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2015 KOHLBERG MEMORIAL LECTURE

Revitalizing human virtue by restoring organic morality*

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ABSTRACT

Most of human history and prehistory was lived in economic poverty but with social and ecological wealth, both of which are diminishing as commodification takes over most everything. Human moral wealth has also deteriorated. Because humans are biosocially, dynamically, and epigenetically shaped, early experience is key for developing one's moral capital. When early experience is *species-atypical*, meaning that it falls outside the evolved developmental niche (EDN), which is often the case in modern societies, biopsychosocial moral development is undermined, shifting one's nature and worldview to self-protectionism. Individuals develop into self-regarding shadows of their potential selves, exhibiting threat-reactive moral mindsets that promote unjust treatment of other humans and nonhumans. Humanity's moral wealth can be re-cultivated by taking up what indigenous people all over the world know: that a good life, a virtuous life, is a one that is led by a well-cultivated heart, embodied in action that includes partnership with nonhumans. Moral educators can help students to revamp their capacities with self-calming skills, the development of social pleasure and communal ecological imagination.

The Setting¹

I ask you today to listen with your heart, not to specific words as much as to their meaning. Words can never adequately express the deeper meanings of life. Listen to what I am trying to say and not the imperfect way I say it. Use your open-minded form of attention (right-hemisphere directed) rather than your categorizing/critical type of attention (left-hemisphere directed), which we all have practiced throughout our schooling. Your heart-minded attention is needed as I want to speak about our common humanity, our common home, the earth, and our relationship with earth and her creatures.

Lawrence Kohlberg was criticized for his attempt to defeat ethical relativism (see Lapsley, 2006). My work seems to take up another aspect of this same effort, but in a different way, by focusing on humanity's heritage of organic, ecological morality. Too often, moral philosophy and education are dominated by Euro-Western worldviews that intellectualize morality. Although there are always good things to be found there, taking that path has not led us

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to what indigenous people all over the world know: that a good life, a virtuous life, is a life that is led by a well-cultivated heart. It is a life embodied in action that includes partnership with nonhumans—e.g. animals, plants, waterways, mountains. Before discussing organic morality and how it develops, we must understand our contemporary setting.

The nature of wealth: economic, social, ecological

There is a great focus on wealth these days and we receive continuous and daily reports about it in business news. Wealth is typically discussed as economic wealth and there is widespread talk about eliminating economic poverty around the world. Such endless talk of economics leads many to think that a good life requires having enough money to live materially well. However, most of human history and prehistory was lived in economic poverty but with wealth of other kinds, such as social and ecological wealth (e.g. the riches of extended kin and non-kin networks, cooperative living with fellow community members, and access to landscapes of natural beauty and biodiversity).

The focus on economic wealth that dominates contemporary discourse is guided by what David Korten (2015) calls the ‘Sacred Money and Markets’ (SMM) story, a narrative we hear every day in the media and from experts in multiple fields. Despite its pervasiveness, it is a story not based in science or reality, but rather an ideology that includes Adam Smith’s (1759/1982) notion of a mechanistic universe guided by a nonexistent entity, *an invisible hand*. In this creed, everyone can think only about their own self-interest and the magical, invisible hand will make everything work out so that all prosper. Consequently, greed and detachment from responsible relations are sanctioned (Latour, 2013; Nadeau, 2013).

The SMM story drives the promotion of economic development all over the world through the ‘market consensus’, where it is assumed that

the magical machinations of the invisible hand will necessarily result in a new global order in which all economies are free market systems and the governments of all nation-states operate in accordance with the principles of democratic capitalism (Nadeau, 2013, p. 125).

However, when David Korten worked on community development around the world he noticed the negative impact of this belief system and the behaviors that go with it. Economic development was a method of ‘alienating people from the lands and waters from which they make their living’ (Korten, 2015, p. 12), ‘a process of monetizing relationships that had once been based on a sense of mutual caring and obligation between people, and between people and the land (p. 11). In the SMM story, each ‘thing’ in the world is to be priced, then privatized, commodified, and securitized.² In Korten’s experience, ‘the more [Gross Domestic Product] grew, the more brutal life became for the majority of people, the faster environmental devastation spread, and the faster Western media-driven cultures of individualistic violence, greed and consumer excess displaced once-rich living cultures’ (p. 7). In other words, *financial growth paralleled the depletion of life*. Money prospered while life withered.³

In effect, what is often unnoticed or unmentioned by those promoting economic development is how *economic development parallels social poverty*. Since the forceful imposition of the SMM story after WWII, materialism has increased in the US. For example, there were no storage unit businesses in the USA until 1958 and now there are almost 60,000 businesses with 10% of Americans owning a storage unit (Self Storage Association, 2015).

