

Habitual Sustainability

*Environmental Action Through the Lens of Habit, Ritual Practice,
and Eucharist*

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Imminence, Information, and Inaction

“Now if arguments were sufficient by themselves to make people decent, the rewards they would command would justifiably have been many and large, as Theognis says, and rightly bestowed. In fact, however, arguments seem to have enough influence to stimulate and encourage the civilized ones among the young people, and perhaps to make virtue take possession of a well-born character that truly loves what is fine; but they seem unable to turn the many toward being fine and good.” Aristotle (1179b5-10)

“Information is not entirely inconsequential, but it is much overrated as a change agent.”

Caron Chess and Branden Johnson (2007: 223)

The Problem of Social Change

In the world of contemporary environmental ethics, one is apt to encounter a cruel irony: the growing need for immediate change in humanity’s relation to the natural world has met the resounding apathy or stubborn inertia of the Western public. Climate change has not inspired the assumption of sustainable behavior; instead, people have resisted, or simply shirked, their responsibility to the environmental. Others put the stalemate differently, calling it a “persistent conundrum” that although “the balance of available scientific evidence conveys an increasing sense of urgency, society as a whole – particularly in the United States – does not appear to view the problem as immediate, and certainly not as urgent” (Moser and Dilling 2007a: 3). Certain groups have set deadlines demarcating a time before which the world’s top-consuming countries must implement far-reaching reforms or face the reality of inflicting irreversible damage to the ecosystems of the earth. Yet, many of these deadlines have passed with little progress for the better. According to Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC) co-Chair Thomas Stocker, “As a result of our past, present and expected future emissions of CO₂, we are committed to climate change, and effects will persist for many centuries even if emissions of CO₂ stop” (McDaid 2013). Especially in the USA, the movement for sustainable change seems to suffer from an anemic constitution after finding itself stalled on the margins of political and social life. Indeed, the pressing need for sustainable change has pushed some environmentalists into the frenzied role of doomsday prophets foretelling an apocalyptic end. This means that the fear-mongering explicit in a medium like *The Day After Tomorrow* is nearly indistinguishable from reports from the “U.N.’s chief climate scientist (who) says the world is at ‘five minutes before midnight’ when it comes to the deadline for averting severe climate change” (Earthweek 2013). Yet despite all the clamor and hubbub, the world seems to have taken little notice, carrying on in largely the same (unsustainable) trajectory as before. Cruelly, the change so desperately needed seems reluctant to come.

Scientific research from past decades has demonstrated a causal link between humanity’s abuse of the natural world as an endless supply of natural resources and the myriad environmental problems that threaten to corrupt the ecological equilibrium. The climatological case against modern society is airtight; it is generally accepted that humans have caused deleterious climate change. Scientists have used many names to describe climate change, including “a carbon dioxide problem, an energy problem, global warming, an ‘enhanced greenhouse effect’” (Moser and Dilling 2007a: 5). At base, climate change is a pressing and global environmental predicament. I am not interested here in rehashing familiar arguments and trotting out the relevant data to prove anew the endangered state of the earth’s ecosystems and humanity’s culpability in the whole affair. Rather, I take climate change¹ as a given, a reality I assume as a

¹ The reader may have already begun to notice that I vary in my terminology, sometimes alluding to climate change, sometimes naming it global warming or a general environmental crisis. Yet all the while, I intend to refer to the basic constellation of phenomena that compose a picture of an ailing planet earth. I must own up to such terminological

premise in my larger project because “the crux of the climate change debate at this time is not conflict over science but over very different values” (McCright 2007: 207). Thus, the questions I ask in this thesis concern not whether climate change will happen (or whether it is already happening), but the bearing that present or imminent reality has on human behavior.

For the past couple decades, the environmental movement has confronted the world with this story: your current way of life as society cannot be sustained, for the environment upon which it is predicated is increasingly failing as a direct result. As mentioned, however, the urgency of the message coming from the environmentalist camp has found its match equaled only by the *lack* of any substantial response from the intended audience. As Moser and Dilling, editors of the recent collection of articles *Creating a Climate for Change: Communicating Climate Change and Facilitating Social Change* contend,

the evidence shows that lack of a widespread sense of urgency is not the result of people not knowing about the issue. It is also not just due to not understanding it or a lack of information. In fact, research has shown that the public is overwhelmingly aware of the problem of global warming. Over 90 percent of the US population has heard of it, some know the problem is related to energy use, and quite a high percentage can correctly identify impacts associated with global warming (2007a: 4).

Note here that the public does not lack relevant environmental knowledge. The green awareness campaign has succeeded insofar as it has made people cognizant of the issue. Yet, where are the green revolutions? Why hasn't sustainability gained the unanimous sympathy and attention of our politicians, public intellectuals, celebrities, and athletes? Obviously, knowledge of environmental

vagueness precisely because my argument does not hinge on using the right scientific terminology or facts to describe the tumultuous changes the earth is currently undergoing. Rather, my interest lies in analyzing the reasons behind the discrepancy between the overwhelming and dire environmental need, whatever that may presently consist in, and the underwhelming societal response to that need. Subsequently, my guiding research question will inquire into the reason(s) why present and past efforts at communicating sustainability have failed; I will then work from this platform to proscribe an alternative model that can bypass this tragic irony.

problems has not sufficed to stimulate the kind of social change needed to redress climate change. Accordingly, the problem lies in what happens to that knowledge, the gap between knowledge and behavior. From all appearances, it seems as though people simply cannot be bothered to care for something so distant and intangible as climate change, despite its cosmic importance. In this way, the majority of the Western world displays what Aristotle called incontinence, the disposition to act in a way contrary to what is known to be good, just, and reasonable. According to Aristotle, the “incontinent person seems to be the same as one who abandons it [rational calculation]. The incontinent person knows that his actions are base, but does them because of his feelings” (Aristotle and Irwin 1999: 1145b12-14, brackets added).²

I must admit that the push to communicate sustainability³ has not fallen on deaf ears completely. The last couple decades have witnessed the emergence of environmentally minded individuals and sub-cultures dedicated to reducing their environmental footprint. Further, I do not wish to undercut grassroots, small-scale movements by implying that they cannot bring about society-wide changes for the better. Rather, I wish merely to note that the rate of sustainable change in the West has not been near equal to the substantial need. Although the sustainability message has been heard, it has not produced the kind of effects

² Given the distinct nature of citing Aristotle, which universally uses the line numbering developed by Immanuel Bekker as standard and the fact that I only draw on Terence Irwin’s translation (2nd. ed.), I will hereafter limit my citations of Aristotle to the Bekker numbering.

³ The term “communicate sustainability” is a term common to environmental academic circles that means the project to convince individuals of the reality of climate change and, more importantly, to get them to change their unsustainable behavior so that they reduce their environmental footprint. Accordingly, “communication” in this sense transcends the level of dialogue and information conveyance, extending itself into the realm of moral education. The ultimate goal is behavior change according to a standard of right and wrong (adopting sustainable practices and shedding unsustainable practices), which places this project in the realm of ethics. Though the colloquial usage of “communication” does not usually encompass any hint of moral implications (which makes it a bit unexpected to talk about communicating sustainability while referring to behavioral change), I will continue to employ it because of its currency in academia. Further warrant for its usage can be found its etymological root, for communication comes from the Latin verb “*communicare*,” from which we get the English word “common.” Communication, therefore, implies making something common, the mutual sharing of a dialogue or project. In this light, the communication of sustainability can be interpreted as sharing in the message of sustainability, making it common for both parties. This implies that the hearing party not only receives the message, but also internalizes to the extent that they take ownership of it by incorporating it into their lives. This kind of communication constitutes an ethical endeavor of transforming lives, and it is this deeper kind of communication to which I refer in using the term “the communication of sustainability.”

necessary to buck the trend. For example, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* held the public's attention for a short period, and while it incited controversy and change alike, it has not proven powerful enough to turn the tide in transforming the degrading pattern of society's consumption.

Consequently, despite the quasi-apocalyptic nature of the message environmentalists have dutifully communicated to the world for the past couple decades, no adequate sustainable revolution has emerged; this leaves the destructive nature of society's practices essentially intact and abandons the urgency of the environment's health to the whims of individual conscience. As Moser and Dilling report, "Our own experience and a review of the literature suggested that the practice of climate change communication had resulted in disappointing and even counterproductive results" (2007a: ix). Effectively, society has in large part continued with business as usual operations as if nothing significant has changed, despite knowing better. While the situation is not completely desolate, it is clear that in attempts to communicate sustainability something is not working as it should. Thus, we must ask the question: Why hasn't knowledge of climate change translated into environmentally responsible behavior? What explains this glaring information-behavior gap? What is going awry?

This, then, is the project for this thesis in brief: in this introduction and the first chapter, I seek to understand why the current model in the communication of sustainability has failed to ignite social change and then to articulate the beginnings of an alternative model (centered on habit) that compensates for the former's shortcomings. The second chapter argues that habit formation belongs to the category of practice because it relies wholly on the logic of practice, and that ritual is a particularly powerful type of social practice capable of habit formation. Lastly, I contend that the Eucharist, the focal ritual of Christianity which focuses on conformation to the Body of Christ, challenges the

individualism and self-centeredness at the heart of unsustainable practices, and thus constitutes a ritual well placed to communicate sustainability.

Ignorance, Knowledge, and Behavioral Models

A comprehensive answer to the aforementioned question (what is going awry?) requires the discernment of a common pattern that unifies the variegated efforts of those who communicate sustainability. To be sure, there is no one institute, program or recognizable spokesperson that oversees what I refer to as the communication of sustainability. Rather, this endeavor is composed of various and discrete projects to persuade the public, or some section of society, to effect sustainable change. The task at hand, therefore, is to discern what universal trait, if any, underwrites these particulars to account for their impotence. With this discernment accomplished, we will have found a model of the communication of sustainability paradigmatic of the various and discrete projects. Further philosophical analysis of this model will reveal its shortcomings.

Despite the lack of an explicit standard within this diverse movement, what holds most environmental advocates together is not only their *telos* (producing positive change among the main culprits responsible for climate change) but also, in most cases, their method for achieving that end. This method hides underneath the surface of rhetoric yet is evident to the discerning eye. To put it bluntly, the implicit methodological assumption that unites and underwrites most advocacy efforts is that the general public simply needs more and/or better information concerning the state of reality. People just need to know more about what is happening to the environment; public awareness campaigns are typical examples of this approach. Once people have their knowledge sufficiently updated, so the logic goes, they will thereby do what is right for the environment, almost as if out of necessity. “Many informational efforts to promote environmentally responsible behavior lean on an implicit theory of behavior (...) that ‘right’ behavior naturally follows from ‘right’ thinking” (Chess and Johnson 2007: 223).

This statement by Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the IPCC, epitomizes the dominant model: “It is becoming increasingly clear that the spread of knowledge and awareness would be a critical driver of the transformation that is required to move human society towards a pattern of sustainable development” (Pachauri 2010). This concern for raising awareness via information constitutes the unifying methodological trait in most current efforts to communicate sustainability.

Given the scientific nature of the climate change phenomena, it has been natural for scientists to assume the role of awareness advocates. The way in which these early advocates understood their business primarily as a matter of informing people of the problem seems to have set the tone for later efforts. “Among many of these communicators, the tripartite conviction that (1) climate change is essentially a scientific issue, (2) experts understand it and others don’t, and (3) the purpose of communication thus is to educate the ignorant is, in short, still alive and well” (Moser and Dilling 2007a: 15). Another paradigmatic example of this perspective is Gore’s documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, in which he explicitly aims to present scientific findings to the public to convince them of climate change and discursively oblige them to change their lives.⁴ In the accompanying book, Gore writes, “I think it makes a compelling case that humans are the cause of most of the global warming that is taking place.” He makes clear that his goal is “sharing the information I have compiled with anyone who would listen” (Gore 2006: 9). This implicit methodology, however, can only conceive of ignorance in intellectual terms as a dearth of information, rather than accounting for ignorance as an embodied phenomenon, a split that divorces knowledge from action.

⁴ Ironically, Gore is quoted as saying “I’ve been trying to tell this story for a long time and I feel as if I’ve failed to get the message across” (Revkin 2006). The point I am trying to make is that there is nothing wrong with the content of Gore’s story, but there is everything wrong with the method with which he addresses the problem. For advocates like Gore, their methodology blinds them to the reality that information is superfluous unless the audience has the requisite moral character that enable them to incorporate their knowledge into their lives. I will further explore this in the section below on Aristotle, a philosopher who acknowledged the surprising weakness of philosophical or scientific arguments when pitted against inimical desires.

Those who keep their faith in the merits of the intellectualist/information model may at this point respond, “Look, there is nothing inherently wrong with an intellectualist model. The reason people have apathetically kept to their old behaviors is that they are not *completely* convinced. If they wholeheartedly believed in climate change and its dangers, they would obviously reform their lives.” If this were the case, the problem would not be incontinence – acting against one’s knowledge – but rather an underlying intellectual dearth. Yet, research into climate change communication belies this objection. As quoted above, over 90% of U.S. Americans affirm that there is a problem called global warming. Furthermore, researchers in 2000 “demonstrated that even if participants have high levels of knowledge about the problem and the community has invested in changing their attitudes through advertising or educational campaigns, behavior is often unaltered” (Moser and Dilling 2007a: 11). Put succinctly, “the public is aware of the term ‘global warming,’ but not energized by it to act” (Moser and Dilling 2007a: 15). Thus, it fits to diagnose the problem with the communication of sustainability in philosophical terms as a problem of incontinence or, in other words, to say that the missing link lies in the space *between* head knowledge and embodied practice.

It is plausible that this strong emphasis on information dissemination to raise the public’s awareness stems from the vocal presence of climate skeptics or deniers who either criticize or refuse to believe in anthropogenic climate change. Given this opposition, environmentalists may have assumed that the battle for social change starts and ends at the level of knowledge, refuting the claims of the deniers. Success becomes measured in response to the skeptics, who have objected on a factual level. With this model in place, the goal naturally becomes to disseminate as much information as possible, inundating society at large with facts, figures, statistics and ominous predictions designed to poke and prod the audience towards a sustainable future by way of their minds.

However, the goal of conveying information reveals a deeper assumption than just a simplistic methodology. Instead, what is at stake is the deeper question of philosophical anthropology, that is to say, an underlying notion of human nature and action. By making methodological claims as to the nature of how humans change and act, this paradigmatic model of the communication of sustainability takes for granted a certain construal of what it is to be a human being. As theologian and cultural scholar James Smith contends, “behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology (i.e.) a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons” (2009: 27).⁵ Education presupposes anthropology. To put it differently, education is by definition education *of* some entity; it is, and must be, oriented towards those who receive the education, and thus the method of education must tailor itself to the nature of the educated in order to obtain success. For example, it would be ill advised to teach a dog to sit by showing him the relevant material in a canine training book because it is not in a dog’s nature to read. Rather, tailoring the pedagogical method to the object would require appealing to the dog’s nature, which in this case might consist of a system of rewards and/or punishments to induce the dog to sit.

As indicated, the dominant paradigm in communicating sustainability focuses myopically on disseminating information. Information concerns the mind. The unstated argument runs as follows: Humans need to change; human action depends on rational calculation and informed deliberation. Therefore, to effect sustainable change, one must pass out information on climate change and sustainable responses. In this way, moral action seems to depend only on knowledge; immoral action must simply result from ignorance. Yet, this claim presupposes a deeper claim about human nature. The unavoidable conclusion of this dominant model in the communication of sustainability is that humans must be beings that primarily think and reason. The way in which advocacy efforts,

⁵ Given that the goal of communicating sustainability is ultimately the education of individuals and social systems in a particular manner (i.e. to live according to different standards), it makes sense to scrutinize it as a pedagogical endeavor.

like *An Inconvenient Truth*, target the mind confirms this conclusion. Consequently, this model methodologically conceives of human beings as primarily *res cogitans* (thinking things, which in Cartesian philosophy, is opposed to *res extensa*,⁶ spatially extended, material things) or, to put it comically, disembodied minds floating in a land of ideas. A pedagogical enterprise that focuses solely on information automatically assumes that the head is the locus of human action and the mind the primary means by which humans meaningfully engage the world. Though many in the environmental movement would not hesitate to reject this depiction of human nature, they have unintentionally adopted a pedagogical model that takes on this anthropological framework. Yet, in aiming solely for the head with its data laden message, this model misses the public's heart, making it possible for people to hear the environmental message without subsequently changing their lifestyles accordingly. As I will detail below, action emanates from the heart, and the primary way to the heart is via the body precisely because humans are first and foremost bodies. Thus, the problem is one of pedagogical methodology, for the method by which the endeavor is carried out does not match the object (i.e. those being educated) to which it is ultimately oriented.

This initial sketch, however, suggests a disconnect between the mind and the body, as if the mind does not matter. Some may ask, how is it possible that an agent can act against their reason? Isn't the communication of sustainability simply a matter of having reason conquer all? To answer these questions leads naturally into the field of moral philosophy in view of the fact that they demand a proper theory of human action, which presupposes an account of human nature. Moreover, by answering these questions, one will better understand the aforementioned critique of head-oriented pedagogies and be able to avoid the pitfalls of reducing our account of human action to the extreme positions of

⁶ These terms come from René Descartes' famous *Discourse on the Method* (2008) in which he argues for a rigid dualism between thinking and extended things.

physical determinism or intellectualism. To do so, we must take a significant detour through ancient Greece.

Reframing the Discourse: Habit and the Communication of Sustainability

“Moral goodness is the child of habit, for we acquire the moral virtues by
first exercising them.”

Aristotle (quoted in Carlisle 2013: 153)

“Sow an action, and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character;
sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

William James (quoted in MacMullan 2013: 235)

Aristotle: Incontinence and Knowledge

This very same issue of human action and knowledge created disagreement between two of the three most famous Athenian philosophers: Socrates (who is only known thanks to Plato’s writings) and Aristotle, the most accomplished student from Plato’s Academy. If we can understand the root of their disagreement, we will become better equipped to diagnose the failure to communicate sustainability. According to Socrates, humans are essentially rational beings, controlled by their reason (or lack thereof, i.e. ignorance). To him, there are essentially two categories that pertain to human moral action, virtue and vice, which correspond to knowledge and ignorance respectively. To Socrates, nothing can stop those who know the Good from doing the good (i.e. be virtuous), whereas those who do not know the Good cannot do otherwise than the bad (i.e. be vicious). “The Socratic tradition (...) sees knowledge as invincible and wrongdoing as a kind of ignorance” (Lockwood 2013: 26). In either case, Socrates views reason as the hallmark of human identity.

Accordingly, because ethics depends on the intellect, it is unthinkable for Socrates that a man who knows the virtuous course of action would not act according to his judgment and do what he knows to be virtuous. In this scheme, knowledge is closely married to action, such that the former necessitates the latter

and the latter can only be necessarily predicated on the former. Likewise, if an agent does not do the good, he must not have had the right knowledge. In other words, “If at time t1 I have true belief that x is better than y, and at later time t2 I do y rather than x, then, in Socrates’ view, I must have changed my mind between t1 and t2 so that at t2 I believe that y is better than x” (Aristotle 1999: 256, editor’s notes). In this way, the current communication of sustainability model stands in line with the Socratic understanding of human action, for both parties affirm in unison that knowledge of the good is sufficient to ensure virtuous action. Whereas Socrates makes this claim explicit, the current model of communicating sustainability takes it for granted. Whether or not the proponents of this model realize it, they owe a large debt to Socrates as the philosophical champion of their methodology.

However, the problem for both Socrates and environmental advocates comes in making sense of those whose action does not conform to what is good. Socrates can only account for vicious⁷ action by positing some level of ignorance. Yet this seems to contradict common experience, what Aristotle called incontinence. Socrates not only has to dismiss accounts of incontinence, he is forced to conclude that they are not humanly possible. Aristotle, on the other hand, attempts to carve out a more nuanced philosophy of action that can account for the aforementioned phenomenon of incontinence. Though Aristotle certainly agrees with Socrates’ high estimation of the power of reason, he also recognizes that there are instances in which an individual may know what is right and still choose against that knowledge. This intrapersonal conflict is best evidenced by the phenomenon of addiction, in which persons with addictions report knowing that their substance abuse was wrong and harmful to their person, but their better judgment is overridden. Other examples of incontinence include overeating or habitual actions like biting one’s nails or cracking one’s knuckles (frowned upon

⁷ In Aristotelian language, an action is vicious if it is not directed towards the human good, i.e. if it does not contribute to increasing the individual’s *eudemonia*. Virtuous actions are those that help an individual realize their happiness.

by mannered society as ‘bad habits’). In most cases⁸, the incontinent agents know and accept that their actions are vicious or harmful, but their action bypasses this knowledge. This implies that human action, and in turn ethics, does not rely solely upon knowledge. Aristotle’s objection to the Socratic philosophy of action can be summarized as follows: “Information is not entirely inconsequential, but it is much overrated as a change agent” (Chess and Johnson 2007: 223). Put simply, knowledge does not suffice to ensure virtue. While it is necessary for the virtuous life, only a shallow pedagogy assumes it adequate in itself.

To elucidate the paradoxical nature of incontinence, it is instructive to follow Aristotle’s example and contrast it with intemperance, the indulgence of one’s desire for pleasure. From an external perspective, incontinence looks like mere intemperance; both the incontinent man and the intemperate man exhibit a lack of self-control, which results in a vicious action. Yet, Aristotle is quick to make a distinction between incontinence and intemperance because he views intemperance as a vice, whereas he places incontinence in its own category a notch above vice. The reason behind this distinction is what goes on internally within the moral agent. The intemperate man has no misgivings about pursuing his base desires, and thus indicates that he has not made the correct, i.e. virtuous, decision. The incontinent man, however, has correctly identified the good and even rationally approved of it, yet he acts on his desires instead of his rational choice. He is “someone who because of his feelings abandons himself against correct reason. They overcome him far enough so that his actions do not accord with correct reason, but not so far as to make him the sort of person to be persuaded that it is right to pursue such pleasures without restraint” (1151a21-24). This explains why the incontinent agent is often plagued by guilt, for he acts

⁸ There are cases that Aristotle calls impetuous incontinence in which the incontinent agent is overcome by overwhelming passion and desire, which compel her to act wrongly. In this case, the incontinent agent’s knowledge is obscured and at some level inoperative, meaning that the impetuous incontinent does not act in clear contradiction of her better judgment. Conversely, the clear-eyed, or weak, incontinent knowingly acts against her better judgment. “For one type of incontinent person [i.e. the weak] does not abide by the result of his deliberation, while the volatile [i.e. impetuous] person is not even prone to deliberate at all” (1152a18-19). The reason behind impetuous incontinence is obviously passion, whereas the reasons propelling the clear-eyed incontinent are not so obvious. This seeming paradox will be explored shortly.

against his own reasoning. The intemperate man, however, acts according to his (poorly made) decision and thus escapes the guilt common to the incontinent man, though at great cost.

The category of incontinence is key to understanding the distinction between Socrates and Aristotle. Socrates' philosophy of action does not allow for the recognition of real incontinence, since to do so would entail the victory of non-rational desires over reason. Due to the close connection between the Socratic understanding of human action and the current paradigm of communicating sustainability, the latter fails just as the former does insofar as neither recognizes that reason is not necessarily king. The reality of incontinence points out the Socratic shortcoming as a failure to take into account the fact that human rationality is an embodied affair. At the root of this shortcoming stands a rigid dualism between mind and body, which presumes that the human mind is the only seat of intelligence: the mind, therefore, must subordinate the body.

To Aristotle, however, the body has knowledge insofar as it can operate effectively⁹ without the oversight of conscious reason. Body and mind, then, are inexorably interpenetrating. This is not to insinuate that humans are not thinking beings or that thinking is of little import for ethics, but rather to situate that rationality in its proper place as a part of embodiment. But the question of *how* incontinence occurs has yet to be answered, and it is in answer to this problem that Aristotle sketches the outlines of a philosophical anthropology that will aid our analysis of the movement to communicate sustainability.

Aristotle and the Moral Life

To set the scene properly, I must reconfigure the modern conception of the moral life by beginning where Aristotle does with a notion of the good life. According to Aristotle, the universally desired and most choiceworthy part of

⁹ It can operate effectively in that it orients itself towards certain ends and works to achieve them, much as an incontinent person does what is bad, even if it requires work and diligence, in spite of having knowledge of what is good.

human life is happiness (*eudemonia*), by which Aristotle refers to the kind of enduring happiness characterized by contentment and general flourishing.¹⁰ To prove his point, Aristotle catalogues the common answers to the question “what is the end of human life?” and he cites responses such as honor or pleasure. These things, he notes, are not solely desirable in their own right, but also in respect to a more ultimate goal: happiness. One does not desire pleasure because one thinks pleasure is merely worth having as an end in itself, but also because one thinks having pleasure is a necessary component in the good life (*eudemonia*). As Aristotle puts it,

happiness, more than anything else, seems complete without qualification. For we always choose it because of itself, never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves (...) but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy (1097b1-5).

Having come this far, Aristotle recognizes the vagueness inherent in the term happiness. To clarify, Aristotle defines happiness as a life lived in accordance with (i.e. possession of) the virtues, which are qualities of human excellence. He argues, “happiness is a certain sort of activity of the soul in accord with virtue” (1099b26). To live the good life, therefore, is to live life excellently, that is, according to virtue.¹¹

¹⁰ To read into Aristotle our modern characterizations of happiness as a good feeling or state of euphoria would be to misunderstand him from the outset.

¹¹ A paramount question that arises from this overview of Aristotle is “what are the virtues?” or “which qualities or dispositions are virtuous?” Aristotle spends a large section of his *Ethics* naming and analyzing the Greek virtues, some of which are now known as the classical virtues: justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence. However, it is instructive to note that Aristotle did not invent these virtues out of thin air; rather he relied upon the Athenian community and tradition to inform his catalogue of virtues. Virtues are given form and shaped by a particular community and their understanding of human nature and the good life; thus, they can only make sense within that localized context. “The question “What is true happiness?” can only be finally answered on the basis of the answer to another question: What is the chief end of man?” (Newbigin 1986: 26). This means that the environmental community must ask itself which virtues are necessary to sustain its conception of the good life, which centers on a holistic conception that takes into account the health of the planet’s ecosystems. Though this question ultimately lies beyond the purview of this project, it seems evident that certain classical virtues, especially temperance (with its relevance for consumption) must be included.

The virtues he divides into two categories: virtues of character (moral virtue) and virtues of thought (intellectual virtue). This division corresponds to Aristotle's partition of the human into rational and appetitive parts. Though Aristotle posits a division between moral and intellectual virtue, he does not ultimately consider them separate, discrete categories. "Although Aristotle juxtaposes habituation and teaching, the notion that the desiderative or appetitive elements of moral development are distinct from its cognitive elements is a view foreign to Aristotle's notion of rational and non-rational desire" (Lockwood 2013: 22). Human nature is such that the acquisition of moral character cannot occur without the corresponding intellectual virtues, particularly prudence (*phronesis*), a virtue necessary for practical deliberation about which particular courses of action are most choiceworthy.

