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Ethics of Sharing: A Situational Anthropology

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Abstract

This article introduces the special issue on ethics of sharing by way of a conceptual discussion of four key terms that animate the individual contributions: sharing, ethics, situation, and presence. Turning to situational analysis to hold fast the anthropological empirical commitment, each author takes as their point of departure a detailed description of empirical sharing situations. The aim is to bring this ethnographic attention to specific situations into conversation with recent anthropological debates on ethics that resonate with the growing interest and emerging literature on sharing. In a concluding reflection on the individual contributions, the article grapples with the problem of scale and makes efforts to relate the ethics of sharing to our present human condition as cohabitants of the shared environmental life-support system of one finite planet, Earth. It is this planetary horizon, we find, that adds a new urgency to the perennial ethical question of how one ought to live: what can this shared existential situation be said to demand of us?

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Ethics of Sharing: A Situational Anthropology

Anders Sybrandt Hansen

In many communities throughout the world, sharing is known to take on moral significance as the best course of action. *Mās |guisa ra hî*, 'one just gives', is how one of Michael Schnegg's Damara informants expresses it in his article in this special issue. In the face of the explicit or silent demand of other persons present, it is widely held that sharing is the right response. In Thomas Widlok's definition, sharing means to 'allow others to access what is valued' (Widlok 2017: 1; see also Woodburn 1998). This differs profoundly from gift exchange because the good that is achieved by sharing seems to belong to the situation itself: access to what is valued is given in response to a need. As numerous studies show, gifts enter into long-term cycles of exchange between parties who become mutually imbricated or indebted, and gifts are remembered for future reference and may be weaponised to embarrass and dominate those who receive but cannot return (Mauss [1925] 1990; Sahlins 1974; Strathern 1990). In contrast, it appears as if the social energy of sharing is practiced, expended, and comes to fruition within the situation itself. But why would this be so? What moral engine (Mattingly et al. 2017) drives the practice of sharing, and what are its limits? Even when sharing takes on the force of a moral norm, we know well that not all demands are heard and access to what is valued is sometimes refused.

In this special issue, we approach sharing as an ethical problem and ask how we may understand the ethics of sharing. We intend two things by this formulation. First, it appears clear that sharing cannot be understood as a simple following of rules. As Widlok writes in his article in this issue, the ethical dimension of sharing is constituted by the very fact that it can be refused. Sharing is not an automatic stimulus response but involves the practice of ethics. With this in mind, we ask, second, what dimensions we can fruitfully bring to bear on the notion of sharing. Does sharing involve anyone who is not present in the situation? And what are the ethics involved in sharing land, a world, a faith, one planet, or the human condition of existential finitude?

To answer these questions, the contributors to this issue find major inspiration in two bodies of literature. These are, first, the comparative anthropology of social transfers and economic exchange (see Graeber 2014; Hansen et al. 2019; Widlok 2017) and, second, phenomenological moral philosophy and its influence on what Eriksen (2020) calls 'contextual ethics', such as the ethical concepts of Knud E. Løgstrup ([1956] 1997), Bernhard Waldenfels

(2011), and others. In this regard, an important distinction that runs through many articles in this issue is the differentiation between, on the one hand, habituated forms of moral judgment and, on the other hand, situated moments of ethical responsivity. At its most basic, this is the idea that we as human beings on occasion find ourselves in situations that demand of us a response and in which our pre-reflective habituated conduct does not seem adequate. One influential rendering of this problem is that of Jarrett Zigon (2007), who calls the two sides of this coin, respectively, morality (social norms and habituation) and ethics (responsive decision-making) (cf. Laidlaw 2014). The articles in this issue accentuate the interplay between morality and ethics in different ways but share the common point of departure that moments of ethical responsivity are often brought about by the demands of other beings. Whether we speak of sharing in strictly material terms or in the existential sense of sharing the human condition, we find that there is an interpersonal responsivity at its heart: sharing is an ethical response to the 'with of being' (Al-Mohammad 2010; see also Hollan and Throop 2008).