As materialism has increased in the US, so has loneliness (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Pieters, 2013). As social wealth (aka social capital) has decreased so has well-being (Kasser et al., 2014).

How does a focus on monetary wealth potentially decrease social wealth? What do social science experiments show? Leonard Berkowitz (1972) some decades ago showed that putting money on the table in laboratory settings made people more selfish. Kathleen Vohs (2015) has done subtler experiments showing that reminders of money make US participants work harder but diminish how helpful and sympathetic they are to others: ‘people reminded of money are less interpersonally attuned’ and ‘are not prosocial, caring, or warm’ (from the abstract). These findings should be of concern to moral scholars whose societies are saturated with the talk of money.

It is not only social wealth that decreases with economic wealth but *ecological* wealth as well. Biodiverse ecologies deteriorate in part because the effects on ecologies or the environment traditionally are not included in economic models and businesses often discard their toxic waste onto public landscapes without penalty. Reports from the United Nations some years ago (Millennial Eco Assessment, 2005), showed that virtually every ecological system in the world was under duress from human activity. Rich biodiversity was being destroyed; wetlands replaced with polluted wastelands, for example, in the former rich land of the Niger River delta. Instead of rich biodiversity in the seas, there is little sea life left and it is being smothered with plastics and pollution. Half the known species—from birds and butterflies to frogs and salamanders—have been lost in the past 40 years, as calculated in an already-decimated pool in 1970 (World Wildlife Fund, 2014).

In recent centuries and then at accelerating rates in the last decades, all types of wealth have declined except for global monetary wealth. And monetary wealth is an illusion on paper! We cannot subsist on paper money or gold. We need earth creatures and entities to survive (e.g. potable water), and these are the things that the drive for capital destroys. Korten (2015) suggests that perhaps the most dangerous assumption within the Sacred Money and Markets story is that money and technology will eventually free us from a dependence on nature—as if humans are not of the earth and reliant on the earth for survival.

Ecological Inheritances

True wealth is deeply tied to ecology. For 99% of its existence, humanity by and large lived in wealth-creating and wealth-sustaining small-band hunter-gatherer communities (SBHG),⁴ which Marshall Sahlins (1968) called the ‘original affluent society’. These are nomadic foragers with few possessions (immediate-return societies rather than delayed-return societies who invest in cultivation, domestication, or resource accumulation which can lead to war) (Kelly, 2007).⁵ They typically live peacefully and sustainably by embracing two ecological systems humans inherit and develop under evolved conditions: the nest for the young, and deep ecological attachment to and respect for the local landscape. Let’s focus on one at a time.

The Evolved Developmental Niche

The first ecological system humanity inherits is the EDN—the nest for the young that matches up with the maturational schedule of the child, optimizing development (Hewlett & Lamb, 2005; Konner, 2005; Narvaez, 2015, in press[a]). All animals have a nest that

represents an extra-genetic inheritance (outside of genes), ‘the reliable and repeatable features of stimulation and experience occurring in an organism’s developmental context’ (Lickliter & Harshaw, 2010, p. 497). Humans are particularly influenced by post-natal experience, more so than any other animal. Internal mechanisms like built-in maturational schedules of multiple systems and subsystems interact with external influences like nutrition and social experience, bringing about biopsychosocial development, shaping personality and morality (Narvaez, 2014).

As I review the EDN, I ask that you hold a particular child in your heart. Maybe your child, your grandchild or another relative. Or maybe another child you know. Maybe yourself. Please stay open to the information.