How then does one acquire the virtues? They are neither naturally occurring nor unnatural or otherworldly, which means that the individual must endeavor to learn them. Teaching and study are required to acquire the intellectual virtues, whereas moral virtues are acquired through habit (1103a15-20). To elucidate the connection between habit and the acquisition of moral virtue, Aristotle employs the metaphor of training to learn a craft or a trade. "Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by having first activated them" (1103a32). This metaphor indicates that the acquisition of moral virtue is an apprenticeship, and, as such, it takes practice, just as the apprentice learns by imitating the actions and methods of the master. Moral virtue is thus built on actively reproducing the actions that those who are virtuous produce, thereby forming the habits integral to virtuous character. Moral character, in turn, is the enduring coalition and constellation of the right kind of habits.¹² This is why Aristotle says,

¹² A more in-depth discussion of habit formation will take place in the following chapter.

we become builders, for instance, by building, and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions (...) a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities” (1103a34-1103b21, brackets in original).

Ultimately, this goes beyond merely doing what the virtuous person does, as it also entails doing what the virtuous person does in the same manner and situations as the virtuous person. Thus, “the just and temperate person is not the one who [merely] does these actions, but the one who also does them in the way in which just or temperate people do them” (1105b9-10, brackets in original). To construe virtue in this manner, however, leaves Aristotle with a paradox. In order to be virtuous, one must produce virtuous actions, but one can only produce virtuous actions from a virtuous state of being. Thus, it is impossible to become virtuous if one is not already virtuous. This adverse implication means that Aristotle’s notion of moral habituation “self-defeatingly assume(s) the existence of the state that is supposed to result from the habituation” (Aristotle and Irwin 1999: 195, editor’s notes).

Recognizing this inherent problem, Aristotle clarifies his account of habituation with a precise distinction between virtuous actions and virtuous character. Here he diverges from his analogy with the crafts, because a craftsman need only learn to copy the actions of production and this alone suffices for knowledge of the craft. The quality of the craftsman is determined by the quality of the product. Moral action, however, is not content with outward display; unlike craftsmanship, virtuous action is not sufficient as an indicator of virtue. Rather, Aristotle stipulates three internal factors that must obtain in a virtuous person. “First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state” (1105a32-35, brackets in original). This

narrows the qualifications for virtue, demanding not only virtuous action, but also the corresponding internal conditions: knowledge, intrinsic decision, and a stable state of character. This external-internal distinction allows Aristotle to dismiss the above objection by specifying, “we must first engage in the right kinds of actions before we can develop the right kinds of desires and affections” (London 2001: 579). Though the outward display of kindness does not ensure a kind character, it trains the insides by building the foundation for kind affections (thoughts and feelings). This permits Aristotle to maintain, “a person comes to be just from doing just actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one has the least prospect of becoming good from failing to do them” (1105b10-13). Accordingly, the acquisition of moral virtue has two distinct, though often intermingled steps: first, the learning of the right habits of action and thought (the external); second, the resulting development of the right affections (the internal) so that internal and external states align. Proper habituation thus undergirds moral development.

Situating Habit

Despite the emphasis on the internal conditions for virtue, it may appear to some that Aristotle’s interest in character formation veils what at the core is a project of conditioning. They interpret Aristotle as an advocate for training humans into automatons who cannot err by fitting them into character molds that strip them of their individuality and agency. Yet, Aristotle did not subscribe to behaviorism. This misunderstanding is somewhat understandable given the nature of habit: it often precludes the need for conscious choice and intentional will because the know-how for the habituated activity is “sublimated or taken care of by the unconscious” with time and practice (Smith 2009: 81). Indeed, part of the benefit of habituation is that it reduces the need for the mind to dwell on every single action, thereby freeing the mind to deliberate over new, more complex situations.

Nevertheless, to regard habits and moral character as a form of behaviorism lauded by the ancients misses the point. Though habits do at certain points bypass the mind or register subconsciously, virtue necessarily implicates the mind. Though they may be subconscious or precognitive, habits are not non-cognitive. Likewise, Aristotle is not solely concerned with external actions, but also with one's internal state. Aristotle's distinction between virtues of thought and virtues of character is, in this sense, merely heuristic, for he does not believe it is possible to exercise moral virtue without intellectual virtue.

Ultimately, Aristotle's notion of *ethos* (Gk. habit) avoids both Socratic intellectualism that views becoming good as a kind of teaching or acquisition of knowledge and shallow behaviorism that views humans as creatures of simply negative or positive conditioning (Lockwood 2013: 23).

In proceeding, it will be important not to collapse the concept of habit either to rote memorization inscribed on the external body or to view it as a wholly internal affair. Habit lies between these two polarities as a genuine middle ground.

Moral Development in Aristotle

The model of moral development mentioned earlier, whereby practiced states of the body result in corresponding states of mind and affection, requires further explanation. To do so, we must turn again to the *Nicomachean Ethics* to note an interesting condition Aristotle stipulates for his audience.

According to Aristotle, evaluative moral reasoning and abstracted reflection, the kind in which he is engaged in the *Ethics*, will not benefit everyone. In fact, his targeted audience is individuals who have had a good upbringing and who already possess some of the moral habits foundational to the life of virtue. Specifically, he deems most young people and incontinent people to be particularly unfit for any kind of significant moral inquiry. "This is why a

youth is not a suitable student of political science; for he lacks experience of the actions of life, which are the subject and premises of our arguments” (1095a2-3).¹³ It will not do to explain away this interesting caveat as a product of a latent elitism in Aristotle’s thought. He is not interested in exclusion for exclusion’s sake. Rather, Aristotle here recognizes the limits of his pedagogical method (the *Ethics* is thought to be compiled lecture notes); he realizes that his teaching cannot change those who lack the requisite moral experience (read: habits). After all, since “the end [of political science] is action, not knowledge” what use is moral reckoning and logical rigor to a man who has learned only to obey his passions? (1095a4-5, brackets in original). Thus, Aristotle acknowledges that moral reasoning and logical argument are a secondary component of the moral life.

In this way, the young person and the incontinent person share common ground, for logical argument can sway neither of them. Their problem lies not in a lack of knowledge, but rather in their lack of the requisite habits essential to appropriate and fully utilize moral knowledge. Accordingly, Aristotle’s peculiar condition concerning the hearers of his lectures aligns with the overarching argument already laid out in this thesis. Following Aristotle, I have argued that primary ethical attention be given to the agent’s embodied knowledge, i.e. moral habits, before moving on to supplement that most basic level with the right information. On this point, it is worth quoting Aristotle at length from a relevant passage on moral education.¹⁴

Now if arguments were in themselves enough to make men good, they would justly, as Theognis says, have won very great rewards, and such rewards should have been provided; but as things are, while they seem to have power to encourage and stimulate the generous-minded among our

¹³ Aristotle conceives of ethics as formally a matter of political science, because he believes that the human good can only be attained politically (from Gk. *polis*), that is within a communal or corporate setting.

¹⁴ The following translation comes from Burnyeat (1980: 75).

youth, and to make a character which is well-bred, and a true lover of what is noble, ready to be possessed by virtue, they are not able to encourage the *many* to nobility and goodness. For these do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment; living by passion they pursue the pleasures appropriate to their character and the means to them, and avoid the opposite pains, and have not even a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it. What argument would remould such people? It is hard, if not impossible, to remove by argument the traits that have long since been incorporated in the character [...]

Now some think that we are made good by nature, others by habituation, others by teaching. Nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine causes is present in those who are truly fortunate; while argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated, by means of habits, for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish the seed. For he who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does; and how can we persuade one in such a state to change his ways? And in general passion seems to yield not to argument but to force. The character, then, must somehow be there already with a kinship to virtue, loving what is noble and hating what is base" (1179b4-31).¹⁵

What some have here interpreted as Aristotle's insufferable aristocratic prejudice actually points more to a crucial ethical insight: one cannot instruct others into moral character. Character formation depends in large part on a good upbringing and a good upbringing means habitually cultivating the dispositions to

¹⁵ Taken from Burnyeat (1980: 75) who draws upon a different translation than that of T.H. Irwin.

feel in a certain way.¹⁶ Aristotle is not excluding “the many” from ethical discourse, but rather noting that their lack of extant predispositions to desire what is virtuous and avoid that which is base *already effectively* excludes them from ethical discourse. At the least, it precludes any possibility that they will appropriate any of the newly acquired knowledge. Without the requisite habits, no amount of lectures on ethics or disseminated information will benefit them. To use Aristotle’s metaphor, students are like the earth, which must be prepared, fertilized, and tilled before planting the seeds of knowledge if the seeds are to sprout, grow and make a good harvest. If the farmer (teacher) sows his seeds among thorny, rocky, or unplowed soil (i.e. habitually vicious or incontinent individuals), the harvest will be scant indeed. The preparatory work ensures that what is sown will come to fruition.

This metaphor provides, in rough form, an Aristotelian model of moral education, which proceeds according to two primary stages. The first step is to learn the right habits. This activation of the external actions of virtue (i.e. coming to learn (in an physical and experiential way) the particulars of life) thus trains the individual to desire the good and abhor the bad. This stage makes little appeal to the intellect, for the primary task is not persuasion but cultivation. Like an apprentice to a craftsman, a budding moral agent first learns by producing actions similar to those performed by an individual of high moral stature. In doing so, the apprentice develops a habitual knowledge of how to act appropriately so as to ensure a fine product. Also like an apprentice, the moral student learns to take pleasure in a fine product (virtuous action) and comes to desire those products that accord with this standard. Through this process, one cultivates and is inculcated with the requisite habits upon which the second stage of moral

¹⁶ The importance of feeling will later be underscored by Aristotle’s attention to desire. Virtuous individuals desire what is virtuous; they feel properly towards virtue, meaning that they take pleasure in a virtuous action because it is virtuous. To flesh this out, because habit formation involves learning to feel enjoyment in certain things, it requires and subsequently incorporates all elements of embodiment; at the very least, this implies that the bodily senses of touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing are wrapped up, stimulated by, and implicated in the process of acquiring new habits.

development – moral knowledge and reasoning – is built. These habits are dispositions and tendencies to act excellently; as such, they constitute a kind of bodily knowledge, or know-how, that allow the habituated individual to function as a craftsman, though yet without the more theoretical knowledge of a true craftsman (the logic and processes behind how and why certain things or actions work as they do). As Burnyeat writes,

You need a good upbringing not simply in order that you may have someone around to tell you what is noble and just – you do need that [...] but you need also to be guided in your conduct so that by doing the things you are told are noble and just you will discover that what you have been told is *true*. What you may begin by taking on trust you can come to know [experientially] for yourself. This is not yet to know *why* it is true, but it is to have *learned that* it is true in the sense of having made the judgment your own, second nature [habitual] to you [...] Nor is it yet to have acquired any of the virtues, for which practical wisdom is required [...] But it is to have made a beginning (1980: 74).

This beginning point, as Aristotle points out, is invaluable for the rest of moral development, as without the proper habits, further knowledge will have little benefit. Though properly habituated individuals are not yet virtuous, they have the requisite foundation. This accords with what Aristotle calls the “*that*,” that is, a preliminary, experiential knowledge of *which* actions are virtuous, which he contrasts with the “*because*,” an understanding of *why* such actions accord with the virtues.

This is the reason why one should have been well brought up in good habits if one is going to listen adequately to lectures about things noble and just [...] For the beginning (starting point) is “the *that*,” and if this is

sufficiently apparent to a person, he will not in addition have a need for “the *because*” (1095b5-9).¹⁷

It is not, however, a stopping point, for no one would call a person truly good who merely produced the right external actions but did so with malicious intent, or out of a bitter heart. To recall Aristotle’s three conditions for virtue that distinguish it from craft, the habitual man fulfills only one of the three: he acts from a stable state, but he does not yet choose to act virtuously for virtue’s sake and he does not yet fully know why he does what he does. Specifically, to acquire the virtues, “he must decide on them [virtuous actions] and decide on them for themselves” (1105a34). To make such a choice requires the “*because*,” which is a different kind of knowledge than what the apprentice possesses, an intellectual appreciation for *why* certain actions are virtuous. “If he [Aristotle] is setting out “the *because*” of virtuous actions, he is explaining [...] how they fit into a scheme of the good life, [...] not attempting the task [...] of recommending virtue even to those who despise it” (Burnyeat 1980: 81). Acquisition of the “*because*” constitutes the second and final stage of moral development. This is the stage where individuals come to appreciate intellectually the goodness and virtue towards which their desires predisposed them. This corresponds to the distinction previously made between formation (the “*that*”) and information (the “*because*”) precisely because the former pair are experientially and habitually based, whereas the latter pair are both head-oriented, pertaining solely to the intellect.¹⁸

The lifelong project of moral education, according to Aristotle, thus proceeds along this somewhat sequential trajectory. First, I acquire habits, which involves learning to desire the right objects and gaining practical knowledge of

¹⁷ This is Burnyeat’s (1980:71) translation, which I find more suggestive than T.H. Irwin’s translation. Irwin adds bracketed statements in an attempt to render the “*that*” and the “*because*” more clear. “For we begin from the [belief] that [something is true]; if this is apparent to us, we can begin without also [knowing] why [it is true]. Someone who is well brought up has the beginnings, or can easily acquire them” (1095b5-9).

¹⁸ This section on the educational distinction between knowing that certain actions are virtuous and knowing why those actions are virtuous draws much of its inspiration from Burnyeat 1980: 71-76.

the particulars, i.e. how to do or produce certain things. Second, I fill in the particular, experiential knowledge with discursive knowledge based on moral reflection. The latter stage depends on the former, just as the former leads naturally to the latter. Likewise, the former does not discard the intellect altogether, but rather bypasses it at first to ground the individual with proper habits which enable information to take hold. By attending to the body and habits first, Aristotle recognizes that “states of the body ‘give rise’ to states of mind,” thereby appreciating the interpenetration of body and mind (Smith 2013: 94). This does not necessarily imply that no information-oriented learning goes on during the first stage, or that the mind plays no part in habit formation. The mind is indeed involved in habit formation, because the body implicates the mind. However, it is not involved on the abstracted level of moral reflection; the process of casuistic reasoning and intellectual knowledge of general principles is secondary.

From all this it follows not only that for a long time moral development must be a less than fully rational process but also, what is less often acknowledged, that a mature morality must in large part continue to be what it originally was, a matter of responses deriving from sources other than reflective reason (Burnyeat 1980: 80).

The model is not a strict and rigid itinerary, for it is meant to highlight the chief importance of habit. There may indeed be moments of crossover, where aspects of the second stage happen in the first stage, and vice versa.

This outline of a model allows me to respond more fully to an objection brought up in the preceding section, that any ethic that first attends to habits also thereby eschews the mind, which renders it merely a project of conditioning and automating human persons. In response, I earlier stressed that any ethic that purports to be Aristotelian cannot neglect the foundational importance of practical

wisdom (an intellectual virtue) for the exercise of all other virtues. To complete this response, it becomes evident here that a primary concentration on habit formation is not, as some would believe, *non-cognitive* or *anti-intellectual*, but rather *pre-cognitive* and *pre-intellectual*.

Aristotle owes to Plato [...] the idea that these motivating evaluative responses are unreasoned – they develop before reason and are not at that stage grounded in a general view of the place of the virtues in the good life – and because they are unreasoned, other kinds of training must be devised to direct them on to the right kinds of object: chiefly, guided practice and habituation (Burnyeat 1980: 79).

Moral education does not always, or even first, need to train the mind; the mind will concomitantly be shaped and conformed as the body becomes habitually ingrained through the performance of certain practices. This is a necessary step along the path towards virtue. To make the final move in moral development from habit to virtue, one must complete and complement one's pre-cognitive habits with resources from the intellect.

Habit as the Structure of Desire

As is evident, Aristotelian ethics concerns first and foremost a teleological account of virtue, predicated upon constancy of character and its constitutive habits. Aristotle also recognizes that *desire*¹⁹ must be taken into account. For Aristotle, a virtuous man is not at war with his desires; rather, he is virtuous to the extent that his desires and his actions exist in harmony. “Aristotle's moral theory must be seen as a theory not only of how to *act* well but also of how to *feel* well; for the moral virtues [...] enable a person to exhibit the right kinds of emotions as well as the right kinds of actions” (Kosman 1980: 105). It is the continent man who is at war with his desires; unlike the incontinent man, the virtuous man does

¹⁹ When Aristotle speaks of desire, he is referring to an individual's desire for pleasure and corresponding desire to avoid pains.

not need to choose his conscience over his desires because he desires what is right and good. Consequently, right desire separates the continent man from the virtuous one, for though they both perform virtuous actions, the actions of the virtuous man accord with his desires.

Some may wonder, is it a random fluke that some have the right desires to align with their virtue? Are some unfortunate – though otherwise virtue seeking – few condemned to conflict with their desires forever by a stroke of cosmic fate? No. For Aristotle, this cannot be the case precisely because the object (or directionality) of one's desire is not a static, naturally inborn phenomenon, but rather something within that remains ever susceptible to the plying of habituation. Humans can train their desires, changing their likes and dislikes through an extended process of habituation. In short, habit orients and shapes desire. The virtuous man is precisely the one who has come to desire what is good – though this did not necessarily come naturally to him – by practicing what is good. One's actions influence the form and directionality of one's desires. The malleability of desire is readily evidenced by numerous examples from daily life, like the ability to change food preferences with sustained practice. For example, two years ago, I decided that I wanted to like beets, and by trying to eat them in moderation over a period of time, I truly came to enjoy them. Well-known psychological phenomena like the Stockholm syndrome, in which victims come to trust, like or love their captors after being kidnapped or held hostage, witness to the pliable nature of desire.

Character formation coincides with desire formation in the Aristotelian project of moral education precisely because both center on habit. Habit endows the individual with the skills to achieve virtue, all the while shaping the individual into the kind of person who enjoys and desire virtue. Unfortunately, habit does the same thing with vice; by habit, it is possible for people to get better at being bad, all the while coming more and more to take perverted pleasure in what is bad. Thus, habit is not in itself a good, but must be oriented to good ends. To

return again to the problem of incontinence, this robust understanding of habit makes sense of how people can act against their better judgment. Whereas Socrates views the struggle for moral action to take place between omnipotent knowledge and finicky desire, “for Aristotle, there is a third principle – habit – that mediates between these two principles, incorporating them into each other” (Dunnington 2011: 53). Through habit, humans form a second nature in which desire and knowledge commingle such that one’s desires shape one’s knowledge and vice versa. Incontinence is not merely the enigma of knowledge versus desire, but instead represents the clash of two different types of knowledge, head knowledge pitted against ensconced knowledge of the body. In a conflict between the mental affirmation of the good and the embodied knowledge of the heart, it is not surprising that what has been habitually ingrained into the agent over time most often wins. “The cognitive and propositional is easily reduced and marginalized as just more ‘blah-blah-blah’ when our hearts and imaginations are captured by a more compelling *picture* of the good life” (Smith 2009: 53-54). It takes a concerted, and often creative, exertion of reason and willpower to overcome those habits that have cemented certain practices in our lives.

In light of the pervasive power of habit, the paradoxical nature of incontinence begins to fade. The incontinent man is one convinced of the wrongness of his actions, yet immobilized underneath the conservative and staying power of habit. His incontinent actions attest to the strength of habit, while his guilt reflects the weakness of merely knowing better. “He has habits that give his pathos [affections or passions] undue dominance in the determination of his actions” (Rorty 1980: 279, brackets added). Merely forcing the incontinent man to acknowledge the error of his ways cannot thus occasion right action. This he may well already know. Thus, “Aristotle differs from Socrates in his diagnosis of the causes of the akrates’ [incontinent’s] condition, viewing it as resting on badly formed habits concerning pleasures. Such failures have an intellectual dimension without necessarily being caused by an intellectual error” (Rorty 1980:

281, brackets added). Accordingly, the path to right action first entails coming to terms with one's incontinence insofar as it rests on habit and habituated patterns of behavior. Having recognized one's negative habits for what they are, the agent can proceed to counterattack indirectly by cultivating positive habits that stand in opposition to those under question. Consequently, habit formation and counter formation, which implicate both desire and knowledge in an interconnected bundle, stand at the fulcrum of change. As Smith puts it, because "research indicates that only about 5 percent of our daily activity is the product of conscious, intentional actions that we 'choose,' one can see that there's a lot at stake in the formation of our automatic unconscious" (2009: 81). Therefore, any honest philosophy of human action must account for the conservative nature of habits²⁰ and their immense sway over individual agency.

To recapitulate the argument propounded thus far: the environmental movement has experienced a dogged inefficacy in its inability to persuade the world at large to take responsibility for climate change and act accordingly (by consuming less, recycling, etc.). This is due largely to the pedagogical method by which it proceeds, assuming its task to be the dissemination of facts and figures so that people know better. Put differently, the public's ideas and beliefs are diagnosed as the root of the problem, which implies that the spread of more and better information suffices to effect positive change. This assumption hinges on a simplistic anthropological conception of knowledge (i.e. the powers of the mind) as the primary, if not sole, catalyst for human action. Likewise, it presupposes that the human mind directly controls action, that morality starts and ends with head knowledge, and that the body has little say in behavior regulation besides carrying out the orders from "on high." In comparing Aristotle's conception of the moral life with that of Socrates, I seek to nuance this account of human action by placing it within the bounds of an Aristotelian framework of moral philosophy.

²⁰ William James famously referred to habit as the "enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent" (James 2012: 109).

In particular, I contend that the phenomenon of incontinence and Aristotle's understanding of its cause (habit) sheds light on the problem modern environmentalism faces in its struggle to recommend sustainable change. I have followed others in arguing, "factual information is usually not sufficient to motivate behavior" (Chess and Johnson 2007: 228).²¹ In doing so, I hint at an alternative conception of human nature, one that can account for a nuanced philosophy of human action. This reconfigured framework strongly suggests that the reason behind society's recalcitrance towards effecting positive environmental change is not a lack of information, but a lack of virtuous habit formation. Put differently, society does not lack moral habits per se; it merely lacks the *right* habits, i.e. habits oriented towards a sustainable future. In their place, people have subconsciously adopted immoral habits of wanton consumption, thereby perpetuating climate change by means of habit. In effect, I have diagnosed "the ecological crisis as a crisis of character" while reconfiguring what we understand by "character" by placing in the context of Aristotle's moral philosophy (Berry 1977: 17). It is not enough to affirm that the majority "of our consumption is shaped by habits, norms, and routines" without also plumbing the philosophical depth of such a claim (Michaelis 2007: 253). To understand how to counter

²¹ At first sight, Moser and Dilling's collection *Creating a Climate for Change* (from which Chess and Johnson's article comes) seems to stand in line with my general critique of communicating sustainability. They recognize the past failures of environmental advocacy, stating that the "fundamental claim of this book is that better information dissemination, more knowledge, or more effective communication alone will not necessarily lead to desirable social changes" (2007: 11a). In moving on from this point to develop innovative communication strategies for social change, however, the various authors in the collection cannot help but fall back into an exclusively mind-oriented project. So, instead of general information dissemination, they advocate for tailoring one's information to specific audiences and relying on already trusted interlocutors to champion the environmental cause. Though these strategies would likely increase their success rate relative to past efforts, they do not escape the paradox of incontinence that vexes any philosophy of action that zones in on the mind and neglects the moral significance of embodiment. Moser and Dilling rightly see that successful advocacy also means addressing the barriers to social change, but they seem unable to conceive of the reality that such barriers are not commensurate with the mind; such barriers are more fundamentally inscribed into the body through the power of habit. Thus, when Moser and Dilling write, "At a more fundamental level, however, climate change communication must reach into deeper and more persistent beliefs, concerns, social norms, aspirations, and underlying values to generate motivation" it is profoundly telling that they omit any reference to the body or habits, focusing instead on cognitive phenomena and mental models (2007b: 502). In this light, it makes sense why the scant references to habit in the whole book refer only "habits of thought" (Bateson 2007: 287, and Moser and Dilling 2007b: 504). Consequently, though they seek to map out innovative strategies into new territory, the collection of articles ends up putting a facelift on an old and tired model by searching merely for more effective ways of informing people. Statements such as "Our task is to educate gently, but with facts, and to tell stories..." are thus paradigmatic, rather than exceptional (Bingham 2007: 164). Environmental advocates, therefore, have yet to come to terms with the philosophic and pragmatic importance of habit and its relevance for their respective projects.

unsustainable habits, I must first flesh out a more holistic philosophical anthropology and proceed methodologically upwards from this firm foundation.

Aristotle and Rationalism

An effective model of communicating sustainability must presuppose an alternative philosophical anthropology that resists the temptation to reduce human beings to minds. More specifically, environmental advocates need a holistic theory that can account for the phenomenon of habit. In light of the analysis above, one can discern the outlines of an Aristotelian philosophical anthropology: a human being is a creature in search of happiness, which can only be found in the active and consistent exercise of virtue. Virtue flows naturally from a character state predicated on the formation of the right habits that both direct and shape one's knowledge and desire. Human beings, therefore, are characterized not by their discursive rationality, but primarily by their habits, which constitute an embodiment of both knowledge and desire. Individuals, then, are more than mere rational agents (as the dominant head-oriented model of communicating sustainability would have us believe); theirs is an embodied rationality, reason embedded in and tempered by the habits that give shape and direction to one's affections.

However, to articulate a truly alternative philosophical anthropology, some may object that it is necessary to diverge from the Aristotelian tradition. Although this interpretation of Aristotle emphasizes the role of desires and habit in the moral life, he also seems to evidence a latent rationalism, epitomized by his distinction between humans and other-than-human nature by dint of reason, which he took to be the unique and principal capacity of humans. Indeed, in Aristotle's hierarchy of natural life, plants are at the bottom, characterized only by their ability to grow and be fed; animals are next, as they not only share the

function of living, but also of sensing and perceiving.²² Humans are at the apex precisely because they not only live and sense, but they also reason (1098a1-6). “Moreover, we take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be activity and actions of the soul that involve *reason*; hence the function of the excellent man is to do this (contemplate) well and finely” (1098a13-15). In answer to the question “what are human beings?” then, it seems as though Aristotle cannot help but respond “thinkers.” One environmental philosopher avers that the “idea that we are primarily emotional rather than rational animals” (which he attributes to Hume) contradicts the most basic premise in Aristotle’s thought (Jamieson 2007: 482).²³ By emphasizing humanity’s capacity for reason, some may worry that an Aristotelian anthropology could easily fall into the same rationalist trap in which the current model of communicating sustainability has been mired.

To charge Aristotle with latent rationalism is a hefty accusation that seizes upon the high status he gives reason in relation to the rest of the natural world. The main problem environmentalists have with Aristotle lies rooted in their judgment that he restricts reason to humankind and consequently belittles more-than-human nature by contrasting it with the human. However, it is instructive to notice that humans are, to Aristotle, rational animals. To many, this merely equates to the mundane claim that humans are rational beings. But, it is telling that Aristotle uses the words rational *animal*, which indicates that he views human beings as a certain kind of animal and their rationality as a part of that animality. Rationality, for Aristotle, is not something distinct and set apart from animality, but rather an extension of that animality, a qualifier of the kind of animals that humans are. What makes humans unique, in Aristotle’s understanding, is the kind of rationality they possess, though, again, it belongs to the general category of animal rationality. Likewise, Aristotle attributed practical

²² Aristotle lays out this tripartite hierarchy in *De Anima*.

²³ Whether or not such a claim is true of Aristotle, much less Hume, it is evident that Jamieson considers Aristotle to be the apex, even the champion, of rationalistic philosophy.

wisdom (the skill to make decisions and choose between particular options) to other kinds of animals because of their ability to plan for and predict the short-term future. Thus, Alasdair MacIntyre concludes,

Aristotle's account of human beings as distinctively rational has sometimes been interpreted as though he meant that rationality was not itself an animal property, but rather a property that separates humans from their animality. Aristotle did not of course make this mistake (1999: 5).

