

VIEWS ON NATURE IN METAPHORICAL DISCOURSE

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INTRODUCTION: A DIALOGUE

- A: – Nature is culture!
B: – No, nature is nature.
A: – Why do you say that?
B: – Because it is so defined.
A: – That, I would call culture.

HOW NOT TO FIND VIEWS

Depending on context, we use the word “nature” to refer to many different sorts of things; living animals as well as non-biological matter may be relevant. For some people, e.g., in poetry and in the New-Age movement,¹ nature is a living being with omnipotent qualities, e.g., the character of being a living totality with rationality. For others, nature is more tied to everyday life; biologists consider nature as an ecosystem, industrialists look at it as a resource, the hunter experiences its wildlife and the artist discover its forms. To me, nature does not denote a definite object, but rather a fascinating cacophony of conceptions. In this article, I discuss some conceptions that manifest themselves in the Swedish discourse on nature.² The purpose is to demonstrate, on the one hand, the heterogeneous character of views

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¹With the New-Age movement, I mean cultural influences that partly encourage a more harmonic, personal and spiritual attachment to nature, e.g., Bloom (1991). One of the affects of these influences can be seen in the use of ‘nature’ as a proper noun, i.e., “Nature.”

²When talking about discourse in general, I am referring to all kinds of verbal interaction going on between people.

on nature, i.e., conceptual variation and conflicts, and, on the other hand, the importance of metaphors in understanding such views.

When dealing with views on nature, varying conceptions of nature create problems of interpretation. What conceptions of nature are we ourselves referring to when discussing views on nature? Our own perspectives play an important role in understanding other perspectives. Perhaps, we rely on some common idea in the mass media or definitions in dictionaries, e.g., *nature as a place where plants and animals live and which has not been affected by human civilization*. In that case, we assume some kind of objective standard from which we derive divergent perspectives. Views are then materialistic, spiritual or emotional depending on people’s relationships to this fundamental nature. Others’ views become subjective distortions of a true conception of nature.

An objective view on nature cannot be found in nature itself, but it arises out of social struggles over people’s values and attitudes which transform certain ideas into all-embracing assumptions in reasoning. We call such unquestionable assumptions “analytic definitions,” but despite an appearance of being neutral, they are products of a never ending cultivation of norms.³ This is not to deny the fact that co-operation demands norms, i.e., that norms have communicative values. However, we tend to forget that norms are actually enacted by people sharing values and purposes. Language, for example, involves the desire to understand, create and maintain social bonds. Since values and goals vary

³All kinds of rules and laws are partly matters of convention (Bloor 1991).

and change, we must be prepared to suspend them whenever we want to understand new or other perspectives besides our own.

When discussing views on nature, I am interested in people's varying conceptions, not of supporting any normative standard. The problem, then, becomes to avoid derivations of certain conceptions from others, since derivations of ideas do not create an understanding of people's complex reasoning, but rather create stereotypes of their arguments, which in turn leads to conflicts.⁴ In the eyes of the physicist, definitions of nature in the mass media appear popular and simplified. To the ears of an animist, materialists let themselves become hypnotized by dead matter. From a yuppie's point of view, the physicist is too specialized and the animist is religious. Opinions like these simplify and stereotype the complex reasoning that always supports human conceptions.

To avoid stereotyping conceptions of nature, we must refrain from the desire to make certain views fundamental, i.e., making conceptual standards. Therefore, neither an objective nor a subjective view of nature can form any point of departure in analytic studies of nature views. In the eyes, and to the ears of many people, I thereby jeopardize my credibility as a speaker of anything at all. How can one ignore an objective nature without becoming a solipsist, without drawing the conclusion that we do not know any longer what we are talking about? I think that hypothetical worries like these are unjustified. One can be objective with respect to views without endorsing or relying on an objective view of nature.

HOW TO STUDY VIEWS

Understanding means understanding in a certain context. Nature is no exception. As a word, nature forms part of larger patterns. On the one hand, it forms part of conceptual patterns represented by individuals, on the other hand, "nature" is structured by the on-going discourse between people.⁵ The problem with views on nature, then, changes from the aim of deriving subjective perspectives to studies of how people use words in various ways to reason about nature, *how they pattern nature in discourse*.

⁴Windisch (1990) considers stereotypes as interpretations of people's behaviour and reasoning that are done almost exclusively through one's own perspectives.

⁵I follow Bateson's (1972) communicative approach to contexts and patterns; "the essence and *raison d'être* of communication is the creation of redundancy, meaning, pattern, predictability, information, and/or the reduction of the random by 'restraint'" (pp. 131–132.) This creation is situated in the interactions between organisms and the environment.