The EDN practices are 30 million- to 40 million-years-old and intensified over human evolution. The EDN for young children in the first years of life, mentioning only a sampling of findings⁶, includes:

- *Soothing birth experiences* (e.g. no separation of baby from mother—which can depress both and undermine bonding, breastfeeding and long term health) (e.g. Klaus & Kennell, 1976/1983; United Nations Children’s Fund and World Health Organization, 2009).
- *Extensive breastfeeding* (lasting, on average, for four years, in part because the immune system is still developing until about age five and breastmilk provides its building blocks). Beyond its many physiological benefits (Centers for Disease Control, 2012), breastfeeding is correlated longitudinally with less externalizing (aggression) and internalizing (depression) (Oddy et al., 2010).
- *Nearly constant positive touch and physical presence of primary caregivers*. Positive (affectionate) touch affects the development of multiple systems. Touch increases oxytocin release (Carter, 2003; Feldman, 2007) and low amounts of reported affectionate parental touch in childhood are correlated with adult levels of depression (Takeuchi et al., 2009).
- *Responsiveness* to needs so that baby does not get distressed, as is common in SBHG societies (Morelli, Ivey Henry, & Foerster, 2014). Well studied in developmental psychology, parental responsiveness has extensive benefits for children’s outcomes like moral development (Kochanska, 2002).
- *Play and playful interaction* with caregivers and multiple-aged community members in the natural world are associated with oxytocin release in players (e.g. Feldman, 2007) and are related to multiple positive outcomes for social mammals generally (Panksepp, 2007).
- *Positive social support*, including multiple allomothers which increases maternal responsiveness (Hrdy, 2009); in childhood positive support promotes healthy development of physiological regulatory systems (e.g. immunity, Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal gland (HPA) axis) with long term effects over the lifetime (Taylor, Repetti, & Seeman, 1997).

My colleagues and I have been studying the EDN with cross-sectional and longitudinal mother-child samples (Narvaez, Gleason et al., 2013; Narvaez, Wang et al., 2013). We find EDN-consistent care is related to children’s self-regulation, empathy, conscience and cooperation, as well as less aggression and depression. What might be the mechanisms involved?

Triune Ethics Meta-theory ([TEM]; Narvaez, 2008, 2014, 2016) tries to explain how the dynamism of early life influences moral capacities and moral mindsets or orientations.

Three evolved brain strata were described by Paul MacLean (1990) as promoting different global brain states that propel behavior. TEM describes how these brain states lead to three basic types of ethical mindsets. Each brain state orients to different goals: self-preservation, affiliation, and reflection, respectively. The first brain stratum is the protoreptilian, a set of survival systems that are inborn but conditioned by early experience. Survival systems include the mapped emotion systems: anger, fear, and panic, which are integrated with the autonomic systems that relate to the stress response (fight, flight, freeze, faint) (Panksepp, 1998). These instincts are useful in moments of physical threat but not as a routine response to social experience. TEM notes how when survival systems dominate functioning, they promote a self-protectionist orientation.

The second brain stratum is generically called ‘mammalian’ and includes the mapped mammalian emotion systems that are other-directed or affiliative, for example, *care* and *play* (Panksepp, 1998). These systems appear to require appropriate early care postnatally to develop properly. With good care in the first years of life, the parameters and thresholds for brain and body self-regulation are set at calm levels that easily rebalance themselves after stress. The brain fosters synapses and networks for sociality, self-regulation, capacities for flexible intersubjectivity and social pleasure, emotional intelligence, beingness (presence to others), self-transcendence and, with maturation, higher consciousness and receptive intelligence (Narvaez, 2014; Schore, 2003a, 2003b). All these contribute to capacities for relational attunement (engagement ethic), embodied (felt and actionable) compassionate morality and, when involving higher order cognition, a communal imagination—capacities to think and act with the welfare of others in mind.

The third brain stratum involves the neocortex, prefrontal cortex and is assumed to host reasoning and executive functions. TEM describes the corresponding ethical orientation as imagination, the use of abstracting capabilities to imagine alternatives to the present face-to-face situation. Imagination builds on the emotional set of either the survival systems, leading to vicious or detached imagination, or on prosocial systems, leading to a communal imagination.