MacIntyre criticizes those commentators on Aristotle who have perpetuated a rationalistic reading of Aristotle. "They have underestimated the importance of the fact that our bodies are animal bodies with the identity and continuities of animal bodies and [...] it is true of us that we do not merely have, but are our bodies" (1999: 6).

Thus, while one may find fault with Aristotle for denying proper status to women and slaves (who were at his time generally not regarded as citizens or fully human), one cannot object to his philosophical anthropology simply because he situates humankind as reasoning animals. Those who have done so base their judgments on a misinterpretation. Note too that Aristotle does not take rationality to be the totality of human existence, but rather takes into account the strength of desires and emotions (in the form of habits) alongside the faculty of reason. Aristotle certainly thought highly of reason, and may have even considered it the best part of the human being for its role in directing action to the right ends. Reason, however, works to temper and shape one's desires; likewise, what one desires shapes what and how one reasons (Smith 2009: 70). Thus, while reason is necessary for a life of virtue, it does not stand alone; to Aristotle, reason and desire exist in dialectic interconnection.

Accordingly, the problem with rationalistic anthropologies is not their extension of rationality to humans, but their subsequent glorification of that rationality to the extent that it constitutes the totality (or hallmark) of being

human. Aristotle does not fall into the rationalist camp because “to Aristotle, reason alone cannot move a man to act without desire, nor can desire have an effect on the world of space–time without being formed by reason” (Hauerwas 1994: 47). For these reasons, we can accept Aristotle’s moral philosophy while leaving behind the masculine-centric baggage typical of his day that is latent in his understanding of humankind. Furthermore, we can accept Aristotle’s implicit philosophical anthropology without lapsing into an undue rationalism.

Human Nature: Bodies, Desire, and Love

Though Aristotle has the resources to construct a robust philosophy of human action, his primary concern in his ethical treatises is not with philosophical anthropology. Thus, to flesh out our Aristotelian sketch of human nature, it is necessary to turn to another source. Similar to Aristotle, James K. A. Smith contends that no true philosophical anthropology can neglect the body and that a realistic account of human nature must begin with desire. A “desiring’ model of the human person begins from our nature as intentional beings who first and foremost [and ultimately] intend the world in the mode of *love* (...) which takes the structure of desire or longing” (Smith 2009: 50, brackets in original). To bolster his claim, Smith turns to phenomenology, which seeks to understand human beings as they exist in the world. I will here enumerate Smith’s argument, eventually arriving at the conclusion that humans are bodies in a bodily world, drawn by desire to certain ends and oriented to those ends by means of habit. This foray will complement Aristotle’s portrayal of the moral life by articulating the primacy of embodiment and the strategic function of habit.

Humans exist only in some place or another; humans cannot exist nowhere. In other words, life is contingent, it could be otherwise; though I exist, I could also not exist and I could also exist in drastically different circumstances. We experience life only within the parameters of this place here or that place there without determining for ourselves where we start, and often, where we end

up. In fact, humans seem to be thrown into the world given that we do not get to decide where or when we are born.²⁴ To live is to find one's self somewhere and to proceed from that seemingly arbitrary starting point. Thus, existence is bounded and shaped by place. Likewise, consciousness does not exist in a vacuum. The rationalistic philosophical anthropology assumed that humans could simply think, as if thinking were a faculty we could exercise without reference to anything else. Hence Descartes' famous "I think, therefore I am" assertion. Yet, it is impossible to think without thinking *of* something; consciousness cannot be divorced from its referent. To correct Descartes with this phenomenological insight would require the insertion of a tiny preposition: "I am thinking *of* [fill in the blank], therefore I am." Consciousness is always already oriented towards the world. This 'being-for' or 'being-towards' constitutes the intentionality of human nature.

Intertwined with our existential thrownness, we humans encounter the world in a tactile, pre-reflective way, using our bodies first to feel our way about the world before turning to reflect on our lived experience (Smith 2009: 50). We engage the world first as feelers, which is to say as bodies. Affection precedes cognition. This flies in direct contradiction to the "human as thinker" model as it stipulates that we are not primarily oriented to the world as minds, but as incarnate beings. Before we learn to think and conceptualize the world, we touch it, bump into it or smell the lingering odors nearby. We are sensuous beings embedded in a materially dense world. In fact, learning to think and reflect comes only after, and is built upon, such experiential learning. This is why Aristotle's appellation "rational animals" fits, for rationality presupposes embodiment. "One might say that in our everyday, mundane being-in-the-world, we don't lead with our head, so to speak; we lead out with our heart and our hands" (Smith 2009: 47). Children readily evidence this claim; their development

²⁴ Smith here is drawing loosely on Heidegger and his existential concepts that center on what he called being-in-the-world, including thrownness, which refers to the way in which humans experience and live in the world as something not of their making or choosing, but as a place into which they are thrown.

as humans depends on exploring the world into which they are thrown. As parents well know, often this means accumulating injuries, like scrapes, scratches or burns as a child endeavors to learn firsthand about the nature of world including its pavement, thorns, and stovetops. This existential method of learning does not stop after childhood, though adults have hopefully learned the habits necessary to thrive, rather than simply survive in their interactions as beings-in-the-world. To take our human nature seriously, therefore, compels us to recognize the primacy of embodiment.

Lastly, the embodied and intentional nature of human beings leads naturally to an inclusion of the phenomenon of desire. As we feel our way about the world, we find in ourselves particular desires out of which action springs. We engage the world not simply as neutral, static bodies, but rather as bodies that intend the world in a certain way according to our urges and longings for this or that. We desire to satiate our hunger, we take pleasure in the warmth of the sun, or we find pain in physical injury. The medieval scholastic Thomas Aquinas goes so far as to state, “Rational concupiscence [desire] is infinite” (Dunnington 2011: 146, brackets in original). These longings lead naturally to the phenomenon of love, for as we desire, we learn to love those things that fulfill our desires. Desire gives form to and propels love. As Aristotle says, “each type of person finds pleasure in whatever he is called a lover of” (1099a8).

Desire constitutes the foundation of human identity for it is our most basic, irreducible mode of engaging with the world as bodies. Human desire encompasses a wide range of objects, but Smith here is referring to ultimate loves, or “that to which we ultimately pledge allegiance; or (...) what we *worship*” (Smith 2009: 51). Though desire often concerns proximate goods, like the sudden craving for Thai food, the thrill of bicycling or the enjoyment of leisure time, these proximate goods exist within the framework of the desire for ultimate goods. Human beings are in the end defined by their ultimate loves. These ultimate loves, which span from God to nation states to wealth, give sense

and order to proximate desires because they are “that to which we are fundamentally oriented, what ultimately governs our vision of the good life, (and) what shapes and molds our being-in-the-world” (Smith 2009: 51). Human action is fundamentally teleological, meaning that it aims towards an end. In Aristotelian language, that *telos* must be happiness (*eudemonia*), but the form that happiness takes differs from person to person as individuals operate according to varying pictures of human flourishing. Desire functions to orient the agent to her vision of the good life.

In short, the fundamental essence of human existence is desire exactly because our paramount loves constitute the fabric of our identity as beings-in-the-world. As the object of love in turn shapes the lover, humans cannot help but be defined by their loves. What we love shapes who we are and the kind of people we are becoming. “What distinguishes us [as individuals, but also as peoples] is not *whether* we love, but *what* we love” (Smith 2009: 52).

Following Smith through the intricacies of embodiment, we have arrived where we left off with Aristotle: desire. Further, like Aristotle, Smith conjoins habit and desire, stipulating that desire does not function alone, but only in and through habit. Habit manifests desire; it directs desire to its intended end, functioning as the fulcrum of change. As Dunnington notes, “habits are fundamentally strategies of desire” (2011: 61).²⁵ However, though habits operate strategically, this does not mean they are always, or even often, intentioned or willfully directed actions. Instead, habits allow agents to pursue their vision of the good life in a precognitive manner, that is, without having to think constantly about how to direct their actions to the desired ends. In this way, habits perform a vital psychological function. As Thomas Aquinas noticed, the human capacity

²⁵ Yet, this only tells half of the story, for habits do not simply direct desire, they also shape desire according to the *telos* inscribed into the nature of the habit. For example, I practice the violin in order to pursue my love for classical music, but by so doing, I am simultaneously shaped into the kind of person who loves classical music even more than I did at the outset. Habits play off the malleable nature of desire and subtly bend desire this way or that. Habits exist in a dialectic harmony with desire. Environmentally speaking, the societal practices that perpetuate climate change form in us habits that not only constitute an outlet for our desire for more stuff or more power, but they also contribute to turning us into the kind of the people who come to desire to wreak havoc on the earth’s ecosystems.

for deliberative reasoning is limited and exhaustible; we humans do not have the resources to reason and do moral calculus infinitely (Dunnington 2011: 60-63). Every decision requires an intentional and focused operation of the intellect to weigh the options, consider the context, and follow through with the choice. The deliberative will can only exert its powers in concerted efforts, and is therefore subject to exhaustion. Habit alleviates the problem of the limited ability of the reasoned will by automating moral decisions and moving them below the level of the conscious. Habits do not require a conscious exertion of the intellect to be activated, meaning that they operate “without effort and often without any explicit consciousness of what is being done” (Dunnington 2011: 62). If I had to engage my higher thinking powers to navigate all the tedious tasks of the day, like getting out of bed, brushing my teeth, making my oatmeal, or getting to work, I would have very little reasoning power left to survive the rest of the day. As William James put it, the immense psychological importance of habit consists in its inherent ability to free the intellect “to advance to really interesting fields of action” by “diminish(ing) conscious attention given to acts” (James 2012: 103-106). Given the limited powers of the deliberative will, it comes as little surprise to find that habituated actions govern the majority of the moral life.²⁶ According to Smith’s personal anecdote,

If I am convinced by Michael Pollan [an environmentally-minded food writer] but still have the default disposition to pull into the drive-through at McDonald’s, the solution is not to be constantly *thinking* – that approach is unsustainable and thus, ultimately, inadequate. It’s not a matter of thinking trumping dispositions; it’s a matter of acquiring new habits (Smith 2013: 9).

This explains why James (and Smith and Aristotle for that matter) puts such a priority on proper habit formation as a part of the moral life: to “make habit (...)

²⁶ As noted above, recent cognitive psychology contends that rational, deliberative choice accounts for only about 5% of one’s daily activity; the rest is handed over largely to the sway of habit (Smith 2009: 81).

our ally and not our enemy” facilitates the acquisition of virtue (James 2012: 110).

In turn, habits are shaped by practices, physical actions repeated to the extent that they capture the heart because “the way to our hearts is through our bodies” (Smith 2009: 58). Practices form habits but do not primarily operate on a cognitive level; they work their influence in a bodily, pre-theoretical way by privileging a certain way of seeing and intending the world distilled in habits.²⁷ Habits, then, do not so much concern discursive knowledge, but an embodied know-how, an almost intuitive sense for a skill or action that is directed towards a particular end.

Two Pedagogic Models

This model composed of elements from Aristotle and Smith offers an alternative philosophical anthropology to the one commonly assumed by those who wish to communicate sustainability to the public. The former model constitutes a pedagogy based on communicating information to individuals, presupposing that humans basically orient themselves to the world through their minds as reasoners. To impel people to change their actions and assume moral responsibility for the environment, then, merely requires an affirmation of the right information. In this scheme, humans figure only as “static containers for ideas or beliefs” (Smith 2009: 47). This concept turns out to be both reductionistic and dualistic by 1) reducing humans to their minds, and 2) sustaining a false dichotomy between the mind and the body. Ironically, most environmentalists eschew this kind of rationalistic dualism largely because it is commonly used as a stepping-stone to the further distinction between humanity and nature; yet their pedagogical method for inciting change unwittingly perpetuates it. Even those well-meaning environmentalists who look to foreign religions and cultures for environmentally helpful systems of belief or worldviews

²⁷ This connection between habits and practices will be further elucidated in the following chapter.

ultimately commit the same fault insofar as they neglect to attend to the precognitive habits that underlie (and often bypass) belief. If environmental advocates solely address the intellect while leaving habits to the conscripting practices of the marketplace, they cannot hope for success precisely because humans possess (or possibly, are possessed by?) embodied knowledge.

The alternative model, based on Aristotle's philosophy of action and Smith's philosophical anthropology, redresses these errors by pinpointing the center of the human being as the whole body, rather than just the head, thereby taking habit into account as the enacted form of desire. According to this model, the crux of any moral pedagogy must center on *formation* of desire by means of habit, rather than *information* of the mind. To overcome incontinence, one must align habit with reason by participating in formative practices – though such formation does sometimes include information (Smith 2009: 22-25). Rational persuasion can only constitute at best half of the project of moral education because to ignore the body, the primary locus of desire, disregards the rogue habits that can persist without the supervision of the reason.

Indeed, this seems to describe the state of contemporary environmentalism. Whether or not the effort to communicate sustainability has rationally convinced individuals to effect sustainable change, it has obviously not penetrated deep enough to the level of habits because most individuals' destructive habits are still operative. Because of their philosophical anthropology, environmental advocates have not dug deep enough to find the locus of action. The persistence of these damaging habits is not surprising given that habits are by definition resistant to facile change. A rationalistic model of communicating sustainability can, at best, accomplish on a large scale a guilty conscience and an immutable incontinence. This model's failure lies precisely in its neglect of habit.

The former model assumed that the main challenge in the communication of sustainability was to inform people's minds so that they could force their bodies into different patterns. Their interpretation of pedagogy concerned a

struggle between mind and body, just as Socrates conceived of the moral life as the conquest of reason over desire. As shown, however, this strategy is only partially effective, usually only with people who were already predisposed to agree with the proposed platform. Further, the environmental advocacy battle is not as simplistic as a battle between the reasoning mind and the begrudging body. Rather, it is better understood as occurring between two mutually exclusive models and outlets of desire that implicate the body, and by extension the mind. To construe the situation in this manner is to acknowledge that the body has a kind of knowledge; or, more specifically, that habits, originally willed at some level by the agent to some end, inscribe knowledge into the flesh. This is embodied knowledge. Accordingly, “we are confronted, not with reason struggling against appetite or emotion, but rather with free-floating reason struggling against reason as rooted in the habits” (Dunnington 2011: 81). To diagnose the problem of inaction as an issue of incontinent habits is the first step towards constructing an effective model to communicate sustainability.

The second step is to identify the culpable habits that work insidiously to perpetuate climate change. Seen from the viewpoint of habit, there are no value-free practices in life. “All habits and practices are ultimately trying to make us into a certain kind of person [...] no habit or practice is neutral” (Smith 2009: 83). The practices that characterize modern life carry within themselves latent, though nonetheless potent, visions of the good life; unfortunately, this vision of the good life (usually construed as infinite consumption or unhindered choice) has proven to be environmentally unsustainable and unjust. These practices do not leave Western individuals unscathed. Rather, they constitute a ubiquitous habituation (a subtle education of desire) as they train individuals to act automatically in certain environmentally destructive ways and take for granted unsustainable patterns of life.

To counter these entrenched habits, we must first see the effort to communicate sustainability as a modality of education, trafficking in “a

constellation of practices, rituals, and routines that inculcates a particular vision of the good life by inscribing or infusing that vision into the heart (the gut) by means of material, embodied practices” (Smith 2009: 26). Thus, environmentalists are right to concentrate their efforts for change on daily and mundane practices like grocery shopping and buying organic/local food, though they may not realize that they are confronting habits *per se*. This approach concurs with William James’ assessment that “We are spinning our fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar” (James 2012: 114).²⁸ Not only does grocery shopping implicate systems of food production, it also insidiously inculcates certain habits of thought and action. Such practices implicate desire, so that now it seems normal that one should be able to eat tomatoes (or other seasonally specific crops) whenever desired, no matter the time of year. These peculiarly modern habits stem from the formative practices of a Western, consumer-driven life.

It is thus evident that the formation of moral habits happens continuously. Westerners are not immune to the persistent plying and temptations of practices that veil environmental ruin, nor are they immune to the subconscious concretization of those practices into automated habits. Accordingly, the battle for sustainable social change must delve deeper than the level of head knowledge to attend carefully to the habituated and unsustainable embodied knowledge of Western life. Though it may be cliché, it holds true that old habits die hard. Die they must, nevertheless, if Western society is to assume responsibility for sustainable change.

²⁸ Though this statement generally accords with the views expressed above linked with Aristotle, James here conflates the nature of habits with that of instincts by his insistence that habits (or a habituated character) are “*never to be undone*.” What distinguishes habits from instincts is precisely that they can be changed and conformed to reason, whereas instincts are permanent or at least only susceptible to change in the form of extreme behavioral conditioning with severe punishment and reinforcement. Though the reasoned will may not exercise absolute and direct authority over one’s habits, habits are responsive to reason in that reason can, by means of patient strategy and indirect intervention, transform them.

On the other hand, habits are distinct from dispositions precisely because although habits can be changed, that change requires “much effort, creativity and ingenuity to quit” (Dunnington 2011: 66). The category of disposition, then, names those states of being that are more easily changed. Dispositions, therefore, do not possess the more lasting quality of habits, just as habits do not possess the permanent quality of instincts.

Habit, Determinism, and Free Will

Thus far, I have highlighted how environmental inaction stems from moral incontinence, habit plays a focal role in philosophy of action, and consequently how we need to reframe the communication of sustainability as a project of moral formation. This section seeks to formulate a working definition of habit that accounts for its philosophical complexity in order to understand better how habits are formed and how they function. I shall proceed methodologically to the nature of habit by examining common theoretical dualisms that habit helps obviate.

By now, it should be clear that to categorize entrenched unsustainable behavior as (incontinent) moral habits is to say something much more profound than the common sense rendering of habit. According to common sense, habits are actions repeated by an agent and for which that agent has a proclivity. Philosophically speaking, however, habits occupy a distinct space that goes deeper than the pedestrian definition. If Aristotle is right, then in “responding humanly to a particular situation, a person does more than shape that situation; he shapes himself. He reinforces or weakens a habitual orientation that accords (or is at odds) with the requirements of human life and so sets up the conditions of his future moral career” (quoted in Hauerwas 1994: 8). To identify the habitual nature of the Western world’s unsustainable lifestyle is, therefore, first and foremost to recognize that the lack of sustainability lies firmly entrenched within our moral character. As Dunnington contends, “a habit is like a disposition in that it can be changed. But a habit is unlike a disposition in that it cannot be changed without great effort” (2011: 65). Habits are, by their very status as “second nature,” hard to break, which explains why facile attempts at communicating sustainability via information have failed to bring about the kind of change needed. We have learned to be who we are today by living according to the very habits that have brought about destructive climate change.

Furthermore, to affirm that unsustainable practices are incontinent habits is also to make a distinction between head knowledge and heart, or embedded, knowledge. As will be shown below, doing so complicates the ordinary philosophical distinction between voluntarism and determinism, while also necessitating a more nuanced conception of free will.

The roots of habit run to such a depth that it is possible, even commonplace, for people to act against their reasoned head knowledge. Put simply, habits enable conflict between one's knowledge (or will or rational choice) and one's actions. Accordingly, it seems as though habit resembles determinism *contra* voluntarism in that it does not necessarily enlist rational deliberation to countenance its action. Conversely, habit also resembles voluntarism *contra* determinism in that it is connected to the reason and will at some level, albeit in an indirect and tenuous fashion.²⁹

Furthermore, no one would say that a man is not responsible for his habits, no matter how deeply ingrained they may be. Although the habits may not now issue from his reasoning will, their presence within the agent signify that at some point in time the will and reason were involved in pursuing the action that turned into habit. For example, I bite my nails habitually to the extent that it annoys me; even my immediate will to stop biting my nails is not successful in producing change. However, I am still accountable for that habit. Although a habit may appear automatic or fly under the conscious will's radar, it would be improper to conclude that a man is not responsible for a habit as if he had no say in cultivating it. Aristotle certainly does not assume that because the incontinent agent does not always intentionally will his erring activities he is therefore excused from moral responsibility.

Yet it is precisely this matter of culpability that distinguishes determinism from voluntarism; for if an action is determined, a man can in no way be held

²⁹ This discussion follows the contour of a similar exposition into the mediating nature of habit found in Dunnington 2011: 63-72.

responsible since his agency did not figure into the equation. Determinism operates without regard for the agent's will. Accordingly, because habits do not preclude culpability, they are voluntary dispositions, albeit voluntary in a different way. To put it differently, habituated agents act voluntarily, though they are strongly predisposed to certain actions. Consequently, habit does not easily fit into the aforementioned dualism between determinism and voluntarism. It is neither determined nor voluntary *in the typical sense* because it incorporates aspects of both categories.

Due to the middle ground that habit occupies, it becomes difficult to distinguish that which is voluntary from that which is involuntary. Voluntary action is usually based on a deliberate, reasoned choice of the will; or, as William James puts it, a "strictly voluntary act has to be guided by idea, perception, and volition, throughout its whole course" (James 2013: 237).³⁰ It would seem, therefore, that habits occupy the realm of the involuntary since the agent does not actively actualize them. However, this judgment presupposes a strangely modern version of free will, which, following medieval scholar Miner, we can term the "freedom of indifference" (2013:81-84). According to this vision, true freedom consists in the ability of the arbitrary will to choose from among a range of possibilities without being influenced by anything. To be free, then, seems merely to consist in having a lot of possible courses of action without any constraints on the autonomous will. Aristotle and Aquinas, on the other hand, have an entirely different vision of freedom in mind when discussing habits. For them, the freedom of indifferent choosing is a cruel gift indeed, for it merely denotes a freedom to err and the likelihood of choosing options that conflict with

³⁰ Given this depiction of voluntariness, it is clear that James' account of habit often flirts with a deterministic reductionism. Habituated action, in James' thought, is formed by repetition of like action, which creates grooves in the brain that facilitate and influence the pattern and direction of later like action. Habits, thus, are triggered by sensational or perceptive stimulation, causing the formed pattern of behavior to assert and actualize itself by following the brain's well-grooved discharge paths, regardless of the agent's reason or will. Assuming this to be true, it is not clear how James can justifiably make a distinction between habituation and conditioning; in truth, his account of habit seems to conflate the two. If, as Dunnington reports, James intended his emphasis on the "force of habit" to function as a corrective to those theories that gave inordinate power to the free will, this helps explain the seeming tendency to see habit as an effect of pre-cognitive and unconscious conditioning (Dunnington 2011: 69).

the agent's *telos*. What good is freedom if it is another name for the propensity to screw up consistently? Instead, the ancients view true freedom as "freedom for excellence," the freedom to choose the good consistently and the ability to realize the good life. This includes "the freedom to perform acts that are possible only for those in whom the power is perfected (...) A person who 'has Latin' has the power of freedom to express herself in Latin, quite unlike the person who has no Latin or is merely 'disposed' to Latin" (Miner 2013:82). This example makes clear the compatibility between habits and freedom: habits are the necessary building blocks that coalesce to enable the freedom for excellence. To return to the question of voluntary versus involuntary action, the construal of habits as involuntary relies on the conception of freedom as indifference because it seems as though the force of habit delimits and constricts one's choice. If however, the freedom of indifference constitutes a sorry counterfeit when compared to the freedom to act excellently, then voluntary action is not necessarily "coterminous with the sphere of the autonomously willed," (Dunnington 2011: 72).

Habit thus confounds the ordinary distinction between involuntary and voluntary because it can bypass the deliberative will and simultaneously constitute an expression of true individual freedom. Thus, habit explains how many unsustainable actions and practices can emanate from the depths of one's character though they may stand in contradiction to the avowed purposes of the rational will. Though it may seem involuntary, the agent who habitually pollutes, litters or consumes gluttonously is still accountable for his transgressions. "He has acquired through practice a relatively long-lasting disposition to respond, in ways he approves of, to feelings of fear and confidence aroused by surrounding circumstances" (Freeland 1982: 21). In this way, actions that originate from habit and character are freely willed, though the will may not have an overt say in the immediate matter.

A further boon gained by a robust conception of habit is that it confers a continuous notion of selfhood. In contrast, many approaches to ethics unwittingly

imply that the self is a disjointed entity made up of discrete decisions and sporadic time slices, as a direct consequence of their failure to take into account the nature and ubiquity of habits in the moral life. The modern neglect of habit in ethics has led naturally to the proliferation of “decisionism” whereby ethics is done by conceptualizing and attempting to solve increasingly difficult (and far-fetched) ethical dilemmas. “What do you think you should do if...?” To do ethics in this manner takes certain quandaries, like the trolley problem³¹, to function as the litmus test for the moral theories under consideration. This unsuitably condenses ethics to the time slice that occupies the space between a situation and a decision, rather to the whole of life. While the moral life does indeed include decision-making, such an approach absolutizes the role of ratiocination in ethics while simultaneously downplaying the prominence of moral habits and prior character. It also restricts the realm of ethics to controversial topics, like war, killing, or abortion, blinding itself to the very way in which ethics pervades life. The ethicist consumed with contentious dilemmas misses the point that ethics also, and more importantly, concerns eating, walking, biking, and conversing. The habits formed in these daily practices are more normative for one’s moral character than the ability to discuss the relative merits of utilitarian versus deontological ethics with respect to a contrived situation. As the ethicist Stanley Hauerwas contends,

³¹ In this classic moral quandary with myriad permutations, one must imagine a situation in which a trolley full of at least a couple people, say 5, are hurtling towards the edge of a cliff or some other form of imminent demise. The only means to save them is to divert the trolley track, whereby it would hit and kill an innocent bystander. Given these two options (the death of the trolley-bound few versus the death of a single passersby), one must attempt to make a decision.

These kinds of dilemmas are used to test both philosophical systems (like utilitarianism or Kantian ethics) as well as people’s intuitions. Some philosophers use these dilemmas as intuition plumbing to show that humans intuitively accept certain situations while eschewing others. This ethical methodology fails to take into account that intuitions are not given, stable entities; in reality, one’s intuitions cleave to one’s character, for they are formed and molded concomitantly according to the nature of one’s character. One can imagine that Spartans or the Huns possessed intuitions that would stand in stark contrast to those held by 17th century Native Americans. To plumb intuitions, therefore, as a ways of doing ethics seems primarily useful as a test of character (which involves how one has been raised, habituated, and culturally conditioned according to one’s society, family, etc.) not as an indicator of what must be universally right.

Morality is not primarily concerned with quandaries or hard decision; nor is the moral self simply the collection of such decisions. As persons of moral character we do not confront situations as mud puddles into which we have to step; rather the kind of ‘situations’ we confront and how we understand them are a function of the kind of people we are (quoted in Wells 1998: 17).

Ethics without character turns moral agency into an endless, yet discontinuous stream of disjointed ethical dilemmas. Likewise, the self becomes limited to the time-slices of each moral decision in which it must rework the moral calculus necessary to confront each situation. This treats the self as an ahistorical entity, as if it must recreate itself anew to respond to every ethical choice. As William James insightfully noted, “There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision” (James 2012: 110). Consequently, to forego an emphasis on character strips the self of any possibility for duration and moral development. Yet, thankfully this depiction does not adequately represent the reality of moral choice and its compounding effects on character. Because “character is not so much the qualification but the form of our agency,” recognizing the ubiquity and necessity of moral habits enables a holistic depiction of the self (Hauerwas 1994: xx). Habit formation, a lifelong endeavor, implies that moral agency is predicated upon an enduring self, a self that develops and learns over time. Therefore, to reconfigure environmental advocacy as a matter of habit formation and character resists the modern impulse towards “decisionism” and its inherent reductionisms.