Human beings demand a share – of resources, of attention, and of each other's lives or personhood. This 'demand sharing', often associated with hunter-gatherers, points our attention to a perceived, or invoked, obligation towards the other rather than to calculable debts or rights. In the contributions to this special issue, the notion of ethical demand is correspondingly opened up to go beyond the specific context of demand sharing typically understood as one special form of distributive transfer (see Peterson 1993; Schnegg 2015). Løgstrup ([1956] 1997) concisely described the 'ethical demand' as a 'silent demand' constituted by the presence of others, which need not be uttered. It is this existential demand that several contributors have in mind when discussing sharing ethics.

Finally, the most important source of inspiration for the contributions in this issue are the ethnographic situations in which the ethics of sharing unfold and which each author takes as a starting point. The notion of situation is key because it holds fast anthropology's empirical commitment, and each contribution consequently begins from a situation that the author has documented ethnographically and which speaks to the ethics of sharing.

Situations and the situational approach

In the classic situational approach of Max Gluckman and the Manchester School, situations were mined for analytical insight into the social organisation of societies. The main focus here was how situations served to play out and resolve conflicts that threatened to disrupt social reproduction (Gluckman [1940] 1958). However, the role of ethics in this transformation from dissonance into resonance remained underdeveloped in this approach, which can be argued to have been predicated on the stabilising force of morality as

norm and not on ethics as a challenge. Developing the situational approach further, Bruce Kapferer and Lotte Meinert (2015) more recently added the valuable qualification that situations need not culminate in the reproduction of social order since they provide room for innovation and creativity. Consequently, in this collection we are not using ethnographic situations simply as paradigmatic examples or even microcosms of larger, enduring cultural systems. Rather, we turn to situations for their undetermined quality. The genuine vitality of situations lies here. It is within situations that persons bring conflicting views and desires to bear, where action takes place, and, in short, where things may change. It is also within situations that ethical demands have to be faced and ethical questions answered.

What does this attention to the openness of situations mean for the study of sharing? On the one hand, it reinstates the ethical practice of sharing as a responsive phenomenon that is sensitive to context. This is well illustrated in several articles in this issue that see the situational approach as fruitful for a phenomenological anthropology and in particular for exploring sharing in terms of human ethical responsivity. On the other hand, what is particularly helpful about the notion of situation is exactly its double quality of being sensitive to contextual detail whilst also allowing for the human ability to section the flow of lived experience into recurring and qualitatively recognisable segments (Luhmann 1979). That means, as Zigon (2015: 503) has put it, that the notion of situation combines the peculiarity of events with the multiplicity that exceeds the localised instances of a situation across time, space, and scale. Situations are more specific than the broader notion of context, and they are unlike texts in that they connect people, places, and objects in their materiality and bodiliness (see Breyer and Widlok 2018: 8; Schnegg 2021).

No two situations are wholly identical. They are always in some sense unique, and yet human beings (as well as certain other mammals such as dolphins, as Gregory Bateson showed some time ago [Visser 2003]) are typically capable of some semiotic taming of what befalls them. As humans we can turn segments of experience into instances of types of situations that are not only unique but also typical, and which carry some meaningful and recognisable reference to us. If you were to recount your day, you would likely recount situations in this sense (waking up, washing, dressing, making breakfast, and so on), and to be understood, you would rely on the receiver of your communication sharing some sense of these occurrences as situations. In this way, types of situations enter our linguistic repertoires not as singular truths about being in the world but as semiotic tools at hand for living our shared social life. The situations that the articles in this issue discuss include food sharing, demanding, work parties, religious conversion, and theft, both in terms of ethnographic particularity and as recognisable types of situations.