The analysis is then directed towards understanding the conceptual patterns that are found in discourse on nature. I think that answers must be taken from actual discourse.⁶

In discourse analysis,⁷ we are dealing with verbal material structured by both verbal and non-verbal experience. Therefore, choices of when and where to study discourse influence to a great extent what results one gets. There are at least two major aspects of discourse that direct us in how to delimit our field of study. First, it is impossible in practice to deal in any thorough way with all conceptions of nature; there is an infinite number of contexts that could be considered. Cultural conceptions seem to be a more appropriate target of research.⁸ Second, and related to the first remark, forms of discourse can be more or less stable. Accidental expressions are not as relevant as the recurrent ones.⁹ Also in this respect, I think that the notion of culture helps us in delimiting the research. We must study cultural expressions of nature. Jointly, these limitations imply that *views on nature are cultural expressions of cultural conceptions in actual discourse*.

⁶It will become apparent in later discussions that this focus does not eliminate the distinction between conceptual patterns and actual discourse. On-going discourse displays many different types of verbal interactions, and conceptual patterns can be drawn from some of them. Language is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but connects to a variety of empirical data, i.e., language has psychological, social, cultural and historical dimensions. Since we are largely unconscious of all the patterns that are involved in communication, it is very important to deal with discourse in an empirical way. Otherwise, it becomes difficult to distinguish between varying types of discourse and different contexts.

⁷Discourse analysis involves the study of language as a dynamic phenomenon, in contrast to theories that put emphasis on rules and closed systems (Brown and Yule 1983). In analytic practice, people tend to stress either dynamic models of language or empirical studies. I prefer the latter approach. To model something presupposes something to model, and there are too many dimensions in actual discourse that have not yet been investigated.

⁸I use the notion of culture in the sense that cognitive anthropologists attribute to it, that is, as shared beliefs (Dougherty 1985, Holland and Quinn 1987). However, "to share belief" is a too vague a notion by itself. For example, humans and monkeys share some kind of belief concerning their physical environment, but I do not know how to formulate this relation in terms of culture. Therefore, besides beliefs, I think that experience and learning must be taken into account. Bateson (1972) makes a good synthesis by emphasizing *learned patterns of communication*. "Cultural conceptions" then refers to shared conceptions with respect to a stable group of people sharing some experience.

⁹Accidental expressions must in some way conform to the recurrent ones, otherwise no stable patterns of communication would be possible.

In linguistics and anthropology, metaphors have become prime tools in conceptual analysis.¹⁰ In contrast to literary analysis that emphasizes individual and creative aspects of discourse, the conceptual approach stresses the cultural and/or conventional character of metaphors. Despite a certain consensus, conflicts in aims and methods of research give rise to many opinions on the relation between metaphors and concepts. I will not go through the arguments, but simply state and explain the way I have chosen to approach metaphors.¹¹

A metaphor is a way of expressing a perspective, to make a point or to illustrate something.¹² An explicit metaphor is an unconventional equation of words because of some similarity/-ies, e.g., “the forest is a lumber factory.” However, there are more indirect ways of conveying similarities. For example, to put the idea of nature in the context of resource management delimits the comparisons that can be made, e.g., nature as an ingredient in the economic sphere of a society, as a component in an economic equation or maybe as an economic value in people’s lives. When we equate nature with “resources,” “production areas” or “environmental sectors,” the expressions by themselves form neither concrete conceptions nor unconventional ways of expressing oneself. Still, I think that it is fully legitimate to talk about metaphorical conceptions. In context, i.e., by taking cultural aspects and on-going discourse into account, it becomes evident that more abstract expressions have a concrete basis by jointly expressing some concrete perspective. Due to experience and learning, “nature” is put into new contexts, and thereby, new perspectives arise. *To treat nature on the whole as a resource is no natural or analytic necessity, but rather a matter of learning*

¹⁰E.g., Lakoff (1987) and Fernandez (1991)

¹¹In Andersson (1991), I discuss some of the arguments in detail.

¹²It is very difficult to talk about some exact function, but an overriding theme in metaphor theorizing seems to be some function to transcend objective limits, but not for the purpose of producing fantasy or subjective ideas. Metaphors express *and/or* give concrete form to general patterns of similarity. I think that when people try to elaborate on the function of metaphor, they neglect this important distinction between expressing a pattern of similarity and learning it. There is a constant mix between the two, e.g., people do not distinguish between metaphors in discourse and their effects. *The function of a metaphor depends on how it has been learned.* If the similarity is made concrete through language, the function varies; it may constitute a rejection to some competing metaphor, it may explain in a compact form one’s own overall experience of something, or it may be a thought experiment. In contrast, learned similarities through experience are parts of myself as a human being, and these can not be altered in any simple way.

to use things in our environment in certain ways to the exclusion of conflicting ways. Therefore, both explicit and indirect metaphors depend on perspectives and also indicate the presence of them.