Accordingly, the philosophical concept of habit sheds light on a variety of factors that relate to the communication of sustainability. Habit explains why certain behaviors or patterns of action have lasting quality and are not susceptible to the barrage of information. Taking into account the priority of habit in pedagogy also suggests an insight into why some people have responded to the

call for sustainability while others have not. Those responsive ones may have habits of thought and practice that do not need much alteration in order to fit with the sustainability agenda.³² Those recalcitrant and unresponsive ones likely have formed deep-rooted habits of thought and practice that stand in direct opposition to the sustainable agenda. Due to the conservative nature of habits, it is not surprising that many with destructive habits, like those surrounding consumption, have remained entrenched in their ways; this is merely the basic function of habit. Furthermore, the concept of habit reconfigures the traditional modern notion of freedom, subsequently making clear how individuals can still be held accountable for patterned actions that do not issue directly from the deliberative will. Lastly, habit leads to an emphasis on character, which adds duration and development to the concept of self. Eschewing a stunted picture of selfhood, habit implies that moral decisions are not made in a vacuum, but rather compound to form people according to the vision of the good life embedded in the habit.

With these distinctions and nuances properly understood, we can formulate a working definition of habit. A habit is a learned, lasting and often subconscious predisposition to act voluntarily and excellently in certain a way, which thereby orients one's character (and desire) towards the *telos* inscribed in that action. If I habitually sing choral music, I have learned how to sing well (how to hold a tune, harmonize, use *vibrato*, etc.); I probably have come to desire a life filled music, i.e. to integrate music into my vision of the good life. I may also find myself singing without meaning to, as if the song welled up inside me and burst out though I did not notice. It is important to note that "excellently" in this definition does not imply that habits are by necessity oriented towards positive ends. It is entirely possible to act excellently in a vicious way. For example, there are bumbling, ineffective burglars as well as first-rate, effective burglars; the latter

³² This is meant as a suggestion, a speculative explanation that will not fit every case. Another explanation for why some have taken to the green movement whereas others have not is that the former group of people may have fallen in love with the *ethos* of that movement, whereas others are more enamored with and captivated by the vision of the good life implicit in non-green movements. Although our desires for a certain vision of the good life relates to the issue of habit, it can also involve more contingent matters like who our friends/family are or where we grew up.

are excellent according to their skill and success, whereas the former lack both. However, both are equally vicious; in fact, the excellent burglar may even be more vicious precisely because his excellence allows him to burglarize all the more. Thus, to say that habits dispose the agent to act excellently (that is, with skill and precision) is to make a descriptive statement, rather than an evaluative one.

In applying this definition to the realm of environmentally responsible behavior, it is evident how routine unsustainable practices like overconsumption fit naturally into the category of habit. Generally, overconsumption is a learned way of shopping that has a relative longevity; it issues from the will, though after a while it may not do so overtly as it becomes a subconscious way of garnering goods with precision and efficiency. Lastly, overconsumption changes individuals and their desires by orienting them to the particular vision of the good life inscribed into the very nature of the action; namely, overconsumption trains people to desire more, always more stuff, and to think that the good life consists in possessing an infinite supply of goods. In this way, the insidious habit of overconsumption inscribes individuals into environmentally harmful patterns of acting and desiring.

Historical Precedent

To call attention away from information dissemination and towards the habits of life that cause environmental destruction necessarily alters the methods used in the communication of sustainability. This approach stands in line with what some have called ‘political meliorism,’ which dates back to the American pragmatist tradition (whose spokesmen, primarily William James and John Dewey obsessed over the primacy of habit) and the ensuing 19th-20th century social movements that stemmed from their philosophies. The meliorist project tried to effect change by practicing the desired change not in some vague, utopian hope, but in the belief that “moralizing and appeals to pity will fail to correct

these habits, since only concrete action that starts the process of cementing new habits in their place will effectively address our habitual responses” (MacMullan 2013: 246). Prominent among the meliorist reformers were Jane Addams and W. E. B. DuBois. Addams worked to assimilate immigrants into American society, while also working for peace and an end to patriarchy. Addams believed that the nation’s tendency towards making war constituted a habit steeped in patriarchy that could only be overcome by new political machinations that included women. Thus, as a women’s rights activist she worked to overthrow the habits of patriarchy through the institution of counter practices that envisioned an equitable mode of society. DuBois famously worked against racism, all the while recognizing that

in the fight against race prejudice, we are not facing simply the rational conscious determination of white folk to oppress us, we were facing age-long complexes sunk now largely to unconscious habit and irrational urge, which demanded on our part not only the patience to wait, but the power to entrench ourselves for a long siege against the strongholds of color caste (from his *Dusk of Dawn*, quoted in MacMullan 2013: 247).

DuBois’ insights into the habituated character of racism in the United States correlate with the aforementioned diagnosis in regard to the communication of sustainability. In effect, DuBois echoes what we have already heard from Aristotle and Smith. Because Western society’s subconscious habits are complicit in environmental vice, the spread of information and teaching of environmentally sound moral theorems, however rhetorically conveyed, will (and have!) only achieve surface level success. Given the present (unsustainable) state of the world and the lack of any radical sustainable reforms on a grand scale, the rationalistic model indeed seems to have faltered. The proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating. The movement to communicate sustainability would do

well to take lessons from the meliorist diagnosis of the roadblocks that impede social change.

Completing the Reconfiguration: Interrogating Our Habits

In summary, by drawing upon Smith's model of human nature based on desire while taking into account the nature of habits as desire's direction, I have endeavored to construct a framework for the communication of sustainability that compensates for the shortsightedness of the former paradigm. Given that the communication of sustainability is formally a pedagogical endeavor, it must orient its pedagogical methods to the nature of its audience. Put simply, humans are more than their heads; they are embodied, desirous beings whose habits guide their everyday moral decisions and structure their desires.³³ Accordingly, habit formation must replace information proliferation as the primary task at hand. "The moral question is not, therefore, "How can I (as a willing mind) fight my bad habits?" The question is instead, "How can I (as a collection of habits) develop the most intelligent habits possible?" (MacMullan 2013: 244). The fate of the environment depends on who we are, namely what kind of people we are, rather than simply addresses what we know or do. Obviously, this is not to say that knowledge, beliefs, and actions are unimportant. However, all are derivative of the agent's character, and their form depends on the nature of that character. This is why Aristotle asserts,

³³ Many environmentalists rightly recognize that desire is a huge environmental concern, for desire propels the wheels of climate change. Yet, they miss that desire does not, indeed cannot, operate by itself; rather it is directed to its ends by means of habit. Habit structures and gives form to desire, allowing it to realize its ends. To change one's desires without instituting new habits to orient those desires and replace the previous habits constitutes a neglect of the fulcrum of social and personal change. It does not suffice to force or otherwise compel the general public to desire different ends (i.e. different visions of the good life) without also instilling new habits to initiate, give form to, and cement them. Yet, people assume that we can merely switch out one vision of the good life for another, more sustainable option and that will be enough to orient the individual moral agent towards that end. Yet, the habits in place structuring former desires conflict and can often win out over the newly transplanted vision because habit is a conservative structure with staying power not easily changed by cognitive effort or mental processes. Habits reside in the space between mind and body, which means it is not enough merely to desire different things; we must practice our way into a new ordering of those desires. We must flesh out those desires by taking on new habits that give shape to the greener visions of the good life. Thus, it is vital that while reconfiguring the general answer to the question "what is the good life?" environmentalists must also ask the methodological question "how does one realize this new vision of the good life?" or "how does one move from one's present condition to the good life?"

decision requires understanding and thought, and also a state of character; for acting well or badly requires both thought and character. Thought by itself moves nothing (...) This is why decision is either understanding combined with desire or desire combined with thought (1139a34-b5).

If this is the case, the conclusion is inevitable: to confront climate change adequately, we must change who we are. We must return to the preliminary stage of moral development and reeducate our desires by learning the right kind of habits in order to form an environmentally virtuous character. This necessitates a twofold emphasis: first, to name the subtle, yet sinister presence and function of current unsustainable habits, and thereby begin to break their power, in short, we must interrogate our habits and scrutinize them in light of the pressing reality of climate change. Second, we must cultivate the habits necessary to sustain an environmentally virtuous self. For virtue prevails even when confronted with the subtle temptation of vice and only virtue will suffice to sustain lasting behavioral change. I leave it to others to attempt a more detailed analysis of *which* habits perpetuate climate change. Instead, this chapter has concerned itself with laying groundwork by reconfiguring the communication of sustainability as the pedagogy of habits. It is to the second area of emphasis – how one cultivates a habit – which I now turn.

The Weight of Practice: Habit Formation and Ritual

“And hence also ‘obeying a rule’ is a practice.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein (2001: §202)

“Indeed the reason why habit is also difficult to change is that it is like nature; as Euenus says, ‘Habit, I say, is longtime training, my friend, and in the end training is nature for human beings.’”

Aristotle (1152a32-35)

To recapitulate the argument made thus far, I have focused in depth on situating the communication of sustainability as an endeavor in moral pedagogy best understood in terms of an Aristotelian philosophy of action. It has become evident that the crucial issue in moral education is habit formation precisely because moral character depends upon the requisite habits that direct one’s desires and thoughts towards virtuous action. Moral knowledge, on the level of general principles – the “*because*” – does little good to an individual bereft of the habits necessary to translate that knowledge into action. In moral pedagogy, formation precedes information (Smith 2009: 22-25). The recognition of the importance of habit for environmental ethics, however, implied a further, more pragmatic question: “*How* does one cultivate the needed habits of environmental virtue?” To answer this question and put to rest any lingering doubts about the deficiencies of the intellectualist model of communicating sustainability, this chapter has a twofold purpose. First, I will unpack the nature of habits by concentrating specifically on how humans form habits. Ultimately, I argue that habit formation is best understood as a practice. Second, I will connect the dots between habit and ritual, by exploring ritual process as a type of practice particularly well suited as a potent means of habit formation.

Although a direct continuation of the line of reasoning evident in chapter 1, this chapter constitutes a break in tone and direction from the preceding chapter. Whereas the previous chapter deconstructed the communication of sustainability and reframed it in terms of habit, this chapter by necessity takes a more constructive tack. The task is to explore one creative means of habit formation that does not become quickly mired in the reductionist shortcomings of former pedagogic attempts to communicate sustainability.³⁴ Accordingly, this chapter tentatively proposes ritual as a means of environmental pedagogy, a suggestion meant to pique environmental interest in areas of study hitherto unexplored for their environmentally relevant resources.

How do I cultivate the habits of environmental virtue, those dispositions necessary to uphold the moral character capable of environmental stewardship in the midst of an environmentally destructive society?³⁵ This is the question that presently demands an answer. To begin, it is imperative to note that a proper theory of habit formation depends in large part on a fitting philosophical anthropology. To understand how habits are formed assumes that one knows what kind of being is under question. This harkens back to Smith's maxim – "behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology" (Smith 2009: 27). In the previous chapter, I contended that human existence is a corporeal existence, out of which rationality springs; to live then is to live as a body in a physical landscape embedded amongst other bodies. As will be fleshed out further, the

³⁴ As Aristotle reminds us, habit formation begins with particular vigor and vim in childhood, a decisive time when one learns certain manners of relating to the world and others. That which is learned in one's upbringing is not easily shed or changed, which renders parenting and childrearing a hugely important ethical task. This calls for a renewed environmental interest in the pedagogy of childrearing. However, since it would be well beyond my expertise and purview, I do not intend to write a chapter on parenting issues. I shall focus instead on a specific means of habit formation not constricted to any particular stage of life (e.g. childhood or adolescence), but relevant to all those who need to form new habits and reform old habits alike. For while habits die hard, they differ from instinct precisely because they are changeable. "An instinct does not imply the power to refrain from the instinctual action, whereas a habit does imply this power" (Dunnington 2011: 64).

³⁵ I earlier contrasted habit with disposition, as if the two were mutually contradictory. This is not the whole story. All habits are dispositions, but not all dispositions are habits. If I have the habit of kindness, I am disposed to act in kindness towards others. However, if I have a disposition towards kindness, I may be inclined to act in kindness towards others, but that inclination is not nearly strong or lasting enough to label it properly as a habit. Habit, thus, is a larger category that encompasses disposition but is not exhausted or depleted by it. While they are not identical, they do overlap.

body – both physical and social embodiment – hold the key to understanding habit formation insofar as they are key elements in the dynamics of practice. In what follows, I shall unpack these three themes (embodiment, sociality, and practice) in an attempt to formulate a theory of habit formation true to the contours of human experience.

The Irreducible Sociality of Human Being

To begin, we must first place habit formation into its proper social context. Individuals do not live in a vacuum but rather exist in cultures and subcultures, rubbing shoulders with other humans day to day and sharing with them the minutia of life. However, in its unhealthy obsession with individualism, the West wants to resist the communal nature of human existence and prefers instead to depict society as the coming together of preexisting, discrete individuals who willingly create a social contract in order to live a peaceful life, though with as little interference from others as possible. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau pioneered this kind of individualistic thinking in political philosophy by assuming that humans in the state of nature – the “very study of the original man, of his real wants, and the fundamental principles of his duty” (Rousseau 1998) – must have existed as separate and isolated units.³⁶ Modern political philosophers, notably John Rawls and Robert Nozick have carried this imaginative method of political philosophy into the modern age with similar individualistic conclusions. The basic assumption operative in ‘state of nature’ philosophizing is that to understand true human nature, one must strip away all the societal constraints and peculiarities that humans have accrued, deconstructing the contingencies and irrelevancies that civilized humans have assumed in order to understand humankind in its purest state. However, we must avoid thinking of

³⁶ Hobbes famously described life in the state of nature as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” in his *Leviathan*. The term “noble savage,” used to describe humans in their natural condition, has wrongly been attributed to Rousseau. Though Rousseau freely used the word “savage” to describe native peoples, the term “noble Savage” comes from *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), a play by John Dryden, a British 17th century poet (Miner 1972: 106).

state of nature philosophy as a historical enterprise, an attempted history of humanity and civilization. Hobbes, Locke, or any others engaged in this kind of project care little if their conceptions of the state of nature ever existed on the face of the earth. Rather, it is an idealization, a thought experiment designed to isolate the distinction between nature and culture. In this sense, it constitutes a mythological project that, as John Locke puts it, attempts to ascertain “what estate all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of Nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man” (quoted in Cavanaugh 2002: 17).

By no means have philosophers agreed as to what the state of the stripped down, uncivilized human would be; disagreement has generally centered on whether the state of nature was violent or peaceful. For example, Rousseau criticized Hobbes for projecting the characteristics of civilized people (as violent and aggressive sorts) back into the state of nature. Hobbes, according to Rousseau, could not escape his own conception and experience of his contemporaries when positing the natural state of humankind. In consequence, Hobbes fails to conceptualize adequately what humanity is like *without* the trappings of civilization. I take Rousseau to be spot on in his criticism of Hobbes; one cannot conceive of a human in its natural state without somehow drawing on one’s contemporary experience of human nature. Yet, Rousseau disregards the totalizing quality of his criticism of Hobbes. In other words, his critique not only articulates the shortcomings specific to Hobbes’ project, but also applies to any project that seeks to recover the original state of nature. Ironically, Rousseau also engages in the state of nature thought experiment, as if he could theorize about the pure state of nature without having his personal experience taint his anthropological suppositions. Surely, however, it is impossible to conceive of men and women in the so-called state of nature without projecting some of one’s own contemporary social norms, values, and context into the thought experiment.

Thus, the root of Rousseau and Hobbes' disagreement does not come directly from their theories of the natural state of humankind, but more basically it stems from their different understandings and experience of humans in their respective time periods. Hobbes' pessimism regarding the inherent goodness of humanity probably branches from his experience of national turmoil in England during the civil wars of the early 17th century, whereas Rousseau's steady optimism may have resulted from his peaceful life in Switzerland in the 18th century. Both, however, were children of the Renaissance as they agreed on one implicit premise: the individual is ontologically primary. Accordingly, "When Rousseau says that humanity was born free, he primarily means free from one another (...) Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke all agree that the state of nature is one of individuality" (Cavanaugh 2002: 17). The governing assumption of these Enlightenment philosophers relies on a distinction between culture and nature – presupposing that culture is not natural – which makes itself plain in the commonly held belief that individuality is more natural than political society.

Consequently, these thinkers could not shed their methodological individualism and conceive of the possibility that some form of political society is proper to humanity's natural estate. Even should one endeavor to envision a mythological separation between humanity and society, it is unthinkable that humans would not naturally exist in some kind of social groups, living not isolated and alone, but amongst others. As one commentator on Hobbes admits the "bonds of affection, sexual affinity, and friendship – as well as clan membership and shared religious belief – may further decrease the accuracy of any purely individualistic model of the state of nature" (Lloyd and Sreedhar 2013). In effect, they asserted without warrant that humanity could exist without any social ties. Thus, it seems that the philosophical concept of a 'state of nature' amounts to fanciful speculation about basic human origins and the conclusions reached therein usually bear an uncanny resemblance to the presuppositions needed to support the author's larger philosophical project.

Interestingly, Thomas Aquinas was one of the first to use the phrase “state of nature” but he did not consider it to be an asocial or pre-social state of being. Rather, he viewed the political community as the state of nature. As a good Aristotelian, Aquinas could only conceive of the human as a political being (i.e. one in a *polis*) (Bevir 2010: 61). In other words, culture is natural. Moreover, it does not require the dubious support of an imagined state of nature to appreciate the innate sociality of humankind. The present state of reality, with society being the rule and complete solitude the exception, offers little warrant to suppose otherwise. Furthermore, horrendous cases occasionally make the headlines where individuals have been deprived of human contact for most their lives. In such accounts, many important features of human existence, like the ability to communicate meaningfully, are notably absent. The lack of social interaction severely stunts human development. Such case studies reveal that human identity and abilities are constructed in the interaction and interplay between humans. We owe a great debt to our family, friends and neighbors because we need each other to create identity and meaning in life.³⁷

Charles Taylor has gone to great lengths to refute atomistic political philosophies, which, like the political philosophers of the Enlightenment, view everything in political society as decomposable to the individual level. The “originating figure is probably Hobbes” and the main tenet, “The events and states which are the subject of study in society are ultimately made up of the events and states of component individuals” (Taylor 1995: 129). As mentioned above, these “methodological individualists” justify their atomistic sympathies by pointing out that society is merely a collection of individuals; a society only thinks and operates to the extent that its component parts think and operate (1995:

³⁷ John Locke believed that humans are born into this world as “*tabula rasa*” (blank slates, upon which their identity is constructed according to their relationships and experience in the world. Interestingly enough, he somehow managed to justify the juxtaposition of this belief to the belief that humans, in their natural state, exist as individuals first and foremost and that society is derivative of the conglomeration of individuals *qua* individuals. Yet, how could there be individuals *qua* individuals (the building blocks of society) if individual identity is predicated upon co-existence with other human beings?

130). In response, Taylor seizes on the nature of language to reveal the inherent flaws in this approach. Drawing on Wittgenstein, Taylor reminds us that language operates according to established rules of validity, much like a game, and that a word can only convey meaning when set against “the background of a whole language” (1995: 132). Linguistic use, as well as the quasi-linguistic ability to have coherent thoughts, always presupposes a background of meaning, a “culture” that sets the parameters, rules, and definition of the language game. Individuals, therefore, can only speak and think meaningfully insofar as they are embedded in a collective that gives those utterances and thoughts the requisite context. As Taylor concludes, “this background is not an event, nor can it be located in individuals” (1995: 134); rather it is an internally coherent web. Methodological individualism separates the individual from the very milieu that makes its existence intelligible. Accordingly, the collective nature of language acquisition and use further confirms the irreducibly social nature of human beings.

In general, environmental philosophy has affirmed the sociality of human life. It has correctly perceived that the libertarian individualism at the heart of modern philosophy is inextricably entangled in modernity’s anthropocentric worldview; to combat the latter requires, to some extent, taking on the former. Atomism, after all, refers only to human individualism. David Abram, an eco-philosopher steeped in the phenomenological tradition, confidently starts his book *Spell of the Sensuous* with the assertion, “Humans are tuned for relationship” (1996: ix). He thereby pushes back against centuries of philosophical consensus that the individual is the most basic ontological reality. Abram and others hold firmly to the social nature of humanity due to their commitment to enlarging the moral sphere to include animals. They argue that human interaction does not delineate the fullness of human identity; rather, to be human is to be always already operative in a more-than-human world. One’s identity encompasses myriad influences that incorporate yet ultimately transcend the human realm to

include pets, wild animals, forests, parks, gardens, etc. “We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (Abram et al. 2006). Abram’s anthropology deserves serious critical attention, for it poses a substantial critique of both individualism and anthropocentrism by maintaining that the human self can only exist insofar as it is a self-in-relation to all beings in the world.

Likewise, moral habits are not formed in isolation by an individual *qua* individual. Instead, moral habits exist in the space between one’s larger social milieu and the individual, mediating between the two as a form of social practice. A child learns habits primarily through watching and imitating others. Parents and siblings exert influence by social modeling, teaching the infant by performance even when the parent is not explicitly aware that she acts as a role model. To recall Aristotle’s metaphor, habit formation is much like learning a craft, in the sense that it is predicated upon social relationships and involves apprenticeship to a person or group – ideally people skillful and knowledgeable in the discipline. Or, to use Taylor’s example, habit formation works according to the same logic as language acquisition, for to learn a language presupposes that one is in a social group that both models language use and, more decisively, provides the context to sustain the meanings assigned to each utterance. Thus, moral habits tailor themselves to the nature of the human; this makes them inherently social, taken on as if acculturated, and passed along as corporate phenomena akin to a tradition.

This is what Pierre Bourdieu refers to when he speaks of *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them (quoted in Smith 2013: 81).

This complex definition points primarily to the way in which habits transcend the individual (habit as structure, external force), yet also implicate the individual in certain practices constitutive of the social body (habit as structuring, internal force). Habit formation occurs in community (or more precisely, communities) because habits are shared phenomena; they are always already bigger than the individual (Smith 2013: 81). Just as Aristotle conceived of the moral life as an issue of political science, so too is habit a political matter, not so much in the sense of weighing in on controversial topics like health care or abortion (as in the US), but rather in the sense that habit concerns the *polis*, the lives and interactions of people who co-exist in close proximity.

Consequently, when I form a new habit, it happens in the midst – and because – of the multiple social bodies outlets that comprise modern life (e.g. school, work, church, sports teams, etc.). To some extent, each group has incorporated me into its particular way of seeing and constituting the world through the habits ingrained in me by way of their respective practices. Likewise, the *habitus*, the conglomeration of habits I currently have, does not come *ex nihilo*; “it is acquired, and therefore has a history; it carries an entire past with it” (Smith 2013: 83). My habits neither start nor end with me. Though it is acquired from the social bodies that lay claim to one’s life, this does not imply that to acquire a *habitus* is a deterministic process whereby each agent is condemned to assume and repeat mechanically the received patterns of actions. Rather, the habituated agent is disposed to see and understand the world in certain ways, taking for granted the particular manners of constituting the world implanted in the *habitus*. The acquisition of a *habitus*, therefore, is less like accepting a rigid script for one’s conduct, and more like receiving the general rules for the game, which do not necessarily dictate specific actions, but nonetheless influence, constrain, and subtly direct how one plays the game. This is the first sense of the corporality of habit formation: humans form habits socially as they are

incorporated in various social groups given that habits are overarching dispositions of a social body realized in practice.

The Irreducible Embodiment of Human Being

The second sense of the corporality of habit formation refers to the bodily nature of human existence. The philosophical anthropology previously articulated stressed the centrality of desire for human nature. Such a move stemmed from a deeper concern to appreciate in fullness the human body and the way in which human existence is bounded by, experienced in, and commensurate with one's bodily nature. The intellectualist model implicit in most efforts to communicate sustainability assumes that "intelligence is centered in "mind" (...) as if being "smarter" is sufficient to transform our being-in-the-world" (Smith 2013: 55). In doing so, it relegates the body to the status of an addendum to human nature, a hollow superfluity with little bearing on the important aspects of life. At this point, it is customary to castigate Descartes for he is usually the culprit and the progenitor blamed for this philosophical move. Indeed, he considered the body a fickle and unreliable source of knowledge and thus deemed it unsuitable for philosophical attention. He was also known as a particularly avid vivisectionist who urged his companions to disregard the wails of the dissected animals as the mere whinings of an automated machine.

Yet philosophy's disinterest in the body may be rooted further back in its long history, and can also be found in ancient Greece. Platonic philosophy also contained a dualism between matter, to which the body belongs, and the realm of ideas, to which the human soul belongs. Plato believed in a world of Ideas, a non-material realm, yet more real than the material world, in which the pure ideas (or forms) of material things reside. Thus, for all the particular chairs in the world there is more fundamentally the pure Idea of Chair, the universal Idea in which all the particulars participate and from which they gain the properties that makes them a chair. Thus, a chair is only a chair insofar as it is formed to the

Idea of Chair. Critically, however, Plato disagreed with Aristotle over whether the universal Ideas existed independently of the particulars. Plato thought that even if all the particular chairs in the world ceased to exist, the Idea of Chair would persist. Aristotle, on the other hand, thought that the existence of a universal Idea was predicated upon the existence of the corresponding particulars. This subtle disagreement between Aristotle and Plato made a world of difference. It explains why Aristotle studied biology and other matters of this world as a natural extension of his philosophical study, whereas Plato confined his philosophical interest to the realm of Ideas because he believed that universals alone allowed for true knowledge. Aristotle resembles an empiricist in his study of nature, whereas Plato distrusted the ever-changing physical world. Plato's dualism renders experiential, practical knowledge gained in the world secondary to knowledge of the Form.

Hence, the roots of the mind-body dichotomy run deep in the pedigree of Western philosophy; dualism is a hard habit to kick. Some, however, have resisted the seduction of this tidy distinction between mind and matter, contending instead that humans do not merely have bodies; “we *are* our bodies – while also *more* than our bodies” (Smith 2013: 56). Moreover, they reinterpret human rationality less as that which sets humanity apart, and more as something ensconced firmly in our animality (MacIntyre 1999: 49).³⁸ These corrective insights are substantially indebted to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's project in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the main thrust of which is to take the body seriously as a theoretical starting point, the most basic datum of human existence. As Merleau-Ponty noted, “the body expresses total existence, not because it is an external accompaniment to that existence, but because existence realizes itself in the body” (quoted in Smith 2013: 66). In fact, it is precisely the phenomenological oddity of habit that provoked Merleau-Ponty to revisit the

³⁸ To view rationality as an animalistic property dovetails nicely with the understanding of the body as a locus of intelligence that we gained from analyzing habit in the previous chapter.

classical (dualistic) conception of embodied existence and attempt to take into account the primacy of incarnation (Smith 2013: 58). Habit, to Merleau-Ponty, “is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort” (quoted in Smith 2013: 58). Aristotle too insisted on the vitality of the connection between body and habit for, as Dunnington remarks, Aristotle theorized that “knowledge is often habit,” but it is a kind of “heart knowledge” or an “embodied knowledge” (2011: 52-3). Habits, then, lie within the purview of the body.³⁹ Although mental habits do exist and the realm of habits is not commensurate with the motor-physical, many do not exist as mental states alone, but as attached to some form of physical motion or activity.⁴⁰

These two insights – human nature as communal and bodily – lay much of the groundwork for a theory of habit formation.⁴¹ To cultivate a habit, then, involves the engagement of the body in a distinct and socially shared activity that either constitutes the habit or accompanies the habit indirectly. We find habit, therefore, at the confluence of communal practice and embodiment. “Not surprisingly, my *incorporation* into a social body is effected through the *social* body co-opting *my* body. The dynamics of initiation are kinaesthetic [*sic*]”

³⁹ This is not to say that habits are solely a mode of bodily orientation because, as Merleau-Ponty writes, “every habit is both motor and perceptual, because it lies, as we have said, between explicit perception and actual movement” (quoted in Smith 2013: 57). Habits, in a very deep sense, involve not only a way of orienting one’s self bodily to the world, but also a distinct way of seeing the world. The reference to vision is not a mere stand-in for the physical acting of seeing, but rather the process of physically seeing, conceptualizing, and understanding in a pre-cognitive way before the translation of that “vision” to language. Habit, as mentioned earlier, occupies a distinct middle ground that intercedes between mind and body, or perception and conception, not confined to or defined solely by either pole of the pairs.

