Dependence on Place, Dependence in Place

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Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father of men in heaven, end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky? The Earth is the very quintessence of the human condition.

Hannah Arendt

Hannah Arendt was not alone in noting that Euro-masculinist[1] cultures seem "possessed by a rebellion against the human condition,"[2] and particularly against our dependence on the Earth. At least since the second world war, a small chorus of anxious voices has tried to remind us, with great urgency if not great success, of our forgetfulness that, "we are tied to place undetachably and without reprieve."[3] Yet it is still rare for our inquiries into the nature of our relationship to the Earth we depend on to avoid the seemingly inevitable pressure of the subjective turn, the pressure to exchange this "free gift from nowhere...for something [we have]

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[1] I use "Euro-masculinist," much as I use the terms "West" or "Western." These are political terms which describe the perpetrators of colonization and inheritors of the wealth and power accumulated during European colonization of much of the rest of the planet (which continues today). In this sense, neither are all women excluded from the descriptive scope of these terms, nor are all peoples of the geographic West included. All such terms are necessarily imprecise and inadequate, but neither can we do without them when discussing the grand themes of world history and thought that plague us globally. I choose "Euro-masculinist" because it points to both the economic and political dominance of Europe and (some) European descended peoples and the masculinist frameworks in which this dominance was achieved and continues to be maintained.

[2] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 2.

[3] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place World,* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) xiii. These texts name the problem in various ways. Eliade speaks of the sacred and profane, Hannah Arendt of world-alienation, Weber and Berman of disenchantment, Susan Bordo of a "flight" from the feminine, Casey of "humanocentrism"–all are attempting in some way to name a fundamental transition in the relation of humans to the cosmos. To call this a transition from *reverence to self-reverence* as I will do here, is only to give a slightly different turn to these other formulations, but one that allows for a clear analogue between modern and postmodern philosophies. It is also to allow for a broad view of what is going on (as does Casey's "humanocentrism")–since it is not only subjectivist turns that centered human subjectivity but "realist" ones as well--the problem is not so much the epistemologies as the self-reverential position of the human knower in them.

made [ourselves]."[4] When the Earth we depend on is exchanged for a "world" we create, we are left marveling again at the extraordinary accomplishing activity of a subject, but with no sense of the ground and condition for the possibility of such activity. We have, in opposing "Earth" to "world", fantasized a "world" freed from Earth, and this amounts to a grave misunderstanding of the world that we *have* made.

I am, to some extent, accepting Heidegger's distinction between Earth and world here, from "The Origin of the Work of Art,"[5] but my usage is closer to Hannah Arendt's more political contextualization and adaptation of Heidegger's distinction in *The Human Condition*. Here Arendt makes two important contributions. First, she sees the "battle" between earth and world as a culturally and historically bound *orientation* that has accompanied Western philosophy since the Greeks, rather than as inevitable. Second, she emphasizes the role of the material *planet* earth in Heidegger's rich but apparently more abstract notion. For Arendt the very planet we call earth is "the quintessence of the human condition," even as how we live and understand our relation to the earth in the broader sense becomes part of the human condition as well. Here there is already a distinction and a relation between a primary, irrevocable, and material dependence on the earth, which is the "quintessence" of the human condition, and the conditions we create, i.e. the way that quintessential condition is lived, altered, and built upon by the world-making activities of subjects. Arendt understands this relation better than Heidegger, because she both acknowledges that what is necessary in the relation is our dependence rather than "battle," and recasts the embattled nature of the relation as a kind of *disorientation* that can and must be corrected. This gives Arendt's account an urgency and relevance that is even more important today than when she wrote *The Human Condition* in 1958 . Today, our exchange of earth for world, and our quest

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[4] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 2.

for a strange emancipation from the earth continues. These undermine our attempts to think our relationship to the Earth in a way that is meaningful, and this at a time of unparalleled environmental destruction that makes the task of thinking this relationship more urgent every day.

This essay is motivated by that urgency. I am working to articulate another understanding of the relation between earth and world, not as a battle, though it easily becomes that, but as a morally charged relation of dependence. Here battle is one option among others, and the most depraved, but is the one we in the West have chosen, by and large. I begin with a brief examination of how the modern exchange of "Earth" for "world" persists after the postmodern turn in the notion of "performativity". This amounts to a retreat to the subjectivism of modernity, now absent the conceit of the sovereign subject. I employ the notion of *dependence*, which I borrow from Eva Kittay and extend to the relation between persons and the Earth, to resist this subjectivism. In the notion of dependence I hope to find "a knife sharp enough" to cut through the self-involved subjectivism that plagues us.[6] This necessitates a re-prioritization of place. While spatiality has received a good deal of renewed attention in postmodernity, Edward Casey is one of the first to prioritize place,[7] to call for "an outright geocentrism—or perhaps better, an engaged ecocentrism—[as] the most efficacious antidote to centuries of unself-questioning

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[5] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London: Harper Colophon Books, 1971) 15-87.

[6] The phrase "a knife sharp enough" is Kittay's, she uses it in an intersubjective context to try to "cut through" the myth of independence. Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999) xiii.

[7] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, xi. Casey distinguishes space and place in this way: "The infinity and silence of space reflects its emptiness. They also signify the absence of place. For space as a vast vacuum does not allow for places, even though one might think that there would be plenty of room for them! In such space there are no places for particular things."

anthropocentrism and subjectivism."[8] I draw on his work to begin to spell out the consequences of facing and acknowledging our dependence on the Earth.

I take this dependence to be absolute. It is a kind of *relationship* to place, one which, properly faced, evokes both wonder and reverence. Wonder and reverence are the attitudes appropriate to our place here, and give us the epistemological, moral and political footing from which our world-building activity could be affirming of our relation to the Earth, rather than so suicidally destructive.

