

**FROM “VIBRANT MATTER” TO ECOLOGIST HOPE  
AND ECOLOGIST CORRECTNESS:  
THE “RIGHTEOUS CONSUMER” SOCIETY**

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**Abstract.** The study proposes a meditation over the generous ideas underlining concepts such as “vibrant matter” (Jane Bennett) and “deep ecology” (Arne Naess), which are assessments of the place of the human being in the world. They sustain in intricate ways the ecologist realities of our times, which suggest the importance of the concept of “ecologist correctness” interpreted in its positive and negative aspects, legitimated by the diffuse but wide social penetration of the ideas associated to the conceptual discourse around “vibrant matter” and “deep ecology”. The present approach correlates these concepts, on the one hand, with a respect for life extended toward the widest ontological sphere, with a wiser conception of the world, in terms of a regained moderation, in the assessment of the relation of the human being with the world. On the other hand, the investigation relates “ecologist correctness” to the dawns of a new society (the “righteous consumer” society), built on the foundation laid by the so-called society of image (Henrieta Șerban) and spectacle (Guy Debord), capitalising on some of the ruins of consumer society (Jean Baudrillard).

**Keywords:** *vibrant matter, ecologist correctness, the “righteous consumer” society.*

“Vibrant matter”<sup>1</sup> is an interesting and rather New Age philosophical concept; in the book with this same title, Jane Bennett undertakes an ontological-political approach, describing what we may call a “blessed part”: an interpretative ecologist perspective with political and philosophical (extended) emphatic consequences.

Jane Bennett employs an extended concept of “affect” in a spiritual ecologist perspective that reminds us of animism: “While I agree that human affect is a key player, in this book the focus is on an affect that is not only not fully susceptible to rational analysis or linguistic representation but that is also not specific to humans,

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press Books, 2010.

organisms, or even to bodies: the affect of technologies, winds, vegetables, minerals"<sup>2</sup>. Ever since the work of Arne Naess, *Deep ecology*, humanity became *socially* acknowledged as a part of nature, seen in some sort of continuity with everything else, rather than separated from everything else<sup>3</sup>.

In Jane Bennett's perspective the "continuity" or the closeness in this relation to nature is brought about by the idea of this "common ontological share", the *affect*<sup>4</sup>. The author translates that ontological share a terminology that have an intuitive appeal. At Arne Naess, we have both an egalitarian and holistic environmental philosophy founded on phenomenological methodology and a psychological interpretation of environmental philosophy: an approach which is anthropomorphizing the world. The core of the concept is the ecological interconnectedness and the worth of life in all forms. In Jane Bennett, the connectedness is given by this "affect". In our view, there is a deeper psychological description. The philosophical ethical, profound and generous phenomenological gaze at the world emphasizes something else than science: "Something always escaped quantification, prediction, and control. They named that something *élan vital*"<sup>5</sup>. The capitalisation of *élan vital* was one way or another central to any "ecosophy" (a relatively coherent philosophical conception of ecology).

Revealing vitality is revealing the connectedness and the profound foundation of worth. Jane Bennett emphasizes: "I believe it is wrong to deny vitality to nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms, and that a careful course of anthropomorphization can help reveal that vitality, even though it resists full translation and exceeds my comprehensive grasp"<sup>6</sup>. The translation that the philosopher achieves is the chance at understanding a more modest and generous perspective on things and especially on the traditional symbolic hierarchy placing the human being at the top, with discretionary powers: "I believe that encounters with lively matter can chasten my fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests"<sup>7</sup>.

In Arne Naess, the connectedness of all living things becomes the measure of self-realization and, at the same time, only by identification with all the other

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Arne Naess, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World", *The Trumpeter*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1987, pp. 35–42. Especially in Eastern philosophy and in the folkloric reflections on life, we encounter a sort of communion of man with nature; however, modern philosophy of culture and structuralism envisioned the meanings of the nature-culture separation.