When early care is appropriate, the brain develops in ways represented in Figure 1: Executive mechanisms are established that are able to control the primitive survival systems and capacities for heart-centered imagination (the capacity to stay relationally attuned while reasoning about and imagining possible futures). These are the capacities that are

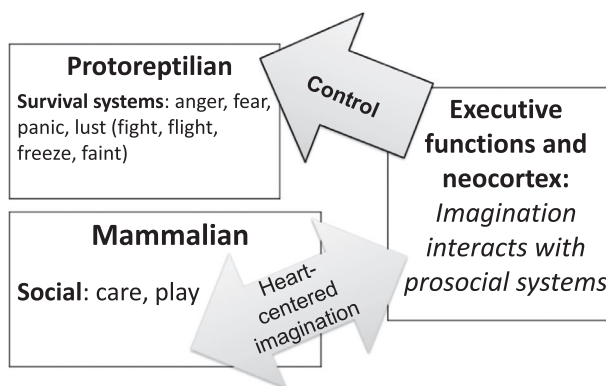


Figure 1. Brain system function with good care.

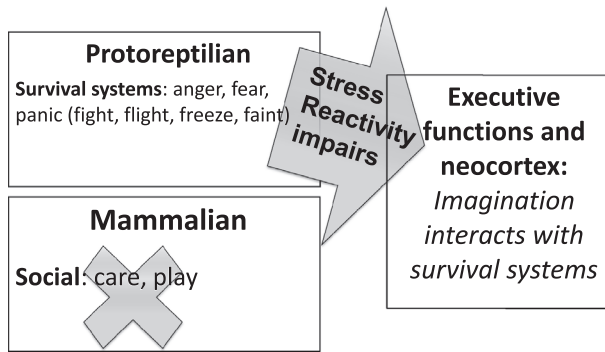


Figure 2. Power of survival systems from early under-care.

documented and predominant among SBHGs. Figure 2 shows what happens when early care is *inadequate*: The survival systems are enhanced by early stress and are set up to habitually impair executive functions and undermine capacities for sociality. The stress response habitually takes over attention and resources, impairing higher order thinking and lowering empathy. Based on early experience, individuals can fall into a pattern of social opposition, based in the activating sympathetic system, leading to defensive or reactive aggression (self-preservational externalizing). Or, again based on experience, individuals may habitually respond with social withdrawal (based in the sympathetic nervous system), leading to submission, passivity, and emotional dissociation or detachment (self-preservational internalizing). Thus, with poor care in early life, one's neurobiology is misshaped, leading to a greater likelihood of stress reactivity and rigid, protectionist ethics.

My colleagues have examined whether childhood experience consistent with the EDN is related to adult morality as hypothesized (Narvaez, Wang, & Cheng, *in press*). Using concurrent and retrospective reports by adults, we found significant mediation patterns. A positive pathway led from childhood experience consistent with the EDN to secure attachment and from there to mental health (low scores on internalizing: depression and anxiety) which led to greater capacity for perspective taking and then to an engagement ethics. A negative pathway in this model led from EDN-inconsistent childhood → lack of secure attachment → worse mental health → to low perspective taking and social oppositional ethics. Another negative pathway led from EDN-inconsistent childhood → lack of secure attachment → worse mental health → to personal distress, resulting in social withdrawal ethics.

Although some scholars blame genetic inheritance for human violence and selfishness, our work is converging on evidence that biosocial experience shapes personality during sensitive periods of plasticity and epigenetics in early life. Like Sylvan Tomkins (1965), I think adult worldviews start in babyhood, biosocially constructed by parents immersed in a particular social system and worldview, which they pass on through their treatment of the child, influencing the child's neurobiological capacities for sociality, morality and well-being.

You might think that morality is always organic because it comes from experience. But there is a critical difference between bottom-up and top-down moral acquisition. As an illustration, the anthropologist, Colin Turnbull (1984), contrasted his British upbringing with African Mbuti (Bambuti) children, a non-industrialized foraging society (with few

possessions) whom he studied. Left with uncaring nannies most of the time, subjected to physical punishment, and his feelings largely ignored, Turnbull approached his adolescence empty and uncertain, ripe for bullying by teachers and peers. In contrast, when reaching adolescence, Mbuti children brim with skills, full of confidence in their ability to meet any life challenge, ready to embrace the transition to adulthood. The Mbuti represent the type of society similar to that in which the human genus spent 99% of its history: SBHGs. We can document a different way of being and becoming: SBHG society provides grounding for organic moral development. In these societies, children learn virtue from the bottom up through provision of the EDN. Inge Bolin (2010) observed the Chilihuani, who follow many if not all of the EDN practices, and notes:

