"Der Fortschritt feiert Pyrrhussiege über die Natur". Karl Kraus[1]

Values and Nature: Lack of reflection in practice and lack of search for truth in theory

Two questions might be point of departure for this paper. *How come that people who admit that our behaviour towards nature has catastrophic consequences still, on the whole, continue their way of living? Or how come that many other people will not – in spite of what ought to be obvious problems concerning nature, resources and climate – admit these as facts or at least do not relate to them at all – even as possible facts?* Answering these questions at a certain length and by qualified explaining means may explain what brought about the situation that makes these questions necessary.

This mentioned explanation of course cannot be given here or at least in an exhaustive sense. What will be done is to attempt at an explanation in a specific perspective. In this paper we shall look at the relationship between values, attitudes and nature. We shall deal with problems both on the grandest scale, but also with problems on the smallest scale in the sense of understanding certain mechanisms of human mind and understandings that are relevant for explaining and understanding the grand scale problems. Thus the main focus is on the individual level, but of course in a grand-scale context, and the main focus is not on the supra-aspects of the problems – or these alone. Although I attempt at giving an explanation of non-individual factors, still, I want to stress the factor of individual responsibility as a backdrop for the explanations. The aim is to yield a supplement to explanations with focus on other relevant factors of structural or systemic kind.

As one might think that nature is the basic aspect of the three matters mentioned, one might also think, that our exploration should start with the problem of nature. This, however, cannot be done, as nature is not a matter as such – is not a thing in itself[2]. Nature is something for human beings, and i.e. is something that is represented in a concept. Nature is something general and not anything singular. Therefore our understanding of nature must take point of departure in our own relationship to aspects of nature and the content of that relationship and from there aim at a fuller understanding of the concept of or of concepts of nature. This last thing cannot be done here for reasons that are probably obvious. What we will do, here, is to try to understand the essential reasons why our understanding of nature may not include an understanding of our dependence on nature and our own fragility in this relationship, or why this understanding – if present – often is not expressed in action.

A concept – very shortly speaking – is a mental representation of something that has certain properties which may be stated more or less precisely according to what the concept represents. Of some things we have relatively precise concepts, i.e. we can state the properties of the things relatively precisely, and of other things we have more imprecise concepts. This last thing among others is the case, because the properties may be so many, that it is difficult to point out the most essential ones and draw distinct dividing lines to the objects of other concepts. Nature is among the matters of which we have the least precise concept, and of which we have in fact very differing concepts. This last thing is the case, because our concepts not only include the shared content that makes it possible for us to understand each other, but also include our own attitudes and values which pick out or focus on different properties as essential and consider others as less essential or not essential, and from these attitudes we can rarely liberate ourselves unless in cases, when we deal with something more precise that may be tested or debated on a basis of certain agreements. We therefore have to have a certain understanding of the status or role of values as such in order to be able to explore their role in our concepts of nature. First of all we should be aware, that among the most essential concepts in our conceptual systems are the concepts we have of ourselves as human beings and individuals, but the content of these concepts are related to our other concepts, and are not necessarily concepts corresponding well to their objects or are not necessarily covering their objects or are not necessarily very reflected concepts concerning their content and relation to other concepts. Limitations in this context is an aspect of human life representing limitations in our conceptual background and human capabilities – representing a lack of and in conceptual instruments that after all are human

instruments and limited in their range for understanding, but limitations may also be "self-inflicted" because of lack of reflection – because of lack of motivation or lack of "will" to reflect and to expand the conceptual grasp of matters, where and when this is in fact possible.

Values

What are values? And why are values relevant in our present context of reflecting on our view of nature? Values of course are the exponents of what we find valuable, or of which are the reasons why we value something, but putting it like that, still, does not give us much more information about the matter. We must know, why we find things valuable, i.e. we must be able to state something more precisely about the status of and reasons for values. We must know our reasons for ascribing value to or for attributing values to some given thing or to some state of the world or for finding value in this thing or in this state of world.

For a start we should be aware, that we must operate with the concepts of positive values as well as negative values. I.e. we should be aware that with exception of aesthetic values we are – overall speaking – operating with the content of the concepts of good and evil.

A value – first of all – is, or rather represents, a state of the world which should or ought to be present or not to be present, but it is also a state of the world that is desired to be actual, and if perhaps present already, desired to remain present, or desired not to be actual or to remain present – a state of the world existing as a state desired or not desired by some consciousness. I.e. anything desired has the mark of a value, but this makes almost anything in the world a possible value – and of equal 'value'-status because of differing desires amongst human beings. We all know, of course, that this is not a correct or fully covering picture of the world of values, as we normally attribute higher value to some states of the world than others. In fact it is only in this respect, that we speak seriously about values as values proper: speaking of values as formulated or stated guiding principles for choice of

ends and of perhaps means in our lives, and it is at this level of values, that good and evil as overall categorisations of respectively desirable or undesirable states of the world come into being as notions and form the categorical basis for the single values and perhaps gain status of some sort of independent existence. How come these values obtain this status? There are two possible answers. One answer is that values represent a consciously considered choice of general goals, i.e. constitute ideal goals, and thus constitute superior values as guiding principles for attitudes and choice of action, stating that some states of the world are desirable, and that some states are more desirable than others. A characteristic feature of these kinds of values is, that they exhibit relatively stable and non-contradictive and coherent features. I.e. they tend to be the choice of their adherents for attempted actualisation or avoided actualisation, and there is a tendency towards absence of inconsistency and incoherence in the attitudes: in the emotional and cognitive foundation from which our attitudes spring, and in our choices of action. When noting the relative stability and the relative non-contradiction and coherence, I stress of course the impossibility of the absolute absence of these features, as the adherents of the values may have conflicting values or may have desires conflicting with the values and probably most often have. The absolute absence, of course, is itself an ideal representing a value in itself concerning the status of other values – their contents and relationships, but practice and means for checking consistency and coherence always include human fallibility and shortcomings as to the ideals. But the formal demands and consequently their attempted practice, nonetheless, constitute the basis for securing best reflexivity and coherence in our understanding and practice. While mentioning this last fact, I indicate the possibility of some values existing not only as created through considered reflections, but as discovered by some means or process. Considering the aforementioned values as prudential values we must notice, that they have features bearing, after all, on more than the subjective. They represent ideals or values for valuing the attitudes and behaviour of the individual, and thus represent ideals of rationality, but ideals of rationality that are not just or only ideals of formal rationality as the just mentioned absence of contradiction and presence of coherence. There must be more to rationality than accepting some formal principles. If that is true, we shall have to discover which are the values on which the formal rational values should be applied[3] for possible clarification, confirmation or rejection? Another answer to the question (of the ontological status of values) might be that values are created every time we think of something we would like to be the case and as a possible goal for action – the value being identical with the goal. This on the other hand is not a fruitful way of handling the term. There