<sup>4</sup> We have to keep in mind that we have in philosophy several traditions of regarding matter in some sort of continuity with life rather than decisively separated from the universe of life. We should mention in this respect *hylozoism*, a term derived from the Greek word *hylē*, meaning "matter" and the word *zōē*, meaning "life". Hylozoism is a philosophical perspective considering matter as alive, part of a founding lively principle of the world, or even a part of the "soul" of the world. Animism personifies nature. Panpsychism advocates the consciousness sensitiveness of all matter. We all know that Thales saw water as "full of gods", Heraclitus considered fire the founding (animating) principle, and for Anaximenes a similar principled role was played by air. Also, for Straton, motion was the source of vitalization of matter. Ecology, relating organisms to their environment, gains philosophical depth when interpreted "in the echoes" of hylozoism, as Jane Bennett does via the concept of "affect".

<sup>5</sup> Jane Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> J. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

living things, one can understand her ontological, axiological and ethical worth. The worth of all and any living thing is intrinsic: life. And the intrinsic worth of the living beings gives way to solidarity and ethical, meaningful life<sup>8</sup>. Capitalizing on the Buddhist teachings “everything is interrelated”.

The core of this descriptive argument is formed by Arne Naess in the *illusory* character of any ontological boundaries between living beings. There is no difference of interest among the living beings when it comes to the biosphere. People become more of a part of whatever they protect: in this case the biosphere and the equal rights at existence of all the “components” of the biosphere<sup>9</sup>.

Political action emerges with necessity from this ecosophical perspective in which protecting nature is ultimately protecting oneself, and affirming the value of life is eventually affirming personal worth. Political action is necessary to actualize the meeting between the Buddhist metaphysics and the deep ecological principles. The mix conception recommends that environmental action should insist to reduce consumption, in general, while secular metaphysics might ease the message of the necessity to reduce human population growth and Christian metaphysics might contribute to messages related to the preservation of biodiversity.

The deep ecology philosophy sustaining the movement starts from a table of eight-point political and ethical guiding principles: “1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes. 2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves. 3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. 4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population. 5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. 6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present. 7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness. 8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World”, *The Trumpeter*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1987, pp. 35-42.

<sup>9</sup> Arne Naess, “The World of Concrete Contents”, *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy and the Social Sciences*, Vol. 28, 1985, pp. 417-428; Arne Naess, “Intuition, Intrinsic Value and Deep Ecology”. *The Ecologist*, Vol. 14, Nos. 5, 6, 1984, pp. 201-203. Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993. Arne Naess, “The Apron Diagram”, *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, eds. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, Berkeley, North Atlantic Books, 1995. This “apron” diagram was reversed transformed into a “tree ecological model” by David Rothenberg.

<sup>10</sup> Arne Naess, “The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects”, *Philosophical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, 1986, pp. 14 (10-31).

By affirming the ontological interconnectedness of all human and nonhuman organisms and the non-living environment (David R. Keller notices, following the ideas of the ecofeminists), one does not necessarily pursue "the holism of self-realization". To underline this point he turns to the paragraph where Richard Sylvan explains why the individuals are neither "absolutely discrete" nor "ontological chimeras". "Certainly, removing human apartheid and cutting back human supremacy are crucial in getting the deeper value theory going. But for this it is quite unnecessary to go the full metaphysical distance to extreme holism, to the shocker that there are no separate things in the world, no wilderness to traverse (...). A much less drastic holism suffices for these purposes"<sup>11</sup>.

David R. Keller notices that the numerous philosophical critiques indicate the failure of deep ecology to propose a system of thought. He mentions that David Rothenberg envisioned a *deep ecology model of environmental philosophical thought* in the form of a "tree trunk" with "conceptual roots" in religious, aesthetic and speculative ideas and "branches", far-reaching into the socio-political realities and socio-political action<sup>12</sup>. Although, one cannot really eliminate the distinction culture-nature, one may continue to pursue the development of ecosophies that reject to a certain extent the anthropocentric principles. The place of Deep Ecology in the history of environmental philosophy remains unchallenged.

When Jane Bennett refuses to place the human being in a political-ontological favoured position, as unaccountable beneficiary of all that exists, she continues the development of environmental philosophy, but she does not transform the human beings in "ontological chimeras" either.

