Research Article

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A Bite of the Forbidden Fruit: The Abject of Food and Affirmative Environmental Ethics

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Abstract: This article explores the negative framing of environmental concern in the context of food procurement and consumption, through the lens of the myth of Eden considering the ontological and genealogical aspects of the experienced exile from nature. The article first considers the theoretical context of the negative framing of food ethics. Demonstrating the consequences of the experience of food as abject, the article then goes on to discuss the exile from Eden as an explanatory myth for the perceptual inbetweenness of humankind. The aim of the article is to outline the genealogical markers of the negative framing of food ethics via the discussion of the exile from Eden. In the context of a new materialist understanding of the nature–culture continuum, the article depicts the exile as a perceptual rather than ontological divide that does not reflect a factual human inbetweenness but mirrors the objectification of nature by stripping the flesh of its spirit. Such reenvisioning is thought to be a pivotal aspect for mitigating the affectual abjectivity of food and recapturing the factual entanglement of body–environment to enable affirmative environmental ethics.

Keywords: ontogenealogy, genealogy, ethics, abject, exile, Eden, food, body, new materialism, environment

1 Food for thought

Food is marked as the most carnal aspect of our lives as well as ingrained with a vast number of ideological and symbolical meanings that co-constitute what this carnality is and becomes. Thus, food is also a site where the entanglement of historicity and materiality is seen very directly. The ontogenealogical approach that I employ in my research presumes (a) theorizing from a place of genealogical understanding of the biosphere, repositioning biology within a nature–culture continuum,[1] and genealogy[2] – within a material context, and (b) the co-constitution of ontologies and materialities. Stating shortly, the research approach presumes the *ingraining* of ontologies as well as more-than-human genealogies *in the flesh*.

1 See the concept of biophilosophy in Thacker, "Biophilosophy;" see further Radomska, "Uncontainable Life." The theoretical premise of a genealogical understanding of the nature–culture continuum and a repositioned biology based on senseful materiality is laid out in my recent article – Sauka, "The Nature of Our Becoming" in context with Philipp Sarasin's consideration of Charles Darwin as a genealogist (see Sarasin, *Darwin und Foucault*).

2 In context with the Foucauldian idea of genealogy, at its core, genealogy is not only refraining from the challenge of constructing a comprehensive historical narrative because of its existential inaccessibility, but to an extent, is also a subversive practice or a practice of the problematization of the present with regard to its past that destabilizes existing narratives as well as stands in clear opposition to the idea of a comprehensive narrative, demonstrating the contingency and discontinuity of historicity. (See: Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History;" Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics;" Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique*; and Sarasin, *Darwin und Foucault*).

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From this essentially new materialist[3] theoretical framework, I ventured to ask: How can food become *mine/ours* again?

Faced with the conflictual relations of differing and often ideological food ethics and the multinational corporate food production businesses, I am left wondering – am I compromised if such is the food that I eat? How does my body change with the consumed food? And am I a bad body/person if the food I consume is made in an unsustainable way?

Thinking about ecological solidarity and sustainability comes with many, if not an unlimited number of challenges that often relate to the lines of flight of ethicality, sharing, and care that often comes in conflict with a rigidly understood sense of morality, and doing "the right thing" that often stems from a neo-Kantian understanding of duty ethics.

The potential for the theorization of food from the standpoint of senseful and processual materiality and a Deleuzian ethicality is informed by the research by Elspeth Probyn,[4] who, among others, follows the lines of research of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, and endeavors a critique of the predominant eating ideologies, facilitated both by mass production of the "bad" industry as well as the ideological systems of morals instituted by scholars and academics, particularly from the field of animal ethics.[5] I, here, seek to continue that line of thought and to invite the reevaluation of the predominant moral ideologies in the context of posthuman processual materiality when seeking affirmative environmental ethics.

Although scholarly research has battled binary dichotomies of mind vs body, nature vs culture, etc. for quite some time now and does so in many, if sometimes seemingly incompatible disciplines and scholarly directions such as posthumanism, lived body phenomenology, cognitive science, biology, and others, an ontological shift on a societal level is still lacking. Similarly lacking (although increasingly more discussed) is the reevaluation of existing ethical frameworks in their embeddedness in dialectics of nature vs culture. The article, thus, seeks to explore these genealogies of exile that see humanity as atopical and frame it whether as angelic or demonic regarding nature,[6] to provide discussion on the sociopolitical and ethical problems that arise from the material impact of the predominant perceptions.[7] The ethics of eating is here exemplified as one of the battlegrounds of morality and ethics, restriction and caring, exile and solidarity, arguing for the prioritization of ethicality (good/bad) rather than morality (good/evil or rather evil/not-evil) in environmental ethics.

First, I address the question of ethics and morality in context with food. The positioning of ethicality vs morality in this article is certainly to some extent restrictive and follows a Deleuzian definition of morality as a *system of Judgment*[8] versus ethics as a field connected with the ontologies-we-live-by[9] that builds on a Spinozian view of relational *good vs bad* paradigm beyond a normative *good vs evil*.

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3 Susan Yi Sencindiver defines new materialism thusly: "Seeking to move beyond the constructivist-essentialist impasse, new materialism assumes a theoretical position that deems the polarized positions of a postmodernist constructivism and positivist scientific materialism as untenable; instead, it endeavors to account for, in Barbadian idiom, the co-constitutive "intra-actions" between meaning and matter, which leave neither materiality nor ideality intact" (Sencindiver, "New Materialism"). The definition clearly outlines an approach that allows a senseful and processual understanding of the biosphere and materiality in a broader sense, thus, allowing compatibility with a biophilosophical account and the reframing of genealogy in a materialist context. For the sake of brevity, this article does not elaborate further on all the relevant concepts regarded by other posthumanist and new materialist authors who engage in understanding human–food relationships. It should be noted, however, that several materialist and processually minded authors have laid the important groundwork for the reevaluation of human–food relations in a processual context and understanding food ontologies. Some of them are Sarah Elton, Annemarie Mol, Jane Bennett, and David Goodman. See Elton, "Posthumanism Invited to Dinner;" Mol, "I Eat an Apple;" Mol, "Good Taste;" Mol, *Eating in Theory*; Bennett, "Edible Matter;" Goodman, "Ontology Matters;" and Goodman, "Agro-food Studies."

