, one has to take into account the radical culture change in the wake of colonialism and globalisation dominated by the West, a change that has seen the traditional culture practically discredited, or demonised.

Colonialism … inflicted a loss of independence on the native cultures. New norms and customs were imposed on the people in such a way that they had to live and act in conformity with a foreign worldview. It was continually impressed on them that their own culture was not valid: it was primitive, pagan, and retrograde. If they wanted to move forward, then they had to abandon it and adopt the civilized way of life of the West. Clinging to their own traditional culture was going to keep them backward and incapable of functioning successfully in the modern world (Kalilombe 1994:131)

Kimmerle's concept of intercultural philosophy does not accept this discrediting and mobilise thinking against it, by thinking equality on the basis of a particular conceptualisation of difference.

In Kalilombe's analysis the ability to 'modernise' (even though this was enforced on all) was not equally available to all. The large majority are 'left behind, trying to cope with the new situation as best they can' (Kalilombe 1994:131). A measure of survival is a struggle, and whatever is available is used: some remnants of the traditional culture still familiar to them, and bits and pieces of the new system. The struggle is an unfair one, and people become increasingly powerless in the face of modern forces. The draw cards of modern life are too strong to resist, and those who are forced to fall back on traditional culture do so out of desperation.

Kalilombe makes a list of Africa's woes, and then asks:

> How does all this tally with traditional culture and spirituality? (1994:132).

This question is asked within the context of neocolonialism, with its basic fact that the economy of the South is subsidiary to the North, the former being 'in practice the dependent and servant member'. The increased poverty and powerlessness of the majority of Africans does not mean that all groups/individuals are poor. Pockets of power and privilege exist side by side with extreme poverty and disadvantage. Traditional society certainly knew poverty, injustice, jealousy and suffering. Then he goes on to point out:

> But there is a radical difference, nonetheless, a difference not simply of magnitude, but rather of basic structure and orientation – a difference in spirituality (Kalilombe 1994:132).

This different spirituality is based on a different worldview and governed by a different set of values and priorities:

> Central to this spirituality is the supremacy of the value of acquiring, possessing, multiplying, and enjoying material goods by individuals (Kalilombe 1994:133).

Kalilombe implies that initiatives that promote human well-being and proclaim the sacred value of the human person should recognise African spirituality as a potential ally in the struggle against the colonial legacy:

> In our present world, cultures of greed and violence are creating death while people long for peace, security and joy. It may be that simple spiritualities, based on more human and humane values, like those coming from the weak and poor nations of the world, are the hopeful reserves for humanity's future survival (1994:134-135).

I take the following from Kalilombe: 'there is a mystical interaction of forces and wills' between the spheres of the invisible and the invisible. The dominant rationality that willed the invalidation of Africa is not neutral but driven by the will to possess. African spirituality, as it existed before colonialism, cannot be restored, but re-evaluated within the context of looking for alternatives to the dominant culture of greed and violence.

5.3 African spirituality as false consciousness

Jean-Marie Makang (1997:336) also produces a litany of Africa's woes: unproductivity and deficient management, the squandering of common patrimony and national resources, injustice, oppression, exploitation, irrational choices detrimental to the well-being and emancipation of African people, bad distribution of political power, including its personalisation and confiscation within a few hands. He also looks for an adequate response to this sorry state of affairs. He (1997:335) propagates as an alternative to the two extremes of either archaism or 'capitulation to mass culture, secreted by Western capitalism', a view of tradition as 'regulating *utopia*" (Fabian Eboussi), as an ideology of society, permeating all fields of knowledge and all institutions of society, yielding concrete effects in society (Kwame Nkrumah). This implies pointing out common references in particular contexts in which Africans and African-descended peoples daily construct societies. He defines 'common reference' as 'a system of ideas, ideals, thought, opinions, values, beliefs, representations, aspirations, or attitudes which bind members of a group together in a common praxis which is geared toward a common purpose (Eboussi 1997:336). He also uses the terms 'community of destiny' (destiny is 'the tension that allows a tradition to renew itself while it perpetuates itself' (Makang 1997:330)) and 'living tradition'. The latter 'is neither a repetition of practices and customs of the past, nor a dream of "the origin" or of a "lost paradise", but is meant to provide a utopian model of action, a

mobilizing ideal'.

This last sentence is the culmination of an extremely sharp critique of the vital force ontology of Placide Tempels and his followers. Makang concentrates on three problematical aspects of this ethnological approach, all three aspects of the mystification of tradition:

The problem of historicity: The dynamic ontology, as expounded by Tempels, is unhistorical in that it denies the evolution of the Bantu world-view. The 'bush-people' are for Tempels the only authentic Bantu, on account of not having been spoiled by European modernity. This amounts to

> the praise of the past over and against the present, of archaism over and against progress, of the good soul over and against technical and material improvement, [tradition as nostalgia, dead tradition] (Makang 1997:327).

The universe on which this tradition rests is mythical, and thus does not affect the ordering of things in the present, and cannot empower contemporary Africans to gain control over their own destiny. The ethnological discourse is characterised by emphasising the difference of the African people from the Western world as essential to understanding African mentality. It consciously or unconsciously complies with the Eurocentric discourse that denies any other place for Africans in the history of humanity apart from the one assigned to them through inclusion into the destiny of Europe – Du Bois's appendix idea. Apart from being mythical, the tradition has also been

> deadly compromised by the intrusion of the Western world … defeated and marginalized by the present world order (Makang 1997:328).