seems to be some explicitness about values which do therefore not only represent our (spontaneous) desires. They rather have the character of being explicit guidelines for goals and actions and not only of being whims.

A more simple way of giving a picture of the status of values and yet develop more elaborately on what has been mentioned above might be to look at the relationship between values and mind. One of the most characteristic features of us as human beings is our ability to act, and i.e. our ability to think of goals for possible doings. When we act, we imagine or think first of all of a state of the world that we would like to be present or to come into being, and this state of the world represents the content of our desire, and if it is not present already, then we look for the sort of doing – the action – that might bring about the desired state. A value thus is or represents 'something that should be the case'. The goal as such is present in mind as a mental state, dubbed a 'desire'. A desire is a mental state with a representational content of something (e.g.: p) that should be the case in the world. The content of a desire represents what should be the case in the world. But in order for an act to be possible as a means for an end we should know, how things are, and what might be done to change things into the desired state. The sort of states of mind that hold a content of what is the case, we call 'beliefs'[4]. A 'belief' is a state of mind holding the content: 'that something is the case', and specifically that something is the case concerning the content of acts and the means for certain changes. The content of a 'belief' that is in correspondence with the facts which it represents is a belief holding a truth and therefore is a true belief or is an example of, what we call 'knowledge' about the thing given.

Both 'beliefs' and 'desires' are attitudes: so-called propositional attitudes. Attitudes towards perhaps the same thing (:p, the propositional element), but differing as sort of attitudes because of the affective difference in the attitudes. I can have a belief about something just as that. But I can also be aware, that I have a belief, i.e. I have a belief about a belief – I discover that I have a belief, or I become aware of my belief. The first belief has what we call first order status, i.e. it just came as part of my flow of mind, and the other belief has second order status or reflexive status: it holds an awareness of or a discovery of the original content of the mind. And this belief need not be about another belief, but may be about another sort of or mixed content of mind: thoughts, emotions or perhaps attitudes. I may e.g. also have beliefs about other sort of propositional attitudes. I may discover a desire of mine, thus having a belief about a desire[5]. When I have a belief about a belief, I have the possibility of

distinguishing between my belief and its extra-mental object asking about the status of this belief. Is it true? I.e. is its content true? Why do I have this belief? And I may thereby enter into a train of thoughts about a thing given and the truth-value of the understanding of this thing, i.e. I reflect on the truth of a belief-statement about something given and move from a state of "unconscious" belief in the sense of a belief that I am not aware of into a conscious state of belief – a belief that I am fully aware of. The outcome of that may be, that I create or expand a store of beliefs that I am more consciously convinced are true and applicable for future use, but which may, still, be in less or more coherence and consistency, if they were examined in relationship. This is my possible knowledge as basis for understanding the world and acting in it and for having[6] and evaluating my first order beliefs. This may be my own, personal knowledge based on my own singular experiences concerning content of my personal and family-related history etc., and these make out my third order beliefs used for possible correction of, amendment of or rejection of discovered first order beliefs or perhaps the other way round of parts of the system of beliefs, if through reflective comparison I discover, that the belief does not fit into the system of beliefs. But this store of beliefs normally – apart from knowledge of specific particulars as e.g. family relations etc. etc. – is not – in fact only to a very small degree is – my own and concerning only personal matters etc., but essentially is part of a larger store of beliefs about more general matters that make out the cultural and constituting background for my individual experiences and beliefs. This set of beliefs might be called fourth order beliefs or our common (shared cultural and social) system of knowledge, but there is no guarantee as such, that either my personal third order beliefs or that the fourth order beliefs of our common knowledge systems are all true, and the systems of knowledge therefore include possible false knowledge to a higher or lesser degree. The truth of our beliefs depends on their correspondence with the reality to which they relate and on their mutual coherence and absence of contradictions and therefore depends again on our means for making certain the "reality" of this correspondence etc., i.e. besides will to reflect critically[7] and have and use one's imagination[8] also the instruments of rationality which exist again as the content of fifth order attitudes: the formal content of the attitude to reflect and act rationally and apply these formal principles of rationality in reflections on truth and value content. The order of beliefs – mentioned here – thus represents the different mental representational products or instruments, whereas the process that may create their possible truth content is formally represented by the instruments and procedures of critical reflection[9]. I may watch a flower and find it beautiful. But I may also have a notion, that it is not a real or true flower. The reason for that can only