For us, the "branches of the tree" are especially interesting in this discussion. Ecologism as the totality of the "ecosophies" remains a heterogeneous, but offering political action reservoir with a myriad of facets. One of them is the perpetuation and development of *the idea of waste as the accursed part* (Georges Bataille)<sup>13</sup>. Another is the criticism of consumerism following Jean Baudrillard<sup>14</sup>. His analysis is a semiotics of the social logic of consumption. The logic of consumption is revealed through signs, structural relationships and codes. It is not by accident that the subtitle of his famous work, *The Consumer Society is Myths and Structures*.

The world of consumption is more than the world of trade and more than the world of objects: it is a discursive world, proliferating discourses (narratives and texts, which can be presented as such either in their own way or in the figurative way), a reality which is confirmed with great validity in contemporary society, despite the fascinating "physiognomies" and actor scores that contemporary society adopts.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Sylvan, "A Critique of Deep Ecology, Part II". *Radical Philosophy* 1985, Vol. 41, p. 10 (1-22). David R. Keller, "Deep Ecology", *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman (eds.), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Farmington Hills, MI, Gale, 2009, p. 206-211.

<sup>12</sup> David Rothenberg, "A Platform of Deep Ecology", *The Environmentalist*, Vol.7, No. 3, pp. 185-190.

<sup>13</sup> Georges Bataille, *Partea blestemată. Eseu de economie generală* [The Accursed Share. Essay of General Economy], translation and epilogue by Bogdan Ghiu, foreword by Luca Pițu, Iași, Institutul European, 1994. See also Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Volume I: Consumption*, New York, Zone Books, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*, London, Sage, 1998, passim.

Although his theory is close to what we call “discourse theory” proposed in post-Marxism by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe<sup>15</sup>, unfortunately Baudrillard is preoccupied with the consumer society too early and does not use this theoretical opening<sup>16</sup>, which signals the continuity of the “class” struggles, transfigured in discursive struggles. Ernesto Laclau also realizes a theory about the rhetorical foundations of the society, reducing to the end the demarcation zones between the rhetorical categories anchored in linguistics and other cultural and social actions with a rhetorical significance force. “Indeed, any semiotic system can, according to Jakobson, be understood in terms of metaphor / metonymy alternations”<sup>17</sup>.

And, as I pointed out in my work *Symbolic forms and representations of socio-political phenomena* (published in Romanian, at the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations “Ion I. C. Brătianu” Publishing House in 2017), these discursive “struggles”, which, to some extent, have always founded the rhetorical (symbolic, semiotic, mythical), metaphorically and metonymically *grund* of the society and of the social order itself are transfigured into image confrontations (socio-symbolic-semiotic, with mythological accents) wherever there is a human action/contribution. “The magical-religious dimension of the image and the symbols overlaps the philosophical dimension of the symbolic forms, and these correspond to the founding and legitimacy assigning vein of the socio-political order, in order to multiply, exacerbate and, quite often, the camouflage, the rudimentary forms by which they infuse the electoral struggle and the processes of trade. We can easily observe that the puppet show with images, characteristic for the (social) human universe, even for the universe of knowledge, or for the universe of art etc., belongs to the politician in the deepest sense, that of establishing order, creating an architectural [symbolic, founding], as well as a state of benevolent expectation, of opening up, welcoming the opportunities presented by the political actors, who thus grow in prestige, legitimize themselves at the level of the image and through images; by speculating the cultural hegemony of some concepts (and images, and imageries)”<sup>18</sup>.

There is such a thing as discursive consumerism. The chance of discursive spreading and discursive deeply (re)forming acceptance that the present-day discourses (of contesting, confronting, emancipating, arguing for rights, etc.) can have in the contemporary capitalist society is increased by the vast technological and social opportunity to “consume” textual products and structures (from puns to genuine information and from genuine information to fake news) as fashions. The chance of interest for discursive struggles that take the place of the class struggles, or, that simply underline them, is to be publicized, thus becoming accessible, desirable and “palatable”; that is, somewhat easier to be consumed.

Thus, we should consider that “The tower of Babylon has been transferred

<sup>15</sup> Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London, Ed. Verso, 1989.

<sup>16</sup> Chronologically, it would have been impossible to accomplish this in his work *The Consumer Society* (1970), anterior to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1989).