In discourse, one shifts perspectives continually.¹³ This shifting may occur at different levels of attention and awareness. By breaking conventions, one may crystallize an idea, i.e., make it stand out from the flow of words, but there are a lot of other possibilities when giving a conception a concrete form. For example, instead of saying “lumber factory,” one could consider the forest as “an economic sector.” That would change the focus and the level of abstraction, but certain concrete relations to forests can still be imagined. Since metaphors are formed by experience, learning and patterns of communication, we should not expect them to conform in any simple way to grammatical structures, e.g., *the forest as a work of art may be expressed as the idea of maximizing the esthetics of forest.*¹⁴ We must rather gather metaphorical expressions in larger coherent clusters that show both abstract and concrete qualities of our object of study, i.e., views on nature. For example, the idea of an ecosystem involves “energy flows” and “mechanics” among “organisms,” but it thereby disregards “thoughts” and “emotions” among “animals.” This way of analyzing metaphors demands that they have a cultural dimension. Otherwise, there would be no stable conceptual or communicative patterns.¹⁵

With these theoretical arguments in mind, I will for the rest of this paper deal with metaphorical expressions in the Swedish discourse on nature. I will try to demonstrate some of the patterns, images and motives involved in expressing conceptions of nature. However, before I start, some remarks need to be made concerning the forthcoming presentation. First, it is well-known that it is very difficult to translate poetry between languages without losing some important dimensions of meaning. During my writing of this article, I have experienced the same

¹³Marková and Foppa (1990).

¹⁴Andersson (1991).

¹⁵“Discourse cannot autonomously determine its rhetorical effects” (Tyler, 1987, p. 212). Human participation must be taken into account. I use the notion of culture to understand at least some of these effects, i.e., stable perspectives. Models of language and reasoning often become closed systems that are independent and autonomous from other human skills. This is a serious flaw for anyone dealing with empirical discourse analysis. The context of learning something is always lurking behind one’s back and disturbing any general conclusion of the form and the pattern involved in a skill. For example, there are great differences between the forms of oral and written communication, but still, we insist on talking about some homogeneous skill called *language*.

thing with the Swedish metaphorical discourse on nature. Whenever this is a problem in an analysis, I will follow the practice of discourse analysts by presenting original expressions in Swedish together with both word-by-word translations in English, and give comments on differences where it is needed. Second, I use italics to emphasize that some expression is common and recurrent in some context. Third, most of the metaphors that will be presented are commonly found in the mass media, for which reason, I will not list any references, but rely on the reader's knowledge. Finally, I want to emphasize that verbal metaphors do not in any way exhaust the metaphorical patterns involved. These studies could go on infinitely because of infinite contexts. The aim with these analyses is rather a communicative strategy, that is, to get a hold on the metaphorical patterns that explain conceptual conflicts that occur in the discourse on nature.

LOOSING ONE'S SIGHT OF NATURE WITH A VIEW

I will begin with a summary of some well-known metaphors that are idiomatic and common in both everyday and academic life. Without a context, they give an appearance of being rather concrete, they invite your imagination, but after a while of contemplation, their patterns shatter and their meanings tend to vacillate. An analysis that simply compares and lists metaphors does not form the usual context of metaphor, i.e., an on-going discourse in which a metaphor constitutes a part. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent metaphors from changing or dissolving. Consequently, in dealing with idiomatic metaphors, there is a need for a context that does not constitute a system of definitions, but rather conforms to a story that gives concrete form to the theme, that is, the story should explain nature, e.g., a myth.

