What Life Means? – A Crucial Question for Environmental Social Research

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Didier Fassin: *Life. A Critical User's Manual.* Polity Press, 2018.

The meaning of life is the theme of Didier Fassin's book. It is natural to assume that the theme 'life' is crucial in environmental thought but, in fact, it is surprisingly seldom taken up. This realization inspired me to compare with each other three terms that describe basic aspects of the field: '*environment*', '*nature*', and '*life*'. As a framing device I use literary critic William Empson's suggestion that "a word can become a 'compacted doctrine', or even that all words are compacted doctrines inherently".[1]

If words, indeed, are 'compacted doctrines' as Empson suggests, then words are agents; words do things. And by implication, this is true also of concepts, even of the most theoretical scholarly concepts; to view concepts as 'compacted doctrines' leads us to explore ways in which they influence both our thoughts and practical actions in the domains within which they are meaningful. And to take one more step: in a field such as environmental research, which is inherently normatively laden, concepts carry strong normative messages as if by their own weight.[2]

Empson identifies five ways in which this process works out. The first one is straightforward: "the Existence Assertion, which says that what the word names is really there and worth naming." The other four types are variants of "an entirely different case, which I shall call an 'equation' and propose to divide into four types." We need not look at Empson's analysis of the four types of 'equation' in detail here; the important thought is that in certain contexts "the word itself seems to put the doctrine into our minds" (p. 74).

In the environmental domain the terms *environment*, *nature*, and *life* have, indeed, special and wide-ranging powers. I take them up first.

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First: *the environment.* The term 'environment' is derived from the transitive verb 'to environ'; in other words, the concept is tied to *something or somebody that is environed*. This, in turn, implies that significant elements of the environment vary depending on who, or what, is thought to be in the center; in this sense the environment is in the eye of the beholder, similar to beauty. This is the reason it is so natural to use either the indefinite or, more commonly, the definite article with the term. – In Finnish the setting is similar, but with the additional twist that the Finnish language draws a clear difference between accusative and partitive objects: *pimeys ympäröi meidät*, and *pimeys ympäröi meitä* are both correct expressions, but the flavour is different: the former version is more fateful than the latter.

As a corollary, the environment of environmental policy is always, I think necessarily, qualified with an attribute that depends on who is thought to be at the center and what criteria are used to assess the quality: good, poor, healthy, unhealthy, beautiful, ugly, peaceful, stressful, and so on. This actually is also reflected in the story of how the current meaning of ‘environment’ has come about.[3]

This feature gives additional weight to the term ‘environment’: when using the term we generally know what we are talking about. On the other hand, some generality is lost. Anthropologist Tim Ingold demonstrated this loss by putting weight on the environment as it is experienced in actual human life; he used the term ‘lifeworld’ in this purpose. He even presumed that in its modern usage, the term ‘environment’ implies that people are separated from their lifeworld: “I am suggesting that the notion of the global environment, far from marking humanity’s reintegration into the world, signals the culmination of a process of separation.”[4]

Ingold’s point has much to commend itself; ‘lifeworld’ is a good term to use as a reference to how people experience what is in their surroundings. However, his comment on the global environment is problematic: we can assess the state of the global environment using criteria that are obviously reasonable; for instance, the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. So, perhaps ‘global environment’ is not such a misnomer after all.

Landscape is an environment enlarged; it seems reasonable to think of landscape as a ‘lifeworld’. In English this connotation is readily expressed, by replacing the first word ‘land’ of the compound word with alternatives. This gives terms such as ‘taskscape’, ‘soundscape’, ‘timescape’ and ‘childscape’. This also helps us to liberate ‘landscape’ from the chattels of landscape painting; landscape gains materiality and becomes anchored in peoples’ lived lives. And as human beings are present in every landscape, landscapes always carry cultural meanings. In fact, this is also the case with landscape painting; rare are paintings in which there are no people in the scene (check, for instance, Romantic painters such as Caspar David Friedrich). Overall, the term landscape brings to light valuable aspects of how to assess the quality of what environs us.

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Second: *nature*. Nature is not tied to the perspective of something or somebody specifically; nature is what keeps things going, everywhere, all the time. *Nature is a process term*, very general, perhaps universal in scope. This is in some ways an advantage over ‘environment’ but, on the other hand, the universality of the term brings forth novel types of problems. If nature is everything, everywhere, what do we refer to, precisely, when we speak of ‘nature’?

