Two versions of ecosophy:
Arne Næss, Félix Guattari, and their connection with semiotics

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Abstract. This paper adopts a comparative approach in order to appreciate the distinct contributions of Arne Næss and Félix Guattari to ecosophy and their respective connections to semiotics. The foundational holistic worldview and dynamics ecosophy propounds show numerous connections with semiotics. The primary objective of this paper is to question the nature and value of these connections. Historically, the development of ecosophy was always faced with modelling and communication issues, which constitute an obvious common ground shared with semiotics. As a means to an end, ecosophy settled to develop a thoughtful axiology based on ecological wisdom and promote it bottom-up. Political activism notwithstanding, semiotics also deals with value: sign value and meaning. In this respect, semiotics is inherently axiological, but most often this dimension is effaced or muted. Emphasizing the axiological dimension of semiotics helps understand how dominant significations, habits, and values are established, and enlighten the crucial part it could play in the humanities and beyond by partly coalescing with ecosophy. As the complementarity of both traditions is appreciated, the plausibility of a merger is assessed. Arguably, ecosophy is axiomatized semiotics. From this novel perspective, one can see human communities as dynamically partaking in signifying processes, in a space that is at once an ecosphere, a semiosphere, and a vast political territory. As there is growing evidence that environmental degradation lessens our quality of life and the sustainability of our communities, ecosophy might help reform values and practices.

Keywords: ecosophy; Deep Ecology; semiotics; axiology; community organizing; ethics

Two versions of ecosophy: A comparative approach

Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss is the founding father of 'ecosophy', or Deep Ecology. He first shared his thoughts on the subject at the 3rd World Future Research Conference in Bucharest, early September 1972. Shortly after, in 1973, his pioneering paper *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary* was published in Oslo (reprint: Næss 2008). The year 1974 saw the first edition of *Økologi, samfunn og livsstil: utkast til en økosofi*, the Norwegian palimpsest of what was to become *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* (1989), his major contribution on ecosophy that helped raise environmental awareness worldwide. Næss also published a number of articles on the matter in influential journals in between (Næss 1984, 1986, 1988).

Ecosophy is a paradigm for ecological reasoning anchored in a genuine philosophical framework directed toward practical action, both through political engagement and everyday action (the two combined constituting a lifestyle). In a certain sense, Næss's works revived a thought brought to life by Vernadsky some fifty years earlier in *The Biosphere*: "The direction in which the processes of evolution must proceed, namely towards increasing consciousness and thought, and forms having greater and greater influence on their surroundings" (quoted in Crutzen 2002: 23). However, the greater influence over our surroundings Næss advocates for is one that, as a result, implies a lesser impact on the environment and a greater sustainability of human communities among nature. Between 1985 and 1992, French semiotician and psychiatrist Félix Guattari also developed the concept of ecosophy (Guattari 2013). In his view, ecosophy was to become an empowering framework in opposition to the capitalist lifestyle, an integrated paradigm taking into account the three ecologies Gregory Bateson had already identified – environmental, social and mental ecologies (Bateson 2000[1972]). Both Næss's *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* and Guattari's original French version of *The Three Ecologies* were published in 1989. Now, more than 25 years later, the ecosophical project is still largely relevant, yet often misinterpreted, if known at all.

The word 'ecosophy' combines the Greek '*oikos*' and '*sophia*': 'household' and 'wisdom'. As with 'ecology', the meaning of 'eco-' (*oikos*) refers to something larger than a mere household understood in a domestic sense. From the ecosophical perspective, our *oikos* is the Earth taken as a whole, as we inhabit it. Thus, an ecosophy is *a philosophical worldview or a system inspired by our living conditions in the ecosphere.* Both Næss and Guattari suggest that an ecosophy is more than a mere abstract system of thought. Indeed, it calls for a radical change in views and beliefs, challenging long established anthropocentric models ruling over the nature/culture dichotomy, the notion of dominance and property over other species, and ultimate premises of life (Gare 2014). Yet if a shift in models is to occur, it is to be understood as a mere

corollary; it is the ecosophers' lifestyle and actions, expressing and promoting the Deep Ecology principles, which shall be deemed responsible for the change happening. Ecosophy promotes self-discipline, determination, and community organization. In Næss's exemplar case, this lifestyle corroborates a fully-fledged asceticism reminiscent of Spinoza (for whom God was equated with the natural world, or nature).

The primary objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between ecosophy and semiotics. I approach ecosophy and semiotics pragmatically, focusing ultimately on praxis and experience, in order to recognize the ways in which living beings are affected by signs, and how environments (or nature) are altogether perfused with signs – a prerequisite to any semiotic worldview (see CP 5.448). Such recognition would highlight the ability we have to change these signs-affections, and the limits of this specific capacity.

In what follows, I shall first ascertain the shared premises of ecology and semiotics in their cenoscopic forms. I will then contextualize the emergence of ecosophy and address the issue of value, as this notion is transverse to ecosophy, axiology and semiotics. In exposing Næss's and Guattari's variants of ecosophy, emphasis will be put on main differences and possible points of convergence between them, especially those compatible with general semiotics. Discussing the purpose and ambitions of ecosophy, an appreciation of the role semiotics could play in this respect will be made. In return, the potential impact of ecosophy on semiotics, and more generally in the humanities, is to be gauged. Ecosophy, I shall argue, is axiomatized semiotics – its main activity is to ever precise (interpret) propositions (or signs) in respect of a basic set of axioms. This paper goes beyond a mere presentation of the two predominant figures in ecosophy; several novel ideas are advanced. Rarely has ecosophy been approached from a semiotic perspective. Scarce exceptions exist (Tønnessen 2003; Lauer 2005; Kull 2011), but fail to develop suitable comparative analysis, neither between Næss and Guattari nor between ecosophy and semiotics. Arguably the most comprehensive contribution in this perspective to date, this paper is written in the hope of starting a thread on a subject in dire need of attention.

Basic premises shared by semiotics and ecology

Semiotics is generally not regarded as a discipline in itself, but rather as an approach or a method. It has for long been, and remains in many ways, an intellectual tradition, starting from Aristotle and Augustine, and is often referred to, following the seminal works of Charles S. Peirce, as "the doctrine of signs". Thanks to Thomas A. Sebeok in particular, a paradigm shift occurred at the turn of the 21st century, one that helped bring semiotics to the forefront. As Brooke Williams Deely (2011:

371) explains: "Thomas A. Sebeok moved beyond the boundaries of pre-existing philosophical paradigms towards what semiotics has become as a new paradigm for all the disciplines". This shift was made possible by emphasizing an important epistemological distinction based on Peirce and neatly analysed by John Deely (2009), between *cenoscopic* and *ideoscopic* sciences. Semiotics, Peirce argues, is primarily of the former kind: its purpose is that of "cenoscopic studies (i.e., those studies which do not depend upon new special observations)" (CP 8.342). Furthermore, in Peirce's view, the cenoscopic studies of all signs (i.e., of all signs' action observed through their dynamic relations, or *semiosis*) "remain one undivided science" (CP 8.342). In accordance with both Peirce and Sebeok, semiotics can be characterized as a metatheoretical science. While it does not produce new scientific data, it can suggest new ways of organizing the data made available by special sciences (or ideoscopic sciences) and, in doing so, it can help connecting specific knowledge through a unifying systemic model. The results obtained by cenoscopic methods may in turn have repercussions on ideoscopic sciences – a change in modelling leading to a change in practices.

Now, ecology features many of the aforementioned characteristics defining cenoscopic sciences. When Ernst Haeckel heralded it as a new science in 1866, its aim was to study the relations of organisms with their habitat (see Haeckel 1866). In 1877, Karl Möbius coined the term *biocoenosis* (from "*bios*", life, and '*koinoein*', to share something, to have something in common) in order to grasp the scope of biotic communities and elicit them as units of interest for research (see Möbius 1877). In 1935, Arthur G. Tansley defined the concept of ecosystem, which is central to all ecological studies nowadays. Ecosystemic modelling is at the root of an important shift in views by which the most important notion for ecology has become the totality of a system and not simply a single object (or organism) anymore. In Tansley's (1935: 299) words:

> […] the more fundamental conception is, as it seems to me, the whole system (in the sense of physics), including not only the organism-complex, but also the whole complex of physical factors forming what we call the environment of the biome – the habitat factors in the widest sense. Though the organisms may claim our primary interest, when we are trying to think fundamentally we cannot separate them from their special environment, with which they form one physical system.