be my background-knowledge about flowers which is part of my cultural background-knowledge holding a distinction between real, natural flowers and artificial flowers. If this last thing were not the case, the question would never arise. But this again is part of a less or more developed and nuanced knowledge of the characteristics of flowers etc. etc. I may find out on closer inspection that it is not a real flower, and then perhaps on the background of my cultural value-system may also discard its beauty. Whether I enter into this process of reflection and practice its assessments and evaluations, and i.e. whether I therefore correct, amend or reject the first order beliefs that do not fit into the system on basis of rational methods, or whether I correct my belief-system or correct parts of it according to a belief or a set of beliefs that does or do not fit, but which might find support in reality on examination, is all a question of my desires and values, and i.e. a question about my attitudes towards things given on this basis. It is a question of my emotional dispositions and attitudes and therefore is a question, whether I am interested in and have a desire for finding the truth as truth or perhaps am not interested in and have no desire for finding or seeing the truth about some matter given, whereas the question of truth is a question of understanding the matter in itself. Truth as such is independent of emotional attitudes, but the search for truth or lack of search is an expression of a certain attitude: a desire for truth or contrarily a desire for not dealing with truth about a matter given – and in the last case as such most often represents an unconscious desire. We need not in this context take recourse to explanation of the relationship between the unconscious and the sub-conscious and explain the subconscious background for the unconscious in general detail concerning what makes it possible to avoid becoming aware of and reflect on a given belief and thus preserving its relative first order or lower order status in my personal or in our common cultural universe, but just take for granted that mind works like that at a subconscious level in order to avoid some sort of mental pain, and that the consequences of that may be omissions of awareness and of further reflection. Thus, I may have a belief which I do not believe is true, but still it is in my mind as a possible true belief. Yet I may doubt its truth, because it conflicts with my desires or my value-system. My attitudes thus may hold me back from correcting false beliefs or may keep me back from dealing at all with the possible or evidential truth of a given belief or a set of beliefs, e.g. that nature is endangered through pollution and over-exploitation, that natural resources and technological solutions to these problems are similarly limited, and that climate-change is caused or may be caused by human behaviour. This of course – as stated – is not only the case concerning individuals, but may be the case concerning groups and cultures. We may have a belief-system holding a belief, that to keep nature going the right

way, we have to sacrifice a young virgin every spring. This belief may be part of a system of knowledge holding true beliefs about other aspects of nature, but in itself it is hardly a belief that resists a rational discussion and is consistent with the rational basis for our true beliefs[10]. We may believe that nature can never be endangered by human doings etc., and we may believe, that there is a solution to all problems, especially a technological solution. But even if I do enter into the process of reflection, my background of more or less limited knowledge and conceptual apparatus limits my capacities and possibilities respectively in different fields. The possible reasons for the mentioned non-reflective attitudes in contrast to a truly reflective, rational, truth-orientated attitude will be investigated briefly in what follows.

Yet, we should be aware that, what is described here, is a formal order of possible (positive) qualifications of or lack of qualifications of beliefs or desires and values (and other propositional attitudes), i.e. a description of formally qualified relations of levels of content in a process or lack of process, and the order is not necessarily a linear order and a tense-order. 'Beliefs' about something may be about something particular or something general. "It is raining just now" or "rain is the result of water condensing in the skies", but the 'belief' in something particular holds something general and therefore represents higher order content, and even the most "spontaneous" belief – here described as a first-order belief – is only relative to and represents or is the product of more or less higher order beliefs. "It is raining now" can only be stated possibly non-coincidentally and correctly by a mind that knows the essential conditions for and characteristics of 'rain' whatever they may be, and knowledge of these conditions exists at a fourth order level as basis for correction of possible mistakes: "This is water from rain that has stopped" or "This is water splashed by human beings or this is water from some technological devices" etc. When we relate to 'beliefs' in a non-formal context – in actual life, we therefore of course never encounter pure examples of the content of the ordering categories, because they are part of a flux of thoughts, except the formal ordering principles 1-4 themselves described here which belong to the pure or purely formal aspect of fourth order attitude level.

We can also have desires about desires. But second order desires as mere desires are different in their relational content to first order content from second order beliefs. There is an asymmetry here between first order and second order desires and first and second order beliefs. Second order desires have their source in higher order "desires". When I have a

second order desire about a first order desire, I desire, that I do not desire what I desire, or I experience, that I would wish, that I did not desire what I do in fact desire[11]. The reason for this is the fact, that prior to the second order desire, I discovered the first order desire – I formed a belief about my desire, and that gave me a possibility for comparing perhaps my desire with my view of what I ought to desire, i.e. for comparing with my view of what I consider desirable in the world: my personal values and perhaps also non-personal values representing explicit beliefs about what is desirable for me or for human beings and perhaps non-human beings. Values state how things should be. Values therefore represent or create guide-lines or basis for evaluative orientation: for how things ought to be, and values create basis for choice on this basis by telling us what is to be considered positive and negative: what must be considered within the sphere of respectively good and bad and thus on the background of or combined with knowledge of facts would be the right thing to do or not to do. My personal values might state – as it is the case for many people and especially is the case around the turn of New Year – not to gain or actually to lose weight. If then I discover, that I have a strong desire for a rich cake and in fact am about to start eating it, I may develop a desire for not desiring to eat the cake on the background of my personal values. Whether I eat it or not is another question, because the existence of and my belief in my values are no guarantee, that I follow them. We all have experiences like this, of not living up to our own values, satisfying our spontaneous desires instead, but that does not change the status of values. It only tells us, that we do not always act on our values, and that we do not always take our stated values very seriously. I.e. we often let our explicit values be overruled by our present desires and preferences – we often do not act in accordance with or act rationally even according to our own professed beliefs in values. Values, still, do not just represent desires, but desires may be stronger as action-causing factors than values for reasons that I shall try to explain very briefly later. In the case of values just representing or being identical with desires, values would be completely contingent as values and represent no sort of necessity in this respect – not even in relation to the person herself.

Now that we have perhaps some knowledge of the status of values, we should also look at the possible non-subjective content of values and our problems concerning fulfilling these values. But before entering into that field, we should have a look at the role of attitudes and try to estimate their relation to emotions and possibly to values and beliefs.