It will only survive by adapting itself to new historical situations, by learning from other traditions, assimilating from them those elements that can contribute to its revitalisation.

The problem of generalisation: The Bantu dynamic ontology is construed from a particular behaviour, observed in a specific ethnic group, and then without further ado presumed valid for all Africans. The reverse also happens. A general feature, applicable to most of humanity, is defined as specifically African. And what is 'Africa' in any case but a common geographical entity? African tradition or identity is a construction undertaken according to the needs of people.

T*he problem of presumed African particularity (Culturalism):* The ethnological discourse has reduced African traditions and identity to culture, whereby culture is synonymous with folklore.

> (Folklore) designates only artistic productions and external manifestations of Negro-Africans' emotional life, primarily in music, dances, and rituals (Makang 1997:330).

In the process African traditions are rendered a marginalised domain of African life in the contemporary global society. Paulin Hountondji has coined the term 'culturalism' to describe this reduction. Makang calls it an ideology in the Marxian sense. It is used 'to divert the attention of African people from the most crucial problems which confront them today, and which are political and economic in nature' (1997:330). During colonial times culturalism gave priority to the demand for cultural recognition over national liberation. In post-colonial times it is misused to divert

> the African masses and revolutionary forces ... from gaining true social consciousness and from organizing themselves for effective class struggle against their indigenous and foreign oppressors (Makang 1997:331).

Cultural rehabilitation, or the rehabilitation of the humanity of African people, must be part and parcel of political liberation, as it is in the conceptualisation of 'negritute' by Aimé Césaire, as opposed to that of Senghor. Makang (1997:332) thus does employ a positive concept of cultural difference, one that proceeds from the fundamental assumption of equality.

For the present context Makang's argument is especially relevant where he links the discourse on cultural difference with the strategy, in the interest of continued Western control, to prevent Africans from acquiring 'what they lacked and needed most in order to become equal to the West', namely political self-determination and technical efficiency. The latter, gaining control over natural forces, is the reason for the superiority of 'the white man' (Makang 1997:332). Tempels never questioned Belgian colonial domination of Africans, while acknowledging technological mastery as the reason for Africans' recognition of 'the white man' as a superior force, surpassing the vital force of Africans. Yet, when modern Africans

> coveted this technique, they were reminded that it is not the technique or material success but the good soul that makes a great man (Makang 1997:334).

For Tempels, says Makang,

> (T)he contribution of the African people to civilization is conceived neither in terms of scientific and technical efficiency, nor in terms of industry building or state building, but in terms of preserving a mystical and a moral view of the world (1997:334).

Thus, he is more interested in learning from the West 'the secret of their superiority over us in recent history', of which key elements are 'technical know-how, efficient organization, discipline, unity, and effective domination over one's physical and social environment' (1997:334). The problem with the dynamic ontology of vital force is that this force belongs to the realm of dreams and the imagination, and has no impact upon physical reality. As such it can be used as opium to perpetuate the domination of Africans.

Makang (1997:335) does not argue merely for the acquisition by Africans of technology, but for taking over the technological worldview, to give up viewing the world in terms of vital force. It would seem that he actually concurs with Tempels' analysis, while rejecting his advocacy for the retention of such an ontology, as this would impact negatively on 'our quest for realization of a better humanity'. In this quest:

> African people need to acquire this fundamental disposition according to which it is their essential mission as human beings to dominate and transform nature in order to acquire a maximum freedom from necessity and want, instead of perceiving themselves as people meant to live in communion with nature (Makang 1997:335).

Thus, argues Makang, on the basis of his reading of Marx:

> The primary quality of the human being, as Marx shows, consists in transforming nature in order to impose one's seal upon it (1997:335).

This view determines his concept of culture, as opposed to that of culturalism:

Culture, understood as the construction of artefacts upon nature in order to create a human habitat, is an essential vocation of the human being (1997:335).

Is this the Marx of *Capital* or of the *Parisian Manuscripts*? There is some indication that Makang would be open to further dialogue when he says his concept of culture is also critical: The domination of nature should at the same time avoid 'the human tendency', to seek infinity and to overcome or negate one's contingence. However, a critique of the instrumental view of nature is lacking here. No new animism is to be conceptualised on the basis of this instrumental view of nature.

The point that must be made from an intercultural philosophical point of view, in terms of the concept of difference presupposed, is that the appropriate philosophy for a particular situation is not necessarily fitting for another. It might well be that in one situation the call for domination of nature is appropriate while in another a shift has occurred where the domination itself must be brought under control. From the latter perspective the very fact that memories are still available of people who have interacted with nature in an alternative way could prove significant. To make such a point for a particular audience does not imply that one is prescriptive with regard to another audience. The question would then be whether a particular philosophical position is appropriate for its context. Entering into philosophical dialogues would under the conditions of a global world seem an appropriate response. Dialogue presupposes equality, mutual respect, but also openness for critique, provided it goes both ways. One will then have to ask what concept of utopia is appropriate for a particular African context. And concrete institutions will have to be interrogated with regard to their ability to act as revolutionary forces in conjunction

with 'the African masses'. But the attempt to re-evaluate animism can learn much from Makang. We will presently be reminded by Bookchin, too, that ecological problems have their roots in social problems.