An ecosystem denotes a continuous and irreducible assemblage comprising a biotic community and its environment. Biology traditionally conceives of the environment, or more specifically the biotope, as nonliving. An ecosystem is thus the reunion, in a single analytic unit, of a biocoenosis (a community of living beings: flora, fauna, fungus) and a biotope (a nonliving habitat: geology, hydrography, topography, climate conditions, etc.). The value and correctness of this shift in conception – from the study of individuals to the study of ecological wholes – has long been debated and continues to nourish many discussions in environmental ethics (see McShane 2014),

but it irrefutably allowed for a whole domain of knowledge to bloom along the line of this new, holist and relational paradigm. Tansley himself was well aware of the implicit hindrances of this conception, mainly that of causation, asking: is the community the cause of its own activities? The very same question arises when dealing with *semiosis*, or the action of signs engendering other signs. Tansley's take on this conundrum may help us focus on what is at stake:

> In a certain sense […], the community as a whole may be said to be the "cause" of its own activities, because it represents the aggregation of components the sum (or more properly the synthesis) of whose actions we call the activities of the community – actions which would not be what they are unless the components were associated in the way in which they are associated. […] But it is important to remember that these activities of the community are *in analysis* nothing but the synthesized actions of the components in association. We have simply shifted our point of view and are contemplating a new entity, so that we now, quite properly, regard the totality of actions as the activity of a higher unit. (Tansley 1935: 299)

It should be understood, hereafter, that ecology and semiotics share this structural propensity to study units of a higher degree – systems of signs –, which does not preclude an interest in objects themselves, but conceives of the object as shaped by its relations within a given environment. Also, it must be said that ecology is discussed here strictly in its cenoscopic form, i.e., ecology as the science of correction and modelling in accordance with an organizational paradigm entailing a set of axioms, the influence of which pervades through all special or ideoscopic sciences, including ideoscopic ecology itself.

Now, if objects are shaped by their relations within a given environment, what, then, is a relation? Most reductionist ontologies exclude any entity other than individuals, as the Ockham razor suggests is best. To an Ockhamist, a relation is nothing but a similar trait or feature shared by two or more individuals according to a comparison made by an observer, i.e., a comparison established in someone's mind. Peircean semiotics refuses this reductionist view and elevates signs as a fully recognized category of being, which can be mind-dependent or mind-independent (depending on the type of sign considered). The ontological status of a sign is that of a relation. In Deely's (2009: 177) view, due to this crucial disparity between ontologies, the modernist (Ockhamist) conception of relationship is irreconcilable with that of Peirce's and semiotics in general:

> A causal relation, for example, in modern thought, is considered as the interaction of two or more things. But such interaction is not a relation; a relation is what results from and survives as *over and above* the interaction. A relation is invisible to sense, even though it unites the sensed; and it is indifferent to spatial distance, unlike the interaction which gave rise to it.

> All of this, then, enters into our semiotic notion of sign. A sign as provenating a triadic relation is not an object, or at least need not be. On the contrary, the action of signs – semiosis – is what every object presupposes.

Objects presuppose semiosis just as organisms presuppose an environment to occur; it is an absolute *sine qua non* condition. An individual cannot be properly accounted for if it is taken as an autonomous unit, i.e., separated from its surroundings. This idea has long been rejected, but results obtained in epigenetics tend to invalidate all claims of falseness regarding this axiom (McShane 2014). Again, Deely (2011: 131) makes it clear as to how an organism pertains to its environment:

> The organism is itself a physical part of the physical surroundings. It acts on the things around it, and the things around it act upon it. Those of these interactions which fall within the range of the sense powers become the sensible Umwelt, or world objectively sensed by and for that organism. But if the Innenwelt upon which the Umwelt as such depends were not *already* engaged in semiosis, there would be no Umwelt – only a physical environment not just independent of mind but unknown by any finite mind at all!

The important notion to acknowledge here is the profound intertwinement of organisms with their supporting milieu, and the fact that the milieu would not exist as such (i.e., as apprehended *objectively* by a given cognitive organism) if it were not for the interpretative capacity all living organisms manifest when facing afforded signs (on the notion of umwelt, see Uexküll 1928; Kull 2001a; Deely 2004). The environment is not merely sensed, but perceived (as objects are formed): there need be perceptual judgements by organisms in order for them to avoid danger and favour reproduction. Natural selection and adaptation is thus fully intelligible within the biosemiotics framework (Hoffmeyer 2008, 2014). But how can this be linked to any social consideration – undeniably, an inevitable issue in environmental ethics? In line with Deely (2011: 133), one must concede that "objects as organized within an Umwelt function as signs of another and of what is desirable and undesirable and safely ignored within that objective world. We may call this transformation of objects into signs their *social function*". Susan Petrilli (1993: 246) uses the term 'ethosemiotics' (based on Morris 1964) to grasp "that kind of inquiry into signs which is not purely descriptive, which does not expect to be neutral", describing it as "[a]n approach that reaches beyond the logico-cognitive aspect of the semiotic process in its responsiveness to problem of the axiological order, to problems of evaluation, of ethics and aesthetics". Thus she encourages the development of a

> […] broader view of semiotics, where the study of *significance* designates the *disposition towards evaluation*, the *value* that we confer upon something, the *condition of being significant*, the very *relevance and value of meaning* determined by man's involvement at both the affective and pragmatic levels. (Petrilli 1993: 247)

Stanisław Pietraszko formulates a similar project when he observes (Pietraszko 1997: 1023–4; my translation, S. L.) that "emotions and affections are psychical correlates of value, and, most of the time, evaluation is expressed through them. At the same time, psychology suggests that values are predominant organizing factors at play in cognitive processes". Drawing on Whitehead 1938, he adds that "evaluation is inseparable from experience, which is always evaluative experience"; and so concludes: "All man's world is clearly axiocentred" (Pietraszko 1997: 1024). Broadening the scope of analysis from humans to life as a whole, Kull (2001b: 355) believes that "the origin of value can be seen as a problem of theoretical biology and biosemiotics", because "it deals with sign processes in living nature". But what does not? Naturalizing ethics must be practised with the greatest of care, and be maintained only insofar as it allows for a better understanding of the mechanisms axiological activity displays. Nevertheless, it seems right to say that values can only be studied properly as taking place within natural order, i.e., from a species-specific point of view. This means human dominance among other creatures and over elements ought to be taken into account.

It is a fact that perceptual judgments are value judgments, and any judgment is inherently ecological in the sense that it arises in an experiential mind, i.e., from a definite umwelt. While the ability we have to interpret signs in the most sophisticated ways is certainly an outcome of evolution with respect to survival and fitness, interpretation nevertheless implies by necessity the ascription of a definite value to every cognized proposition, or else the usually seamless process of object-formation would fail irremediably. Peirce (CP 5.267) stresses the fact that "there is no absolutely first cognition of any object, but cognition arises by a continuous process", namely, *semiosis*. This presupposes that value ascription cannot be reduced to the arbitrariness of one's judgment.[1] Biological, environmental and cultural factors are at play and must be taken into account. Semiotics, ecology and axiology are thus closely interrelated, and it is precisely this interrelatedness that ecosophy pushes forward.

As established heretofore, cenoscopic ecology and semiotics share basic premises, and one can imagine ecosophy would in turn show a good deal of common traits with semiotics, and presumably even more so with ecosemiotics (Nöth 1998, 2001; Kull 1998; Maran, Kull 2014) and semioethics (Petrilli 2014; Deely 2008). This is true, indeed. However, here is not the place to argue about it. My aim is not to compare ecosophy to these subfields of semiotics, but to reveal the analogical relationship

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1   Nor can it be reduced to some transcendental godlike Sign, no matter how unfathomable. According to Peirce's notion of semiosis (or continuity), there is neither any original sign nor final sign. Consequently, we are forever (relatively) lost in the semiosic stream (Merrell 1996: 27–8). Hence this very understandable anthropological tendency, shared by all human cultures, to deify such an absolute referential Sign and make it rule over values and behaviours (prescribed and proscribed) among mortals.

that connects ecosophy and semiotics in general. As we shall see, both are inherently ecologically designed. While semiotics is generally perceived as focusing on modelling (see Anderson, Merrell 1991; Sebeok, Danesi 2000; Kull 2010), ecosophy is primarily conceived of as inclined towards ethics and practical action – '*sophia*', or wisdom, suggesting a virtuous behaviour (i.e., in conformity with a definite ethic). My objective is to invert this perception by stressing the practical side of semiotics and the modelling side of ecosophy in order to corroborate their complementarity.