The common expressions “*outdoors*,” “*indoors*,” “*in nature*” and “*being close to nature*” relate to some kind of bodily orientation and movement, and many idiomatic metaphors support some kind of bodily notion of nature. Presented below, are some Swedish compounds involving “nature” and “body”:¹⁶

natur/kontakt kropps/kontakt
nature/contactbodily/contact

natur/känsla kropps/känsla
nature/feelingbodily/feeling

natur/upplevelse kropps/upplevelse

nature/experience	bodily/experience
<i>natur/vänlig</i>	<i>kropps/vänlig</i>
nature/friendly	body/friendly

The metaphors point to similarities between “nature” and “body”, i.e., they form similar patterns of discourse. It is very easy to construct arguments that involve both nature and the human body. *We protect both nature and our bodies against harm. Nature lives and dies, and so do our bodies. We treat nature badly or well, as we do with our bodies.* The metaphors may give the impression that “nature” is “a human body,” but such a conclusion would be an analytic mistake. Metaphors are not definitions. It is always possible to dispute metaphors by argument. A good example is the recurrent scientific or academic discourse on the relation between *man* and *nature*.¹⁷ On the one hand, one asks how natural man is, on the other hand, one asks how nature really looks without human intervention. This problem would never arise if the relation between the human body and nature was a matter of definition. Interestingly, a related question concerns our individual bodies, that is, the separation between me as a person and my body. The body seems fixed and down-to-earth, but I as a person change depending on the situation to a much greater extent. However, one can be *natural* by *wearing no mask* and having an *unaffected* manner, as if one is *naked*. Nature in the form of a body is a very intricate theme in the whole Western culture, but not a very precise one.¹⁸

Man is dependent on nature. Nature gives birth to life and nourishes it. Once again, nature involves metaphors of the body. This time, it is in the form of a female body, e.g., *mother nature*. In a sense, man is as dependent upon nature as the small child is dependent upon its mother. We say that *man comes from nature*, and some of us even say that *we should return to nature because we have mistreated her*. As adults, you and I as single persons are independent of our mothers, but as human beings, we are dependent upon a motherly capacity to give birth to children. Nature is like mothers in this general sense; there would be no human beings and no life without

¹⁷The contrast between man and nature may be a sexist expression in this context, but in the discussions to follow, it is a metaphor of the contrast between the male and the female body.

¹⁸Jordanova (1980) notes a number of topics in the Western discourse that form metaphorical contrasts: *nature versus culture, woman versus man, physical versus mental, mothering versus thinking, feeling and superstition versus abstract knowledge and thought, country versus city, darkness versus light, and nature versus science and civilization*. There are anthropologists who claim that the concept of nature does not apply to cultures in general (MacCormack and Strathern 1980), something that is often taken for granted, e.g., Lévi-Strauss (1962).

¹⁶I use a slash to mark the boundary between the words involved in a compound.

mother nature. This argument extends to the idea that *man has left nature*. Children leave their mothers too when they grow older.

We lost contact with nature when we developed civilizations and a certain independence of natural conditions. In the same way, *we loose bodily contact with our mothers* when we become independent persons. The following metaphors support this metaphorical argument:

Children are *more natural* than adults and *closer* to their mothers.

Children are *born into a culture*, but not into nature.

We live in a culture, but not in a nature.

We cultivate ourselves, but people do not naturalize themselves.

However, *a child of nature has not been affected*.

There is a bodily distance expressed in these metaphors of nature, and there are many more examples that reinforce this impression. One may *visit nature*, it is a temporary contact, as when one visits relatives. In practical life, bodies and locations are interdependent dimensions. If bodies are in contact, there is a place where they meet. The shifting of perspective between nature as a body and as a place seems unavoidable because nature is a stationary thing; *it stands still, it is a place, whereas cultures rise and fall*. There is a lot of academic activity and conflicts concerning the attempt to establish when, where and how cultures meet. Culture does not seem to have the same stationary character as nature. Likewise, the female body is both more immobile and natural than the male body (both in modern myths and in older ones). Women take care of children, which put up restraints of mobility. Traditionally, she stayed at home, a quite stationary place.

Places and bodies like mountains and cities do not move and they can put up a heavy resistance to change. The contrast between a movable and a stationary character reinforces the distance between man and nature, i.e., man and nature do not follow each other because the former moves, whereas the latter is stationary. Nature does not visit our homes, but *man meet nature* by visiting her on her own ground. Therefore, *we leave, return, depart from, go back, move from, move back, lose contact or keep the contact with nature*. Man may move from place to place, but not nature. *Nature is a landscape*. It is a territory that man sees from a location, and then *enters*. No doubt, there has been, and there still is, much talk of *conquering both nature and women*. In contrast to a competition, in which all participants

move according to the same rules, there is no symmetry involved when *we fight nature*. Man does not compete with nature, but tries to *master her*. But one must be aware, *she may strike back*. Even if nature is stationary, it is *a dangerous and wild place, a foreign land. Nature is hard to capture*, but we try.

