# ETHICS AND BIOPHILIA

## A Constructivist Critique of Enlightenment

Rupert Lay

# ETHICS AND BIOPHILIA

## A Constructivist Critique of Enlightenment

Rupert Lay

Karl Schlecht Stiftung (KSG)

# Contents

# Translator's Foreword

> *We need to know the difference between how things are and how they ought to be, or what do we live and die for?*
>
> Peter Hitchens

Do not, dear reader, be dissuaded by the forbidding subtitle of this little book. Rupert Lay (1929-), an outcast German Jesuit currently residing in Frankfurt, certainly presents the 21st-century reader with some challenges; I mean it as a compliment when I say that his German prose reaches us from a bygone era.

These pages, however, are less a translation of Lay's 2017 book *Über die Liebe zum Leben* than a short introduction to his work for the uninitiated, non-German reader. We are confronted, in Lay's 'constructivism', with a binary and almost conspiratorial world of amoral 'social systems', on the one hand, and brave individuals on the other, who in true Enlightenment spirit must dare to exercise their own consciences in the face of constant pressures to conform.

Lay is honest enough to admit that most of the businesspeople he has coached in his long and prominent career as a management guru (his 1974 book *Dialektik für*

*Manager* has sold several hundred thousand German copies across multiple editions) have been less outwardly 'successful' than they otherwise might have been: his 'biophilic' creed, after all, is a constant call to whistleblowing. The costs of this conscience are not unknown to Lay himself; at the end of his life, he finds himself reduced to modest circumstances, and cut off from both the Vatican and the Jesuit order to which he contributed so much (not least financially).

'I tried to live as a human being': this is Lay's stated preference for his gravestone. The limits of individual conscience in the face of peer pressure were the defining experiences of his 1930s childhood: by his own admission, only his mother prevented him from following his classmates and enthusiastically joining the rank and file of the Hitler Youth. There is, indeed, a certain Milgramesque pessimism in Lay's view of human nature, accumulated over a long lifetime in business, Jesuit politics and elsewhere: most people, most of the time, just conform. Ethics and biophilia, then, are the opposite of this conformity; they are the realm of freedom itself, in which the individual confronts her own demons, her own 'constructs', and aims to create her own reality, or her own addition to reality, on top of all the givens. This dark, dirty, but ultimately liberating business is 'biophilic' in the sense that it reflects a deep commitment to a humanistic or spiritual dimension of our existence; this is the realm of art and poetry, to be sure, but also, Lay argues, of philosophy itself, properly understood as 'love of wisdom'.

Recovering this lost holism in the humanities, and bringing it to bear in the real world - promises on which the Enlightenment has so far failed to deliver - has been Rupert Lay's lifelong mission. A severe jesuitical prose style ought not to distract us from the essence of *Ethics and Biophilia*: always dare to think (and feel) for yourself.

*Jonathan Keir*

# Prologue

*Those who fight monsters must be careful not to become monsters themselves. When you stare too long into an abyss, the abyss starts looking back at you.*

Friedrich Nietzsche

These words from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) could not be more relevant for the purposes of this book. The 'monsters' Nietzsche is referring to here are none other than the everyday assumptions we make about ourselves and the world, and then fail to notice.

Contemporary 'constructivism', as we shall be calling our theme, is relevant to all, regardless of political, cultural or religious affiliations. No existing philosophy has succeeded in penetrating the consciences of cultivated individuals everywhere. The goal of philosophy should not be exhaustively to describe existing conditions, but rather to nourish these consciences as they sprout in the individual political, economic, social and cultural leaders of our time, thereby determining humanity's fate.

We need, therefore, to reimagine the role of philosophy, now that everything narrowly *thinkable* appears already to

have been thought. Karl Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* are a good place to begin this journey: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.' Against the standard view that Marx sought only to describe the revolutionary path, this phrase admits the possibility that mental activity can bring revolution into the world. It was philosophers who first brought the revolutionary ideas of democracy, liberalism and socialism into being, and helped to implement these changes in ways which allowed the seeds of political, economic and social development to take root in the form of the Enlightenment.

Philosophy is faced with the task of critically accompanying human consciousness as it changes over time, and pointing out possible paths to a 'better future'. Philosophy must therefore *always* remain critical, and should never simply accept the *status quo* as something self-evident - or worse, allow itself to serve it. Critique of the *status quo* will always entail, and begin with, a critique of language. The possibilities of thought form the framework and borders of philosophical possibility. Such frameworks are above all drawn from established linguistic forms; transcending them is the task, but also the promise, of all philosophy. 'Modern' philosophy, to the extent that it has focused scientistically on language for its own sake, has signed the warrant of its own obsolescence.

In Chapter 1, we define the characteristics of our 'constructivism', in order to answer the question, in Chapter 2, whether there is an ethics which is compatible with this

dynamic understanding of philosophy, and what such an ethics might look and feel like. Since, as we argue, such an ethics could only take a 'biophilic' form, we also briefly cover the intellectual history of biophilia as a concept. In Chapter 3, we clarify the elementary preconditions for dealing biophilically with language. Chapter 4 takes us to the space 'where reality meets itself', namely the biophilic realm of the cultivated individual spirit. Chapter 5, 'God is Love', tackles the question whether theology as a discipline could be said to be biophilic. Chapter 6, 'The Limits of Ethical Responsibility', returns us to the level of the individual, where all meaning is situated.

The vision of ethics presented here is built on a truth criterion which can light the way to forms of understanding and desiring which, in turn, can profoundly affect the everyday decision-making of all people, regardless of origin.

# 1. What is Constructivism?

Constructivism, as coined here, calls many ideas and assumptions in Western philosophy into question. It requires a certain audacity to position oneself against the current of these established systems. If philosophy wishes to remain true, however, to its task of critically accompanying human thought as it faces ever new political, economic and cultural decisions, then such an approach has much to redeem it. The philosophies of the past proved unable to prevent eruptions of inhumanity in the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries. If philosophy does not wish to be exposed as the effete pursuit of thought for thought's sake, then a radical new beginning is necessary.

The 'constructivism' explored in this book does not claim that historical, economic or political 'facts' are 'socially constructed', even when they are presented by a plurality of independent sources with a variety of vested interests. As soon as facts are translated into ideas, desires and real-world decisions, however, they coalesce with conceptions of value and the expectations, needs and/or interests of the human animal or animals concerned. Fixed rules for behaviour and action would hence seem to be needed. One must, however, be willing to leave certain conceptual categories behind; in particular, we will be distinguishing in a subtly new way between the objective world which exists independently of human beings and the inner subjective reality created by

human beings in their engagement with the world. Because we all have such an inner consciousness, we tend uncritically to accept that it is the locus of objective reality. Yet we can hardly fail to see, in our time like never before, the error of this lazy assumption.

Constructivism highlights the individual nature of these private consciousnesses, and assumes that each of us constructs her private universe out of her own unique inherited faculties and life experiences, incorporating all manner of environmental influences into the mix, but for the most part unconsciously. Over time, elements of this baroque 'construction' of individual consciousness - words, phrases, images, colours, melodies - will become tied to emotions. Both the content structure and the relationships between structures have their own long and complex private histories which are partly determined by the interests and value judgements brought to bear by the individual at different stages, and on the experiences themselves through which the individual passes.

## Facts and Constructs

Facts are those things which, independent of individual understanding, are given in advance: the elements of objective reality or the events which constitute it. Facts can be physical, social or psychological. Physical facts may take the form of dates on a calendar, weather events, or weights

on a scale. Social facts include ethical or legal norms, or even epistemological theories. Psychological facts are the emotions, constructs, decision and value systems, physical needs and life experiences that go into making up the background of individual consciousness at any given time.

The worlds of individual consciousness are defined in terms of interests and expectations, the needs of given biological species, social systems or individual members of a given species (for our purposes, *homo sapiens*). Every individual human being creates her own inner world, the structures and functions of which are phylogenetically and genetically determined and may have adaptive benefits. Freedom, however, in the deepest ethical sense, begins where these 'facts' end.

Radical *'constructivists'* are typically accused of claiming that physical, sociological or historical data are entirely socially determined. While some purported 'facts' may indeed fall into this category, there remain many others which patently do not. Our 'constructivism' takes seriously, however, the fact that much of this empirical data, when it becomes relevant to human decision-making, passes through the filter of our individual constructs, which are always codetermined by our personal conceptions of value, expectations, interests and needs. This private realm lies behind the public norms of morality and law which aim to regulate the expression of these individual constructs. Our focus here, however, is on the individual dimension of ethics.

The human child can be said to begin the quest for self-understanding, roughly and footnote-free speaking for our purposes here, in the second and third years of her life. In distinguishing between self and other, she constructs a framework within which she places all that is foreign to her. This framework contributes to the formation, in later years, of the 'construct' of the self, but also to the development of the many constructs which govern the sphere of social relations. The structures formed in these early years largely remain in place across the lifespan.

In the fourth and fifth years, the child begins to ask herself the question: 'What can I do (in relation to others)?' The answers form the basis of trust or mistrust in one's capabilities and in oneself in general, and overwhelmingly determine one's later attitude to the limits of one's own ability. By the end of the fifth year, the main interests, expectations, needs, and even conceptions of value - the foundations of one's private moral 'code' - are largely in place. The answers to the question 'What can I get away with without being punished?' - particularly when the punishment involves the withdrawal of parental love - ripple down massively into the sphere of 'moral' constructs which begin to emerge decisively in the preschool years.