Yet not every experience readily lends itself to such typification. Lived experience is phenomenally excessive of our linguistic categories, and situa-

tions may consequently remain undetermined or at least underdetermined. In some cases, people cultivate a receptive attention that allows them to dwell in this momentary potentiality of a situation (Louw, this issue). In other cases, situations confound the actors; they stick out – clearly – as if carrying a message, but without actors necessarily comprehending quite what the situation is telling them or in what kind of situation they are finding themselves. In yet other cases, the issue involves the interaction of different understandings, or definitions (Goffman 1959), of the situation, as is the case when one person's sharing is another person's lending, theft, or gift exchange (Graeber 2014; Meinert, this issue; Strathern 2011).

Let me turn here to an extended ethnographic example in order to open up to the reader some of the issues sketched above.

Aunties in the field with knifes and a plastic bag

During fieldwork in rural north China in May 2018, I stayed in the farmhouse dormitory of a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm. The farm worked on a membership model and supplied its member households in nearby Beijing City with fresh organic farm produce as well as eggs, chicken, and pork. Farm employees used an online platform to announce what was currently available at the farm. Members would then place their orders online, and these would be packed at the farm and delivered by lorry to the members' doorsteps the following morning. With this operation, the farm was responding to the food safety anxieties of middle-class consumers that had developed as a result of several widely publicised food safety scandals in the preceding decade (Bunkenborg and Hansen 2019).

We were supposed to eat at six, but dinner in the communal dining hall was delayed, so I borrowed a bicycle from a friend and took a ride through the fine haze of heat and micro particles that enveloped the sleepy village, passing by curved grey tile roofs and white brick facades of recently refurbished houses. As I exited the village and circled right to return to the farm, I was overtaken by Auntie Ren and a friend who jolted past me on the wagon bed of an old, motorised tricycle. I noticed that they left the road soon after to turn on to a dirt path that passed through the fence which separated the garden at the far end of the farm site from the main road. On an impulse, I decided to follow. When I caught up with them and bumped unto the garden plot, I found both women bent over the crops, knives in hand, chopping at vegetable stems. As I brought the bicycle to a halt, Auntie Ren (I call her so in keeping with the Han Chinese custom of using fictive kinship terms of address for friends and co-workers of different generations) straightened her frame to face me and for one apprehensive moment our eyes interlocked. 'Ah! I cannot pass through here,' I said, feigning surprise, and this conceit broke the spell. I was only trying to take a shortcut, suggesting that whatever they

were up to went unnoticed and was of no concern to me. We tacitly agreed to this with a little grinning and nodding. Turning to take the long way back, I kept on chuckling to myself.

What had just happened? Considering the available information, I hazard an informed guess. It was after working hours (during which I had tidied up considerable amounts of garlic chives, to be shipped in cardboard boxes to farm customers, alongside Auntie Ren and accepted her occasional and patient advice on how to do so more efficiently). The friend she was with did not work at the farm. Auntie Ren and the friend passed into the CSA garden through a gap in the fence at the far end of the farm. Her gaze had been quite intense. And so I conjecture that they were taking vegetables for their own consumption without permission. Auntie Ren recognised the ethical status of the situation without further explication and so it seems was our shared understanding of how we were going to deal with it.

When I visited the farm one year earlier, Yang Maowen, who oversaw production in one farm locality, had told me that the farm routinely lost crops to petty theft. This was really common in the Chinese countryside, he said. With an operation like the CSA farm, he claimed, it was the perception of ordinary local people (本地老百姓 *bendi laobaixing*) that the farm was run by 'big boss' outsiders (外地过来的大老板 *waidi guolaide dalaoban*) with more than sufficient means (see Hansen 2019). Maowen felt this was important to keep in mind when talking about the theft. Local employees, he claimed, would also occasionally make a detour to pick crops for private use. To him, this was an expected practice, a tolerated form of 'co-consumption' (Widlok 2017). As long as he did not personally see it take place, it posed no threat. If he did see it, he would have to confront it, and so he would prefer not to witness it.