4 Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*.

5 Probyn particularly exemplifies the negative framing of the environment via ideological moralism by employing a critique of Peter Singer. Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*, 54–6.

6 See Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*; and Merchant, *The Death of Nature*.

7 From an ontogenealogical standpoint the industry of processed foods, for example, can be analyzed as the materialization of human–nature distinction and substance ontologies in the last instance.

8 Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 23.

9 Radomska "Uncontainable Life," 75–6.

Epistemologically, the distinction between ethics and morality is important to me because of the relativity of ethical paradigms. In the words of Carry Wolfe: "there is no 'god's eye view'" with regard to which lives are to be protected; instead, "there are only 'limited points of view'."[10] It must be, however, also noted that such a restriction limits the opportunities for building conclusory ethical trajectories – a condition that I accept lightly, since my aim here is only to reflect rather than teach or prescribe a particular course of action. Nonetheless, a position that could urge some of the readers to ponder if there is any practical takeaway from an academic exploration of the topic at hand.[11]

Then, I turn to some ontogenealogical aspects of mythology, engaging with the idea of the ultimate exile – the metaphorical exile from the garden of Eden, as a thought-form permeating Global Northern environmental thinking and affectual experience, to challenge the negative framing[12] of food ethics and alienation in body–environment relations. The problematization of the experienced and affectual alienation of food via food ideologies and globalization processes is theorized through Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject,[13] viewed through an ontogenealogical lens that accepts the processual and transformative relations of subjectivity, objectivity, and abjection.

Focusing on the processes of eating and being eaten, I seek to explore the possibility to reimagine human–food–environment relationality in terms of trespassing Eden in a both affirmative and critical move toward posthumanism. The figure of Eden is analyzed here as one of the genealogical beginnings of the cultural imaginary of the inbetweenness of humankind. A reference to a connection between the "exile from Eden" and the human inbetweenness can be found both in the works of Erich Fromm[14] and Søren Kierkegaard,[15] as well as other theorists that uphold an ontological inbetweenness. While the approaches that accept human exile from nature often employ bioconservative or transhumanist attitudes, which would metaphorically translate to inviting humans to either return to Eden or to shed their ties with Eden entirely (conceptualized as a neo-Kantian invitation to overcome human animality), I, here, consider the "overcoming" of this split as trespassing the ontological horizon that has always been only perceptual.

Finally, I should also note that from the standpoint of an ontogenealogical exploration that combines biopolitical and biophilosophical considerations, my method is synthetical and employs relevant concepts from several authors, when finding their work to be an important contribution to tracing the ontogenealogies we live by. Thus, the notions borrowed from several different theories are reframed within the context of their compatibility or service to an ontogenealogical account rather than explored in their own right, within their respective research fields. This method of working with texts becomes possible because of the character of ontogenealogy that upholds the view of co-constitution of materialities by concepts and ideologies, and aims to trace and demonstrate the synthesis, symbiosis, entanglement, and interdependency of theories and conceptualizations that themselves also experience a kind of materiality and are enmeshed in the plural and processual co-dependency of the genealogically embedded materiality.

2 Not caring enough?

The ethical relation to food vs the problem of food ethics and the capitalist marketplace is related to a conceptual juxtaposition of morality and ethicality. In the discussion of food, this juxtaposition is reflected in Elspeth's Probyn's book *Carnal Appetites*, where she cites Nikolas Rose,[16] stating that:

10 Wolfe, *Humans Before the Law*, 86.
11 To this, I have no serious enough answer. To my merit, however, many human endeavors in academia are to a large extent equally unpractical.
12 Neimanis et al., "Four Problems," 76–8.
13 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.
14 Fromm, *You Shall be as Gods*.
15 Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*.
16 Rose, "Identity, Genealogy, History," 135.

> In this sense, ethics is contrasted with morality: 'moral systems [that] are, by and large, systems of injunction and interdiction – thou shalt do this or thou shalt not do that' (Rose, 1996:135). While certainly there are forms of eating that fall into this strict codification, I am more interested in the rather nebulous ways in which eating can inform practices and ways of thinking that coincide with Foucault's notion of ethics as a 'domain of practical advice as to how one should concern oneself with oneself, make oneself the subject of solicitude and attention, conduct oneself in the world of one's everyday existence'. (Ibid., 1996:135)[17]

Starting with this conceptual divide, Probyn exemplifies the affective negativity of moral philosophies on food, among others contrasting moral normativity with affective materialities of food philosophies by such theorists as, for example, Peter Singer, who theorizes from a "moral highground,"[18] and concludes that despite, for example, McDonald's untrustworthy morality, it also distributes the idea of ethics and caring. Conversely, normative philosophies negatively frame their positions, thus, earning either the public's distrust or cultivating the affects of shame and guilt around the topic of food.

Philosophically, this restriction is explored already by Spinoza who makes the move beyond good and evil as dogmatic cultural codes that appear as substantiations of the underlying processes of transformative lived ethicalities of *good vs bad* that relate to the frameworks in which they are embedded.[19] Spinoza, thus, already highlights the transformative nature of good and bad that change their meaning according to the framework from which they are evaluated – a stance that is justified by an immanent understanding of existence.[20] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche develops this view further, particularly, in the first essay of "On the Genealogy of Morals,"[21] where he evaluates the concepts of good vs bad and good vs evil.[22] Not to recount his view of ethics and morality,[23] in short, he proposes to view the formation of evil via ressentiment vs the formation of good and bad with respect to the usefulness of a particular phenomenon (implicating contextual relationality).