I. The Performative and the Disclosive

> *One of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes and perhaps its most original contribution to philosophy has been an exclusive concern with the self... an attempt to reduce all experiences with the world as well as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself.*
>
> Hannah Arendt

Even in postmodernity, we seem to always land ourselves, by whatever circuitous route, back in the lap of Immanuel Kant. In his crusade against the *Sturm und Drang's* tendencies toward pantheism, Kant was determined to exchange what he saw as a misplaced reverence for the natural world for reverence for human reason. We seem to have been infected with an overwhelming tendency to do the same. This is true of modernist realist accounts, where our reverence is turned toward the power of human intelligence and tools to really know, to possess fully the secrets of the natural world, "as if we dispose of it from the outside."[9] It is true of the

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[8] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 187.
[9] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 262.

modern idealists and transcendentalists as well, whose fetishizing of the mental activity of subjects amounts to an abjection of the Earth, either by denying its existence, or bracketing the question of it, or collapsing its existence by whatever subtle sleight of hand, back into the self-aggrandizing "world-making" activity of some (simple or transcendental) subject. And perhaps surprisingly, it is true of the postmodernists, who finally decenter the subject, only to paradoxically recenter the *subjectivity* of the humbled subject through a fetishization of the power of language to make worlds of its own.

Indeed, two persistent confusions of modernism seem to have crossed over into postmodernity unscathed. The first is a confusion between what we call "Earth" and what we call "world," or perhaps better said, an inability to articulate the relation between the two. The second is a confusion about our relationship to Earth (which we replace with "world"), that constantly positions subjects as "world-makers", "authors" or "stewards", while never acknowledging our absolute and utter dependence in this relation. Both of these confusions, between Earth and world and between persons and place, I take to be symptomatic of the miscarriage of reverence which we who inhabit the postmodern have inherited from modernity.

By *miscarriage of reverence*, I mean to name a cultural transition that is perhaps most eloquently detailed in Kantian aesthetics, particularly in Kant's notion of the sublime. Here Kant narrates a confrontation between a rational (masculine) subject and the natural world in its might (dynamical sublime) and magnitude (mathematical sublime). In this story, the subject is at first humbled in the encounter, filled with awe and wonder. The first response to the might and magnitude of nature is a fearful reverence. Yet this moment of reverence for something that is

external, humbling, and gendered female,[10] is quickly exchanged for another sort of experience altogether. The confrontation with nature becomes a mere occasion for setting into motion a drama that is inward, self-aggrandizing, and triumphantly masculinist. The internalization of the drama involves the assignation of a feminine gender to the imagination, and of a masculine gender to reason, and the "breaking" of the imagination by reason.[11] The result is a reorientation of reverence, from the external to the internal, from the natural world to the subject, from the power of nature to the power of reason. In short, our reverence is *redirected from Earth to the self.*

So far from marking a transition from wonder to doubt, as Arendt supposed it did, the advent of what we call "modernism" marked a transition in the *orientation* of the Euro-masculine subject's wonder. The wonder of this awe-filled subject was *redirected*, through doubt, toward himself. And this newfound self-reverence seemed everywhere justified: in the progress of science and technology, in European empire building, in the accumulation of European wealth, and in the accomplishments of philosophy itself.

But if this is the subject who is criticized in postcolonialist and postmodernist writings, how is it that I can claim that the modernist miscarriage of reverence is carried over from the

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[10] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement.* Trans. by James Creed Meredith. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928). I am not so much accusing Kant of gendering nature here, explicitly, as I am pointing to a general and widespread cultural association of nature with the feminine, and reason with the masculine.

[11] Kant's gendering of the imagination and reason simply follows the cultural associations above. The imagination's association with the feminine is necessitated by its reliance on sense experience and consequent close association with nature. This gendering has been analyzed by feminist scholars such as Cornelia Klinger, and is made explicit in Lyotard's reading of the Kantian Sublime. Cornelia Klinger, "The Concepts of the Sublime and Beautiful in Kant and Lyotard," in *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant,* ed. Robin May Schott (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.) Lyotard's extraordinary and seemingly exultant narrative on the Kantian sublime, which he refers to as "a family story" centers on a scene in which father (reason) rapes mother (imagination): "The sublime is the child of an unhappy encounter, that of the Idea with form. Unhappy because this Idea is unable to make concessions. The law (the father) is so authoritarian, so unconditional, and the regard the law requires so exclusive that he, the father, will do nothing to obtain consent, even through a delicious rivalry with the imagination... He fertilizes the virgin who has devoted herself to forms, without regard for her favor. He demands regard only for himself, to the law and its realization. He has no need for a beautiful nature. He desperately needs an imagination that is violated, exceeded, exhausted. She will die in giving birth to the sublime. She will think she is

modern to the postmodern? There is nothing so irreverent as the postmodern attitude of skepticism toward the grandiose claims of the centered subject. This is the subject whose universalism has been undermined, whose grand narratives have been brought down to size, whose omnipotence has been exposed as a self-aggrandizing fiction, precisely through the deconstructive efforts of postmodernity. Yet it seems the very strategies that have been deployed to humble the modern subject, reinstantiate the accomplishing activity of that subject as the object of our wonder and admiration.

One way to clarify this reinstantiation is to look at the "performative" and "disclosive" in postmodernity. A postmodern reading of Kant emphasizes that sublime experience points to "that unpresentable Beyond that gives the lie to the totalizing claims of rational cognition."[12] The subject is humbled because "the incommensurability of reality to concept which is implied in the Kantian philosophy of the Sublime"[13] initiates the "discovery of the 'lack of reality' of reality, together with the invention of other realities."[14] This is why there has been such a flurry of interest in the sublime, since Lyotard recuperated the notion from Kant.

Yet this humbling is only a momentary effect of the sublime—this is the sublime's displeasure. We might just as well emphasize the other moment, that moment when something that seems at first to be *disclosed* to the subject in sublime experience, the givenness of the power of nature, discloses finally the pure *performative activity* of reason. This is the sublime's pleasure, when the subject recognizes that his reverence for nature has been misplaced, and reorients this reverence toward himself. This experience does involve a melting away of a sense

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dying (my translation)." Jean Francois Lyotard, "Das Interesse des Erhabene," in *Das Erhabene: Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grossenwahn, ed. Christine Pries.* (Weinheim: VCH, 1989) 108-109.