5.3 From epistemology to ethics

Can highly complex societies really learn anything from African cultures or are we exoticising? Leonhard Praeg (2000) has argued that the problems we experience with ethnophilosophy should not be allowed to kill ethnophilosophy. He specifically addresses the paradox that *ubuntu*, as something that characterises African philosophy, disqualifies the aim of a separate philosophy - autonomy. He eventually proposes that ethnophilosophy shifts from epistemology to ethics. This shift will allow an overcoming of the solipsistic *ego ergo sum*, as well as of a romanticised nostalgic 'I am because we are'. The proper expression according to Praeg would be 'we are as if we were'.

Applied to animism, as positively viewing everything as related and worthy of respect, which includes the possibility of a more comprehensive sense of community, this shift entails a moving away from the problematical ethnophilosophical nostalgia to an ethical view of the world, as it really is, and therefore should be. What does it still have to do with Africa, and with the dialogue with African philosophers? Extended *ubuntu*, is the ecological community, as injunction.

The ethnophilosopher Senghor had no doubt about Africa's essential contribution to the civilisation of the universal, which

> will be monstrous unless it is seasoned with the salt of negritude (quoted in Praeg 2000:191).

The cultivation of negritude is thus justified as a contribution to a universal civilisation. Praeg identifies the contradiction incurred by Senghor. The particular African contribution must be cultivated, and yet it is already known that this contribution will be worthwhile, will be vital. This is the same problem that Charles Taylor has identified with regard to the thesis concerning the equality of cultures. I have tried to address this problem in a previous paper by substituting the 'equality of cultures' with the 'equal validity' of cultures (Hofmeyr 2004). Praeg reaches a similar conclusion to Kimmerle's notion of the discursive non-availability of universals, a state of affairs that legitimises the particular as such, and articulates the relation between ethics and ethnicity, as described by Miller:

> What is ethical would be a dialectical relationship between a transcendental truth and respect for the other, for difference. A self relating to itself has few ethical problems. In this sense, *there is no real ethics without ethnicity* (quoted in Praeg 2000:132).

The problem addressed by Praeg (2000:134) is that:

> (A commitment to Africa's particularity and performative difference is) faced with the paradox or dilemma that short of circumventing the historical invention of Africa with the aim of de-colonising and re-establishing its autonomy through a final act of liberation, [the] narratives that aim at re-inventing Africa only have recourse to the very discourses that invented it and made its oppression possible.

And:

> the difference needed in order to sustain African philosophy is exactly the difference that needs to be undermined by it (Praeg 2000:194).

The particularity of African philosophy is *ubuntu*, but to maintain itself in the face of colonialism and oppression, it must assert Western style autonomy (see Makang's argument above). Praeg does both: he radicalises the critique of ethnophilosophy as exoticism, and he also recovers ethnophilosophy's 'dyadic logic as probably the first significant and positive contribution to/of African philosophy' (2000:207). This implies ceasing to think of the autonomy of African philosophy in epistemological terms, but rather in ethical terms,

> transcending the epistemological through the fictional, the phenomenological dialectic between the essential and the imaginary through the ethical – affirming the *as if* that historically has and always will constitute the African self; Africa is, *means* replacing both the solipsistic certitude of the Cartesian ego and the nostalgia of the traditional *I am because we are* with a contemporary identity that is neither prior to nor post- the truth/fiction divide but irreverent of it; a celebration, instead, of the awareness that *we are as if we were* (Praeg 2000:211).

We are, as if we were human persons, who have the ability to relate in such a way to other persons, including non-human persons, that an in-between can emerge, in-between me and the tree, the hill, the river, the rock, the other human person.

6. New animism and environmental philosophy

6.1 Deep Ecology

The issue I want to explicitly take up now is the implication of a re-evaluated animism for ecophilosophy and environmental ethics. Few have worked out the implications of one such a reformulation of 'animism' more profoundly than the environmental philosopher Arne Naess, the 'father' of Deep Ecology. He formulates as the first of eight points held in common by supporters of the deep ecology movement:

> The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherently worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes (Naess 1993:412).

According to Naess, the ecosphere forms a whole and includes individuals, species, populations, habitat, as well as human and non-human cultures:

> Given our current knowledge of all-pervasive intimate relationships, this implies a fundamental concern and respect. 'Life' thus includes non-living entities, biologically speaking – rivers, landscapes, ecosystems.

Naess formulates the main principle of what he calls 'ecosophy': 'Maximize (long-range, universal) Self-realization!':

> I do not use this expression in any narrow, individualistic sense. I want to give it an expanded meaning based on the distinction between a large comprehensive Self and a narrow egoistic self as conceived of in certain Eastern traditions of *atman*. This large comprehensive Self ... embraces all the life-forms on the planet (and elsewhere?) together with their individual selves (*jivas*) (Naess 1993:418).

The second term of ecosophy formulated by Naess is 'Maximize (long range, universal) diversity!':

> A corollary is that the higher the levels of Self-realization attained by any person, the more any further increase depends upon the Self-realization of others. Increased self-identity involves increased identification with others. 'Altruism' is a natural consequence of this identification (Naess 1993:420).

This leads to a hypothesis concerning an inescapable increase of identification with other beings when one's own self-realization increases. As a result, we increasingly see ourselves in other beings, and others see themselves in us. In this way, the Self is extended and deepened as a natural process of the realization of its potentialities in others.

The resultant 'joyful sharing and caring' is linked by Naess (1993:420) to Kant's concept of 'beautiful actions', actions in which duty and inclination coincide. This insight shows an affinity with Kimmerle's use of the concept 'Achtung' (respect and reverence) in stead of 'tolerance' or 'respect'.