⁴⁰ The Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas writes in his memoirs, “My writing is exploratory because I have no idea what I believe until I force myself to say it. For me, writing turns out to be my way of believing” (136). The claim that he does not often know what he thinks until he writes should not be taken whimsically as mere fluff or a form of self-handicapping. It is more likely that the habit of writing stimulates and aids his thought process to such an extent that thinking unaccompanied by writing is robbed of its impetus and the activity suffers in productivity. Anecdotes such as these readily evidence the interconnection between thinking and acting to the extent that it reveals the large indebtedness of the “mind” to the body. Such a view is probably not surprising for those who have diligently resisted the classical but pernicious dualisms of Western thought, particularly the split between mind and body. For an interesting and light-hearted review of the extreme and quirky habits on which great thinkers, artists, and writers alike have relied in (and for) their literary/artistic careers, see Currey 2013.

⁴¹ While I want to leave a small space open for the possibility of cultivating habits by mental processes disconnected from any bodily activation, it does seem to be the case that the body is a more direct and efficient means of habit formation precisely because it is the major seat of human intelligence.

(Smith 2013: 94). Habits of thought may spiral out of a habituated body.⁴² As Smith, drawing on Merleau-Ponty, contends, “states of the body ‘give rise’ to states of mind” (2013: 94). To put it differently, emotion in large part depends upon motion. Since we experience the world only through and as bodies, it follows that we must enlist the body when to form habits. To ground habits in the body ensures the relative permanence characteristic of habits due to the ease and enthusiasm with which the body takes to scripted patterns of actions. This explains why Merleau-Ponty describes “the acquisition of habit as a rearrangement and renewal of the corporeal schema” (quoted in Smith 2013: 57).

Incorporating the Social Body: Habit Formation as Practice

While embodiment and social incorporation constitute necessary conditions, they are not entirely sufficient to ensure the durable “knowledge in the hands” that habit comprises. Many social actions engage the body without giving way to habit. Why do some become habit and others do not? The missing link to habit formation, I suggest, is *practice*, a repeated and patterned movement of bodies in a socially defined time and space. In other words, a practice repeats the same actions again and again in a certain socially defined setting to attain a certain skill, and that repetition entrenches that specific action or set of actions firmly into the bodily know-how of the agent. “Frequency of past behavior” according to psychologists Ouellette and Wood, “then reflects habit strength and has a direct effect on future performance” (1998: 54). Thus, the themes of physical body and social body that weigh so heavily into habit formation are complemented by practice. This links the social, bodily, and repetitive nature of habit formation, for all three dynamics have a place in this understanding of practice. As Bourdieu notes, the *habitus* “is constituted in practice and is always

⁴² For example we moderns have gorged ourselves on supermarket shopping (a physically conscripting activity) and have consequently come to expect the earth to comply with the a-seasonal demands of the supermarket (an intellectual habit). People are thrown into this world where modern mass consumption constitutes the norm; in subsuming such practices, they gradually come to habituate not only their bodies to enjoy and expect certain amenities, but also their minds.

oriented toward practical functions” (quoted in Smith 2013: 81-82). In essence, habit formation demands practice. The maxims “practice makes perfect” or “practice makes permanent” are imprecise; in reality, practice makes habitual, which is to say that it facilitates the acquisition and relative permanence of a certain skill. As cognitive psychologist Timothy Wilson counsels, “to establish a desirable pattern of habitual, nonconscious responses, the best advice is to practice, practice, practice” (2002: 216).

We can draw on Aristotle to make the same point. An individual forms habits as apprentices learn crafts, “by having first activated them” (1103a32), for “a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities” (1103b21, brackets in original). T.H. Irwin, in his translation of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, explicitly defines habits as “patterns of action, acquired by *training*” (324, italics added). As noted above, craftsmanship begets itself by means of apprenticeship, which is an irreducible social reality. Furthermore, key to Aristotle’s account of moral habituation is the repeated bodily activity of an agent, which explains why he draws an analogy between the moral life and physically conscripting skills like musicianship and construction (1103a35). To practice, therefore, is to acquire. Habit results from the reproduction of morally excellent deeds as learned from the virtuous; it is, in other words, a practice.

Bodies in Motion

Having articulated this conception of habit formation as practice, I will employ two examples to elucidate this point further: the disciplines of soccer and philosophy. Sports, such as soccer (what the rest of the world more aptly calls football), dancing, or even golf, rely on training to produce good athletes. To train as an athlete involves impressing into the body specific ways of moving that coalesce into habit. A soccer player learns to be a good soccer player by learning the habits common to good soccer players. For soccer, like most other sports, is not always, or even primarily, about being able to think clearly in the game, but

rather about the cultivation of certain habits that allow the athlete to be able to react and improvise skillfully in the game as if out of instinct. This explains why Smith contends that to have a habit is “to know more than you think” (2013: 89). Soccer of course involves tactics and other theoretical knowledge; however, all of that would be rendered meaningless without the skills instilled through habit. An ardent observer of soccer could learn to recognize what constitutes good soccer; without the physical training, however, his body could not put into practice what his mind directs him to do.

We can extend this anecdotal analogy a bit further to connect the physical body to the social. After all, soccer is by its nature a corporate sport; unlike ping-pong, tennis, or track, soccer concerns both the individual skills cultivated by the respective players on the team (like ball control, trapping and passing ability) but also, and more critically, the skill of the team in its ability to play as a cohesive whole. A good team demands more than clever players; it also demands a shared understanding of the overall purpose, style, and tendencies of the team. A form of soccer does arise when eleven strangers are placed on the same team, but their collaborative movements will inevitably go out of sync.⁴³ Passes will go awry and misunderstandings will abound given that the group does not know itself as a team; it does not have the requisite practice of interacting constructively as a unified collection of diverse individuals. Thus, it is not uncommon for good players to transfer to different teams where surprisingly they do not, indeed cannot, perform up to their former standards. These “flops” evidence that the team context often weighs as much as the player himself; in fact, the skills of a player in a certain sense belong to the team, for they are localized skills inculcated by the social as well as the body. Accordingly, to play soccer well

⁴³ I am tempted to use this fact as an explanation of why the MLS All-Star team (composed of the best players in the American soccer league) undoubtedly always loses to visiting European teams. Simply put, they are generally skillful players who have little to no experience playing with each other, going up against some of the better teams that England, Spain, or Germany have produced. Though some may say that the Americans may not have a chance to begin with, to strip good players from their team contexts and force them together in an amalgamated whole certainly cannot help their prospects! That said, I recognize the gulf in quality between the mediocrity of American soccer and the talented, rigorous culture characteristic of the European soccer world.

requires the cultivation of the right habits via the physical *and* social body effected in practice. The continued success of certain club teams in today's age, namely Barcelona and most recently Bayern Munich, depends just as much on the fluid, cohesive, almost aesthetic quality in their distinctive style of play as it does on the skills of the individuals within the group. In short, a skillful soccer player is made in the repeated interaction between the body and the social.

In this scenario, it makes intuitive sense that the agent in question trains his/her body to endow it with the skills necessary to play the corporate sport, because the activity in question obviously implicates the body embedded in a group. However, this also proves to be the case in another, less obvious example.

Philosophers are often chastised as armchair thinkers, smart individuals who remain stationary in their work and obstinately passive in the world at large. These thinkers seem that they could do without their bodies, as if the discipline only implicated the mind. Accompanying this charge is an implicit, pervasive understanding of theoretical disciplines as fields that pertain only to the mind and do not involve the body. Yet, this unduly undervalues the manner in which all thinkers must work to train their bodies in order for the mind to function properly. In fact, many philosophers have been known to prescribe themselves a daily regimen of walking as an integral part of their academic life. In Heidelberg, Germany, for example, there is a quaint old path called Philosopher's Way, by no means an easy hike, that meanders through the hillside; it derives its name from the generations of German philosophers at the university who frequented the trail, using bodily movement to work out their complex philosophical systems or insights.⁴⁴ Thus, the practices of thinking and writing enlist the body. This

⁴⁴ There is a long heritage of philosophers known for their habit of ambulation. Socrates of course deserves mention, for he liked to take long walks under the Athenian colonnades, all the while discoursing with his companions according to his method of elenchus. Aristotle also was said to be quite the walking man, for tradition knows him as a peripatetic (one given to walking) philosopher, and after his death his followers also assumed the name "Peripatetics." One could create a sizeable list if forced to enumerate all the great thinkers prone to ambulate regularly, including Heidegger, Arne Naess, and Charles Darwin. Lastly, I must quote Henry David Thoreau who, in his essay *Walking*, wrote "I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits unless I spend four hours a day at least – and it is commonly more than that – sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields absolutely free from all worldly engagements" (1862: Part 1, section 6).

should not surprise those who have eschewed an absolute dichotomy between mind and body. “Now [though] it is accepted that Descartes was wrong on two fronts – the mind is not separate from the body, and consciousness and the mind are not the same thing” (Wilson 2002: 45). The physical side of doing philosophy manifests itself in a variety of ways, from smaller habits such as scratching one’s head, biting one’s nails, drumming one’s fingers, twirling a pencil continuously, or stroking one’s facial hair, to larger movements, like pacing, going for walks, or twitching one’s leg. Even the ability to sit for a long time staring at a computer screen or reading a book is a learned skill drilled into the body.

Like soccer, philosophy also demands the context of a social body. The social nature of philosophy becomes evident in the reality that good thinkers are made and educated, not born. This is why good teachers beget other good philosophers, as is the case with Socrates-Plato-Aristotle-Alexander the Great, or Husserl-Heidegger-Gadamer, for to some extent philosophy demands apprenticeship. In this sense, philosophy needs the university to sustain itself, for the academic environment provides the social lifeblood upon which philosophy survives. Furthermore, philosophers not only thrive in an immediate, tangible social context, but they are always already embedded in a social context by dint of their field of study and discourse, engaged in dialogue with either a thinker long dead, a contemporary, or colleague. Even those known for their hermitic tendencies do not truly cultivate their philosophical habits of thought and practice in isolation, but in the interaction with other texts, lectures, or even nature in some cases.

These examples point suggestively to the causal relationship between practice and habit. This insight corresponds to a recent philosophical trend, particularly among thinkers on the European continent who has moved away from an intellectualist bent and sought to reconfigure the classic issue of the relation between mind and body. According to Charles Taylor, “The crucial difference is

that these philosophers set the primary locus of the agent's understanding in practice" (1995: 170).

Habit in Practice

These three aspects – sociality, physicality, and repetition, understood together as practice – constitute the major components that play into a theory of habit formation. At base, this theory of habit formation works with how the individual interacts with the world as a social, embodied being by way of practice. As Smith rightly notes, habit formation largely resembles the process of becoming a native (2013: 92-93). A native takes the right things for granted and native habits are those that allow the agent to navigate the local world with ease. A native learns first by practice what it is necessary to survive and thrive in a certain community, and only subsequently complements this practical know-how with the intellectual links. If this is so, forming the habits of a native concerns acculturation, the drawn out procedure of joining a people group. Thus, to form a habit requires the repeated engagement of the body in a socially current action or way of being-in-the-world practiced and thereby implicitly accepted by a certain social body. Put differently, I acquire a habit when I, as a body, participate time and again in an action, pattern of action, or disposition practiced by others.

Habits work this way precisely because they match the rhythms and oddities of human nature: our bodies work well with repetition, for it is the repetition of certain actions that sustain life. Just as we must eat every day throughout the day to sustain our bodies, and just as we must study *ad nauseam* our notes and texts well in advance to prepare for a test, so too does the moral life take practice. We are incarnate beings who know the world primarily through our bodies and relate to the world as bodies living and breathing amongst other bodies. As such, we are subject to the influence and prescriptions of other humans, particularly those humans who have gathered together as bodies to form a social body. The influence that emanates from such social bodies often passes

beneath our rational/conscious awareness by centering on repeatedly engaging the body in definitive and distinct motions. As Bourdieu insightfully notes in his *Logic of Practice*,

One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, made body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can instill a whole cosmology, through injunctions as insignificant as ‘sit up straight’ or ‘don’t hold your knife in your left hand,’ and inscribe the most fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing or physical and verbal manners, so putting them beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement (quoted in Smith 2013: 96).

This precognitive training is exactly what Aristotle pinpointed as the first and most formative stage of moral development. Commands such as “sit up straight,” “shop for lowest prices,” or “eat meat every day” thus function formatively below the level of ratiocination while nonetheless profoundly shaping the character of modern individuals. To appreciate Bourdieu’s assessment means to realize that the purview of ethics is not restricted to those moments of obvious moral dilemmas, or to controversial topics like war. Ethics concerns the whole of life – the ways in which we shop, how we heat our house, how we commute to work, and our hobbies – precisely because all these seemingly innocent practices form us into the kind of people who take them for granted, the kind of people who cannot conceive of a world structured differently where people only bike to work or use mass transit systems. The problem is not that we moderns have habits inculcated in us by means of our bodies and social circles; this is part of what it means to be human. Rather, we have latched onto the *wrong* habits, thereby sustaining ourselves unthinkingly by unsustainable practices that have lead us past the threshold of global climate change.

Given this, it makes sense that totalitarian regimes all across the political spectrum resort to mass demonstrations, salutes, and other bodily activities designed to inscribe in the public a certain disposition, usually that of submission or exclusive unity, as a means of gathering support and legitimating their government. William James noted that the army takes advantage of the logic of practice as they seek to fashion “a man completely over again, as to most of the possibilities of his conduct” (James 2012: 108). Though evident in the extremes of politics, this phenomenon is by no means restricted to totalitarian regimes. In the US, one way this occurs is through the civic rituals surrounding the flag and national anthem. During this rite, the citizen is expected to stand up, face the billowing flag, place her right hand over her heart, and either keep quiet in obeisance to the national anthem or sing along with gusto.

This practice is in no place more prevalent than in the public school systems, where each day begins with paying homage to the flag by standing and reciting what is called the pledge of allegiance. These prescribed and socially hegemonic movements that accompany the visceral expression of the nation’s song amount to a civic ritual that aims first at the citizen’s heart by way of the body. In a seemingly innocuous move, the meaning-laden ritual of the national anthem works to instill certain nationalistic habits of practice and thought by utilizing the three aforementioned components of habit formation. In a telling statement, Bourdieu asserts, “The cunning of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the fact that it manages to extort what is essential while seeming to demand the insignificant” (quoted in Smith 2013: 97). The goal is not to persuade the citizen to support the government but to garner her *de facto*, implicit approval by insidiously scripting the movements of her body. To use Bourdieu’s terminology, “The body politic implants in me a *habitus* by immersing me in an array of tangible movements and routines that effectively ‘deposit’ an orientation within” (quoted in Smith 2013: 95). With regard to environmentally responsible behavior, it is evident not only that habit impacts consumption, but also that

modern consumption (among other culprits of climate change) breeds habit by employing social influence, bodily engagement, and repetition to the benefit of the major corporations and industries.

The Genealogy of Ritual

Thus far, I have argued that to understand how modern people behave in relation to climate change, we must first understand the nature of habit. The conservative power of habit explains why people are resistant to assume environmentally responsible behavior, even when that behavior accords with their knowledge. This gap between information, attitudes, and/or values and behavior indicates that the problem is one of insufficient moral formation, captured by Aristotle's category of incontinence. To construe the issue in this way reveals the centrality of character to the ethical life; character, in turn, is built on one's habits. As I have argued in this chapter, habits privilege the body, both the social and the physical, and operate according to the logic of practice; that is, a habit is formed insofar as it is activated physically, socially and repeatedly. Practices form habits. I should stress that I do not regard this provisional theory of habit formation as comprehensive, for I believe the mind can often instigate the assumption of certain habits (of thought or practice). The interpenetration of mind and body allows for each to exert mutual influence over the other, although the body's influence is insidiously present, often underestimated by the mind.⁴⁵ Instead, this framework has sought to provide an articulation of the most basic and necessary factors at play in habit formation. For though the mind can involve itself in the cultivation of habits, it is not entirely necessary, since the body also constitutes a repository of knowledge.⁴⁶ Further, it is likely that any influence the mind can exert over habit formation must incorporate corporeal elements.

⁴⁵ Yet, even this linguistic turn (to speak of mutual influence) does not do justice to the holistic reality of human existence, in which mind and body exist not as discrete though cooperative and connected entities, but as entirely interdependent.

⁴⁶ This makes sense given that a habit is pre- or sub-cognitive, but not necessarily non-cognitive. There is always some connection, however tenuous, between one's cognition and one's habits.

Accordingly, I have not relegated the mind to pure marginality and insignificance, but sought to situate it as a faculty of embodied rational animals embedded in a social world of practice.

As hinted at above, a pervasive and powerful form of habit formation is ritual. As will be argued below, ritual is a type of social practice, and is accordingly pertinent to the realm of habit. Nation states, religious bodies, civic organizations, and family units alike make use of rituals in their social life. However, to understand the potent connection between habit and ritual, it is necessary first to answer the most basic question: what is a ritual? As one scholar dryly notes, there is “the widest possible disagreement as to how the word ritual should be understood” (Bell 1992: i).

Before providing a positive account of ritual, I must first attempt to dispel a common, yet spurious presumption that threatens to paralyze this project from the outset. Moderns and post-moderns alike tend to view rituals as outdated, primitive systems of practice connecting tribal peoples to their supposed deities, or as manifestations of superstitions. From the contemporary vantage point, they seem curious relics of a bygone, pre-modern age that allowed primitive people to feel more in control of their oft-tumultuous lives threatened by myriad factors. Yet, this presumption wrongly assumes that because moderns have ceased sacrificing animals or performing other rites similar in form, that ritual activities have disappeared altogether. According to Catholic liturgist Godfried Cardinal Danneels,

Ritual is an unavoidably anthropological datum. Every significant human reality is surrounded and protected by ritual: birth, marriage, love, death. Every transition is adorned and embellished with ritual. Every time we

encounter something that transcends the human person we ‘humanize’ it with ritual (2003: 20).⁴⁷

Rituals take diverse forms, sacred or profane, civil or military, national or provincial. Moderns have not escaped rituals; instead, they merely have stopped talking about ritualized activities explicitly as rituals *per se*. Indeed, many modern practices are ritualized in the sense that they are set apart from daily life and conscript the participant’s bodies in socially defined practices. Whether recognized or not, Western societies already has default, implicit rituals embedded within it. In the United States, for example, it is common to witness ritual-laden events such as the infamous Black Friday of consumer shopping mania, the practices surrounding both playing and attending baseball (or other sporting) games, marriage practices (even those not on the wedding day, like bachelor/bachelorette parties) and holidays (like Halloween). Unfortunately, these society-wide rituals often conscript individuals into certain subconscious activities centered on mass consumption, which is, as is well acknowledged, environmentally unsustainable.

Consequently, the issue that education-minded environmentalists must face is not so much *rediscovering* the power of rituals as if it were lost and long forgotten, but rather *recovering* rituals from their unsustainable defaults and redeeming them for the purpose of forming environmentally virtuous habits. To put it differently, rituals provide a valuable means of access to practices that have the normative power to transform the malformed habits endemic to the West.

All this, however, merely begs the former question: what is a ritual? For we can only assess whether rituals still live on and have some sort of social power if we have a firm grasp on the definition of ritual. However, this is easier said than done, as the history of ritual studies evidences. Since its nascence, ritual

⁴⁷ Though Danneels exaggerates the universality of ritual by assuming that ritual always corresponds to distinct existential moments, the sentiment elicited in the quote gets at the deeper point that ritual is not a dead, pre-modern phenomena, but a living, life-giving diverse practice common to people across nations and cultures.

scholarship has defined ritual in various ways. Emile Durkheim understood ritual to be the practical manifestation of religion because it functions to set apart the sacred from the profane (Bell 2009: 24). To Durkheim and his followers, ritual manifests the psychological projections of individuals and their religious beliefs about God or gods. Functionalists like Arnold van Gennep cared less about the psychological origins of ritual and concerned themselves more with the social function(s) that ritual plays. The functionalist framework has yielded varying interpretations of the roles and purposes of ritual, the most prominent of which takes ritual to create group unity and exercise social control. Another significant approach to ritual studies is based on the belief that ritual possesses a communicative function. Concerned with ritual as a quasi-linguistic phenomenon, these scholars view ritual as performance, a means of symbolic action whereby that which is enacted expresses the interior beliefs of the social group. In his work *The Ritual Process*, Victor Turner approvingly quoted Monica Wilson who, in her analysis of Nyakusa ritual and symbolism, wrote, “Rituals reveal values at their deepest level (...) I see in the study of ritual the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies” (Turner 1977: 6). Closely aligned with semiology, this clustered association of theoretical models sees ritual as a secondary phenomenon, since it articulates in tangible movements that which is interior and primary. Ritual activity is thus a symbolic derivation. Culturalists, like Clifford Geertz, take this semiological model as ammunition for their argument that ritual is not simply the expression of cosmological beliefs, but also the symbolized expression of social tensions (Bell 2009: 66-7).

This brief foray into the history of ritual studies and the various interpretative models does not pretend to be comprehensive. The purpose, instead, is to highlight how all these definitions all bear a tacit methodological similarity: from Emile Durkheim to Victor Turner, ritual scholarship has on the

whole opted for a deductive method of ritual studies.⁴⁸ A deductive method of ritual studies starts by pinpointing a single trait or function possessed by a certain ritual, or group of rituals, that the researcher takes to be paradigmatic. The research then arbitrarily makes this the center for their understanding of ritual in general, thereby ensuring that they limit their field of study by constructing “ritual” according to their parochial categories. Thus, “talk about ritual may reveal more about the speakers than about the bespoken” (Bell 2009: xi). Consequently, the researcher is left with a well-defined phenomenon to study, and conveniently dismisses as irrelevant all ritual-like phenomena that do not fit into the deduced category. These theorists “proceed by formulating the universal qualities of an autonomous phenomenon. They maintain (...) that there is something we can generally call ritual and whenever or wherever it occurs it has certain distinctive features” (Bell 1992: 69). In doing so, they reduce the diverse array of ritual expression to that which can be universalized. Furthermore, these models tend to analyze ritual as an object of study in isolation from its cultural context, as if it were an inert phenomenon detachable from other social activities. This stems from the desire to situate ritual “as a distinct category of behavior” and results in “the tendency to cast activity, ritual or otherwise, as an object and thus as the completed or ‘dead,’ execution of a system” (Bell 1992: 72).

Reacting against the deficiencies of this approach which seeks to differentiate ritual from all other forms of social practice, some have responded by widening the category of ritual to the extent that nearly every human act counts as ritual. These theories usually prefer the ritual-as-communicative model and contend that since ritual serves an expressive-linguistic function, it must be a part of every aspect of social life. While this method mitigates some of the problems that follow those who seek to demarcate a limited category of ritual, it comes at a cost. As Catherine Bell contends, “it is a short step from the

⁴⁸ This critique and the following exposition of ritual owe much to Catherine Bell, whose work undergirds and informs this history of ritual studies.

proposition that everything is ritual to the practical reality that nothing is ritual” (1992: 73). With a watered-down concept of ritual, that which makes ritual interesting and distinct is lost at sea among even the most mundane of social activities. The study of ritual *per se* morphs into the gargantuan study of everything else. Moreover, generalizing the scope and application of ritual leads to the counter-intuitive conclusion that rule-bound actions like using one’s turning signal while driving, walking on the sidewalk, or even using the toilet are rituals. While they may have ritual-like qualities, namely regularity and repetition, to draw such mundane practices under the category of ritual collapses any theory of ritual into trivialities. Thus, the history of ritual studies begs the question: how can we study ritual as distinct phenomena without also jettisoning the social context that preserves its meaning?

Ritual and Practice

A relatively new method of ritual studies has emerged in the past three or four decades, a veritable paradigm shift in the field, that sidesteps the aforementioned problems by taking ritual to be a form of social practice. Indebted to Bourdieu, whose *Logic of Practice* undertook to understand the dynamics and peculiar logic of practice as practice without reducing that logic to the more common logic of reason, Catherine Bell articulated this approach in her seminal work *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992). In what follows, I will lay out Bell’s framework of a theory of ritual practice that avoids the temptation to formulate a comprehensive and detailed definition of ritual and instead inductively analyzes the many ways by which ritual, a social practice among other social practices, distinguishes itself from other social practices. Bell’s method studies how and why certain activities attain the status of ritual, which is to investigate the means by which a ritual practice maintains a “privileged distinction” between itself and other social practices (1992: 90). She assumes that ritual is a distinct social behavior and goes on to study it as a strategic activity

since it somehow makes itself different from common modes of activity. Accordingly, rituals do not so much correspond to already established, discrete categories of sacred and profane as Durkheim asserted; rather, they construct that which is sacred and that which is profane in the very act of ritualization.

Because of this tack, Bell prefers to speak of “ritualization” over the elusive category of “ritual,” for to use the term ritualization implies a study of ritual as an activity, the act of making something ritual. This model disallows one universally common characteristic or feature of acting ritually and proceeds to examine ritual as a practice, that is “what people do and how they do it; it involves less preliminary commitment to some overarching notion of ritual in general’ (Bell 2009: 82). This frees the scholar to consider ritual as a socially potent activity whereby authority, responsibility, beliefs, even the individual/social group are not so much symbolized, enacted or expressed (such a performative-symbolic understanding strips ritual of any primary efficacy and effectively reduces activity to a subsidiary of thought) but constructed and reinforced in the very rhythms and practiced movements of the ritualized activity.

To understand ritual as social practice, Bell undertakes to draw together those strategies frequently and commonly put into practice by ritual agents to generate a distinction between ritual and other activity. By necessity, this must be a limited depiction of ritualization, for it eschews any notion of intrinsic features of ritual and attempts to honor the fact that strategic ritualization finds its meaning only when bound in a specific cultural context within which it distinguishes itself from other common activities (Bell 1992: 93). For example, though repetition is often thought to be a universal characteristic of ritual, there are rituals that delineate themselves from other practices not by repetition, but by infrequency. The Jewish celebration of Passover, which commemorates salvation from slavery in Egypt, takes place only once a year and this infrequency serves to highlight the specialness of the occasion. Lack of constant repetition does not necessarily detract from significance, and can sometimes heighten it. Traits like

repetition or fixity, therefore, are not necessary to act ritually, though many people groups across time and space frequently utilize such traits as strategies of ritualization.