Most importantly, Nietzsche associates the notions of evil and bad conscience with the experience of punishment and shame and links the dichotomy of good vs bad with a historically changing pattern of human–human, human–non-human, and human–earth relations that allow recognizing the link between ethicality and lived ontologies. Nietzschean genealogy also contributes to the *recognition of the dangers of negative framing*. Namely, Nietzsche demonstrates the danger of building ethics *via negation*. When what is *good* is defined via *not evil*, goodness lacks any flexibility – rather than becoming better, one can only strive to become *less evil*. Depending on where the normative lines are drawn, the list of evil deeds that should be avoided promises to be endless, creating a negative mindset in an unlimited number of situations. Put shortly – if there are unlimited ways to be evil and only a fraction of a chance to *not* be evil (think of the context of the negative framing of the climate crisis), and even then, there is only a fraction of a chance that I will be *good* – what motivation do I have to go on?

17 Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*, 4.
18 Ibid., 55.
19 Deleuze, *Spinoza*.
20 Spinoza, *Ethics*.
21 Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.
22 By fleshing out the genealogical character of the transformations of the notions, Nietzsche goes further than Spinoza, allowing the conceptualization of a co-constitution of moralities and ethicality and a co-transformative constitution of "evil" and 'bad' as well as "good" and "good" within these distinctions. Rather than simply hierarchizing "joy" (as a notion attributable to an affectual ethicality) or "happiness" (as a moral goal or concept), one can already see by Nietzsche a way toward the entanglement and co-constitution of both notions.
23 Nietzsche's view, literally interpreted, is evidently problematic. First, it is not a historical account and the genealogy that Nietzsche builds is largely a subversive strategy (on Nietzsche's subversive genealogy see Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique*, 59–60) Second, content-wise, ascribing the formation of judgment and, thus, also normativity only to the discriminated groups of society is questionable, as well as the somewhat utilitarian dichotomy of good vs bad that for Nietzsche is rather phenomenological than ontological and refers strictly to the social field, in contrast to Spinoza who embeds the dichotomy in a broader materialist framework beyond a human-centered notion of utility.

In Chapter 2 of her book, with the illuminative title "Feeding McWorld, Eating Ideologies,"[24] Probyn problematizes the construction of food ethics via negation, namely, negative framing of food ethics and food philosophies, and asks the question:

> why it is that multinationals can mobilise the affect of caring, while serious forms of eating philosophies are still content to tell us how we should be eating and why, and even with whom we can or cannot eat?[25]

Thus, instead of contrasting any kind of normative ethics to the corporate/capitalist production type, Probyn highlights an unexpected angle of the affectual background that demonstrates contrasting affectual messages of caring versus judgmental exclusion.

In a broad context, Probyn's question resonates with today's environmental humanities and material ecocriticism. Drawing on Probyn's work, Tom Hertweck[26] continues her research in the light of affective and material ecocriticism regarding the problem of negative framing of food that, among others, can result in what is commonly known as *climate grief*,[27] and conceptualizes the co-constitution of materialities via moralities in the concept of "embodied ideologies." With this term, Hertweck manages to link the realms of affectivity, materialization, and ideology, stating that:

> food's production of affect as an embodied ideology emerges from a two-part process. First, it understands food as different from its usual presentation as a material form of sustenance or a symbolic repository and instead as a merger of both notions that is ultimately mediated by food's discursive reality in the marketplace. Second, it understands that the process of food consumption – in both market and bodily terms – is an act that proceeds from physiological hunger (as a baseline) that responds to the webs of affective discourses used to compel the subject to eat.[28]

What is mainly illuminated by this passage is the synthesis of material and symbolic realms, and the accentuation of affectivity as a result of embodying an ideology. The resulting affect that exists within the perpetual process of material ideologizations is a key factor for framing further ideologies and lived experiences. When conceived within the realm of food, the process of materialization and affectivity of ideologies has both personal and societal consequences, from eating disorders to climate denial and beyond.

Today the negative framing of food takes on many complicated forms. Starting from a hierarchization of "most evil" (such as red meat) to "least evil" (such as local fruit), to different kinds of systematizations that value local vs foreign or organic vs synthetic food, the normative jungle is impossible to grasp in individual application. For the purposes of this article, however, I shall not delve into the analysis of the different value systems that permeate eating. Similar to Annemarie Mol, I am here "a student of Foucault, not Chomsky"[29] and seek to regard the ontogenealogical markers that see the constitution of the judgment system[30] rather than to decipher its particularities, however important that certainly is in the current state of the world. With that in mind, it is significant to note that the negative framing (of good vs evil) itself is embedded within a nature vs culture divide that demeans nourishing and eating in context with talking and thinking.[31] Thus, the resulting idea of "just eating" is an idea that encompasses oppositional meanings,

24 Ibid, 35–60.
25 Ibid, 60.
26 Hertweck, "A Hunger for Words."
27 Bladow and Ladino, "Toward an Affective Ecocriticism," 2.
28 Hertweck, "A Hunger for Words," 134.
29 See Mol, *Eating in Theory*, 10–2.
30 It should also be noted that the judgment system that has developed upon the embodied ideologies could easily be said to also contain its own inversion, namely, it is a capitalist dialectic that, while framing products via negation in the same move also adds to their value. Thus, meat, for example, is framed as bad, unhealthy, and environmentally problematic, while also a sign of wealth and abundance (namely, *indulging in sin*). Thus, the negative framing of food (i.e., a framing that rests upon the distinction of evil vs good) is a dialectical framing. To move beyond this dialectic, it is important to reevaluate normative systems by considering their dialectical foundations.
31 I.e., to the idea that "as cultured beings, we can refrain from…" that already terms ethics as an ultimately human and normative endeavor.

since within a nature/culture distinction "just" and "eating" are exposed as opposites, where one adheres to "sameness, civilization, and symmetry," while the other is associated with "difference, nature, and asymmetry of the eater and the eaten."[32] With that in mind, the current ethics of eating cannot but come down to the assimilation of one to the other, i.e., to the strive for sameness that sees justice *eating up* eating and comes down to the ultimate "good" being non-engagement, namely, not-eating at all to refrain from consuming the other.