[12] Kirk Pillow, *Sublime Understanding: Aesthetic Reflection in Kant and Hegel,* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 5-6.

[13] Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1984), 79.

[14] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition,* 77.

of the externally real, but it also involves an experience of the "real" as precisely the internal accomplishing activity of the subject. And indeed, Lyotard recasts "seemingly non- or postreferential 'epistemology' in terms of linguistics, and in particular of theories of the performative."[15] So while the epistemological claims of the subject to know an external world that is *disclosed* are here detotalized, the *performative* activity of the subject becomes a kind of everything and everywhere, to be found in any apparently disclosive relation. To be sure, modern self-reverence is recast in the postmodern as *self-reference*, as the self-referentiality of texts, but the giddiness and exhilaration of the experience of finding the performative in the apparently disclosive amounts to a kind of reverence in a sea of irreverence, and remains every bit as focused on what subjects *do*, rather than what they discover.

Fredric Jameson's discussion of the sculptures of Duane Hanson can serve to illustrate this point. Hanson's life-size polyester sculptures are on first glimpse lifelike. They are displayed in "real" settings. His "museum Guard," for example, is actually placed in the position a museum guard might occupy and "Tourists II", two stereotypically tourist-like sculptures are placed in a Museum staring uncomprehendingly but importantly at a work of art. They are intended to be mistaken for the real thing. The experience created by making and then realizing this mistake is one of sublime intensity. These images, these signs, on Jameson's reading, have a "peculiar function" which

> lies in what Sartre would have called the derealization of the whole surrounding world of everyday reality. Your moment of doubt and hesitation as to the breath and warmth of these polyester figures, in other words, tends to return upon the real human beings moving about you in the museum and to transform them also for the

[15] Jameson in Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, ix.

> briefest instant into so many dead and flesh-colored simulacra in their own right. The world thereby momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density. But is this now a terrifying or exhilarating experience?.[16]

Both terrifying and exhilarating, I would argue; this experience is precisely that of "disclosivity" melting into "performativity," where something that seems at first to be not of human making, is discovered to be, essentially, a product, something *someone did*. Of course this aesthetic experience is so effective precisely because it "points to" the "irreality" of living persons as well, the extent to which persons are *produced* in the *"chain of signification."* The experience certainly is humbling, since our perception of the real is destabilized, and the world around us is "derealized." But like Kant's sublime experience, our discomfort here gives way on the one hand to a kind of delight at the genius of the artist, i.e. a kind of wonder at the accomplishing activity of a human subject. On the other hand, and even more significantly, it gives way to a wonder at the world of signs in which all of us are bound. This is the world of human making that *makes us*, that bestows social existence.[17]

While perhaps very appropriate to the world of art, there are consequences other than aesthetic delight when we repeat this experience in the face of *virtually everything*. When everything we confront in the external world gives rise to this melting away and delight at the self, Kantian self-reverence is reinstantiated in a kind of delirious postmodern register. We find ourselves everywhere. We are on the side of the subject to whom something is disclosed, and we

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[16] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press., 1991), 32-34.

[17] As Butler puts it, "Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms, and names that are not of its own making the subject seeks the sign of its own existence outside itself, in a discourse that is at once

are what is disclosed, because every act of "knowing" is an act of "making." *Disclosivity is really just performativity dissimulating.*

The consequences for our sense of place are here profound. Postmodernity has been very concerned to *locate* subjects, to recognize the *positionality* of subjects. Susan Bordo has perhaps recognized the subterfuge here most clearly, and again, the connections between the modern and postmodern are more revealing than their distinctions. "The Cartesian knower...being without a body, not only has 'no need of place' but actually is 'no place'."[18] Yet the self of Cartesian consciousness becomes a kind of place, " 'Myself'... is neither the public self, a social or familial identity, nor even the voice of personal conscience, belief, or commitment. It is an experiential 'space,' deeply interior."[19] As Casey puts it, "Within the machinations of this mental machine, place was reduced to what could be represented by icons, indices, or symbols: it became place-in-mind."[20] This interiority of the modern subject is turned inside out in postmodernity, where subjectivity does not inhabit the interior universe of individual subjects so much as it is the ocean we are swimming in. The entire world becomes a collective and textualized interiority, which is both made from and makes the performativity of each subject. Subjects engage here in textual play, a kind of "epistemological jouissance."[21] But as Bordo points out, "This ideal [of ceaseless textual play]... although it arises out of a critique of modernist epistemological pretensions to represent reality adequately by achieving what Thomas Nagel has called the 'view from nowhere,' remains animated by its own fantasies of attaining an epistemological perspective free of the locatedness and limitations of embodied existence—a

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dominant and indifferent." Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 20.

[18] Susan Bordo, *Feminist Interpretations of Rene Descartes*, (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 61.

[19] Susan Bordo, *Feminist Interpretations*, 52.

[20] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 312.

fantasy that I call a 'dream of everywhere'."[22] Far from abandoning the modernist ideal of transcendence of place that created an interior universe of consciousness, the postmodern version simply exteriorizes and expands that universe, *in which* the now decentered and multiple subject engages in textual play. "Denial of the unity and stability of identity is one thing. The epistemological fantasy of becoming multiplicity—the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self is another."[23] Without any limits between self and world, Bordo notes, (or when the interiority of the subject becomes the exteriority of context, we might say), the postmodern subject is as placeless as the modern subject who was so concerned to wall up an interior consciousness over and against the world.

One need not dispute that there is much truth in this postmodern vision. We do live in significant and primary ways in what we build, whether technologically or linguistically. But is performativity *always* and *only* what is disclosed in our relationships with the worlds we make, the world's that "world us" in Heidegger's terms? Only, I believe, if we are unwilling to fetishize our performative activity, particularly our capacities for language, will we have the wherewithal to *reorient* ourselves to what exceeds or *subtends* our prolific making.