6.2 Social Ecology

Amongst Neass' critics, the most vitriolic might be the social ecologist Murray Bookchin:

> 'Deep ecology' was spawned among well-to-do people who have been raised on a spiritual diet of Eastern cults mixed with Hollywood and Disneyland fantasies. The American mind is formless enough without burdening it with 'biocentric' myths of a Buddhist and Taoist belief in a universal "oneness" so cosmic that human beings with all their distinctiveness dissolve into an all-encompassing form of 'biocentric equality'. Reduced to merely one life-form among many, the poor and the impoverished either become fair game for outright extermination if they are socially expendable, or they become objects of brutal exploitation if they can be used to aggrandize the corporate world. Accordingly, terms like 'oneness' and 'biocentric democracy' go hand-in-hand with a pious formula for human oppression, misery, and even extermination …
>
> To declare, as Arne Naess, the pontiff of 'deep ecology', has done, that the 'basic principles of the deep ecology movement lie in religion or philosophy', is to make a conclusion notable for *its absence of reference to social theory* (Bookchin 1995:229-230).

And that, I submit, is the crux: Is Derrida 'Saint Jacques' for siding with Saint Max Stirner? (see Bedggood 1999).

Is Heinz Kimmerle's notion of a new animism sufficiently protected from

> its degeneration into an atavistic, simple-minded form of nature religion peopled by gods, goddesses, and eventually a new hierarchy of priests and priestesses (Bookchin 1995:230)?

Bookchin says:

> (T)he clear-sighted *naturalism* to which ecology so vividly lends itself is now in danger of being supplanted by a *super*natural outlook that is inherently alien to nature's own fecundity and self-creativity (Bookchin1995:203).

According to him natural evolution exhibits a wonderful power of its own to generate a rich variety of living beings. We need not people it with 'earth gods and goddesses'. He asks whether it is not the crudest form of anthropocentrism (the projection of the human into the natural) 'to introduce deified forms created by the human imagination into the natural world in the name of ecological 'spirituality'…', and continues:

> To worship or revere *any* being, natural or supernatural, will always be a form of self-subjugation and servitude that ultimately yields social domination, be it in the name of nature, society, gender, or religion. More than one civilization was riddled by "nature deities" that were cynically used by ruling elites to support the most rigid, oppressive, and dehumanizing of social hierarchies. The moment human beings fall to their knees before *any* thing that is "higher" than themselves, hierarchy will have made its first triumph over freedom, and human backs will be exposed to all the burdens that can be inflicted on them by social domination (Bookchin 1995:203)

Kimmerle (1995:159) refers to Schmidt's work on the concept of nature in the work of Marx. In this book the following quotation can be read, the words of the worker-philosopher Joseph Dietzgen addressed to Marx:

> You formulate for the first time in clear, forceful and scientific terms what will be from now on the *conscious* tendency of historical development, namely, to subject the natural power of the societal processes of production, until now conceived as blind, to human consciousness' (quoted in Schmidt 1974:136).

Schmidt (1974:210-211) agrees that the transition from the young Marx to the critique of political economy has been an expensive affair. Marx's important contribution has been the reversal of the idea of the mediatedness of all unmediated against its idealistic form. But some idealistic hubris has to continue working in Marx - that an entity is nothing in itself, but mere material for praxis. This goes against the tendency of Marx's work, the 'resurrection of nature', 'humanisation of nature', or 'naturalisation of humanity'. Schmidt recommends as remedy a reconsideration of the emancipatory role of human nature and the liberating power of sensuality in the work of the young Marx. What is needed, and will determine human survival, is the development of a concept of rationality that reconciles the total emancipation of the Gattung with the vital interests of individuals.

Bookchin (1995) interprets Marx in similar vein: nature must surrender to a conquering active-aggressive humanity. The natural world is a taskmaster that must be controlled. Deep ecologists assume the reverse of exactly the same - humanity is dominated by nature that must be obeyed. Social ecology claims to escape from this trap by re-examining the concept of domination. Bookchin holds that animals do not 'dominate' each other in the same way that a human elite dominates an oppressed social group. This shows that society, far from being the metaphysical opposition to nature, is one with nature in a graded evolutionary continuum on the basis of the extent to which human beings embody the creativity of nature. They do not merely adapt, but create, expressing nature's own powers of creativity. Natural history is a cumulative evolution toward ever more varied, differentiated, and complex forms and relationships.According to Bookchin the question is not the opposition of natural and social evolution, but how social evolution can be situated in natural evolution and why it has been thrown against natural evolution – needlessly and to the detriment of life as a whole:

> If social evolution is seen as the potentiality for expanding the horizon of natural evolution along unprecedented creative lines, and human beings are seen as the potentiality for nature to become self-conscious and free, the issue we face is *why* these potentialities have been warped and *how* they can be realized. ...

> Whatever has turned human beings into 'aliens' in nature are social changes that have made many human beings 'aliens' in their own social world: the domination of the young by the old, or women by men, and of men by men. Today, as for many centuries in the past, there are still oppressive human beings who literally own society and others who are owned by it. Until society can be reclaimed by an undivided humanity ... all ecological problems will have their roots in social problems (Bookchin 1995:232).

It is against the background of Bookchin's insistence on social theory, and his thinking of humanity as having a place in nature, of nature itself becoming self-consciousness in human consciousness, that I now turn to the originator of the animism-theory, EB Tylor.

7. Old animism

It is significant that Tylor ([1873] 1979) uses the term animism to refer to a spiritualistic philosophy that he opposes to a materialistic philosophy. He says:

> (T)he deepest of all religious schisms [is] that which divides Animism from Materialism (Tylor 1979:19).

