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The Iranian Yearbook of Phenomenology

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The Temple of Athena and the Return of the Salmon: Orientations toward Nature and Meaning in Salishan/ Sahaptin/Wakashan (Northwest American Indigenous) and Heideggerian Philosophy.

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Abstract

In Origin of the Work of Art, Heidegger presents an evocative claim about the way the Temple to Athena on the Acropolis, opens a world rich with meaning and resonant with significance that orients the Athenian people within reality thus allowing their relations to others and to nature to appear as meaningful and ultimately nourishing. In other words, the Temple, like all great works of art, opens a world that is also a home. This article reviews the import of Heidegger’s reflection on monumental art, but we quickly turn to the principal objection to Heidegger’s thought, - hich is that the entire venture by which an artistic, religious, or poetic event organizes a world for “a people” is fundamentally illegitimate because of the way it binds individuals to an identity that outgroups the “foreigners” that do not belong to this identity and thus marginalizes them.

This objection is a central motivating force for liberalism, and since World War II, and particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union, has been almost hegemonic in many strands of philosophical thought and the globalized culture more widely. Thus, we see that the objection against Heidegger is primarily ethical and political and concerns not only his philosophy but the central and inter-related phenomenological ideas of the horizon, lebenswelt, and the world—and thus the very relation of phenomenology itself—to contemporary ethico-political thinking. But because the objections are so strongly rooted in motivations, our phenomenological inquiry into ‘world’ will have to be supplemented by recourse to hermeneutics.

Keywords: Heidegger, Nature, Meaning.





پرویشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی
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In *Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger presents an evocative claim about the way the Temple to Athena on the Acropolis, opens a world rich with meaning and resonant with significance that orients the Athenian people within reality thus allowing their relations to others and to nature to appear as meaningful and ultimately nourishing. In other words, the Temple, like all great works of art, opens a world that is also a home. This article reviews the import of
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 cccccc cccccc Heeeeeee tttttt ttiii c eiii ee
 venture by which an artistic, religious, or poetic event organizes a
 rrr rrr “a e eeeee aaaaaaaaaa la llllllll tii t eeeesss aa a
 tt sssss siiii an tttttt tt ee “o eeeee””” hhh
 do not belong to this identity and thus marginalizes them. This objection is a central motivating force for liberalism, and since World War II, and particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union, has been almost hegemonic in many strands of philosophical thought and the globalized culture more widely. Thus, we see that the objection against Heidegger is primarily ethical and political and concerns not only his philosophy but the central and inter-related phenomenological ideas of the horizon, *Lebenswelt*, and the world—and thus the very relation of phenomenology itself—to contemporary ethical-political thinking. But because the objections are so strongly rooted in
 ttt eeemmmlllllll ia iiiii iii ttt tee ww’”” ’llll aave
 to be supplemented by recourse to hermeneutics.

In doing so, we take the concern of tribalism seriously. We argue,
 eeee ee ttttt tt eeeeeee “ooo a llll ” oo
 severall connection oo“oil”, bu aather touncvve a phenomenological connection to a place that is more originary than ethnic or cultural identity. As a rootedness in place, this gives the inhabitants of a bioregion, marked by significant geographic and ecological features, a relation within a natural environment that is not yet a fully-formed cultural world, but is already a meaningful relation to space and time and is thus at least minimally already a world in which things can appear and to which one can belong. However, because it is pre-cultural it can bind together all residents of a bio-region, regardless of language, religion, literature, citizenship status, etc.

In the second half of this article, we develop an example of this eco-geographical belonging in the relation to salmon that lies at the heart of the lives of the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest



and Interior Plateau of North America, including the major cultural groups we will examine Salishan (Salish Sea, Fraser, and Columbia Rivers), Sahaptin (Snake and Palouse Rivers), and Wakashan (Vancouver Island). The bounty of the salmon harvest is itself a preliminary worlding that orients the inhabitants of this region in richly meaningful ways. These relations are underdetermined and must still be taken up in different cultural contexts in a multicultural political arena, while still allowing for an already meaningful relation to a natural site—that is a home—for all.