It is only by asking an apparently naïve question that we are able to proceed. What enables all of this accomplishing activity, what enlivens the subject who is engaged in and by it? What is it that enlivens the body that speaks, that moment by moment, literally breath by breath, materially produces this body as a lived body to begin with? Philosophers have never taken seriously enough the all-too-commonplace reality that we have to breathe to think. Here I am presenting our relationship to the Earth in a very brute sense. I am reducing it, one might say, to

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[21] Susan R. Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body.*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 228.

[22] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight,* 218.

[23] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight,* 229.

its most basic and seemingly animalistic level, to that level where we don't make the world, but *it makes us*. Breath, heat/light, water, and food are all absolute necessities for philosophy, yet since the Ancients we have paid far too little attention to them, even though this seemingly mundane fact of human existence is the condition for the possibility of everything else. We don't make these four things, (which correspond of course to the four elements of air, fire, water and earth) though we may both cultivate and contaminate them. We *depend* on these gifts, irrevocably, absolutely, without choice or reprieve.

II. Dependence

> *It was, after all, as a rejection of dependency on the feudal lord that Rousseau (echoing the sentiment of his day) declared the equality of men [sic]. But the deeper dependencies of infancy and early childhood, frail old age, disease and disability, do not vanish in a revolution. We have no lords to fight for this independence. So we have built fictions.*
>
> Eva Feder Kittay

> *The independent individual is always a fictive creation of those men sufficiently privileged to shift the concern for dependence on to others.*
>
> Eva Feder Kittay

I admit to being rather smitten with Eva Kittay's work on dependence, which is saying a great deal, since I have a long-standing and almost lethal allergy to any sort of maternalism in feminist theory, and her work certainly comes out of this school. Yet Kittay's theory of dependence strikes me as in the very best tradition of feminist common sense. Starting with a

simple and common aspect of the human condition, she proceeds to carefully and systematically dismantle the fetishization of independence in the Western political tradition. She manages this without essentializing women's relationship to mothering or caring, and without pretending that these relationships are gender-neutral. She insists, at the same time, that relationships in which persons depend on other persons for care are *essential* and *universal* relationships, and manages *this* claim without thereby depoliticizing such relations. On the contrary, Kittay is working to found feminist ethical and political claims on the bedrock of human dependency. Her work is germinal for feminist theories of epistemology, ethics, politics, and I believe for feminist environmentalism as well.

Kittay focuses on the most brute sorts of dependence--dependencies that are "inescapable," "inevitable," "determined neither by will nor desire," "unassailable facts," "unavoidable as birth and death," "a mark of our humanity"[24] -- because only this kind of dependence provides "a knife sharp enough to cut through the fiction of our independence."[25] She is concerned with intersubjective dependence, the fact that dependents require care from other persons, and no one survives or thrives to become relatively *independent* without some minimal care from another.[26] Though influenced by maternalist ethics, Kittay's work cannot itself be said to be maternalist in the sense of ascribing a special epistemological vantage point, or moral insight to mothers. Her vision is far broader; she argues that the epistemological and moral footing to both know and fashion just social policies, is in a *relationship* of dependence/care that *all of us* experience. It is more by virtue of having been mothered, (and for

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[24] Kittay, *Love's Labor,* 29.

[25] Though a kind of brute dependence is pre-social, how care for dependents is organized is deeply political, and many kinds of dependence are, at the root, political, such as the traditional dependence of men on women for the preparation of food and organizing of the household, for example, or the traditional dependence of women on men for income. Kittay, *Love's Labor,* xiii.

[26] Kittay, *Love's Labor,* 1.

Kittay, following Sara Ruddick, both men and women can mother,) than by virtue of mothering, that we can know and do the right thing.

Several aspects of Kittay's work on dependence lend themselves to an articulation of the notion to the relationship between world and the Earth in a way that both acknowledges that this relation might become a battle, and leaves open other possibilities. First, Kittay insists that relationships of dependence have a natural *priority* in relation to other kinds of human relationships. This priority has to do with the asymmetrical and non-reciprocal character of the relation, with the vulnerability of one person to another, with the inequality of power in the relation. Secondly, such relationships have immediate *moral* implications, including bestowing value on persons cared for, moral obligation on those in the position to care, and an equal entitlement to care on all persons in such relations. Thirdly, the notion of dependence connects what we *are given* to what *we make* in a way that doesn't essentialize a conflict between them, but connects the human condition of dependence to political and social covenants. And fourthly, there is a muted reference in Kittay's work to the *spiritual* implications of such relations. When we extend the notion of dependence to the relationship between persons and the Earth, all of these aspects remain important, though not simply analogous.

The priority of the relationship of dependence arises from its "ubiquity" in the human condition. "This relationship is ubiquitous in the human society and is as fundamental to our humanity as any property philosophers have invoked as distinctly human."[27] But in addition to the omnipresence of the most basic sorts of dependence in all cultures and at all times, it is also the condition for the possibility of all other human relations, since to come to a point of engaging in any relation, one must first be cared for. We can understand this priority as two-fold. First, it is a *temporal* priority in the sense that everyone who achieves independence or interdependence is

first dependent on another for care (and some people are always dependent). A relationship that is asymmetrical and non-reciprocal grounds more reciprocal relationships developmentally. Secondly, ongoing "independence," which is always a "relative independence" rather than absolute,[28] is purchased at a price.

> The world we know is one fashioned by the dreams of those who, by and large, consider themselves independent. Their self-understanding as independent persons is generally purchased at a price—one set so low and considered so inevitable that few have traditionally considered it pertinent to considerations of social justice. The purchase price of independence is a wife, a mother, a nursemaid, a nanny—a dependency worker.[29]

The very self-understanding that has founded Western conceits about independence requires the projection of necessary daily dependency work onto others. The independent political actor dissimulates; he keeps his dependency out of sight.