A focus is needed; such features of the universal “everything” of nature need to be named that are of concern for some particular reason. Indeed, valuable specifications are commonly found. Efforts to understand how vital processes actually function in nature have brought specific topics onto the environmental agenda. Classical nature conservation has been the predecessor; conservation has been an increasingly significant stream of

thought since the mid-19th century or thereabouts. Objects worthy of conservation were identified and named, international and national societies were established, and during the 20th century nature conservation became increasingly a governmental duty. ‘Biodiversity’, the newcomer concept from the 1980s, summarizes the heritage. Biodiversity brought onto the agenda a style of conservation that is not tied to specific target species and areas; although, endangered species retain a specific role.

The view of ‘nature’ adopted in nature conservation is narrow, however; human dependence on modified nature is mainly bracketed off. That ‘nature’ is intimately tied to human conduct and well-being is a dominant theme in conceptions of nature adopted in cultural history. A whole range of authors such as cultural critic Raymond Williams, historian Clarence Glacken, philosophers Alfred North Whitehead, R. G. Collingwood and John Passmore, and numerous anthropologists have discussed this issue. Clarence Glacken summarized the original questions that have defined the problem field in Western thought since antiquity:[5]

> “In the history of Western thought, men have persistently asked three questions concerning the habitable earth and their relationship to it. Is the earth, which is obviously a fit environment for man and other organic life, a purposefully made creation? Have its climates, its relief, the configuration of its continents influenced the moral and social nature of individuals, and have they had an influence in molding the character and nature of human culture? In his long tenure of the earth, in what manner has man changed it from its hypothetical pristine conditions?“

In recent times a dominant trend has been an effort to uncouple nature from the connection to human culture. This is expressed by attributes common in conservation discourse such as “primeval”, “pristine”, “original”, “virgin”, “native”; antonyms include “introduced”, “human-dominated”, “alien”, “non-native”. The attributes in these series introduce problems of criteria and definitions; they reflect a view that nature in itself is inherently, essentially different from nature modified by humans. But in which ways, precisely? – Nature does not speak; what “genuine” nature is requires an interpreter, and nature allows mutually contradictory interpretations.

The contrast produced by these attributes is false. ‘Nature’ is part of human lifeworld and backs human livelihood; functioning nature is an integral element of the human sustenance in a similar way as functioning physiology is an integral element of the human body. Use of nature is a necessity for us. Our different ways of using elements of nature produce domesticated natures, elements of “NatureCulture” that emerge as mixtures of societal practices and wild nature.[6]

But no elements of nature remain completely under human control, let alone under human dominance. The feebleness of human control is best demonstrated by thorough case studies on domesticated natures, for instance farming, gardening, forestry, fisheries. Such cases bring into focus the significant roles of uncertainty and chance in human dealings with the rest of nature; they can teach a lot.[7]

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Third: *life*. How to understand life is the theme of Didier Fassin's *Life. A Critical User's Manual*. The book analyzes the position of human life in today's world; as Fassin spells out his aim in the introductory chapter (p. 3): "I propose … resituating individuals both in society and in the world; in society, that is, in the relational space that constitutes them; in the world, that is, in the global space in which they move." – This might superficially appear as being only about human lives, but as we shall see, general conceptions of life are at the background. One of Fassin's expressions is (p. 5): "the moral economy of life". Another brief characterization of the problem field he aims at clarifying is the contrast between "good life" and "right life": the former is singular, the latter is communal.

Fassin introduces in the discussion the work of several important cultural critics active during the last century: Georges Canguilhem, Hannah Arendt, Theodore Adorno, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, among others. This reflects his view that his theme requires conceptual groundwork and reshuffling. Canguilhem, in particular, is an important figure in this problem field, well worth getting acquainted with.[8]

'Life', similar to 'nature' is *a process term*, but 'life' is more specific than 'nature'. In particular, *life is close to us because we are alive*. And as life as a process is integrated with its environment, life as a concept *includes conditions that life demands*. There is no easy way to clarify this complex problem, far from it; I think efforts to specify *what life demands* opens a path toward environmental social thought.

We humans are alive; we are dependent on a living earth, in companionship with other living beings; we are eating at a table prepared by almost four billion years of biological evolution. What do we do with our life, personally and collectively, and in relation with other life on the planet? There hardly is a deeper question to ask. And when searching for an answer, we do not want to "define" life, we have a more pragmatic goal: to find out *how to live*.