According to John Tinnell (2011: 38), "we might think of ecosophy as performing a metamodeling with respect to environmental models such as the ecosystem". I will not argue against this point. However, what I wish to highlight in this paper is: (1) how *sign systems models and dynamics* (developed by semiotics) shape ecosophical praxis, and why, therefore, sign systems are as important to ecosophy as are ecosystem models developed by ideoscopic ecology; (2) the relevance of the proposed emphasis put both on praxis formation and the semiotic dimension of ecosophy in analysing the ways in which ecosophy and semiotics can be coordinated while not sublimating their respective designs and purposes; (3) the characteristic ethics this semio-ecosophical worldview purports, and the working definition of ecosophical praxis it entails; and (4) logical implications of this worldview and entangled axiology for research axiomatization in the humanities and beyond.

Contextualizing the emergence of ecosophy

Næss was a keen mountaineer. He led the first expedition to conquer the 7,708m Tirich Mir, in Pakistan, in 1950 (and again in 1964). He often expressed that his experience of the mountain was a predominant influence in shaping his personal ecosophy. It is thus closely linked to the fate of Deep Ecology, the movement he pioneered since the beginning of the 1970s and continued to promote and develop until his death in 2009. As for Guattari, he did not engage openly on this path before the mid-1980s (after his period of joint writing with Deleuze). He developed his ecosophical branch as a result of what he called the "Winter Years": a decade of political disillusion for him and the younger generation in France and throughout Europe (see Guattari 2009). Even though one posture follows the other by over a decade, we can say that both Næss's and Guattari's respective works emerged as outgrowths of the persistent environmental movement beginning in the 1960s and calling for ecological responsibility, for they both emphasized the poor state of consciousness over environmental issues in the Western world as an attempt to bring attention to the situation and change it.

Nowadays, there is a scientific consensus on human-caused global warming (Cook *et al.* 2016). But even before the end of the 1980s, it was clear enough to Næss and Guattari that we had entered a time of environmental crisis, resulting from the

unbounded expansion of the human habitat. As we know all too well today, the situation has continued to worsen over the past 30 years and only recently have we coined a term capable of fully expressing the scale of the problem with which we are faced: *the anthropocene* (Crutzen, Stoermer 2000[2]). Ceballos *et al.* 2015 shows humans induced a global loss of biodiversity; Newbold *et al.* 2016 shows the loss of biodiversity worldwide is seriously menacing ecosystems sustainability and, along with it, human well-being. Still, this situation is hardly unexpected. As capitalism dominates worldwide, it promotes an ideology of infinite growth, entrenching values of exploitation, private property, and accumulation, generally resulting in major alterations of ecosystems and their established biocoenosis, ecoregions' climate disorder (see for example Todoc 2006), let alone global warming.

Mass commodification promoted by dominant economist ideology – singling out money as the only homogeneous currency defining value judgement and praxis on a global scale – was already occurring by the time Næss decided to resign from his position at the University of Oslo; it was 1969, he was 57. He left to devote himself unreservedly to an outright ecosophical life and develop his thoughts freely on the matter. Næss raised an important distinction between 'bigness' and 'greatness' and between 'standards of living' and 'quality of life': the former are quantitative while the latter are qualitative. This distinction is clearly stated in the sixth and seventh points of the Deep Ecology platform:[3] "6. Decisive improvement requires considerable change: social, economic, technological and ideological. 7. An ideological change would essentially entail seeking a better quality of life rather than a raised standard of living" (Næss 2002: 108–109).

It may be obvious to a younger generation that previous generations of thinkers and activists (partly) foresaw, at least three decades ago, the state of the world as it is now. Yet not much has changed since the first calls to take action (most importantly maybe that of Carson 1962), neither ideologically nor practically. And, as predicted, the situation has only intensified, become more palpably real. Green politics emerged to make us believe capitalism and ecology are compatible, and "greenwashing" emerged as a marketing tool to raise sales overshadowing a shallow awareness. A single newspaper article about the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) growth prediction for 2015 may help illustrate the nature of this shallowness. The article is reporting the point of view of the managing director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, who claims that

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[2]   Crutzen, Paul J.; Stoermer, Eugene F. 2000. The "Anthropocene". *Global Change Newsletter*, IGBP 41: 17–18. http://www.igbp.net/download/18.316f18321323470177580001401/1376383088452/NL41.pdf was accessed on 11 April 2016.

[3]   The eightfold Deep ecology platform was developed by Næss and Sessions in 1984, published in Devall and Sessions 1985, and revised in Næss and Haukeland 2002. Næss, Arne; Sessions, George 1984. Basic principles of deep ecology. can be retrieved from https://theanarchistlibrary.org/ library/arne-naess-and-george-sessions-basic-principles-of-deep-ecology.

while the growth predictions for 2015 are about the same as last year's (3,4%), it is "simply insufficient". Lagarde continues: "Six months ago, I warned about the risk of a new mediocrity, that is to say, a slow growth over a long period of time. Today, we can't allow this new mediocrity to become a new reality" (AFP in *Le Devoir*, April 10, 2015; my translation, S. L[4].). Arguably, this kind of assertion can be deemed rooted in a one-dimensional economical simulacrum, forged and maintained by an elite (holding dominant positions in discourse transactions) to increase production and lower expenses of exploitation. Money, a medium by definition, has become an end to itself as growth is fetishized (on fetish signs, see Sebeok 2001: 115–126). According to Jahlly (1987: 29, cited in Sebeok 2001: 117), fetishism "consists of seeing the meaning of things as an inherent part of their physical existence when in fact that meaning is created by their integration into a system of meaning". Through fetishization, anthropologist David Graeber (2001: 105) suggests, "The object of desire becomes an illusory mirror of the desirer's own manipulated intentions".

Indubitably, Lagarde's discourse manifests an ideology, namely that of capital growth as inherently good. Tarasti (2004: 24) defines ideology as manifest through any utterance "postulating one's own values as if they were 'natural'". This implies a "naturalization" of certain ideas, thereby becoming irrefutable. The processes by which certain ideas are naturalized within a given society – occurring through repetitive utterances of unquestioned assumptions or rigidifying public narratives – could also be defined as axiomatization, i.e., the establishment of largely accepted, or self-evident, propositions, thereby reducing epistemological complexity to a set of basic "truths", or axioms, underpinning a shared worldview. Those axioms need not be rational nor consistent with one another. As Tarasti (2004: 25) points out: "When an individual or group adopts certain values as its own, those values transform into axiologies, which constitute more or less compatible collections of values". This is congruent with the axiocentred definition of experience proposed by Pietraszko. Wąsik (1997: 347) uses the term 'axiosemiotics' to designate a "system of specific regularities occurring between values and meaning that condition and co-determine the modes of human life and become materialized in the sphere of products and behaviors of people". A set of values is organized within an axiology structuring beliefs, behaviours, politics, economics and social organization. Axioms (truth-valued propositions) are the analysable, constitutive units of those axiosemiotic lattices.

As the Greek root of the word suggests – '*axios*' means 'worthy' – , axioms are not true or false by nature, but function just like signs. The value of a sign is its meaning,

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4   AFP = Agence France-Presse 2015. Christine Lagarde veut éviter une "nouvelle médiocrité" économique. *Le Devoir*, April 10. Available at http://www.ledevoir.com/economie/actualites-economiques/436746/fmi-la-croissance-mondiale-tout-simplement-insuffisante-dit-lagarde; accessed on 19 October 2015.

and, at least in Peircean semiotics, the meaning of a sign, or more precisely of a proposition, is its reference as seized by some interpretant connecting a representamen to its appropriate object (see Stjernfelt 2014 on *Dicisigns*, i.e., signs susceptible of truth-value ascription). A sign can only be appreciated from a definite point of view, as part of a bigger scheme, and in opposition with other signs; its value is relative, not absolute. However, as is well known, the degree of arbitrariness of signs varies, and so does the degree of arbitrariness of their value. As a matter of fact, it is the degree of arbitrariness of the value that determines the degree of arbitrariness of the sign. This is a very important point, on which I shall come back in the last section of this paper.