I observed that at a very young age children feel the need to belong to a group, to invite others to belong, and to care for the group's members. Children first learn to care for their immediate family. Whenever three-year-old Victor... came to visit me, I gave him a few cookies. Every time he proceeded to count them. When he discovered that I had not given him enough cookies for all members of his family, he politely explained to me who would be without a cookie. Only when he had enough cookies did he flash a smile and hurry into his little house to give one to each member of his family. (p. 4)

In societies that follow the EDN, children develop receptive intelligence, presence, and the virtues of companionship living: generosity and sharing, egalitarianism, and no coercion. Their morality appears to skip over Kohlberg's preconventional level, starting at the conventional level, likely because they are not punished, which derails social growth, putting attention onto self and self-protection.

These types of findings corroborate Darwin's description of the moral sense—that humans inherited through the tree of life (a collection of characteristics found in other animals). According to Darwin (1871/1981), humans inherit pleasure in socializing, empathy for others, memory for intentions and outcomes, concern for social opinion, and capacities to develop habits in response to social requirements (characteristics that appear to be diminishing in the USA, Narvaez, *in press*[c]). Interestingly, these are the characteristics Darwin noted in 'primitive' peoples and in British women but not in British men. He did not explain why his male compatriots did not display these characteristics, but since these characteristics seem to rely on postnatal care, the lack of the EDN may have something to do with the deficit. In fact, boys' brains show greater impairment from neglect than do girls' brains (Teicher et al., 2004).

Deep attachment to local landscape

The second ecological inheritance which forms part of an organic morality concerns our relationships with the landscape. Ecological attachment generally stands outside the purview of most Westerners because modern lifestyles make us blind to it.

Although people have different definitions of virtue, most definitions include getting along well and wisely with others. For example, Aristotle included 'social fittedness' as a necessary characteristic (Nussbaum, 1988). But, as we are learning in this era of human-caused planetary crisis, we must expand modern notions of virtue to include *living well with the earth and its creatures*—cooperating with the 'more-than-human world' (Abram, 1996). Clearly, with nearly every locale and lifeform on earth under duress from human

activity, inclusive ecological virtue is widely needed. Though rare among the powerful in dominant societies today, a virtue inclusive of non-humans is normal in first-nation communities. In sustainable cultures of the world, humans are viewed as responsible for keeping Life on Earth going.

When we are provided the EDN and immersed in the natural world, we develop our second heritage, a rooted organic morality that is large enough to embrace the whole of life. It propels relational attunement not only with other people but with the natural world. The EDN allows for self-directed exploration of the natural world where we learn natural laws like gravity, ‘just desserts’ or karma. These natural laws are necessarily framed in an ecological community that provides social support and nudges toward prosociality. With well-functioning neurobiological capacities, we more easily access a higher consciousness of Common Self (sense of oneness with all things) with deep ecological attachment to our particular local landscape. Among indigenous societies, other-than-human entities are treated typically as kin and as agentic subjects, asked permission for their life sacrifice to feed the human community (Ingold, 2005; Kimmerer, 2013). The indigenous practice the natural world’s gift economy—the endless cycle of giving and taking that keeps nature’s ecosystems in relative balance (Gowdy, 1998; Latour, 2013).

Among SBHG societies, a different sort of intelligence is cultivated: receptive intelligence. Receptive intelligence refers to non-acting, perceptive capacities: listening, observing what is important and understanding relationships⁷. It includes attunement to the signals and signs in the natural world including from non-human entities (animals, plants, wind). Mother Earth sends ‘teachers’ through animals and signals through natural events. Among native peoples, listening is considered a far more important skill than using words. Receptivity does not look like a typical skill-expertise with fast spontaneous processing and immediate action. Listening takes quietness of the ego-self. Because it enlists more of the nonjudgmental social implicit systems, using these systems can take longer to come to a decision or action. Receptive intelligence is a type of openness but far larger than is typically meant in Western contexts. In fact, it is often derided, in the past as women’s intuition, ESP, or insanity. But this is because receptive intelligence is trained out of children and Western accounts of science, intelligence and morality are often blinded to these sensibilities.