But this search brings forth a potential problem: Can we envisage life as if from the inside out? The eye cannot "see" itself; the eye only "sees" outwards, toward what it is facing. Conceptual thought enters as a solution. Didier Fassin comments (p.21, rephrasing Canguilhem) that "the living itself is the inherent condition to the formation of a body of knowledge on the living."

Knowledge of life does not, however, automatically grow out of the fact of living. As Fassin notes, the understanding of life is plagued by a basic dualism: *biology,* the basic processes of life versus *biography*, the fulfillment of a lived life. This dualism permeates our understanding of life. "Is it possible to think of life as biology and life as biography simultaneously?" is the question he asks (p. 6).

To prepare for answering the question, Fassin presents a brief overview of historical changes in conceptions of life: from animation of matter (Aristotle) to mechanistic movement (Descartes) to self-maintaining organism (Kant). Then, in the 19th century biological research took over, and since the mid-20th century biological understanding of life has shifted in scale to the micro level: molecular biology and genetics have risen to

dominance within the field. This has hardened the opposition between biology and biography.

In biological understanding there is, however, another trend which has gathered force in the 21st century: an emphasis on the planetary dimension of life. Fassin does not take this trend into account but it can be easily integrated with his view that life is relational; it is also essential for integrating life into environmental social thought.

It is a biological fact that life is necessarily a planetary phenomenon. The whole earth is manifested as *the environment* of life on earth, including human life. This has two consequences: On the one hand, human life and other forms of life are tied together, in a fundamental dependence that encompasses the whole range of scales from microscopic to planetary. On the other hand, as living earth is the environment of everything alive, the term ‘global environment’ has a role in environmental discourse; this is a counterargument to Tim Ingold’s view I presented above.

Fassin’s work is focused on human life as it is expressed in today’s world. He takes up three mutually complementary dimensions: *forms of life*, *ethics of life*, and *politics of life*; and continues (p. 16): “the theoretical framework behind each of these three concepts derives from a reflection on the treatment of human lives in contemporary societies. One theme underlies this reflection: inequality. As I will show, this theme binds together the biological and the biographical, the material and social dimensions of life”.

To fulfill his goal, Fassin combines together demanding re-conceptualizations and conclusions based on rich empirical data; he gives references to his original publications. I present a concise interpretation of his conclusions from the perspective of environmental social research. For this purpose I proceed further than his text explicitly says; I think his book is an invitation to do precisely so.

The first dimension: *forms of life*. The critical question is (p. 20): “Are forms of life shared by the whole human species, or is it inscribed in a given space and time?” To explain the term ‘forms of life’, Fassin cites Georges Canguilhem (p. 22): “life is the formation of forms”. This may seem obscure, but Canguilhem’s thought is clarified by a citation from his writings on the history of biology:[9]

> “The concept of the organism as a regulative totality controlling developments and functions has remained a permanent feature of biological thought since the time when [French physiologist Claude] Bernard was among the first to demonstrate its experimental efficacy. … In the most general sense, organization is the solution to the problem of converting competition into compatibility. … Just as Bernard said that “the larynx is the larynx,” we can say that the model of an organism is the organism itself.”

Organisms have biographies, in addition to the physiological processes that keep them alive; the form of an organism is created in the course of its development from a fertilized egg to maturity. Life cannot be reduced to a mere process of staying alive (biology); rather,

life includes its own specific requirements formed and stabilized during development and adulthood (biography). In this way, life and its closest environment belong together; the environmental conditions that have influenced the biography of a particular individual, or a group of individuals are an integral part of ‘forms of life’.

As empirical material Fassin refers to his studies of the precarious situation of transnational nomads: the case studies include what became known as the “Calais jungle”, a campground at Calais inhabited by migrant mainly from Near East trying to get to the UK via the Channel tunnel; and Zimbabwean refugees in South Africa. Fassin charted the precarious existence of young, mainly male refugees living in makeshift tents in the Calais “jungle,” and of young, mainly female refugees squatting in abandoned warehouses in Johannesburg. The total number of transnational nomads in the world is perhaps 70 million. This (p. 46) “tells of a certain state of the world. Indeed, this form of life results from the predicament of contemporary democracies, incapable of living up to the principles that constitute the foundation of their very existence.”