Coming back to our example, growth is valorized in our global economy context because it is posited as inherently good (but, interestingly, not necessarily beautiful; the value of growth is predominantly ethical, as only some people will find aesthetical pleasure in seeking or realizing growth fantasies). It is thus endorsed and vindicated (sometimes violently) as such: growth, it is said, makes you wealthier; absence of growth is seen as ill and unnatural, and so it makes you poorer. Most financial advisors will tell you that if you fail to "make your money work for you", not only do you miss out on the presumed interest to be gained, you basically fail to collect what is given to you – a gift of nature. This crooked rhetoric alone is a major incentive to perceive growth as good in itself, or as naturally true, since "no growth makes you poorer", and, according to Lagarde, even a slow growth over a long period of time gets you "mediocre". If anything, this shows how easily ethical propositions transmute into veridictory stances, pretending to possess epistemic value.

Another way of defining naturalization of values, or axiomatization, is to compare it to how mythology works. An ideological utterance is usually presented as a type, and not so much as a token (Tarasti 2004: 24). Signification of mythological signs cannot be deduced from the interpretation of a single occurrence, nor can it be reduced to its "message" or content; its reference lies in the recurrence of its form. "One should not assume, however, that myths cannot be analyzed. Something lies behind them; namely, the axiologies of a community. An ideological statement can be unobvious as such, yet still manifest hidden, immanent values" (Tarasti 2004: 25). Capitalism ideology, as manifested by discourses (continuous with behaviours: values are abstract, but they affect organisms which interpret them) expressing variations on a set of definite axioms, can thus be seen as a contemporary mythology by which world populations are being more or less coercively conducted. Here, I adopt E. J. Michael Witzel's (2012: 35) definition of myth: a myth is "a true narrative that tells of cosmology and society as well as of the human condition and that is frequently employed to explain and justify social circumstances". How does our capitalistic mythology affect us, then? And what constraints and conundrums does it generate? As French physician and philosopher Henri Laborit (1973: 8; my translation, S. L.) puts it:

> The problem consists in understanding how the myth of growth for the sake of growth, and not only to satisfy fundamental needs, has been set up while at the same time shadowing to such an extent its initial motivations that it is now regarded as the basis of all social behaviour within all industrialized countries, and as such is nowadays being defended as an end in itself, as an end for the human species, wrapped in affective and mystical notions such as happiness, needs, progress, the domination of man over cruel nature, when it's not the domination of the white supremacy or that of any other ideological regime in particular. It is all defended by perfectly rational discourses, based on a priori, on value judgements such as social promotion, always viewed as good in itself, the free market, because in a "free" world competition must be free as well, international competition, labour as a virtue, while wars provide their daily share of brave heroes, the defence of traditions, of currency, and so on.

Næss was well aware of these mythologems and how they are efficacious. His researches, in the first half of his career, were primarily done in the perspective of the philosophy of language. The questions of propaganda, rhetoric and persuasion are his trade (see Næss 2005, esp. vols. 1–4). In *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, he uses the decay of the German forests as a well-known example, among others, to show how being aware of something deleterious is not sufficient to trigger change. From Næss's perspective, general inertia is the result of ideologies structuring in a profound way, through customs and habits, the greatest number of people, to the extent that it constitutes a major disincentive in itself. The situation could be abridged as follows: The *lack of desire to trigger change* (for one to take responsibility for it, to represent that change and encourage others to follow) is immense, but *the need to defend established rules* (for one to seek, or seek gain from, exploitation, extraction, liberty of consumption and disposal), even as environmental degradation is occurring in the most obvious ways, might just be even greater still. A sense of duty compels most people to defend the status quo over change, because change is represented as a source of anxiety and possible ruin. As the proverb goes: *a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*. Næss (1989: 87–8) writes:

> Large segments of the European public are now aware of the formidable destruction. The death of German forests is well known. But the same segments have not been able, and partly not even willing, to change the ways of production and consumption. These are secured by the inertia of *dominant ideas of growth, progress, and standards of living*. These ideas, manifest as firm attitudes and habits, are powerful agencies preventing large-scale, long-range changes.

This assessment is twofold. First, it deals with the notion of public opinion and how people do not feel concerned about environmental issues. Second, it points out the underlying reasons why people do not feel empowered about these issues,

even though they are well aware of them. To sum up, I cannot help but summon the decisive word of the radical American socio-ecologist Murray Bookchin (even though Bookchin more than once manifested his disdain for the Deep Ecology movement). In *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Bookchin (2004: viii) writes: "Any attempt to solve the environmental crisis within a bourgeois framework must be dismissed as chimerical. Capitalism is inherently anti-ecological". This has the merit of being clear, and has so far proved true. As a matter of fact, both Næss and Guattari expressed exactly the same incompatibility. Næss (1989: 24): "It would be unwise to suppose that improvement can be achieved for the great majority of mankind without severe political contests and profound changes in the economic objectives pursued by the industrial states"; Guattari (2013: 64; my translation, S. L.): "It appears the objective is not to merely seize power from the bourgeois and the bureaucrats anymore, but to define precisely what it is we want instead". Now, let us see which solutions they championed for a paradigm shift to occur.

Félix Guattari's ecosophy

As far as it can be established, Guattari and Næss never met. Guattari's writing on ecosophy never even refers to Næss, nor does it explicitly allude to Deep Ecology (Genosko 2009: 86). Yet, this does not prevent them from sharing a common ground. Guattari would most certainly share Næss's observation cited above about social inertia. Also, he undeniably criticizes capitalism for its role in social inertia, as Bookchin does, but he does so, counter to Bookchin, by denying the actuality (the actual relevance) of the Marxist framework. In *The Three Ecologies*, Guattari (2000: 47) writes:

> Post-industrial capitalism, which I prefer to describe as Integrated World Capitalism (IWC), tends increasingly to decentre its sites of power, moving away from structures producing goods and services towards structures producing signs, syntax and – in particular, through the control which it exercises over the media, advertising, opinion polls, etc. – subjectivity.

What Guattari is suggesting here is that Integrated World Capitalism (IWC), the heir to classic capitalism, has changed its focus from exclusively producing goods to producing subjectivities through commodities, whether material or immaterial: "Integrated Word Capitalism pretends to integrate, program, and conduct every single inhabitant of the planet. It seeks to direct even their unconscious fantasies via the mass media. A real madness is driving it to promote the homogenization of subjectivity" (Guattari 2013: 415, my translation, S. L.). Following this observation, Guattari offers

a typology of the IWC signs, which he sees as the "instruments" underpinning IWC. The following four types of signs must be understood as parts of an ongoing complex process, namely that of capitalist semiosis, which models at once all social constraints and freedoms for individuals and communities within IWC:

(1) *Economic semiotics* (monetary, financial, accounting and decision-making mechanisms);
(2) *Juridical semiotics* (title deeds, legislation and regulations of all kinds);
(3) *Techno-scientific semiotics* (plans, diagrams, programmes, studies, research, etc.);
(4) *Semiotics of subjectification*, of which some coincide with those already mentioned, but to which we should add many others, such as those relating to architecture, town planning, public facilities, etc. (Guattari 2000: 48)

To clarify the operation of this typology, Guattari (2000: 48) adds:

> We must acknowledge that models which claim to found a causal hierarchy between these semiotic regimes are well on their way to completely losing touch with reality. For example, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain that economic semiotics and semiotics that work together towards the production of material goods occupy an infrastructural position in relation to juridical and ideological semiotics, as was postulated by Marxism. At present, IWC is all of a piece: productive-economic-subjective. And, to return to the old scholastic categories, one might say that it follows at the same time from material, formal, efficient and final causes.

