



The notion of nature is one of the most recurring and questioned notions in Western thinking. Although its definition was never obvious, nature currently seems in need of a more radical rethinking, also due to the increasing relevance of research fields that compel to its revision. The present issue of «Teoria» aims to let a number of hints emerge for a critical discussion of current definitions and understandings of nature. This second number follows the first one on «Burning Issues».

Il concetto di natura è uno dei più ricorrenti e dibattuti del pensiero occidentale. Sebbene la sua definizione non sia stata mai pacifica, attualmente esso sembra aver bisogno di un ripensamento più radicale, dovuto anche alla sempre maggiore rilevanza di ambiti di ricerca che ne impongono una revisione. Il presente fascicolo di «Teoria» si prefigge lo scopo di far emergere una serie di spunti di riflessione per una discussione critica delle definizioni e delle concezioni correnti di natura. Questo secondo numero segue il [primo](#) sulle «Questioni aperte».

Flavia Monceri

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Raimondo Cubeddu

The Non-Ergodic Nature of Political Philosophy

pp. 7-26

This article argues that it is not necessary to recover or develop a normative idea of “nature” in order to give politics a foundation. Even less that would require developing a new conception of nature (including the so to speak “human”), which is the synthesis of ideas passed on to us by the philosophical tradition. The latter is also open to a redefinition in its relation to “scientific progress” and to the contributions of specific sciences. Instead, it is our aim to affirm that the nature of political philosophy, or rather the “natural condition” of political philosophers, who inevitably place themselves between experience of what has worked and new contingencies that require remodeling, is essentially that of having to continually deal with a “less ergodic” human world that is constantly subject to the emergence of unintended consequences in relation to human actions, development or erroneous analyses. This continually modifies the agenda.

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Fra nomos e physis. Ragion pratica e diritto naturale in Robert Spaemann

pp. 27-44

According to Robert Spaemann, in contemporary debate on Natural Right the main issue is the relationship between Reason and Nature. His proposal is founded on an original interpretation of the following Aristotelian saying: «Neither by nature nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit». Similarly, Natural Right is not an immediate reality, we must certify without hermeneutical and historical commitment. On the contrary, Natural Right is always the result of rational interpretation of our nature (that is not only “rational”) and environmental nature, today more and more threatened by the ecological crisis. Consequently, there is no incompatibility between Positive Law and Natural Right: the same Positive Law, in fact, is due to the first requirement of Natural Right, that is creation of social and legal order consistent with social nature of human being.

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Marco Stefano Birtolo

Le Dichiarazioni dei diritti umani tra natura e cultura

pp. 45-63

The aim of this essay is to give account of the criticism originated by non-Western cultural contexts to base the universal validity of human rights on the idea of human nature. In particular, the essay tries to examine the refusal contained in the Islamic declarations of human rights and the Bangkok Declaration to the possibility to find a unique legitimacy for human rights based on the tradition of natural rights, by which Western declarations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were influenced (1948). The assumption for which human rights are inherent in human nature is rejected on the wake that their foundation and interpretation are related to the different cultural contexts in which they spread. So the main conclusion of this essay is that the effort to found a universal legitimacy of human rights on the concept of human nature is not a useful political strategy for granting them in an intercultural global context.

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Helmuth Plessner's Philosophy of Life

pp. 65-82

The focus of this paper is Helmuth Plessner's philosophy of life as presented in his opus magnum *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (1928). The special emphasis has been put on the methodological aspect of researching the phenomenon of life, and on the category of positionality, analyzed in both spatial and temporal context. Positionality characterizes a general relation between a living being and the environment. Different forms of positionality determine the whole variety of the world of nature. In the concluding part of the text, a characteristic of three fundamental levels of life have been presented – a plant form, an animal form, and human form – considering the last one as introducing into the issues of philosophical anthropology.

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Salvatore Giammusso

Esercizio e comprensione della natura nell'ermeneutica di O.F. Bollnow

pp. 83-100

In the following paper I will focus on the relationship between man and nature in the hermeneutical philosophy of O.F. Bollnow. I will keep in the background the phenomenology of nature in the work of the Japanese philosopher Ueda Shizuteru. The intercultural comparison reveals their common philosophical intention to analyze the relationship between man and nature in terms of ethics and education. Bollnow and Ueda are interested in how human beings experience their relatedness to self, nature and others; and both argue that exercise is the “way” to realize a different way of being. According to Bollnow the self-centered subject that exploits nature greedily to meet his needs is not the only possibility: a “relaxed” dimension of subjectivity can realize that it is itself “life” and therefore understand nature and others from their center. Bollnow’s meditative hermeneutics of nature should be therefore considered as a philosophical position which breaks with modern subjectivism.