Over the following years, these elements will be modified, perhaps slightly reordered in terms of importance, and generally fleshed out in accordance with, for example, the specific role models, trial and error learning, and - yes - social conflicts which each individual experiences in the

course of a lifetime. One cannot, however, deny the role played by both conscious and unconscious interests in the further development of each individual's evolving 'construct' of self. Insofar as all human attempts at understanding are accompanied by the presence of latent or patent interests (as well as indirect expectations and direct needs), it may be worthwhile to distinguish between types of interest:

1. conscious versus unconscious
2. existential versus conditional
3. private versus public

In moments of decision-making, most interests remain unconscious, even when one may consciously reflect on them either before and/or afterwards. Unconscious interests, recoverable in the deep character structure of each individual human being, are not typically visible, even to the most self-reflexive and self-critical spirit. Existential interests concern the security of the individual self (the 'narcissistic equilibrium') or physical, psychological and social survival in crisis situations. Conditional interests, by contrast, are formed in the accumulation of specific social, psychological and physical experiences.

In general, however, the tension between private and public interests plays a decisive role in the development of individual constructs. Discrepancies between these interests can open up wide spaces for individual decision-making.

Ethical norms might be regarded as attempts to codify solutions to such conflicts.

## Social Systems and the Individual

Reckoning with the past, and keeping the past alive in the present, is not only a theme for historiography or the writing of CVs; all minimally significant past events leave their traces behind in us, and can come back into play in our ever-evolving present. Nevertheless, the past itself, whether defined by autonomous decisions or external forces, is no longer our responsibility, even if we remain responsible in the present for righting past wrongs.

The version of the past which survives into our present is always a narrative construction. This is as true for individuals as it is for groups. Even when one strives for the greatest possible 'objectivity' or scope, the role of (largely unconscious) interests remains enormous. Life experiences are, so to speak, only ever the 'descendants' of these individual constructs of the past, a part of the evolving mosaic which an individual paints of herself and makes out of her past as a whole. The one thing which ties us back to the reality behind these constructs, however, is the steady emergence of new conflicts across our lifetimes. Such conflicts can have destructive consequences (and by 'destructive', we mean that they can cause behaviours which are less than strictly 'biophilic' in nature); they can remain

largely psychological in their expression - causing phobias, compulsion disorders or various forms of depression and mental illness - or become overtly social in their consequences, leading to emotional abuse of others and/or physical violence.

The ability to evaluate (and constantly to *re*evaluate) one's own expectations from life and reality as a whole over time constitutes a central pillar of one's ability to navigate the ethical quandaries of everyday life. Such value conceptions have their own history, and, like other constructs, are only partially available to our conscious introspection. They retain, however, a central importance in our everyday dealings: they provide the framework within which, for example, friend-enemy distinctions are made. It is above all, however, the overall construct of the self, and its general biophilic or necrophilic orientation, which determines the nature of this ethical engagement with the world. The remaining task for ethics as a discipline, as far as is ever possible, is to make conscious the conceptions of value and hierarchies of value which are formed largely in our earliest years. Only to the extent that one can achieve this impossible goal can one begin to evaluate the ethicality or otherwise of one's own behaviour.

This constructivist approach to ethics presupposes the ability to distinguish between the objective facts surrounding and conditioning one's experience and the subjective constructs one brings to it. The past is always constructed from memory; the illusion of subjective access to an objective

overview of the facts of one's life, independent of one's ongoing interpretations and emotional reactions to these facts, ignores the fact that subjective 'bridges' are always required to link these data into a narrative whole. Such 'bridges' can help tie one to biophilic contact with reality or lead one to a self-destructive loss of contact. The past is constantly interpreted and evaluated in terms of the ever-evolving present. A destructive, necrophilic perception of this present can then, in turn, infect one's perception of the past, and lead to constructions rooted ever more deeply in private fantasy.

From the distilled narratives of this psychological and social experience, then, our conceptions of value emerge. These are often uncritically reincorporated into the ongoing process of construct formation. When we are faced with everyday decisions, these narrative constructs must then be measured against the ethical norms external to them, which we have also constructed for ourselves. The longer one remains in specific social relations, however, the more rules and conventions governing these interactions can be expected to emerge; system-specific language games develop which minimise the risk of misunderstanding, stabilising the system over time and making it more 'user-friendly'. Such system-specific norms are typically considered, consciously or unconsciously, as 'moral norms' in general, as if they were automatically universalisable. Members of a given social system correspondingly face a certain coercive pressure to make the norms governing the

system 'their own'. The question remains, however, whether there are norms which apply, or should apply, to all social systems. It is part of the business of ethics to address this question, but before we can do so, the deeper roots of ethicality must first be explored.

# 2. The Roots of Ethics

Since the ingredients of construct formation differ from person to person, each of us can be said to construct her own unique inner world. In order to prevent such worlds from descending into private fantasy realms - thereby making coexistence impossible - we need to find a criterion for understanding others which goes beyond relativism. Since all understanding has private, idiosyncratic, constructed elements, only behaviour can act as a guide here. The answer to the question whether there are universal ethical maxims for human beings can only be found by examining what people *do*; the question naturally arises, in this context, whether one can transcend relativism and reach a horizon where a creative, productive, biophilic coexistence becomes possible.

Even though all the values we proclaim are indeed products of the personalised constructs which make up our private universes, we argue that it is possible, with a burst of the biophilic energy which accompanies all true freedom, to transcend relativism and ascend to a sphere of common human responsibility.

# The History of Biophilic Thought

The first explicit expressions of biophilic sentiment can probably be found in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions; in the doctrine of *samsara* (the 'constant cycle of changes'), life itself never goes under; death is always the occasion for rebirth in new forms.

Ethical systems which arise out of this vision of the 'eternity of life' tend to focus on three sources of 'spiritual pollution' which poison human existence: greed, hatred and delusion. Greed, like its opposites generosity and charity, manifests itself in behaviour. Hatred, too, is rooted in a selfishness which places the self at the centre of material and spiritual quests for possession. Delusion appears in behaviour as both direct ignorance of the world and indirect ignorance of one's own knowledge of the world. The doctrine of *karma* holds that all thought, desire and behaviour leaves indissoluble traces behind it, for which each individual is responsible. Whether inspired by Buddhist teachings or its own early Sanskrit sources, Hinduism also developed a 'Trimurti' theology in which God is presented in three forms: Brahma (the giver of life), Vishnu (the maintainer of life) and Shiva (the taker of life for life's sake).

In modern Europe, the doctor, theologian, philosopher and organist Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) was certainly familiar with these elements of Hinduism, which are indirectly recoverable in his best-known ideas of 'reverence for life' and 'love of life'. The business of all philosophy, for Schweitzer, is

to bring about a multiplication of humanity. This requires spiritual engagement to avoid the temptation of considering oneself as the highest goal of all biological evolution or as the 'crowning glory of creation' - as the master of the universe rather than its brother. Only such a fraternal spirit, Schweitzer argues in *Die Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*, can guarantee reverence for life as a whole:

> [Reverence] comes gradually to be recognised as a natural disposition for human beings. That we are moving away from an incomplete towards a more complete understanding of the meaning of humanity, away from the naive inhumanity in which we have been trapped, is an immensely significant achievement in the spiritual history of human beings.
>
> […] Good is: maintaining and fostering life. Bad is: inhibiting and destroying life. We are on strong ground when we step out of our own obstinate skin, cast aside the otherness of other beings, and live in ourselves what lives in them. This is what makes us human; it gives us possession of an inalienable, self-sustaining and self-enhancing virtue. Reverence for life as a whole - learning to live other lives inside our own - is the greatest achievement in the history of the world.

By the end of his life, Schweitzer believed firmly that human beings who were capable of thinking and feeling beyond themselves would be able to recognise and identify in a particularly profound way with their kindred spirits in all times and places. This was to be the path towards a new human solidarity which transcended the bounds of the tribe, extending even to people one had not met, or could not meet, personally. The major world religions and spiritual philosophies all conserve, in their histories, the milestones of this cultural development. Reverence for life, in other words, becomes the theme of ethics in general: 'Philosophy must strive to *embody* the ethical. Ethics is therefore to be understood as dedication to life, a dedication strengthened and motivated by contact with life itself… Arising as an inner need, an ethics based on reverence for life does not depend on the development of a satisfying narrative or theory of the meaning of life, but rather on direct contact.' An ethics of biophilia knows intuitively, in other words, that the individual human life is important for life in general.

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) built on these biophilic insights in his critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. In *The Heart of Man* (1964), Fromm says explicitly:

> The tendency to preserve life and to resist death is the most elementary form which a biophilic orientation takes, and is innate to all living things. This is, however, so to speak, only the first level of the life instinct. Living things also

tend towards integration and union, growing together in ever more complex structures. Union and integrated growth are characteristic of all life processes, not only at the cellular level, but in the realm of human thoughts and emotions as well.

Later, in 1973, Fromm writes in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*:

> Biophilia is the passionate love of life and all living things; it is the desire to promote growth, whether of an individual person, a plant, an idea or a social group. The biophilic individual prefers to build something new than to cling to a changeless tradition. She wants to *be* more, not *have* more. She possesses the capacity for wonder, and enjoys new experiences more than the confirmation of old ones. Adventure is more important to her than security. She sees the whole rather than only the parts, entire structures rather than superficial summaries. She wants to shape the world and to make her influence felt through love, reason and positive example.