The ecological worldview Guattari tries to build with this semiotic typology is one that is able to take into account the broad ensemble of human and nonhuman interactions deemed decisive of the human species' sociality. This typology shapes restricted patterns of actions that are used as a means of subjectification to an end of organization. Through this, Guattari attempts to reveal the mechanisms of what he calls 'semiotic machines': "Sign machines that have their own consistency. But they have no reach unless they diagrammatize signs that are in connection with a referent, which is a power formation" (Guattari 2013: 338–9; my translation, S. L.). Three years after *The Three Ecologies*, in *Chaosmosis* (1995; 1992 for the original French), Guattari proposed a more developed analysis of subjectivity (not intrinsically bound to IWC) in terms of four dimensions: (1) material, energetic, and semiotic fluxes; (2) concrete and abstract machinic phyla; (3) virtual universes of value; and (4) finite existential territories. At this point, we must remember that, for Guattari, ecosophy is threefold: environmental, social, and mental. Ecosophy, from his viewpoint, is a way to emancipate human relationships both within our own species (between

humans and machines alike) and within nature (other species, landscapes, natural elements). Emancipation is made possible by taking into account the different modes of production and subjectification these relations imply and afford. Thus, Guattari (2000: 49) formulates the following aspiration for ecosophy:

> It is to be hoped that the development of the three types of eco-logical praxis outlined here [environmental, social, and mental] will lead to a reframing and a recomposition of the goals of the emancipatory struggles. And let us hope that, in the context of the new "deal" of the relation between capital and human activity, ecologists, feminists, antiracists, etc., will make it an immediate major objective to target the modes of production of subjectivity, that is, of knowledge, culture, sensibility and sociability that come under an incorporeal value system at the root of the new productive assemblages.

Developing a normative semiotic system (defining axioms and latitude, codes and agency), entails the question of whether this system will allow for dissent and singularization, creating lines of flight within its own assemblages, or if it is to be yet another, even more resilient, capitalistic signifying and commodifying system of manufactured standardized subjectivities. "Rather than looking for a stupefying and infantilizing consensus", Guattari (2000: 50) argues, "it will be a question in the future of cultivating a *dissensus* and the singular production of existence". New forms of valorization must help us quit the homogenesis of capitalistic values that prevent us from emancipation. Resingularization should happen through a process Guattari calls "heterogenic", which implies the development of value on a differentiated ontological level. In Guattari's view, value is the index of a polarization within a field of desire and power. This field is a symbolic existential territory, and the value within it is a reference point (Guattari 2013: 370). Value judgments pertain to an axiological dimension, which is structural to any set of relations. So what we should initiate first is not a critical enquiry of the values themselves, but an enquiry into the modes of production of those values. Since they emanate from our natural and social relationship patterns, those patterns must be criticized by means of semiotic analysis.

A first step, Guattari suggests, would be to valorize the reconstitution of human relationships by promoting affective and pragmatic investment within human groups and communities of various sizes. This, in turn, would stimulate the desire for change and the appropriation of tools, mechanisms, and semiotic devices, promoting awareness of sign systems dynamics. The new ecological practices Guattari hopes for should elicit the ability to capture and activate the heterogeneous, isolated, and repressed singularities in order for them to cooperate and build assemblages of subjectivities able to function as processes of reterritorialization (to take root, or be grounded, in a milieu recognized as such). Simply stated, the aim is to *reintegrate and inhabit our environment in meaningful ways*. To attain it, it is essential to "organize

new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices regarding the formation of the unconscious", says Guattari (2000: 51). This would be the only way whereby politics could get back on its feet, "working for humanity and not simply for a permanent reequilibration of the capitalist semiotic Universe" (Guattari 2000: 51). Accordingly, Guattari emphasizes valorizing politics as an everyday practice as the best, and perhaps the only path towards emancipation. This might be how genuine ecopolitical praxis can be best understood: in the sense of a continuous negotiation of meaning with and within our surroundings. It is nothing short of a fully acknowledged semiotic activity. Nevertheless, Guattari's ecosophy remains essentially anthropocentric (i.e., focused on politics for the benefit of human society), whereas Deep Ecology is characterized by its nonanthropocentric approach to ecology (see Fox 1990). Næss's original vision, we shall see, is broader and much less speciesist in comparison.

Arne Næss's ecosophy

In spite of the fundamental difference I just evoked, the two versions show obvious points of convergence, which I will try to highlight. As for their discrepancies, broadly speaking, Guattari elaborates models, discretizes sign-types, and wishes for change (even though he partook in some forms of activism himself), whereas Næss explicitly puts forward ways of action to embody and initiate that change. It might be true, as Tinnell (2011: 37) writes, that "though Næss coined the term 'ecosophy', he does not think through the semiotic implications of the word as fully as Guattari does". Nevertheless, many aspects of his thoughts on Deep Ecology are inherently semiotic, as I shall demonstrate.

Arne Næss's Deep Ecology platform presents itself as a series of eight general assertions working as axioms aiming to condition and coordinate the actions of individuals and communities, as well as to structure social organization and economic activity. I will not dwell on the content of these axioms, but limit myself to comment on their form. (I have shared two of them above, and will share two more below. For the full platform, see Næss, Haukeland 2002.) The eight axioms are designed to serve as a foundation for the development and valorization of a lifestyle able to hierarchize the values driving a community. For Næss, semiotic systems are normative systems: "Value priorities are socially and economically anchored, and changes in these priorities continuously interplay with other changes in a boundless, dynamic whole" (Næss 1989: 24). In Næss's view, the organization and economic structure of a given society depends solely on the hierarchy of values within that society, so much so that any change in the way a society determines its values produces a chain reaction according to a continuing process within a dynamic and unbounded globality, which he calls the *ecosphere*. This holistic view shows obvious resemblances

with Juri Lotman's notion of *semiosphere* (which is derived from Vernadsky's concept of biosphere, see Lotman, M. 2014). The semiosphere is the space where semiosis (the action of signs) occurs. For Lotman, "the unit of semiosis, the smallest functioning mechanism, is not the separate language but the whole semiotic space of the culture in question" (Lotman 1990: 125; on the concept of semiosphere, see also Hoffmeyer 2014). Further connections between Næss and Lotman are made below.

To develop his ethic, Næss starts from the premise of an unavoidable and irreducible co-dependence of man and nature. The more we understand the unity we are forming with other living beings (as well as with what most people would consider nonliving natural entities, e.g., rocks, landscapes), the more we identify with them and make ourselves available to them. Understanding this intrinsic togetherness is the key to a greater care (Næss 1989: 175). Our task, Næss suggests, is to realize a form of togetherness with nature that would be the most advantageous. However, this goal is acceptable only if the benefit envisioned is understood not at the individual level, but at the "bigger Self" level: transindividual, interspecific and ecosystemic. "One can, without hypocrisy, *desire something which is for the benefit of other living beings*", Næss (1989: 168) posits, "and one normally obtains great, rich satisfaction from it". This attitude, or ethical stance, is the key to *Self-realization*, which, again, is not to be understood as a process occurring at the individual level, but at a transpersonal and ecosystemic level: I better put efforts in doing good for whom or what is around me than for myself alone, because without my milieu, I am nothing – I simply cannot exist as an individual outside of a given environment. Deep Ecology, prior to the *movement* Næss wished it to become in the political space, is first and foremost an ethic, a practice of the self, an asceticism that can be shared due to its exemplar character: I can desire something for the benefit of someone else, and someone else can do the same for me. This attitude is very similar to Peirce's (1893: 177) Golden Rule in his 1893 essay, *Evolutionary Love*: "Sacrifice your own perfection to the perfectionment of your neighbor". It should not, however, be understood anthropocentrically, or in a speciesist fashion (on speciesism, see Ryder 2012; Horta 2010). Næss stresses how crucial it is to acknowledge the *universal right to live and blossom,* or *the biospherical egalitarianism principle*. This view, or wished turn, is often called 'ecocentric' or 'biocentric', which are somewhat misleading terms. Fox explains (1990, *sine pagina*):

> Whereas an anthropocentric orientation considers the nonhuman world as so many "resources" to be used as humans see fit, an ecocentric orientation attempts, within obvious kinds of practical limits, to allow all entities (including humans) the freedom to unfold in their own ways unhindered by the various forms of human domination.