The metaphors above presents nature as both a female and distant body/place.¹⁹ *Confrontations with nature* in our everyday life and discourse support such a metaphorical pattern. The discourse on nature takes place through visual media, e.g., maps, books, pictures and television. Once outdoors, *in nature*, we talk about more particular things, e.g., trees, plants, animals and lakes, etc.²⁰ Nature is everywhere whenever one visits nature, and therefore, there is no use in talking in terms of nature in nature. Of course, nature is somewhere, but we use maps to point it out, and then we are usually far away. Consequently, there is an image of a distant place where nature is.²¹ This stationary nature is almost a paradox. In books and on television, one gets the picture of something well-behaved and far away, but at close range, she is everywhere and yet nowhere to be seen. Consequently, in practical life, we view “nature” at a distance and avoid bodily contact, e.g., in front of the TV.

Vision directs and extends our field of action.²² Through vision, we document the objective properties of things. Objective bodies are not supposed to think and to move by their own will. Thoughts and feelings disturb our concentration

¹⁹According to Hodge and Kress (1988), bodily distance expressed in discourse and in art indicate relations of power and solidarity. There are no absolute rules involved, but the tendency is to keep a distance in power relations when there are also dependencies involved, e.g., relations between males and females and master and servant. In war and love, bodies meet because there is no “status quo” to maintain. I believe that this dimension is much more important to discourse analysis than what is usually assumed. To indicate dependencies is to talk about relations between oneself and one’s environment. The context of interaction is a necessary component in all communication (Bateson 1972). “Power,” “control,” “rule,” “dependency,” “distance,” “safety,” “insecurity,” “trust” and many more are all words that have something to do with the context of things in an organism’s environment. This dimension forms an important type of context in discourse.

²⁰Learning a concept involves contexts that affect discourse in a profound way. We talk about things in their contexts (Tyler 1987). There is then the possibility that our idea of nature would not exist without visual media. The argument that nature is a holistic thing may demand a view point that is very far away from it, e.g., in front of television or when reading a book.

²¹Olwig (1984) discusses a more dynamic conception of nature that existed from classical times to the Enlightenment, i.e., nature as an inherent change in things.

²²Sheets-Johnstone (1990).

when something is being an object of our treatment. To a psychologist, sounds constitute a subjective dimension, whereas “objective” sound waves are measured by visualized frequencies and decibel. The “objective” nature involves dimensions like time, heights, lengths and depths that are given by visible numbers. Acidification, growth and animals are matters of visible things. This static and visual view of nature may sound like an overly extreme simplification of people’s conceptions. Despite an appearance of being a distant body that stands still, we know that everything changes, including nature. However, this recognition is not part of our desire, which is to control change and to create order by subjecting nature to our treatment. By transforming sounds and sensations into visible things, we create a greater distance between our environment and our own bodies. We do not accept changes in our surroundings that are undirected by ourselves.

The metaphors involved when “looking at nature” in everyday life are parts of a verbal repertoire that gives concrete form to nature. As a cultural conception, nature is apt to create conflicts. Since nature is nowhere in sight, but we are encouraged to control her, we need views to see her. Questions like “when, where and how to observe and change nature” become great problems. Depending on cultural identity and experience, e.g., being a scientist, a farmer, an urban citizen or an industrialist, metaphors of nature take on varying forms that order and affect every discourse on nature. They become very strong motives in conceptual conflicts.

REGAINING THE SIGHT OF NATURE IN DISCOURSE

I shall now exemplify some conceptual conflicts that were expressed in an interview with three students. The topic was “opinions and attitudes concerning the environment, nature and forest.” The students were between twenty and thirty years old. The two females studied landscape architecture and plant ecology, respectively. The male was a student in political economy. The interview lasted one and a half hours. Consequently, I will only discuss a short extract from the interview. The extract relates to a question of mine about the difference between “environment” and “nature.” It shows how people in discourse use metaphors of nature to negotiate conceptions and present perspectives. Views on nature are embedded in these negotiations, and it is during discourse that we actually understand nature.

In the extract below, the following abbreviations will be used to refer to the participants in the interview: LA (landscape architect), PE (plant ecologist), PO

(political economist) and IM (interviewer, myself). Italics highlight conceptions of nature. As before, slashes mark boundaries between words in Swedish compounds. A line indicates that some portion of the interview has been left out. There is a lot of talk going on that is not relevant to conceptions of nature in any direct way. I have omitted many dimensions of oral discourse, e.g., paralinguistic features, interjections, repetitions and pauses. In this extract, I have included only aspects that are needed to show what conceptions of nature are involved. The other dimensions are, of course, necessary to express the conceptions, but because of limited time and space, they must be presupposed. However, the sequence of the dialogue is intact as not to lose the interacting character of a discourse. I will skip the Swedish original, and jump directly to a word-by-word translation. There are explanations of words and expressions in footnotes.