Or further still: 'An ethics of biophilia embraces its own principle of good and evil. Good is that which serves life; evil

that which serves death. This ethics entails reverence for life and all that life needs. Evil smothers life, constricts it, and eventually dismembers it.'

This awareness of and reverence for one's own individual life, in the wider context of life as a whole, will form the central root of our vision of ethics. This is always an individual matter; social systems can only be judged to be 'biophilic' or 'ethical' to the extent that they foster such individual spiritual development. Social systems, therefore, are never ethically self-justifying, but are always to be evaluated in terms of their contribution to the lives of the individuals operating within them.

The question of responsible coexistence among human beings, however, remains to be posed. The norms regulating this sphere are both legal and moral; ethics, however, would seem to be the only discipline which seeks to transcend, via philosophy, both the local relativisms of law and custom and the private realities which each of us constructs for herself within the bounds of her own life experience and genetic inheritance.

Mistaking constructed, subjective 'realities' for preset, objective reality leads almost inevitably to destructive conflicts. Such conflicts have the power today to call the entire future of humanity into question; if a senior politician in charge of a nuclear arsenal, for example, were to descend into such realms of private fantasy, millions of human beings, or more, could pay the price. The Enlightenment failed to build an enlightened ethics into its enlightened epistemology:

it shone the torch on reason, but now a Second Enlightenment must shine it on behaviour and its deep spiritual roots. The *sapere aude* principle ('Dare to use your own understanding!') must be extended to the breaking point at which it recognises the constructs which risk separating us from reality, and calls us back to life itself.

## The Five Pillars of the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment, like almost all political, economic and social ideas which have changed the world, owed its emergence to philosophy, most notably to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), John Locke (1632-1704), Montesquieu (1689-1755), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Voltaire (1694-1778).

Kant largely defined the meaning of the word 'Enlightenment' as we have come to understand it: the liberation of human beings from self-inflicted immaturity, and the call to each individual to exercise her own powers of reason. Moreover, he drafted a theory of knowledge which could be seen as the forerunner of modern constructivism. Kant argued that knowledge begins with contact with worldly objects or *phenomena*, and that this contact affects our cognition. However, he regarded the constructs which we bring to bear on these phenomena - most notably the *a priori* constructs of space, time and causality - as straightforwardly common to all human beings. In his *Groundwork of the*

*Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant develops an ethics which stresses the value of human beings as ends in themselves, and frowns severely on reducing people to mere means.

In *The Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau presents an outline of a contractarian theory of democracy, in which citizens have the same voting rights and leaders owe their positions to the will of the led (the principle of popular sovereignty).

Locke ascribes to the individual human being in the 'state of nature' certain capacities for violence which she renounces and delegates to executive and federal authorities by accepting the social contract. Legislative powers, however, must also find their place in a modern state beyond the executive powers which govern matters of war and peace and other extrajudicial decisions taken in the public interest.

Montesquieu further elaborated the theory of the separation of powers. He recognised that freedom could only reign when legislative, executive and judicial levers of power were strictly separated from one another. Without such a separation, Montesquieu argued, the spectre of despotism would always remain. To prevent such degradations, power must place limits on itself.

One could scarcely overestimate, last but not least, the 'prophet of tolerance' Voltaire's influence on constructivist thought. Constructivism seeks to defend the idea that each individual constructs her own subjective world, and that these constructs are all equally legitimate to the extent that they

cohere with a broadly biophilic vision of ethics. Modern philosophy has so far largely failed to develop such a vision.

Voltaire, however, sketched the outlines of such an active understanding of tolerance, one which not only reluctantly puts up with those who think differently, but rather welcomes such contact. Opinions developed in foreign social circumstances were in principle, for Voltaire, as important as one's own. This was no defence of relativism; it was rather a plea for freedom of conscience and expression. The oft-cited 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it' may be falsely attributed to Voltaire, but it is a fair description of his attitude.


## Successes and Failures of the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a period of rupture from the many received ideas which had survived, beyond their time, from the Middle Ages. Modernity, with its discovery of new continents, new frontiers in science, and new currents in philosophy beyond medieval scholasticism, demanded new forms of political and economic organisation, which the Enlightenment sought to crystallise. The Industrial Revolution brought new structures to the human workplace; ethics struggled to keep pace with these drastic changes. Kant's categorical prohibition of the instrumentalisation of human beings did not find an immediate echo in business.

Revolutions always begin by setting the new against the old in the form of public debate and, gradually, legislation. The Industrial Revolution proved no exception; there was, initially, no room for a new ethics. New political structures - indeed, a new 'spirit of laws' in general - were needed. The Enlightenment encompassed virtually all aspects of social existence and knowledge, and culminated most notably in the emergence of democratic states in Europe and North America, in which individuals enjoyed unprecedented freedoms. The history of democracy in Europe can of course be traced to Athens in the 5th Century BC, and to 10th-century Norman institutions in Iceland, in which 'free citizens' played a part in determining their own fate, and refused to accept the dictates of arbitrary authority. The history of modern democracy, however, can be said to emerge on 4 July 1776, with the *Declaration of Independence* of the United States of America:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The French Revolution, begun on 14 July 1789 and, like her American cousin, not yet brought to full fruition, achieved a semblance of itself only decades later under Napoleon III in the Second Republic. Yet the ethical meat hidden in the

slogan *Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité* - namely, that freedom is only possible when brotherhood and equality are also realised - was quickly lost.

The Council of Vienna (1814-1815) was convened in an attempt to address and domesticate these revolutionary ideas in their European dimension. Locke's vision - in which the legislative authority of a democratically elected assembly was universally recognised - proved difficult to realise in practice. Executive powers continued to play a dominant role in European law-making.

The 'social freedoms' undoubtedly advanced by the Enlightenment - freedom of public expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of religion - have a complex relationship with 'human freedom' in the inner, personal sense. On the one hand, such formal freedoms may be both causes and effects of such true liberty; on the other, however, they may obscure or restrict it even as they remain necessary for it or a necessary outcome of it.

The Enlightenment's offer of liberation to individual human beings - freedom from the tutelage of 'outside thought' and the freedom to think for oneself - has not led to direct or full emancipation for humanity as a whole. Human beings in privileged countries may largely have freed themselves from the arbitrary dictates of external authority, but not necessarily from the irrational interests and collective clichés of modern life. 'Inner authorities' - compulsions rooted in our private constructs - have taken the place of tyrants and despots.

The Enlightenment has proven unable to call these received collective norms - slavery, totalitarianism, racism, military and cultural imperialism - into sufficient question. In order to understand why, it will be useful to separate the true roots of ethics from customary understandings of morality. The former are to be found within individual human beings; the latter - whether norms concerning sexual morality, taxation, capital punishment or other social phenomena - arise in specific social systems, and carry with them a series of context-specific rewards and punishments.

Ethics as a 'discipline' has tended to assume that human beings are the same, or at least similar, in the ways they understand the world. We would prefer to argue, however, from our position of constructivist privilege in the early 21$^{st}$ Century, that this is far from being the case.

A Second Enlightenment

Why do we need a Second Enlightenment? Constructivism is to be understood alongside the Frankfurt School and postmodernism as a reaction against the failure of the (First) Enlightenment to realise its lofty goals - anti-authoritarianism, democracy, revolutionary consciousness and a general multiplication of humanity. Critical Theory and postmodernism questioned the Enlightenment's achievements, but did not present a vision of ethics which allowed for an explanation of this failure or a transcendence

of it. Instead, they permitted, in practice, an 'economisation' of all values, in which political, social, pedagogical, and even religious goals are reduced to a function of their economic utility. Economic globalisation has, by and large, only accelerated and further encouraged this tendency.

Both Critical Theory and constructivism aim to defend the value of the individual against these 'economising' forces, but only constructivism translates this dignity into positive practice by according the individual maximal freedom to construct her own inner world, and to define and order her own values within it. This requires, however, that one accept the constructivist distinction between objective reality and the subjective worlds we all construct. 'The world is as I understand it to be' is a seductive form of relativism; 'My world is as I understand it to be' is the preferred constructivist motto.

Such distinctions, however, are not in common use. We may, in our use of language - group objects together under the same umbrella-terms – 'table', 'juice' and 'love' in English, 'Tisch', 'Saft' and 'Liebe' in German - but each of us, even within the same language group, does so in her own unique way, making her own unique (and largely unconscious) associations out of her own life experience and on the basis of a unique genetic and environmental inheritance. This is the constructivist insight – banal but with extremely far-reaching ramifications - which lies at the root of all talk about 'ethics': no word means, or can ever mean, exactly the same thing to two different people; our inner emotional lives are far too long for that, and we are far too complex and idiosyncratic.

# 3. Talking Terms

In its failure distinguish sufficiently clearly between objective reality and the subjectivity of our individual constructs, the Enlightenment's undifferentiated approach to language has prevented progress in whole fields of human understanding. In particular, the scope for manipulation of primordial and metalinguistic expressions has not been critically discussed.

