

Nature - the Supreme Instance^a

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1. Introduction

Nature - what is that? How well do we know nature? We believe to know well what nature is. No, we do not know what nature is. Since the beginning of civilization, we treat it with contempt. We consider it as a hostile environment, because it inflicts us death. We try to harness, tame and dominate it. We exploit regardlessly its resources. Already early cultures like the Indus valley civilization disappeared because deforestation led to their collapse.

Convinced to be able to dominate nature, the human society adopted rationalism as its paradigm. The residues of veneration of higher instances were rapidly wrapped in rationalism and, consequently, into domination by the class of priests. The respect of nature was an exception. Paracelsus and Franciscus of Assissi remained isolated outsiders. In the 17th century, Enlightenment replaced the religious dogmas by the authority of scientific truth.

As a consequence of the bloody experience of the French revolution and the Napoleonian wars first doubts came up that human misery could be lifted by reason alone. Rationality was no longer recognized as unique tool of our mind. Artists, poets, musicians and philosophers requested that emotional experiences be rehabilitated as equal partners of reason. The emotional world entered into resonance with nature again.

The center of the German Romantic movement was Jena. For a short period of time, a circle of poets, philosophers and naturalists gathered around Goethe with the intention to provoke an intellectual, and later also a political, shift. In particular, nature was rediscovered and re-evaluated. In 1798, Schelling held his lecture on the philosophy of nature. His objective was to promote a holistic worldview. However, the pronounced individualities of the participants of the circle became rapidly the source of discord. Each one defended his own view and a lasting dialogue was not achieved. Instead, the explosive development of industrialization set in. The chance to establish nature as a subject of general concern was missed for a long time.

While most of the members of the circle obtained comfortable positions on different universities, one of them remained excluded: Friedrich Hölderlin. The young poet sojourned in Jena in the years 1794/1795 and met most of the members of the circle. He visited the lecture of Fichte. It is very probable that, later, he got to know the philosophy of nature of Schelling, his roommate in the Stift of Tübingen. However, his attempt to obtain a position as teacher in Jena failed. His letters of application to Schiller and Schelling were not answered.

After Hölderlin's death, his work fell into oblivion. In the beginning of the 20th century, Hölderlin was rediscovered, but first exclusively as a lyricist. A few decades later, it was Martin Heidegger who discovered the philosopher Hölderlin. He became a lifelong source of inspiration for him. In his "Elucidations of Hölderlin's poetry"^c [1] Heidegger postulated that the hymns of this poet should be read not only as lyric masterpieces, but also as the testimony of a strong philosophical thinking. Thus, Heidegger bestowed a new actuality on Hölderlin's work.

One of the hymns treated by Heidegger in his "Elucidations..." has the title "As when on a holiday...", written by Hölderlin in the year 1800 [2]. It is the subject of the present essay. In this hymn, Hölderlin launches the proposition to consider nature as the supreme instance "being older than the ages and above the gods of Occident and Orient". Heidegger presented the "elucidation" consecrated to this hymn several times in the form of lectures between 1939 and 1940. His text does not let show through the political events of the time of its origin. Fortunately, because what Heidegger has to say is independent of any political context.

Meanwhile, two hundred years have passed since Hölderlin wrote the poem and eighty years have passed since Heidegger wrote his "elucidation". During this time, science has progressed regarding the understanding of natural processes and of the fundamental rules which govern them. Yet, though we learned a lot about the functioning of our biosphere, nature is still a stranger for us. In the light of the ecocrisis which threatens hu-

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manity and the persistence of life on our planet, the proposal of Hölderlin-Heidegger is a welcome wake-up call and provides guidance to the task ahead of us.

In the following text, I shall investigate the actuality of this message. In the first section, I shall present Hölderlin's hymn, in the second section, I shall analyze Heidegger's interpretation of it, and in the third section I shall try to bring Hölderlin-Heidegger's proposal up to date in order to conform it to the present state of knowledge and requirements.

2. Hölderlin - the poem

The poem begins with a marvellous description of a landscape. Refreshed by a nightly thunderstorm, the water returns into the riverbed and the sunlight is reflected by the drops on the leaves of the grapevine and the trees of a nearby grove. Right from the beginning, nature is characterized as a live-giving as well as a live-threatening environment, a theme which pervades the whole poem.

In the first two strophes, Hölderlin compares the farmer's relation to nature to that of the poet. For the farmer the fruits of his fields represent his subsistence. For the poet, nature is the educator: Nature educates him "by light embrace". She is described as the all-present, all-mighty and divinely beautiful. The rhythm of nature is the alternation between sleep and wakening, a rhythm which is imprinted not only on plants and creatures, but also on "people", i.e. human beings and social systems are included. The sleep is the preparation for a new phase of activity. The sleep is not complete: Both nature and poets are divining in expectation of their awakening.