Similarly, Kull (2001: 356) suggests: "the necessary turn to a biocentric view [...] may mean that the valuing process is extended so that the experiential world of any living

being is included". Counter to some misleading critiques (among others, Bookchin *et al.* 1993), to abide by the biospherical egalitarianism principle does not involve being misanthropic or denying our human uniqueness, or humanness. As Næss (1989: 170) explains:

> A biology which clearly states the biological peculiarities of human beings, as well as the differences, e.g. between human and animal communication, is fully compatible with an ecosophy of identification and equal rights. A specific feature of human make-up is that human beings consciously perceive the urge other living beings have for self-realisation, and that we must therefore assume *a kind of responsibility for our conduct towards others.*

To adopt and follow a coherent ecological ethic (an ecosophy) represents the only way whereby one can incite another to join a common cause, and a community supporting that very common cause. Or rather, it is the only way whereby disparate people (partaking in an organizational schema that does not relate them functionally) can find a reason to coordinate their actions *naturally.* By emphasizing this very relational aspect, Næss follows Spinoza, for whom one can never be truly constrained but by one's own profound belief in a just cause, as apprehended by virtue of its freely exercised reason (Spinoza 2007; see also Næss 1977, 1993; Gamlund 2011). This is precisely why Deep Ecology must be a *movement*, i.e., driven by exemplarity, influence, and persuasion, so the greatest number gets acquainted with the ideas it promulgates. In Næss's view, the *ecopolitical frontier is immensely long*, and so there is an equally immense ecopolitical territory that is not yet bounded by this indefinitely long frontier. While the frontier is immense, it is also multidimensional. Each singular action, each individual developing or maintaining a stance in regard of, and a relationship with, this frontier affects others: "the pull of the pole of greenness can be felt in all our political positions and actions" (Næss 1989: 162).

Ecosophy is axiomatized semiotics

Let us remember that "the boundary, which surrounds a semiotic system as 'self' and distinguishes it from 'non-self', is not, according to Lotman, a mere line or surface, but a whole region with a complex and generative behavior" (Kull 1999: 127). The frontier Næss is evoking is immensely long (unlimited) because of its generative nature, and standing for its recognition helps it lengthen. The longer the frontier, the broader its influence becomes, the more traction the movement gets. The ecosphere is at once a semiosphere, where political ideas are communicated, and an axiological territory, where dominance over normative value apparatuses is negotiated. Lotman (1990: 128)

explains this quite clearly in *Universe of the Mind*, where he highlights how dominance occurs through normative codes structuring sign systems:

> Whether we have in mind language, politics or culture, the mechanism is the same: one part of the semiosphere […] in the process of self-description creates its own grammar. […] Then it strives to extend these norms over the whole semiosphere. A partial grammar of one cultural dialect becomes the metalanguage of description for culture as such.

Codes naturally tend to constrain one another by virtue of what Lotman calls the "self-descriptive" tendency. The semiosphere is driven by ecological dynamics between centre and periphery. Self-descriptive semiotic structures (those prone to autocommunication, i.e., critique and correction) arise as the epicentre of a radiant dominance exercised by virtue of the adherence it purports.

> Semiotic space is characterised by the presence of nuclear structures (frequently multiple) and a visibly organised more amorphous semiotic world gravitating towards the periphery, in which nuclear structures are immersed. If one of these nuclear structures not only holds a dominant position, but also rises to a state of self-description, thereby separating itself from the system of meta-languages, with the help of which it describes not only itself but also the peripheral space of a given semiosphere, then the level of its ideal unity creates a superstructure which itself is above the irregularity of a real semiotic map. (Lotman 2005: 213)

Deep Ecology, unaware of Lotman's theorizing of the semiosphere, acknowledges all the same this phenomenon. It manages to open, within the movement's general proposition, a space of valorization for a plurality of descriptive variants of action, namely: *ecosophies*. This plurality is programmatic: it serves as the basis to form distinctive communities around iterative ecosophical dissensuses, in opposition to the general consensus existing over ecology that is naturally shared by all ecosophical communities and ecosophers. Deep Ecology has a normative and transformative aim, and this is why it must be developed so as to conform to preexisting enunciative logics as much as to propose new ones. According to Næss (1989: 74), "our opinions as to what is or *ought* to be done are highly dependent upon our *hypotheses* as to how the world is organized. Applied to ecological relationships, this implies that our norms are dependent upon our beliefs regarding the interdependency relations within the biosphere". Consequently, as far as opinions are concerned, the situation within the environment we *suppose* is ours predominates over the *actual* organization of the species and its social groups in relation with nature. Our perception of the ways in which we partake in the dynamic processes of ecosophical development determines how we actually partake in it; it shapes the *lifestyle* we choose to adopt (individually and collectively).

This lifestyle develops in correlation to the depth of understanding we have of the interdependencies on which rests the very possibility that is ours to live harmoniously as a living community within life as a whole. Hence the importance Næss gives to ontology. For him, ethics depends solely on ontology, because ontology shapes the way reality is perceived. The rule could be stated as such: "a change in hypotheses [about what there is] generally leads to a change in norms" (Næss 1992, *sine pagina*). Posit, for instance, that relations exist, and the materialist-reductionist paradigm becomes inoperative: the mind/matter nature/culture dichotomy is no longer valid (see Merrell 1996; Santaella 2001). It is the implicit decrees we translate by ruling over the modes of existence of lifeforms surrounding us that mould our collective lifestyle, and such a lifestyle necessarily entails a set of rules of action defining our relationship with these surrounding forms of life. In a nutshell: if our beliefs shape our norms about the type of relations we can engage, or maintain, with the lifeforms surrounding us, it is because our beliefs over-determine our perception (given important biological limitations and cultural limitations related to historical inertia). Acknowledging the power of beliefs, the task for the Deep Ecology movement is clear: it needs to bend beliefs so that a fresh look can prevail. Adopting an ecosophical worldview should help induce new organizational models at the species level (taken as the widest cultural system possible), thus instilling a lifestyle that is coherent with the ethical commitment Deep Ecology prescribes.

As a corollary, this commitment generates decentred axiosemiotic nucleuses, i.e., the ecosophers and ecosophical communities promoting ecological wisdom. The environment is not to be viewed as a mere habitat anymore; a *new relational, total-field image* is to be valued, whereby related organisms are conceived as "knots in the field of intrinsic relations" (Næss 1989: 28). Deep Ecology is, above all, an ethic of relationships from the viewpoint of the species, our constituent form of life, among others. This specific ethic prescribes to perceive actively (i.e., render obvious and preponderant) the ways in which human communities dynamically partake in signifying processes in a space that is all at once an ecosphere, a semiosphere, and a vast political territory. Both Næss's and Guattari's ecosophies involve, as a fundamental requirement, the finesse and power of semiotics – the systematic study of meaning-making –, as it best connects modelling and praxis. Semiotics, Nadin (1982: 96) suggests, "reflects the tension between the universal (general) and the individual (particular)", unifying levels by means of a "common currency", to wit: signs. In return, ecosophy helps reveal the inherent, but most often effaced, axiological dimension of semiotics, and suffuses it with a definite orientation: ecological consciousness.

Communities as transpersonal spaces of persuasion

Many insisted on Peirce's understanding of semiotics as the logic of vagueness (Nadin 1988; Tiercelin 1993). In both Næss's and Guattari's ecosophies we are confronted with a deliberate vagueness. Vagueness is structural, and "precisation" (a term Næss coined to express *the action of going towards more precision*, see Næss 2005, vol. 1) is the dynamic principle that allows for internal discrimination. As Fox (1992, *sine pagina*) describes it: "If something is vague and open to many interpretations and precisations, it leads to discussion. And that is the most we can hope for any honest philosophy in today's world". While members of a community should agree on ultimate premises of worldviews (implicitly or explicitly), they must value a plurality of means by which these worldviews can gain strength and become actively pursued by others. Therefore, each ecosopher should behave following his/her own personal ecosophy (which is supposed to be exemplar to others): everyone is invited to create precision within the Deep Ecology movement.

For the Danish Peircean semioticians Torkild Thellefsen, Bent Sørensen and Christian Andersen, "a community is created and maintained through exchange of emotional effects, signs, which attract and create members of the community and in this process consolidate the community" (Thellefsen *et al.* 2008: 177). The genesis and fate of any community is contingent upon a process of attraction. "From an ecosophical perspective, intensities precede both ideology and identity" (Tinnell 2011: 42). Guattari (with Deleuze) used the concept of refrain to describe this process of attraction, subjectification, and territorialization enabling the formation of localized communities. Refrains emerge "when motifs are detached from the flux of components […] acquiring the ability to generate a process of positive self-reference" (Genosko 2009: 80). A refrain is a territorial assemblage, a sign enabling an active and creative space of appropriation and identification; a place one (or many) may call *home*. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 333) describe it in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

> […] home does not preexist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organize a limited space. Many, very diverse, components have a part in this, landmarks and marks of all kinds. […] now the components are used for organizing a space, not for the momentary determination of a center. The forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible, and the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do. This involves an activity of selection, elimination and extraction, in order to prevent the interior forces of the earth from being submerged, to enable them to resist, or even to take something from chaos across the filter or sieve of the space that has been drawn.