Definition of and explanation of attitudes

Attitudes make out or might be understood as a special type of content of human mind or consciousness, and i.e. make out a special type of content that hold common, special formal features the content of which again is characterized by differences of type. An attitude is a state of mind that holds a specific cognitive and emotional content in relation to a specific object and most often (and if it is to make sense to speak of attitudes:) of some durance and especially stability of content, i.e. with a tendency for experiential disposition in relation to the given object and expressed in related behaviour. The attitude thus is the expression of the stable relationship in consciousness to the object and is different from a mere emotion or feeling by its disposed i.e. its repeated cognitive content and its determined or rather: by its determining, reiterate, emotive content in contrast to the more "common", situative and fluent nature of emotions just as emotions, so that the content of relationship to the object of attitudes persists, even if the object is not present for or in mind. The cognitive element identifies and delimits the object with fewer or more elements or details, whereas the emotive element holds the affective experiences that are connected to the object. 'Anger' thus as a mere emotion is general and arise in a specific situation, whereas an 'attitude of anger' ('hate') is directed towards a specific object with a tendency for being tied to the object with a reiterated content, whenever the object is present in mind and in reality. Attitudes may be simpler, but can also be complex in their cognitive and emotional content, and most often are. What we name with a single term as mere emotions or attitudes most often distort the fact, that the content of emotions and attitudes are complex. Simple attitudes can principally and formally be identified by their type which may as such be formally identified by their differing emotive content which represents the many nuances of attitude-content of which I will only give a few essential examples here. Examples of "simple" attitudes or rather simple terms for types of attitudes, but often with a complex content may the following: 'to be aware that', 'to believe that', 'to presume that', to 'judge that', 'to expect', 'to wonder that', 'to doubt that', 'to deny that', 'to be certain that', 'to confirm that', 'to estimate that', 'to accept that', 'to desire that', 'to be happy that', 'to like', 'to love', 'to admire', 'to hope that', 'to feel faith in', 'to trust', 'to feel confidence in', 'to fear that', 'to

dislike', 'to hope for', 'to despise', 'to disdain', 'to feel repugnance for', 'to mistrust', 'to feel shame about', 'to reflect on' or 'to ascribe value to' (which last attitude in its true sense we shall see represents or is "born with" a higher order and complex attitude-status) concerning a given thing (e.g.: p), while the content of the attitudes are given by corresponding nominalizations: 'awareness of', 'belief in' etc. But not 'astonishment about' as this emotion is not characterized by the fixed object and stability of attitudes – on the contrary. The purely formal aspect of the simple types exists as propositions, and we therefore characterize many attitudes as 'propositional attitudes' – thus following the tradition after Bertrand Russell, but not fully he himself[12], and the possible emotional content characterizes the respective attitudes as 'reactive attitudes', i.e. they are characterized by their specific nuanced pro or con emotional content[13]. Types of attitudes, thus as stated, may in principle represent only different emotive content in relation to the exactly same object (: p)[14]. The cognitive content, though, will in each singular case most often be unique, as the thoughts about the object are or can be part of a larger body of thoughts: of 'views', and as no object is understood in the context independently of an emotive content, and the emotive content is in constant change in relation to the cognitive aspect, and therefore as a rule is full of nuances and is unique. Attitudes therefore most often are – and 'views' about things by "nature" are – complex states of mind with a variegated and possibly contradictory content which comes to exist in psychic process with other attitudes as original sources and themselves moving in a process. This process often contains a circularity as a mark of the tie aspect and stability aspect of attitudes – narrow, broader or large circles – more or less constant returning to the same way of experiencing the object – the closed attitude of 'prejudices' or 'biases' in contrast to e.g. the more open and reflected attitudes – and specifically the more reflected attitudes towards attitudes which we are trying to practice formally here and shall return to concerning reflective attitudes to attitude-content relating to nature later in this paper. Only few attitudes can be absolutely or truly self-reflexive in type at more than two or more levels as can 'beliefs' and 'desires', and as will be seen from the schema below 'desires' at a higher reflexive level include 'beliefs' and not 'desires' as 'desires' proper[15], and not all "positive" attitudes have a symmetrically opposite "negative" attitude or vice versa. E.g. 'feeling shame about' does not have a symmetrically opposite attitude: 'not feeling shame of', but rather represents an outside attitude of reproach against the person who ought to feel shame, because he or she behaves "shamelessly" according to the outside attitude-view, thus attributing this person a content of a non-existing attitude rather than considering its lack of content of attitude as a potential that ought to be fulfilled as e.g. in the case of attitudes of

'not reflecting', if there is no "motive" i.e. desire behind the absence of reflection, but I shall not delve deeper into this, as it is not of main relevance in depth for the further exploration.

Non-subjective values and objective values

Having said above, that my spontaneous or first order desires may conflict with my personal values or with the values of my culture, I must modify the statement. Cultures represent systems of knowledge and values, and as members of a culture we are brought up on and socialized into these systems, and therefore our spontaneous desires are formed or influenced by the existing value-system, so that many of our desires are the more or less direct product of our cultural background, but this does not mean, that the specific content of this influence is necessarily a good influence. Even our biologically founded desires, i.e. our desires for food, drink etc. are not just desires for food and drink – and sex for that matter, but are desires for specific sorts of food, drink etc. influenced by cultural traditions and these represent adaption to given conditions of life including geographical/natural, cultural, power-related matters etc. Beyond that, many of our desires themselves are the product of culture, but as such they are not necessarily identical with what we need, essentially speaking. This, however, means that our value-systems and attitudes might not represent, what might be the right values: the best or true values. As such cultural values represent non-individual values, but not necessarily objective values. The question now is: do such, objective values exist? Which are they? And how do they relate to nature? If they exist, then we have to explain them, and why they exist and how come, that we perhaps are not aware of them in our understanding and do not practice them in attitudes and do not observe them in practice. But before addressing this problem we should be aware, that we do not only have beliefs about desires and other propositional attitudes (as mentioned: taking notice of, denials of, acceptance of, being certain of, fears of, hopes for, confidence in, faiths in, trust in, reliance on etc. of perhaps the same thing: p, but with differing emotional content or differing emotional modes), we do or may – as stated above – also have desires about our beliefs, i.e.