In fact, in the third strophe, the sleep ends abruptly. The daybreak is described as sudden. "I awaited and saw it come": Here, Hölderlin speaks himself. It looks as if he were not sure that he can speak in the name of all poets. What he saw coming is the holy. It becomes his word, the subject of his poetry. It is nature which is holy. And then the surprise:

Nature is declared being older than the ages and is placed atop all divinities.

and

The awakening nature acts according to the "firm law" ("veste Gesez").

At the time of Hölderlin, these statements were blasphemous. As if he wanted to underline the importance he attributed to his saying, Hölderlin follows up with: "... from the high Aether down to the abyss". Nature's awakening is all-encompassing. There can be nothing before and beyond. The firm law is the rulebook according to which nature becomes reality "out of holy chaos". Nature demonstrates its vitality as the all-creating.

In the 4th strophe, the poets are carried away by the brightness of the day, by the awakening of nature and hence relieved from the phase of stagnation. They are encouraged by the signs and the deeds of the world. Hölderlin wants to say that the profane activities of "the sons of the earth" contribute to this set-off as well, even if they do not contribute to the arrival of the holy. In other words, the poets should remain in contact with reality, rather than enclose themselves in the ivory-tower.

The reality of live is also the subject of the following lines. With a reference to the farmer of the first strophe, Hölderlin mentions the all-living forces which farm the fields for us. Surprisingly, he attributes these forces to the gods. Didn't he relegate the gods to the role of handymen of nature before? The ambiguity continues in the following strophe which begins with a question. Who is meant with "them"? The gods or the forces of nature? The spirit that blows in the song of the poets is that of the forces. The forces are not only active in the moments of sun shine and the storms of the air, but also in the activities of the "peoples". Thus, the forces are by all means those of nature and not those of the gods. Another word of Hölderlin is causing a problem of interpretation: the communal spirit. The common spirit of whom? Heidegger's explanation is not more "elucidating" in this respect.

The poets are destined to testify of the holiness of nature. However, the experience of the spirit of nature is not sufficient for the song to be successful. In addition, it must be struck by the "holy ray". It ignites in the soul of the poet the reminiscence of "what it [the soul] knows since a long time". However, there is the danger that the

poet could be carried off by pretension like Semele who wanted to see the god.

In the 7th strophe, Hölderlin voices his concept of the role of the poet as an educator of the "sons of the earth" ("Erdensöhne"). He believed that while the poets "stand bare-headed beneath God's (again not: nature's) thunderstorm", the "sons of the earth" are exempted from the danger of being burned by the heavenly fire. Since only "a pure heart" warrants innocence, he considered that it was the duty of the poets "to grasp the [holy] ray" with their hands and to offer to the "sons of the earth" "the heavenly gift" wrapped in the song.

The poem ends with the affirmation that the holy ray will not sear the poets and that their hearts will remain unshaken. Thus, the end is optimistic. However, in a later version, Hölderlin added a few lines which show him completely pessimistic and no longer convinced of his mission:

But alas, if from - - - - -

Alas!
And if I now say - - - - -
I had come to see the gods,
They themselves cast me down to the living,
Me, the false priest, down to darkness,
That I sing a song of warning to those able to learn.
There - - -

Is the "pure" poet an illusion? Is the poet only the point of the iceberg "sons of the earth"?

3. Heidegger's interpretation of the hymn

Heidegger, as well as Hölderlin, was profoundly nature-related. His firm stride was that of a forester used to walk up by foot to his cottage in the Black Forest. As for Hölderlin, nature was a mentor for him. Both they combined experience of nature and thinking. Therefore, it was rather obvious that Heidegger would dedicate an interpretation to Hölderlin's poem. He was aware that, in this hymn, Hölderlin developed a fundamentally new conception of nature. By his interpretation, Heidegger has considerably enhanced and refined the intentions of his spiritual complement.

As a philosopher, Heidegger was used to distinguish between the essence of something and its existence as a real object. In his interpretation, Heidegger exposes what each of the two notions means in the case of nature. Hölderlin paved the way for him by the two statements, which we have retained above:

Nature is older than and above all divinities.

and

Nature acts according to the firm law.

For Heidegger, the discovery of Hölderlin's hymn was the occasion to provide us with a breathtaking description of the essence of nature. It is the best to listen to him:

She [nature] is present in everything that is real. Nature comes to presence in human work and in the destiny of peoples, in the stars and in the gods, but also in stones, growing things, and animals, as well as in streams and in thunderstorms. "Wonderful" is the omnipresence of nature. She can never be found somewhere in the midst of the real, like one more isolated actual thing. The all-present is also never the result of combining isolated real things. Even the totality of what is real is at most but the consequence of the all-present. The all-present escapes explanation on the basis of what is real. The all-present cannot even be indicated by something real. Already present, it imperceptibly prevents any particular intrusion on it. When human deeds attempt this intrusion, or when divine activity is directed to it, they only destroy the simplicity of what is so wonderful. The wonderful withdraws from all producing, and nevertheless it passes through everything with its presence. (translation of Hoeller, p. 75)

All-presence signifies the presence of nature not only spatially, but also with regard to time. Nature is the incipient. She makes available the space into which all real can enter into openness, and she bestows it with the duration of its stay. Her wholeness is the consequence of her omnipresence.