The very fabric of society is made up of what Kittay calls "nested dependencies." We can understand this in terms of the classic (today more mythical than real) situation of a young child in a relation of dependence to her mother; this relation is in turn "nested" in a relationship of dependency between these two and a breadwinner, who is himself "dependent" in relation to an employer, and so on. Though this classic situation is hardly in evidence anymore, dependency relations do seem to be nested in one another as Kittay claims, more haphazardly but no less irrevocably than in the model of the nuclear family.

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[27] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 25.
[28] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 184.
[29] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 183.

This insight seems to me to apply even more strongly to our dependence on the Earth, in which all such relationships are *ultimately* nested. Our dependency on the Earth does not shift and change over time like our intersubjective dependencies. We are moment to moment dependent in this more primary relation, cannot survive for more than a few minutes without the air and warmth the Earth "provides," for more than a few days without its water, for more than a few weeks without its food. The subject that was born in a fantasy of independence from *this* relationship, dissimulates even more profoundly than the masculine breadwinner. This relation is the condition for the possibility for *any* intersubjective dependency relation, or for any experience of relative independence. Moreover, it is a condition that follows the subject, moment by moment, place to place. It cannot be left behind at home like a dependency worker can.

Kittay is concerned to expose the ethical implications of dependency. "The relationship [of dependency] at its very crux, is a moral one, arising out of a claim of vulnerability on the part of the dependent on the one hand, and of a special positioning of the dependency worker to meet the need, on the other."[30] In morally charged moments, the needs of the dependent are prioritized over the needs of the dependency worker, and at such moments "this prioritization is absolute."[31]

A crucial distinction grounds Kittay's claim here, that between inequalities of power, and domination. Inequalities of power may result from domination certainly, but also from unequal capacities, and from unequal situations (whether socially constructed or not). An inequality of power, the vulnerability of one person in relation to another, is precisely the morally charged situation that calls for a caring response. "Inequality of power is compatible with both justice and caring, if the relation does not become a relation of domination."[32] This is true whether or not the dependency relation is socially constructed, but Kittay does maintain that there are levels of

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[30] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 35.
[31] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 52.

coercion that void the claims of dependents to care. A "tyranny" of the caretaker by the dependent is a clear danger in some dependency relations. The dependent may "fail even to recognize the integrity of the other who exerts her labor on [her] behalf."[33] This said, the vulnerability of one person to another is ubiquitous in human relationships as Kittay claims, and apart from situations of grave injustice, the moral claim these relations have on us seem to trump most others.

There is another aspect of the "claim" that these relations have on us which is even more general. Kittay uses an anecdote about her mother, who after serving food to the entire family would justify sitting down to eat herself by saying, "I too, am some mother's child." Kittay turns this phrase, which could certainly be read as a particularly apt expression of the kind of self-effacing feminine virtue feminists criticize, into a study of how *caring* bestows *value*. There is a "fundamental connection between a mothering person and the fate of the individual she has mothered,"[34] Kittay claims, and this fundamental connection is recognized as a source of *entitlement* for the one who has received such care. In saying, "I, too, am some mother's child," one is claiming "I am due care," "I am worthy of this care," and "this worthiness is inalienable."[35] This establishes a new basis for moral claims, not in how persons are individuated or in terms of the properties they can be said to have, but in terms of the relationships of care in which they are bound.[36] Because we are all "some mother's child," we can all claim the entitlement to care that this relation bestows.

> That nothing can fully alienate the responsibility of others to recognize us as some mother's child resides in that feature of

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[32] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 34.
[33] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 35.
[34] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 24.
[35] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 68.

> human existence that demands connection as a fundamental condition for human survival... When we respect an individual as some mother's child, we honor the efforts of that mothering person and symbolically of all mothering persons. When we do not, not only are rights belonging to the abused individual violated, but the efforts of the mothering person are dishonored. The sanctity of the relation that makes possible all human connection *per se* is thereby disavowed.[37]

The moral situation we find ourselves in in relationship to the Earth is certainly not the same moral relation that we find ourselves in in relation to one another. We would have to anthropomorphize the Earth beyond all recognition to speak of the "obligations" that "she" has to us by virtue of our dependency on "her." But there are two aspects of Kittay's discussion of the moral implications of dependency that do seem relevant to a discussion of our dependence on the Earth. If, as Kittay claims, "dependency relations are the paradigmatic moral relations,"[38] then the dependency relation in which all others are nested must be the paradigm of paradigms. This relationship, too, is characterized by vulnerability, and as such is a moral relation (for us) at its very crux. Of course in this case we are talking first about *our own* vulnerability, but it is precisely in this sort of experience that Kittay finds epistemological footing for moral claims. That we have chosen the path of "tyranny" over and against the Earth in this relationship, have "failed to recognize the integrity" of the Earth as separate from ourselves, have chosen to do battle with the earth to the point of suicidal destruction of the environment, bespeaks an unfathomable *moral and epistemological* failure. Yet it is *possible* to know how to behave in the

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[36] Kittay, *Love's Labor,* 27-28.
[37] Kittay, *Love's Labor,* 69.

face of our vulnerability to the Earth; this very vulnerability is the vantage point from which we are called to right action.

This can be more clearly understood in terms of the second aspect of Kittay's discussion of the moral implications of dependency which seems to me to be very relevant to our dependency on the Earth. Kittay's insight that dependency relations bestow value on dependents has implications for our relations with one another as all equally dependent on the Earth. "I, too, am given life by this Earth," might be a kind of environmentalist equivalent of Kittay's, "I, too, am some mother's child." Our inability to care for one another in our intersubjective relations (and here my "we" extends between nations and cultures), constitutes a second moral failure—but here we do not simply fail each other, we fail one another *in relation* to our dependency on the planet. We *dishonor* that relation as much as we dishonor one another.