To delineate a space and organize it is characteristically a semiotic activity, because doing so implies: (1) discriminating signs, meanings; and (2) criticizing established

grammars or codes. If one chooses, or happens, to enforce a specific grammar or code within its meaning-making space (one's space of activity), one endorses a set of principles eliciting certain signs or propositions as meaningful (positively valued), while others are marginalized or discriminated as meaningless (negatively valued). Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 334) continue: "The *nomos* as customary, unwritten law is inseparable from a distribution of space, a distribution in space. By that token, it is *ethos,* but the ethos is also the Abode". This is congruent with the main ecosophical idea shared in the introduction: from the ecosophical perspective, our *oikos* (Abode) is the Earth, to wit, geosphere + biosphere + semiosphere. Smaller heterogeneous pieces of the Earth – synecdochically or mereologically assembled – form localized ecological communities, which are territorialized spaces of subjectification, and limited spaces of persuasion. Communities are not formed exclusively of interactive human beings; all forms of living and nonliving entities must be included in these locally signifying spaces. The inclusion criterion is for them to be meaningful, i.e., to express value within a sign system.[5] The role of the ecosopher, therefore, is to recognize the ways in which marginalized beings (isolated singularities) may become significant (i.e., valorized) if viewed as integral components of a whole. Decentralization is the key concept here: organisms are knots in a field of intrinsic relations. At the same time, territorialization entails some sort of self-expression that is congruent with a cognizance of the self as an individual among others, situated within its surroundings (or umwelt), and subjectified through environmental identification. Guattari's ecosophy suggests territorialized communities emerge through singing (we could as well say *signing*) refrains, exchanging emotions (pre-linguistic signs), thus enabling spaces of communication able to strengthen community members' engagement and manoeuvrability in the milieu, among surrounding forces, affects, signs.[6]

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[5]   Our definition of the community precludes any superfluous replication of reference systems, since sign systems developed by biosemiotics encompass at once the biotic and the semiotic. Continuous efforts are made in the field to identify a definite threshold for the emergence of life activity (physiosemiotics is discussed, but remains purely speculative). The core idea of biosemiotics is that signs and life are coextensive. What was once distributed among at least three different regimes (biotic, animalistic, symbolic) or disruptive domains of enquiry (biology, zoology, anthropology) is now attuned in a unified holist model. For a synthetic presentation of main hypotheses in biosemiotics, see Stjernfelt 2002.

[6]   As Hoffmeyer (2014: 14) explains: "Sign processes are neither forces nor things. They are process-relations that organize activities. The causality of signs thus differs from the causality of forces. While signs are frequently misunderstood or ignored, forces always exert their power with merciless efficiency. Thus the concept of semiosis does bring a novel element to the scientific tool set for, by definition, a sign-process requires an interpretative agency".

> And so, though we begin at the level of so-called individual subjectivity, this is only the beginning of the issue because, for Guattari, the question of the individual is inextricably linked with trans-individual domains of flows, phyla, territories, and universes. Existential refrains are laid out by collective machines, which are themselves dialogically related to the available modes and technologies of production. (Tinnell 2011: 43)

Thellefsen *et al.* add an important precision to their definition of community as a space where emotional exchange occurs, a precision that makes it similar to the concept of refrain. They posit the necessity of an emotional core as the fundamental sign driving a community, which is quite similar in many senses to a refrain that can be sung collectively and spontaneously:

> […] a community is a semeiotic structure in the sense that a community is created, maintained, and developed through ongoing exchanges of signs in accordance to a certain purpose. The exchange of signs takes place between the members of the community assembled around a governing and basic idea, which we refer to as a fundamental sign: the emotional core of any community. (Thellefsen *et al.* 2008: 177)

Based on this, we can characterize the Deep Ecology platform (axioms) and movement as the propositional expression of an emotional core able to induce adherence on the basis of an ever-precising engagement in function of each individual's related experience and dispositions. Emotion is an emboldening means for action, since the emergence of an emotion implies beforehand a "change in readiness for action" (Thellefsen *et al.* 2008: 173). Emotion is the symptom of a not yet distinctly perceived urge. The fundamental sign, under which members of a given community gather, suffices to create *a vagueness conducive to praxis*. Localized ecosophical communities operate as transpersonal spaces of persuasion. And, it can be argued, the greater the number of communities engaged in this form of praxis formation, raises the general awareness about the basic premises of ecosophy.

Communities, just like signs, because of their constant renewal, are inherently vague. But at the same time, they are always in a semiotic process of precisation. Therefore, *the role of a community is to ever precise its own purpose*. Defined as a practice entangled in an axiomatized model made explicit by the practice itself, ecosophy helps us realize just how important it is to consistently redefine the purpose and pertinence of our activity as living beings assembled in communities.

Conclusion: potential impact of ecosophy
in the humanities and beyond

While, on the one hand, Guattari theorizes the production of subjectivity and emphasizes the importance of creating singularities and valuing reterritorialization, on the other hand, Næss stresses the transpersonal means by which our co-dependent relationship with nature becomes intuitive. To adopt an ecosophical worldview is nothing but to personally implement a communal stance; it is a discipline of the self, an ethic of exemplarity. It entails the very possibility of forming any community, that is, to create assemblages of shared meaning, or shared reality, which in turn gives traction to valued actions, driving ideas and goals. This is quite close to the empowering transformations Guattari (2000: 67) envisions in *The Three Ecologies* when he writes:

> To bring into being other worlds beyond those of purely abstract information, to engender Universes of reference and existential Territories where singularity and finitude are taken into consideration by the multivalent logic of mental ecologies and by the group Eros principle of social ecology; to dare to confront the vertiginous Cosmos so as to make it inhabitable; these are the tangled paths of the tri-ecological [or ecosophical] vision.

The role of the ecosopher, in both Næss's and Guattari's visions, is to trigger an urge to develop a genuine, coherent, and sustainable pattern of relations with nature and our conspecifics. This is to be done by *stimulating the recognition among peers of a common wealth to share and preserve* (which, by the way, has nothing to do with the Commonwealth described in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*). As Næss asserts: all living beings have intrinsic value, and the diversity and richness of life itself has intrinsic value (those are the first and second axioms of the Deep Ecology platform). As evident as it is, it must be clearly stated: the richness of life does not exist for the sole benefit of human beings (genuine ecosophy and speciesism are incompatible), and even if it allows humans to flourish, it does not mean one, or a single community, or even a single species should appropriate some resources or a certain locality exclusively, because then others will be deprived of benefitting from it (i.e., of maintaining a sustainable relationship with it). Peirce's blunt remark settles the matter quite reasonably: "The real", says Peirce, is "independent of the vagaries of me and you" (CP 5.311). Respectful interspecific communities should prevail.

Now, to conclude, I would like to assess the potential impact of ecosophy on the research in the humanities, assuming its underlying axioms were adopted. For the sake of the argument, I shall use semiotics as an emblem of the humanities by reason of its characteristic transdisciplinarity. As described, ecosophy has its roots in cenoscopic ecology; its purpose is to develop an axiology and a consequent, coherent, ethic.

Semiotics is a cenoscopic science; it deals not with scientific experiment, but with epistemological questions, among which we count those related to ontology and ethics, logic and critique. Connections are obvious, but there are arguably some discrepancies in purpose. While ecosophy explicitly aims to transform practices, the outcome of most researches in the humanities (semiotics included) comes down to a correction in views, or interpretations – most often correcting pre-existing interpretations by means of critique. But ecosophy needs a prior, or concurrent, change in views to enact change in praxis. And so both share a common objective or need. On that basis, a merger seems conceivable. Doing so, however, would necessarily entail a systematic axiomatization of research, encouraging ecosophical probity in design, rendering the definition of purposes, means, and ends of research activity mandatorily compatible with the ultimate premises of a shared ecosophical worldview.