He would have used the term 'spiritualism' if this term were not already associated with what he calls a particular modern sect. Animism thus means the general belief in spiritual beings. Tylor develops his theory of animism as a hypothesis concerning the origin of religion. One reason why the term carries such negative baggage is the evolutionary framework within which Tylor situates it. A few quotations should reveal the general trend:

'Animism characterizes tribes very low in the scale of humanity'; 'Animism is … the groundwork of the Philosophy of Religion, from that of savages up to that of civilized men'; 'One great element of religion, that moral element which among the higher nations forms its most vital part, is indeed little represented in the religion of the lower races', and so on (Tylor 1979:11). It should be clear that any talk of 'a new animism', or any re-evaluation of animism, will not take over any of the vulgar evolutionary view with which the original theory was joined at the hip. For Tylor, animism entailed:

the belief that human beings have souls that can have an existence independent of the human body;

the belief that animals have souls that make it possible for humans to communicate with them, although, from the 'evidence' cited by Tylor, it would seem that these souls are quite easy to cajole;

the belief in a 'theory of separable and surviving souls or spirits belonging to sticks and stones, weapons, boats, food, clothes, ornaments, and other objects which to us are not merely soulless but lifeless' (Tylor 1979:17).

It must be noted that the assessment of animism as primitive, was, in accordance with the views of August Comte, used by Tylor to describe the

> 'primary mental condition of mankind' as a state of 'pure fetishism, constantly characterized by the free and direct exercise of our primitive tendency to conceive all external bodies soever, natural or artificial, as animated by a life essentially analogous to our own, with mere differences of intensity' (Comte, quoted in Tylor 1979:18).

A new animism differs with Tylor at this point. The system of interrelated forces, the dynamic whole of spiritual forces, the spiritual universe, to which natural things belong, as participating in life-force (Kimmerle 1995:162) must thus be conceived without the prejudices of a scientific modernism, or classical science.

8. Animism revisited

In 1999 *Current Anthropology* published a paper by Nurit Bird-David in which she argues that even so-called primitive animism was misunderstood by Tylor and others and that it can be refigured as a relational epistimology. Her approach shows an affinity with Kimmerle's criterion of adequacy:

> The perspective to be employed is presented not as more valid than any other but as one now needed in studies of the complex phenomena which Tylor denoted as 'animism''' (Bird-David 1999:68).

I follow Bird-David's argument in support of Kimmerle's clarification of his original call for a 'new animism'. We do not need a new animism, but a re-evaluation of the phenomenon that has gone by the name animism, since at least Tylor.

In her review of the 'textual conversation' on animism to date (Tylor, Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss and Guthrie) she shows how positivistic ideas about the meaning of 'nature', 'life' and 'personhood' made it impossible for these attempts to understand the local concepts. These theoreticians

> attributed their own modernist ideas of self to "primitive peoples" while asserting that the "primitive peoples" read their idea of self into others! (Bird-David 1999:68).

She points out that Tylor, whose monograph *Primitive Cultures* (published in 1871) was rewarded with the first chair in Anthropology at a British university, never did primary research in the localities that he theorised about. He relied on second-hand accounts of 'primitive people' and had his own direct experiences at spiritualist séances in London where he investigated what he called 'modern spiritualism'. He read the literature on 'primitive' or 'savage' people with his first-hand knowledge of séances and his supposition that the latter is a remnant of the former allowed him to use the terms "spirit" and 'soul' and 'ghost' in his conceptualisation of 'primitive' animism.

As a rationalist Tylor rejected the 'appearance' of spirits at séances as a delusion, and thus 'primitive animism' as delusionary.

The concept of spirit/soul/ghost used by Tylor was firstly dualistic – every person had a body and a 'ghost-soul' that was a 'thin unsubstantial human image', 'the cause of life or thought in the individual it animates' and 'capable of leaving the body far behind'. It also continued to exist and appear after the death of the body (Tylor, quoted in Bird-David 1999:69). Secondly, as indicated by Durkheim, Tylor identified the mind of a child with that of a 'primitive'. Thinking like a child the 'primitive' endows even inanimate things with a nature analogous to his own. Bird-David makes the point that:

> Tylor read into the primitive view the modernist spiritualist understanding of 'one's own nature,' not the primitive's or the child's sense of 'his own nature' (1999:69).

Lévi-Strauss criticised the theories of Tylor and Durkheim for placing indigenous peoples on the nature side of the dualistic split between nature and culture. But according to Bird-David (1999:70), although he correctly put them on the culture side, he retained the split and located it inside the savage mind of indigenous peoples. This was not an explanation of animism but explaining it away.

Exploring an alternative interpretation along the lines of personhood concepts and ecological perception, Bird-David (1999:70) starts with the work of Irving Hallowell. He has found that the Ojibwa of Northern Canada have a different sense of personhood from the modernist one. The latter restricts the category 'person' to this side of the human-nonhuman divide, whereas the former conceives of 'person' as an overarching category with subcategories including human person, animal person, wind person, etc. Hallowell, says Bird-David, not only frees the study of animism from modernist presuppositions, but also from the assessment that animistic notions and practices are erroneous. She pursues his insights further through ethnographic material that she has collected during fieldwork amongst the Nayaka, a hunter-gatherer community of a forested part of South India. She wants to understand the senses of what the Nayaka call *devaru*, a concept that remains enigmatic to positivistic thought.