To further understand the implications and consequences of the negative framing in food contexts, one can trace the genealogy of popular food ethics and guilt in the context of individually practiced food philosophies to the seminal phrase by Ludwig Feuerbach: "Man is what he eats."[33] Although, in Feuerbach's text, the phrase illuminates social injustices, reflected, for example, in the phrase: "Nothingness in the stomach – a very real, because perceptible, Nothingness,"[34] today the phrase is widely adopted in the popular culture and reflects the idea that a pure body reflects one's morality, which is further connected with the *reactive nihilist*[35] substitution of the soul with the body (ca. nineteenth century) without a reevaluation of the human goal of eternal life that is now reframed in secular contexts. The direct impact of food production to materiality facilitates moral mores of food consumption to be directly associated with environmental issues, and, thus, the phrase "you are what you eat" today, next to its symbolic representation of the food–health link[36] (that conceals the phrase's socioeconomic sense-making of food–money ontogenealogical formations) also represents a tie between environmental awareness, food consumption, and (moral and literal) bodily purity.

In short, from "if you eat bad (read: evil), you will be unhealthy" (and if you are poor, you will be unhealthy) the symbolical meaning has changed to "if you eat bad, you are bad." This genealogical consideration allows understanding the peculiar tie between the body/health and the environment that one is faced with in today's food market, where healthy and *green* have become almost synonymous, as if the forest cared and/or grew according to whether or not I am fit and energetic.

Thus, at least a twofold problem ensues:

1) first, via the food–body bond one is here reminded of the Nietzschean genealogy of evil and good, which already outlines the dangers of a negative definition of any given phenomenon. With food today, it seems nothing is "good for you," at least, if one wishes to maintain environmental awareness.

   Thus, moral normativity leads to repulsion, shame, and guilt, which rather than attracting heightening societal environmental awareness, leads to (a) societal polarization and the consequent politicization of the environment[37] and the moral superiority of some (often more affluent) groups, as well as (b) the association of choosing the right food with duty and citizenship[38] that, in turn, is

32 See Mol, *Eating in Theory*, 4–11.

33 "Der Mensch ist was er isst," Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, 5.

34 Grün, *Ludwig Feuerbach in Seinem Briefwechsel und Nachlass*, 86, cited by Cherno, "Feuerbach's Man is What He Eats," 401.

35 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 148–51.

36 For a brief extrapolation of the historical transformation of this phrase see: Landecker, "Being and Eating." For the explanation of the meaning of the phrase see Cherno, "Feuerbach's Man is What He Eats."

37 I agree with Neimanis et al., "Four Problems" that political awareness in environmental humanities is important, yet, in this context, I refer not to the need to take into account the political and cultural situatedness in discussing environmental issues, but rather to the issue of political polarization in associating certain types of morality with certain political groups that heighten the possibility that certain people will refrain from being environmentally aware as that is associated with a political stance that they are opposed to.

38 See Mol, "Good Taste," 269–70. Mol argues that the late capitalist association of pleasure and citizenship (via *fair trade* etc. initiatives) overcomes the usual dichotomy between consumerism and dutifulness as well as the dichotomy of body and mind, which is a notion I am strongly inclined to argue against, since the association of leisurely dutifulness rather indicates a capitalist appropriation of moralities and moral gratification and, thus, reveals the reconstitution of the usual dualism in a secular context. My argument is also in line with the overall argumentative arch of this article that is critical of the adoption of a particular moral "code of conduct" based on duty ethics, since "duty" already anticipates alienation and a radical otherness that assumes the need for in-affectual moral action. Rather than demanding such action, it is important to reevaluate the grounds for the intangibility of food, the other, or the environment, to facilitate the creation of such affectual ties that would render null the necessity of forced codified morality.

appropriated in capitalist markets via demarcation of certain foods for particular groups of eaters. Food is the ultimate moral framework and marks bodies accordingly. Since one is never "the one" doing everything right, and as such, is bound to fail in at least some instances, one is committing the sin of not being "good enough" and, hence, ultimately – is evil. In the words of Tom Hertweck:

> to be implicated in acts of "bad" eating risks marking the bad eater as a bad person. Not just energy transfers here, but also a morality – as the old aphorism goes, we are what we eat.[39]

Given the existing highlight of health and fitness discourses, this morality can also be traced to susceptibilities to eating disorders. Furthermore, due to the association of choosing and consuming the right food as duty (linking back to the translation of morality via codification of good vs evil), the previously mentioned polarization is strengthened by common anxiety about one's own "sinful" habits of consumption that prompt finding an outer evil, a person non-grata to blame as "even worse" than one's current position.

2) second, via the body–environment bond, the environment is negatively framed as inaccessible and "lost" to humanity ("we are the evil that killed nature"), multiplying apocalyptic framing that both diminishes awareness in action (as if all is already lost) and, again, strengthens political polarization.

In short, the association of body–environment–food today is marked by the affectual feeling of exile that is felt both as an exile from nature via sinful humanness and as a metaphorical exile via shame and guilt felt when not adhering to the standards of any number of moral mores cited by food philosophies. The third meaning of food-exile also marks the socioeconomic divide that traps the less affluent groups of the society in an inescapable situation of being "less than" not only financially, but also ethically.

2.1 In exile

The idea of exile, of course, can be traced back to the ultimate *exile from Eden* that characterizes the Western attitudes toward nature not only distinct from culture but also inaccessible via restriction and deprivation embedded in the human anthropological disposition.

The drama of uncertainty, which permeates human beings, is expressed by the myth of creation in the Old Testament. Is it not peculiar that God prohibits eating from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge? Is knowledge not the very thing that should be regarded as virtuous? Well… yes and no. A literal understanding of this myth (and there are those inclined to accept such an interpretation) would certainly be wrong assuming that wisdom and knowledge are automatically sinful. Here, I venture to discuss only one explanatory aspect of the myth of creation.