Metalinguistic expressions are constructed from other linguistic expressions, and do not directly describe empirical objects. The meaning of these constructed concepts, such as 'justice' or 'freedom', is filtered over time through our life experiences, interests, emotions, and conceptions of value; they are therefore ripe for demagogic manipulation. Communication between individuals from different social or cultural backgrounds is made particularly difficult because these metalinguistic expressions can be loaded with wildly differing subjective meanings and emotional nuances from one time and place to another, and even from one individual to another in an otherwise seemingly homogeneous community.

Primordial expressions are constructed by reason to refer to objects which are thought to exist, but which are not directly available to the senses. They include words like 'dignity' (to the extent that it embodies the uniqueness of each individual) or 'information'. The word 'God' is also a good example. Primordial expressions can also be abused by

demagogues; their meanings and connotations vary wildly among individuals, and across social groups and contexts.

Most verbal expressions one might consider relevant for ethics could be defined as either primordial or metalinguistic. Aquinas put the matter succinctly in his *De Veritate*: 'Whatever is perceived is perceived the way the perceiver perceives it.' This insight did not, however, become common currency; the recognition that every individual and every social grouping - from a state to a guild, a church, and even a married couple - can (and do) perceive real objects very differently from others, and even among themselves, could have saved a tremendous amount of evil and mischief committed in the name of truth in recent centuries. People refuse to believe that their understanding is not only their business; they insist on access to a 'true understanding', and speak accordingly. Ethics has never really been able to get over this hurdle.

Most European philosophers since Aquinas have wrongly assumed that people perceive similar objects similarly. The form and content of individual perception, however, is inextricably tied to prior life experience, conceptions of value, needs and interests. Together, these mostly unconscious subjective factors fuse into things we ourselves take for granted, but which have a frequently tenuous hold in external reality.

Expressions formed via abstractions from sense experience are dependent on the elements which feed this abstraction. This insight has been relegated to the

background of Western philosophy in general and Western ethics in particular, both before the Enlightenment and since; constructivism brings it, long overdue, to centre stage.

Language Games

Over time, every social system develops its own unique 'language games', formulae which are frequently deployed in given situations. These formulae are loaded with semantic and emotional meanings which are attributed by individual participants to the metalinguistic and/or primordial expressions used. Such linguistic conventions go so far as to form the basis of social exchange and social identity itself.

The question arises, however, how individuals - both within and across social groups and their language games - can communicate with each other. Consensus would seem to presuppose:

- that all involved end up playing the same language game
- that all involved are able to recognise as subjective the prejudices, interests, previous life experience, needs and expectations they bring to the game

Such dialogue cannot entail the imposition of one's own definitions or the claiming of the epistemic high ground.

Consensus can only be achieved through *interaction*, where actions match the words used.

Only the long-term success or otherwise of this exchange in the real world can provide information on the degree of correspondence between external reality and the private, subjective constructs of the individuals involved. From the constructivist point of view, most theories of knowledge fall down in their belief that understanding can be justified, in terms of both form and content, by understanding. Words are the public names given by individuals to concepts developed in the privacy of their own subjectivity. Ethics suffers more acutely than most disciplines from the problem that the meanings of value-related words cut very deep into this construct-laden subjective realm, and cannot easily be made available for common understanding in the way that, at least relatively speaking, the word 'tree' can. The language of an enlightened ethics, moreover, would seem to need its own justification; it refers not to things, but to oughts. Ethical maxims and rules have, however, tended always to be formulated in the language of tree-like facts. Part of the constructivist mandate is to examine how and under what conditions such value-language is built. Human beings think in words, but words are the names given to concepts; the failure to understand this distinction can have ethical consequences and, in the worst-case scenario, lead to ethical disasters. If one speaks of 'Germany' but is really talking about the German football team, one may bring emotional

baggage into play, both in oneself and/or in one's interlocutor, which has nothing to do with football.

## The Formation of Concepts

Sense experience lies at the root of our understanding of the world; one need not be Immanuel Kant to recognise that real material objects affect our senses. These sense impressions are then processed and ordered, if one follows Kant further, in forms which are straightforwardly common to all human beings and precede understanding, giving structure to our sensory experience in space and time. Kant took the view that this all happened in more or less the same way from one person to the next, and that the content and scope of the concepts developed and deployed by these individuals would hence be extremely similar.

Constructivism takes a different view. It assumes that each individual constructs her own inner world and conceptual frameworks - most notably, her conceptions of value - in ways that can be extremely idiosyncratic. Life experience, education, social circumstances and personal needs and interests can differ so wildly from one human being to the next as to make any form of even moderately successful verbal communication appear as a miracle.

Concepts are elements of thought, but the question arises how one can even begin to communicate them. The most important instrument that human beings use to share

and exchange their thoughts with other human beings is spoken language. This language is composed of words. How are these words and these contents of thought related to one another? How does the translation of thought into communication take place? The default theory, on which most people operate most of the time, holds that human beings, in acquiring language, learn to translate the contents of their thought into words in such a way that concepts and the connections between them and the thoughts which give rise to them are given names, and thus become the common property of those who speak the same language. This is not true even of everyday objects - we each define the precise definitional and emotional borders of the concept enshrined in the word 'tree' or 'table' differently, for example – but the situation is much worse for emotionally charged political, economic, cultural, moral or religious concepts. These various domains of human co-creativity build their own lexicons of value words. Of particular relevance for our purposes, however, are the value words which purport to apply to all domains of human endeavour. These are the value words which can lay claim to an 'ethical' rather than merely 'customary' status.

All value words, however, even those claiming to be 'universal', have private histories and destinies; they do not refer to the same concept over time. How, then, do value words - 'person', 'freedom', 'justice', 'dignity', 'loyalty', 'conscience' etc.? - attach themselves to concepts? The acquisition of such ethical concepts is itself also heavily

influenced by the use of words in the given contexts in which a person is socialised. The everyday practices which influence behaviour in these systems are the necessary precondition for the internalisation of these values, and ultimately for their deployment in evaluative and behaviour-regulating functions. All social systems which expect or demand that an individual make the value conceptions of the system her own require in practice that these values be embodied by the representatives of the system. Many social systems responsible for ethical education, however - from family homes to daycare centres, kindergartens, and schools - fail in their primary task because such humanistic education does not take place in words as such, but rather, if at all, via empathic contact with exemplary role models. Ethical theories (and their related value words) which do not live up in practice to their own principles are ethically irresponsible because they claim to regulate a reality which they do not themselves match.

Social systems are all unique at any point in time. Fluctuating individual and collective interests, expectations and value judgments create a dynamic in which system-specific language games must actively and passively be played by all involved. These language games build the bridges which allow the various structures of the system to function as an organic whole. Structures determine the evaluation, processing and sharing of information, which in turn is created, destroyed (because 'unusable', 'irrelevant' or 'incomprehensible'), evaluated, weighed and selected.

When individuals process information, they make decisions whether to act or not to act. Such information is more often than not incomplete; decision-makers are forced to operate with a degree of insecurity regarding the consequences of their decisions. This leaves, theoretically and practically speaking, room for individual freedom, a true freedom rooted in the subjectivity of the decision-maker. A 'pure' freedom independent of all information is not possible; such, however, is the basis of all ethical theories which presuppose radical freedom of the will. While ethics demands responsible decision-making, and while such responsibility can only ever be located at the level of the individual, real freedom has its limits; boundless freedom is an illusion. These limits can be political, economic, religious, and perhaps above all psychological in nature. Peer pressure, phobias, depression and other psychological conditions place limits on freedom, but so too do the everyday assumptions of our thoughts and acts of valuing, all of which is rooted, among other complex factors, in certain genetic predispositions.

## Constructivism and Value Terms

Every ethics uses value terms, words which may have a profane or not strictly ethical meaning (such as 'duty' or 'happiness'). Category errors here can lead to significant misunderstandings. Value concepts, even those described in single words, are typically metalinguistic expressions, the

meanings of which are constructed by each individual in the privacy of her own subjectivity.

It is the construction of value *concepts* which is the central theme of constructivist ethics. This construction is always an individual business. Ethics, on the other hand, claims for itself an intersubjective, transsubjective or universal validity. How can we arrive at such universal ethical norms when they are necessarily constructed on an idiosyncratic individual basis? Value concepts, like all other concepts, evolve over time, both across an individual lifespan and within social systems, as needs, expectations and interests shift according to physical, psychological and social changes. The values of a social system, moreover, are not by any means only those recognised as such by individuals in leadership positions within a system; they are in practice much more dependent, for example, on the socioeconomic structure of the system itself.

Even the norms of a putatively 'universal' or 'categorical' code of ethics, then, evolve; these change factors can be political, social, cultural, religious, pedagogical and so forth. In our time, we are experiencing an apparent shift in values towards the quantitative and economic: that which promotes economic growth is regarded as good; behaviours or actions which cause economic harm or bring no direct and quantifiable economic benefit are not. Ethics of 'happiness maximisation', however, obviously depend on definitions of 'happiness', which could be measured in financial, health, social or other terms. Ethics of 'duty', by contrast, are tied to

the people, beings, or ideas to which people consider themselves beholden. This could be the state, a boss, a God figure or any other authority regarded as securing the individual's identity. Concepts described under the terms 'happiness' and 'duty' are subject to changes in individual development and the corresponding need to find one's place anew in social systems. Both 'happiness' and 'duty' are subordinate to individual and social preconditions. They enjoy only a shifting, local validity.