<sup>17</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, London, Verso, 2014, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Henrieta Anișoara Șerban, *Forme simbolice și reprezentări ale fenomenelor socio-politice*, Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale “Ion I. C. Brătianu”, 2017, p. 18.

into cinematic constellations of images, whose whirlwind perfectly expresses the thirst for meaning and order, a universal thirst for the human being. This is taking on nostalgic body and romantic clothes, emanating the human fascination with magnificent images, which humanity is unceasingly declining, in non-perishable, personal and socio-political constellations"<sup>19</sup>.

The reasoning behind beautiful causes (for example, the environmentalist causes, such as the recent rescue of suffering animals in Australian fires, animals whose metonymic symbol was the irresistible koala bear) is still convincing, by the appeal at the great values cherished by humanity – in a simple enumeration, without any intention of hierarchy: order, love, justice, beauty, fairness, equality, generosity, freedom. However, in the contemporary capitalist society, the career of these judgments is decided through language games<sup>20</sup>, inscribed in life forms, by a certain mythic-archetypal force, as well as, above all, by the semiotic “vestments” assumed.

This direction of analysis clarifies the mechanisms by which the capitalist society matured as a society of image and prestige in what we call a “consumer society”, takes the forms of protest that appear in its bosom which it assimilates, tames and manages, many of them becoming a diversity of fashions (fashionable behaviour).

Fashion is the main mechanism by which capitalism processes protest, framing it in a preferred “form of life”<sup>21</sup>, in a form of consumerist conformism. Gilles Lipovetsky<sup>22</sup> shows that this specific form of life is fashion. This is not an irrational epiphenomenon, but a profound and effective way of standardizing the popular consciousness, an effective way of inclusion, a modality of being together, similar with the others albeit special, a manner of being “on the wave”, a way of gaining prestige. Fashion brings together prestige and popularity within a quasi-coherent semiotic system with several elements of well-managed elements of discontinuity and surprise. Fashion is one phenomenon that gives the true measure of the power of metonymy and metaphor.

For our analysis, we must also observe that fashion is a source of prestige in a simple and typical capitalist way, typical for the consumer society. We interpret that the fashion phenomenon thus represents a peak (a “spearhead”) of the consumerist system. Understanding fashion, it is about a phenomenon that involves yet one more alignment in order for someone to be noticed and accepted within a popular group, an alignment to something just a little different, but widely celebrated all of the sudden and, of course, to a refreshed direction of consumerism.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 358.

<sup>20</sup> With reference to L. Wittgenstein II.

<sup>21</sup> This is the phrase used by L. Wittgenstein, born at the encounter of the analysis of the various (social, economic, cultural, political) phenomena, as discursive and structuralist worlds, established along the lines of “family resemblance” (see also C. Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism) and neopragmatism. The form of life proposed as philosophical referential by Wittgenstein is obviously not biological, but rather a phenomenon associated to social life as a human and social discursive micro-universe, somewhat typical for everyday life, bearing a feeling of familiarity, acknowledged as something that we can understand. However, while it is not biological, the form of life can live, age and die and it belongs to human life, although, at the phenomenological and discursive level.

<sup>22</sup> Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion. Dressing Modern Democracy*, translation from French by Catherine Porter, Foreword by Richard Sennett, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994.

In the perspective of the discursive theory<sup>23</sup> we can detect the mechanism by which the language game presumed by the uprising, or by the embraced noble cause (which includes a core of protest in its bosom), will be accepted in the consumer society by aligning with the capitalist socio-symbolic dominant consumerist code; more precisely, by assimilating the elements of protest, “with a changed sign”, the protest itself being changed into a fashion, into a sum of symbolically related goods to be bought. And this way revolt returns to consumption, even to the strident consumption. It is a soft “repression”.

At the same time, as G. Lipovetsky has shown, fashion is truly the empire of the ephemeral (as it is also the empire of image, symbol, myth and discursiveness), whose perfect metaphor is the “mythical sacralisation of feminine beauty”<sup>24</sup>, or of unisex beauty. Lipovetsky points out that it is about a narcissistic logic of youth without old age, individualizing (of course, producing anomie and alienation). The social meaning of the fashion sign is not only a hegemonic meaning with a passing status; in our interpretation, this is an episodically structuring meaning of legitimizing and celebrating a certain type of strident consumption. Another characteristic of fashion, more and more obvious and fascinating these days is the fact that the ecologist impact on fashion brings about a cultural celebration of the natural, as paradoxical as intriguing.