I. The Temple to Athena: Dwelling in a Meaningful Spatial/Temporal World Opened by Great Art

In a forthcoming companion article to this one, we show how much in common Heidegger shares with his Modern critics, in particular with regard to the desire to overcome the estrangement that separates us from things and the illusions that cloud our ability to know them. With — cmmm eeaaæ ii ee ee eeeeeeee tttt ttt eeeeeeeeeeeena ee eee eeæe eee eeeeeee motivations are typically modern, his solution diverges from the main wellsprings of modernity in fundamental ways. For Descartes and Locke and their followers, to avoid seeing things in an alien light requires that one adopt a theoretical stance, such that we are able to know them in a purely detached and objective manner. However, as Heidegger shows in his most philosophically significant work, conscious intentional stances are themselves rooted in an even deeper layer of intentionality, that of mood. We can thereby see that the theoretical attitude is not the neutral zero-point of consciousness, but is rather an abstraction from a more primordial relatedness. Thus, we can see the tragic irony of Modern European/ American thought: a culture so explicitly dedicated to recognizing the hard facts about how things are has also been among the blindest to the true natures of things and peoples as it so often violently and imperialistically fails to ee all rrrrr tttt eeee ggggg' tttt ttt iii s mæaaai eæea aaaaaaii rr al llll'''''''''' ttttt t to understand things—in the attempt to see things as they are—we also inadvertently occluded the very qualities that make things worthy of respect and care and thus, in the end, get a distorted view of their nature. This is why Heidegger claims (2008, p. 224) that true humani apppppppemmmtttt iii mmmmmmmgggggggggg

interests, but the basic point remains operative, namely the intuitive and compelling exhortation that to know things, to encounter others, we must dwell near them in a shared world. As he will say later (2008, 11), “*is aaaaaaa ee eee ll*””cccc “*mea a aa ii eeeeeeeeeeeeeectttteeeæevææccccce rrr*””

This care, however, is not primordial; it, itself, is not the basis of the intelligibility of beings, as if our willing and choosing were the ground of their reality. Rather, our caring relies on a prior opening of space and time into a horizon in which things can appear at all, one that is not eternal but not instantaneous either; neither flashing by nor eaaaa ee tt eeia eeea aa ””” ” *Peasant Shoes*, and of what lies deeper than the distinction between form and matter, ee eeeeeee aass 888888 ””” , “*eee epppaaaaaa aeee ff eee* equipment consists indeed in its usefulness. But this usefulness itself rests in the abundance of an essential Being of the equipment. We call it reliability. By virtue of this reliability, the peasant woman is made privy to the silent call of the earth; by virtue of the reliability of the emmmmm ee eeee ee rrr eiiablitt a opens a temporal dimension for it means that tomorrow will be like today; the constancy of the saw, planer, lathe, and drill allows the carpenter to continue functioning in similar ways over time. There is also a spatial dimension opened in the way things become connected together or contiguous through their reliability. This is emphasized in English, in which *reliable* comes from and still resonates with the Latin *religare*: to bind together, and Farsi, **کایه**: with its connotations of support, something we are able to lean upon. In all cultural contexts, however, it seems that what we rely upon opens a spacio-temporal horizon by creating a context in which relation becomes possible. The c”””” ” Saaaaa rrrr cccc cccaaaa pestle, and mortar, symbolize only because they first make possible the world in which its practitioners live.

ee eeeeeee ee mman-language highlights one more connection that is crucial to his thinking. In linking the Greek *mōrphe* with the German *Verlässlichkeit*, Heidegger suggests that what a thing is, its essence, is made possible by a Spatio-temporal context rooted in the trust of reliability but also calling on its relation to *verlassen* (to allow, let occur), Heidegger suggests an element of gratuity or graciousness rrrr r all aaccrrr eesssssssPrrr rr ttll l iii eee substantial form (hylomorphism) is an ongoing reliability that can

is ontological, and Heidegger links it to carrying a child in the womb, or childbearing, but he also links it to gesture and thus intelligible relation (L. *gerere*: to bear a child, bear oneself, act).