The claim of ethics to absolute legitimacy is often uttered in the language of custom. Even the 'don't do unto others' Golden Rule supposedly common to the world's major and minor spiritual traditions can look suspiciously like this. It presupposes, for example, a certain reciprocal or equal relationship between the parties concerned; it doesn't seem applicable to situations of social subordination. Value terms and concepts also change across an individual lifespan: a child will have a different idea of 'justice' from an adult or pensioner, a boss from a worker, a politician from an economist. The types of behaviours arising from the application of these concepts contained in the word 'justice' will be, to say the least, diverse.

In conclusion, then:

- value concepts are constructed by individual human beings.

- these constructs are dependent on a wide variety of psychological and social factors which change across the individual lifespan, and from situation to situation.

Psychologically and socially healthy individuals seem, however, to agree on what constitutes ethically reprehensible behaviour: for example, the murder of an innocent person; the spreading of a secret; continual insistence on the imposition of one's own needs and interests to the detriment of others (namely, treating people as slaves). Such behaviours are by no means foreign even to the 'freest' and most 'democratic' societies, or those most concerned with 'human rights'; the 'structural lies' of social systems which purport to defend 'human rights' but then apply them selectively to suit their own interests are, alas, still widely told.

Values are internalised via engagement in social systems (family home, kindergarten, circle of friends, religious community, corporation etc.). The extent to which these values are absorbed unconsciously and uncritically via osmosis, or personalised as autonomous, critical and self-critical constructs, will depend, among other factors, on the personality structure of the individual in question. The ability to hold to values believed to have universal ethical relevance will depend both on physical and psychological predispositions and the nature of the situations in which one finds oneself. The evaluation of one's own ethical decisions, and of the individual and collective decisions of others, is also

tied to these dispositions. Concrete decisions in any given situation tend to be made, both consciously and unconsciously, based on information external to the decision, information which is then treated as implicit to the decision itself. Bridges are constructed which are regarded by those who construct them as anchored in reality, but not necessarily by others; this can lead to destructive consequences.

Constructs rooted in long-term habit, such as a person's view of human nature, general worldview and image (or otherwise) of God, tend to admit of only minor updates in response to concrete individual situations. Many value words are constructs of this type; their emotional and semantic meaning evolves slowly over a lifetime in response to a plethora of shifting interests, needs and preferences, and against the backdrop of economic, social and cultural change through which the individual lives.

The question of collective constructs, which give social systems their identity, arises in this context. These constructs can, like individual constructs, be evaluated ethically based on their rootedness in reality. This rootedness also plays a major role in determining the extent to which individuals within the system internalise them and embrace them as their own, rather than simply paying lip service to them. Since the values of any system change over time, the degree and scope of internalisation by individuals is constantly changing; among other challenges, social systems must overcome the inertia of individuals when it comes to questioning received ideas and adopting new ones. An individual who remains

trapped in the prison of shifting social systems without developing her own sense of independent ethical identity will not be able to behave ethically.

Every established social system develops its own language games; even when the meanings of individual terms in these games could be said more or less to match their dictionary definitions, they often carry an emotional weight or connotation specific to the system itself. This means that words and phrases uttered in the context of this system will not be understood as intended by those external to the system. An extra spirit of individual biophilia is needed to break this apparent deadlock.

## The Stability of Collective Constructs

The history of philosophy has witnessed philosophies of 'eternal being' and philosophies of critique of the *status quo*. Constructivism distinguishes itself as a philosophy of *becoming*: constructs, both individual and collective, are always - to the extent that they remain dynamic and healthy - images of a personalised present coming into being. The attempt to fix and reproduce constructs from the past, to transplant them wholecloth into the present, will always fail; such constructs change, as interests, expectations and concepts of value also change.

The ability to change, however, is often very limited in large social systems. The apparent stability of such systems

is coupled with the risk of inertia in reacting to changes both external and internal to the systems themselves. Large systems whose identity comes to be defined by such false stability degenerate into dictatorships, though this is often camouflaged by the fact that the stability is presented as a stand of good against bad, right against wrong.

Unresolvable conflicts can always be attributed to thinking which - on one side at least - is divorced or otherwise separated from reality. In all such situations, two or more contrasting or even contradictory conceptions of reality clash. This is true at the level of individuals, but it is even more pertinent to conflicts between systems, for systems are much less amenable to new information which might solve the conflict. Such information, and above all the emotional use to which it is put, determines what is useful and good; systems organised along ideological lines, for example, require enemies in order to maintain their crusade of good versus evil. All individuals or systems who threaten this narrative find themselves swiftly in the enemy camp.

Like individual constructs, collective constructs must continually maintain their connection to reality if they are to uphold their ethicality. Destructive conflicts are evidence of a divorce from reality, and call for an analysis of their causes. As we explore in the next chapter, only a biophilic approach to decision-making can secure this ongoing attachment to reality. With the advent of constructivism, a philosophy of becoming replaces meditation over the 'unshakable essence'

of things and the verbal form that this essence might be said once and for all to take.

# 4. Biophilia: Where Reality Meets Itself

The Enlightenment ideal of emancipation - individuals freed from all forms of illegitimate psychological and social domination - led to new forms of inhumanity, slavery and war in the 20th Century, most notably in the guises of Fascism and Bolshevism. Personal decisions, if they are to have a meaningful ethical dimension, must be free, both in the formal sense of freedom of the will and in the practical sense of freedom of choice. This presupposes, however, autonomy over inner forces (phobias, depression etc.) and all interests, needs, expectations and concepts of value which have been uncritically inherited. This work of biophilic self-criticism is, on the constructivist view, the business of ethics, and may lead the individual to conclude, for example, that it is wrong:

- to murder anyone, even to further a putatively 'good cause', or to use fear as a means of deterrence, even of serious crime;

- to attempt to minimise damage to life by taking life elsewhere, e.g. by murdering a large number of innocent people in order to shorten a war;

- to wage wars in the name of political, economic or religious interests.

The following may also remain ethically suspect in an individual's eyes:

- the collectivisation of individual values;

- the commercialisation of individual values, and the measurement of human labour in terms of its market value;

- calls to collective self-defence in order to secure the stability or wellbeing of a social system (which may involve depriving individuals of their freedoms);

- the reduction of human beings to their functional value ('human capital') or specific functions (taxpayer, soldier etc.);

- punishments of individuals designed to deter others through fear.

Every individual, however, develops her own norms and/or habits of behaviour which distinguish her from others. These must be ethically justified, but this presupposes that one is conscious of these norms and habits. The justification must transcend the accidents of circumstance; only biophilia offers the promise of doing so. Our understanding's connection to reality cannot be established via understanding alone; only the quality of our behaviour can bring us closer to it. All

theoretical philosophising, of whichever stripe, assumes otherwise, but in the end, any theory or universal rule which seeks purchase in reality is answerable to its outcomes. Many individual decisions are made without full knowledge of the consequences; one must nevertheless strive as best one can to avoid necrophilic decision-making. This requires the continually renewed exercise of conscience.


## Striving to Understand Reality

Most talk about ethics from beyond the confines of the philosophical community remains as clogged with mumbo-jumbo as so much of the discourse within it. Politicians in particular are in the habit of referring to 'shared values' without specifying *which* values. Such negligence and emotional manipulation has nothing to do with ethics, the business of which is to *secure* values, and above all the value of each individual life. Nothing which contradicts or subordinates this value has a place in ethical discourse. This is not simply a plea for virtue ethics in disguise, but an attempt to ground a new branch of humanistic discourse. Ethical decision-making presupposes certain psychosocial conditions; ancient 'virtues' like justice, courage, temperance and prudence do not serve as the *foundation* of ethics, but rather as the *prerequisites* for it.

The effort to base one's decisions and actions on a solid connection to reality is an elementary aspect of biophilic

human striving. Distinguishing between solid and weak or nonexistent connections therefore appears as a fundamental challenge of ethical engagement. Although classical ethical theories typically fall short of making this challenge explicit, they are all based on this idea of trust in reality and our ability to improve it. Insofar as a biophilic orientation is the only source of such energy, it may here be understood as a virtue. Virtuous decision-making in any case requires a certain psychosocial effort, which not everyone will bring to every decision. All personality traits which lead to a distancing from reality could hence be described as vices.

Biophilia is thus both an epistemological and an ethical matter. This connection is foreign to most modern philosophy; the Enlightenment faith in the self-justifying capabilities of reason nevertheless made possible the emergence of a pragmatic approach to truth criteria. Constructivism is a 21st-century extension of this trend: all knowledge can only be evaluated in practice, and biophilia is hence a measure of truth. The roots of this movement can be traced to Wittgenstein's work on 'language games' between 1936 and 1946; the necrophilic tendencies of National Socialism and Bolshevism required countering with reference to the power of ideology to distort reality. This theory of language games forces us to confront whether truth claims can only be understood within the context of the game in which they are uttered. The question once again arises: How is communication across social systems possible?

## Truth and Communication

Both the idea of 'communicative truth' and the idea of 'the truth of the good' entail a certain liberation from the realm of dogma and a move into the realm of becoming; it is not uncommon today to hear talk of 'finding one's own truth' or 'living one's own truth'. At the same time, however, this vision of truth as 'authenticity' may be seen to have a communicative and situation-dependent element.