At the same time, what I also argue in the above mentioned work titled *The symbolic forms and representations of the socio-political phenomena*, the image, the symbol, the myth and the discursiveness, until they arrive to represent what is derisory and ephemeral, first and foremost, in each of their hypostases, they are the bearers of the hegemonic values and the “gatekeepers” of the dominant social order. They are not just representations, just adornments, just symbols. As a consequence, we can understand also the high functionality of the image, the symbol, the myth and the discursiveness. And this efficiency is so high that it might, within a capitalist social order, evoke the intrinsic value of life through an animal symbol: let’s say, the panda bear, or the koala bear. And such symbols might found fashions, movements and eventually regulate behaviours with either a more ethical or (also) a more consumerist aim.

Value remains present regardless of the register of meaning imposed by the specific sign, symbol or representation. Although some semiotic systems are closer to the economic realm and farther from an area of the ideal forms, their “political economy” maintains axiological language games within a plurality of areas of the mundane (of daily expressions, of superficiality and fashion, of prestige and popularity, or of use). When the fashion gains adepts and the fashionable products become value-signs, then they develop forms of life and language games. Thus, a distinct direction of consumption of products which are also symbols becomes a direction of solidarity and recognition among the consumers, almost a “language” spoken in that consumption group.

<sup>23</sup> Studied and proposed for the first time in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy [Hegemonie și strategie socialistă]*, mentioned above.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 115.

The consumers are the new citizens. The advertisements are competing with the news in informing people and even in educating them in the spirit of the conviction that for any problem there is a product which is the solution. And sometimes this is indeed the case. Other times the product just masks the problem. When the advertisement is about alcohol, the consumers are reminded with somewhat hypocritical accomplice concern: "Responsible consumption is recommended".

In our interpretation, the social order of consumption is the dominant one, neither that of production nor the order of choice, nor that of responsibility etc. Marxism left the stage many decades ago, and republicanism and liberalism have nothing to say about consumption. About a half of century ago, Baudrillard considered of utmost importance the order of production (a Marxist point), but he includes this view within a structuralist interpretation, indicating that the order of the key meanings for the realities of the Western capitalist societies become clearer as order of the meanings concerning consumption. In our perspective, when we turn to the post-Marxist discursive theory<sup>25</sup> we can emphasize through the paradigm of the displacement of the "class" struggles from the labour and production environment into the discursive one the hegemony of the consumerist discourse. Even at present the vegan discourse, the health discourse, or the environmentalist discourse are all still consumerist (even though they recommend the reduced consumption or the heavy regulated consumption).

Jean Baudrillard indicated two types of constraints acting in society: at the level of meanings and at the socio-economic and political level (that is, in the structuralist and in the Marxist perspective). The interpretation is only one step away from that of discourse theory. In our view, for Baudrillard, Marxism explains the main architectural dimension of the consumer society (for instance, the importance of production as constraint imposed to consumption), while structuralism describes the relevant nuances.

At present, the ecologist discourse reveals the grant orienting characteristics of the advanced and learning societies related to the awareness in front of ecological imperatives, which are many of them imperatives of human health and human quality of life. The very quality of life becomes enrooted in regulated natural and reasonable green consumption, not in quantitative consumption, under the scrutiny of a public opinion kept alert via publicity, new media films and texts, ecological movements and ecologist stars and also via fashionable trends, products, activities and movements. The ecologist concern is justified and admirable. The philosophical roots bring about a recognizable essential "nourishment" of hope and love for what we may call, following the development of deep ecology models of Arne Naess and David Rothenberg, "political branches" (movements and causes with environmental core, but political means and manifestations), identifying and fighting "environmental nuisances".