Ritual, Bodies, and Blindness

How, then, do people commonly distinguish ritual action from other action? Bell identifies the active involvement of the *body* as a main and oft used strategy of ritualization (Bell 2009: 81). The body is central to ritual precisely because ritual is generally an activity that entails a form of spatial and/or temporal movement. Rituals do not so much provide an arena for theoretical engagement or intellectual discussion as they primarily concern ritualized bodies moving about in ritualized space. As James Smith puts it, “ritual is the way we (learn to) believe with our bodies” (2013: 92). Thus, acting ritually “is a particularly mute form of activity. It is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking” (Bell 1992: 93).

Circularity characterizes the dynamics of ritual. The particular way in which bodies learn by ritual constitutes an interiorization of the value-laden dynamics and motions at play in the ritual. Yet, though ritual actors experience these dynamics as something other and outside of themselves, they do not recognize that their participation in the ritual helps construct the dynamics at work in the ritual. Through their movements, ritual actors shape the very ritual environment that in turn shapes them (Bell 1992: 98). Ritual thus can alter one’s understanding of reality by conscripting one’s body to participate in the ritualized construction of that ritualized reality. As Bell says, ritual practice instills a native “sense of the ritual” that comes “to be embedded in the very perceptions and dispositions of the body and hence are known only in practice as the way things are done” (1992: 107). Bell’s “sense of ritual” (also called ritual mastery) is an embodied knowing, an understanding that can bypass the awareness of the rational mind. This is the same kind of knowledge – what Merleau-Ponty

described as “knowledge in the hands” – that inheres in habit (quoted in Smith 2013: 58).⁴⁹ Ritual process creates ritual bodies – a combination of the physical and social body – that produce ritual-like practices precisely because a “sense of the ritual” seeps deep into one’s dispositions and permeates all other areas of life (Bell 1992: 98).

Given its circularity, ritual, it seems, operates best in a certain type of secrecy. Bell calls this the “intrinsic ‘blindness’ of practice (...) a strategic ‘misrecognition’ of the relationship of one’s ends and means” (1992: 108). Foucault’s dictum captures well the misrecognition inherent in ritual practice: “People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 187). In other words, ritual is a practice that does not acknowledge the fact that what it is doing is a practice; ritual smuggles itself (as a practice) in under the guise of normality. Accordingly, ritual conceals itself as a practice by means of practice and in doing so “manages to extort what is essential while seeming to demand the insignificant” (quoted in Smith 2013: 97). Ironically, to call attention to ritual as a practice undercuts its normativity, because the ritual and the habits inculcated cease to be seen as natural, and are instead acknowledged as contingent. If ritual is to function well – that is, to shape ritual bodies – it must involve a misrecognition of the dynamics at play, an assumption of the ritually created world as *reality*. “Some type of ambiguity or blindness in ritualization is linked to its distinctive efficacy” (Bell 1992: 109). Ritual and practice, then, are not simply indistinguishable; rather, ritual is a type of practice that does not openly purport to be a practice, and instead operates in ritualized world that reconfigures reality. It is a social practice of a privileged kind, one whose normativity is realized because its reality is normalized.

⁴⁹ In another place, Bell calls ritual mastery “a strategic form of socialization” (1992: 98), which harkens back to Bourdieu’s understanding of habit formation as a matter of incorporation and assimilation into a social body.

The structured environment of ritual is characterized by liminality; it is a time out of time and a space differentiated from other spaces. Victor Turner defines a liminal space as a “threshold realm of otherness,” “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (1977: 95). This inherent inbetween-ness of ritual practice allows for the germination of new possibilities and fertile connections that would have been otherwise stifled. Ritual provides a unique space that temporarily displaces “normal life” and offers an alternative conception of reality as realized in practice. Because it constructs a liminal space, participants have the opportunity to learn new habits in a ritual without having to vie with the cumbersome weight of former habits that constrain “normal life.” Within its liminality, ritualization extols its own virtues while simultaneously relativizing the virtues and norms typical of the world outside the ritual.

Accordingly, ritualization is teleologically aimed at the production of a ritual body; it accomplishes this through bodily practice in a socially defined liminal space, all the while veiling the contingency of its practice so that it comes to assume the normative status of reality. Ritual purposes to create a ritualized agent, “an actor with a form of ritual mastery, who embodies flexible sets of cultural schemes and can deploy them effectively in multiple situations so as to restructure those situations in practical ways” (Bell 2009: 81). Theories of ritual that emphasize their symbolic-communicative function miss out on this fundamental potency of ritual, for they can only conceive of ritual as a means of expression, rather than as an actual means of production. For example, the ritual practice of kneeling does not so much express an interior attitude of submission as it does create a kneeling agent, one used to submission (Bell 1992: 100). The force of ritual is not so much communicative as it is generative; “it primarily acts to restructure bodies in the very doing of the acts themselves” (Bell 1992: 100). Accordingly, ritual practice does not limit its concern to the realm of values or

knowledge, but holistically envelops such concerns in its ultimate *telos* of the creation of a new person (Bell 1992: 110).

Ritual Power

Implicit in this discussion of what ritual does and how it does what it does is the underlying dynamic of power. Ritual displays its power in the production of ritual agents, especially in their assumption of the ritual's configuration of reality, but there is ample theoretical disagreement as to how ritual power functions. Some theories interpret the power of ritual to be a brute, heavy-handed means of social control, a conservative agent that preserves the status quo; other scholars, primarily those of the symbolic-communicative persuasion, confer to ritual the power to instill knowledge or an ideology in participants, which looks eerily like brainwashing. While it is clear that ritual and power are inevitably connected, the nature of that connection is under question. As mentioned earlier, ritual as practice operates below the conscious level of ratiocination. Accordingly, since the nexus of ritual power lies in the conscription of bodies, it cannot be concerned with communicating specific messages or instilling knowledge. That would be too simplistic an understanding of practice, for it falls into the intellectualist trap of reducing the function of ritual to the derived expression of a more primary reality.

Instead, as a distinct type of social practice, ritual exercises a flexible and instable form of power since it aims at the human heart by way of the body rather than by way of the mind. Because ritual conscripts the body, it only demands the actor's "external consent," (the doing of certain actions) which leaves ample space for individual freedom (Bell 1992: 221). Ritual participants who fulfill the minimum requirement of bodily assent do not have their mental processes dominated by some ritual hegemony; instead, they are free within certain bounds to form their own interpretations of the meaning implicit in ritual acts. Thus, rituals do not require the preexistence of a dogmatic (mental) consensus to exert

their authority, nor do they explicitly result in a system of shared beliefs (Bell 1992: 186-187). Institutional bodies like the Roman Catholic Church have historically recognized the inherent instability of rituals, which is why they combine ritual participation with catechism, i.e. discursive teaching about the symbols used and their proper meaning.⁵⁰ The explicit instruction given in catechesis ensures that Christians are not left to themselves to interpret church practices, and instead they learn the traditional meaning and significance of certain rituals. The practices themselves do not have this power, so to guarantee agreement about their meaning Christianity has combined them with catechesis.

Rituals inevitably incorporate “a fair degree of internal resistance” for the movements enacted do not so much convey a clear message as they do subtly form a disposition that privileges a certain sense of reality (Bell 1992: 221). The use of power, therefore, is diffuse, limited, and dialectic, for it both empowers ritual actors to constitute the world in certain ways and simultaneously allows for a variety of interior responses to the practice – what Bell calls “negotiated involvement.” To take another example from the Roman Catholic Church, though Catholics across the world honor the ecclesial leadership of the pope, many take issue with the papal stance on contraception. They do not, however, view their subversion of the papal doctrine to be in any way anti- or un-Catholic. “Catholicism is a consent to papal power and a resistance to it at the same time” (Bell 1992: 214). Their ability to resist on such matters is not an exception to the otherwise coercive power of Catholic rituals; it is rather a corollary of the flexible nature of ritual authority, a testament to the peculiar way ritual both restrains and liberates.

Though one cannot participate in a ritual and escape without a single so to speak, the power exerted does not primarily belong to the level of discursive knowledge and first and foremost imparts an embedded knowledge, what Bell has called a “sense of the ritual” that endures even when removed from the ritual

⁵⁰ This insight will be important for the discussion of the Christian Eucharist in the following chapter.

environment. In other words, rituals “enable the person to deploy schemes that can manipulate the social order on some level and appropriate its categories for a semicoherent vision of personal identity and action” (Bell 1992: 216). This does not resemble a top-down process of information, whereby the ritual actors receive new discursive knowledge; instead, it resembles a nuanced process of formation, the molding of a person with new eyes to envision the world and its possibilities. In slightly different terms, rituals inculcate an inarticulate habitual comportment to the world that is effected through bodies enmeshed in a social constructed ritual space and subsequently carried beyond the corridors of ritual practice into other social situations. Rituals implicate the individual in a social body with its constitutive practices. This process works as a type of pedagogy or training, which concentrates first on the body and indirectly influences one’s conscious mental processes.⁵¹ The result, as mentioned above, is a ritual body, a person equipped with the habits inherent in the practice, one whose vision of reality, possibility, and normality is no longer confined by the arbitrary constructions of society at large.

A Recapitulation

I have now articulated the connection between habit and ritual, thanks to the interpretive lens of Smith (through whom we became acquainted with Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu) and the insights of Bell. Ritual turns out to be a visceral and atypical social practice that cultivates habits by exercising the body to achieve what Bell calls a “sense of the ritual,” that pre-cognitive know-how predisposed to see the world according to the dynamic logic of the ritual (Bell 1992: 98-107). Because it operates according to the logic of practice, ritual functions as a breeding ground for habits.

⁵¹ Like Bourdieu, Bell’s framework of ritual practice takes into account that “practice can give rise to thoughts, cognitive categories, and modes of perception” (1992: 217).

With this in mind, we are better equipped to understand not only the nature of the task to communicate sustainability properly but also the essence of the problem inherent in sustainable change efforts. The social practices inherent in modern life, like those surrounding food consumption, transportation, and domestic heating/cooling, have hijacked the modern self by co-opting the body into habits that perpetuate climate change. Since the life of the mind depends in large part on the life of the body, the incorporation of the physical body into the unsustainable social body paradigmatic of modernity further works to constrain our intellectual ability to respond constructively. As Bell, drawing on Bourdieu, wisely reminds us, “one might retain one’s limited and negotiated involvement in the activities of the ritual, but bowing or singing in unison imperceptibly schools the social body in the pleasures of and schemes for acting in accordance with assumptions that remain far from conscious or articulate” (1992: 215). Our bodies have been so thoroughly trained in practice that even environmentally beneficial information does little good to ameliorate our behavior. Our incontinence is inscribed deep within, beneath the purview of the mind by *practice*. Bourdieu rightly notes, “What is ‘learned by the body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is” (quoted in Smith 2013: 98). We have not worked our way towards climate change by knowledge (or the lack thereof) so much as we have got there by practice.

The remedy, I propose, must likewise utilize the dynamics of practice, though it must be of a privileged kind – ritual – if it is to have a chance to overcome the insidious practices that have already taken hold. As Bell has argued, ritualized activity is a complex social practice that centers on bodies and trains them to understand the world according to the liminal environment constructed in its activity. Ritual practices under the guise of normality, projecting its constructed environment as reality “through a series of physical movements (...), thereby producing an arena which, by its molding of the actors,

both validates and extends the schemes they are internalizing” (Bell 1992: 109-110). In short, by habituating the body ritual shapes character.

Going Forward: Invention vs. Study

Up until this point, I have purposefully deferred addressing a question that readers may find poised on the tip of their tongues. That insistent query asks: “okay, so *what* do you suggest? Which practical solutions can you offer, i.e. what rituals should be put into practice?” Even if they are convinced by my overarching argument – 1) to effect sustainable change is principally a problem of incontinent habits and malformed character, 2) habits are formed in practice and, 3) ritual practice constitutes a particularly normative tonic for unsustainable malformation – they may still hold serious reservations. Another important question from a slightly different angle asks, “what are the environment virtues?” for it is no use to speak of habits without any notion of the ultimate *telos* to which they are meant to contribute. Even those sympathetic to my construal of the communication of sustainability and the anthropology laid out above (which involves epistemological claims about the formation of understanding in practice) may still retain a certain skepticism regarding the practical outcomes of this thesis precisely because it is not a quick and easy fix. To recommend a daily dose of ritual practice to combat climate change does not easily lend itself to ready made solutions, and the urgency of climate change seems to demand a “magic bullet.” Nor does this thesis seem amenable to universalization; advocates of sustainability tend to desire a solution that can be communicated to all people everywhere, regardless of their particularities. Yet, a method of ritualizing the communication of sustainability must by necessity be localized and tailored to the cultural context of its “audience.” Accordingly, it is difficult to imagine what this thesis would entail since it requires doing the creative work of reimagining social practice, building community (more on this to come), and thinking ritually, which is more artistic than discursive.

I do not want to dismiss as offhand this pragmatic question since it is obviously merited. The next logical step in this discussion is to translate this theory about practice into tangible practice, or at least into pragmatic suggestions about practice. The inclination, therefore, is to begin to recommend ritual practice *x* or *y* or *z*, as if from the standpoint of an unengaged theoretician I know what specific practices are needed. However, I must avail myself of one proviso, for, in a certain sense, my skills and interests have led me to concentrate on summoning the proper theoretical support to provide a new lens through which we can more appropriately tackle sustainable change. Accordingly, I have conceived of my task to be the writing of a prolegomena, the necessary foreword that sets the stage for the more interesting developments to come. I add this qualification precisely because I believe that ritual is the natural outpouring of a community that shares certain assumptions about the good life, a *polis*. One can no more prescribe a certain ritual to a social group than one can change the public's mind by spewing facts all over them. Ritualization is not the work of an individual, largely because the individual is a foreign entity to the ritual process. Rather, ritual addresses, incorporates, and in a certain sense gives definition to a social body and it is precisely its social quality that makes ritual so compelling and liminal. Thus, the pragmatic question posed above constitutes an unrealistic temptation, the expectation that with a prescribed ritual, environmental advocates could fashion a community out of thin air and transform them according to the logic of the ritual. Yet, "Ritualization cannot turn a group of individuals into a community if they have no other relationships or interests in common, nor can it turn the exercise of pure physical compulsion into participatory communality" (Bell 1992: 222).

What the pragmatic question fails to take into account is that there are communities and groups of people who already make good use of the logic of practice, even to combat climate change. The insights of esoteric French philosophers are not so arcane as to be used in only a few "enlightened" circles.

Rather, what thinkers like Merleau-Ponty and Aristotle have attempted to do is encapsulate the nuances and dynamics of lived experience. Their framework is only insightful insofar as it names the wisdom inherent in social life.

To recognize this is to find that the pragmatic question demanded above has been slightly altered. Rather than muster up a foolhardy attempt to formulate new rituals, the way to proceed constructively is to look at varying social bodies around the world that resist the insidious mindset of modernity (with all its forces that perpetuate climate change) and inquire into what ritual practices sustain their nonconformist habits of thought and action. Take, for example, the proliferation of “hippy” social/environmental activists who were known in 1960’s America for practices like chaining themselves to atomic weapons, trees, or river areas as a ritualized mode of resistance. Such practices brought people together and galvanized the movement by creating pockets of ritualized space where new habits of life could be envisioned and formed.

Thus, I am much more interested in pinpointing the ritualization practices already utilized to good effect than in improvising my own answer to the pragmatist’s question. Further, my preferred method of response would provide environmental advocates with a firm footing by pointing out certain ritual practices which people already participate and making clear to the ritual actors involved that their practices have direct implications for their posture towards the environment. Accordingly, the task of the next chapter is to identify a subculture/community rooted in ritual practice, analyze the habits formed therein, and show how those habits can and do constitute a response to the challenge posed by climate change and the habits implicated therein. Specifically, I will study the Christian ritual of Eucharistic practice. The ritualization strategies implicit in this practice will be offered as a case study. They will provide an example of the possibilities open to the environmental movement that can pique the imagination and hint at further creative community practices with the power

to produce “ritualized agents, persons who have an instructive knowledge of these schemes embedded in their bodies, in their sense of reality” (Bell 1992: 221).

*Christian Rituals in a Green Age: Communicating Eucharist*⁵²

“We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more.”

Dorothy Day (1981: 285)

“Everything in our lives that takes place at the Lord’s Table can, if we will, inform and shape our lives as we return to our kitchen tables.”

Eugene Peterson (1999: 222)

Christian Environmentalism?

The previous chapters have made a sustained case for the centrality of habit to the moral life, particularly with regard to (un)sustainable behavior, as well as for an understanding of habit formation as practice – social, bodily, and repetitious – that leads naturally to a study of ritual as a particular type of practice. The basis for this contention is the acknowledged fact that more information does not (and has not) led noticeably to behavioral change. Using an Aristotelian lens, I have noted that the force keeping Western society stuck in its unsustainable ways is the conservative power of habit, which basically constitutes an embedded knowledge, a bodily know-how not necessarily or always tied to cognition yet thoroughly active and formative. I have claimed that any method in the communication of sustainability that seeks to be effective in meeting its goals must move past the preliminary discussion of *information* transference and concentrate its efforts on character *formation* by encouraging and instituting

⁵² When used in a Christian context, “communicate” means to partake of the Eucharist, which is the ritualized consumption of the sacred elements of bread and wine. I find it striking that Christians employ such a term to speak of ingesting the body and blood of Jesus (the consecrated bread and wine), while it also finds use in the context of the communication of sustainability. I hope to show below why the Eucharist is a fitting subject of inquiry for the communication of sustainability. Etymologically, to communicate is to make something common, to share something between the various parties involved, and this is precisely what the Eucharist (also known as Holy *Communion*) does.

different practices (of consumption, transportation, heating/cooling, etc.) that have the power to instill a more sustainable “knowledge in the hands.” Formative practices frequently appear in the form of ritual, an activity that distinguishes itself from other social activities by its “blind” incorporation of bodies. In other words, ritual does what it does without acknowledging *how* it does what it does. It is a practice whose normativity lies in the misrecognition of itself as practice. Ritual does not purport to be a practice; in fact, it does not purport to be anything but reality, the true state of the world. In doing so, it functions to instill in participants a ritualized way of seeing and knowing the world. Rather than proposing original, universal rituals designed specifically to ameliorate the environmental behavior of the Western world, I have instead set my task to be an environmental analysis of a pre-existing social body whose set ritualized actions offer a case study that can elucidate not only how rituals operate as powerful spheres of habit formation, but also how certain extant rituals presuppose certain environmental virtues and can therefore be understood as vehicles of sustainable change.⁵³ The social body I proposed is the Christian church, with regard to the ritualized practice of the Eucharist.⁵⁴

At first glance, it may seem odd to some and possibly downright naïve or archaic to others to mention Christianity in the same breath as environmentalism, much less to propose its ritualized actions as a case study for a practical, embodied communication of sustainability. Being thoroughly modern, many environmentalists have inherited modernity’s distrust of, even antipathy to,

⁵³ We must also come to terms with the fact that a communication (the making common) of sustainability based on practice cannot achieve instant success; the problem of habits requires a long-term, patient approach.

⁵⁴ I am not interested in tackling the question, “to which Christian church are you referring?” For although Christianity is a partitioned religion consisting of many different creeds, confessions, denominations, and interpretations, the Eucharist is a ritual practiced by the majority of Christians across space and time. This is not to say that the doctrinal and practical differences between churches are negligible, or that differences in Eucharistic practice do not exist, only that my reflections on the Eucharist and the environment are meant to be ecumenical and can theoretically be accessed by all Christians. Of course, my own vision and interpretations of Christian practice is profoundly influenced by my own history growing up in the Free Methodist church, a denomination of Wesleyan descent. John Wesley was an 18th century theologian and preacher in the Anglican tradition, which split off from the Roman Catholic Church, which resulted from the painful division in 1054 that separated it from the Orthodox Church. However, one’s own inevitable biases should never negate any attempt at contribution; they should rather induce a state of self-awareness and humility.

religion and anything else that does not conform to its understanding of rationality. Christianity has often borne the brunt of environmental critiques, allegedly for being complicit in the worldview and practices that have led to and perpetuated adverse climate change. Many credit Lynn White Jr., a 20th century American historian, with having established an airtight causal connection between Christian theology and climate change. In a brief but scathing paper entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” White lays out his argument that the Christian view of humankind in relation to nature, characterized by a divinely mandated relation of tyrannical dominion, has provided humans with the justification for wanton environmental abuse and objectification. According to White, “Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (1967: 1205). He asserts that because it presupposes an unflinching anthropocentrism, Christianity has stripped the physical world of spiritual significance, which has in turn opened the door for environmental commoditization and exploitation. Thus, White views the problem of climate change as essentially a matter of religious beliefs that have given birth to certain destructive practices (1967: 1207). Concerning the confluence of Christian theology and environmentalism, White’s legacy is monumental, as evidenced not only by the many convinced by his argumentation, but also by the sheer number of those not in agreement who have tacitly acknowledged the strength of his thesis through their varied attempts to refute it. The spate of recent Christian books seeking to support theological concern for the environment can be seen in part as a rebuttal and response to White’s contentious thesis.

I am not convinced by White’s argument. Instead, I find it a worthwhile critique of Christian theology gone wrong; in other words, it applies not so much to Christianity as it should be if it is to be faithful to itself and its Scriptures, but to a Christianity that has been co-opted by the insidious powers and ideologies of

the world.⁵⁵ The latter kind of Christianity, the kind that has compromised its essence to make itself more palatable to its contemporaries, is pervasive; this Constantinian Christianity has traded in its faith for so-called relevance, bartered its God for capitalism and a few quick bucks, and generally lost its bearings as soon as it assumed any positions of governmental power.⁵⁶ A Christian can act in many capacities, not all of them Christian, and not all Christian theology deserves the name. Suffice to say, the ecological critiques of Christianity from individuals like Lynn White Jr. may well apply to Christianity as it has historically taken shape and been practiced; it is quite another thing though to stipulate that such a critique applies to its essence, the theological framework of Christianity. The former critiques the historical form of Christianity, whereas the latter critiques its theological form. To put it differently, there is a critical distinction between Christianity as it is or has been and Christianity as it should and can be. The Latin phrase “abusus non tollit usum” (the abuse of a thing does not bar its use) succinctly captures this distinction. I am not implying that Christians have never succeeded in living out their ideals (for its history has witnessed scattered pockets of good and faithful servants of Christ), but to be epistemologically honest requires the recognition of repeated failure and detrimental compromise on the

⁵⁵ In the discipline of Christian theology, “world” refers to that part of creation that has chosen to live in rebellion against God. It does not refer to the environment, the flora and fauna, or everything in the world, for the world in itself is not bad. Rather, it refers to those individuals, powers, and structures that do not recognize God’s kingship and do not follow the way of life as revealed in Christ Jesus. Thus, “world” is often contrasted with “church.” By church, I mean a storied group of people who form their lives around the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ. Church names the people who gather together “by reason of no affinity other than their common affinity to Christ” (Cavanaugh 2011: 218). Church of course is not a pure, static organization of people; it is inevitably mixed with the world and in constant flux between the dynamics of salvation and sin. It may be more useful therefore to speak of church as a social body that is continually remade by the act of gathering and their ritualized life together. In Christian terms, this is the liturgy, for liturgy literally means the work of the people, the actions “by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals” (Cavanaugh 2011: 217, quoting Alexander Schmemmann). The church is always the church becoming the church in its work together, an “enacted drama” of dynamic and repeated liturgical formation (Cavanaugh 2011: 220).

⁵⁶ To call this kind of Christianity “Constantinian” follows the work of Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder and refers back to the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, when Christianity experienced a tumultuous shift in its identity following the baptism of Emperor Constantine. At the point of this Constantinian compromise, Christianity suddenly became tied to the Roman state and it became possible to assume that one’s Christian faith was commensurate with one’s Roman citizenship. Before this point, Christianity was a persecuted religion because its virtues, practices, and faith did not align with the virtues, practices, and civil religion of the empire. Pre-Constantine, a Christian lived a precarious existence as a resident foreigner, one whose religious allegiances conflicted with and trumped the demands of Roman citizenship. Accordingly, Constantine is emblematic of the problematic shifts that occurred when Christianity became an imperial religion, and thus had to adapt itself to the demands of empire.

part of the church. It is no great feat to take Christians to task for failing to live up to their own standards; indeed, one could produce a litany of events and actions perpetrated by Christians in a very un-Christian like way. But this is precisely my point: we must ask in each and every case whether Christian agents are acting as Christians, that is to say Christianly, or whether they are acting out of some alternate, compromised capacity, say as a capitalist, nationalist, or warmonger.

Because the history of Christianity is the history of certain (fallible) humans called Christians enmeshed in the machinations and turmoil of the world, it takes a theological endeavor to discern whether the actions of Christians reflect their commitment to Christ Jesus, or whether they pervert and tarnish that commitment. To give a classic example, Christian agents perpetrated the Spanish Inquisition and the Crusades; but, I would contend, the violence and discrimination therein do not do justice to the Christian gospel. The Crusades are not in any theological sense Christian, though they are historically Christian. This does not absolve Christianity of guilt; rather it calls for humble recognition of past wrongs and repentance for the ways in which the church has not embodied the ethic of Jesus. In a similar manner, to recognize that Christianity has aided and abetted the kind of practices and mindsets that have brought about climate change does not necessitate abandoning the faith; rather it requires Christians to inspect honestly and rigorously the ways in which they have been a force for evil rather than good, and seek to realign themselves with their Christian identity and the God they serve.

However, to give a comprehensive defense of Christianity contra those who blame it for the myriad environmental problems of today's world is beyond the scope of this project; others have taken it on with great success.⁵⁷ This would require much more than the admission that Christians have erred substantially and

⁵⁷ See Steven Bouma-Prediger's *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (2001) for one such attempt.

would force us into a prolonged discussion regarding the specific nature of certain Christian doctrines. Instead, I would like to call attention to an interesting assumption White (among others) makes, namely that Christianity is first and foremost a set of beliefs and that the ecological crisis is therefore a problem of religious beliefs. This formulation looks eerily similar to the diagnosis given by the intellectualist model for the communication of sustainability; both assume that head knowledge is all-powerful and that human activity is a top-down, mental affair. Yet, if there has been a single overriding claim in this thesis, it is that this model of behavior (and philosophical anthropology) has significant shortcomings. The problem of unsustainable habits (embodied knowledge) demands an embodied response; without the requisite habits that give cognition the footing and traction it needs to be effective, more knowledge does little good in the moral life. Thus, I have identified rituals as a particularly potent means of habit formation by practice. In this way, White is mistaken not only in his assumptions concerning the nature of Christian theology – a claim I shall not attempt to support here but maintain nonetheless – but also in his proposed solution (better and/or different kinds of beliefs about humankind and nature) since he misunderstands the relation between knowledge and action and reduces it to a simple unidirectional conduit from belief to behavior.

If Christianity consists solely, or even just primarily, in a set of beliefs, a creedal exercise that addresses the human by way of cognition, then it surely cannot help remedy the ecological crisis, for it is a crisis of character and habits, not primarily a problem of principles and convictions. Yet, what is notable for any who have attended a Christian church for a worship service, the epicenter of Christian life, is that they are not most obviously characterized by a concentration on head knowledge and information conveyance, but rather by certain social practices, like singing, kneeling, greeting, dancing, baptism, Scripture reading, prayer, and the Eucharist. Christian worship is an embodied, practical affair replete with rituals. Christian worship does typically involve certain components

that cater more to the mind than the body, such as preaching. However, the information passed on does not stand alone but is couched in certain practices, like standing together to hear the gospel read or to recite a creed aloud in the company of believers. The very existence of church, a group of people gathered together for the sole purpose of worship, is itself a profound social practice. Though Christianity has a rich theological and philosophical tradition and a wealth of intellectual resources, it is also more than that. Right belief (orthodoxy) only encompasses a part of Christianity, for it is itself intertwined with and dependent on right practice (orthopraxy).