This begins to sound like an overly precious virtuosity with language, but his concrete examples are quite clear. The bridge is a thing because it gathers together a little area or opens a neighborhood of being in which relation becomes possible. The river had cut through the earth separating the now distinct earthen banks from each other and anything that grows from or lives on that earth. For any terrestrial being that cannot swim those waters or fly over them, these different regions have been carried so far apart that they are now ruled by indifference; they cannot come into contact. The bridge, however, gathers them back together, ferrying them back and forth, and in doing so makes the site of the bridge a special place. Anything that can walk or run or crawl can cross just here bringing with them, from one bank to the other, bits of soil on boots of farmers, burs hitchhiking in fur or clothing, grasses, and other seeds in the intestines of animals to be deposited in rich manure in the newly accessible sites nearby on the other side, etc. Space has been opened through connection, but it has also opened through the creation of a new orientation. What has been introduced is not an abstract and indifferent Cartesian coordinate system but a meaningful spatial orientation in which following the river *that way means* going upstream from the crossing made possible by the bridge, and going *the other way means* downstream from the bridge; cutting across the forests or fields or neighborhoods besides the river now means going at this or that angle away from the bridge. These relations are made meaningful for any being for whom crossing could be significant, explicitly so for the beings with the consciousness to remember where this crossing is, such as raccoons, coyotes, wolves, bears, skunks, weasels, deer, elk, etc. and appreciatively so for the self-consciously reflective and embodied beings, such as humans, who can be grateful for them.

A poetic soul with an appreciative mind can also see how a town square, a minaret, an amusement park or sports arena, a spring in an oasis, a mountain peak or pass, a lowland valley or surf break, eeeee eee eaaaaa eee o a a ll a ee a iii gg nn this sense—for the way they gather together and open a world. Heidegger (2001, p. 180) explicitly includes both the products of human labor and the more-than-mmra ii iii ::: “

and the bench, the footbridge and the plow. But tree and pond, too, brook and hill, are things; each in its own way is heron and roe deer, horse and bull. Things, each thinging and each staying in its own way

Things, though, however beautifully they open worlds and however important they are to Heidegger have significant limitations, particularly in the late modern era. Heidegger (2001, p. 111) quotes from a 1925 letter written by Rilke,

their own clothes, their cloak, still meant infinitely more, were still infinitely more intimate; almost everything was a vessel in which they found something human and added something human to its store. Now, over here, there are encroaching from America empty, trivial things, sham-things, dummies of life... A house, in the American understanding of the word, an American apple or a vine from over there, have nothing in common with the house, the fruit, the grape into which the hope and reflection of our forefathers had entered... The life-infused, genuinely lived things, the things known to us, are waning.

Certainly, Heidegger shares this sentiment, but he points out (2008, the European exaltation of the will above all else in high Modernity. More importantly, though, he suggests that this is not merely a result of some particular cultural epoch, either American or modern European; rather there is something in the nature of things that are created to serve a human need that makes them forever susceptible to being obliterated, and the world they hold open thus lost. For this reason, Heidegger argues (2008, p. 188) that the work of art has a unique role in the opening of worlds. Art and things created by human beings for use, such as the bridge, have many similarities. Both are

Heidegger believes there is such a difference in the way that craft-making and artwork-making deal with this materiality that Heidegger

which we make art.

This use of the earth [in artwork] is a working with it that, to be sure, looks like the employment of matter in handicraft. Hence the illusion that artistic creation is also an activity of handicraft. It never is. But it is at all times a use of the earth in the fixing in place of truth in the figure. In contrast, the making of equipment never directly effects the happening of truth. The production of equipment is finished when a material has been so formed as to be ready for use. *For equipment to be ready means that it is released beyond itself, to be used up in usefulness. Not so when a work is created.*

In *ccc ee dæee'' rrr nn ee ssscee aa ddd* Farrell Krell (1991, p. 255) articulates the difference this way; in handicraft a *ccc ccc eeeee rro eee iii gg* produced is absorbed in sheer serviceability or usefulness as a piece of equipment. In the artwork, however, the fate of openness is different. Here openness itself achieves what Heidegger calls *Ständikeit eeerrr acce''''I ee gggge'' rrr 888888 99* "eee 'that tt '' ff createdness, emerges into view most purely from the work [of art]. To ee eee hhl tt eee a eeeeeeeæ all emmmmm available and in uee Btt iii aaaa eee oo eec emmmmm tt eeeeeee eeeeeeeæeeee aa a eeeee rennnnm to being (2008, p. 190-1):

In general, of everything present to use, we can note that it *is*, but this also, if it is noted at all, is noted only soon to fall into oblivion, as is the wont of everything commonplace. And what is more commonplace than this, that a being is? In a work [of art] by contrast, this fact that it *is* as a work, is just what is unusual. The more purely the work is itself transported into the openness of beings—an openness opened by itself—the more simply does it transport us into this openness and thus at the same time transport us out of the realm of the ordinary.