Her omnipresence does not mean a complete, quantitative comprehension of all that is real, but rather the manner of permeating it“ (Hoeller, p. 76).

Heidegger uses the word “permeating (durchwalten)”, which signifies an invisible, but determining presence. The omnipresence maintains in opposition the extremes like heaven and abyss and thus sharpens their difference. But at the same time, the opposites are united in a “coniunctio oppositorum”.

Nature seems to sleep from time to time. During the rest, she is divining, i.e. she thinks ahead to her coming. The rest is not the cessation of movement, but the preparation of an awakening with refreshed forces. Human life, too, is characterized by a succession of phases of stagnation and activity.

The Greek word for nature is φύσις. Heidegger consecrates a section to this word in order to describe nature as the *all-creative*. He discusses the difference of meaning given to this word by the ancient Greeks compared to that of our time. Citing him is the only way to convey the accuracy of his thinking:

φύσις is an emerging and an arising, a self-opening, which, while rising, at the same time turns back into what has emerged, and so shrouds within itself that which, on each occasion, gives presence to what is present. Thought as a fundamental word, φύσις signifies a rising into the open: the lighting of that clearing into which anything may enter appearing, present itself in its outline, show itself in its "appearance" (εἶδος, ἰδέα) and be present as this or that. φύσις is that rising-up which goes-back-into-itself; it names the coming to presence of that which dwells in the rising-up and thus comes to presence as open. The very clearing of the open, however, becomes most purely discernible as the transparency of brightness that lets the "light" pass through. φύσις is the rising-up of the clearing, and thus it is the hearth and the place of light. The illumination of "light" belongs to the fire; it is the fire. Fire is above all brightness and blaze.The blaze illuminates, it sets afire in its glowing all that emerges into its appearing. Thus the fire, as the illuminating-blazing "light," is the open, that which has already come to presence in everything that emerges and goes away within the open. φύσις is what is present in all. However, must not "nature," if it is φύσις in so far as it is the "all-present," be at the same time the all-glowing? That is why in this poem Hölderlin also names "nature" the "*all-creative*" and the "*all-living*." - (Hoeller, p. 79).

In this section, Heidegger describes how the firm law moves into action. Nature replies to the question “Why is there something, and not nothing?”. Her answer is emerging, rising into openness, showing its outlines, appearing. The openness, the being in the light, is the reality of nature. It is truth. Nature becomes the *all-living*.

The openness mediates the relations between all real things. The mediation belongs to the all-presence of nature, her openness. The openness itself does not have its origin in a mediation, because she is the immediate. Man can never reach the immediate. The appearing, the openness and the mediation between real things are characteristic elements of the firm law which itself is an implementation of the all-creativity of nature. Heidegger puts the question whether firm law and chaos are compatible. Hölderlin simply replies that the firm law arouse from the chaos - the holy chaos.

The all-present, the all-creative, the all-living: Consequently, Hölderlin comes to the conclusion that nature which is older than the ages and beyond the gods, is the supreme instance. Therefore, her essence is the holy. The whole is the holy. The holy is the revelation of the essence of nature.

Nature or the gods? It is confusing that at the one time Hölderlin raises nature in the position of the supreme

instance and at another time he lets the gods cultivate the fields for us and send the holy ray. Heidegger restricts himself to rectifying Hölderlin by saying that, naturally, it is nature which cultivates the fields and sends the holy ray. But otherwise, Heidegger seems not being disturbed further by this ambiguity. I shall address this issue in my comment (see my comments below).

The essence of nature appeals to the deepest strata of our mind. Both, Hölderlin as well as Heidegger were aware that awakening the understanding of the essence of nature and the firm law in the mind of the “sons of the earth” would require educators with special qualities. They choose the poets to assume this role. In order to be able to transmit the spirit of the holiness of nature to their audience, they must have enjoyed nature’s “light embrace” and they must have been hit by the “holy ray” which inspires them and lends to their words the strength of conviction. Heidegger considers poets as human beings which are sensitive enough to respond to the “light embrace” of nature. Thus, it is nature which draws the attention of the poets to her essence. The poets must share the experience of awakening with nature in order to benefit from the breath of the coming of the holy. The exposure to the “weathers” is part of this initiation experience. As any initiation, the encounter with the essence of nature is not without danger. Like Semele, the poets may misunderstand “the blessing by the divine fullness” and become presumptuous. That would “signify the loss of their poetic being” and of the embrace by the holy. But a little suddenly, poet and philosopher wipe away their scruples. The transformation of the terror of the chaos into the mildness of the mediated word, as Hölderlin&Heidegger describe it, is not entirely convincing. As educators of the “sons of the earth”, the poets must “bear witness” with their song of the essence of nature and her firm law. Here, Heidegger sees another danger: Words belong to the sphere of the mediated. If they are used to testify of the essence of nature, the message could lose the immediateness of the holy. Again, Heidegger’s effort to get around this trap is not convincing. He confines himself to remarking that the poets must stay in contact “with the reality of everything real” and avoid getting lost in bare esoterism and elitism.