That these moral failures are borne out in our social and political institutions is perhaps too obvious to require comment. "Questions of who takes on the responsibility of care, who does the hands-on care, who sees to it that the caring is done and done well, and who provides the support for the relationship of care and for both parties to the caring relationship—these are social and political questions. They are questions of social responsibility and political will."[39] Our failure to honor dependency relations in our social and political institutions is, on Kittay's reading, a failure to fulfill "the obligation of society to attend to relationships upon which all civic relationships depend." If dependents and those who care for them, and their *relationship*, is not protected and enabled by the social and political institutions we build, we have absolved ourselves of our "most fundamental obligation," the obligation to the "founding possibility" of

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[38] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 71.
[39] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 1.

society itself.[40] For Kittay, how we understand, how we *revere or disregard*, relations of dependency, will determine a great deal about what kind of political institutions we build.

Of course in our violence toward the natural world we turn away from an equally fundamental obligation, an obligation to the Earth that gives us life, moment by moment, breath by breath, while we build a world to live in. Like ourselves, *our world* is dependent on the Earth that sustains us. Further, it is in this relation of dependence that "the political" becomes meaningful to begin with. In saying this, I'm claiming that this relationship is the ground or space on which domination is built, and struggles for liberation, equality, democracy, etc. are waged. How we understand, how we *revere or disregard* our relation to the planet, will be key in every instance to how we engage political questions. This essential relationship between persons and the Earth gives the political a weight and depth, makes the political an urgent matter. If we understood our world-making to entail a fundamental obligation to protect and support our relation to the Earth, *which is its founding possibility*, what a different sort of world we would make!

Instead, fantasies of finally dominating the Earth permeate our social and political life. It seems to me that these circumstances bespeak not only a moral and political depravity, but a spiritual one as well. Though Kittay never explicitly evokes "the sacred" in her dependency critique, she seems to sense a violation of the sacred at the heart of our disregard for relations of dependence. When we are forgetful that an individual is "some mother's child," Kittay argues, "not only are the rights belonging to the abused individual violated, but the efforts of the mothering person are dishonored. The *sanctity* of the relation that makes possible all human connection *per se* is thereby disavowed (my emphasis)."[41] Kittay moves here from the political

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[40] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 130-131.
[41] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 69.

(rights), to the moral (honor), to the spiritual (sanctity) in this short passage. A violation of this fundamental relationship is a violation at all three levels.

It is interesting to note that the historical moment which was marked by an extraordinary new fetishizing of independence or autonomy as the *sine qua non* of truly human life, was equally marked by an exchange of the sacred for the "profane" products of human reason. If Kittay is correct in claiming that our inalienable entitlement to recognition as "some mother's child," "resides in that feature of human existence that demands connection as a fundamental condition for human survival,"[42] perhaps our very capacities for moral action and experience of the sacred reside in that feature of human existence that is our relationship of dependence to the Earth.

The word "reside" is important here, of course, evocative as it is of that very relationship. We not only depend on the Earth, we live here. It strikes me that the claim, "I, too, am some mother's child," *locates* the specific person uttering the claim in a specific relation to another, it also locates her as a child among others, as equally a mother's child, crossing in one breath the border between the specific and the general, the one and the many. The utterance establishes a *place* for her in a vast world so populous with indifferent strangers, but she has this place *like others* have a place, or should have. By saying "I, too, am some mother's child," one claims, along with Kittay's mother, "I, too, have a place here at the table, which is my sacred right." To be "some mother's child" is to be some *place*, to be entitled to *place*, to take one's *place*, to be *im-placed*.

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[42] Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 69)

II. Persons and Places

There is no being except being in place... To be a sentient bodily being at all is to be place-bound, bound to be in a place, bonded and bound therein.

Edward S. Casey

When it comes to being ethical, there is no escaping the imperative of place.

Edward S. Casey

A stance of ecocentrism does not, however, signify that the only genuinely ecological issue is whether we can save or preserve the land, especially wild land. We can and should and must do just this. But the more pressing question from a lococentric perspective is whether we will let the land save us.

Edward S. Casey

Edward S. Casey's *Getting Back into Place* is perhaps one of the first and most important postmodern redemption narratives. In this it goes against the grain of the postmodern, where we are, if nothing else, beyond redemption. For Casey, whose work leads him into environmentalism, the deepest question is not whether we will save the land, but "whether we will let *the land save us* (emphasis in original)."[43] This is the motivating question behind his complex narratives of place, the kind of attention to place which may be capable of saving "those in a displaced, secular, and postmodern age who lack any sense of a perduring place of collective self-belonging."[44] Indeed, in postmodernity we seem to be reaping the whirlwind of modern disregard for nature, and nature's gift of place. As Jameson put it, "postmodernism is what you

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[43] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place, 263.*
[44] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 309.

have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good."[45] Jameson's reading of the postmodern is useful in order to understand what getting back into place might *redeem us from*. For Jameson, the postmodern is fundamentally a repudiation of depth, as characterized by "the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, [which is] perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms."[46] This repudiation has focused on at least four separate "depth models", including "the dialectical one of essence and appearance... the Freudian model of latent and manifest...the existential model of authenticity and inauthenticity...and most recently, the great semiotic opposition between signifier and signified."[47] All of these amount to an exchange of depth for surface.

But what kind of place is a postmodern surface? What happens to the Earth in a world of surfaces? Is the Earth itself another surface? We certainly say that we live "on" the Earth, perhaps envisioning ourselves as in a child's drawing, pop-up stick figures on a smooth, round, crayon-line planet. The surfaces we are left with in postmodernism are not the "sensuous surfaces" of landscape;[48] such *deep* surfaces have given way to the smooth flatness of a shopping-mall planet, where "depth, the elusive basis of all dimensions, indeed the 'first dimension,' has been eliminated in favor of shallowness of affect and image, a flatness reinforced by glossy walls and sleek floors."[49] In Casey's terms, this amounts to an exchange of places for mere sites. Places, which are everywhere local and specific and rich in their specificity are exchanged for sites, like shopping malls, everywhere alike and interchangeable. A site is certainly a kind of location, but it is a location emptied of depth, which is "a matter—perhaps

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[45] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, ix.
[46] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 9.
[47] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 12.
[48] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 270.

even *the matter*—of place."[50] A depthless surface is devoid of both "life [and] place."[51] "A site is no place to be, much less to remain. It is not even worth a postmodern nomadic journey to get there. Once there, moreover, where are we?."[52] We are no place, dis-placed on the surface. We surface dwellers, it seems, live in a perpetual state of dis-orientation, on a mere planet, which is what the Earth becomes when it is no longer able to provide us with places. Even though our lack of orientation might engender postmodern excitement, terrifying and exhilarating as all sublime experience is, we are no less *mis-placed* for our giddiness.