One could argue all this is merely a displacement of the bias towards Deep Ecology against IWC (or, in any case, the actual state of affairs). But this would be misleading. A thorough examination has been conducted and, after much consideration, it seems one set of axioms (IWC) promotes an unsustainable lifestyle, while growing scientific evidence supports the alternate stance (Deep Ecology). Consequently, a new set of axioms is to be favoured. Another reason for such a change is that Deep Ecology's axiology and ethic support and promulgate a lifestyle that is best attuned with (eco) semiotics wisdom. As mentioned earlier, there is a basic rule in general semiotics to ascertain the value of a proposition. The degree of arbitrariness of signs varies: there are conventional signs, and there are natural signs. But of course, any cognized sign is an interpreted sign, so, as far as humans are concerned, no sign can be deemed entirely "natural", as opposed to "cultural" (CP. 2.275). The difference between conventional signs (symbols) and natural signs (icons, indices) lies in the faith they afford the interpretant in determining the truth they convey. Natural signs' truth value affordances are of higher trust, because their reference is to be found in observable phenomena, while conventional signs reference depends solely on a convergence of judgments exchanged and soldered through communication, i.e., within a given community (CP 5.311). While ecosophy deals with social issues (i.e., symbolic patterns and dynamics), it is supported by ecology and all ideoscopic sciences of life, which conduct scientific experiments to study natural patterns and dynamics. This depth cannot be neglected when assessing the relevance of ecosophy as a doctrine able to elicit meaningfulness in social life, organization and economy. But can it pervade through all communities, including intellectual communities within the humanities, and be adopted as a default stance, thus reforming research activity?

Tinnell (2011: 38) suggests something akin to this idea when he writes: "[...] the proper aim of ecosophy (and a properly transversal eco-humanities) is not to produce a more energy-efficient light bulb or a hybrid car, but to reconfigure subjectivity and

to remake academic and/or social practices altogether". I do not agree with him about what he states to be "the proper aim" of ecosophy; I think his view is reductive and academe-centred. Why should ecosophy be prohibited from driving major changes in engineering and technology, as long as these changes are done in respect of the principles and values ecosophy bears? There is nothing counterintuitive in suggesting ecosophy could have a role to play in the industrial world, since it is directly connected to the capitalistic modes of production, consumption, and its inherent processes of subjectification. In fact, in order to enact urgently required change, and not merely wish for it to happen by some magical means, ecosophy must interfere as much as possible with the industry. Here, an important divergence between the Deep Ecology movement and Guattari's more politicized disciples emerges: the range envisioned for change to happen. Deep Ecology suggests it should only take place in the long-range – no precise time frame is specified in order to redesign "our whole systems based on values and methods that truly preserve the ecological and cultural diversity of natural systems" (Drengson 2012, *sine pagina*[7]) –, whereas others might think time is actually running out. Paradoxically, Deep Ecology extols activism and continues to drive community organizing, whereas the heritage of Guattari's tri-ecology is essentially of intellectual nature. As for Tinnell, he might be right as far as academia and research are concerned, but restraining the scope and aim of ecosophy to make it fit to a scholarly lifestyle would contravene the basic premises of Næss's view, which states that Deep Ecology should be developed as a movement driving communities. And by that he meant any variety of communities, not just scholarly ones.

What I tried to underline in this paper is not only how ecosophy can axiomatize research in the humanities and beyond, but also which connections ecosophy and semiotics manifest, and how both are complementary. This axiomatization would not be possible if one of the components were missing in the equation: ecosophy needs semiotics to model ecological and social interactions and relationships with respect to the principles it promulgates, and semiotics needs ecosophy to instil a definite ethical dimension in its modelling patterns. In the end, ecosophy helps us understand why semiotics cannot be reduced to modelling, for models and praxis are coextensive. Nadin (1982: 96) summarizes this quite well:

> The semiotic field is only part of the generic human field in which transformations from one type of praxis to others continuously take place. The interaction of signs is nothing other than the expression of the interaction of people. The interdisciplinarity of semiotics should be understood as a condition of existence – sign processes imply the (ideal) integrality of human function – and not as a theoretical desideratum.

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[7]   Drengson, Alan 2012. Some thought on the Deep Ecology movement. *Foundation for Deep Ecology*. Available at http://www.deepecology.org/deepecology.htm and accessed on 29 April 2016.

Signification connects the general with the singular, for meaning-making is rooted in experience. Ecosophical communities function in the same way, assembling singularities within a purposeful whole. In emphasizing purposefulness and the communal dimension of meaning-making and axiomatization processes among human societies, ecosophy challenges semiotics to delineate its praxis, forcing it to recognize its, as yet, mostly implicit axiological dimension.[8]

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Две версии экософии: Арне Нэсс, Феликс Гваттари и их связь с семиотикой

В статье применяется сравнительный подход, чтобы оценить различные вклады Арне Нэсса и Феликса Гваттари в экософию, а также их связи с семиотикой. Предлагаемое экософией целостное мировоззрение и его динамика имеет многочисленные связи с семиотикой. Главная цель этой статьи изучение природы и ценности этих связей. Исторически развитие экософии всегда сталкивалось с темами моделирования и коммуникации, которые обнаруживают очевидную общую основу с семиотикой. Как средство для достижения цели экософия развивала значимую аксиологию на основе

экологической мудрости. Семиотика также имеет дело с ценностями: значениями и ценностью знаков. В этом отношении семиотика аксиологична по существу, но чаще всего это измерение скрыто или приглушено. Подчеркивание аксиологического измерения семиотики помогает понять, как устанавливаются доминирующие значения, привычки и ценности и показывает возможную ключевую роль, которую семиотика, соединяясь с экософией, могла бы играть в гуманитарных науках и шире. Признавая комплементарность обеих традиций, автор дает оценку достижимости их слияния. Можно утверждать, что экософия является аксиоматизированной семиотикой. С этой новой точки зрения можно человеческие сообщества считать динамично принимающими участие в процессах означивания в пространстве, которое является одновременно экосферой, семиосферой и обширной политической территорией. Так как находится все больше доказательств того, что экологическая деградация ухудшает качество нашей жизни и устойчивость наших сообществ, экософия могла бы помочь в переформировании ценностей и практик.

Ökosoofia kaks versiooni: Arne Næss, Félix Guattari ja nende seos semiootikaga

Artiklis kasutatakse võrdlevat lähenemist, et käsitleda Arne Næssi ja Félix Guattari selgesti eristuvaid panuseid ökosoofiasse ning nende vastavaid seoseid semiootikaga. Ökosoofia poolt väljapakutaval aluseksoleval holistilisel maailmavaatel ja dünaamikal on arvukaid seoseid semiootikaga. Käesoleva artikli peamine eesmärk on uurida nende seoste olemust ja väärtust. Ajalooliselt on ökosoofia väljakujunemine alati kokku puutunud modelleerimise ja kommunikatsiooni teemadega, mis moodustavad ilmse ühisosa, mida see jagab semiootikaga. Eesmärgi saavutamiseks mõeldud vahendina võttis ökosoofia ette ökoloogilisel tarkusel põhineva mõtterikka aksioloogia väljaarendamise ning selle alt üles propageerimise. Poliitilist aktivismi silmas pidamata tegeleb ka semiootika väärtusega: märkide väärtuse ja tähendusega. Selles mõttes on semiootika olemuslikult aksioloogiline, kuid enamasti jääb see mõõde varjatuks või vaigistatuks. Semiootika aksioloogilise mõõtme rõhutamine aitab mõista, kuidas kehtestatakse dominantseid signifikatsioone, harjumusi ja väärtusi, ning valgustada olulist rolli, mida see ökosoofiaga ühte sulandudes võiks mängida nii humanitaarteadustes kui ka väljaspool neid. Tunnustades mõlema traditsiooni komplementaarsust, antakse hinnang nende liitumise usutavusele. Võib väita, et ökosoofia näol on tegu aksiomatiseeritud semiootikaga. Sellest uudsest perspektiivist lähtudes võib pidada inimkogukondi dünaamiliselt osalevateks signifikatsiooniprotsessides ruumis, mis on ühtaegu ökosfäär, semiosfäär ning tohutu poliitiline territoorium. Et on üha rohkem tõendeid selle kohta, et keskkonna halvenemine kahandab meie elukvaliteeti ning meie kogukondade jätkusuutlikkust, võib ökosoofiast olla abi väärtuste ning praktikate ümberkujundamisel.