This importance of transcending the ordinary influences Heidegger *eeee aa eewwe aa n ccaa ,, eeeeeee lllll lee asssic eeeeeiii rrea a... aa ll 888888* 28) explains in *Eidos*, *rrrea a'' ca nncii eee* manipulation of objects present-to-ha a ee "oo ''''''''''''rr cttt aaa eee llo rrr a eeeeeeece eeea a contemplative and poetic fuse into a unity of efficacious presencing; a *mmne iii ttt tee aaeeee ee'''''' I aac tt* on the basis of extraordinary works of art that we are able to transcend our average everyday fallenness amongst the objects of our care, a status

to which Heidegger had a tendency to relegate all forms of *technē* in his earlier work (Taminiaux, 1993. P. 993).

This does not mean that even the greatest artwork of a generation is fail-proof and immune from the kind of collapse into the status of an object standing before a subject or even a dissolution into a mere resource to which tools are also susceptible. I aac rrr ea a''' particularly vulnerable to becoming an aesthetic object. As Heidegger notes in his Nietzsche lectures, Hegel had pronounced that art could no longer be a prominent human activity. But as Heidegger (1991, p. e ee ee never wished to deny the possibility that also in the future individual works of art would originate and be esteemed. The fact of such individual works, which exist as works only for the enjoyment of a few sectors of the population [as a resource for aesthetic enjoyment], does not speak against Hegel but for him. It is proof that art had lost it poee r oobe tee assolute had lost itsaabolute pwver.”

S “eeeat” ca rrr e eee uuuuu aaaaaa aa aare inspiration, the work of a genius that only comes along once in a century, or, relatedly, artworks of extraordinary monetary value. It cannot mean merely the unusually interesting collections in the greatest museums in the world that only the very elite have the resources to go to visit—but that the middle classes get to see once as clll eee rrrrr reear-aooa eeea rrr a aahle ss one that is able to open a world that one can inhabit, *in which one can live*. It can do so in two ways. The first, which is more in concert with late modernity, is to help us see anew a *thing* that already had world-opening power even before it was depicted in art but, as is the wont of iii aalle tt iii caee ””” ” peasant shoes. While the woman who wears the shoes experiences her rrr eciialll tt rrrrr raaceee a emmmmm “aa aaa rrr e ffff”” a “ ccc aa iii eciialll tt aa”””””””””” eeee ha “hle emmmmmtttt tt eiii eppepll comes *to the fore* through the work oo a]]]””Btt eeee a aa n ””” ” aattt seee c a s a rrr ... The shoes themselves, however, cannot hold open her world for long, for they soon narrow into pure serviceability. The artwork, on the other hand, to the extent that it cannot be used for anything, is able to avoid the collapse into serviceability and thus continue to hold open a world, but only by referring to the shoes which themselves can exist only because they are already part of a world, if only pre-reflectively.

living near the Temple to Hera at Olympia is only similar, but never the same, as living near the Temple to Hera at Paestum.

Thus, Heidegger does not spend very much time giving details for the way the Temple to Athena worlds, for it is not his world that it Post-modern critics, both too diverse and not diverse enough. On the one hand, the modern thinker is oriented towards a *universe*. In fact, a discovery that the universe is uniform, that the supra-lunar world is not different from but *the same* as the sub-lunar realm, along with the increasingly pervasive propensity to translate of the differences of bodies into the uniformity of mass, the particularities of place into the indifference of position, the variety of motions into the sameness of inertia, the diversity of tendencies into the homogeneity of forces and in ethics the corresponding transition from a diversity of virtues to a uniformity of moral law that are valid for all rational beings in all times and places. From this point of view, to speak of multiple worlds is to slide into the relativism of subjective whim or even worse to retreat to the cultural illusions and superstitions of a pre-modern period.