Consensus theories of truth, built on the premise of ideal conditions for communication, have risen to prominence via the work of Karl-Otto Apel (1922-) and Jürgen Habermas (1929-). In *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy* (1980) and other works, Apel argues that the subject-centred vision which has dominated philosophy since Descartes, and through the Enlightenment, ought, if it is to live up to the Enlightenment's own highest political, economic, social and cultural ideals, to give way to an intersubjective paradigm. This is the only way, Apel argues, for philosophy to avoid devolving into self-centred relativism. The main tenet of his communicative ethics consists in the idea that there is no beyond of rational argumentation, and no beyond of the communication community; they are the final court of appeal. No external justification is possible here without falling into circularity; every willing participant in a discourse expresses her faith in the possibility of generating truth out of it, and that this truth could emerge from any of the partners. If someone

leaves the discourse community, she expresses her scepticism regarding this possibility; the ideal, however, leads in this direction of universal inclusion.

The ideal communication community, however, presupposes that all parties are playing the same language game; otherwise, consensus, if any is reached, will be cosmetic and coincidental rather than real. The principle of biophilia offers a partial solution to this problem insofar as it transcends local language games and encourages all parties to try their hardest to communicate simply and constructively in a spirit of truthfulness and trust, first and foremost with oneself. Such character features can be learnt, but also unlearnt; an ethics of biophilia requires us to promote them. This includes, most notably, the ability to overcome the illusions and received ideas which govern the social systems (religious, political, cultural etc.) in which we as individuals operate and find meaning.


## The Limits of Empirical Knowledge

When biophilia becomes the main vector for measuring contact with reality, truth becomes an ethical rather than a narrowly semantic question, less a focus on formulation than on purity of intention.

A pure, detached interest in knowledge of reality is impossible for human beings: values are always flowing behind our judgments. Science as a whole, however,

progresses on an ethos of neutrality and objectivity, even when the individuals who labour under its aegis are incapable of keeping their emotions and interests out of it. From a constructivist point of view, all understanding, even that which purports to be scientific, is embedded in constructs which are never free from interests and value judgments. This is especially true when it comes to the practical application of such understanding; since practice always involves interests, ethical orientation is required if this practice is not to end in inhuman consequences.

Contemporary claims of the neutrality of applied science can be traced back to the German economist Gustav von Schmoller (1838-1917). Max Weber (1864-1920) carried this spirit into sociology and the social sciences as a whole: empirical researchers were not to be held responsible for defining ethical norms. Nevertheless, Weber argued in 'Die Objektivität sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis' (1904), 'even though values cannot be the result of empirical science, they can still be the *objects* of research. In this way the social sciences can remain practically relevant. The distinction between ends (i.e. values) and means is part of any empirical social scientist's logical toolkit.' All applied sciences, indeed, as distinct from pure ones, are called to generate 'useful' knowledge – scarcely a value-neutral endeavour.

The place of philosophy in this cosmos of empirical research has always been fiercely debated: it is frequently dismissed as a form of useless intellectual masturbation. As

science in Europe emerged, however, and before the individual sciences had achieved their full disciplinary independence, 'philosophy' was closely tied to what we consider today to be the natural sciences. Thales of Miletus (624-547BC), for example, was a philosopher and astronomer, arguably the first person in history to draft a wholesale (water-based) theory of the origin of all things (the element which we still regard as the basis of all life). According to Herodotus (himself the father of history as an academic discipline), Thales correctly predicted a solar eclipse on 28 May 585BC. Nearly two thousand years later, in 1300, Petrus Peregrinus de Maricourt integrated this anecdote into the 'Epistula de magnete', first work of natural science written in the Middle Ages, in which he sought to understand the movements of a compass needle. Such attention to empirical detail in medieval Europe remained miles behind that of the Arabs, who had absorbed Aristotle long before.

The most inhuman of all modern ideologies - National Socialism and Bolshevism - likewise claimed both empirical and philosophical bases. While the ethical responsibilities of philosophy as a whole may seem too abstract a subject for reflection, the responsibilities of individual philosophers remain live; many philosophers have failed, and continue to fail, the biophilia test, sharing a common intolerance and claiming their own privileged access to reality. Tolerance, however, is the basis and precondition of all ethical decisions made in situations where interests conflict. This is also

(perhaps especially) true for philosophy itself; a philosophical concept is to be measured ethically in terms of the quanta of tolerance that it makes possible in practice, as well as in theory. This is nowhere more true than for philosophical systems with direct political, social or cultural pretensions. A philosophy which allows (or requires) an ethics of biophilia to flourish, such as the constructivism described here, places tolerance in thought, will and behaviour at the centre of its endeavours: 'All constructs are equally valid, as long as they are not necrophilic.' Voltaire's apocryphal maxim remains as relevant here as ever: 'I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.' The latent or even patent dogmatism of many philosophical frameworks, both past and present, also contradicts the Socratic insight: 'I know that I don't know.' As soon as this elementary biophilic humility is lost, the path to intolerance and monstrosity is laid open.


## The Ethics of Physics and the Ethics of Technology


In the 19th and 20th Centuries, physics was regarded as the most exact of the empirical sciences, and therefore as the paradigm for all others. A 'natural scientific truth', however, if it is to merit such a lofty label, must integrate an ethical component into itself. This is particularly true of natural sciences with political consequences. Knowledge entrusted to politics is always in danger of being misused for

necrophilic, destructive purposes. Since political self-regulation has typically failed to insure against such excesses, science's own responsibility to control against such misuse looms large. Most great technical advances in human civilisations were implemented without prior ethical reflection; ethical shortcomings of the Industrial Revolution, despite the Enlightenment's attempts to keep pace with it, led to new forms of radical inhumanity. The digital revolution promises even greater upheaval. Only a chain of coincidences prevented us, during the Cold War, from manmade catastrophes which would have made the Earth uninhabitable. Ethics capitulated in this period to the demands of economic and political power. Does an ethics of biophilia promise to save humanity from an apocalyptic fate?

The striving to extend one's own life in all its dimensions, with the insight that this requires symbiotic coexistence with other human and living beings, implies an extension of the biophilia principle to social (and ecological) systems as a whole, insofar as human life, on this account, can only be fully realised through social ties. Only when agents in social systems embrace biophilia for its own sake will humanity stand a chance of surviving the coming decades. Can we avoid collective suicide? The autonomy of technological evolution from ethics, indeed its immunity to ethics, can certainly lead us to the brink.

## The Ethics of Historiography

Constructivism takes the view that 'History' is a sequence of private histories squeezed into a more or less internally consistent public framework. These private histories are constructs of their authors, full of the interests, values, preferences and prejudices of each. The phrase 'History is written by the victors', reflecting as it does the fact that all knowledge is accompanied by interests, appears in this context as uncontroversially true. Moreover, these 'winners' decide what gets to count as good and evil.

Early modernity retained its faith in the idea of objectivity in the writing of history. In the postmodern period, however, the idea that history serves always to legitimate existing social, economic, cultural religious and social systems has gained the upper hand. Constructivism takes this trend further: anyone who compiles an account of past events can only do so on the basis of the constructs she herself has made of them. As with all other constructs, these are accompanied by interests and conceptions of value. Every present shapes its past in this way. Biophilia looms again as the decisive ethical criterion.


## Belief and Action

'In my view, people can live without religion, but not without ethics.' The ethics of theology, if the Dalai Lama is to be

believed, therefore warrants special attention, which we will be granting in the next chapter. 'Theology' is a discipline which seeks to bring expression to a realm which by definition defies expression; it is, in an Abrahamic sense at least, the 'science of revealed knowledge', a 'knowledge' which continues to define the life orientation and constructs of millions of people.

Many religions around the world, from China to India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and beyond, have developed an ethics which can be reduced for apparent convenience to the Golden Rule, the cheapest and most widely-used currency in contemporary interreligious dialogue. Beyond reciprocal self-interest, however, we must recognise that religious constructs are endlessly intimate and diverse; they will never be the same for any two human beings. We must therefore settle for a pluralistic space within which an ethics of biophilia can flourish instead of relying on any reductive formula or 'Golden Rule' to solve our problems.

Concepts such as 'God' serve to explain why anything should exist at all, and why seemingly unrationalisable aspects of our existence - the death of children, natural disasters, peculiar forms of suffering and punishment, indeed the whole spectrum of vicissitudes of life itself - might have a meaning after all. The question whether the word 'God' can claim the status of 'truth' within a given language game will depend on the ethical import of the behaviour it inspires. One is therefore required to define the word for oneself! Social systems, even those specifically defined for religious

purposes (such as churches), offer precious little help with this task. And if help *is* offered, it is not usually disinterested help.

Many religions, most prominently Buddhism and the Abrahamic religions, can be traced back to a founder, and bring with them revelations or foundational texts. These texts offer, among other things, concrete ethical 'guidance' in practical situations. The source of individual religiosity and ethicality, however, transcends this particular language game: if such 'guidance' leads, as it often does, to unthinking obedience - if religion and ethics (in the sense of autonomous individual responsibility) are decoupled - the baby gets thrown out with the bathwater as soon as the individual comes under any real pressure.