we also have desires about what to believe, and these desires of what to believe whether individual or influenced by or part of our culture do not necessarily correspond to the reality of what the desired belief is or ought to be about, and our beliefs therefore are not necessarily true beliefs. In contrast to second order desires about desires which are the product of a reflective process[16], second order desires about beliefs – desires not to believe or desires to believe without reason – are most often unconscious and unreflected mental states that stop reflection. The reason for this may be the pain involved with facing reality, and as we all "know"?: "...human kind cannot bear very much reality..."[17]. There are several mental mechanisms operating like this, and among these are on one hand the more "active" mechanisms of repression and self-deceit[18] whether this relates to an individual or to a culture, and there are on the other hand the more "passive" mechanisms of "forgetting" and not reflecting which may also relate to individuals and cultures[19]. These mechanisms of course are two sides to the same coin, but I shall only return briefly to one special side to the last aspect concerning (what I dub) symbolization of power.

The order of the attitudes of respectively beliefs and desires may be represented formally like this, and it should be kept in mind, that this is a simplification of a complex reality for the sake of understanding:

Fifth order attitudes:	*Fourth order attitudes:*	*Third order attitudes:*	*Second order attitudes:*	*First order attitudes:*
Will to use formal principles of rationality and instruments of reflection on belief-content	Cultural belief-systems/Cultural knowledge systems	Belief-system/sum of personal knowledge	Belief (about first order belief)	Belief: that p is the case

Will to use formal principles of rationality and instruments of reflection on desirability-content	Cultural belief-systems of desirable states in the world/sum of cultural values	Belief-system of desirable states in the world/sum of personal values	Desire not to desire first order desire	Desire: that p should be the case

Objective values

As stated: our possible true beliefs and our possible true knowledge systems are the products of the right reflections on the relationship between the content of our beliefs and the object of that belief. If by the means available for rational approach we are convinced, that there is such a correspondence, we call the belief a true belief. If by the same means we are convinced about the "universal" desirability of given state of the world, we are as close as possible to considering this state of the world an objective value. But in that case we do not deal with just how things are, but how they ought to be, i.e. what ought to be desirable for us: values about our given values. We might call this aspect of the problem: reflections on what values we ought to have and cherish. We therefore have to reflect on the basis for our first order desires and find out, whether they are in correspondence with the basis for fulfilling of desires as such. I.e. we have to reflect on our common nature as human beings and understand our desires as part of our nature and understand their function. Desires thus should be understood as the means for satisfying the needs of the human being. Desires according to this view "serve" needs, but on the other hand: not all needs are necessarily spoken out in desires, and all desires do not correspond respectively to an essential need given. I may have a need for water without being thirsty, and I may have desires for things that will perhaps not make me more satisfied or may even jeopardize my other needs and may in the worst case jeopardize my most central or essential needs – my future well-being or my future being. These possibly problematic needs are representatives of what one might

call secondary needs, i.e. needs the content of which has taken the role of a substitute, compensating/representing the original need because of lack of satisfaction of the original central need[20].

Needs can be described as and by the content of the aspects of organic beings without the presence of the object of the need and it's satisfaction the being will fare badly: without the 'satisfaction' of which the being is object to harm and damage and perhaps ceases to exist. The content of a need therefore should be understood in a broad sense and not as something that can be listed in short form and be ordered exclusively in types as we often do. What is characteristic of needs is, that they represent conditions for beings concerning not to suffer damage and to preserve their well-being, and that needs are representations or images of the conditions of absence of non-harm, or oppositely the conditions of satisfaction of and presence of well-being. The content of a need therefore can be characterized by an absence of harm (negatively seen) or by a possible well-being (positively seen) in a specific sense, and this content can be understood in a specific sense or context in relation to the being, and the object of the need therefore must be understood as that – that if (possibly) acknowledged and accessible – might prevent the harm. In cases concerning food and water we know the objects, but for a great part of the population of the world these objects though known are not accessible in sufficient supply.

Still, we may suffer harm in respect to needs without knowing, and we can have needs without knowing[21]. But we may also be un-well or threatened concerning our well-being without knowing.

Needs therefore represent objective, factual, conditions in the world, but our given conditions of knowledge, our awareness of the possible needs and our will to try to understand their content and objects play a role for needs. The content has a factual side to it, but also a reflective and an interpretative side. E.g. has the understanding of the need for air been replaced by the understanding of the need for oxygen in metabolic processes, and the need for nourishment has been specified into several things e.g. vitamins etc. in the right combination and amount. The interpretative aspect of a need may correspond less or more to its object and may be less or more exploratively and critically reflected on and therefore may

be farther away from or closer to an understanding of our needs, but our understanding of needs construct these as some sort of ”objects” that do in fact not exist in themselves. Our understanding can try to get hold of essential or less essential needs and can distinguish between needs and their objects. The essential needs of course are those the lacking satisfaction of which cause greatest harm, and this harm in itself may be very real and serious and telling. As our ways of understanding needs differ and as misunderstanding at the same time represents possibilities of harm and damage, and as the background of these possibilities often represent complex interplays between content of needs and their objects, and between lack of understanding in some people or perhaps closer understanding in other people, it is therefore obvious, why this area is not – as mentioned – only an area of great variation of understanding, but an area of disagreement and conflict, and also why this area makes out the basis for values and debate about values, i.e. which ends we should aim at, and which means we ought to apply.