The education unites the poets as educators and the “sons of the earth” as disciples. Astonishingly, Heidegger sees the educators and the disciples “separated from each other more decisively now than ever before”. The disciples drink the “heavenly fire”, the essence of nature, without danger while the poets are exposed bare-headed to the “weathers”. This model of education raises further questions, which I shall investigate in my comment.

Yet, at the end of his elucidation, Heidegger touches an important subject: sobriety. The shadows of the trees and the refreshing water protect the poets against the blazing heat of the heavenly fire, that is, to become carried away by the overwhelming manifestation of nature. Coolness and shadow must be seen as a metaphor which should warn the poets not to transgress the limits given by the firm law. “Sobriety is the sensibility that is always ready for the holy”, says Heidegger and so adds another rule to the firm law.

4. My comments

We must take leave from the outdated rationalistic paradigm. We have adhered to it for a too long time. We are at the crossroad: either we continue to consume the resources of the planet without restraint and we jeopardize the existence of the human species, or we concentrate our forces to save the biosphere. We wanted to obtain globalization. Here we have it: saving the biosphere is a task of global extent.

The change of paradigm is a mandatory condition for bringing nature back into the game and succeeding the repair of the biosphere. The Hölderlin-Heidegger model is the appropriate basis for a new paradigm. However, since both Hölderlin and Heidegger, time has passed requiring some adjustments of the model. They concern the following points:

- The ambiguity between the role of nature and that of the gods must be clarified.
- The relation between the essence of nature and ethics must be clarified.
- The concept of “firm law” must be updated and filled with content.
- Hölderlin-Heidegger’s model of education is outdated and must be revised.

Nature - the supreme instance, beyond the gods of Orient and Occident - This is the key statement in Hölderlin’s hymn. In his time, these words were blasphemous. Was it his intention to wipe aside nearly two

thousand years of Christian religiosity with its amendments, its appeal to peace, to justice and to the respect of a higher instance? The ambiguity between gods and nature in his poem is intriguing. For Hölderlin, the gods were probably addresses for our personal preoccupations, symbolic figures of our problems with ourselves. Therefore, it did not disturb him that the relation between God and us remained on an “anthropomorphic” level. He knew very well that “the gods of Orient and Occident” were not the right address regarding the all-present, all-creative and all-living nature. The gods on the one hand, and Nature with her firm law and the reality of the universe on the other, are on two different levels.

The proposal of Hölderlin did not stir virulent reactions at his time simply because his work passed nearly unnoticed until about a century later. As well, the statement “nature - older than the ages and above the gods of Occident and Orient” remained an isolated remark which Hölderlin never repeated in his later work. In his time, his statements did not have the same significance as for us today. In any case, the beginning of the industrialization wiped out the spiritual turn of the Romantics. When Heidegger presented his “Elucidation” in his lectures, World War II was imminent and his message remained unnoticed. After the war, Heidegger did not resume the subject, though he continued to warn about the dangers of an unrestrained technological development, in particular of the nuclear energy. His interest shifted from the essence of nature to the essence of man.

If we revive the proposal of Hölderlin-Heidegger today, how will it be received? Will it be considered as a rival of the world religions or will it cohabit with them? If we draw the balance of about two millenaries of reign of their reign, how does it look like? On the one hand, many found consolation from misery and despair, others were encouraged to take their destiny into their hands or bear it with dignity. Many communities maintained their cohesion by a common belief. The world religions became the source of an unprecedented cultural development which testified of their unifying force. On the other hand, on a global scale, the result is deceiving: they could not prevent that wars, injustice, and exploitation persist until today. With their dogmatism, they embarked themselves on the rationalistic paradigm, and their institutions became structures of dominance. Their central message, intended to provide a spiritual counterweight to rationalism, fell behind and lost its conviction. A tendency to revitalize them is not sight. On the contrary, some of them take a turn to fanaticism or become germs for terrorism. There is little hope that they will still be able to promote a human society with a collective essence, in the sense of the Heideggerian Being, as they promised.

Nature - the holy and ethics - We cannot live without a reference to a higher instance. Otherwise, we end in an unholy state and all our attempts to resolve the ecocrisis will fail. In the strophe in which Hölderlin declares nature as being the supreme instance, the word holy occurs twice. Hölderlin-Heidegger’s proposal comes at the right time. It fits the requirements of our time and is suited to become the core of the new paradigm. With its two components, the essence of nature and the firm law, it fullfills the needs of a future-oriented worldview. On the one hand, the essence of nature is the spiritual concept so urgently needed to reorient the minds of the sons of the earth, on the other hand the firm law allows the human society to insert her actions again between the limits imposed by nature.

