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The Lazy Dawn of Ecomodernity
A Preamble

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Plus Ultra - Further Beyond



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The last thirty years have witnessed a number of seminal studies which have credibly documented that humanity *can* – and has all resources – to meet all challenges connected to climate shift, food scarcity, poverty, and energy crisis. We can do so with negligible short term costs and with massive long term benefits. We can tackle the crisis but *we will not*. And we will not because *we do not care*.¹ Today the ideal of sustainability is neither a matter of documenting a threat (there has been enough of evidence), nor finding technological and economic solutions (there are enough solutions); it is the matter of overcoming political, social, and cultural obstacles to necessary change. In order to be successful, the agenda of sustainable future needs not just intelligent legislation and innovation in business, technology and politics. It needs to persuade an average Norwegian or Chinese worker that limiting growth does not mean unemployment. Perhaps it is time for the advocates of sustainability to abandon their Lutheran-technocratic jargon and use more persuasive techniques?

Unlike modern researchers who have often been irritated by the irrational behavior of electorates, Aristotle - the ancient expert on the arts of persuasion – took human emotions seriously as the most important factor in story making. In his *Rhetorics* he spoke about three components of a successful argument: *logos* (persuasive reasoning, coherence), *ethos* (ethical values), and *pathos* (emotions.) To this we would add the fourth related feature: *mythos* - an exciting scenario of action with an alluring protagonist. A compelling story must equally appeal to reason, emotions, ethical values and desire for role models. These elements may at odds with one another, and yet, when woven together in an imaginative way, they have the power to entice and draw the crowds.

¹ E.g. Nicholas Stern, *Stern Review on the Economics and Climate Change* (2010) http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_report.htm; Jørgen Randers, *2052: a Global Forecast* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2012).

If we look at the progress of Western modernity through Aristotle's rhetorical prism, there are two master-stories that have strongly influenced our relationship with nature. The first one states that there are no limits to human dreams and pursuits. Its key concept is illustrated by the Spanish motto, *Plus ultra* – “further beyond” – emblazoned on a banner stretching between the Pillars of Hercules, the physical and symbolic limit of the ancient world.² The motto can be taken as a rallying cry of Western modernity, which has moved steadily *beyond* boundaries, *beyond* nature, *beyond* humanity, *beyond* God. This aspiration has been founded on empowering stories which has featured autonomous, free, rational, and interest-driven men and women. For them, meaning of life has been about individual happiness and self-realization. Triumphs of science and technological innovation have equipped them with tools to fulfill their dreams. The industrial revolution has provided them with material welfare on an unprecedented scale. Ever efficient production and market competition have allowed them to become exuberant consumers who would buy more and more goods at lower and lower prices. Natural resources have been boundless and to be exploited ad infinitum.

This spirited story invites two qualifications. Firstly, as Shmuel Eisenstadt and his research team have argued, “the best way to explain the history of modernity is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs,”³ i.e. a multiplicity of modernities. What is under scrutiny here is the *dominant story* as it developed in Western and Central Europe, not its various reinterpretations by other cultures. Secondly, the upbeat narrative outlined above, obviously runs counter to the intense scholarly focus on

²<http://www.google.no/search?hl=en&q=pillars+of+hercules,+plus+ultra&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=6sXuULLbK8T2sgahjIHQDQ&biw=1091&bih=470&sei=78XuUP3ZKIHZtAa4xoDwCA>

³ S.N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities”, special issue of *Daedalus*, “Multiple Modernities,” Winter 2000, p.2.

Western modernity's imperial and genocidal credentials.⁴ Zygmunt Bauman has insisted that the Holocaust was not “an antithesis of modern civilization” .- It was a perfect expression of modernity's disturbing soullessness: “Weberian” bureaucracy, glorification of rational spirit and scientific mentality, fixation on efficiency, and the problematic relegation of values to the realm of subjectivity.⁵

And yet, while recognizing the Janus face of modernity, we wish to draw attention to the importance of compelling, mobilizing myths which have created foundations of modern liberal democracy. The tale of Robinson Crusoe depicts a man creating his own reality and fashioning a “mini-civilization” out of the untamed wilderness of a desert island. The American Dream tells us of about men and women who progress from rags to riches and - regardless of their race, gender and class – and have an equal chance to achieve freedom, wealth and eternal youth through hard work and determination. You too can become the president of the United States even if you are a poor, black son of a single mother.⁶ Yes you can.