This mis-placement is also an emptying out (individually, collectively). For Casey, placelessness gives rise to "a sense of unbearable emptiness."[53] And indeed, the postmodern subject has been emptied out, has him/herself become a mere site in the chain of signification,[54] even as signifying activity swallows up depth, both internal and external. When we are empty sites, mere occasions ourselves, the meaningfulness of our accomplishing activity, of our "world-making" collapses into mere discursive playfulness, into surface.

The point of Casey's work (and indeed Jameson's in another dimension), is to *get us back into place*, so that "we can resume the direction, and regain the depth of our individual and collective life once again—and know it for the first time."[55] Casey's implication, that we are dangerously off course, is reflected in the chorus of voices that have decried our *dis-orientation*, as a complex of Euro-American cultures, if not as a species, since the Second World-War. But

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[49] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 269-70.
[50] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 67.
[51] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 269.
[52] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 208.
[53] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, x.
[54] As Butler writes, "The geneology of the subject as a critical category... suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a *placeholder*, a structure in formation. Individuals come to *occupy the site* of the subject (the subject simultaneously *emerges as a 'site'*) (my emphasis, 1997: 11)."
[55] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 314.

for Casey, it is the "insurrectional power of place,"[56] itself that can counter the massive disorientation that characterizes postmodern life. By "getting back into place itself, back into the very idea, indeed the very experience, of place," we might "re-orient" ourselves in the most radical sense.

It is this notion of *re-orientation* that is provocative in our consideration of dependency. If the Euro-masculinist abnegation and projection onto others of our dependence on the Earth is part of what has dis-placed, and thus dis-oriented us, then a re-affirmation of this relation might be the first step in an urgent *re*-orientation.

Perhaps this is the time to note that I have been speaking all along of "the Earth," as if we really lived on/in the entire global sphere rather than in the specific places *where we actually are*. Specific places are what we inhabit, never "the Earth" in some grander sense. Yet places are nested, like Kittay's dependencies, one in the other. This specific room where I write, is in this flat, which in turn is in this 100 year-old house (which survived the two great Earthquakes), in San Francisco, in Northern California, etc. My invocation of dependency to name our relationship to the Earth is simply a shortcut for our dependency on the specific places, nested in one another, for which the Earth is simply the most encompassing horizon, the boundary that gives all of these places their own limit, and thus existence.

I mean to invoke "dependency" to name our relation to place at its most brutal and unforgiving, yet where we are perhaps most ungrateful and forgetful, our irrevocable dependence on air, heat/light, water and food. But this relation is no mere biological imperative—certainly without these gifts we would die, and die as bodies die—but who has ever seen a *mere body* die? Who, indeed, has ever seen a *mere body* that was not already dead? Believing ourselves trapped within a prison of mortality, cursed to be bounded by flesh and blood, we have misunderstood is

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[56] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 314.

that it is not only our biological life but our mental and spiritual life that are gifts of the planet. But this very "bounding" is what gives us existence in the fullest sense, is the condition for the possibility of *every aspect* of human existence, from the most primal biological functioning to the most developed spiritual practice.

Without focusing on dependency in the brute sense I am proposing here, Casey argues for the priority of place in a way that illuminates this multifaceted relation.[57] Attention to dependence, to this primary asymmetrical, nonreciprocal relation between persons and places strengthens the case Casey makes for the priority of place. At the same time, Casey's narrative of the many ways in which place is primary, adds dimension to our study of dependence, and lends depth to our description of the dependency *relation* between persons and places. Though Casey speaks on occasion of "the mutual enlivening of body and landscape,"[58] "the reciprocity of person and place,"[59] or "the mutual determination of person and place,"[60] the overwhelming focus of his work is on restoring a proper *priority* to place. "Orientation," he argues, "is given primarily by the places and not by my own body."[61] It is urgent that we "let the land take the lead,"[62] "let the Earth be the guiding force,"[63] because "*its* power, not ours in relation to it, is what is at stake."[64]

The priority of place in relation to performative activity is (at least) three-fold. Places are phenomenologically prior (in the order of description, ontologically prior (in the order of being),

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[57] In a fascinating passage on atmosphere in wild places, Casey does allude to this dependence, "As an inherent presence, atmosphere is invigorating and has as its most palpable expression the actual 'breath' of a living creature, though it is also at play as the air that penetrates and moves through inorganic substances. The overall effect is to alleviate and animate any given wildscape: to bestow upon it an *elan vital* that vivifies the whole scene and not just the literally alive being in it." Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 220.

[58] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 29.

[59] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 307.

[60] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 308.

[61] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 225.

[62] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 260.

[63] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 260.

[64] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 264.

and also "primary in the order of culture." Place is phenomenologically prior in that our implacement underlies our bodily experience and perception: places are "the pre-positions of our bodily lives, underlying every determinate bodily action or position, every static posture of our corpus, every coagulation of living experience in thought or word, sensation or memory, image or gesture."[65] Our very capacity to sense, perceive, describe, is rooted in place. Places are ontologically prior. To exist at all is to be bounded or limited, to be bordered by place. This bordering or limiting is part of that very existence. If, "there is no being except being in place,"[66] then it is because to be at all means to be limited by place, and "the limit of an existing thing is intrinsic to its being."[67] Place is primary in the order of culture, as well. "Just as every place is encultured, so every culture is implaced:"[68] place is on the *inside* of culture as well as on the outside of culture, or under and around culture, which is always built in relation to place. Of course another way of naming the priority of place in relation to us is to say *we depend on place*, phenomenologically, ontologically, and culturally. It is not difficult to see that these three aspects of place are actually *three modes of our dependence* on place.