Fassin’s description of the settings of his fieldwork draw a picture of desolate all-encompassing environments; perhaps “total environment” is a good description. The total, if not totalitarian, nature of these places shapes lifeworlds of the people who are trapped inside. They constitute environmental conditions in which an increasing number of humans live.

The second dimension: *ethics of life*. The critical question is (p. 49): Are ethical lives “defined by principles external to individuals, whether these principles are universal or local [or are they] produced through internal processes of self-realization, whether these processes are subjective or inter-subjective.”

After clarifying the question, Fassin specifies his own perspective:

> “Beyond their divergencies, these approaches tend to devise an ethical substance already there or in the making, that can be isolated from its historical construction, social inscription and political implications. Yet, from the moment one leaves the realm of philosophical abstractions to examine ethics in concrete situations, it is difficult to ignore this threefold dimension of the historical, the social, and the political.”

This examination induces Fassin to a critical analysis of the ethics of life in the current society. He presents a brief overview of the main variants of ethical theories; following this he sets himself the aim to explore “facts which do not suppose preexisting morality of ethics but are produced by agents in particular contexts.” (p. 55).

Fassin’s empirical research on this theme is focused on ethical stakes in different, even contrasting social contexts. The first case: the French system of “humanitarian rationale” which granted asylum seekers with a severe illness an opportunity to get a residence permit. The second case: controversies in South Africa during the spread of the HIV epidemics in the early 2000s over who are entitled to get anti-retroviral treatment. Of the

two conflicting positions on this issue, “one situated the single life saved above all other priorities; the other gave precedence to fairness in the allocation of goods to the whole population.” (p. 65)

These cases share a commonality: a threat to the biological life of individuals was valued higher than social justice. Fassin uses the term ‘biolegitimacy’ for this trend: it is ethics of life “through which biolegitimacy is rendered undisputable whereas legal protection and social justice are more and more easily called into question.” (p. 68) Fassin’s third case study brings this duality into a bright focus. It concerns martyrdom in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Sacrificing one’s life is a gesture of opposition to the terror of occupation; the source is the hopelessness of the endless humiliation: “Confronted with the permanent debasement of their lives, these aggressors [Palestinian martyrs] find in their death a way to regain some of their lost value.” (p. 78)

These case studies do not allow an easy summary, but an important theme that Fassin leans on comes from the work of Axel Honneth: *social recognition*.[10] The postulate is that social recognition “enables self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, which constitute the three elements of self-realization through interaction with others.” (p. 56). From this perspective, the basic issue of ethics of life is straightforward, in principle: resistance; that all individuals “confronted by the extreme hardships of precarious life” resist “the erosion of their dignity.” (p. 81)

I think it is easy to integrate this principle with environmental thought: Isn’t social recognition a self-evident precondition that people be able to participate in building “our common future”, as the goal of sustainable development is phrased?

The third dimension: *politics of life*. The critical question is: How could a right balance be found on how far the government can legitimately intervene into the life of its citizens to ensure equality and liberty? Answering this question requires close interaction with both ethics of life and forms of life. In addition, politics of life is molded by structures of social power.

As a historical prelude Fassin refers to Michel Foucault’s view that in the 18th century a new mode of government broke through that he dubbed *biopolitics*. However, Fassin adds a critical comment to Foucault’s term: He notes that Foucault’s ‘biopolitics’ is actually *government of populations* rather than ‘politics of life’. Foucault had in his focus the methods of government early modern states adopted to mold peoples’ lives so they fulfill roles reserved for them as obedient workforce, cannon fodder, and so on. This is an important point as Foucauldian biopolitics has also been viewed as environmental governance. Fassin suggests a new approach to the problem: he asks “what politics does to human life?”, instead of how technologies of government try to control human populations. He explores the shaping of individual lives rather than governmentality “from the angle of the way politics treat human lives so as to introduce the ordinary and the social.” (p. 91)

What then might politics of life be? First of all, politics of life is characterized by a clash between the absolute value of human life that is accepted in principle, and the actual reality of human lives; this is a shift from the normative to empirical. Indeed, in historical reality the value of singular human life has since ancient times been assessed in monetary terms in various situations. Early examples include the compensation for a murder to the family of the victim, and marriage arrangements (dowry). More recent examples include life insurance, and compensation for work-place fatalities or for societal catastrophes like 0911 in New York City in which case the sum given to the families varied from $788.000 to over $6.000.000. For comparison: the families of the victims of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 received no financial compensation from the authorities.