The American dream especially has been a powerful engine of human actions in the past three hundred centuries: not only has it proved to resonate with most people's aspirations and dreams; it has contributed to the building of the wealth of nations. It promised new hope and a new beginning to millions of desperate people in desperate places. It distorted and deceived on a massive scale - as much as it inspired as empowered. People world over still

⁴ See Zygmunt Bauman *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989) p. 7. See also: Henry L. Feingold, ‘How Unique is the Holocaust’ in *Genocide: Critical Issues of the Holocaust*, ed. Alex Grobman and Daniel Landes (Los Angeles: The Simon Wiesenthal Centre, 1983); Richard Rubinstein, *The Cunning of History* (New York: Harper, 1978).

⁵ Bauman, 10.

⁶ To recall: “The American Dream” was codified by James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America* (1931). It drafted the contours of “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.” (1931; Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications, 2003).

relish it today not just because it is optimistic – mark that the Soviet myth was optimistic too – but because it displays an extraordinary balance of *logos*, *pathos* and *mythos*. It equally appeals to reason and to our secret longings for magic, prosperity and happiness – and for an attractive protagonist that we want to emulate.

The second modern story of humanity's interplay with nature has been the anti-thesis of the first. It has replaced the *boundlessness* of high modernity with a mantra of limits. The codex of limits – implicit in Rachel Carson's poignant *Silent Spring* (1962) - was codified by Meadows' and Randers *Limits to Growth* (1972), an international bestseller in global pessimism.⁷ Their story argued that a continuation of boundless modernity entailed a catalogue of misfortunes: firstly, the world would run out of resources; secondly, pollution would rise to intolerable levels; thirdly, we would run out of food; fourthly, our economy would crumble; fifthly the world population would dramatically decline as a result of impossible living conditions.

The narrative of limits has spawned an apocalyptic discourse which holds the imagination of cultural creatives – and the public at large – in its grip. It has been most dramatically, but also comically, captured by the eternally tormented film director Woody Allen, who said: "More than any other time in history, mankind stands at the crossroads. One path leads to utter hopelessness and despair. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly." Implicit in this *bon mot* is a suggestion that humanity refrains from action not just because of a propensity for self-deception and life in denial, as Kari Marie Nordgard has argued in her studies of human response to climate change.⁸ Like the Vikings from the Sagas, humans are actually fascinated by stories that tell us that "nothing can be done" and show us the workings of Fate and punishment for our sins. A tale

⁷ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962; New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000). Donella H. Meadows, Jørgen Randers and Denis Meadows, *Limits to Growth* (Club of Rome, New York: Universe Books, 1972; London: Chelsea Green, 2004).

⁸ Kari Marie Norgard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011).

of Armageddon is strong on pathos and mythos: it chimes both with a masochistic stoicism in some – or with inertia and laziness in others - and it offers a liberating catharsis. The apocalyptic logos, pathos and mythos fascinate – but they demobilize as well. The result is that narrative of “limits to growth” has failed to generate action which The American Dream has been so strong on.

But there is a chapter 2 of the story of environmental gloom, nourished by narratives which have told us how to prevent the doomsday. One of the more radical ones has been Arne Naess, Bill Devall and George Sessions’ deep-ecology, which insists on intrinsic value of all living beings and demands dramatic cultural, economic and political change to radically minimize or nullify human interventions in nature.⁹ Naess’s ecosophical narrative – enriched by the thought of Ghandi and Spinoza and “elastified” by his scepticism - was compelling to the civic protesters who marched against the dams in the 1970s crying: “Let the River Live!” But as a story, it has been too demanding on pathos and ethos: Most humans have problems with biocentric compassion and most people find it hard to accept that a river has the same value as human beings.

The other story telling us how to avoid the environmental apocalypse has been more pragmatic and down to earth. It has been the narrative of *sustainable development* as codified by the Brundtland Commission in *Our Common Future* (1987)¹⁰. There are many problems with sustainable development which have been anatomized in countless studies.¹¹ Rather than rehearsing the arguments for and against, let us again highlight the Aristotelian weaknesses inherent in the concept of sustainability. Firstly, as a narrative, it has yielded rather poor

⁹ Arne Naess, Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (1985; Layton, UT, 2001).

¹⁰ *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1987).