As I have stated the possibility of discovering objective values so far, it is a question of discovering conditions for general well-being, and i.e. discovering and reflecting on the general, essential needs of human beings. That discovery might end up in the following list as conditions for well-being – the general central values – and therefore will end up in a discovery of sub-values (satisfaction of differentiated central needs) in themselves for which we can state the means for satisfaction and of which some have instrumental value (e.g. food and the technological means that may bring about the satisfaction of the needs) which in accordance with L.W. Sumner[22] we might call sources of well-being:

Sources of well-being:

Energy and relaxing (a supply of nourishment and water, excreting of wastes, detensioning of tensions)

Close personal bonds

Play and rest

Vitality/gladness

Love of life and attitudes of engaging commitment

Health (freedom from physical and mental pain and limitations)

A feeling of safety (freedom from worries)

Enjoyments/pleasures

Experiences of successfulness

Self-respect/experiences of equal worth and respect being attributed to one

Knowledge and understanding, and the ability for reflection and self-reflection

Personal freedom

Meaningful activities and an experience of “acceptable” coherence and purpose in life on the whole and in one’s own life

The outcome of the understanding of these needs and their means for satisfaction may be represented as the following essential or superior values, i.e. as desirable states of the world the presence of which may secure well-being and its social conditions best:

Truth and the means for truth about essential and relevant matters:

true knowledge

and

critical reflection (truth as an ideal concerning beliefs about facts of the world, and as necessary for understanding the content of the values and for understanding the means for actualizing the following values:)

Sources of well-being or what as conditions for such we might shortly call:

Welfare- and happiness-conditions,

Equality of individual worth

and

Freedom

Knowledge about values

The basis for knowing, that these things mentioned are the case is – as stated – true knowledge about ourselves and our needs, therefore the essentiality of the value of truth, but also of knowledge of the conditions in the world that may best secure the satisfaction (truth about the nature of the world and about the best, possible cooperative conditions for securing these conditions), knowledge about the nature of social life and its best security conditions and presuppositions, that we are all part of a social, cultural and linguistic/communicative context established basically for cooperation and which make out the preconditions for being the human and individual beings that we are (: equality of worth), i.e. that I can only come to an understanding of myself through an understanding of or recognition of other human beings and their equal social status. Of course our ways of satisfying the need for well-being may vary, and we should therefore within certain attempted definable limits have the right to pursue our own means for satisfaction and be

granted freedom to do so without harming the corresponding freedom of the others. An understanding of the best conditions for our lives is based on a common understanding of the role of all the values in social life. This understanding need not be explicit, but may be a practice in social life – a practice that keeps the understanding alive without necessarily reflecting on it and on the consequences of the lack of practice. This sort of social life "just" practices a mutual recognition of needs without necessarily reflecting explicitly on the values involved and their connections, but still makes out the core of possible social life.

Of course things do not always work this way in social life, and sometimes in some relations things are very far from this understanding, and this is a consequence of forgetting the pre-reflexive understanding of basic common values in special contexts or in common and in this last case without perhaps developing a fully reflexive understanding of the role of values, as I have tried to indicate very shortly above. We can see now, that a full understanding of values includes an understanding of the relationship between the different order-aspects of attitudes which together make some sort of "system" of values which again are part of our attitudes. The basis being a discovery of first order desires which are discovered on the background of third order desires/states desirable (personal and social value systems) not to be convenient with or to be in conflict with our third order desires and therefore as objects for possible second order desires thus desired not to be desired. When values as third order attitudes of desirable matters and their basis are reflected on at a deeper level on the background of fifth order values of rationality, we may create and discover fourth order values that gets close to holding an objective and universal act-obligating status[23]. A lot could be said more about and elaborated on these values and possible reasons for lack of understanding them, but this is not the place, for now it is only relevant to remind of the role of desires and values in our attitudes as stated above as emotional content with a more or less reflected dimension to it. Let us instead turn to our understanding of the role of nature in this context and i.e. more specifically also to the role of attitudes towards nature, specifically the content of attitudes that might block deeper reflections on nature and produce the assumed negative consequences for nature and human beings of this paper, because we cannot sum up all the possible attitudes we might take towards nature.

Nature and values

Our understanding of ourselves and thus our understanding of on which values our lives rest does not only include other human beings – understanding of interdependence, but also includes an understanding of our relations to most aspects of nature – understanding of absolute dependence. As beings with needs we are dependent on the matters that may satisfy our needs and should ascribe value accordingly to these matters, and therefore nature ought to play the same role concerning values in our lives as does or as ought aspects of social life and societal institutions that produce cooperation and well-being. The satisfaction of most of our central needs depends, of course, on resources of nature, and these resources represent natural values. Here we have to look closer into the causes for the lack of understanding of the values of nature and the value of nature as a whole. These consist as in the case of social values in forgetting the pre-reflexive understanding of the values of nature and perhaps not developing a reflexive understanding of the value of nature – of nature – now – in the general – i.e. of nature in a reflexive respect[24].

Why do we forget the essential values of and the possible true beliefs about nature? The answer has to do with forgetting as in the case of social values, but in this case the forgetting is not only a factor that dissolves or jeopardizes social values, but it is helped about by social cooperation for control over the conditions of nature in the future. This common human will to break the contingency of the dependence on natural conditions – this will to control nature – originates in and makes the basis of the possibility to develop technological means for control and relief. The discovery of means to make life less dependent on coincidental matters in nature, and making material life easier and improving aspects of social life by means of technology, inventiveness and cooperation with other human beings has caused the development in recent historical times of a technology that has made many of us forget our dependence (as needy beings) on nature and has created a culture of promise of satisfaction of desires and created an influence on our desires that works in direction of forgetting our fragility and dependence. The more we can persuade ourselves and others into, that we are independent, the less dependent we feel, and the means for showing power today to many people is identical with the ability to show material-control: ownership of market commodities. Technology and a reductive attitude towards nature among many

representatives within the natural sciences focusing on nature as something only quantitative[25] and abstract has made it possible for many of us to forget more easily, that we ourselves are part of nature and are dependent, and has helped us develop a "need" (desire) for forgetting our dependence in this respect: for not being aware of our dependence on nature. Power over material life in society thus has come to take the role of value in itself – as the supreme value, and not just as a means for satisfying fundamental needs. This forgetting is an aspect of a mechanism which I shall touch on briefly in the last part of this paper, but the understanding of which I consider most essential to a full understanding of the problems and for moving from the pre-reflexive to the reflexive understanding of our fundamental values including the fundamental aspect of values of nature.