Interventions

Another set of heritages is that humans can shift attention at will; they can expand their imaginations and reverse course; they can help themselves develop new habits and intuitions about life and living. What can moral educators do to return students to an organic morality? Although there are many things needed to help humans return to sustainably wise lives, I remark on a few that can be incorporated into schooling and one’s self-development. Briefly, here are three suggestions for those who missed out on these aspects in early childhood (see Narvaez, 2014 for more suggestions and explanation). These can be incorporated into any classroom.

Find ways to heal with self-calming and moral mindfulness

It is important to calm down the survival systems. Deep breathing and meditation practices are helpful for those whose early experiences were less than ideal and leave them prone to

anxiety, anger or self-bullying. Letting the more-than-human natural world heal oneself can help, such as ecological immersion in wild or semi-wild spaces, or even interacting with domestic pets.

Increase social pleasure

Calming down is not enough for sociality or morality. One must learn to feel pleasure being with others, and learn to bond and join the intersubjective dance. These are capacities governed by right hemisphere functioning which can grow throughout life, after establishing the calming of the stress response. Growth occurs through caring and positive playfulness with others. These include self-directed physical play with peers, silly humor, social dance, and song.

Relational pleasures should include *ecological* attachment to the local landscape of other-than-human entities. When we return to deep-rooted placefulness, to knowing our ecological neighborhoods of animals and plants, we do so not for mastery and control but for relational attunement, for cooperation and guardianship. This means staying put and putting down deep roots, building experiential, personal actionable knowledge. The poet, Wendell Berry (2013) understands that feeling is vital for living life well—feeling *for* and feeling *with* the earth. We can restore our humanity with resonance and attunement to one another as well as to our other-than-human neighbors.

Foster communal imagination.

We can foster an inclusive communal imagination by emphasizing nonexclusive group attachment that is more playfully competitive than cutthroat. We promote a sense of ‘us’ and ‘us’ instead of ‘us-against-them’. Immersion in the life of others through story and lived experience expands empathy and sense of relation. Deliberation is used to include rather than exclude concern for other-than-human beings. Heart-centered imagination is fostered through the development of receptive intelligence and reflection on fitting into the web of life in ways that foster flourishing of the Whole.

As an illustration of an ecologically-embedded way of life, B. Traven’s (2012) short story, *Assembly Line*, describes an entrepreneur visiting from New York conversing at a local market in Mexico with an Indian selling beautiful baskets. The Indian has a life where he balances his (work) time raising food and tending domestic animals on his land. He also gathers materials for and makes baskets, regularly selling them at the market. The New Yorker has noticed the beauty of the baskets and tries to convince the basket maker to create an enterprise where he would mass produce the baskets and make lots of money. After a back-and-forth conversation that demonstrates different worldviews and different logical reasoning, the basket maker finally says:

I’ve got to make these canastitas [dear/little baskets] my own way and with my song in them and with bits of my soul woven into them. If I were to make them in great numbers there would no longer be my soul in each. Each would look like the other with no difference whatever and such a thing would slowly eat up my soul. Each has to be another song which I hear in the morning when the sun rises and when the birds begin to chirp and the butterflies come and sit down on my baskets so that I may see a new beauty.

The Indian is ‘following his bliss’:⁸ when soul or spirit is central to one’s life. Money making is not central, and the logic of money making is illogical. Most humans through human existence maintained this integrated view of life, of living ‘soul-fully’. Among the vast majority of peoples and societies in human existence, the Sacred Money and Markets story is an insane, soul-less and immoral story. Korten (2015) describes the alternative, the ‘Sacred Life and Living Earth’ story, which builds on wealth creation and wealth sustenance of our ecological home. It focuses maximizing the well-being of living systems. We can return to this living story.

Stories guide our behavior and imagination, circumscribing what we think is normal or possible. Cultural stories or narratives shape attitudes and behaviors, influencing everyday psychological functioning. ‘A shared story is the basis of the ability of any people to live together as an organized society’ (Korten, 2015, p. 22). Part of the new story is attending to the rights of the earth and of its creatures. Table 1 lists Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth (2010). Just reading it can expand one’s imagination.

We can modify our day to day behavior by taking up the worldview of SBHG and many native peoples, understanding how Nature runs on a gift economy. As part of a gift economy, the ‘Honorable Harvest’ represents a set of usually implicit rules by which Native American peoples honor the life of other-than-human beings around them. Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 183) wrote them down, for example:

1. Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them.
2. Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life.
3. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.
4. Never take the first. Never take the last.
5. Take only what you need.