If viewed as an explanation for an existing condition, myths resemble science – a description, rather than a prescription of how things ought to be. Thus, the myth of creation depicts the uncertainty, the erroneous and complicated existence humanity must endure, presumably because of self-awareness that positions humankind "outside" of perceived materiality that they "are," highlighting the inbetweenness and indetermination that being caught between nature and culture prescribes. The picture it paints is astonishingly precise, even positioning inbetweenness as a historical event, which has plagued mankind with "god-like" knowledge – the cognitive revolution, perhaps? The explanatory character of a myth, however, does not prevent the myth from taking part in world-building – the explanation is both descriptive and prescriptive, in the sense of co-production of knowledge and experienced materialities and, thus, takes on also an affectual form in co-creating the affect of shame, sin, bad-conscience, etc.

One could also associate the exile from Eden with a similar approach to biology – the biogenetic law of Ernst Haeckel, often expressed in the famous formula "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"[40] – on a

39 Hertweck, "A Hunger for Words," 135.
40 Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel*, 36.

psychoanalytical level the story encapsulated in the myth is the story of every individual human being. In this sense, the "Eden" – the determinate and safe environment embodied by the mother's uterus/breast must be left to experience what it means to be human. This is associated with a great sense of doubt and anxiety, which does not leave the human being and functions as one of the driving forces for further development.

To comment on this ultimate affectual exile that is also reflected in ontological and symbolical categories and discourses in Western society, I turn to Erich Fromm's interpretation of the myth.[41]

Erich Fromm states:

> The curse with which God sends his children out into the world also is in keeping with this same male attitude. The son must work; he will no longer live like the infant at the mother's breast.[42]

It seems that this is the price man has to pay to attain what the snake calls: "You shall be as Gods" – creators and destroyers, yet humans have not gained the true transcendence of a God[43] and are caught in the clutches of mortality vs trans-naturality. The process of civilization that impacts human relations with food can, thus, be viewed as a manifestation of the inner conflict of humanity. Fromm writes:

> Adam is beset by the existential dichotomy of being within nature and yet transcending it by the fact of having self-awareness and choice; he can solve this dichotomy only by going forward. Adam has to experience himself as a stranger in the world, estranged from himself and nature, to be able to become one again with himself, with his fellow man, and with nature, on a higher level. He has to experience the split between himself as subject and the world as object as the condition for overcoming this very split.[44]

Fromm's interpretation of the myth of creation, thus, touches upon the "atopicality" of humanity that is also encapsulated in the symbolical structure of an exile from Eden. Humankind is always "displaced" – a part of nature, yet, transcending it, reflecting upon it, "knowing what it is" is a blessing and a curse. Transcending nature is forever incomplete – man has not eaten from the Tree of Life, and thus is forever caught in-between. This inbetweenness and the dichotomy of transcendence vs mortality has attracted the attention of many philosophers, especially in the sphere of philosophical anthropology.

The wisdom of the myth, as well as its interpretation by Fromm, is seemingly obvious and simple yet it leaves a lot of unanswered questions and is often misread. Most interpretations of the inbetweenness of man seem to adopt a view that the source of this inbetweenness coincides with its origin – i.e., that humanity is tainted with original sin (namely, erroneous) or conversely – superior to the non-human world, rather than, for example, bears an embodied ideology that perpetuates the experienced atopicality.

Thus, one is often inclined to think that the inbetweenness is expressed via the mind and experienced as a split between mind and body or human spirit and animal flesh. Consequently, one might assume that

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41 My choice is driven by the apparent paradoxicality of Fromm's ideas that seem to mirror many of the problems that humanist thinkers face when framing humanity in-between nature and culture and simultaneously striving to accentuate the significance of an enfleshed view of the human being (via the importance of empathy, emotion, etc.). Namely, his interpretation also includes philosophical anthropology that via a critical analysis can be interpreted as a clear depiction of the perceptual disposition of the human being. On the one hand, for Fromm, the human being is trapped in inbetweenness between nature and culture, and to overcome the divide, which is also exemplified in the myth of the exile, the human being has only one road ahead – to free oneself from nature completely by becoming "fully human." On the other hand, Fromm envisions this as a process that allows building a new relationship with nature and negates identifying "being fully human" with the notions of the rational mind, alienated from the flesh. This, therefore, puts Fromm in an interesting position as a theorizer that, although, self-proclaimed humanist, does not seem to fully accept a transhumanist worldview, yet fails to question the ontological embeddedness of the exile from Eden. In this sense, Fromm is very exemplary of humanist thinking, as well as reflects precisely on several key aspects of the exile from Eden. The combination of precise analysis and being on the border of realizing the paradoxicality of nature/culture distinction provides fruitful ground for Fromm's theorization from a posthumanist standpoint and delineates embodied ideologies as co-constitutive of the lived materiality.

42 Fromm, *Love, Sexuality and Matriarchy*, 56.

43 Fromm, *You Shall be Gods*, 22–4.

44 Ibid., 88.

the self-awareness adopted by man, expressed in our *I-consciousness*, is also the factual origin of culture, civilization, and everything associated with a "human" lifestyle, and thus humankind is literally "between" nature and culture.

In such a case, only two roads ahead presumably lie – either one tries to overcome the "sin" of knowledge by pacing a bioconservative path "back to God," or one tries to "transcend," investigating the freedom (presumably – from nature) that the exile from Eden provides. Knowledge, hence, both divides and subtracts, as well as provides new opportunities for investigating the freedom that it gives.

