

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Life beyond the Anthropocene: The Human and Ecological Attunement

March 17–19, 2023

CENTRE FOR PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

King's University College at Western University, Canada

The conference will include keynote addresses from Daniel Wildcat (Haskell Indian Nations University), Jason Wirth (Seattle University), Marjolein Oele (University of San Francisco University), and John Maraldo (University of North Florida).

THEME

The depth, scale, and urgency of our contemporary ecological precipice cannot be denied. In less than a century humanity has more radically transformed and exploited the Earth than all previous generations combined and thus far the 21st century has only intensified this exploitation. The manifestations are well-known: dependence on fossil fuels and plastics; industrial scale deforestation; rapid extraction and depletion of natural resources including freshwater, proliferation of toxic waste products, etc. To these geophysical symptoms and mechanisms can be added increasing and rampant socioeconomic inequity and widespread spiritual malaise and alienation. As ecosystems collapse and species go extinct, the continued survival and well-being of human and nonhuman life forms on Earth cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, the exponential rate of consumption, exploitation, and destruction leads to the real possibility of global resource wars coupled with increasing mechanisms of state security to maintain severe inequality. However, despite glimmers and whispers of dawning alternatives, there is little indication of widespread collective action. At this critical moment, we appear paralyzed by a crisis in human self-understanding and an inability to imagine the human outside the framework of *Homo economicus*.

Many mainstream proposed responses to the ecological crisis are largely rooted in a Neo-Liberal framework of monetization and profit-making. Green energy and sustainable models of resource management, along with geoengineering schemes of carbon capture and economic strategies of carbon trading and offsets, are touted as new frontiers for financial investment, with returns pitched in both moral and economic terms. Such tactics fail to address the fundamental problem of human understanding. The changes needed cannot be brought about by continuing to think within an economic model of subjectivity largely responsible for the escalation of the Anthropocene in the last century. Instead, confronting these complex challenges requires rethinking and renewing fundamental understanding of what it means to be human.

Such elemental scrutiny has long been the province of religion and philosophy. And yet, both religion and philosophy have just as often functioned as forces of division and modes of

justification for hierarchy and domination. Nevertheless, and despite necessary critiques of the overreach and harms of false universalizing, we believe the time is right for renewed projects seeking to articulate transcendental or universal conditions of the human, even as such projects must never lose touch with the concrete singularity, difference, and value of each particular life. Can we learn to understand such unique singularity not as a mode of separation, but rather as an expression of the interconnectedness of life that the philosopher Glenn Albrecht calls “*sumbios*” (living together)? As the present crisis makes starkly clear, despite differences in vulnerability and culpability, all humanity, and indeed all life, share a fundamental dependency on the Earth and its climates.

Moreover, if it is increasingly clear that paradigmatic transformations are necessary for more authentically symbiotic relation with each other and all life forms, this does not mean beginning from a blank slate or jettisoning the inheritance of the world’s religious and philosophical traditions. Nor must it be approached through the false and damaging dichotomy that posits sciences and faiths as mutually exclusive opponents. Rather, what is needed is a dual project of revisioning and rediscovering what remains relevant from the past for the novel present and future. Could the possibility of a planetary scale transformation inspire deepened reflection, renewal, and cultivation of what is valuable in our diverse heritages and traditions? Instead of positioning differing traditions as competitors for the sole mantle of authority, could we work with their different lenses in the process of creatively synthesizing or collaborating towards a new culture and human understanding?

With such questions in mind, the Centre for Philosophy and Culture (formerly the Centre for Advanced Research in European Philosophy) will host an international conference from March 17 to 19th, 2023 bringing together scholars, philosophers and visionaries to explore vital questions of human self-understanding. Can we transform prevailing conceptions of the human to become a contributing, and not dominating, participant in the life of the planet? What seeds can be found in our respective religious and philosophical wisdom traditions? Can we articulate a transcendental understanding of the human that is no longer based on essential dominance or separation from the Earth and its myriad life forms?

In addition to these keynotes, specific panels will be devoted to ecology and Indigenous philosophies, ecology and Buddhist and East Asian philosophy, and ecology and Abrahamic philosophy. We invite abstracts (300 words maximum) from all interested parties. While there are many possibilities from which to explore these questions, we ask that the abstracts express a clear connection to the question of rethinking the human in this context. As such, sample themes might include:

- What are the conditions for “ecological conversion” (citing Pope Francis)?
- What is the relationship between conceptual and affective modalities in theorizing transformation?
- Can religion be rethought so that it might serve as a uniting rather than a dividing force?
- How can we transform the Neo-Liberal economic frameworks of monetization?

- How do inherited cultural narratives influence collective engagement with ecological crisis in the present?
- How do we understand the relationship between the global or planetary and the local or communal?
- How do we balance the need for large scale planetary action with the specific local differences of varying ecologies and histories?
- What role does the temporal structure of the imagination play in creating conditions of possibility for an alternative future?
- How does rethinking the human relate to processes of decolonization and indigenization?
- How can we interrupt invisible assumptions of 'common sense' to alter lived experience towards more robust awareness of interconnectedness?
- How might lived relationships to time be altered so as to deepen appreciation of the way that the present is linked to both past and future?

We will have two rounds of submission. The first round has a due date of July 15, 2022. The second-round due date is January 1, 2023. All submissions will be equally reviewed. Please email abstract proposals for anonymous review to: carep@kings.uwo.ca.