The phenomenon of "environmental nuisances" was captured also by Jean Baudrillard who understood the relatively paradoxical connection between

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<sup>25</sup> Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London, Verso, 1989.

exacerbate consumption and environmental concern. We present here his reasonable position through a generous quote: “The advances of affluence – that is to say, of the possession of ever more goods and individual and collective amenities – have been accompanied by increasingly serious ‘environmental nuisances’ which are a consequence, on the one hand, of industrial development and technical progress, and, on the other, of the very structures of consumption. First, we have seen the degradation of our shared living space by economic activities: noise, air and water pollution, environmental destruction, the disruption of residential zones by the development of new amenities (airports, motorways, etc.). Traffic congestion produces a colossal deficit in technical, psychological and human terms. Yet what does this matter, since the necessary excess of infrastructural building, the extra expenditure on petrol, the costs of treatment for accident victims, etc. will all be totted up as consumption, *i.e.* will become, under cover of the gross national product and statistics, an indication of growth and wealth! Does the flourishing mineral water industry permit us to speak of a real increase in ‘affluence’ since, to a large extent, it is merely a response to the deficient quality of urban water? And so on. We should never be done with listing all the productive and consumer activities which merely counteract internal nuisances generated by the system of growth”<sup>26</sup>.

However, the environmental concern is in fact founded on the concern with the quality of human life, of “our shared common life”. The question is how we are ever be able to keep enjoying the wonders of the consumer society, how can we keep up the spiral of production and consumption and the quality of human life which is still related to the quality of the air and to the quality of water, that is, to the quality of the environment. The “homoeopathic treatment of growth by growth” did not exactly work out. The “environmental nuisance effects” translated into “cultural nuisance effects”, which could not be addressed otherwise than infusing the consumerist discourse with a more philosophical concern for environment and this concern become not just a discourse about the quality of human life. The environmental concern became an ecologist concern, for human life none the less, but as life within a system where all life has value. As a consequence, setting up a “clean air ministry”, become the minimum measure to enforce. All sorts of branches with socio-political stakes infused the economic concern with environment. All sorts of fashionable movements popularized a more ecologist and environmentally friendly philosophy. Life in consumer society was acknowledged as insecure, stressful and polluted. And it was philosophy and the ecological wisdom the gate through which our daily thoughts and actions become interested in the views and means to alleviate, regulate and reduce this opposition between the consumerism accompanying the technological and civilizational advancement and the preservation of the ecological systems seen as equally important. Social investments paired up with ecological investments. Learning society learned about ecology. Life and its quality implied that consumption was to be ecologically regulated and ecological concerns were to be stated as quasi-compulsory main social values.

<sup>26</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *quoted work*, p. 39.

The rules and regulations of consumption followed two principal directions: the first, consisting in the constitution of civil society movements aiming to make ecological concerns more concrete and the emergence of a public opinion educating and guarding an ecological social consciousness; and, the second, related to the alleviation of pollution, to the official measures for carbon emissions diminishment and to green energy technologies. As an assembly, they establish the emergence of a society of reduced consumerism. "The righteous consumer society" is generated by the consumer society and eventually appropriated again by the latter, through new fashions and regulations of consumption and waste.

Analysing the emergence of the manifestations of the emergence of a society of reduced consumerism within the consumer society we distinguish a Hegelian dialectics between consumerism and reduced consumerism involved as well in the capitalist processes of the reestablishment of the domination of consumption (such as the capitalist regulation through fashion of the social either diffused or more clear ecologist movements toward the diminishment of consumption investigated above). George Bataille approaches the Marxian discussion about "accumulation" in the light of the necessity of both "excess" and "waste". In his interdisciplinary theory of "general economy", describing a general philosophical and anthropological view over economy and not a sum of the general but specific problems of economics, and which derives the concept of "excess" from the concept of "gift" described by Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille noticed: "...the final process of wasting shall not delay to fulfil the movement that animates the terrestrial energy. (...) The human spirit reduces its operations [directed naturally toward waste, though, with a limited scope]. (...) The spirit generalizes composing the assembly of the operations: the economics as science is content to generalize the insulated situation, limiting its object to the operations completed for a limited end, of *homo economicus*: it does not consider a game of energy that no particular purpose could limit: the game of *the living matter in general* (...). On the surface of the terrestrial globe, for *the living matter in general*, energy is always in excess and the problem is always posed in terms of luxury, while the possibility to choose cannot consider something else than the appropriation of wealth. (...) The general movement toward waste characteristic for the living matter animates man, too, and he cannot oppose it (...) even more, this movement predestines man, in a privileged manner, to the glorious operation of pointless consumption"<sup>27</sup>.