Further principles include that it is important to use what is given respectfully, not waste it, doing minimal harm, giving thanks and leaving some for others after harvesting. By practicing this kind of respect and honor towards other-than-humans, we can return to a sense of the sacred, a sense of community with the Whole: the mystery of life, a sense of infinity, the oceanic feeling. Holding a well-cared for baby can link you to this wider sense as can experiencing wild places on earth. Every day we ground our being in relations with familiar nonhumans, trees, the ocean, clouds. Our daily practices can remind us we are not alone. The whole planet is alive.

Table 1. Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth (World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, Cochabamba, Bolivia, April 22, 2010).

| |
|--|
| Article 1(1) Mother Earth is a living being. |
| (2) Mother Earth is a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings. |
| (3) Each being is defined by its relationships as an integral part of Mother Earth. |
| (4) The inherent rights of Mother Earth are inalienable in that they arise from the same source as existence. |
| (5) Mother Earth and all beings are entitled to all the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as may be made between organic and inorganic beings, species, origin, use to human beings, or any other status. |
| (6) Just as human beings have human rights, all other beings also have rights which are specific to their species or kind and appropriate for their role and function within the communities within which they exist. |
| (7) The rights of each being are limited by the rights of other beings and any conflict between their rights must be resolved in a way that maintains the integrity, balance and health of Mother Earth. |

Leadership from the global south

In the book, *Pacific*, Simon Winchester says that China will be the next global power and that it will improve on the current global culture (dominated by the West) by enhancing respect for elders and extended family: ‘there is a calmer, wiser effect in the peoples of the East’ (Winchester, 2015). But China represents one leg of a multi-legged stool of what is needed. I would like to suggest that Latin American leadership is also needed.

Latin Americans know how to keep ‘heart’ alive, how to maintain loving presence with others, relational attunement, and communal imagination. From my observations as a visitor, it is clear that Brazilians, like other Latin Americans, love and appreciate their children, treating them with kindness and respect. They appear not to subject their babies to many of the toxically-stressful practices widespread in the USA, like leaving babies isolated or crying. Companionship care leads to well-being, to the neurobiologically well-functioning brain described earlier. And it may also contribute to restoring a sense of community with the earth, when interaction with the local other-than-human entities is a regular part of childhood.

Consider some data: The Global Well-Being Index (Gallup, 2014) is a measure of well-being across nations. Responses to questions about five elements (purpose, social, financial, community and physical) are categorized as thriving, struggling or suffering. Countries are ranked according to the percentage of the population that is thriving in three or more categories. Eleven of the top 15 countries are in Latin America.⁹ Moreover, in South American communities where biodiversity has been protected, levels of autonomy and social well-being are higher than in areas covered by extensive terrestrial or aquatic monocultures, degraded landscapes, or large cities, where poverty and marginality are abundant (Rozzi, 2003).

Conclusion

It is time to stop being relativistic about living on the earth. Either we follow nature’s laws, including providing the EDN and fostering respectful ecological attachment, or expect things to go vastly wrong. Indeed, the problematic human culture has undermined child raising and led to mis-developed human beings who continue to mis-raise their children, creating more self-protective and ecologically-autistic people who feel good conquering the world with their superior ways. Clearly, in recent centuries the dominant culture has been mesmerized by the wrong story, creating a ‘wrong’ future (one that leads to species suicide).

The Sacred Money and Markets story breeds cultures that consider it normal to be narcissistic, selfish, and ruthless for one’s own ends, an aberrant way of being according to virtually every other culture through human existence (Sahlins, 2008). And non-virtue, or vice, becomes part of the social institutions self-protectionist adults build. As the sociologist, Charles Derber (2013) points out, the USA has become a sociopathic society, one that:

... creates dominant social norms that are antisocial—that is, norms that assault the well-being and survival of much of the population and undermine the social bonds and sustainable environmental conditions essential to any form of social order.