Moral supposition and bodily presence

The ethnographic situation described above points us to two issues at play in a situational approach to sharing. First, we see that actors bring moral suppositions to situations. In this case, the question of who gets a share of farm produce is imbricated with notions of just entitlement and the desirability of social levelling. Auntie Ren was a local woman in her sixties who had lived in the village throughout her life. In recent years, at the behest of the village party secretary, the majority of families had pooled their tiny individual farm plots into larger chunks of land which were then leased to outside enterprises, who used the proximity to the Beijing City consumer market to make a profit on such activities as organic agriculture and tourism. In return, the local families earned a modest rent and were in some cases hired as workers by the enterprises leasing their land.

Considering the widespread sentiment in rural China that the countryside has been unjustly left behind during the rapid economic growth of urban China, it is perhaps not surprising if villagers felt that they were entitled to a share of the fruits of the local soil. It might be understood as the residue of a socialist levelling ideology that was at least formally hegemonic in earlier generations. A further kaleidoscopic twist to our perspective makes clear the imposition of an overriding notion of property on to the situation. It is of course a cultural construct, and not an inherent quality in the vegetables, that they belong to someone in particular, and yet the modest drama of the situation sprang from the mutual supposition of the moral category of property: Who may take these crops? What role does legal ownership play, and what role hereditary rights? Does it matter who planted and tended the crops? Are there individuals who take on themselves the moral position to refuse anyone else access?

Second, the situation points to the importance of bodily presence and absence for the ethics of sharing. As long as the person who is supposed to enact the rule of property is absent, Auntie Ren and her friend can take a share. A tacit understanding of what is morally acceptable to do, respectively, in the presence and absence of others appears to pattern social practice. It is not just what one does that matters but, equally important, what one is seen to be doing and how things unfold in the course of being seen. As several articles in this issue demonstrate, the same holds for possession of what is valued. In either case, this distinction opens up some room for moral irreverence and for the situated practice of ethics in the sense discussed above. For example, knowing that possessing tobacco would prompt others to demand a share, Thomas Widlok's Hai||om informants often keep a second, hidden tobacco pouch (Widlok, this issue). This sort of practice allows the person to safeguard a minimal interpersonal distance and ethical autonomy when faced with the demands of others. Anders E. Rasmussen and Michael Schnegg describe related situations in their articles in this issue, when their informants receive sharing demands from relatives and friends via text messages on their mobile phones. Such demands do not speak with the same urgency as do demands made in person. In consequence, they are often deferred and sometimes ignored.

This introduction concludes with a reflection on situations and scale, and on how the ethics of sharing articulates with the human condition in the Anthropocene. But first we first present the individual contributions of this issue.

Featured articles

This special issue features six original research articles. Whilst certain interests are common to each article, such as the situational focus and the question

of who and what is able to register as present in a situation, it is possible to place the articles on a continuum of interest in elucidating, respectively, the social and the existential qualities of sharing ethics. We first present three contributions – by Michael Schnegg, Lotte Meinert, and Anders E. Rasmussen – that look to ethnographic situations to demonstrate the interpersonal responsivity of sharing ethics and differing interpretations of situations and responses to sharing demands. This is followed by a second set of three contributions – by Thomas Widlok, Maria Louw, and Alfred Sköld – that tie situational analyses to existential arguments about the human condition and interpersonal being-*with*.