All human knowledge must prove itself in practice. It is therefore necessary to free religious faith from the esoteric language of theology, and to find philosophical paths which bring it into the realm of the profane and everyday. This was achieved, paradoxically, in Babylon, with the emergence of a conception of God - One and no longer many - of which no image could be formed. One could not state the matter more clearly or concretely: all forms of anthropomorphism and narrative are forbidden when it comes to God.

And yet, one feature of this abstraction could not be obscured or suppressed: love.

# 5. God is Love

Within the Abrahamic context at least, Judaism pushed the boat out in the direction of formless love; Christianity brought it to port with the story of a concrete human being.

Many biographers whose interests were less than strictly historiographical have written about this man. In many of these accounts, one finds above all the reflection of the author's own preexisting religiosity, her interests and conceptions of value. 'Churches' soon emerged around these various narratives. Four biographies in particular were singled out and squeezed into an official 'canon': Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Of course, the accounts of St. Paul preceded all this: he wrote the bulk of his Epistles between AD50 and 60, and died before the first 'Gospels' were drafted. As a committed rabbi and Pharisee, he initially persecuted the followers of Jesus, before a vision led him to convert. He even went so far as to change his Hebrew name, Saul, to the Latin Paulus, spreading the teachings of Jesus, as he understood them, to a largely Gentile audience. His influence then spread to Christian circles, and hence filters down into the Gospels themselves.

## The Legacy of Jesus

What, then, can be discerned as the message of this Jesus of Nazareth? In short, he interprets God as synonymous with

'love': 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another' (John 13:34). An early Christian hymn, passed down by Paul, describes Jesus' call to love in the following terms: 'Love is patient, benevolent, leads not to anger, bears no grudges, endures all and never dies.' As Paul himself adds:

> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing (Corinthians 13, 1-13).

This message was presented by the biographers of Jesus in the form of sermons and parables. In a world governed, then as now, at least partly by the deceit and lies which accompany political and economic interests, this message remains a pertinent one. The almost unfathomable credulity of so many people, even today, belies the Enlightenment call to think for oneself; lying has become a virtue in political life, and not only in leadership circles: 'purity of heart' has become scarce not only among the owners of the means of production, but among the owned as well. Jesus calls all of us to new forms of thinking, feeling and acting.

Most people set out, most of the time, with the intention of maintaining peaceable relations with their friends and neighbours. This is not, alas, a guarantee of peace; the world is nevertheless prone to bouts of individual and collective brutality. Jesus invites us to embrace a biophilic outlook even in such a world: the authors of the Hebrew Bible, in their Babylonian exile, describe 'original sin' as the fratricidal arrogance associated with believing that one can, like God, 'define what is good and evil'. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his audience to 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Matthew 13:44), and also to refrain from uncritical judgments ('do not judge, or you too will be judged', Matthew 7:1). The Parable of the Good Samaritan serves as a reminder that foreigners too can serve as moral examples.

## Are the Teachings of Jesus Biophilic?

The Christian message, then, can be condensed into three words: 'God is love.' There are forms of 'love', however, which are clearly not biophilic in nature: possessive love, hegemonic love, love which destroys You in the name of Us. Jesus, however, does not have these in mind: 'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10). And yet there is a self-sacrificing element in all this: 'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has

no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (John 15:12-13). The overall biophilia of Jesus' teachings, however, is seldom questioned, despite - or precisely because of - this call to sacrifice. Practising these teachings would seem to be the challenge: this is where the truth claims of Christianity are put to the real test.

What are the most important features of Christian love? I would identify two: mutual gifting of freedom, and trust in oneself. People commonly associate religious faith with freedom-reducing lists of dos and don'ts. Such faith, however, can only be described as 'faith' at all if it is based on the autonomy of the individual making the 'leap'. Blind, uncritical faith is always freedom-reducing; true adult faith is only possible at all after periods of adolescent doubt, and if it is accompanied by lifelong and automatic critical questioning. A religious faith which shackles the believer to its precepts, instead of liberating the individual continually to update her relationship with her own spirituality, cannot be described as biophilic.

Faith presupposes trust, namely that the object of one's trust will not disappoint. In the case of faith in 'God', this means first and foremost trusting the human beings who transmit or embody the content of the divine message. Religious trust, however, in the end transcends the social dimension: it is an extrapolation of our best human experiences into a realm of trust beyond all experience.

Biophilia and Theology

Constructivism accepts that each individual will have her own private construct of God. The correspondence of these constructs with reality can only be measured in terms of the behaviour they inspire. All constructs which promote biophilic decision-making are equally valid. Many theologies, however, claim privileged access to God, and establish a hierarchy of faiths on the basis of this privilege.

All talk of God or a godly realm implies a journey into dimensions - those of infinity and eternity - which seem foreign to us as human beings. We must, however, if we are to break our silence on such matters, wager an attempt to bring God into our world of language. This has traditionally been the thankless business of theology.

The absolute timelessness of God makes it impossible, among other things, to attribute any verbs to Him. He neither creates, nor proves, nor loves. Christian theology tries to get around this problem with its recourse to the figure of Jesus, a human being. Is this a biophilic move? Here one must distinguish between the message of Jesus and the social systems - most notably, churches - which have arisen over time to propagate and regulate the message. To the extent that individuals receive the message of Jesus via institutions and lack a personal relationship with it, one is obliged to ask first and foremost what these various institutions make of the message. But what, then, of the message itself?

It is uncontroversial to claim, with Matthew, that Jesus regarded God ('Jahweh', 'JHWH') as his father. Are we therefore to infer that this relationship offered Jesus privileged access to divine revelation? Jesus also called his disciples to refer to God as 'Father'; theology has likewise tended, over the centuries, to resist Paul's claim that Jesus deserved special status because of his alleged resurrection from the dead. Beyond all church dogma, then, the Kingdom of Heaven is reachable via love: compassion, tolerance, patience, peacefulness, embodied caring.

The first task of any Christian church is to announce and defend this message: 'He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation"' (Mark, 16:15). Do these churches manage this responsibility in a biophilic way? Like all other social systems, churches must secure their own existences before they can turn their attention to realising any higher ideals. Such a reification of values, however, fundamentally contradicts Jesus's message; neither the transmission of 'content' nor the acceptance of certain formulae as 'true' can replace the spirit of everyday practice here. Jesus himself did not affirm any dogmas, but rather showed, through his own example, the limitlessness of God's love for human beings. At the centre of all true education, even and especially of so-called 'religious' education, one therefore finds the cultivation of conscience, for individual conscience is the final court of appeal for all ethical claims.

The idea that there can be no compromise between truth and error is, from a constructivist point of view, built on a

naive semantic understanding of what truth is; it leads always to persecution of one kind or another. The obsession with concretising God's message in dogma was precisely what was foreign to Jesus himself: indeed, it was his very rejection of dogmatic religiosity which led to his crucifixion in the first place.

## Faith is not Enough

In the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus makes clear in a number of parables that he regards action, not blind faith, as the core of his creed. Can good will alone justify our actions? Marx took the view that the godless are not 'those who have contempt for the gods of the masses, but those who attribute the opinions of the masses to the gods.' In other words, individual conscience stands above all human legal jurisdictions and social systems; it alone can resolve value dilemmas. A social system which requires decisions the individual conscience cannot accept *must be rejected*. Responsibility implies a response to something, and that thing can only belong to us in total freedom: conscience. The fact that our family structures, schools, churches and other social institutions have largely and implicitly abandoned this business of character education reflects the fact that the Enlightenment call to think for oneself - a rejection of medieval church autocracy in favour of a return to the original message of Jesus himself - has been forgotten in our political,

social, economic and religious practice. Individuals, however, are responsible for their own moral development, over and above the social structures which form them.

# 6. The Limits of Ethical Responsibility

Human life plays itself out within certain boundaries; reflections on the meaning of biophilia require an acceptance of this unavoidable reality. The unconditional knows no conditions, but it does know limits: namely, the limits of those who strive to live the unconditional in practice. This is, so to speak, the unconditional postulate of an embodied biophilia, a lived love for life. Limits are not a reason to say No to existence; on the contrary, existence itself is surrounded, threatened even, by the prospect of death. Religions have made a better fist of embracing this reality than modern philosophy has.

An important question for an ethics of biophilia arises in this context: how can we make decisions in situations, unavoidable in all social systems, where the multiplication and advancement of our own life conflicts with the multiplication and advancement of the lives of others? Does life in a given social system, beneficial overall to the individual, also require a certain amount of self-sacrifice at certain times? When exactly, and when not? No answer can be given in advance.

Social systems tend to encourage their members to adopt system-typical and system-specific values, either with explicit strategies or implicit flows of information. Violation of these norms is typically punished in some way or other;

behaviour which conforms to the rules is more often than not rewarded.

When can such measures be said to be biophilic? On the one hand, social ties are necessary for the self-actualisation of every individual. Any social system, however, which reduces rather than fosters individual spheres of autonomy *de facto* serves to promote necrophilic behaviour, and as such is ethically problematic. If such constrictions are necessary for the functioning of the system, then the system as a whole is to be rejected. If ethics is to mean anything, then one is ethically required to offer resistance in proportion to the degree of necrophilia involved.