Inequality shows through in Fassin's scrutinizing of the empirical in politics of life. The variation in actual life spans among different layers of the population, depending on living conditions, demonstrates that politics of life does not treat all citizens in the same way. Fassin cites Canguilhem (p. 161): "The average life span is not the biologically normal, but in a sense the socially normative, life span."

Another set of examples comes from degradation of conditions of life due to outright negligence of infrastructures such as provision of water and heating. "Politics of life do not only depend on state policies. They involve the entire society." (115)

Finally, Fassin draws together his exploration (123): "Rather than a metaphysics of alterity, what is at stake is a physics of inequality – as is attested by the fact that the biological and biographical dimensions are tightly bound in forms of life, and that ethics of life cannot be thought independently of politics of life." An essential moment of this equality is the positionality of the "have-nots" and the "haves" in relation to each other. "Considering life through the lens of inequality thus makes the social world intelligible anew, but also offers new possibilities for intervention. It enables us to move from expressing compassion to recognizing injustice." (124).

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What does Fassin's analysis of life have to do with environmental social thought? – To answer this question we have to move beyond the themes of his book; I believe this is justified as his work offers an excellent platform for this additional move. I begin by looking more closely at what Fassin's specifications of the three dimensions summarized above offer for environmental thought.

First, *forms of life*: Different forms of life reflect different lifeworlds, i.e., they are shaped by different types of environments. On a primary level the relation is very close. In the most dire conditions, in particular, the environment is most likely a determining element of the form of life, at least momentarily, despite the constant struggle of people to improve their lot. Indeed, I believe environmental activism can become a part of forms of life which are experienced as deficient in terms of environmental conditions. In this sense, a good environment is similar to 'health': one becomes aware of it when it is lacking.[11]

Second, *ethics of life*: Social recognition is a key moment in the ethical basis of environmental social thought. Mutual recognition and esteem encourage people to demand a good environment for all. This is the demand for environmental justice. The struggle for environmental justice covers both the lifeworlds of individuals and their right to a secure sustenance. It is the theft or plunder of the necessary preconditions of sustainable sustenance that forces millions of people as transnational migrants to refugee camps. The question is: What kind of life can people build for themselves? What is the 'nature' of these lives?

Third, *politics of life*: "What politics does to life?" is the question. Injustice is the answer in current society, in Fassin's view. It is grounded in forms of life and ethics of life: the former offers manifestations, the latter justifications. This may seem paradoxical, at first: Does politics loose its independence? But perhaps politics is actually on the driver's seat. Politics is backed by power relations; naturalizing inequality as "the ordinary and the social" is both an indication and a result of asymmetric social relations. It is entirely adequate that politics of life appears as the most elusive of the three dimensions Fassin takes up; politics works behind a curtain of normalcy.

Taken together, the three perspectives talk directly to one of the most difficult problems in environmental social thought: How to begin the large-scale societal change that is required for ambitious environmental goals to become feasible? How to achieve a change in the ways people view the world and act in the world in which they live and on which they depend?

The tremendous inertia of the existing human world is dramatically brought into light by denialism: in the small of the virus causing the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the large of climate change. How to speak convincingly to a person who is at an Intensive Care Unit and will, perhaps, die next day or next week but, yet, doubts the reality of the virus?; or to deniers of climate change who will, perhaps, lose their sustenance during the next hurricane, or wildfire, or spell of an "abnormal" heat wave?

Fassin recognizes this dilemma in another form (p. 46), as "[t]he conjunction of massive displacements of populations fleeing conflicts, disasters, and poverty, and of no less impressive reactions of hostility fueled by populist rhetoric, is a signature of our time."

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As compacted doctrines, 'environment', 'nature' and 'life' grade to one another: the images they evoke overlap with each other, but each one has also a core meaning. I have come to think that the terms can be arranged into a hierarchy that is flexible but has 'life' as a central element: All forms of life are embedded in nature which fulfills the requirements of life, and the environment of life comprises those preconditions that viable nature requires. What is primary depends on the point of view; the point of view is for us humans to decide.