From time immemorial, man has identified the supreme instance with the holy. Therefore, the essence of nature is the holy. The holy claims our respect and our responsibility. Yet, we are used to associate our relation to a supreme instance with an ethics. Usually ethics have been developed from the perspective of the relation man-to-man. A nature-centered ethics signifies a shift of the perspective from man to nature. Hence, by declaring nature as the supreme instance, ethics is placed in a completely new context. We must learn to think in terms of the requirements of nature, instead of ours. And our own interests? Since we are an integral part of nature, we will find that the interests of nature represent best ours too. In any case, the development of a nature-centered ethics is necessary to prolong our sojourn on earth. Evidently, the rules of this ethics are prescribed not by us, but by nature. We must derive them from the firm law. They are not only binding for our relation to nature, but also for our relation to ourselves and among ourselves - obviously, because our essence, our being, is part of the essence of nature. What are the rules of this ethics? They are very simple: We must observe the rules of the firm law.

One may put the question whether it is opportune to commit our destiny to an entity “nature” which imposes us death, which is cruel, and which allowed us to be cruel, to wage wars, to enslave other humans, to lie, to be corrupt and so on. A misunderstanding is threatening here: With nature as supreme instance we are in another paradigm. Nature has no organ to think and has no conscience of herself. Thus, nature “has” no ethics. She does not accept prescriptions, how to behave and does not emit such prescriptions.

It is true, nature is as she is.

Die Rose ist ohne Warum.
Sie blühet, weil sie blühet.
Sie acht' nicht ihrer selbst,
fragt nicht, ob man sie siehet.

The rose is without 'why';
it blooms because it blooms.
It pays no attention to itself,
nor does it ask whether anyone sees it." - Angelus Silesius (1624 - 1677)[3]

There are scholars who forward the hypothesis that nature let access man to a mind capable of consciousness in order to get a notion of herself. If this is true, it is part of our long-term mission and our responsibility to carry on this experiment as far as possible. It would be a pity to stop it now midway. Thus, the adoption of a nature-oriented ethics is a logic consequence. It must be an ethics derived from the goal of this mission. Its "purpose" is to allow us to fulfill this mission.

The rules of this ethics may be the same as those of the world religions, however they are now longer attached to an authoritative anthropomorphic god figure, but to the postulations of the firm law. For millenaries, we have maintained the illusion of a god from which we claimed the protection from the „weathers“ - his weathers - and our own mistakes. With the essence of nature as supreme instance, we can no longer uphold this view. We must renounce on a savior who sacrifices his life for our misdeeds. We must assume them ourselves and find ways to master our mind to avoid them. It comes down to the requirement that we must master the unconscious part of our psyche. Instead of mastering nature, we must learn to master ourselves. The internalization of the essence of nature serves not only our interaction with nature via the firm law, but also our relation with ourselves and our fellow human beings.

An ethics attached to the firm law is more realistic than that attached to the raised finger of the man with a beard on the ceilings of our churches. The new ethics should replace the raised finger by our being aware that:

Nature knows neither good nor evil, but only consequences - Simon Butler

The essence of nature - It is the merit of Hölderlin&Heidegger that they summoned us to resolve our relation to nature. They remind us, that we belong to nature. We are one of her creatures. Sure, with some special capacities with which we emerged from previous species, but we remain liable to the firm law. Further, Heidegger has shown that we access to the full understanding of reality only, if it is wrapped in the essence of nature. Only solidly "embraced by the essence of nature" can we access to the deeper layers of understanding where the relations between the elements of the real are revealed to us. This wrapping helps us to evaluate our actions in the context of the firm law, i.e. to know whether they are commensurate with what exists and with what we can do in a controlled way. The essence of nature must become firmly anchored in our mind, always ready to be activated to arbitrate our doing.

From its beginnings until its end, the philosophy of Heidegger was devoted to the Being as an opposing force against the one-sidedness of rationality. The Being is the essence of man. Since man is a part of nature, the essence of man is a part of the essence of nature. Parallel to Heidegger, C.G. Jung developed the notion of Self in the context of his model of the human psyche[4].

In a way, we are already what we are yet to become! We already are, but we are not aware of it. So our life is about unfolding consciousness in which we experience ourselves as part of a greater wholeness that has always been from the beginning.[5].

It is obvious that the views of the philosopher and the psychologist coincide. Since then, neuro-psychological studies have confirmed that our mind works in two modes, the rational and the intuitive, spiritual mode[6]. The contents developed by the spiritual mode must pass by the rational mode in order to be "published", i.e. to become conscious. Thus, the rational mode has the possibility to censor the contents passed to him. This complicates the cooperation between the two modes. It will be decisive for humanity to solve this problem.

The firm law - Ahead of us is the enormous task to rehabilitate nature and to reinstall her physically in her

rights. We can still hope to re-establish the equilibrium of the biosphere, but to achieve this task, we must know the rules with which the firm law guides the processes of nature. Without the knowledge of these rules, the firm law remains a lifeless notion for us.