Yet, it is nowadays quite popular to assert that the church is superfluous to the Christian life. Slogans like “I love Christ, but not the church” seem to resonate with the general ethos among young adults who seek to separate themselves from the perceived backwardness and sinfulness of churches and tradition. Even aside from the abuses that have wracked church history, many simply think of the church as a place where individual Christians come together with other individuals who already believe more or less the same things. In this rendering, church is reduced to a social hour, a self-congratulatory support group, or a meeting place with strange, almost cultic practices that have little or no bearing on the constituents’ lives as Christians in the world.

I believe that this reading of church radically misunderstands both the nature of church as well the nature of Christian life. For one, the individualism implicit in this account belies its indebtedness to a peculiarly modern manner of thought, and, more importantly, it seems to imply that individuals divorced from the practices of Christian worship can sustain Christian belief. This kind of faith is a mind-centric phenomenon, one that tragically eschews association with Christian tradition and practice. It assumes that it is enough to believe the right things. Consequently, lacking the character formation embedded in Christian practice, these Christians are woefully unequipped to counter the conscripting and sinister solicitations of modern life. In other words, a churchless Christian can

end up with all the right beliefs, but will find himself conscripted by the formative practices of modern life that will eventually colonize the mind. “That is, the visions of the good life embedded in these practices [of the mall and market] become surreptitiously embedded in us through our participation in the rituals and rhythms of these institutions. These quasi-liturgies effect an education of desire, a pedagogy of the heart” (Smith 2009: 25). This critique, however, requires some unpacking; to do so, I will go further into the distinct interrelation of practice and belief as held by Christian tradition.

There is an ancient church saying in Latin “*lex orandi lex credendi*,” which roughly means the law/order of prayer is the law/order of belief. The church developed this axiom around the time it began to canonize scripture, that is to take the disparate and discrete writings used by churches for the edification of their Christian life together and standardize them into a commonly accepted book (what we now call the Bible). In the process, the church had to discern which writings (letters, gospels, prophecies) that had currency among the churches of the day to include in the canon and which to exclude. Clearly, this was a question of truth and belief: which beliefs were to be the common doctrine of the church and which were false?⁵⁸ The church developed an answer to this question: *lex orandi lex credendi*. As the church has prayed and practiced in worship, so the church believes. Belief must conform to, or at least not contradict, that which is experienced and learned in prayer. To translate this into terms relevant to this discussion, the church affirmed (and still does) that it only knows what it believes because of what it practices and who (God) encounters it in those practices. Worship is the primary task of the church, and the beliefs the church professes as truth can only emanate from that foundation. The practice of worship, then, cannot be dismissed as superfluous to Christianity, or as merely the reflection of prior beliefs; practice is the litmus test, the basis by which the church can affirm

⁵⁸ There was another category beside truth and falsity in this ancient discussion over canonization, for the question was not just over what was true, but also which truths should the church count as essential to the faith, and which were *adiaphora*.

its beliefs. Essentially, what the church does when it comes together provides the starting point, the sustenance and substance for its faith (which is why it is difficult to sustain a Christian life as a solitary being).

Against Lynn White Jr., we must contest that Christianity is not only, or even primarily, a system of belief; it is first and foremost a devotion to God as revealed in Jesus Christ that is *lived out*, i.e. practiced in the church as worship and then in the world. As sketched above, the *doxa* of Christianity is predicated upon its *praxis*. This accords with the philosophical anthropology articulated in chapter 1: since we humans are bodily beings whose rationality stems out of that physicality (animality in Aristotle's terms), we intend the world with our bodies, producing actions which coalesce into practices, followed by theories that try to make sense of those embodied experiences.

However, I am not formally concerned here to vindicate Christianity from its cultured (i.e. "green") despisers; I am no apologist and this would be a paltry apologetic. Karl Barth is known to have said, "the best apologetics is a good dogmatics" (Barth 1963: 62). I am suggesting a somewhat different formulation: "the best apologetics is good liturgy." Accordingly, I approach Christianity with a specific lens to see how its ritual practice can function as a means of communicating sustainability. Accordingly, let us dive into the world of Christian ritual, immerse ourselves in the logic of practice, and undertake to understand not simply what the practice of the Eucharist means to the church, but also what it does in and to the church.

The Eucharist: Origins and Ethics

Let us first be clear on what the Eucharist is, what it is not, and what it means to approach the Eucharist in the context of environmental communication. The term Eucharist comes from the Greek word "*eucharistia*" (meaning thanksgiving) and is one of many names (alongside Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread, Mass, etc.) used by Christians to refer to the

central ritual of the faith.⁵⁹ Eugene Peterson, a biblical scholar, calls the Eucharist “the definitive action practiced in the Christian community (...) the sacramental act that pulls us into actual material participation with Christ.” Elsewhere, he terms it the “focal practice” of Christian fellowship (1999: 203). The primary ritualized action consists in the congregation-wide consumption of a shared loaf of bread (or a variation like cracker or wafer) and a shared cup of wine (or a variation like grape juice); these are the Eucharistic elements understood to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are consecrated before the ritual consumption. Consecration of the elements usually involves the recitation of the institution narrative and words of blessing that serve to remind the congregation of the ritual significance.⁶⁰ The institution narrative tells the story, found in varied form in the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church, in which Jesus first practiced the Eucharist “on the night he was betrayed” and instituted the ritual by commanding his followers to repeat the actions in remembrance of him. This weaves the ritual into a foreshadowing of Jesus’ imminent crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

However, the fourth gospel, John, does not contain any explicit institution narrative, nor does it make any overt reference to Eucharistic practice. At the same point in his gospel narrative at which the Synoptic gospels describe the Eucharistic institution, John has Jesus wash the feet of his disciples. However, some, most forcefully Paul Bradshaw, a liturgical scholar at Notre Dame, claim that not all early Christian records of Eucharistic practice, particularly those from the *Didache*, Justin Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch, and Irenaeus of Lyons, connect the ritual to a commemoration of Jesus’ sacrificial death.⁶¹ In fact, the gospel of John does contain a Eucharist of sorts in the miraculous feeding of the 5,000

⁵⁹ The vast majority of Christians across time and space have considered the Eucharist to be a sacrament of the church, that is, a ritual in which God is especially present. There are some, however, who do not recognize the Eucharist as a sacrament, preferring instead to label it an ordinance. To my knowledge, Quakers and those part of the Salvation Army are the only Christians who formally reject Eucharistic practice.

⁶⁰ This, however, is by no means universal, for like all aspects of Eucharistic practice, there is a diversity of interpretations due to the complexity of the ritual and the traditions out of which it grew.

⁶¹ Bradshaw, Paul. “Did Jesus Institute the Eucharist at the Last Supper?” in *Issues in Eucharistic Praying in East and West: Essays in Liturgical and Theological Analysis*, ed. Maxwell Johnson, pp. 3-7

when Jesus refers to his flesh as the bread of life (Bradshaw 2010: 3). In other words, the Johannine Eucharistic tradition connects the ritual meal to spiritual feeding on Jesus Christ, which varies from the more dominant tradition of connecting it to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Thus, we are dealing with a ritual of complex origins and diverse interpretations. After all, early Christianity was not a uniform phenomenon (not surprising given its geographic dispersion), and was not characterized by liturgical stability or a single normative tradition that governed with undisputed authority. Accordingly, the most charitable interpretation of Eucharistic history allows for diversity, a complex patchwork quilt of ritual practice. One of the most notable controversies in the history of the Eucharist occurred as part of the Reformation, during which certain Protestants took issue with the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which holds that the Eucharistic elements are mystically transformed into the real body and blood of Jesus Christ, though their outward form remains the same. In contrast, some reformers disputed that although Christ is really present in the elements, the elements do not change substance, while others contended that the elements have only symbolic reality, as signs of Christ's Body and blood.⁶² However, regardless of interpretive differences, the church catholic has consistently made the Eucharist an integral

⁶² The reformers often drew on early church fathers who sometimes referred to the Eucharist as a symbol to provide backing for their case. Yet, these same church fathers would often in the same work refer to the Eucharist in both realistic and symbolic terms. This is because symbols were not understood to be separate realities from that which they symbolize, rather they must participate in the reality of that which is symbolized. Accordingly, to say that Eucharist symbolizes the presence of Christ must mean that to some extent it effects that presence. Some have wished to keep the language of Eucharistic presence merely at the metaphorical level, a safe distance away from any strange and powerful mysticism. Yet, this unwittingly strips the Eucharist of substance, abandoning any power it had to *do* something in favor of the view that it *points* to something. As Flannery O'Connor famously wrote in a 1955 letter, "Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it." According to William Cavanaugh, "Christ's Eucharistic body is both *res et sacramentum*, sign and reality. Christ does not lie behind the Eucharistic sign but saturates it. Christians do not simply read the sign but perform it. We become Christ's body in the Eucharist" (1998: 14). I do not doubt that for many, this pithy footnote does not even come close to solving the controversy surrounding Eucharistic presence, but I believe that Eucharistic practice makes significantly less sense and has significantly less power if it is rendered solely in symbolic terms. Thus, like Cavanaugh I propose moving past this tired dilemma by holding that the Eucharist is not either reality or sign, but both simultaneously. A ritualized sacrament is not only a symbol; it is the reality itself precisely because ritual is a social practice that moves bodies around and involves human interaction (this, however, is not to align myself with any theories as to how this works, like transubstantiation, but merely to proclaim the mystery that Christ is present in the breaking of bread. Furthermore, this kind of Eucharistic theology corresponds well with Bell's theory of ritual, for she also eschews merely symbolic talk of ritual, preferring instead to understand it as a social practice capable of effecting change.

part of its worship. Indeed, many in 1st and 2nd century Roman society fallaciously thought the Christians among them were cannibals, for they only knew that Christians practiced eating someone's flesh and drinking blood.⁶³ This is not to say that all interpretations are right and practical differences do not matter – for clearly the Apostle Paul believes there are wrong ways to practice the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:20-21).⁶⁴ However, I find it telling that the Eucharist has enjoyed an enduring and esteemed presence in Christianity, despite the internal divisions, disputes, and doctrinal spats that have marred its long history. Peterson agrees; “It is nothing less than astonishing, considering the conflicts and variations in practice that mark the Christian church across the continents and centuries, that this Supper has been eaten so consistently and similarly under Jesus' command “do this...” (1999: 200). It is difficult to dispute, therefore, the centrality of the Eucharist for Christian life.

When theologians approach the Eucharist from the vantage point of social ethics (as is the case in this endeavor), the temptation is to use the Eucharist to symbolize some important ideas or key affirmations that can then be applied to the situation at hand. This constitutes a well-intentioned, though misguided attempt to make the Eucharist ethically relevant by taking what one learns liturgically and transplanting it in the context of the “real world” (Cavanaugh 1998: 11). Well-intentioned though it may be, this approach presupposes that social ethics/politics and liturgy/ritual are incommensurable fields, and that if ritual is to command social authority or relevance, it must conform to the dominant conception of ethics. In some ways, it may seem like the project I have proposed for myself in this chapter fits too easily into the characterization I have just condemned, for I come to see what Eucharistic ideas I can translate into the language of environmental ethics.

⁶³ This hilarious anecdote is found in Justin Martyr (2009), in his *Second Apology*.

⁶⁴ All biblical references come from the New Revised Standard Version (1989).

Yet, this is not a totally satisfactory description of the project in this chapter. The goal is not build a bridge between Eucharist and ethics. The Eucharist needs no help in cultivating an ethic of its own; it is a practice teeming with power to instill a sense of the ritual. The task is to recognize what is already there in Eucharistic ethics (and the habits that inhere in it). Just as there is no need to bridge the gap between Eucharist and ethics, no bridge building is necessary between Eucharistic and environmental ethics either. As I will argue below, Eucharistic ethics is in part an environmental ethic. As argued in the upcoming section, one of the crucial virtues espoused by the latter is upheld and practiced in the former. Thus, instead of a philosophical search for ethical “diamonds” in the liturgical “rough,” the task is to understand Eucharist primarily as a socio-ethical reality and name how this ritual practice places the church in a favorable position – i.e. endowed with certain requisite habits and oriented to certain virtues – from which it can more readily assume sustainable behavior.

To avoid reducing the Eucharist to an environmental tool, I will analyze not what the Eucharist means for social ethics (as if the practice could be reduced to relevant or irrelevant ideas) but rather what it does to, in, and for the church, which is itself a social arena. I will not attempt to translate Eucharistic principles into a language foreign to the church; instead I intend to show how the Eucharist constitutes, among other things, a ritual of Christian environmentalism that teaches Christians by force of habit what it means to be Christian, and in doing so, implicitly instructs them in the practical logic of environmental stewardship.

Two words of caution to the reader: I do not intend to explicate all aspects of Eucharistic practice and theology; to do so would enlarge the scope of this chapter beyond its carrying capacity. This is not a comprehensive analysis of the Eucharist and all its myriad interpretations; rather, this is a concerted effort to highlight one aspect of Eucharistic practice that trains Christians in an environmentally virtuous habit. However, though I will not and cannot comprehensively cover all that the Eucharist means and does, the Eucharistic

theme evoked is not a mere side note in the Christian life. Rather, it holds a central position in the church's understanding of its identity and its practice, and thus constitutes neither an anecdote in Christian tradition nor an obscure or unemployed interpretation of the ritualized breaking of bread.

Lastly, when espousing a liturgical ethic, there are two dangers that lie on opposite extremes. The first is intellectualism, which understands the important ethical realities to be communicated through the mind and worship to be primarily a matter of the intellect. I have hitherto sought to deconstruct this method in order to reveal its inherent reductionisms. The second danger I will call magicalism; for in its reaction to the intellectualist model, it overcompensates by stipulating that the liturgy realizes its ends without reference to the mind, working as if by magic to instill in the body a certain understanding. Magicalism assumes that the liturgy is supposed to work solely on the body, instilling its vision and habits in the body without engaging the intellect at all. Not only has the preceding discussion of ritualization dispelled the merits of this approach (Bell claims that ritual power is ambiguous and cannot function like magic), but also Christian tradition itself has rejected magicalism. The church has long recognized that Christian practice is not sufficient in itself as pedagogy and that it must operate in conjunction with catechesis if the church is to raise up good young Christians. Catechesis is discursive instruction in the mysteries of the faith, in which catechumens learn what it means to take the Eucharist, to be baptized, to live as a Christian in the world. This reaches back to the discussion of mind-body, for though I have focused on how we know the world as bodies, we also know the world through the mind. Body and mind are interconnected so that bodily knowing implicates the mind and vice versa. In other words, it is not an either/or situation (either mind or body); this way of construing the matter leads to either intellectualism or magicalism. Rather, the reality of the human is that we are a both/and; we are both mind and body for they are interpenetrating realities.

Moral education, therefore, works primarily in and through the body, but catechesis to a certain extent informs that education.

Accordingly, in this chapter I do not claim that because of the Eucharist, Christians are already great environmentalists. One could call upon myriad examples to disprove such a claim. There are indeed some Christians who are attuned to the needs of their ecosystem and have exhorted each other to strive for environmental virtue because they believe environmental ethics to be a vital part of their Christian faith. Some have found in the Eucharist the warrant and resources to commit themselves to the care of the earth (Johnsen 2006, Wirzba 2011). However, many more believe in a Christianity in which God does not care for that which is not human and intends to destroy the earth in the end of days; naturally their actions reflect their peculiar theologies.⁶⁵ I do not argue from a historical case that Christians on the whole are environmentally virtuous, for two reasons: 1) I doubt that this kind of argument is supported by the facts; and 2) such a claim does not actually matter for my argument. Instead, I believe that a seed of environmental virtue lies dormant in Eucharistic practice, ready to be unearthed and evoked. The resources for an environmental training of the body are present within Christian tradition, but they must be excavated and triggered if they are to take effect. To mine environmental resources, as I will attempt, constitutes a catechetical effort, an approach that sheds light on the logic of Christian practice in order to expose themes and ideas that while present, may not always be operative.

The Body of Christ as a Unity

⁶⁵ Though I take issue with this kind of theology and any that does not support a robust environmental ethic as a misunderstanding of God's creative and redemptive purposes as made manifest in Christ, I have concerned myself with the Eucharist to show how the ethical logic practiced in the ritual by necessity extends its sphere of influence into matters environmental. Environmental ethics, in my estimation, is indelibly linked to Eucharistic ethics insofar as the habits and virtues necessary for the former figure heavily into the practice of the latter. In doing so, I have made the somewhat counterintuitive argument (with words) that practice says and does much more than words; it can even communicate things that words cannot.

In the language of theological ethics, the Eucharist is all about moral formation; more precisely, it concerns the formation of a certain people into the Body of Christ, which is a poignant name Christians have historically used to speak of the church. By partaking of this particular meal, Christians learn to receive in practice the virtues necessary to be Christ on earth. In this section, I maintain that one such Eucharistic habit learned therein is also an environmental virtue, and thus, by practicing the Eucharist, Christians are equipped with a resource (habit) necessary to live sustainably both as a part of the Body of Christ as well as a part of the earth's ecological systems.

Interestingly, the ritual meal consists of consecrated elements believed to be the body and blood of Christ, yet the church also speaks of itself in those terms. Furthermore, how does Jesus, the human being of flesh and blood who hailed from Nazareth, figure into this scheme? In Pauline and Patristic theology, there are three referents to the phrase "Body of Christ:" "the historical body" or Jesus the man who lived and died in Roman-occupied 1st century Israel, "the sacramental body" or the Eucharistic elements, and "the ecclesial body" or the church (Cavanaugh 1998: 212). Traditionally, the ecclesial body has been understood as the *corpus verum*, the true Body of Christ in light of the absence of the historical body, and the sacramental body as the *corpus mysticum*.⁶⁶ In the Eucharist, the *corpus mysticum* connects with the *corpus verum* so that the sacramental and ecclesial bodies together compose the historical body in the present (Cavanaugh 1998: 212). Accordingly, these three separate entities are interpenetrating in Eucharistic theology, for the church becomes Christ in the taking of the sacrament.⁶⁷ The turn of phrase "you are what you eat" expresses a

⁶⁶ To call the sacraments the mystical body of Christ does not contradict an understanding of the real presence of Christ in Eucharist, for the mysticism refers to the mystery of Christ's presence in the elements.

⁶⁷ To some, this is an absurd statement, not merely due to the "superstition" involved in claiming such transformation, but in the fact that the church cannot be the Body of Christ because the church is an imperfect, and notably flawed institution. Some think "church" is synonymous with "sinful" or "evil" because of its history. It is hard, and unwise, to dispute such accusations, but the critique does not actually contradict anything the church has to say about itself. For the church has long recognized its inability to live up to the perfection of Jesus Christ, yet it still claims that somehow it is engaged in Eucharistic process of becoming the Body of Christ. Cavanaugh explains it this way: "In the Eucharist the church is always called to become what it eschatologically is" (1998: 206). The church, thus, is a not a static entity

similar sentiment, for Christians believe that consumption entails formation. Yet, unlike the normal process of consumption, “the body does not become assimilated into our bodies, but vice versa” (Cavanaugh 1998: 232). Put differently, Christians, by eating the Body of Christ, are incorporated into the true Body of Christ. In Peterson’s words, “We become what we receive. Christ is, we are. In receiving the Eucharist we re-affirm our identity, ‘Christ in you [me!], the hope of glory’ (Col. 1:27)” (1999: 200).

Thus, there is a theological and material relationship, or a dialectic tension, between the sacramental and ecclesial bodies, so much so that Paul in his first letter to the church in Corinth reprimands them because they practice the Eucharist without giving any thought or aid to their fellow Christians who are poor and downtrodden. As Paul writes,

I hear there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it (...) When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’ Supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? (1 Cor. 11:18-22).

As Paul makes clear, any individualism and disunities that characterize the church body make it impossible to partake of the sacramental body; ecclesial disunity prohibits sacramental unity, for ecclesial disunities are unfit and unworthy of incorporation into the one true Body of Christ. If the church is to be who it is supposed to be, it must practice the Eucharist, but it cannot truly practice the Eucharist if it does not display the kind of unity predicated on care for others that befits Christ’s Body. To quote Paul again, “The bread that we break, is it not a

that can claim a certain status of perfection, but rather a drama, a process of formation that cleaves ever closely to Christ, yet ever aware of the effects of human sin. The Eucharist allows the church to glimpse and practice what it means to be the Body, for in the ritual that Body is realized then and there. This is why the church practices the Eucharist every week, for every week it must realign itself, and re-member what is to conform to Christ.

sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The Eucharist, therefore, not only displays the unity of the church by making it visible in the acting of eating together, it *requires* unity and demands that congregants must share in each other’s lives if they are to eat and become the Body of Christ. In many churches, this belief lives on and takes practical form in worship during what is called “the kiss of peace” or alternatively “the passing of the peace.” During this time, congregants greet their fellow Christians in the name and peace of Christ *before* entering into the liturgy of the Eucharist. The peace of Christ, however, does not gloss over church disunity; this is a time for reconciliation, a space where grievances are acknowledged, wrongdoings penitently confessed, and forgiveness offered to each other in the love of Christ. According to Cavanaugh, “from the earliest times, Christians have exchanged the kiss of peace before the Eucharist as a sign that the Eucharist requires reconciliation and forgiveness” (1998: 238). To pass the peace, then, is to prepare for Eucharist by making amends within the Body of Christ, knitting back together its members into communion with each other, in order that they may partake of the Lord’s body and blood in all honesty and love. The *Didache*, one of the earliest church documents in Christian history, stipulates that whoever “has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you [in the offering of the Eucharist] until they have been reconciled, so as to avoid profanation of your sacrifice” (quoted in Cavanaugh 1998: 238, brackets added). Nothing less than the church’s existence as the unified Body of Christ is at stake in the Eucharistic ritual.

In this light, the alternate name “Holy Communion” seems especially apt, given that the communion⁶⁸ under question is twofold: 1) the individual believer coming together with God in the Eucharist, and 2) the individual believer coming

⁶⁸The prefix -com comes from the Latin *cum* meaning “with” and union comes from the Latin *unus*, meaning “one;” thus communion means “one with each other” or “together as one.”

together with her fellow congregants under God in the Eucharist. Christians believe that both facets of communion are important; moreover they believe that their ability to commune with the divine depends upon the communion they keep with their brothers and sisters in Christ. In this regard, the language of remembrance has figured strongly into most Eucharistic liturgies throughout time, following Jesus' command to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).⁶⁹ The command to remember (*anamnēsis* in Greek)⁷⁰ is a literal exhortation to remember Jesus, to reconstitute the Body of Christ, broken on the cross and broken as sacramental bread, yet gathered together as the members of churches around the world in past, present, and future. Ecclesial unity is important because it is the unity of Christ, a unity found within Christ, as a part of him. For if the church is not unified, whose body are they re-membering?

Eucharistic Unity: Gifts, Equality, and Christian Altruism

Unity, however, is not a good in itself, for unity can be achieved by nefarious measures and turned to vicious ends. Totalitarian states succeed precisely as they foster a certain kind of unity, oriented to a particular end (usually some form of repression or evil) but usually this kind of unity is built by demolishing diversity and forcing the group to conform to a certain standard. Fascist nations, particularly Nazi Germany, have shown themselves to be especially adroit at creating and maintaining group unity by dismantling otherness and creating strong group boundaries between those permitted inside (due to some commonality) and those outside. One need only mention the name "Jonestown" to realize 1) that unity can be a dangerous thing indeed, and 2) that

⁶⁹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

⁷⁰ *Anamnesis* means a "remembrance [that] is not just a mental act, however, but a public performance that gathers people into a particular kind of community, the Body of Christ" (Cavanaugh 2011: 217). This kind of performative remembering does not conform to a chronological view of time, for it views the past and the future as entirely present in the now. Thus, by remembering in the present, Christians participate meaningfully in the past events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection which inaugurated God's Kingdom on earth and anticipate the coming of the fullness of that Kingdom. Cavanaugh also remarks, "the liturgy is a real foretaste of the Kingdom, and the Eucharist calls us to be now what we will be perfectly later: the Body of Christ" (2011: 217). In another work, he writes, "At the Eucharist the feast of the last day irrupts into earthly time, and the future breaks into the present" (1998: 224).

American social life and politics are no less susceptible to the corruption of solidarity into a repressive and coercive oligarchy than Nazi Germany.

Accordingly, we must approach Christian unity predicated on Eucharistic practice with skeptical lens and ask if its unity is a constructive force, or one that abhors difference. For surely it would be futile to recommend Eucharistic unity as a means of communicating sustainability if church unity constitutes a thin disguise for pusillanimous (or vicious) conformity.

Let us, therefore, return to analyze in depth one of the church's primary names, the Body of Christ, to delve further into the nature of ecclesial unity. As hinted at above, the church must perform certain acts of repentance and learn to forgive each other before partaking of, and thereby becoming, the Body of Christ together. Paul develops the language of "body of Christ" in his first epistle to the church in Corinth, which is worth quoting at length.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (...) If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. (...) If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? (...) On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable (...) God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor. 12: 12-26).

Significantly, Paul uses baptism to introduce the subject of body, indicating the use of the ritual as an initiation ceremony into a community defined by its

allegiance to Christ.⁷¹ In that community, the members are diverse and varied, each with his/her own distinct function that contributes to the overall health and ability of the body as a whole. John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian, prefers another Pauline term “the fullness of Christ” to describe the same reality. “Paul’s metaphor (...) accentuates reciprocal accountability and interdependence” (1992: 47). This is a body that prizes those normally considered weak, one that values diversity and resists the conformity of one part to another. Like a physical body, Christ’s re-membered body experiences and feels as a unit; this is a body committed to learning how to celebrate and grieve together according to the various fates of its parts. In other epistles, particularly Romans, Paul goes on to connect his talk of the church body with a discussion of spiritual gifts. After repeating his reminder to the Corinthians that the church is a multifaceted body, Paul writes to the Romans, “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness” (Romans 12: 6-8). Elsewhere, he goes on to identify more gifts operative in the context of Christian community, including gifts of healing, wisdom, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues (which must be accompanied by someone who can interpret such cryptic utterances), and working miracles (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Though some of these gifts may strike us moderns as absurd, I mention the diversity of gifts to indicate the extent to which Eucharistic unity encourages a plurality of members whose flourishing, whose diversity, and whose varied talents are integral to the flourishing of the church body. This is not a mere toleration of others and their peculiarities, a stand-offish practice in which

⁷¹ In many ways, it is a myopic approach to treat Eucharist without also taking on the subject of baptism, for baptism is what makes the church. Baptism is the ritual by which individuals renounce other convictions and commitments and instead commit themselves to Christ and their church body. “There is a new inter-ethnic social reality into which the individual is inducted rather than the social reality being the sum of the individuals” (Yoder 1992: 30). The baptismal commitment relativizes all other commitments, for it constitutes a pledge of ultimate allegiance. Thus, through baptism, God makes God’s church, and the Eucharist sustains the baptismal reality by making that church visible (if only briefly) as Christ’s Body each time members break bread together and consume that which incorporates them (Cavanaugh 1998: 234).

another's oddities are endured so long as they do not encroach on my rights; this kind of logic characteristic of modern politics makes no sense in a Eucharistic setting. Instead, the gathered people made into a church by the Eucharist rejoices at the gifts each individual brings, recognizing in them God's creative provision for the church. This means that Christians learn to see their wellbeing as cooperative with the flourishing of other members, instead of thinking that one must compete with others to secure the best goods for one's self.