As a radical humanist, Erich Fromm accentuates the second version, tracing freedom and transcendence as the necessary solution for humanity. While his work does show affinity to enfleshed materialities,[45] the conceptual apparatus is rather problematic, as to how the human enlightenment and maturing might occur. He suggests rather a transhumanist solution that requests humans to completely abandon and sever the "umbilical cord" that leads to frustration of not being able to "return" to *nature, mother, natural state*. The frustration of inbetweenness, thus, would cease in favor of freedom from the bond itself. Hence, Fromm, for example, writes:

> Indeed, if we look at man's development in terms of historical time, we might say that man proper was born only a few minutes ago. Or we might even think that he is still in the process of birth, that the umbilical cord has not yet been severed, and that complications have arisen that make it appear doubtful whether man will ever be born or whether he is to be stillborn.[46]

This solution is, however, problematic and ultimately presumes a transhumanist thought paradigm. Interestingly, the *transgression* that marks the atopicality and the following exile of the human being within the myth of Eden is not an act of "word" (in contrast to the world being created by the word of God), but an act of indulgence – eating a fruit. This apparent paradox of humanity being exiled from nature via a seemingly natural activity informs the dialectics of nature versus culture as a double-edged sword. The dialectics of the transgression of the natural via the alienation of nature is also mirrored in the transgression of culture (the word of God) via the use of knowledge and thus seemingly leaves the human in an impossible double-bind that restricts humanity both from nature and true knowledge.

Namely, the act of eating is here exposed as an act of transgression that detaches the eater from the eaten, constituting its subjectivity with regard to the objective, while simultaneously also reaffirming the "animality" of the eater. How is it that we come to "know thyself" via eating while eating is also a humiliating act (and the first demeaning action)? Here, eating is demonized in as far as one knows of oneself eating, namely, with knowledge via difference from "the other" also comes the shame of assimilating the other via consumption,[47] and with knowledge (in a broader sense) – the shame of one's naturality. The dialectics therefore operate upon the grounds that what is most unnatural about the human is precisely their naturality (while what is most civilized – eating not only for sustenance – also the most ungodly – i.e., the original sin) and hence, the act of transgression is a natural indulgence, in as far as it is framed by knowledge, i.e., in as par as the act of eating is a known use of the natural.

If one translates Fromm's writing in the terminology of Julia Kristeva and regards the affectual experience of inbetweenness via the concept abject,[48] the severing of the umbilical cord might mean that the ultimate freedom from the original sin entails freedom from abject realized through completely severing the

45 Especially in the analysis of the proximity he sees as to psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism, where Fromm writes: "*When he thinks he grasps reality it is only his brain-self that grasps it, while he, the whole man, his eyes, his hands, his heart, his belly grasp nothing – in fact, he is not participating in the experience which he believes is his.*" (Fromm, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, 109). The humanist outlook also leads to an ambiguous view of technology, which he both criticizes and praises in different text spots, suggesting that his actual views are restricted by the conceptual apparatus.

46 Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 251.

47 Everyday food ethics today seems to operate similarly – as far as one *knows* where the food comes from, one is to be held responsible, and as far as one consumes unknowingly, one is yet immersed in innocence.

48 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

tie that humanity has with nature.[49] *Abject* – something or some event outside of the subject–object dichotomy that is constituted as a not-subject and by this constitution enables tracing the boundaries of what is thought as a subject. Thus, feces, sweat, or even one's mother can acquire the state of abjection, since these phenomena force the self to realize the fragility of the boundaries of the self. As the not-subject, the abject defines the relations of objectivity and subjectivity allowing the world to be ordered within the dichotomy of a self, confronted by an alienated and objectified not-self. It is the third element that needs to be repetitively pushed out of the self, to reorganize and reaffirm the autonomy and self-containment of a self, or else, the evident entanglement with the processes of the world threaten to denigrate the fragility of selfhood.

Food traces the vector of enfleshment very directly, as well as serves as striking evidence for the processual character of the body, and ultimately also our selfhoods. Since food, its ingestion, and digestion transgress the habitual limits of the self so forcefully, it also holds the potential of being experienced and functioning as abject, which results in pushing food out of the sphere of the mind and subjectivity to avoid experiencing the fragility of the borders of the self and maintain the subject's integrity. The abjection of food has many consequences, one of which might also be the tradition of excluding food from philosophical discussion (except for ethical regard). Annemarie Mol, one of the rare philosophers reflecting on food, associates this lack of interest with the mind-centeredness of the philosophical tradition in the West: "That people get physically mixed up with apples is bad enough as it is. But thinking and eating should be kept apart."[50] Food, hence, might be the most often experienced existential limit-situation that is constantly leaped across to sustain the continuous subjective experience of a seemingly whole selfhood. Thus, food also serves as a reminder that the inbetweenness of humankind is only perceptual, instead of ontological – we are entangled with the world, yet choose to rather ignore it, for the sake of maintaining a stable subjectivity. The perceptual inbetweenness is directly related to what could be termed as "affectual abjectivity" – a felt sense of food as abject – foreign yet not fully object, since it is a permanent reminder of the entanglement that threatens the boundaries of the self.

In the case of embodied food ideologies, the overcoming of the world could then mean, for example, the overcoming of a need to eat at all, thus, freeing oneself from the "sin" and "bad conscience" of eating the world, since food, experienced as abject, reminds of human entanglement with the world – the enfleshment and "animality."

The negative framing of environmental issues often employs the affects connected with the feeling of disgrace, shame, and disgust of the enfleshed reality of needing nutrition from the earth to survive. For example, in Latvia, a vegan initiative takes place every year, with the motto "Don't eat the world," challenging everyone to abstain from animal foods for 30 days. While the challenge itself seems fun and creative (in the form of sending the participants exciting recipes for vegan foods), the slogan sends the message that instigates bad conscience and a disconnect from the environment – I am the outsider, the predator who stalks the world for my own satisfaction, basically a "foreign body" that does not fit into the rest of the non-human *Umwelt*.