Devaru are neither spirits, if spirits are part of the spirit-body dualism that characterises the modern person-concept, nor supernatural beings, if the 'nature' in 'supernature' is conceived along Western lines. Bird-David (1999:71) introduces the concept 'superpersons' to denote persons with extra powers, and then allows this concept to acquire meaning by describing *devaru* in local contexts. Referring to a common practice in South Asian scholarship, she uses the term 'dividual' as 'a person constitutive of relationships' in distinction to the Western notion of an individual as 'a single separate entity'. To dividuate would then mean to be

> conscious of the *relatedness with* my interlocutor *as I engage with her*, attentive to what she does in relation to what I do, to how she talks and listens to me as I talk and listen to her, to what happens simultaneously and mutually to me, to her, to *us* (Bird-David 1999:72).

She argues that the Nayaka do not individuate, but dividuate other beings in their environment:

> They are attentive to, and work towards making, relatedness. As they move and generally act in the environment, they are attentive to mutual behaviors and events.

And:

> They *make* their personhood by producing and reproducing sharing relationships with surrounding beings, humans and others (Bird-David 1999:73).

They appreciate that they share the local environment with such beings, which, different as they are, constitute a we-ness together with the human members of this relationship. *Devaru* are beings that are absorbed into this we-ness:

> By maintaining relationships with other local beings to reproduce their personhood, Nayaka reproduce the devaru-ness of the other beings with whom they share. ... These relationships constitute the particular beings as devaru" (Bird-David 1999:73).

Bird-David summarises this part of her argument:

> (T)he devaru objectify sharing relationships between Nayaka and other beings. A hill devaru, say, objectifies Nyaka relationships with the hill; it makes known the relationships between Nayaka and that hill. Nayaka maintain social relationships with other beings not because, as Tylor holds, they a priori consider them persons. *As and when* and *because* they engage in and maintain relationships with other beings, they constitute them as kinds of person: they make them "relatives" by sharing with them and thus make them persons. They do not regard them as persons and subsequently some of them as relatives, as Durkheim maintains. In some basic sense of this complex notion, devaru are relatives in the literal sense of being "that or whom one interrelates with" (not in the reduced modern English sense of "*humans* connected with others by blood or affinity" [The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary 1973]). They are superrelatives who both need and can help Nayaka in extraordinary ways (Bird-David 1999:73).

Gibson's ecological approach to visual perception is used to describe the way in which *devaru* are known. According to this view meaning is not imposed on things (see the reference to Adorno's critique of epistemology above), but discovered in the course of action. Information is picked up from the environment by means of attention. Gibson has it that this attention is 'a skill that can be educated' (quoted in Bird-David 1999:74), and knowing is developing this skill. Stories and models of things, words and pictures are aids to perceiving and not themselves knowledge. They facilitate knowing, induce an awareness of being in the world, and never copy or represent reality. Bird-David applies this approach to the Nayaka:

> Their attention is educated to dwell on events. They are attentive to the changes of things in the world in relation to changes in themselves (Bird-David 1999:74).

Relative variances in the flux of interrelatedness of different kinds of persons are interpreted as manifestations of *devaru* in specific situations. At regular *devaru* performances (that involve what in modernist language would be termed 'spirit-possession') devaru are 'made alive', which means

> raising people's awareness of their existence in-the-world and, dialectically, producing and being produced by this, socializing with them (Bird-David 1999:77).

Bird-David's (1999:77-78) argument culminates in a description of animism as a relational epistemology, a 'talking with trees' alternative to the modernist epistemology that would involve knowing a forest through 'cutting trees into parts'. 'Talking with' means a two-way responsive relatedness with a tree (for instance) with the possibility of the emergence of mutual responsiveness and even mutual responsibility. Knowing in modernist epistemology is 'having, acquiring, applying, and improving representations of things in-the-world', while the animistic way of knowing entails 'developing the skills of being in-the-world with other things', 'understanding relatedness from a related point of view within the shifting horizons of the related viewer'. Both these ways of knowing are real and valid, and each has strengths and limits.

In his 'Comment' on Bird-David's paper Tim Ingold (1999:82) elaborates further on the concept of a two-way relatedness to components of the environment (e. g. trees) that results from a longstanding intimate engagement with them. Talking with a tree does not constitute an erroneous attribution of an inner intelligence that exists prior to interaction. It rather means responsiveness as 'a kind of sensory participation, a coupling of the movement of one's attention to the movement of aspects of the world'. The intelligence at work here would not lie inside the head of the human actor, nor in the fabric of the tree. 'Rather it is immanent in the total system of perception and action constituted by the co-presence of the human and the tree within a wider environment' (Ingold 1999:82).

In her 'Response' to Ingold and others, Bird-David refers to Martin Buber's I-Thou concept that specifically also includes animals, trees, objects of nature and God. She quotes Friedman's formulation of the role of the in-between in Buber's I-Thou:

> I-Thou ... cut[s] across the lines of our ordinary distinctions to focus our attention not upon individual objects and their casual connections but upon the relations between things, the *dazwischen* (there-in-between), (Bird-David 1999:87)

The point Bird-David (1999:87) makes is not that relational ways of knowing do not exist within the context of the modern state and its institutions, but that they are not given sufficient authority, as is the case in Nayaka culture. It is thus a matter of giving authority, and a call for the giving of authority to relational epistemologies. What kind of epistemology is now needed becomes a matter of ethics.