The mechanisms of power and "forgetting" (of essential knowledge and values)

If we define or understand power as: *what* makes it possible to do what one wants or we want to do and obtain, it is evident that we strive for power, and i.e. we strive for the means that make this possible. To strive for power is identical with striving for securing what makes it possible still to be able to do what one wants to do or obtain. This *what* "thing" most often comprises non-mental aspects, but basically it also comprises and needs fulfilling of some mental conditions based on the fundamental mental mechanism of avoiding pain and its reminder: feeling endangered, and comprises this mechanism's creation of means for defence against this feeling and its supposed origin: i.e. means of defence against powerlessness in different contexts and interpretations.

Among conditions for power at the outer level thus basically certain inner conditions are necessary, and these are mental conditions of a partly or possibly problematic sort. These conditions should not only be satisfied in pretence or temporarily in order to work. They can only work by establishing a deeply rooted mental pattern that satisfies the conditions of struggle for power and express the striving for power:

”…The same arts that did gain

A pow’r must it maintain…”[26]

These conditions hold several dimensions. The first dimension of the matter is, that the person striving for power or control must preserve an image of herself/himself as in power or powerful and i.e. abjure the possibility of weakness and lack of power in order to secure the faith in the ability to practice power. I.e. the person must develop a mental ability – a disposition – to “close her/his eyes to” doubt-reminding examples or memories – must develop a specific attitude to things concerning power. This can only be done by constantly demonstrating one’s strength and secure this being the case, also in cases when there is not necessarily a need for obtaining anything beyond this fact: only in order to persuade one-self and others of the ability and to develop and exercise and strengthen the necessary emotions and thoughts. This therefore becomes an end in itself, although as a condition for exerting power it serves also as a means, but also discloses the fact, that this attitude has been emotionally practiced and integrated in mind as a “need” for self-assertion, but in the sense: a “need” for not being dissatisfied with one-self as powerless – a dispositional desire for not being reminded of powerlessness, i.e. developing an attitude concerning obtaining the means that might help us in this respect. The mental means are attempted self-trust, and “forgetting” defeats as “satisfaction” of the desire not to see the reality of powerlessness, and the non-mental means are the means of any kind that might help the mental means and here not only material means of power are essential, but also symbols of power. The ways by which we try to assert our power as an end in itself – of course – are influenced by our surroundings – by our culture – and the ways power is considered, and not least how power is represented in common/cultural symbols of power. In this respect we become dependent on the symbols of power in order to try to forget our dependence. Thus a culture characterized by efficient dominance over nature and celebrating values of material control necessarily helps us forget our dependence on nature, and when our dependence in other respects becomes obvious and is disclosed to us, as it is always the case now and then, it only makes us “need”/desire to see even less this dependence and base our values on desires for things

that may not remind us of or may try to hide our dependence – and in this case cherishing "false" values – rather than finding the "true" values that do not endanger our future lives.

Conclusion: Values in nature and values in (social) life

If what is stated above is true – and of course the credibility of the theories about the many aspects that have been touched upon needs a great deal more clarification and reasoning support, but that I have done elsewhere concerning part of the content – then what we can conclude is: first of all that it is not only necessary to take a rational attitude towards our beliefs about the many aspects of nature, as is done within the natural sciences and technological practices, but secondarily that it is also necessary to deal rationally with our values and find essential and common values that include the values of nature. In fact this last doing is a precondition for doing the first thing – and to do it in the right way[27], and therefore the order of the findings mentioned should be reversed, so that the secondary should be the first and vice versa, in contrast to the "traditional" order that I have followed here to show the role of the factors which are of course connected – as I have also tried to show. The values in nature as basis for a good life therefore consist in secure access to healthy food, clean water and to energy for cooking, heating and other technological purposes without endangering future access, and all this equals sustainable production, housing etc., and it implies social and political life that strives for equal access to these means. These values can only be a surprise to those who do not reflect on the values of nature and their role in social and political life, and who do therefore not see our total dependence and moral duties in a coherent picture of life, and do not therefore see, that a broad, reflective and thus inclusive picture of life is necessary for finding the true values and practicing them.

So to sum up: blind progress is not true progress, but ends up in barbaric consequences, and enlightenment that focuses solely on dominance of nature for the sake of material progress is not true enlightenment[28] and is self-defeating.

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[1] From Karl Kraus: *Pro domo et mundi*, Suhrkamp Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 1990 (originally 1912).

[2] Cf. e.g. Ute Guzzoni: *Über Natur. Aufzeichnungen unterwegs: Zu einem anderen Naturverhältnis*, Verlag Karl Alber: Freiburg und München 1995.

[3] If rationality were just a matter of formality, anything but formal deduction and formal explanation would be senseless, which is, of course, not the way we operate as rational beings. I shall return briefly to this problem.

[4] I here draw on the tradition of understanding acts as being based on 'desires' and 'beliefs' founded by David Hume, but again I must stress, that this is just an inspiration, as I think, that this point of view holds a basic understanding, but it is far from covering the more complex reality that I shall try to indicate or show.