Since the 1960s however, both inside the academy and in post-modern culture more widely carried the day. A uniform world has come to be seen as drab and dull, and both the professional academic and the layperson yearn for diversity and difference. Thus, while there are still modern critics of Heidegger motivated by the desire for the unity of the scientific project, the multiplicity of worlds in his philosophy is generally seen as a merit rather than a liability. Nonetheless, this desire for a rich, colorful world of diverse and meaningful realities has come to be seen more and more as the province of individual preference or choice, due to the fact that within the strictures of Euro-American economic and cultural imperialism this is the only kind of diversity that is possible. Regardless of questions of power, however, there are need to be assuaged before the particularities of his arguments can be addressed; in other words, there is significant ground that has to be cleared for his ideas even to receive a hearing. Most significant is the

eeeeeee rrrrr rrr a iiiii ee eeeeeeee iiiii the opening of a world in creative tension with the earth by way of which we become gathered in a Spatio-temporal horizon where all kinds of rich and meaningful relations can emerge is very appealing; however, his examples of ways that these worlds are opened tend to focus on culturally founding monumental works of art and simple things as they come to resonate over time with meaning in a specific linguistic/cultural tradition. On a planet in which transportation technologies have made immigration commonplace—and in a time when the global warming largely caused by those transportation technologies is making vast swaths uninhabitable that immigration will necessarily increase—we cannot count on conditions in which the inhabitants of a region will share an ethnolinguistic world. Further, in a modern European-inspired culture where dissent and personal conscience are so highly valued, we have no reason to think that the inhabitants of a region will all share allegiance to any great works in common.

Put simply: Will not some people always be left out of the worlds proposed by Heidegger? This is even more worrisome for Heidegger can seem to make culture more fundamental than politics and to make rrrrrrr rrr ee W cttt aally excluded other always also be politically excluded? In fact, these worries are so real and are felt so intensely that many contemporary thinkers believe all attachment of a world of meaning to a particular place is a necessarily illegitimate project. Heideggerian thinking has resources to answer these questions, but it is not always easy to see from the examples Heidegger uses. This is further complicated by his inexcusable ethical failures to condemn Nazism and his own participation in it. Thus, to help answer these hermeneutic concerns, the difficulties of a cross-cultural approach will be balanced by the crrrrt aa a eeea rr ee eeeeeeee nnn cttt aaa c that end, we turn to a very different set of traditions, those of the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest.

II. The Return of the Salmon: A Natural Basis for a Shared World Prior to Cultural Difference

To reverse the rhetorical force of the objection and thereby open the possibility of a compelling response to our hermeneutic challenge, we will reformulate the question and ask: What could possibly unite

people in a common world when they belong to different cultures and languages? For the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest, the return of the salmon throughout summer and early fall did just that, it opened a world that was prior to the personal commitment to any artistic or cultural tradition and prior to linguistic affiliation. The pre-colonial range of the salmon extended from what is now Northern Alaska to the Baja Peninsula of Mexico, but we will focus on the Wakashan, Salishan, and Sahaptian cultures that lived around the Salish Sea and along the river valleys of the Columbia, Snake, and Fraser River basins. The principal foods of these peoples were the roots of *Camus*, *Wapato*, and *Lomatium* species (including Biscuitroot and Snowdrops), and salmon. Indeed, the Salish and Sahaptian peoples of the Interior Plateau were known by this food source to the bison hunting Shoshone of Southern Montana and Wyoming. Shoshone contacts of Lewis and Clark disparagingly told the expedition they were unlikely to find anything good to eat once they crossed the Rocky Mountains, for they would be entering the land of fish and root eaters. This neighborly prejudice, however, is quite beside the mark, for abundant *Camus* fields cultivated through the use of controlled burns and accessed by way of carefully monitored hereditary rights provided high degrees of consistent food security, fffflieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeadddddeee222?

Salmon provided a lavish supply of protein that, in conjunction with the carbohydrate-rich *Camus*, allowed for population densities higher than almost anywhere else in the world without more intensive forms of agriculture. But the salmon was not just a material substrate for existence, its return from the ocean to the rivers of its birth opened a world for the peoples that relied upon it. As always this means an opening and gathering of space and time. Grasslands can support large herds of grazing animals and the predators that follow them, but the conifer forests and deserts of western North America do not generally allow very high animal densities or elaborate congregations. A sagebrush desert can be quite beautiful and host a wonderful array of eagle, hawk, crow, deer, coyote, mountain lion, jackrabbit, grouse, badger, ground squirrel, sparrows, mice, rattlesnakes, sagebrush lizards, etc., but these are very dispersed and the landscapes are generally open and quiet. The pine and fir forests of the mountains and the cedar, hemlock, and spruce forests on the coastal side of the Cascades are a riot of vegetative life and are home to bald eagles,

tied to a sense of space opened out from the availability of salmon in the river. For example (Troster 1995, p. 21):

Indians from southeastern Puget Sound derived their major concept of social unity from the geographical concept of the drainage system. Often names of a village site and the area that fed its river were the same. For example, the Puyallup River above its fork with the Carbon River is called the village at that spot. The Indians call it the village of the salmon.