LA: the word nature [...] precisely as one says, is there any *wild/land*,²³ is there any *untouched nature*. Then, it is also dangerous [...] if one interprets nature as *something that man has not affected*, as some would put it, whereas others begin to shift more to *park/environment* [...] it is difficult to set up *limits*, isn’t it

PO: well, *not built-upon land*

LA: but, not built-upon land, it is *cultural-ly/influenced*, in the south of Sweden, all land is surely culturally/influenced [...] it is the question, should one call it nature or not? [...]

PO: *everything that is not a building is nature*

[—]

PE: when one talks to people in general [...] then I, I suppose, willingly use the word nature, but between ourselves,²⁴ we never do it. It is called *biotopes* and it concerns rather *specific units*. One classifies the word directly if it is *untouched*, or to *what degree* of, *forest or open land*.

[—]

²³More proper translations of the Swedish compounds would be: *wild/land* = wilderness, *park/environment* = park-like environment, or simply park, *culturally/influenced* = influenced by culture, *health/care* = prophylaxis, and *city/environment* = city life.

²⁴PE is here referring to some cultural group to which she belongs, but it is difficult to know what people she would include. Maybe, she thinks of biologists or ecologists in general.

IM: you have,²⁵ for sure, the *resource*/concept [...]

PE: yes precisely [...] *equal to*²⁶

PO: there is of course the idea of *renewable and non-renewable resources* [...] because English is the language that is in use, it is “*environment*”

[—]

LA: but I do not see it as an *economic profit* [...] urban people [...] for them, I see it as a *source to well-being and health/care* [...] *to come out from the dull city/environment*.

In this extract, nature is mainly contrasted with human places of residence, human settlements and artifacts. The metaphors are of a rather subconscious sort: *wilderness, something that is untouched and unaffected, park, ground/soil/land,*²⁷ *not built-upon land, everything that is not a building, biotope, units, an economic profit, a resource and a source for urban people*. They may not be experienced as especially metaphorical, but still, they are standard ways of indicating cultural contexts, experiences and concrete perspectives that the students partly share, and partly do not. For example, when PE says “it is called biotopes,” she is expressing a core concept in theoretical ecology that is connected to certain methods to observe, investigate and document things in nature. The students are negotiating their conceptions of nature through these metaphors by discussing when, where and how to apply them. There can be no doubt that the participants in the interview are trying to give concrete form to nature.

LA makes a good introduction to nature by mentioning the questions “where to find wilderness” and “where to find untouched nature.” An unaffected place relates to the idea of nature as uninfluenced by man and culture. By focusing on cultural influence, it becomes difficult to draw a line because some people consider parks as nature. Obviously, LA is aware of different conceptions and respects them. PO takes no notice of this potential conflict. Instead, he contrasts nature with buildings. LA is more sensitive to human influence in judging where nature is, whereas this

dimension does not seem too important to PO. Here is a conceptual conflict that resides in the extent to which one is sensitive to human influence on land. A landscape architect is trained to see and to picture such an aspect, an economist is not. After PO’s second statement, LA does not seem to be interested in continuing the argument.

During the whole interview, PE is in general more reluctant to compare her conceptions with others. As a concept, nature is of no concern in her empirical studies, but relevant when talking to people in everyday life. However, in being an ecologist, besides “biotope,” “uninfluenced land” is an important concept too. “Nature” is an everyday concept that relates to biotopes by way of other concepts like “land,” “forest,” etc. PE does not claim that nature should be totally uninfluenced by human activities, but talks about degrees. By stressing degrees of influence, she is even more sensitive to human influence than LA. This is exemplified by her reaction to the concept of resource. She taunts PO by alluding to a lack of distinction. The relation between man and land, then, is a shared theme among all three when trying to explain nature, but they differ in what the relation should be. The idea of human influence and the earlier more idiomatic metaphors that depicted nature as a distant place complement each other fairly well. It becomes more problematic to influence something the further away it is.

I wanted PO to elaborate on *nature as resource* because it is fraught with conflict. However, he relates the idea of resource to the concept of environment, and thereby, he restricts its field of relevance. Instead, a long argument arose about the way landscape architects use nature. Do they not see it as a resource?! LA thinks that the whole idea is wrong. She does not primarily see nature in terms of profit, but considers it as a place to go and feel good. Once again, we are dealing with a conceptual conflict that gets enacted through metaphorical expressions, i.e., nature as a variable in an economic calculation or a physical place. “Source” emphasizes nature as permanent location, whereas “resources” are economic and transportable units. Obviously, the idea of economic resources is more important to an economist, whereas a landscape is essential to the work of a landscape architect.