9. Bookchin revisited

A few months after the death of the 'founder' of social ecology, the great Murray Bookchin,[3] I want to honour his memory by further exploring his argument against spirits and the 'supernatural' in general. It is significant to note that social ecology as originally conceived by Bookchin included the insights derived from an exploration of what he calls preliterate 'organic societies'. These societies are called organic "because of their intense solidarity internally and with the natural world" (Bookchin 1991:44).

These societies existed before hierarchy and capitalism emerged and Bookchin's interest in them is informed by the conviction that contemporary radical ecological politics can learn from their 'nonhierarchical sensibilities, practices, values and beliefs'. He positively took up into social ecology the principle of the irreducible minimum, by which organic society guaranteed to everyone the material means of life; its commitment to usufruct rather than the ownership of property; its ethics of complementarity, as distinguished from a morality of command and obedience (Bookchin 1991:xiv).

His approach to inbetweenity involves the integration of the principles and values of organic society with the rationality, science and large parts of the technology of the modern world. The latter, however, would be redesigned 'to promote humanity's integration with the nonhuman world'. He thus has a selective integration in mind that would form 'the overarching practices of an entirely new society and sensibility (Bookchin 1991:xiv).

Bookchin originally also examined organic society's religions and cosmologies, including what he calls 'its mythic personalizations of animals and animal spirits … and its overall animistic outlook'. But he

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3   He died on 30 July 2006 of complications of a malfunctioning aortic valve in Vermont, USA. He was 85 years old.

> never believed that we could or should introduce their naïve religious, mythic, or magical beliefs or their cosmologies into the present-day ecology movement (Bookchin 1991:xv).

And yet, according to his interpretation that is exactly what happened in new ecologies such as Deep Ecology and ecological animism that has emerged since the first publication of *The Ecology of Freedom* in 1982. He dismisses these approaches as 'mystical ecology' that threatens the integrity of the rational ecology movement. The latter tries to balance reason and technology with organic thinking and spirituality (Bookchin 1991:xvi). Bookchin's concern is that 'these practices' (and the list is much longer as the instances mentioned here) are cop-outs because they do not deal with the authentic problems of our time, which, for social ecology, are social problems from which ecological problems spring. The main problem is that capitalism has become more than just an economy. It is a society (Bookchin 1991:xviii).

In capitalism as a society people have come to resemble the commodities that they produce and consume. Fragmentation has become an ideology. Capitalist society has nothing to fear from mystical ecologies:

> (I)t is profit, power, and economic expansion that primarily concerns the elites of the existing social order, not the antics or even the protests of dissenters who duel with ghosts instead of institutionalized centers of power, authority and wealth (Bookchin 1991:xix).

Bookchin understand 'nature' as an evolutionary development that should be conceived as an aeons-long process of ever-greater differentiation, up to the emergence of organic and sentient beings.

> (It is) a cumulative evolutionary process from the inanimate to the animate and ultimately the social, however differentiated this process may be (Bookchin 1991:xx).

The principal distinction made by Bookchin (1991:xxi) is between first nature (non-human) and second nature as the social nature created by human beings. He emphasises that this distinction is not a separation, but reflects two developments of 'nature-as-a-whole'.

The use of the terms first and second nature is also to be found in the negative dialectics of Adorno who strongly influenced Bookchin. Adorno (1980) describes society as second nature, and one sense of this is negative, that society that is supposed to be the product of the history of freedom, becomes nature according to the dialectics of Enlightenment. Society is reified. In this context the negative implication of second nature is that the whole is the lie (against Hegel). The problem is how to get out, because it is the whole. Bookchin himself has suggested the exploration of 'non-identical' (Adorno's term, not Bookchin's) organic societies.

Heinz Kimmerle works more with the simultaneousness of such

societies with Westerners whose glasses have cracked to such an extent that they cannot see a thing. They must be told what it is that they cannot see, as a blind person would listen to a seeing person describing a landscape or a scene. If the non-identical interlocutors would now say 'spirit', imagine a blind person saying 'you can't be serious, it is impossible to see spirits, spirits do not exist' and go on to rant about how ridiculous and harmful it is to believe in spirits, and that secularism is the only solution. Kimmerle (1985:92) has dealt elsewhere with what would be happening here: the view that Europe with its order is superior to wild and chaotic Africa has its roots in Europe's own myths. Remember Tylor at the London séances, and then going home to write about animistic Africans! Kimmerle involves Heidegger: onto-theology is a combination of the Greek idea that the being of the cosmos finds its unity in the gods, and Jewish monotheism with its idea of direction through a single history. To that was added the logic of Aristotle with its metaphysical principle that everything must be subjected to an external order (see Hofmeyr 2005:58). Bookchin's reaction to spirit-talk might be mistaken for the anxiety experienced by Europeans when confronted with the threat of the regression into mythical times. The point is that he might be reading his own repressed ghosts into what is intended by ecological animists.

Back to the metaphor: Hopefully the blind person will be sufficiently conscious of her helpnessness that she continues to listen, and that her non-identical interlocutor would be sufficiently patient to lead her to the tree so that she can feel the texture of the bark and experience the coolness of its shade and hear the wind rustling the leaves, knowing that it is the wind rustling the leaves *and* angles passing through. Compare our poet Breyten Breytenbach's (1977:206) poem:

> ['n Man]
>
> moet weet as die wind deur die olyfbome waai
>
> dat dit die wind is wat deur die olyfbome waai
>
> en engele op reis.