Neither this conclusion nor Fassin's work represents shallow anthropocentrism. The starting point is that the actual conditions of human life need attention because human life is embedded in a livable world; this is the core postulate supporting the 'biography' aspect

of Fassin's work, "the moral economy of life" he promotes. His approach is pragmatic, it is not primarily a defense of a philosophical or theoretical position.

I have personal stakes in this particular perspective, grounded in experience. During a trip to the River Kolyma in eastern Siberia, 30 years ago, we visited the site of prison camp Butugychak in the Gornyak mountains, in permafrost country, way above the tree line. Old barracks constructed of stone, with bars in the windows, were still externally intact. These used to be "dormitories" serving a tin mine, with a workforce formed by prisoners, some 10.000 heads simultaneously at its heyday; the mean life expectation of a prisoner after arrival was perhaps two or three months. Before the visit our host biologist Daniil Berman remarked that "It is no wonder that nobody cares about nature at Kolyma as nobody has ever cared about human beings at Kolyma."[12] – The *politics of life* of Kolyma was as dark as it can get.

At the extreme presented by Kolyma, the politics of human life is all that matters; there are no residuals, nothing else to be concerned about. But where does this extremity grade to a more benign terrain in which other kinds of concerns, more nuanced and balanced would rise to the fore?

Of the three concepts I took up in the beginning: *environment, nature,* and *life*, the last one, life, is most difficult to really pin down but, paradoxically perhaps, it is also the one that remains to the end. As a mental exercise, imagine an ultimate "eco-catastrophe": the decisive threat is an ultimate end of life.

I think all three concepts are important in addressing the human environmental predicament. Each one of them opens questions that we have to explore, sometimes separately, sometimes integrated together. I read this conclusion out of Fassin's book. As he does not take explicitly up problems of the environment, it is entirely understandable that, as regards environmental social research, his book remains half-way. But he has erected signposts (not a meager achievement!); thus, he presents a task for us, environmental social scholars: go on from here.

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[1] *The Structure of Complex Words*. Chatto & Windus, London, 1952, 39.

[2] See James Meadowcroft & Daniel Fiorino (eds), *Conceptual Innovation in Environmental Policy* (MIT Press, 2017); in their essays in the volume, the editors emphasize the 'promise' and 'expectations' created by successful concepts.

[3] See James Meadowcroft's article "The birth of the environment and the evolution of environmental governance" in Meadowcroft & Fiorino.

[4] Tim Ingold: “Globes and spheres: the topology of environmentalism.” Ch. 12 in his *The Perception of the Environment. Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. (Routledge, 2000). Finnish translation “Sfäärien soitosta pallojen pinnalle: Ympäristöajattelun topologiasta” in: Yrjö Haila & Ville Lähde (eds.), *Luonnon politiikka* (Vastapaino 2004).

[5] This is in the opening paragraph of the Preface in *Traces along the Rhodian Shore. Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the Ends of the Eighteenth Century* (University of California Press, 1967).

[6] ‘NatureCulture’ is a useful term adopted particularly by feminist scholars.

[7] See, for example, Yrjö Haila & Klaus Henle: “Uncertainty in biodiversity science, policy and management: a conceptual overview. *Nature Conservation* 8: 27-43 (2014).

[8] *The Normal and the Pathological* (Zone Books, 1991) includes both Canguilhem’s doctoral dissertation in medicine (1943) and additional reflections on the theme 20 years later. The theme of the work is the ‘normativity’ of “the normal” in human life, and in life in general; Canguilhem shows the circularity of how “normal” and “norm” become entangled together.

[9] *A Vital Rationalist. Selected Writings from Georges Canguilhem* (ed. by François Delaporte; Zone Books,1994, 302).

[10] The key reference is Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Polity, 1995).

[11] This analogy is derived from G. H. Von Wright’n note that “in the case of organs, badness (poorness) appears to be logically primary to goodness” in *The Varieties of Goodness* (Thoemmes Press, 1996 [1963]), 55; in other words, elements (“organs”) of a good environment are recognized after they are lacking.

[12] Mines on the mountains delimiting the Kolyma catchment area were probably the worst part of the Gulag camp system adopted in the Soviet Union in the 1930s; see Yrjö Haila: “Camping in Siberia”, in Yrjö Haila & Marketta Seppälä (eds), *Ikijää, Permafrost, Merzlota* (Pori Art Museum, 1995, 214-217; the Finnish version on pp. 101-107).