In this way, the world that I inhabit is intimately tied to space. Put more precisely, the world that is opened by the abundance of the salmon is always spatially oriented in meaningful ways as we are gathered around the river.

In this type of world, space does not exist as an originally neutral Cartesian coordinate system that then gets overlaid with meaningful relations. Space is meaningfully oriented from its most primordial opening. This leads the dominant Western culture that came to colonize the Pacific Northwest to misunderstand the indigenous inhabitants even when its representatives acted with goodwill. This is particularly true with regard to space and its relation to religious practices, which are widely recognized as worthy of protection. Thus, even when the colonizing powers were willing to grant special status to the religious sites of the indigenous peoples already living there, they were blinded as to what this might mean. As the University of Manitoba Professor and member of the Nuu-chah-nulth branch of the Wakashan/Ahousaht First Nation, Marlene Atleo, writes (2006, p. 2), “nuu-chah-nulth intimacy with the landscape and its sacred sites are in stark contrast to concepts of sacred sites proclaimed by the White House in the United States of America and the Heritage Conservation Act. A designated place of worship set aside from daily activities and economic bustle. But this is to miss what is seen by a people whose world is from the beginning some sort of participation in a sacred topography gathered around orienting centers of meaning. For the Nuu-Chah-nulth, the sacred sites are not separate from the world, but are a richly variegated way (Atleo, 2006, p. 2).

Because the connection to place also necessarily carries with it a temporal

component so that space and time are opened together in interrelatedly meaningful ways. Interior Salish thinker and professor Jeannette
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cccccc cccaecececeey,,

of course, we are not migratory at all. We simply move around on the territory at different seasons, and at different times of the year, but we always return to our villages in the winter months after all the
aaeeiii eeee S,, i iiee aaeeiii a.ggge garden and taking care of that huge garden. Think of the garden as being vertical, rather than flat; then you have some idea of the different seasons and the different levels of growth patterns.

This world that is opened is a beautiful and meaningful one; it is a vertical garden, a home in which one can dwell by being gathered together in variegated weaving of space and time.

Insights about the way particular cultural keystone species (Garibaldi and Turner 2004) have opened worlds for indigenous peoples are being rediscovered all over North America. For the Ojibwe (Chippewa) and wider Anishinaabek peoples of the Great Lakes region of North America, wild rice, sugar maple, and sturgeon were central to survival. But, again, this is far more than a source of calories. As Minnesota Chippewa Tribal President, Norman
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the wild rice rights assured by treaty accrue not only to individual grains of rice but to the very *essence* of the resource. We were not promised just any wild rice; that promise could be kept by delivering sacks of grain to our members each year. We were promised *the rice that grew in the waters of our people, and all the value that rice holds*

Philosopher and member of the Anishinaabek nation, Kyle White,
eeee ee aa rreuuucœ can ee a rrr hhhh
particular reference to *nymé* (Lake Sturgeon) revealing important parallels to the way our Sahaptian, Wakashan, and Salishan writers speak of salmon. This work is worth following in detail, but since a full account of the world of the Anishinaabek cannot be followed here, what is important from his analysis is the way he highlights how this opening of a world extends to all residents of the region regardless of language, culture, or tribal affiliation. He writes (2017 p. 210) of the way learning about the sturgeon and its reliance on the waterways and lakes of the region can be meaningful in cross-cultural ways;

“aaccce eecerrr ll a nn iii aaee wa of
 thinking or living, yet they come to feel a sense of themselves as co-
 ccaaaa eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeewwrrrhe”””