Furthermore, unlike other rituals that gather individuals together, the Eucharist makes it difficult to speak of individuals *per se*. Instead, the church proclaims that in the Eucharist a person has undergone a transformation from single individual into a member of Christ's Body. This is not simply the coming together of individuals to realize every week anew that they are connected; rather, it is a gathering where the individual learns to no longer think of himself as an individual *qua* individual, but learns instead to situate and understand himself corporately. The individual still exists (it would be hard to classify a ritual that obliterates individuality as good news), but only insofar as it is a member of the larger entity; one's individuality becomes re-situated into the more primary reality of Christ's Body. I will refer to this as the Eucharistic displacement of the individual.

Furthermore, the body metaphor lends itself to egalitarianism, for though Christians are members of the same body, some with more notable functions than others, all are subordinate to Christ. Paul uses the body metaphor with the understanding that Christ, not the pastor or priest, is the head. In doing so, he "relativizes hierarchy" within the church body (Yoder 1992: 53). Eucharistic unity, therefore, levels the playing field, for it is a unification of diverse peoples under Christ, who are all concomitantly part of Christ. This "unity is constituted by our inability to tell our stories without one another's stories. (...) Such a conformation does not obliterate our story but rather it shapes how the story is told, so that it may contribute to the upbuilding of Christ's body" (Hauerwas

1995: 41). The Eucharist provides the ritualized pedagogy through which one learns to care for each other by seeing other members as inextricably tied together and woven into the fabric of one's life.

In the early church, Eucharistic care for the other manifested itself in the mutual sharing of possessions. According to one of the earliest records of the first Christians, "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, (...) they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2: 44-46). Though some believe that Luke, the author of Acts, here gives an idealized account of the situation, it is clear that he associates the breaking of bread⁷² with the peculiar economics practiced (see also Acts 2:42). To understand the economic nature of breaking bread, we must appreciate the 1st and 2nd century context of the biblical writing, for in that world "bread *is* daily sustenance" (Yoder 1992: 20). Bread is one of the most basic goods, that which everyone requires to survive. Thus, the Eucharist does not merely symbolize a new economic reality; it is an "economic act" in which "people actually were sharing with one another their ordinary day-to-day material sustenance" (Yoder 1992: 20-21). Eucharistic unity is not some pie-in-the-sky feeling predicated on otherworldly beliefs; it is unity sustained by active economic care for others in which the needy find provision and relief in the Body of Christ. According to Martin Luther's theology of the Eucharist, "receiving bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, signifies the creation or confirmation of a community that receives 'gifts' and consequently bears responsibility to respond in mutual assistance to each other" (Torvend 2008: 94). Luther himself construed the ethical nature of the Eucharist in bold and suggestive terms. "By means of this sacrament, all self-seeking love is rooted out

⁷² Paul Bradshaw and others take the "breaking of bread" to be synonymous with early Eucharist practices, precisely because early Eucharists often involved full meals. Andrew McGowan in particular argues that the Eucharist, the *agape* meal, and the breaking of bread all correspond to the same ritual celebration. See especially Bradshaw (2004) pp. 26-32; and McGowan (1997).

and gives place to that which seeks the common good of all; and through the change wrought by love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community” (quoted in Torvend 2008: 95). The love fostered by the Eucharist necessarily reaches outside of one’s self to attend to others; it inculcates the virtue of selflessness by requiring the church to think about itself as an intricate and multidimensional body, rather than as a haphazard collection of individuals.

Conversely, Christian neglect of the Eucharist leaves the church bereft of practice-oriented resources to instill love for the other.⁷³ “It was not uncommon, therefore, for the ancient church to connect failure to recognize Christ in the consecrated bread and wine with failure to treat others as brothers and sisters in Christ” (Cavanaugh 1998: 231). A person unable to discern Christ’s Body, and consequently who cannot see his own participation in that body alongside others, is likely to practice neglect of those who suffer and need care. This allows for the possibility that one can take the Eucharist without *really* taking the Eucharist, that one can go through the physical actions without participating in the reality of the ritual. This is because rituals are never merely physical, they always implicate the corresponding inner states of those involved.

Christians believe that the Eucharist is Christ’s Body, a commemoration of his death and brutal crucifixion, broken yet somehow turned to good so that all may be fed. By consuming it, the church becomes part of that same broken body, which can only mean that they too must lay down their possessions, their pride, their very lives, so that others can receive Christ’s sustenance through them.

⁷³ There are some who have eschewed the Eucharist for other ritualized practices, like footwashing, a service Jesus practiced with his disciples (John 13: 1-20). Like the Eucharist, this practice encourages in its actions, and thereby practices, the virtue of selfless attention to the other. Though these Christians assume a ritual with similar virtues embedded in the physical practice, there is a strong sense that by foregoing Eucharistic practice, they are missing something crucial to the Christian life. One aspect not included in footwashing practice is the tangible emphasis on the unity of the sacramental body and, derivatively, of the ecclesial body. Footwashing practices love for the other, but it does not go as far as the Eucharist does in stipulating that the self has been incorporated into a new reality that subsumes and displaces the self. To put it in a stark and almost absurd manner, in a way there is no love for the Other in the reality of the Eucharist, for the Other is always already part of who I am as I am part of Christ’s Body. Thus, a “Eucharistized” self can no longer conceive of himself as a single entity; instead, he is now irreducibly bonded to the others in the Body to the extent that to tell his personal story fully requires telling the stories of those connected to him. As Luther wrote, “Offer to others your strength, as if it were their own, just as Christ does for you in the sacrament. *This is what it means to be changed into one another through love*, out of many particles to become one bread and drink” (quoted in Torvend 2008: 95, emphasis added).

There is a circular Christological logic at play in the Eucharist: the Eucharist gives life and wholeness to the church so that they too may be broken for the sustenance and wholeness of others. The sacrifice of Christ reproduces itself in the church precisely because it is the *corpus verum* and must cleave to the life (and death) of Christ. The Eucharist does not enliven the church so that the church may simply go on living its former life; rather, a Eucharistic church is one that follows Christ's self-offering by humbling itself in self-emptying service to others. When Jesus says "if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24) there is a very real sense in which Christians are called to eschew any fear of death, for in the person of Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected, they see that death does not have the last word. This, however, does not warrant any nonchalance about death, especially when it comes to the deaths of others (notice that the example Christians follow is Jesus who rejected the way of the sword, the violent option to institute the Kingdom of God by forcing death on others, and instead gave himself up to the cross to suffer death so that there may be life abundant for those who choose to follow him).⁷⁴

Let us pause to rehearse the argument. The Eucharist is a ritual of ecclesial formation to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It teaches the church to come together as an egalitarian body replete with diverse gifts under the headship of Christ. It trains the church to consider itself first as a group in which the "dignity of the individual is his or her uniqueness as a specific member of that body" (Yoder 1994: 371). The Eucharist ushers Christians into a new reality in which economic goods are shared freely with one another in the manner of Christ's self-giving, characterized by selfless care for one's fellow members of the Body. The Eucharist effects ecclesial unity by offering life through the

⁷⁴ "Assimilation to Christ's sacrifice is not the continuation of the violence and rivalry needed to sustain a certain conception of society, but the gathering of a new social body in which the only sacrifice is the mutual self-offering of Christian charity." Thus, the Eucharist aims "not to create new victims but rather martyrs, witnesses to the end of victimization" (Cavanaugh 1998: 232).

brokenness of Christ's death; according to theologian Raniero Cantalamessa, "the Eucharist makes the Church by making the Church Eucharist!" (quoted in Cavanaugh 1998: 232). In re-membering the church, the Eucharist practices selfless and care-full group-ness, and produces members who habitually attend to their life together and recognize that its unity is at stake in their every action and interaction. Put differently, the Eucharist gives Christians extended and embodied practice in thinking and acting beyond the parameters of the self; in fact, the Eucharist trains Christians to relocate the self, i.e. to remove it from the center of one's reality and reposition it as part of a group whose reality is more primary than that of the individual. In this sense, the use of "altruism" to describe Eucharistic love falls well short of the reality, since the Eucharist challenges the self/other distinction that undergirds the concept of altruism (altruism comes from the Latin *alteri huic* meaning "to this other"). Whereas altruism reaches outside of the self to embrace somebody else, the Eucharist welcomes the other into such intimacy with the self that it blurs the lines that separate people. This is why "Eucharistic worship is the primary context for reconciliation (...) in the Christian life" (Berkman 2011: 97), for if one member holds a grievance against another, he is estranged from that part of himself in which the other co-abides and must seek to make amends if unity of self and the social body is to be achieved. In short, Christians learn to care for others (e.g. prizing the concerns and problems of another as one's own, sharing economic goods) in the Eucharist by discovering that they together re-member the broken Body of Christ as they consume it.

Caritas: An Environmental Virtue

Although such an emphasis on ecclesial unity that encourages diversity while demanding reconciliation is surely commendable, it may not yet be immediately obvious how this practice of ritual unity can respond constructively and sustainably to the challenge posed by the ensconced habits of climate change. The rest of this chapter will therefore enumerate how one moral habit formed in

Eucharistic practice can sustain a life capable of consistent and countercultural environmentally responsible behavior.

One of the more remarkable elements of Eucharistic unity is the force with which it disallows any kind of celebrated individualism. Yet, the individual is not so much eliminated as it is displaced, removed from the center and resituated as a member, a part of the overall group.

In short, in gathering, the *ekklesia*⁷⁵ learns to receive its true identity as the Body of Christ. In doing so, the *ekklesia* confesses that there is no “I” apart from that body: that every person receives his or her truest identity as a part of the Body of Christ. This is why gathering is neither secondary nor incidental, for in so doing, vital and life-giving connections are nurtured and sustained (Kenneson 2011: 65).

Recalling the imagery used by the Apostle Paul in his letters to Corinth and Rome, Christians learn to see themselves symbolically – though no less actually – as a member in Christ’s Body: a leg, arm, nose, or finger, etc. This stands in direct opposition to the modern (and unsustainable) habit of considering an individual as autonomous, discrete, and solitary. Such a perspective inordinately prizes the individual to the extent that he learns to believe the lie that he can do or possess whatever he desires whenever he desires it. Methodological individualism believes that a social body is always reducible to its parts since it treats individuals as the most basic ontological unit. In this world, the individual recognizes neither higher authority nor membership in any sort of organizations, ecosystem, or group that has morally binding obligations. Complete moral autonomy does not serve the environmental movement, since a large part of its platform rests on the presumption that we must care for something (nature in general, this polluted lake or stream, etc.) other than ourselves, a move that individualism undercuts. Thus, methodological individualism ultimately destroys

⁷⁵ *Ekklesia* is a Greek term from which we get the English word “church.” Etymologically, it means those who are called out (*ek* – meaning “out” or “from” and *kaleo* meaning “to call”).

life precisely because it cannot justify, support, or encourage any moral attention given to others, humans or more-than-human beings. To some extent, therefore, the blame for climate change falls at the feet of an insistent and narrow-sighted individualism. After all, how can one care about one's natural surroundings if one has not learned to care for other humans? The love required for the latter is the same love demanded by the former, stretched and extended.

In contrast, the Eucharist practices a different logic, a communitarian logic that demands attention to the other in order for true ritualized celebration to occur. Neglect for others within the community constitutes a failure to participate fully in the rite. In the Eucharist, therefore, Christians have training in selfless love and group-mindedness. In theological terms, they are equipped with the habits of *caritas*, the love of (and for) Christ that indwells a person and extends itself outwards in love for others.⁷⁶ Unlike altruism, *caritas* does not presuppose individualism but instead draws people together in love by drawing them all closer together in the unity of Christ. Where we discern unity, altruism is no longer necessary; in its place stands *caritas*. This is the love of and for the Body of Christ, which extends outwards by drawing Christians towards Christ. The Eucharist, therefore, has the resources to provide the moral basis for the environmentalists' insistence that we must take more than ourselves into account when we engage in practices that affect the health of the environment.

Another provocative similarity between Eucharistic and environmental ethics is the extent to which both emphasize the interconnected and holistic nature of their respective systems. Christians, of course, refer to the church and its corporate life, whereas environmentalists speak of the unity of an ecosystem. One could use the Christian language of the Body with respect to an ecosystem,

⁷⁶ *Caritas*, for Aquinas, is the form of all other virtues for it is "more excellent than faith or hope [the other two theological virtues], and, consequently, than all the other virtues, just as prudence, which by itself attains reason, is more excellent than the other moral virtues" (*Summa Theologica*, Q.23 Article 6). Aquinas claims that just as prudence (practical wisdom) is required for the exercise of all other virtues, so too is *caritas* a prerequisite for the virtues since no one would call a person virtuous if they acted out of virtue but not out of love. A courageous man does not rashly throw himself into the heat of battle for little reason; rather, he acts courageously out of love for a fellow soldier, his wife, his country, or another other objects of his love whom he desires to protect. *Caritas* gives shape to all other virtues.

as the body image resonates with the intricate and complex web of relations that make up a particular ecosystem. Each (animate or inanimate) member of an ecosystem possesses an irreducible and distinctive function that contributes to the symbiotic health of the overall system. This harmonizes with the church's understanding of itself as the Body of Christ. Ecologically speaking, everything is connected to everything else, so that an alteration of a seemingly insignificant facet of an ecosystem affects the whole. In the words of Sir Albert Howard, to see ecologically is to see "the whole problem of health in soil, plant, animal and man as one great subject" (1947: 11).

This is the basis for the common ecological maxim, "it is impossible to do just one thing in nature." The unexpected death of an old tree will send ripples throughout the neighborhood's flora and fauna. The pollution of a river will hurt those animals that live in or near the water, and by extension, all those other animals, plants, trees, and humans connected and dependent on the normal functions of water-based fauna. Because bees are a crucial member of an ecosystem's web and play a crucial role in pollination, nectar collection, and honey production, the decimation of the bee population worldwide is a nightmare situation. As Wendell Berry eloquently writes,

For some time now ecologists have been documenting the principle that "you can't do one thing" – which means that in a natural system whatever affects one thing ultimately affects everything. Everything in the Creation is related to everything else and dependent on everything else. The Creation is one: it is a uni-verse, a whole, the parts of which are all "turned into one" (1977: 46).

According to Berry, agriculture, if it is to succeed, must follow the logic of the uni-verse and realize that "simple" industrial fixes and "progress" are not benign developments, but cannonballs that sends tidal waves through an ecosystem and the human economy built up around that environment. "The definitive

relationships in the universe are thus not competitive but interdependent” (Berry 1977: 47). To understand this cooperative reality is to tread lightly, to care for the effects of one’s actions that reach beyond one’s self. Conversely, to ignore or misunderstand the unity of reality, the more commonly taken option, is to burn through the world’s natural systems as resources, taking only humankind – or more likely, only the interests of an exclusive few – into estimation. Thus, the ability to discern (and attend to) the unity of nature constitutes a paramount virtue in environmental ethics.

On a smaller scale, the church operates according to a similar logic as they gather together not as individuals, but as members in Body of Christ. In this body, one’s actions are never completely one’s own because one is embedded in a web that connects to all other members. Should one member act out in disdain for the larger community, or neglect to care for a downtrodden member and thereby fail to discern the Body, the ecclesial body feels the effects. The Eucharist weaves together the disparate strands of the church into a coherent and functional whole so that the members learn to extend the boundaries of their individual selves to include the Other – to love “your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). In the incorporation of the self into the Body, the member learns to conceive of his own happiness and fate as tied up in the flourishing of others. Without clear demarcations that separate the self from the Body, it thus becomes natural to act out of consideration for others, for such other-oriented love is really just an enlarged selfishness. Because the Eucharist pronounces that the group has displaced the self by subsuming into its benevolent Body, I can no longer pursue my own aims without taking into account the welfare of those tied to me. Thus, the Eucharist creates a unity that teems with moral significance, a ritually practiced union that demands care and *caritas* from its constituents. By requiring certain practices, the Eucharist instills in the church body the habits necessary to sustain the Body and to maintain its unity. I have pinpointed one such habit as selfless love, or *caritas*, which takes form in the passing of peace and the sharing

of bread and wine with one another. An early name for the Eucharist, the *agape* meal⁷⁷, captures perfectly the virtue of selfless care, for those Christians who partook of the Eucharistic meal understood it as the primary practice of their love for one another. Not only does it constitute a means of showing love to others, the Eucharist also constitutes a means of rehearsing the actions of love for others and thus coming to love those previously thought to be unlovable. The Eucharist is *caritas*, Christ's love for all people made manifest in the giving of himself and that same love embodied in the church by which it is drawn together under Christ and sustained.

Of course, Christians are not perfect and often cast aside Eucharistic unity in favor of disunity and disparities, but this is precisely why the ritual is practiced weekly, sometimes daily in certain communities. The Eucharist functions to call the church to be the church and to cease pretending to be anything but Christ incarnate. It serves to gather and repeatedly re-member the Body of Christ, to teach and untiringly inculcate in Christians a sense for what it means to be a part of this particular group, and to practice internal reconciliation, forgiveness, and incorporation.

Addressing Objections: Humanity, Nature, and the Virtues

At this point it is necessary to confront a roadblock in this argument. The environmentalist is concerned primarily with extending human love to that which is more-than-human. The fact that the Eucharist trains people in the habit of selfless love towards other humans, then, seems a starkly limited solution. Due to its focus on the human, it appears to lack the resources to command love towards the environment. However, this objection ultimately possesses a pernicious dualism and backwards moral logic. This critique presumes an unflinching dichotomy between humanity and nature, which assumes that learning to love

⁷⁷ *Agape* is the Greek word for compassionate love, as distinct from erotic love or brotherly love. *Caritas* is the Latin word used to name the same phenomenon.

humans cannot pertain to loving nature due to the inestimable difference between the two. Because of this disjunction between the human and the natural, this assumption ultimately concludes that humans are unnatural and that the survival of nature demands the eradication of humanity.

I eschew this dualism and hold that there is no ontological distinction between the human and the natural, between culture and nature as if culture was not natural. Humans are beings born of nature and inseparable from it (recall Aristotle's appellation for humankind: rational *animals*). To accept this holistic perspective makes it impossible to maintain that what we do in human matters has no relevance for what we do in nature; indeed, intra-human interactions have everything to do with our relationship to the environment because we are a part of the environment. What we do and who we are in the human world carries profound environmental import because the natural world subsumes the human world. As Marilynne Robinson keenly contends, "Every environmental problem is a human problem" (1998: 253).

What is at stake in how we treat our human neighbors is our moral character. For in those interactions, we develop the habits of virtue and vice that predispose us towards particular actions and ends. Our actions towards humans do not happen in a vacuum; to assume so requires an anemic moral logic that disregards the primacy of character in ethics. Instead, my relations with other humans shape me into an individual of a certain moral character whose sphere of influence transcends human boundaries. In other words, habit often operates without respect for distinctions between species. My care, affection and love for others are likely to pervade my relationship with nature; equally, should I habitually comport myself to other humans with hate and ill will, I become the kind of person who can justify with good conscience the same malevolence directed to the more-than-human realm. "Unless we can re-establish peace and order as values, and learn to see our own well-being in our neighbor's prosperity, we can do nothing at all for the rain forests and the koala bears" (Robinson 1998:

253). There is an inescapable connection between human virtue and environmental virtue; training in one can readily lend itself towards realization of the other. Our inability to care for nature, even against our better knowledge, reflects our inability to care for each other; likewise, the more we learn to love those humans who appear so different from ourselves, the more ably we can practice love to the ailing ecosystems of the world. The love required for environmental care is the same love operative in the human realm.

This, then, is the primary connection I draw between Eucharistic ethics and environmental advocacy: the ritual practices a unity that presupposes selfless love and thus trains the constituents in the practical measures necessary for group membership. “The body politic of the church is, then, centered on a practice of table fellowship: where sharing is an enactment of participation or co-belonging with one another, humanity with creation, and the whole of creation with God” (Méndez Montoya 2009: 151). The Eucharist ritually inscribes love for the other in a tangible practice while also expanding the boundaries of the self by displacing it within a body, so that members learn to love the other *as* themselves. “Christians need each other if they are to be able to experience the gift of the body of Christ in the food and of the Eucharist” (Hauerwas and Wells 2011: 20). Unlike the ethic of individualism, a Eucharistic ethic has the resources to sustain the health and wellbeing of a system simply by shaping ritualized bodies attuned (tangibly and cognitively) to the needs, interests, and presence of others. In short, the interconnection of ecosystems resembles that of the church, so that Christians, by practicing what it means pragmatically to be the church, are equipped with the moral foundation – the habits and predispositions to favor that which is virtuous – required to mount a resistance to climate change practices.

This ritual works primarily below the level of ratiocination, focusing first on bodily practices like the sharing of hugs, kisses, or handshakes in the passing

of the peace.⁷⁸ Catechetical instruction, however, makes people aware of the significance of what they are doing with their bodies. Practice does not communicate unambiguously and bodily movement is not sufficient to form a habit; it is possible to go through the motions and still miss the poignancy of the ritual. Because the practice must have currency in a social body, that nexus of contextual meaning, habit formation requires an agreed upon understanding of what is going on and what it does. This is why it is possible for Paul to rebuke the Corinthians for their inequitable Eucharistic practice and explicate what the Eucharist demands of the church (1 Cor. 11:17-22). Paul contends that what is believed to be effected in the Eucharist (the re-membering of Christ's Body) actually takes place and that therefore any outstanding disunity within the social body must be reconciled. What I have done emulates Paul's tactic: I am drawing on a certain understanding of the ritual to contend that a Eucharistic ethic must resemble a habitual disposition to selfless love for one another and that this virtue prepares Christians to respond sustainably to the climate change that afflicts our uni-verse.⁷⁹ In writing this, I am not only describing Eucharistic ethics, but also prescribing (or excavating) an ethical reality part of a Eucharistic ethic. The fact that many who partake of the Eucharist do not act with love to the environment does not undercut my argument. Unless the connection between *caritas* and ecology is underlined as I have tried to do, the ethical kernel dormant in the ritual practice will not have the chance to germinate and take hold.

Conclusion: The Eucharist as Pedagogic Starting Point

I have proposed that the Eucharist constitutes a practice capable of challenging the habits of individualism that undergird unsustainable behavior. This is because the Eucharist does not primarily convey certain information

⁷⁸ In the passing of the peace, "the very concept of 'stranger' is being challenged and redefined from a radically Christian perspective" (Katongole 2011: 80).

⁷⁹ To partake of the Eucharist "is to commit to an economy and a politics in which the care of each other is our all-consuming desire" (Wirzba 2011: 178).

teeming with environmental implications. Rather, the Eucharist forms and reforms a people characterized by the life and death of Christ, that is a people who practice with their bodies the selfless love and that sustains the unity of Christ's Body. I have argued that the Eucharist practices a specific habit (remembering the Body of Christ) that in its very nature resists the individualistic logic at play in unsustainable behavior and promotes instead a communitarian logic that extends love beyond the self to embrace the Other. If triggered, this Eucharistic habit can be put to environmental ends by practicing the virtue of *caritas* within the unity of the universe's ecological systems. This habit can create a firm foundation upon which an environmental ethic can be built. Environmental virtue, accordingly, finds substantial realization in the realm of Christian virtue and performance in the Eucharistic ritual.

I am not suggesting that the repetitious gathering of a group of strangers to partake of a single loaf of bread and drink a common cup will form the habitual resources to ground a more sustainable life. This is not to say that eating together is bad, or anything less than formative – no doubt eating together has myriad positive environmental impacts. However, I am not prescribing the Eucharist to the secular environmental community in hopes that they will adopt it and be better off for it. Such a move would be meaningless precisely because the Eucharist is what it is (and does what it does) only as it is embedded in the context of beliefs, tradition, and people that make it intelligible. Divorced from that preexisting context, Eucharistic practice would be a hollow shell, a form without meaning, and simply another name for eating together. Instead, in this chapter I have adopted the lens of an anthropologist, committed to studying the particularities and peculiarities of a certain subculture in order to understand how its ritual practice founds and sustains its ethics and whether that habits learned therein can have any bearing on its environmental behavior. I have made Christian Eucharistic practice into a case study reflective of the diagnosis in the previous two chapters, a test case designed to show the viability of a habit-

oriented, practice-based communication of sustainability. This does not mean that the Eucharist practices the virtues of every kernel of environmental wisdom, but rather that it provides a starting point to ground environmental information and the moral propulsion (habits) necessary to direct that information towards sustainable action.

As a social practice with normative power to educate the body, the Eucharist makes the church a single body and institutes Christ at its head. In doing so it privileges and prioritizes the virtue of *caritas* – selfless love for one another – by displacing the self from the center of reality and muddling the boundaries between self and others.

Self and other, the human and divine, spiritual and material, the individual parts and the whole, do not collapse into one another, but, rather, they coexist or mutually indwell in and through this *metaxu*, the in-betweenness that is the Body of Christ. Difference is not eliminated, but it is brought into a new harmonious and excessive unity (Christ's Body) that opens up an infinite space for relations of affinity, mutual care (mutual nurturing), and reciprocity (Méndez Montoya 2009: 140).

Christians who partake of the Eucharist practice love and so learn what is necessary to sustain the unity of the Body. Thus, the Eucharist trains Christians to carry their love beyond themselves, and counters the mantra of modern individualism which only considers the self to be worthy of moral attention. This kind of other-directed love orients the individual towards the wellbeing of the group, and creates individuals who practice love, that is who have the habit of other-attentiveness. “To join Christ's body is to begin a patient, affectionate, and responsible commitment to others so that the memberships of creation and community that feed us are strengthened to form a more integrated and healthy whole” (Wirzba 2011: 159). Since sustainability requires an attention to the wellbeing of the more-than-human ecosystem, the Eucharist concerns the main

moral habit of environmentalism required to care about the more-than-human world. The Eucharist prepares Christians to value that which is other than themselves, to take on “this ethos (which) accepts the Other unconditionally, practices unlimited forgiveness, and confirms all the relations that contribute to another’s identity” (Wirzba 2011: 169). Essentially, the Eucharist draws humans closer together and closer to God’s creation as they participate in what is a truly “cosmic liturgy” (Wirzba 2011: 169).

This test case develops a ritual-based communication of sustainability by evoking a fundamental ethical reality at play in the Eucharist and elucidating its natural connection to environmental ethics. In other words, Eucharistic virtue realizes and constitutes environmental virtue. With the habit of *caritas*, Christians have the moral platform to begin to heed the information disseminated by environmentalists. While I have not relegated information and head knowledge to superfluity, I have attempted to displace it from primary importance and situate it in its proper place as secondary to the habits integral to moral life. To formulate a constructive response to climate change, I have drawn on the moral logic implicit in a specific habit already ritualized in certain social bodies and made evident the relevance that habit holds for humankind’s relationship to the environment. Thus, the project of this chapter has been to understand the Eucharist environmentally, to extend the moral logic of the Eucharist to its *natural* conclusion by excavating a latent, though potent, ritual motif. Put simply, the Eucharist offers a unique arena where a certain virtue is extolled and its constitutive habits are formed that have the ability to resist the practices that perpetrate and perpetuate climate change. Eucharistic habits, therefore, compose a hint of the moral character society needs to sustain environmentally responsible behavior.

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