The borders of social systems may be more or less sharply defined, both in terms of internal diversity of interests and external threats, perceived or real. At these borders, everything from propaganda campaigns to open warfare is possible. Within systems, the necessarily diverging interests and corresponding emotions of the individuals composing them makes communication according to system-specific language games always and everywhere difficult, and in extreme situations impossible. Every biophilic social system therefore requires its members to master as many language games as possible. Does a social system (through ideology or top-down imposition) become its own end, or does it foster the self-realisation and autonomy of the individuals within it? Systems which regard themselves as elitist, from religious institutions to armies and corporations, tend to turn themselves into their own ends, and therefore become

necrophilic. If a social system sets limits which prevent members from advancing their own lives and/or those of others, then resistance is called for. Only the individual conscience can decide the appropriate limits of this resistance.


## The Question of Basic Trust

Erik Erikson was among the first to argue for a concept of Basic Trust, a disposition which develops, if at all, from the first year of life, and which allows an individual to face daily experience with the confidence that all will work itself out as it should. Early breaches of this trust can have lifelong effects on a person's ability to respond ethically - i.e. with her own free conscience - to these ongoing experiences, and may lead to a preference for forms of unconscious 'collusion' within social systems. Helper Syndrome, for example, emerges from early-childhood experiences of withheld help: the adult develops a pathological need to help others. Truly biophilic relations can never be based on such forms of codependency, regardless of concrete outcomes.

Social systems, in this sense, cannot themselves be said to behave ethically or unethically; only individual human beings can do that. Nevertheless, they can make such individual ethicality either easier or harder than it otherwise might be for the individual. The theme of 'justice' is never far from the surface here, including, most notably, the question

of participation: only slaves get no say. The Enlightenment ought to have done away with slavery, but the fact that it hasn't is the chief *raison d'être* of this book. The ownership of capital and the right to certain material resources in no way justifies dependencies which lead to immaturity. Enlightenment presupposes individual autonomy; forms of submission which condemn the individual to effective slavery have no ethical justification. Mature participation in a social system also implies, however, a duty to participate.

Similar considerations can be extended to the concept of private property; Marx's *Paris Manuscripts* (1844), for example, describe how private property can lead an individual to alienation from herself, her social environment, her work and even the world as a whole - in short, to alienation from her nature as an autonomous spiritual being with a living conscience.

## The Ethics of Political Engagement

Political systems, like all other social systems, are not, or should not become, ends in themselves. The most fundamental right, in ethical terms, is the right to exercise individual conscience; this is what brings us nearest to reality.

If the free exercise of individual conscience is the ultimate goal of politics, does this require democracy? It certainly implies tolerance of the fact that individuals construct their own inner realities. It also entails a rejection of

social systems which allow or encourage the individual to pass her responsibilities up a chain of command and/or pressure her uncritically to follow orders. The freedom of the individual can only be secured when these conditions are met. 'External freedoms' are worthless if they are bought at the price of this inner liberty.

In Article 1.1 of the *Grundgesetz*, the *de facto* Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, one finds the following: 'Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.' The role of the state as a service provider to human individuals, not as an end in itself, is here emphasised, and for good historical reasons. The ethical essence of this dignity remains, however, to be defined in practice: on the constructivist view, it is the utter uniqueness of the individual - beyond race, gender, religion and status - and the world she constructs for herself in conscience, which must be protected. All questions of distributive justice are secondary to this fundamental biophilia at the heart of any truly 'just' society.

# Epilogue

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that 'ethics' must be rethought, not as a theoretical discipline or as en end in itself, but as an invitation to the tolerance which flows from love for life itself. Defining terms like 'dignity', 'freedom' and 'justice' is far less important than embodying the spirit which makes them possible in the first place. A philosophy - 'love of wisdom' - which is unable to grasp this spirit is unworthy of its own etymology.

The three pillars of a biophilic ethics can be summarised as follows:

1. Respect for being, rather than being so-and-so;
2. Absolute primacy of the individual conscience over any collective;
3. The corresponding cultivation of a symbiotic rather than parasitic attitude towards society and the environment - a spirit of sacrifice rather than entitlement.

Philosophy must, however, do more than content itself with describing or defining this biophilia: it must actively promote and exhibit it. Instead of seeking to ground truth in evidence alone, as in the Cartesian tradition, it should also seek truth in the very questions it asks. It ought, in other words, to hunt out the everyday constructs and assumptions that lurk in all of us, silently threatening our freedom.

# Bibliography

The goal of this short volume was to arouse interest in Rupert Lay's work. Those willing and able to engage with his substantial German corpus, laden with footnotes and Jesuit erudition, are encouraged to choose from the following titles:

Lay, Rupert, *Unsere Welt. Gestalt und Deutung*, München, 1959.

Lay, Rupert, *Die Welt des Stoffes*, München, 1966.

Lay, Rupert, *Das Leben*, München, 1969.

Lay, Rupert, *Grundzüge einer komplexen Wissenschaftstheorie*, Frankfurt, 1971.

Lay, Rupert, *Dialektik für Manager. Methoden des erfolgreichen Angriffs und der Abwehr*, München, 1974.

Lay, Rupert, *Marxismus für Manager. Kritik einer Utopie*, München, 1975.

Lay, Rupert, *Meditationstechniken für Manager. Methoden zur Persönlichkeitsentfaltung*, München, 1976.

Lay, Rupert, *Manipulation durch die Sprache. Rhetorik, Dialektik, Forensik in Industrie, Politik und Verwaltung*, München, 1977.

Lay, Rupert, *Führen durch das Wort*, München, 1978.

Lay, Rupert, *Krisen und Konflikte. Ursachen, Ablauf, Überwindung*, München, 1980.

Lay, Rupert, *Zu einer philosophischen Analyse ökonomischer Krisen und Konflikte*, Mainz, 1981.

Lay, Rupert, *Credo. Wege zum Christentum in der modernen Gesellschaft*, München, 1981.

Lay, Rupert, *Der Glaube an die Schöpfung*, Olten, 1981.

Lay, Rupert, *Die Ketzer. Von Roger Bacon bis Teilhard*, Gütersloh, 1982.

Lay, Rupert, *Ethik für Wirtschaft und Politik*, München, 1983.

Lay, Rupert, *Vom Sinn des Lebens*, München, 1985.

Lay, Rupert, *Die Macht der Wörter. Sprachsystematik für Manager*, München, 1986.

Lay, Rupert, *Zwischen Wirtschaft und Christentum*, München, 1986.

Lay, Rupert, *Das Bild des Menschen. Psychoanalyse für die Praxis*, Frankfurt, 1987.

Lay, Rupert, *Philosophie für Manager*, Düsseldorf, 1988.

Lay, Rupert, *Ethik für Manager*, Düsseldorf, 1989.

Lay, Rupert, *Kommunikation für Manager*, Düsseldorf, 1989.

Lay, Rupert, *Die Macht der Moral*, Düsseldorf, 1990.

Lay, Rupert, *Wie man sinnvoll miteinander umgeht. Das Menschenbild der Dialektik*, Düsseldorf, 1992.

Lay, Rupert, *Über die Kultur des Unternehmens*, Düsseldorf, 1992.

Lay, Rupert, *Die Macht der Unmoral*, Düsseldorf, 1993.

Lay, Rupert, *Bedingungen des Glücks*, Hildesheim, 1993.

Lay, Rupert, *Wie man sich Feinde schafft*, Düsseldorf, 1994.

Lay, Rupert, *Nachkirchliches Christentum. Der lebende Jesus und die sterbende Kirche*, Düsseldorf, 1995.

Lay, Rupert, *Ketzer, Dogmen, Denkverbote. Christ sein heute*, Düsseldorf, 1996.

Lay, Rupert, *Das Ende der Neuzeit. Menschsein in einer Welt ohne Götter*, Düsseldorf, 1996.

Lay, Rupert, *Gelingendes Leben. Zu sich selbst finden*, München, 1996.

Lay, Rupert, *Weisheit für Unweise. Ein Plädoyer für mehr Biophilie gegen das Ableiten in eine unmenschliche Welt*, Düsseldorf, 1998.

Lay, Rupert, *Charakter ist kein Handicap. Persönlichkeit als Chance*, Berlin, 2000.

Lay, Rupert, *Die zweite Aufklärung. Eine Einführung in den Konstruktivismus*, Hamburg, 2015.

Lay, Rupert, *Über die Liebe zum Leben. Die Ethik im Konstruktivismus als Ausdruck der Biophilie*, Hamburg, 2017.

Is ethics best understood as the search for abstract, public 'values', or as the quest to unlock a personal, spiritual dimension of conscience? German Jesuit philosopher Rupert Lay has argued tirelessly for the latter vision over decades as a public intellectual and business coach.

This short introduction to Lay's work for an English-speaking audience, condensed from Lay's *Über die Liebe zum Leben* (2017), integrates the concept of *biophilia*, popularised in 20th-century Germany by Albert Schweitzer and Erich Fromm, into a 'constructivist' worldview fit for the demands of a new age.

The *sapere aude* injunction of the Enlightenment, Lay argues, ought to be extended to the realm of everyday ethics: dare not only to think for oneself, but above all to feel for oneself, and to exercise one's individual conscience despite all social pressures to conform. Only such a commitment, which reflects a 'love for life' beyond individual self-interest, is considered by Lay to be truly ethical.



Rupert Lay (1929-) is a German philosopher, theologian and management expert. His 1974 bestseller *Dialektik für Manager* has enjoyed 24 reprints, and remains an important reference in German business circles.

KSG    Karl Schlecht
       Stiftung