The wind, invisible energy, is *muya* in Venda and *moya* in Zulu and spirits are *muya* as well. The blind person might hear why this particular tree differs from the others, that it is associated with the predecessors, and that rocks and lakes can also be sites of the non-absent absence of the predecessors.

An article by Clark (2000) on social ecology is very interesting in this regard, especially as he refers specifically to the concept 'spirit'. According to him the most radical dialectical and holistic thinking is repairing the ontological and political meaning of the concept 'spirit' (after all the exorcism of the young Hegelians, including Marx). Concerning Marx: he was right in identifying the fundamental

irrationality of economic society as lying in its spirituality – the fetishism of commodities. Clark obviously does not want to hark back to Hegel's idealistic concept of spirit, on account of it being one-sided and dogmatic. Yet, the concept of spirit is an important means of expressing the human relationship to the becoming, developing, unfolding whole and its deeper ontological matrix. He quotes Kovel: spirit is what happens to us when the limits of the self disappear. 'Self' here is the narrow consumer's ego of economical society. The negation of ego-identity happens when we discover our relationship with the primordial continuum and its expression in the striving for wholeness and the whole. Note the importance of striving: the primordial continuum finds expression in processes of life, growth and development. Clark says, and that is why I relate his argument here: a social ecology can give expression to an ecological spirituality that will embody the truth of religion, which is a liberating truth if set free from the mystifying and grotesque expressions that it has found in the service of domination and conformism.

Baird Callicot (2001), writing about a multi-cultural approach to environmental ethics, has argued that diversity is good, but that there is also a need for a unifying process and discourse. Three global discourses are presently available. Global capitalism and geo-politics do not respect the other and are top-down. Post-classical science, on the other hand, has integrated the undermining of the epistemological priority of western rationalism in its foundation. The scientific accounts are seen as narratives. And yet, against post-modernism's critique, these narratives are grand. To be grand they have to satisfy certain criteria, e. g. imagination. The new grandness includes: embeddedness, not transcendence, cooperation, not conquest, wholeness, not fragmentation.

The stories of post-classical science are more credible than any other available stories, and one ignores them at one's peril. But to be grand they have to be integrated with local knowledge systems. Reciprocal interaction between scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge, recognition of the organic relationship between the two kinds of knowledge, is called for, if an appeal to the human soul must be made by the post-classical scientific narratives. Without an appeal to the human soul and the emotions, and without addressing the symbolic, no narrative can claim 'grandness'. Local knowledge, as also contained and expressed in religious ceremonies, does exactly this. This might be the adequate formulation of the problem that is addressed in hauntology: the failure of classical western science, and the logocentric philosophy based on it, to integrate local, indigenous knowledge into it.

And here in Africa local knowledge knows of spirits. Kimmerle has

exposed himself to the foreign and in his latest book reports on his homecoming (*Rückkehr ins Eigene*). Back home he attempts to find more words after Kant stated our fundamental inability to know about the existence/non-existence of God/spirits, and after Derrida left the question open as to whether God and spirits are real (Kimmerle 2006:109). The direction into which Kimmerle takes a groping step ("Wir versuchen, uns einen Schritt weiter vor zu tasten" – the appropriate attitude for someone who knows he cannot see through his cracked glasses) is away from the Feuerbach-Marx-Bloch line where the mystery (radical questioning) is situated in the questioning philosopher. The reality of the human historical and social world is embedded in nature and in the cosmos in such a way that it cannot be fully explained in terms of itself. Philosophers have no name for that which religions call spirits and God. But that which the spirits represent – the reality of the absent present – can today be explained in terms of virtual reality.

The question that Kimmerle (2006:111) poses is: what does it mean that God and spirits 'represent' something? Projection theory, from Feuerbach to Bloch, cannot answer this question satisfactorily, as it proceeds from a concept of reality that only accepts the relations of the human-historical-societal world as basis of explanation. But this world is not everything. It is embedded in nature and the cosmos. We do not know, however, how the forces of nature and the cosmos affect human life and the human-historical-societal world. A religious explanation of this interaction cannot be dismissed. It must be left open. The relationship between human beings in history and society and the reality that encompasses this world is one of openness. Kimmerle (2006:112) finds this openness an adequate expression philosophically of the 'whole' of human life and the world.

A philosopher who thinks along these lines would then prefer the term 'forces' above 'spirits' – forces that have an effect on human life and the human-historical-societal world, and that cooperate with the known and explained forces active in the world (Kimmerle 2006:112).

This is how Kimmerle reflects on what has happened to his own thinking as a result of his exposure to dialogues with African philosophies. From an African and an ecological perspective the question can be posed whether the term 'force' is appropriate if animism is about understanding the world as a community of living persons, only some of whom are human (Harvey 2006). It makes more sense to respect and revere a person than a force, and to communicate with a person in showing respect. Harvey (2006) poses entry into full relationality as an improved means of achieving understanding of the world we live in.

The ethical implication of an animist way of looking at the world would

be that no environment is the exclusive domain of human persons, or any other persons. Whatever we need we must seek in honest engagement with a diverse community of similarly needy and desiring persons. This personalist dimension is what might be lacking in Kimmerle's preference for the term 'force'.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, how does a new animism relate to a new humanism? The new humanism is new in that it goes beyond the western tradition. In Africa it immediately encounters the invisible world of spirits. This presents it with an opportunity to incorporate local knowledge into its endeavours to together solve the problems of today. The problems are immense, specifically those that pertain to our relationship to nature. Indigenous African knowledge suggests an opportunity to extend the community of persons, at least to include the predecessors and the places and sites of their invisible presence.

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