The firm law is the executive organ of the essence of nature and as such represents her in the world of real objects, or in other words: in reality. Both form a union, i.e. they cooperate in an interactive loop. Hölderlin-Heidegger had precise ideas of the essence of nature, but their remarks concerning the firm law are scarce. Hölderlin mentions it only once in his poem, Heidegger three times in his "elucidation". His corresponding statements are (Hoeller pp. 85,89,94):

p. 84: By awakening to herself, nature originates in accordance with her essence: "according to [the] firm law."

p. 89: The manner of its presence is to be coming. The holy keeps everything together in the undamaged immediateness of its "firm law."

p. 94: In its origin, the holy is the "firm law," that "strict mediatedness" in which all the relations of everything actual are mediated.

These statements concern the relation between the essence of nature and the firm law, but they tell us nothing about the agency of the firm law in the real world, the world in which we live and in which we must be active in accordance with it. They merely explain why Hölderlin-Heidegger believed that the access to the essence of nature, at the same time, included the access to the firm law. We must know more about the rules of the firm law, however, and therefore must explore them more deeply.

From the knowledge of the rules of the firm law, we expect instructions how to operate in the reality of the world. At first glance, it seems obvious that these rules pertain to the field of the natural sciences. Since the beginning of modern science about 300 years ago, laws like that of gravitation, the Maxwell equations, and the Schrödinger equation of quantum mechanics have become standard tools for the physicist.

Referring to the firm law, however, we look out for rules of another kind. In the second half of the 20th century, the Theory of Complex Systems entered the arena [7]. Though based more on biology than on physics, rules like holism, self-organization, emergence, bipolarity, attractor, and non-linearity were discovered as by-products of this research. We have learned how ecosystems function and how they can be maintained in equilibrium. Derived from Complex Systems Theory, these rules are valid throughout all processes of nature which comprise not only phenomena in the free outdoors, but also social human activities as economy, politics, technology, science, and education. Finally, when converted into reality, the creations of our mind are productions of nature as well. Therefore, the results of Complex Systems Theory should be directly useful in our daily life. However, in their scientific form, these rules are not understandable to the common son of the earth. They must be presented to him in a simplified form which I have designated as Systems Thinking. In this form, the rules of the firm law are a knowledge which can be acquired by anybody.

After having been acquired, do these rules have for us automatically the quality of rules of the firm law? Derived from Complexity Theory, these rules pertain to the rational sphere of our mind. Therefore, they are value-neutral. They can also be abused for negative purposes, e.g. to plan wars. For instance, the use of self-organization to manipulate social processes is a pseudo-application of it called „social engineering“. Hence, as long as they are not wrapped by the essence of nature, these rules do not represent the firm law. Only "lightly embraced by the essence of nature" will we be able to apply the rules in accordance with it. The access to the essence of nature renders us conscious of our responsibility, the access to the firm law makes us capable of assuming our responsibility actively. Thus, the framework for our living in accordance with nature has been set.

The education of the sons of the earth - Hölderlin-Heidegger's model - Both Hölderlin and Heidegger considered the promulgation by education of their model of nature, a sign that they were aware of its importance and its urgency. In the light of the present condition of the biosphere, the advice of Hölderlin-Heidegger to re-establish nature in her rights attains still higher significance. Their model, essence of nature and firm law, is the appropriate basis for the new paradigm for which we are looking. But what about their model of education of the sons of the earth? Projected on the current status of human society, it appears antiquated for different reasons:

- Psychological reality tells us that the “sons of the earth” will never enter into resonance with the message of the poets, unless they have been sensitized before in one way or the other. By the way, it is doubtful whether the high-level language of the poet and the philosopher is comprehensible to the sons of the earth. It wasn't as we have seen.
- The choice of “poets” as educators is overly restrictive, even if one assumes that the term “poets” designates creative artists in general, musicians, painters, philosophers and other intellectuals. They don't have the privilege to be “embraced” by nature and to receive the holy ray. Anybody can be bestowed with the message sent by nature, even a schoolgirl at age of fifteen. A planter of bananas in Latin America may be nearer to the essence of nature than any “poet”. Incidentally, “poets” are “sons of the earth” as well. On the other hand, the young generation is going to the streets, because it fears that the generation of their parents is jeopardizing their future.
- The “word” is not the only means to disseminate the message of the essence of nature. A painting or a piece of music may “speak” to us at least as well. The photos of the earth taken by the astronauts of Apollo during their flight to the moon awoke in us for the first time the sense of the fragility of our planet.
- The dissemination of the Hölderlin-Heidegger model can only be the result of a self-organization process. It has the best chances to proceed far away from the misguided Occidental world, from its media and its economic interests.
- The poets must leave to the immediate its immediacy, and yet also take upon themselves its mediation as their only task. - (Hoeller, p.93).

By his sophisticated attempts to conserve the immediateness and the holiness of the message, Heidegger demonstrates himself, that the access to the essence of nature and the firm law communicated by an intermediary is problematic. The direct contact between “the sons of the earth” and nature is a better solution. Whatsoever, coercion or the menace of being sent to hell should be avoided, even it is real.