This is the key insight toward which all our preparation points. The world that is opened by the salmon is one that is opened for all the peoples of the Northwest, one that excludes no one based on language or culture, because rooted in a natural world that is prior—and the basis of—speaking and cultural expression. This is not raw materialism that attempts to describe the world completely apart from humans; that is a legitimate but derivative discourse. As we have seen, Heidegger (2001, p. 17)) says thing “oo not apee \’*by means of* human making. But ‘either do hley apear wthout the vigilacce of mrr tals””Add a Whyte notes (2017, p. 207), while dystopian environmentalist critiques of the Anthropocene and Indigenous activists share certain similarities, “indieenous coneeraatinnists and restaaationist tend to focus o sustaining *particular* plants and animals whose lives are entangled locally—and often over many generations—in ecological, cultural, and economic relationships with human societies and other nonhuman species””Heggesnnttaaaayttaat whieeemnaaaaupeppciesssch attthe pola ear taat we hae eever een, “it i als .ree that we are unlikely to invoee tee poaa bea in the assece o als ..voking tee ppecie significance to particular human and nonhuman communities with whom it aas lnnng, lccal compeex, an unieqe relationships””i otee words apart from the world it holds open.

This worlding is not complete and must be taken up in characteristic cultural ways, but it can already be appreciated and celebrated prior to particular commitments to specific religious or cultural traditions. This idea is given very clear expression in the work of Armstrong. She is critical of careless thinking that fails to recognize the differences between different indigenous cultures but also points to something that is, or ought to be, common to *all* human beings, and that is a love of, and protection of, the natural world they inhabit. In an oral interview (Armstrong 2007), she tells us:

One of the things that I can see in terms of looking at spirituality is
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 can sa a iit rr aaa aaaa www ss a
 I a eeeeeiii a cerrr ai a ee
 maintaining, and the sustaining of the human part of that knowledge,
 and moving that forward generation to generation, and maintaining,

Further, if nature and culture are necessarily interwoven and imply a continual transition back and forth between the two in our philosophical investigation, the political is always also at play. For the Indigenous peoples of the Northwest, the legacy of the sacred topography opened by the salmon continues to have relevance as rooted in the particular places where they are caught. Despite all the injustices perpetrated by the forced treaties of the 1800s, signed only under the sway of the violence of disproportionate technologies, they did concede the legal right of the Indigenous peoples to fish. Thus, the “*wwwwwwaaaaaaeeeeettttt aa eee aaaaeeee addddddee treaty-right to take fish at all the accustomed places*” (Courtland, 2012, p. 1). Limiting catch numbers to keep the salmon population healthy is required for their continued return. So deciding who has the right to catch how many fish and what location has long been a central part of the cultures of the Northwest, and is, of course, an irreducibly political procedure.

Deciding how to distribute and open access to natural abundance is a matter of distributive justice. Deciding how to balance the use of irrigation for farms versus water levels for fish is a matter of resource justice. This intrusion of politics into our relationship to the natural world opened by the river means that we will never have a perfectly harmonious relationship with it for we will always have competing interests at work, but it also means that interminable disputes can remain political, i.e., at the level of the use of compromise to judiciously balance competing interests, rather than hardening into absolutely fractured cultural worlds.

In the Northwest, we all belong to a world opened by the abundance of our rivers, and it remains plausible that the Palouse wheat farmer take a summer camping trip on the Columbia to fish salmon and the traditional Nimiipuu visit an irrigated farm in the spring to pick strawberries. These political compromises only operate within certain limits, however, limits imposed by nature. Irresponsible farming and the insatiable demand for hydroelectric power of over-consumptive cities threaten to exceed the balance of political compromise and pose an existential threat to the indigenous cultures of the Northwest, but only because they first pose an existential threat to the natural world of the salmon based on which these cultures developed. The eradication of these salmon runs would be a tragedy all residents should work diligently to avoid, whatever the linguistic,

ethnic, or religious cultures in which they are rooted because it would be a prodigious impoverishment of the natural world that we all share. Conversely, a commitment to conserving the salmon runs would be an example of how protecting the natural world can unify the inhabitants of a bio-region across our cultural differences—notwithstanding our political disagreements.



Notes

- [1] There can be no substance (standing under) if everything remains absolutely distant (standing apart).
- [2] This use of fire to open glades in the fir and pine forest so that the beautiful Camus flower could grow and nourish its caretakers as the basis for culture saees imtttt att eesaaances wit Heideeee metaphor of the forest clearing. These connections we are in the process of developing and hope to see others work on as well.

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