The first article is by Michael Schnegg. His contribution discusses the ethics of sharing as it plays out amongst the Damara in Namibia and uses ethnographic examples to construct a theoretical typology of what goes into sharing situations. As sharing typically takes place in response to a demand, argues Schnegg, our understanding of the phenomenon must begin with a grasp on human responsivity. With inspiration from Waldenfels and other authors in the phenomenological tradition, he proposes that human beings attempt, in their confrontation with the alien (*das Fremde*) and alien needs, to find the right way to respond. Doing so, our situational experience leads to the construction of ethical orders that work as registers, with which we attempt to 'tame' alien experience. The existence of such ethical orders (which correspond quite well with 'morality' as used above) may account for sharing when it is performed, as is often the case, as a near-habitual response to the demands of others. As noted in the beginning of this introduction, 'one just gives' is one way to put this into words. When need is immediate and essential, this is the typical response. In other cases, the attempted fit between experience and ethical register is not as neat – something in the situation sticks out as *extra*ordinary and prompts in the actor the need for a creative response. Schnegg's article identifies that this reflective form of response is prompted in situations with multiple conflicting demands and in cases where the alien need sticks out as 'unethical', which is to say unassimilable to the response registers of the actor. With this approach, the author is elegantly able to account for sharing ethics as the 'habitual and creative responses to the demands that situations create' and to include decisions not to share as one outcome of this same ethical practice.

In her article, Lotte Meinert discusses ethics of sharing versus logics of exchange based on fieldwork in the Ik community and amongst missionaries in Uganda. Three cases concerning land, faith, and items describe different ethics of sharing and exchange in play between the missionaries and the Ik community. Sharing of the mountain landscape for living, hunting, and gathering is fundamental to the Ik ground ethics of dwelling, and sharing of land for agriculture is based on 'caretakers of the soil' entrusting the land to younger generations, whilst other items and goods are exchanged, sold, and

gifted. These and other ethics of sharing and exchange are part of everyday life, yet seldom take place without friction and contestation. Meinert argues that when international missionaries came to the Ik mountains, they too were driven by an ethics of sharing; but for them the ground ethics was a sharing of faith and the Bible. At the same time, the missionaries were also conveying various ideas about and moralities of exchange. The article features three cases regarding land, faith, and items which point to how communities of belonging and resonance may arise out of sharing and exchange practices; but they also show how friction builds up when parties do not agree about whether certain transactions are a form of sharing or exchange, or about which ethics to apply. The article draws attention to how the ethics involved in sharing phenomena that are radically different (such as land and faith) can be quite similar and grounded in wishes for belonging and resonance.

Anders E. Rasmussen's article takes the reader to Manus Province in Papua New Guinea, the quintessential homeland in the anthropological canon of ceremonial gift exchange. Rasmussen carefully untangles the sharing transfers that take place alongside gift exchange, particularly during large-scale work parties, and shows how monetisation of the local economy and the economic reliance of the Titan people on remittances has led to increased sharing both in scope and scale. He uses the work party as the ethnographic sharing situation to illustrate this. When a house or an outrigger canoe is being built, Rasmussen's interlocutors experience a moral obligation to involve and accept the help of everyone present – including unhelpful help – and to share out their wealth, which is displayed in the very fact of undertaking such a large-scale enterprise. If a canoe is built without the involvement of the local community, this is considered immoral, as is the canoe itself: immoral, shoddy, and likely to break. It is not seen as a real canoe. The article reveals a new social product of such work parties. They simultaneously illustrate and constitute the existence of 'the community'. The community is a new frame of reference for solidarity, implying some form of equality between its members, and at a much higher scale than the kinship ties that were formerly the frame of reference for Titan people. It is situations such as these work parties that allow for economic redistribution of new wealth that reaches local people in the form of remittances; and it is the sharing that takes place in these situations, which includes all who are present, that allows 'the community' to emerge as a meaningful frame of moral reference.

Thomas Widlok, in his contribution, emphasises that it is part of the situationality of sharing that, counter-intuitively, hiding regularly occurs. He underlines that sharing is more than simply a distributive technique, as sociobiology might have it, but that it has a distinctly ethical dimension. The humans involved make ethical decisions. These decisions are greatly influenced by the presence of others in need, which can be said to create a silent demand. Unlike pooling, which relies on having defined solidarity beforehand

in terms of who is in and who is out, sharing allows one to draw people near – and for others to get near to us even though they may be genealogically or categorically distant. At the same time, it does not require us to know the intimate motives of others or to commit these to a conventionalised morality. Not wanting to give but to keep is not an obstacle to sharing as long as those who have things to give remain responsive to legitimate demands and are prepared to put themselves into the situation of those in need. We can explain why hiding occurs regularly in social systems of sharing by placing sharing conceptually in its specific ethical space: a space that is characterised by mutually recognised presence combined with a degree of minimal distance that protects the autonomy of individuals and their judgement as to when and how to respond to demands.