- ...because the holy is the terror of universal shaking... - (Hoeller, p.94)

Meeting the essence of nature for the first time may be shaking, but not meeting it is worse, as we learn at present. If we succeed to re-establish a biosphere in balance, we will live in peace with nature, because we spare us the consequences of our excessive interventions in the natural environment. Otherwise, as recommended by Hölderlin-Heidegger, sobriety is the appropriate attitude for living under the protective cloak of nature.

In short, we can adopt with affirmation the Hölderlin-Heidegger model of the essence of nature and the firm law, but we find that the Hölderlin-Heidegger model of education is outdated. It remains partially committed to the rationalistic paradigm which it intends to overcome. We must conclude that we are obliged to develop a model of education of our own.

Education of the sons of the earth - Nature's model - Isn't a model based directly on the essence of nature and the firm law much more relevant, in other words, to let nature invite herself directly into our mind using her rules, those of the firm law? Our model of education has to deal with two topics, the *essence of nature* and the *firm law*. According to Heidegger's distinction, the essence of nature is a subject of education whereas the firm law is a subject of inculcation. Education deals with spiritual subjects as the essence of nature, whereas inculcation is appropriate for rational subjects as the the rules of the firm law.

We have seen above that our mind works in two different modes, rational and intuitive, spiritual. The *essence of nature* is an entity to be lodged in the spiritual part of our mind. But, in the spiritual mode, our mind is listening to the unconscious. Does this mean that we must wait until the grace of nature bestows us with the insight “essence of nature”? Yes and no. Yes, we must have the patience to wait, and no because nature has given us a tool for shortening the waiting time. She is master in developing something from scratch. Didn't she succeed to surround a block of rocks with a life-giving biosphere? Didn't she succeed to develop an organ which can feel and think with an assembly of fibres called neurons? Developing something with completely new properties by combining elements which let show through nothing of the new quality, this is a procedure called self-organization, a rule belonging to the firm law. A self-organization process works best, if a rich diversity of elements is available at the beginning. It is a bottom-up step-by-step build-up of a structure from constituents which interact with each other. In the case of man, the constituents are genetically inherited faculties and behaviors,

the influence of the family and school environment, the influences of the social environment in general during their period of growth, and finally his own selection of influences and building blocks of knowledge. A few negative choices or influences can be helpful to gather experience. Our unconscious cumulates all these experiences in a repository “behind our back”, recalls them when needed and combines them in a way which is opaque to our understanding. A process of this kind brings about the contact with the essence of nature. It is the modern version of the “embrace by nature” and the “holy ray”.

The essence of nature is more than the view of a beautiful landscape, it is the feeling to have internalized her firm law, to be aware at any moment what is commensurate with her rules. It manifests itself as a malaise which arises in you, for instance, when you see a new industrial building springing up on virgin terrain, or when a 5G-antenna is built in your vicinity, or if you read about the introduction of autonomous car driving, or if you hear talking about transhuman artificial intelligence. We must align our mind with the essence of nature individually and collectively, locally and globally in order to avoid being on the wrong track.

And what about the *firm law*? We have seen above that the theory of complex systems, developed in the second half of the 20th century came across a number of generic behaviors of nature which qualify for becoming rules of the firm law. In the [Appendix](#), I have assembled a series of them, each one accompanied by a short description. A more comprehensive treatment of this subject can be found on my website. I have chosen the term “Systems Thinking” for the ensemble of these rules. I am aware that a variety of different versions of the notion “Systems Thinking” circulates in the scientific literature which have little in common with my version. Note again, that the rules of System Thinking become only rules of the firm law when they respect the essence of nature.

The overview in the [Appendix](#) is not complete, but it should be sufficient to show how far away we are acting from the rules of nature. The rules of the firm law can be taught. They are not intended to replace the classical school subjects, but rather to enframe them. They should be incorporated into specific pedagogical programs for all levels of formation from the kindergarden to university, for all groups of age, and last not least, for continuing education. The teaching should be interdisciplinary. The goal of this education is the internalization of the firm law.

The build-up of a collective essence of nature, however, will be a long bottom-up process. The education will be a self-referential process, i.e. while we practice essence of nature and firm law, we will learn what they really mean. The process must be driven by those who have already performed the step. Fortunately, these humans exist. They are much more numerous than we may know: The young generation of protesters which takes to the streets for the climate change is chosen to pave the way.

5. Conclusions

Human agency on this planet has become a provocation of nature. We neglect the essence of nature and we violate the firm law. Nature is not able anymore to compensate the load of destructions inflicted to her by humanity. We have produced a level of complexity which we dominate no longer. Thus, we have arrived in the zone of bifurcation where nature confronts us with the consequences.

The reasons for this scenario should have become evident in the course of this exposé. Since several thousand years we remained stuck in the attractor of the rational paradigm. We deprived us of the essential counterpart of the rational component of our mind, its spiritual component, and we thus broke the feedback loop which nature gave us in order to control our doing. Instead, we have been carried away unabatedly by the temptations of rationality.