One short passage reflects not only our multi-faceted dependence on place, but how this dependence might *orient* us: "To be a sentient bodily being at all is to be place-bound, bound to be in a place, bonded and bound therein."[69] Casey's multiple senses of "bond/bound" are important here, and carry us from an ontological priority, through a kind of telos, to a moral and ethical imperative, and to the human condition itself. First, we are place-*bound*, i.e. dependent on place to provide a *boundary*, a limit to our existence. Second, we are *bound* to be in a place. As a

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[65] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 313.
[66] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 313.
[67] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 15.
[68] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 31.
[69] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 313.

condition of existence, "place-being is part of an entity's own-being,"[70] we are *purposively* bound to be there, we depend on place because it is part of who and what *we are* to be there. Our dependence on place means we are "bonded" by place, which for my purposes I would like to read as both "tied by affection or loyalty," and "obligated by a moral duty, a vow, or a promise." And finally, our dependence on place means we are "bound therein," embedded in place, through and through indebted to place.

Just as Kittay finds in intersubjective dependency relations an orientation that can inform our ethical choices, our social and political practice, we find in our relation of dependence on place an orientation that provides social, political, ethical, and spiritual direction. Casey hints at this connection when he remarks parenthetically that "anomie, a lack of social norms or values, often stems from atopia."[71] In reference to built places, Casey notes that the very activity of building or cultivation "localizes caring," that is, it gives caring a place. "We care about places as well as people," he writes, "so that we can say that *caring belongs to places*."[72] But this connection is precisely what we cannot take for granted, since we live in a world where the destruction of place, of the very ability of the Earth to provide us with places, seems to be on its way to becoming an absolute of the human condition. Perhaps in this case we would have to say, of the *inhuman* condition, since once places are gone certainly humans will be gone as well. But if our intersubjective dependency is precisely the source of the moral call to care rather than to domination, then our dependency on the Earth is such a source as well. The importance of recuperating a sense of humility in the face of our dependence on the Earth is nothing less than the importance of recuperating a sense of what it means to be persons in place, i.e. of our very humanity. In speaking of the indigenous people who have inhabited a particular place, Casey

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[70] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 16.
[71] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, xi.

writes that "to inhabit a place in terms of the habitat and habitus is thus to re-inhabit it by living here on *preestablished terms* laid down long before the actual advent of current homesteaders (my emphasis)."[73] But the "preestablished terms" are perhaps more clearly the ones that the very indigenous inhabitants seem to have been able, at least in many cases, to live *by and with* rather than against. These are the terms that we, in what we call the "Western world," seem determined to live in rebellion against, no matter how suicidal and homicidal such a path ultimately proves to be. These are terms that are *disclosed to us* in the dependency relation, which is the condition for all other relations, and indeed for our very existence.

When Kant believed he looked into the mirror of nature only to see himself, perhaps he was right in one sense, and one sense only—nature *gives us* ourselves. But the Earth gives us to ourselves first *as children*, only later and only apparently as "independent" world-making adults. Our dependence on the Earth which accompanies us through every experience, on every journey, moment by moment, is not something we make, even with our most powerful "performative" tool, language itself. When we say "Earth," as enculturated and enculturating as this speech is, still on the very inside of our speech is our breathing of the Earth's air, our being warmed by its heat, our drinking of its water, our eating of its food—all of which are prior to any saying of the Earth. On the inside of that utterance is the very enabling and enlivening relation of dependency on the Earth. This relation is not merely constructed in language, it enables language, it is the condition for the possibility of language, and thus *inhabits* language from the outset. The disclosive, at least here, discloses that the performative *would be nowhere at all* without place. The Earth is the very founding condition for the possibility of the worlds that we make.

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[72] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 175.
[73] Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 295.

Of course we in the Euro-masculinist cultures of the West have misunderstood our dependence on the Earth as a kind of coercion and have responded by doing battle. We have not wanted to be "on nature's leading strings," so what we have made of our dependence is an ethical, social and political disaster. We have failed the moral and political challenge of our *status as children* in relation to the Earth. This is, of course, a status that is not analogous to that of actual young people vis-à-vis their parents, because this moral relation demands care *from us* rather than simply for us. By this I mean we have failed to respond in a situation of dependence with care, both for the Earth itself, and for one another. Anyone can claim, "I, too, am given life by this Earth," and this claim calls for an ethics and a politics of care that is both Earth-focused and intersubjective. Our response has been, instead, one of domination—against one another, but ultimately also against the Earth itself. This means that we have failed to protect the relationship that is the very founding condition of our capacities for care, and of our world-making activity.

A profound miscarriage of reverence marks this failure. Kant failed to acknowledge that *the Earth has a claim on us*, and instead treated the natural world as a mere site, a mere occasion for the dramas of reason. Though he claimed to be merely reversing a subreption by which nature had inspired such awe in "man," in fact the subreption was altogether the other way around. The "autonomy" that founds the self-reverence of the modern subject is both fraudulent and fictitious. And so is the fetishizing of performativity over and against disclosivity in postmodernity. The Earth has a claim on us, and this claim is on the very inside of our existence as subjects, of our capacities for language, and of the worlds that we make. The skeptical approach to the Earth, the doubt that *anything* is given, is a response that violates the sanctity of our relation to the Earth, and that dishonors the Earth in the process. In saying this, I am saying that wonder, not doubt, and certainly not hostility, is the appropriate philosophical attitude in

relation to *our relation* to the Earth. This wonder is called for in and by the very moment to moment sustenance, the moment to moment life-giving that is our dependence on the places the Earth provides us.

What Thoreau called "intelligence with the Earth,"[74] is only possible on the basis of reverence for the Earth. Indeed our *irreverence* toward the Earth has resulted in nothing less than environmental depravity. An "ethics and politics with the Earth," requires first a wonder-filled recognition of our utter and absolute dependence in relation to it.

[74] Cited in Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 245.

Talking Back to Feminist Postmodernism
Toward a New Radical Feminist Interpretation of the Body

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