The win-at-any-cost, profits-over-people attitudes and behaviors at the top of such social systems trickle down to the rest of the populace, infusing hyper-individualism and

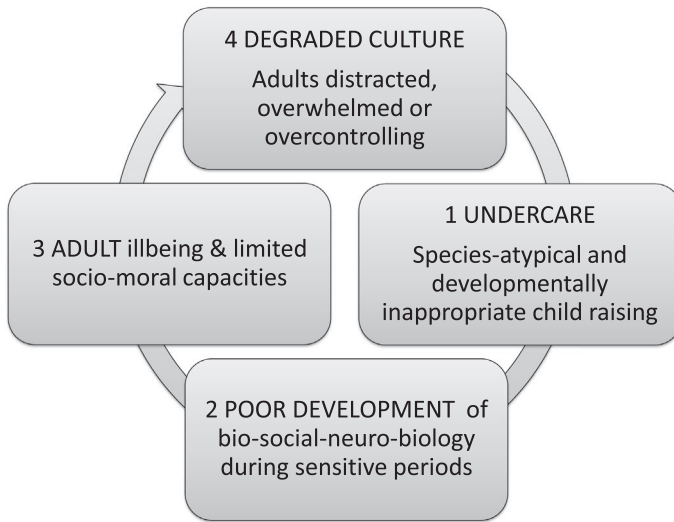


Figure 3. Shifting baselines have created cultures of competitive detachment.

conversational narcissism throughout the social landscape. It bubbles over to intercultural relations and the treatment of the other-than-human.

Cultural forces have shifted our baselines, our understandings of what is ‘normal’ regarding what children need to flourish, the type of health and behavior we expect in children, what behavior and well-being we expect in adults. As a result of all these shifting baselines, the type of culture the resulting adults create is one of Competitive Detachment (see Figure 3). In these cultures, members are necessarily relatively detached from their (especially softer) emotions, from intimate connection with others and from fitting into ecological life systems (see Narvaez, 2014, in press[b]).

But all is not lost. There is an alternative story, one that sustained humanity through most of its history. A people interested in sustainable flourishing will take up a Sacred Life and Living Earth story. With an understanding of a dynamic, living world, young children will be raised within the EDN and adults will grow to resemble the wise elders notable in traditional indigenous communities. They will create a culture of *cooperative companionship*: EDN --> healthy child development --> adults with wellbeing and wisdom --> cultures that respect human inheritances and basic needs. Instead of feeling separated from and superior to nature, isolated and oppositional to others, those who are raised organically display embeddedness in their environments of living beings and treat with respect other-than-humans. Certainly this is the life of virtue to which we all should aspire.

Notes

1. It was an honor to be asked to give the Kohlberg Memorial Lecture in the beautiful country of Brazil. Though it was my first visit to Brazil, it was not my first visit to South America. As a child I lived in Bogota, Colombia and Latin America was made familiar to me, with two years spent in Mexico and four of the first five years of my life in Puerto Rico, where my father was born. I was happy to recognize the jolly, kind and affectionate ways of Latinoamericanos in the Brazilians I have met.

2. This has led to selling the earth's water (see the packaged water among conference attendees) and now even clean air is being bottled and sold, for example, by Canadians to the Chinese.
3. The wars occurring around the world and terrorism aimed at the West may have their roots in this combination of ecological and cultural destruction, driven by this dominant SMM ideology (a rigid worldview based on belief and not organic experience).
4. Small-band hunter-gatherers must be distinguished from other groups that may also hunt or gather, like complex hunter-gatherers, tribes, chiefdoms, which have some form of settlement or hierarchy that leads to resource accumulation and can promote war, both of which do not occur in SBHG (for extensive detail and data, see Fry, 2006, 2013).
5. See Narvaez, 2013, for contrasts with today's dominant culture.
6. For vastly greater detail on current research and mechanisms please see Narvaez, 2014, 2016; Narvaez, Panksepp et al., 2013; Narvaez, Valentino et al., 2014.
7. This is similar to the Confucian notion of wu wei, a action through nonaction, a receptivity to circumstances.
8. 'Follow your bliss' is mythologist Joseph Campbell's term for living a good life (Campbell, 1988, p. 113).
9. For perspective, the US dropped to 23rd place in 2014, from 12th in 2013. Afghanistan ranked last in the report, at 145. Gallup's researchers interviewed 146,000 adults in 145 countries to obtain its data. 'Our research shows that people with higher well-being have higher productivity, lower healthcare costs, are more resilient in the face of challenges and are more likely to contribute to the success of their organizations and communities' (p. 3).

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