In her article, Maria Louw is concerned with the sharing of being and the sharing of alterity as existential and ethical matters. Louw raises fundamental questions: Do we as humans, or do we not, share the world in an existential sense? Are there many worlds or one? What do we share by our thrownness into existence? And what are the limits of existential sharing? Louw explores these questions of sharing and faith in a situation where Kyrgyz Muslims, drawn to Christianity, encounter alterity in worlds they thought they knew. Questions about existential sharing of faith and experiences of alterity also arise in intimate relations with family members when relationships turn out to be different than expected. These experiences of conversion, passage, and indeterminate ontology open up deeper realisations of existential sharing that offer perspectives which potentially include experiences of alterity. The article discusses what it means to share when people share a faith, and how this is experienced in relation to other aspects of existential sharing, such as sharing blood, or sharing a family, or sharing fundamental conditions by being part of a historical generation. These questions about what people share with others, by virtue of their very being and thrownness into the world, become existentially and ethically striking in liminal situations when persons confront alterity amidst the familiar.

Drawing on fieldwork amongst recently bereaved people in Denmark, Alfred Sköld points out that death needs to be considered a shared condition and experience, even if Western philosophy has long considered it as having an ultimately individualising effect. Shared finitude (losing a life) implies shared living (having a life). Bereaved persons have lost a shared life, a shared home, and a shared life history. They often ask themselves the ethical question as to what right they have to live on in the face of their partner's death. The situation of the recently bereaved is a boundary situation and it is characterised by continuing bonds with the other. It introduces an ethical tension between feeling bound to the deceased partner and the need to carry on alone. The accounts that Sköld has collected show that from childhood our shared world is coloured by mortality and loss and by the knowledge that

one of us will mourn the loss of the other. The loss can create an experience of closeness (between a surviving parent and their children) but also of distance and alienation from others around us and a heightened sense for one's own death as the only remaining care person of a child. There is thus an intergenerational dimension to grief and to the connectedness of our lives that comes to the fore in the situation of death, of losing a close family member. This affects not only the surviving life partner but also the wider network of people with whom we share our lives. The shared knowledge of human finitude is ultimately also the source for a shared ethic to live for one another, an ethic that is actuated whenever a loss is anticipated or experienced.

Sharing the present human condition

In this concluding section, I want to point out an irony involved in studying the ethics of sharing. On the one hand, the immediacy of sharing – allowing others access to what is valued – speaks in a register of immediate human mutuality and solidarity. This is a large part of the attraction of the phenomenon. Holding out the potential for more responsive forms of human being-*with*, sharing is likely to engage more than an abstract mechanism of reciprocity or a cool intellectual curiosity in the anthropologist. On the other hand, if presence is decisive for sharing, this introduces the tricky question of who and what is capable to register as present and to address the actor (a problem considered in particular by Louw and Schnegg, this issue). Whilst the social anthropological record shows countless cases of sharing as a living social and economic form across the world, this is perhaps principally the case with hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. This brings up the issue of whether and how sharing practices common in small-scale societies may translate into forms that are viable in a contemporary world brimming with human activity at many scales, including at very large scales and involving countless persons who do not encounter each other regularly or intensely. In this situation, it would be ironic if we were to find in the phenomenon of sharing a near flawless model of human solidarity and yet had to recognise that it cannot extend beyond the microscale of those who are physically present.