Since several decades scholars of all kind agree that the rational paradigm should be replaced by another one capable to lead humanity out of the ecocrisis, but they were not able to propose convincing solutions. In the present document, I tried to show that the model proposed by Hölderlin-Heidegger could be the foundation for the worldview we search for. The model proposes a combination of a spiritual component, the essence of nature, and a rational component, the firm law. Both components will be active only in combination, each one alone remaining ineffective.

As the ecocrisis is a global phenomenon, the new paradigm must reach global coverage. What are the chances of this proposal to be accepted? The choice of nature as supreme instance has the advantage that she is a glo-

bally uncontested and “neutral” authority. Around the globe individuals or groups show that they are ready to accept this authority as an overarching binding force. However, spreading out this insight is nevertheless “a giant leap for mankind”. It cannot be achieved on the expense of the economically less advanced populations. Will religious differences still be an obstacle? What will be the role of cultural differences?

We have seen that the big leap implies a big step of human consciousness. The essence of nature encompasses the essence of the human being, Heidegger’s Being or C.G. Jung’s Self. Therefore, the access to the essence of nature presupposes the access to the Self, i.e. the wholeness of the personality, or, in terms of Hölderlin-Heidegger, the “holy ray”. As bipolarity is a rule of the firm law, the change of paradigm will encounter heavy resistance in the form of lack of readiness to sacrifice some of the well-loved advantages and privileges of our civilization. However, it will not be necessary to return to a Neandertal way of living conditions.

Nature invites us to adopt her model. She has equipped us with the necessary instruments, i.e. she considers us able to accept and realize her project. The essence of nature must become our conscience, the firm law the mentor of our actions, the essence of nature the sail, the firm law the ship. Humanity must become a single living organism.

Appendix: Systems Thinking - The rules of the firm law

The rules of the firm law are derivatives of tools of systems theory (non-linear dynamics, multi-agent systems, Boolean networks, etc.). They were discovered in the course of computer simulations with these tools. They have revealed that the rules described below are generic properties of natural processes to which belong also all mental processes of man and all human activities and social processes. (**Fig. 1**).

Wholeness - The central rule of Systems Thinking. Natural processes are interconnected. They form a network. It corresponds to the description of the essence of nature given by Heidegger (see above, Hoeller p. 75). We cannot compete with nature regarding the overview of interconnected items, but we should do our best to realize it as far as possible. For the time being, we violate this rule daily, because we privilege our preoccupations.

Dynamics - Nature is dynamic. Agency is her principle. Since she is not planning, she advances by ...

Self-organisation - A process proceeding by the interaction of elements of a network produces new elements with properties non-existent before. The process progresses without guidance by an external authority. It produces ordered states spontaneously from the disorder of the interacting elements. The result is called ...

Emergence - The new state exhibits properties which are laid out in no way in the elements on which it is based. The new state constitutes a higher level of organizational complexity with increased possibilities of development and adaptation. Natural processes have a ...

Directionality - Natural system evolve in direction of increased

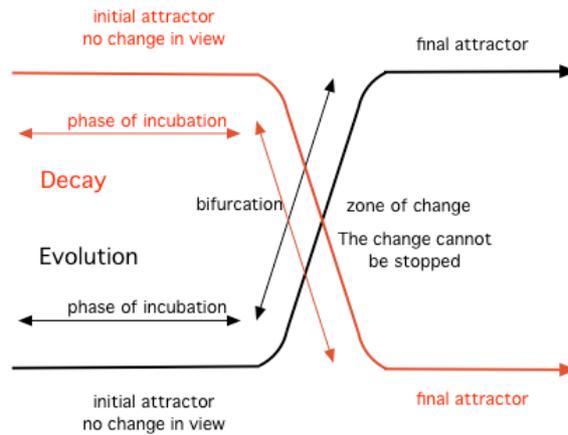
Complexity - Complexity increases the **stability** and the **robustness** of a system, but is also characterized by inherent **uncertainty** and **unpredictability**. The build-up of complexity produces a hierarchy of levels.

Attractors - Starting from different initial conditions, self-organized processes lead to a common final state called attractor. The initial states of the system form a closed basin of attraction, i.e. states outside of the basin cannot reach the attractor. Attractors are characterized by high stability and, eventually, high adaptability (immune system). Nature needs stable states as basis for the build-up of increasing complexity, but also a repository of disordered elements for creating new levels of order with new properties.

Non-linearity - Complex systems are characterized by their non-linear behavior: a system may be exposed to a gradually increasing force without exhibiting change until a threshold is reached beyond which the systems undergoes a ...

Bifurcation (Fig. 2) - Attractors are dissolved by bifurcations. The system either transits into another attractor, or decays, or returns into the initial attractor. Bifurcations are normally initiated by a change in the environment of the system. The extreme case of a bifurcation is the sudden breakdown (**criticality**).

Fig. 2



Notes and References

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