Thus, by freeing from the need to eat one would presumably overcome the affectual abjection of being part of the world and simultaneously looking in from the outside, becoming a completely detached and independent outsider, i.e., becoming God, as the reactive nihilism paradigm suggests as an ideal.[51] Here, the association of abjectivity and perceptual inbetweenness with the imagined factual inbetweenness works both ways similarly, as the perception is sought to represent factuality, factuality is thought to be

49 This stance is also exemplified by Erich Fromm when he writes: "Man has to yield to God's superior force, but he does not express regret or repentance. Having been expelled from the Garden of Eden, he begins his independent life; his first act of disobedience is the beginning of human history because it is the beginning of human freedom. It is not possible to understand the further evolution of the concept of God unless one understands the contradiction inherent in the early concept. Although he is the supreme ruler, God has created a creature which is his own potential challenger; from the very beginning of his existence, man is the rebel and carries potential Godhood within himself." (Fromm, *You Shall be Gods*, 23–4).

50 Mol, "I Eat an Apple," 33.

51 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 148–51, for more exploration see author's article Sauka, "A Lack of Meaning?"

overcome by overcoming perception. Namely, while inbetweenness is accepted as an ontological disposition, the natural result of which is the affectual abjection, a teleological solution is imagined to be possible in the future, when humankind would sever its ties with nature, thus, freeing nature from the burden of humanity, while also freeing the human being from the affectual abjectivity. A transhuman desire for freedom from "flesh" (and thus, also animal and vegetal flesh as food) ensues. Thus, losing the affectual abjection (via freedom from body–environment entanglement) would presumably force an ontological change. The affectual abjectivity is, thus, employed in evoking environmental awareness that in this abject-mediated form often leads also to apathy or climate denialism, or, alternatively, to climate grief, shame, etc., by facilitating the feelings of guilt. Simultaneously, corporations and the global food production industry also exploit the affectual abjectivity, by packaging and designing food in ways that conceal its visceral and fleshly origins, creating a misleading landscape of objectified, "pure" foodstuffs that escape the affect of abjection. Both processes, although following opposite moral codes, facilitate the alienation of body–environment association further, each inviting a form of the transhuman overcoming of the enfleshed entanglement. The ideals of each, however, depend on the ontological inbetweenness, where the human is either a dangerous predator (and, hence, the Anthropocene), responsible for all the ailments of the world or, alternatively, a super-human genius, who, in turn, will better the world in his image, but either way – radically exiled from the natural order.

It is often said that there is no nature and no wilderness anymore, for example. On either side of the argument, some view this "fact" critically as a major loss and others see it as a human victory over the natural order. Each of us may be on each of the sides in particular situations – getting the news of a new cure for cancer one might feel victory over a natural illness, while hearing about the cutting down of a rainforest puts one in an opposite position. Yet, one can only accept that there is no nature, if the touch of a human is imagined to be as an impurity contaminating anything it touches, or as the touch of a God – creating new supernatural worlds. Either way, it is a touch from the "outside," a foreign invasion to an otherwise self-contained world. If viewed in a nature–culture continuum, it is, however, clear that the human is neither a devil, nor a god, and a change facilitated by human habitats is a naturecultured[52] part of bio(il)logical processes. If I am not a foreign body to the rest of the world, is it not the intangibility of the environmental entanglement that suggests that solutions must always be sought in exiling oneself from enfleshment?

Although I started the article by stating that ontologies *do* affect materialities to a certain extent, they can only do so by constructing and creating and not by reconfiguring something that is already in place. Thus, one can imagine the ontological nature/culture divide to be responsible for the way our cities today are built, furthering the ontological premise, yet one cannot presume that such a divide would also institute this divide in any universalistic way, since the development of the human body, for example, is a co-constitution of both the ontologies we live by and the genealogies that come before us.

Thus, the freeing from abject, although somewhat possible, as a try to "escape" human entanglement with the world,[53] is also based on an unjustifiable premise that humans were, in fact, exiled from Eden in the first place and can only choose from either losing their independent will and freedom to create or overcoming world-entanglement entirely.

If, however, a nature–culture continuum of senseful materiality is considered, the exile from Eden proves to be a perceptual divide, since culture is beyond humanity and does not depend upon freedom from material embeddedness.

2.2 Eden unlocked?

The previously discussed state of the exile, thus, suggests that when considered as an ontological nature/culture divide, the exile from Eden symbolizes "nature" as forbidden to humanity, thus, inviting the completion of overcoming human material embeddedness in a linear trajectory of transcendence.

52 Haraway, "The Companion Species Manifesto."

53 The antibacterial and antibiotic discourse, for example, represents one such attempt that has led to new lived materialities.

However, today ecocritical and posthumanist scholarly attempts have re-envisioned the myth of Eden based on a nature–culture continuum,[54] where consciousness is the result, instead of the origin of culture, and as such, the alienation of nature is rather a genealogical occurring, captured by the myth, than an inevitable part of being human. The reinterpretation enables considering that the human mind or self-awareness is not what is poisoned by the Tree of Knowledge – it is rather the flesh itself. The myth of exile might provide a key here – an apple is a food, and as such, it poisons the flesh, not the mind alone. The poisoning of the flesh is also expressed by the displacement. Displacement (exile of Eden) does not make humankind more cultural or more spiritual, but rather, robs nature of its spirit – we see humans in exile from Eden, viewing land as a mere object, a cause of pain and suffering. And indeed, Adam and Eve feel dire carnal consequences. They can be understood both metaphorically (*they must die* might just mean that now they are *aware* of dying, yet that does not mean that awareness of thyself is the only source of cultural life) and literally – as by stripping nature of spirit (namely, attributing sense only to knowledge and thought), the world is stripped of its liveliness and left barren. Considering the exile as an *inner* exile through which humankind robs the nature of its spirit demonstrates more clearly the perceptual nature of the experienced inbetweenness.