²⁵I am trying to get PO to use the word “resource” because it is a controversial concept in discussions of nature. PE confirms my belief by taunting PO with an insinuation that economists do not make a distinction between “resource” and “nature.”

²⁶In the interview, it is clear that PE is here expressing the idea of *nature as equal to resources*, and that she taunts PO with the idea.

²⁷Without a context, the Swedish word “mark” corresponds to both ground, soil and land. In practice, it is very difficult to distinguish between the different senses.

SWEDISH “CARE OF NATURE” IN VIEW²⁸

So far, metaphors of nature have either had the character of idiomatic expressions, e.g., *mother earth*, or been standardized expressions of perspectives, e.g., *biotopes*. They have been presented in two essentially different contexts, i.e., in the form of arguments and in an extract from an interview. On the one hand, metaphors are used to construct a view, on the other, metaphors are used to present and shift already established perspectives. It may be a good thing to demonstrate something in between, that is, a metaphorical argument that has an empirical basis and is also coherent. In Swedish newspapers, television and journals on nature, we find recurrent and common metaphors of precisely this kind.

There is a large number of compounds in Swedish that all involve the concept of “care.” It forms the kernel concept in front of which other concepts indicate the kind of care involved. Many of these compounds constitute names of private and public services. To Swedes, “to take care of people and things” is a cultural ideology.²⁹ Institutions of care are founded for many reasons, e.g., tending to people and nature. Furthermore, it is easy to invent new types of care, both mentally and in practice. Listed below, is only a few of many such compounds.³⁰

<i>sjuk/vård</i> sick/care	<i>fång/vård</i> prisoner/care
<i>mental/vård</i> mental/care	<i>åldrings/vård</i> aged/care
<i>kroppsvård</i> body/care	<i>maskin/vård</i> machine/care
<i>mark/vård</i>	<i>gödsel/vård</i>

²⁸There are important distinctions between the Swedish word for care and this English word that must be kept in mind during the coming discussion. In Swedish, “care” is more abstract. Furthermore, in Swedish, “the care of something” is expressed in idiomatic form that cannot easily be altered syntactically.

²⁹In Swedish, the morphological difference between the verb “to take care of” and the noun “care” is only a matter of a suffix, i.e., “vårda” versus “vård.”

³⁰A correct translation would be: sick/care = medical care, prisoner/care = prison welfare, and machine/care = to maintain machines. The four compounds at the end are rather difficult to translate. There are laws regulating what they imply. Superficially, whereas “care of nature” partly means both conservation and protection of nature, “care of soil,” “care of manure” and “care of forest” imply that some kind of, and some level of fertility and productivity should be maintained with respect to what is of concern.

soil/care	manure/care
<i>skogs/vård</i> forest/care	<i>natur/vård</i> nature/care

The Swedish word for care, “vård,” relates to an aim of keeping things in good order. It is a cultural commitment. Inevitably, this cultural motive affects the way nature is patterned in discourse. There are some common expressions that, to some extent, explain the perspective in question.

to *manage* the care of nature
to *treat* nature
to *tend* nature
to *observe* nature
to *respect* nature
to *be careful* in nature

Care of nature means all these things. The idea could be phrased as “keeping things in good order.” There is a Swedish word that expresses this sense, and that is strongly related to the *care of something*, that is, “att bevara.” Dictionaries translate this word into “to preserve” or “to protect.” The Swedish word “bevara” fuses these senses, e.g., in the context of nature, it implies both preservation and protection, as is the case with *care of nature*. Since one does not usually protect bad things, the idea of keeping something in good order is a rather good translation of the Swedish *ideology of care*. However, if it concerns people, we had better paraphrase this into “keeping people in good health and shape.”

There are many human activities that aim at treating and tending something as to make it last and to keep it in good shape. It may concern everything from human lives to stamps. We learn to keep our toes, our nails, hair, skin and body in good order. To be healthy is a question of not being ill, i.e., to keep one’s health in good order. The human body resembles graves and other *objects of care*. The process of decay is underground, as not to be seen, whereas the memorial stone above looks perpetual and impervious to change. Likewise, there is much talk about the need of conserving and protecting nature, but then, “care of nature” does not apply to natural forces that are out of control, e.g., flooding or storms, as in the case of decay. *Care*, keeping things in good order, is essential to cultural life.