We should underline that in this theory the human being is a being living in the space of "sovereignty". The concept is derived from and an equivalent of the concept used for the description of the situation of national states in the world system. Within the same world system, man has a similar quasi-objective situation. The human being is objectively destined for sovereignty, but assumes it subjectively through his self-consciousness. The sacredness itself is revealed through the sacrifice of the total and absolute possession of intimacy of the person, of the human being and her inner life ("sovereignty"). Expenditure is the plenary affirmation of individuality and self-consciousness, defined as lucidity of (self) sovereignty.

<sup>27</sup> G. Bataille, *op. cit.*, p. 25. Translation from Romanian.

In our interpretation, the human being's need for the sacred is revealed by a need for this endeavour of relating, which involves a sacrifice of ontological sovereignty, of ontological discretion. For Bataille, the reduction of sacredness objectifies (or establishes) intimacy and the sacred exteriorizes intimacy.

At the same time, the evolution and becoming of the human being is oriented toward the increase of energetic resources. This increase calls for expenditure(s), for spending. Other thinkers discussed this aspect in terms of actions and efforts destined for self-actualization, for the accomplishment of the human being. In our view, the impossibility to clarify the becoming and the necessity of adequacy to becoming is the source of pure expenditure and waste. The philosopher also explains that man is found in a continuous fight with this phenomenon of waste, for man attempts to deny this movement toward waste and to oppose it with a conscience of necessity. However the human condition of living (despite all efforts) in separation from the world makes man a perpetually *needy* being (Bataille's term) which has no influence over the general movement of energy.

Seen in the light of the principles of ecosophy, Bataille's theory is the acknowledgement of the sinful state of ontological discretion of the human being. For this ontological discretion, the state of separation from the other living entities and from the world is directly linked with excess, waste and the accursed part. Self-consciousness is paradoxically a consciousness of the necessity of connectedness, of the necessity of relation; but this always implies a measure of self-affirmation and separateness.

This line of thought acknowledging the body of ecosophical thought, the ontological discretion of the human being and the environmental nuisances generated by consumption and waste captures as well an aspect best described by us in this study through the phrase *ecologist correctness*. We propose here "ecologist correctness" in neutral tone and we do not intend to overtake the critical chorus that accompanied "political correctness" considered by the most acute critics a totalitarian reflex. Currently, this is an ethical avenue where individual choice and individual consciousness, which is never totally exterior to ethical principles, have the final say. However, when these ecosophical ethical principles are going to be completely overwhelmed by the legal and political impositions, or when they become mis-represented as indoctrination and, or, as coercive peer pressure; then, we should acknowledge the presence of totalitarianism. For now, the thinker should signal the totalitarian *potential*. The more coherent is the environmental ecosophical system developing the "roots" of the above proposed model, the more potential for totalitarianism for the "branches". The indisputable beauty of ecologism as principle and philosophy of hopeful generosity is threatened by the totalitarian potential of ecological righteousness. The idea of continuity with nature should not translate into indifference to people, into more separation among the human beings, into more fragmentation and inequality among people and states. We need to learn and relearn bearing with one another, a deeper sense of tolerance and togetherness, *with and beyond* our identities, convictions, religions, ideologies, righteousness and species. This old and new human path starts with the acknowledgement of the fact that identities, convictions, religions, ideologies,

being right, keeping the right path, being careful, being faithful, being part of a species, all these, merely define a "position"; which should not impede our relations, or, our relating capacities, or our "movement" and evolution.

Anthropomorphizing used to be an avenue of love and care for nature. Not anymore: now, koala bear or panda bear "morphing" signs are the new metaphors and metonymies of value. The visions of "vibrant matter" are ecosophical and the beautiful lesson of vibrant matter constitutes the current nourishment of ecologist hope and correctness, which implies the rise of the "righteous consumption society"; for now, all these aspects mean a supplementary chance at a meaningful life, describing "the blessed part".

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