> Man suffers from this loss of oneness. He is alone and separated from his fellow man, and from nature. His most passionate striving is to return to the world of union which was his home before he "disobeyed." His desire is to give up reason, self-awareness, choice, responsibility, and to return to the womb, to Mother Earth, to the darkness where the light of conscience and knowledge does not yet shine. He wants to escape from his newly gained freedom and to lose the very awareness which makes him human.[55]

The quote clearly depicts the ontological interpretation of the exile of Eden that also anticipates an essentialist view of nature as the "Mother Earth," as well as highlights the two reductionist possibilities that humankind face when captured by the imaginary of the exile, to either return to "nature" by giving up reason or imagining that "what makes one human" is the exact opposite of "nature." This is a double bind, however, reflected on the one hand by a self-negation (or *passive nihilism*[56]) or an affirmation of a superhuman future (*reactive nihilism*).

What suffers is the flesh, robbed of its spirit via the alienation of the mind. This self-alienation isolates and creates a "split" in the self, a "split" that is nevertheless the unique quality that humankind experiences *as* "the self." It is, thus, the path of confusion, doubt, and indetermination, and simultaneously also probably the only possible way to be human. The flesh is poisoned with the ontology of dualism and, thus, indeed freed to create civilizations, yet, not stripped from the world in any ontological sense. Again, referring back to the exile from Eden, the mindset of exile is what enlivens the disposition of exile, creating embodied ideologies of "forbidden fruit." Here it is possible to move beyond the dialectics and the symbol of the forbidden fruit is inverted – it is not the presence of *abject* that constitutes the sin (restricting those who *know too much* from that which is *naturally given*), it is rather the idea of the sin, i.e., the idea of transgression via indulgence that has poisoned the land and made it barren.

The idea of trespassing Eden then might be associated with a critical posthumanist stance of creating understandings that trespass the idea of the exile itself. In the words of Donna Haraway:

> Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.[57]

Rather than overcoming abject, one should rather be inclined to experience and reflect upon the abjective, thus, also reevaluating the negative felt affects, such as shame, disgust, and bad conscience,[58] creating

54 See Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 11; Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 9.
55 Fromm, *You Shall be Gods*, 87.
56 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 148–51.
57 Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble*, 1.
58 Purvis, "Confronting the Power of Abjection."

understandings of tangibility and entanglement, to provide opportunities to reengage with Eden beyond exile. Freedom that humanity has sought to be possible only through exile might lie beyond humanity within the naturecultured materiality that is life, possible rather with the non-human entanglement than only as an individualizing force of conscious action that is oftentimes a self-deception. The individual ethics of food are, thus, only imaginable via affirmative ethicality of processuality, caring, and interdependence, outside of embodied normative moral mores. That, of course, does not exclude negative affects, as the argument in favor of embracing abjection rather than overcoming it suggests the usefulness and necessity for negative affective relations of disgust and shame, as exemplified also by affect theory.[59] Here, however, it is important to highlight the processual entanglement of *becoming* that prevents from accepting a fixed state of moral reality and evidences the ethicality as a relational and transforming part of becoming human that rather resembles the art of living than an established form of conduct and invites self-reflection and joyful openness to the world. Probyn accentuates this issue, saying that multinationals such as McDonald's are more aware of people's needs for positive food affects that proliferate the affect of caring and solidarity, and successfully markets their products with this need in mind,[60] while food philosophies often disregard this problem, thus, proliferating negative associations.

The problem, however, is to align affirmative food affects that allow the bite into the forbidden fruit with the care for the environment,[61] since the affect of exile also cooperates in building materialities. Namely, as the global climate crisis demonstrates, the affectual intangibility of the environment has resulted in materially experienced alienation that has produced many problematic issues regarding food ideologies, food production, and marketing strategies. How to combine caring for the world with a post-humanist allowance to experiment and trespass the Eden that we already own?

One such attempt of theorizing a solution is offered by Tom Hertweck in terms of affect theory, where he writes on embodied food ideologies and states that:

> The point is not to blame someone who loves, say, strawberries – arguably the most resource intensive, pesticide laden, and migrant-labor exploitative mainstream agricultural commodity – for their bad environmentalism and social injustice. Environmental thought has for too long wasted unnecessary energy chastising behaviors that feel right. Instead, affective environmental politics could include the habit of acknowledging the Pandoran desire made possible by global markets – say, the relatively recent development of having strawberries in grocery stores all year – and casting a valued counter-narrative that thinks through the consumer's desire and the discourses that produce it.[62]

Food, "takes something external to the subject and literally transforms it through the mechanism of digestion into a part of the body and powers the subject's life and thinking. In short it brings the world inside and makes it a part of us."[63] Hence, as humans, we are all innocent in our need for the forbidden fruit that we reach for in hunger for life and knowledge, trespassing the Eden we were never exiled from, yet the thought-forms provoking negative affects of exile, bad conscience, and disgust toward ourselves turn also outward and threaten to destroy our lived materialities via the wish to transcend the felt abjection. To bring it back to the discussion of ethics and morals, one could say that rather than witnessing the birth of an essentialist human form, the myth of Eden sees the birth of essentialism itself, thus, depicting another genealogical factor that plays into the development of morals as an imperative that creates a world of pervasive sinfulness. Tainted by the original sin, humankind is doomed to feel the distraught of abject, when consuming fleshly vegetal, fungi, or animal life, and, thus, prone to transform, upend, and reconfigure the seemingly rigid "laws of nature" it faces, to conceal the abject and facilitate transcendence and freedom from the strains of enfleshment.

59 See Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*.
60 Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*, 60.
61 In some ways one can only hope that caring attention to one's affectual responses and interconnectivity with the world might gradually instigate a change in the ontological perception of the world, initiating systemic changes.
62 Hertweck, "A Hunger for Words," 149.
63 Ibid, 134.

Eating *forbidden* strawberries is probably no more a sin than inhaling polluted air – one tries to avoid it if one can but does not feel shame or regret if that is not possible. Building fortresses of plastic and advertisements against the abject, we act, indeed as the biblical Adam and Eve hiding their nakedness from the world, for it is not the nakedness of processual entanglement that one should fear, but the fear itself that threatens to destroy us.

How can, then, food become *mine/ours* again? – Only by recognition of never having lost it in the first place.

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