Fortunately, this does not seem to be case, at least not entirely. The articles in this issue point to the human ability of scaling and the potential for scaling up. In Louw's and Sköld's articles, we see an interpersonal meshing and widening of existential horizons that arise in intense moments of sharing the human condition. In Rasmussen's article, we see an unexpected effect of work migration, namely the advent of community as a meaningful category of identification and solidarity, which involves sharing at a higher level of social integration than was the case with the lineages that the Titan people formerly considered their solidary groups. Widlok, in his contribution, presents the ethics of sharing as responsive not only to concrete situations but,

at the same time, to the intrinsic injustice of the human condition: there are always human beings 'out there' who are separated from what they value and sharing is the fitting response when faced with this situation. The problem of scale thus recedes on the premise that the ethics of sharing is universally appropriate across instances of similar situations.

This finally brings us back to the question of how occurrences come to register as situations. What kind of attention and semiotic tools must human beings bring to situations to be able to 'receive a message' (see also Anna Tsing [2015: 17–26] on the arts of noticing)? What allows such situational messages to travel beyond the confines of one unique context? And what truly characterises the present human existential situation? In the early twentieth century, death and birth took centre stage in discussions of the human condition. Ecological thought and its offspring, the Anthropocene, has since drawn attention to a further crucial dimension to our shared existential situation. We now acknowledge that our lives do not take place against the backdrop of infinite nature; we rather cohabitate and share the environmental life-support system of one limited planet, Earth (see, for example, Raworth 2017; Sloterdijk [2004] 2016: 312–313). If being is therefore always being-*with* on finite planet Earth, the argument goes, the species' future of being may be said to hinge on the caretaking and maintenance of a shared life-support system. To drive home this point, English economist Kate Raworth and German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk both revive the same image from American architect R. Buckminster Fuller: we now live on Spaceship Earth. Spaceship Earth does not come with an operating manual and yet we have to keep it running since there is nowhere else for us.

But how does such a macro-level comprehension register – if at all – in actual 'human-sized' situations? An interesting example of this can be found in zoologist Rachel Carson's classic *Silent Spring* in which the vehicle of ecological comprehension was found in a situational absence rather than a presence: 'Spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of bird song' (Carson 1962: 103). As is well known, this uncanny silence signified to Carson the biocidal effects of the indiscriminate use at the time of pesticides such as DDT in US agriculture. In turn, this message was lifted from its original context and used as poignant warning to rally people to the nascent ecological movement.

Quite possibly I will be seen to shift the conversation into strange terrain with this example and to overtax the concept of sharing. Even so, I will end in this train of thought by noting one possible future line of inquiry. There is perhaps something remarkable to be found by relating the ethics of sharing to our Anthropocene condition on an abundant but finite planet that is marked simultaneously by plenty and poverty, wastefulness and want. One such example is Raworth's 2017 book *Doughnut Economics*. With the

flippant image of the doughnut, Raworth aims to fasten in the reader's mind the image of a circular form bounded by inner and outer limits as the guiding model for planet-friendly economic life. We are invited to imagine that this shape delineates the space of sustainable human flourishing. Beyond its inner limit lies critical human deprivation, beyond the outer limit critical planetary degradation (Raworth 2017: 11). Raworth attempts to capture with this image both shortfall and overshoot in human interaction with the planetary ecology. That is, the distributed simultaneity of too little and too much satisfaction of human demands – in the ecological and not the religio-moral sense (see Sloterdijk [2004] 2016: 657–658) – as measured against the yardstick of sustaining individual and species human life.

As the articles in this issue elegantly illustrate, the ethics of sharing is responsive to the needs of others. Sharing is felicitous whenever 'one just gives' in response to such demands. Since there is an expression of human mutuality or solidarity in this gesture of freely letting go of something of value, it is worth asking what an ethics of sharing will look like in response to the inverse problem of too much satisfaction of human demands in excess of the regenerative capacities of the planetary life-support system. What can the ethics of sharing tell us about getting the balance right for general and sustainable human indulgence whilst preventing self-destructive overindulgence? What are the situations in which the ethics of sharing would require us to reject demands that are out of proportion and unjustified?

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