Swedish care and *supervision* are intertwined in practice and in the discourse on nature. We *supervise and observe influences* on nature. There is a need for observation and supervision whenever we want to keep things in good order. Whenever new technology is introduced to transform our environment into resources, there is a growing need for *care of nature*. *Technology changes our environment and creates a distance between man*

and nature. The destruction of nature justifies better care of nature. Maybe, the total human environment needs care soon, something exemplified by a growing concern for *care of the environment* and *care of the landscape*.³¹

The criterion of good care is that something *looks good*. If something looks good, it is healthy. Nature may look good or bad, healthy or sick.³² Once again, we are dealing with metaphors that relate nature to the human body. There are more examples of this pattern. *Nature may endure some harm*, as a body may. *Nature recovers from damage*, as a body does. There are reasons for assuming that medical care forms an especially important discourse on nature. No doubt, biology and medicine are related sciences, and also constitute authoritarian discourses on nature and the human body respectively.

Swedes “take care of things” that cannot manage on their own, e.g., machines and sick people. Things that do manage on their own need no care, e.g., the weather and thoughts. Ideas like “care of friends,” “care of happiness,” and “care of creativity” sound very strange even to me as a Swede. In Swedish, “to take care” is to change a bad situation into a good one as to conform to the good order of things. Criminality may be difficult to control, but by putting criminals in prison, it is done in an indirect way. However, there is naturally no “care” involved if something cannot be bad, e.g., happiness, or is beyond our control, e.g., the weather. “Care of things” demands some kind of object that lacks the capacity to change a bad situation by itself, but then, it must be possible to be in such a situation, and we must be able to control it. In “taking care of nature,” there seems to be a rather strong confidence in man’s control and supervision of things.

In the interview with the three students, I asked them what we take care of when we care for nature and the environment. After a rather long pause, I got the unanimous answer “*the future*.” *Care of future* fits rather well with the purpose with controlling and supervising something; we have plans that must be fulfilled.

DISCUSSION: THE PLANNED NATURE

At a lecture on animal cognition that I attended, there was a discussion whether animals could intentionally

fool each other or not.³³ The question developed into the problem of how to decide if some behaviour constitutes a habit or if it is intentional. Some people meant that we need more systematic and controllable observations to be able to answer the question and to solve the problem. This objective view on how to approach the thoughts of animals is interesting in that it insists on plans and rules to investigate the creativity of animals. There is no wish to live with animals in nature to actually learn something from them, but only the idea of observing them at a distance. In contrast, people who love their pets would never dream of putting a strait-jacket on their intercourse with their friends. There is much talk about respecting animals and nature, but there is very little intercourse with living beings in nature. To discover the creativity of animals, one must not only refrain from planning and controlling one’s intercourse with them, but also accept unforeseeable events.³⁴

A creative environment is experienced whenever we associate ourselves with things. Man has dissociated himself from nature to replace it with a technological and planned environment. Consequently, nature has no feelings, thoughts or creativity whatsoever. Animism is not accepted as a serious perspective in the Western cultures. Ascriptions of social and spiritual qualities to nature are judged as superstition. I want to stress that this reaction is truly ideological, and that it expresses an ignorance of perspectives. When we talk of superstition, we are really stereotyping views on nature that are immensely complex. People in cultures that live by and in nature do not have the same concern for a planned future as we do. To live in nature is as much to feel it as to observe it.³⁵ People living in cultures with high technology feel rather a planned and a technical environment, not a varied biological one. I believe that arable land and urban life must have changed man’s sight in nature. We have been accustomed to viewing nature as one thing or another, but lost sight of its biological potential.

Throughout this paper, I have stressed the importance of metaphors in analyzing views on nature. Naturally, there are many other dimensions, e.g., historical, biological and psychological contexts. However, studies of varying and deeper layers in concept formation demand analyses that take both cultural experience and patterns of discourse into account, and therefore, I believe that discourse analysis of metaphor is the best way to approach views on nature. Through this kind of

³¹More correct translations would be “control of the environment” and “maintenance of the landscape.”

³²In Swedish, “to look sick” and “to be sick” are two very common metaphors for expressing the view that something appears not, or is not working, as it should. In a way, things are in bad order.

³³“Animal cognition” is the study of animal perception, problem solving and reasoning.

³⁴Lorenz (1985).

³⁵Lévi-Strauss (1962).

analysis, it is possible to explain and make explicit conceptual conflicts that depend on experience and different values. We should not repress or hide varying conceptions through norms and standards, but state our values and try to explain them in order to make them fit other goals. Maybe, we should use more explicit metaphors to this end.

Nature was a friend and an enemy.

*Man lost one by fighting the other, but he keeps a picture.*³⁶

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³⁶If there is any doubt; this is my own view on nature.