[5] I am inspired here by the thoughts of Harry G. Frankfurt on second order desires etc., but I deviate a great deal in my use and understanding of the content of the differing orders. See Harry G. Frankfurt: 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person', in Journal of Philosophy 1971. Reprinted in Harry G. Frankfurt: *Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1988.

[6] I shall return to this aspect very briefly in the immediately following text.

[7] This is a factor for which it is impossible to state exact norms, but for which I shall indicate some descriptive and formal conditions in the immediately following.

[8] Imagination is formally speaking the name for a faculty of mind for experiencing in mind things that are not directly part of perception. Imagination is the faculty for combining in mind to a certain degree under the control of will what is not immediately present, and the elements of combination may comprise anything of mental content: of experiential and conceptual sort. I shall not delve deeper into this aspect, but let it be reminded as combining part of the contents of mind – and in some cases, negatively speaking: as the "lack of" combining or of combination of certain contents of mind, i.e. as lack of activity or of the right activity, when the "obvious" and "necessary" combination is not present or is "avoided", which I shall try to explain. Imagination

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plus a relevant and broad conceptual apparatus should be considered as essential aspects of qualified or positive capacity for reflection – and for 'empathy', i.e. for the capability to mirror or "experience" what other beings experience emotionally and/or cognitively, but I cannot elaborate on that here apart from the negative aspect: the absence of imagining and imagination that is in focus in this paper.

[9] This attempted, ideal product or result of reflection has been dubbed: 'a wide reflective equilibrium' which in philosophical tradition comprises both attempts at establishing the truth or falseness of beliefs and attempts at establishing right values or moral principles and discarding false values. Cf. e.g. John Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1971, and Norman Daniels: *Justice and Justification: Reflective Equilibrium in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press: New York/Cambridge 1996.

[10] I take shared knowledge of rational understanding of the principles and laws of nature for granted, and I shall not enter into a further discussion here.

[11] The reason why second order desires are only negative desires about desires is that to desire what you desire is not a true second order desire. The possibly alleged, positive second order desire relates to the object of the first order desire and not to the mental state of the desire – relates not to the desire as desire – and is therefore identical with the first order desire. A first order desire exists by its object, but that object may be of variegated sort relating not only to and is not only just a desire for a given object and/or the feeling of satisfaction it may bring about, but depends also most often on the thoughts about and mental images concerning the object and its context. On the other hand a second order desire takes as its object the purely mental aspect of the first order desire: of the fact that there is a desire for a specific object. Thus desires are only simple or un-complex attitudes, as we might interpret Hume to think, though he stresses first of all the emotional dimension of desires, if they are understood in the mentioned purely formally representational way, whereas in reality they are most often a great deal more complex. Still, of course, there are positive second order attitudes. I may react positively to my first order desire and 'accept' my first order desire, but 'acceptance' is a different type of attitude, as we shall see. Second order acceptance of a first order desire has its source in third or fourth order desirabilities – as we shall also see – and may bring about a desire to act on the specific first order desire. This desire to act on a first order desire Harry G. Frankfurt dubs a second order desire, but though it is a desire relating to a desire, it is not in my view a direct desire about a desire. Something has been added giving it a status of a "new" desire, though of meta-kind, and that is my reason for not totally adopting the view of Harry G. Frankfurt. I shall leave the matter undecided so far, as it is of less importance for the overall concern of this paper.

[12] Bertrand Russell: 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', in The Monist, 1918. Reprinted in Bertrand Russell: *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950*, pp. 177–281, Robert Charles Marsh (Ed.), Unwin Hyman: London 1956. The matter of focus in the context of this paper is not an understanding and discussion of the semantic i.e. of the propositional aspect, but rather of the attitudinal aspect.

[13] Cf. P.F. Strawson: 'Freedom and Resentment', Proceedings of the British Academy, 48 (1962), pp. 1-25. Reprinted in: P.F. Strawson: *Freedom and Resentment and other Essays*, Methuen and Co. Ltd.: London 1974.

[14] There is or may of course be a difference between the possible emotional content of some of the attitudes related to respectively human beings, cultural and societal matters in contrast to the emotional content related to respectively purely natural objects.

[15] Of course I can have first order desires about (higher order) desirabilities, but then a strong cognitive reasoned element is included as reason-giving element and background as mentioned in footnote 11 of this paper.

[16] Cf. footnote 11 of this paper.

[17] From 'Burnt Norton' in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

[18] Believing that things are like what one desires them to be, although things are not truly like that.

[19] In Marxist thinking the term used to describe this phenomenon is false-consciousness which again comprises more aspects and is part of the phenomenom termed alienation.

[20] This mechanism needs a more elaborate explanation that I cannot enter further into here.

[21] Needs therefore do not represent only mental states, but also represent physiological states or activities. Cf. Garett Thomson whose thoughts on needs make an essential basis for inspiration in this specific context. See Garett Thomson: *Needs*, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London and New York 1987.

[22] See L.W. Sumner: *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, Clarendon Press: New York and Oxford 1996, but I have elaborated on his list.

[23] What I defend here, is some sort of quasi-realism concerning the ontological status of values – meaning that values exist in relation to human life independent of individual desires and preferences, but as expressions of an intelligible human world.

[24] Remember page 2 of this paper.

[25] This aspect of course is a factor among the many others that I touch on, and it deserves a much more elaborated discussion than the mere mentioning here.

[26] End-lines from Andrew Marvell's poem: 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland'. These lines were uttered in a specific context and with a legitimizing intention or attitude, but with the same implication as the one expressed here and in the case of Marvell presumably with the same understanding of the price of power. *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, Edited by Nigel Smith, Revised edition, Pearson/Longman: Harlow 2007.

[27] This has been stated in a larger historical perspective especially by representatives of the phenomenological tradition, e.g. Husserl, Heidegger et al., but with a less explicit focus on values.

[28] Cf. e.g. Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno: *Dialetik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*, S. Fischer Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 1969 (1944).