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Miriam Tola

The Political Ecology of Isabelle Stengers: Displacing the Anthropocene

pp. 101-118

This essay delves into the work of philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers to complicate current debates on the Anthropocene, the new geological epoch marked by human impact on planetary system processes. I highlight some problematic elements in the discourse of the Anthropocene, in particular the orientation toward a model of governance by experts, and the foregrounding of an undifferentiated anthropos at the expense of a complex milieu of earthly forces that have enabled the emergence and variation of uncountable forms of life. I show how Stengers concepts of ecology and the “intrusion of Gaia” unsettle any notion of the human as primary agent of Earth’s becoming and open up the space for a productive reconfiguration of current understandings of politics, agency and expertise.

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Anthropocentrism and Nature. An Attempt at Reconciliation

pp. 119-137

This essay delves into the work of philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers to complicate current debates on the Anthropocene, the new geological epoch marked by human impact on planetary system processes. I highlight some problematic elements in the discourse of the Anthropocene, in particular the orientation toward a model of governance by experts, and the foregrounding of an undifferentiated anthropos at the expense of a complex milieu of earthly forces that have enabled the emergence and variation of uncountable forms of life. I show how Stengers concepts of ecology and the “intrusion of Gaia” unsettle any notion of the human as primary agent of Earth’s becoming and open up the space for a productive reconfiguration of current understandings of politics, agency and expertise.

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Paul O’Brien

Aesthetics, Virtual Reality and the Environment

pp. 139-156

This paper examines questions arising in the interface between ethics, aesthetics, nature and technology: in regard to our knowledge of reality and nature; the valuation of nature; the ontological status of virtual worlds vis a vis nature; and the aesthetic implications of the virtual reality experience vis a vis the experience of nature. Is nature itself a human construction? What – if anything – is there about nature that would distinguish it from a virtual reality simulation? And what – if anything – is there about the aesthetic experience of nature that would distinguish it from the aesthetic experience of a persuasive virtual reality simulation? Is it possible to value nature while doubting its existence?

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Gianluca Cuozzo

Resti di natura. L'esistenza dell'uomo tra spazzatura e utopie della reintegrazione

pp. 157-174

To live in the presently disfigured landscape – where nature is but a fragment of an ancient beauty and richness – means entering the era of allegory tout court, within which human

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existence is forced to dwell in a lunar landscape remindful of those described by P.K. Dick, locus of rotting refuse, where everything is swiftly reduced to “kipple” and “gubble”. Yet, even though a mere fragment, an allegory of its former self, nature still retains a historical dimension: that dimension of time to which the social universe – turned into an obtuse self-perpetuating myth – has given up in the name of the “always identical and always new” and of the irrevocability of a particular historicocontigent outcome. Yet, even a disfigured nature can be the source of a concrete utopia of reintegration, by virtue of its historical dimension. In other words, both the wastes of nature and the dreams of salvation are not exempt from an otherwise unsuspected mutual solidarity: being interconnected, they push imagination in remote and long forgotten lands where a happiness dwells whose name – now unsayable in history – is the regained Eden.

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Un nuovo cancro per il pianeta? Natura ed essere umano nell'etica ambientale contemporanea

pp. 175-192

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Rethinking nature in the present age means measuring up to the new prospective of Environmental Ethics, drawn up as a response to the incumbent ecological crisis, and addressed to affronting the theme of the relations between human beings and the environment. Within Environmental Ethics, the paradigms of Anthropocentrism and Biocentrism are founded: they are differentiated for the position given to Man in the cosmos but also for the value of nature that is to be acknowledged. The two paradigms are generated by two metaphysical antithetical concepts (the ontological hierarchy of living beings and Spinoza's immanentism, reconsidered in light of Cybernetics), and inspired two different methodologies (Atomism and Holism); Anthropocentrism and Biocentrism give us two different anthropologies and morals: if the former acknowledges the superiority of the human being, assigning to him a role of "master of nature", the latter condemns Man to be "the cancer of the planet" and, therefore, tends to annihilate his identity, losing it to the natural fluxes.

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Unmasking Epistemic Ethnocentrism: "Rethinking Nature" as an Intercultural Project

pp. 193-212

In the first section of this article I briefly introduce Yuasa Yasuo's attempt at "rethinking nature" from an intercultural perspective, especially addressing the process through which it emerged as a research project. My point is that similar "intercultural experiments" are still too rare and marginal in "Western" scientific and academic community because of the too high incidence of epistemic ethnocentrism. Therefore, in the second section I consider more in depth the notion of epistemic ethnocentrism, as well as its dangers, the most important of which is epistemicide. In this context, the reference is, among others, to authors such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Walter D. Mignolo, and Ramón Grosfoguel. In the concluding section, I try to argue for the adoption of a successful intercultural attitude also referring to some of Friedrich Nietzsche's positions.

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