¹¹ To mention but a few: Lincoln Allison, *Ecology and Utility: The Philosophical Dilemmas of Planetary Management* (Leicester University Press, 1991). Saroy Chawla, "Linguistic and Philosophical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis" in *Environmental Ethics*, Fall, 1991, pp. 253 - 262. Court, de la, T., *Beyond Brundtland. Green Development in the 1990s* (London: Zed Press, 1990). Martin Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Duke University Press, 1992); Wilfred Beckerman, *The Poverty of Reason, Sustainable Development and Economic Growth* (Oakland CA: Independent Institute, 2002); Mike Hulme, *Why we Disagree about Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

results on the ground because it has been built up a fundamental contradiction. It has sought to balance the limitless growth with adequate restrictions - such as regulation, taxation and emissions trading - that would trim down growth to manageable proportions. It has advocated both exuberant growth and puritan limits to growth. In other words, growth and no growth in one gesture. This rather wobbly *logos* has made many countries postpone the agenda of limits to a vague and distant future.

However, the main weakness of the vision of sustainable future has been the lack of mobilizing *mythos*. A comparative research project undertaken in Ghana, Norway and China, has shown that sustainable development, though a favorite mantra of NGOs, is secretly resisted by most cultural creatives – and by the public at large.¹² The reasons for this aversion are copious, but one which is often overlooked is that Gro Harlem Brundtland's team gave birth to a concept and a story that has not inspired: it delivered a document which has become the basis of an evasive UN-speak at international summits. For modern myth-makers – writers, journalists, visual artists - sustainability has been a verbal contraceptive. The authors of *Our Common Future* have overlooked that the most successful stories that have nourished our imagination since time immemorial have had little to do with *sustaining*. They flagged *exceeding, transgressing* and *excelling*. For centuries people all over the world have been captives of the myths of excessive goodness, badness, knowledge, curiosity, riches, love. In most world cosmologies and founding myths – from Adam and Eve Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Kuan Kung, to the Arabian Nights, King Midas and Dr Faustus, and on to modern soap operas and reality shows – humanity has been dreaming of boundless knowledge, fortune, power and fame. In short, we have been drawn to stories which have contributed to wrecking of the planet. We have been attracted to myths of boundless wealth, power and glory in the same way we are not drawn to the penitential story of renewable resources. Given the sex appeal of

¹² See CERES21.org

the stories of plenty, it has been rather difficult for the advocates of sustainability to face down the cavaliers of extravagance and abandon

Thus, when seen in narrative terms, sustainable development is in need of a mobilizing *mythos*. Just as the struggle for emancipation triumphed in liberal democracies because it rested on promising and upbeat ideas of the French *Encyclopédistes*, so the project of a sustainable revolution lacks compelling concepts, paroles, and protagonists that would capture the imagination of the rich and poor alike.

We believe that there is yet a third story – one which may be again more in tune with modern aspirations. The story is about transcending the “limits to growth” dilemma. It does so by turning limits into opportunities. It follows Albert Einstein’s motto: “Once we accept our limits, we can go beyond them.” It proposes growth by means of a new, “elemental economy” based on the power of the sun, water, and wind - resources which are in abundance. The logic suffusing this process is that of a fountain rather than a stagnant well: the surging water never vanishes but feeds into a new cascade. As the English poet William Blake has put it: “the cistern contains, the fountain overflows.” This is a story about the coming age of ecomodernity.¹³

There is a general sense that we are entering into a new phase of the modern project. “Postmodernity” – feted for the last thirty years by post-Marxist and post-colonial critics - is now increasingly visionless and exhausted by its own deconstructive zeal. Our age is the locus of an intense return to nature – not so much in the romantic sense which fostered the idea of a poetic genius in pursuit of a mystic enlightenment - but in the rational pragmatic sense; if we do not attend to climate and the environment, we shall perish.

¹³ William Blake, “Proverbs from Hell” in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*(1790; <http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/object.xq?objectid=mhh.i.illbk.01&java=yes>)

There is today a myriad of scholarly analyses which draft the contours of a new civilization based on a greener and kinder modernity.¹⁴ They talk about “ecological modernization,” “eco-efficiency,” “green growth,” “natural capitalism”. There are two problems with these concepts and scenarios. Firstly, they are ghettoized, reigning in compartmentalized domains such as management of resources, political economy, architecture, environmental activism, government policy, etc. Secondly, they hardly talk to one another. Green growth, ecological modernization and eco-efficiency are concepts that have been used mainly by techno-economists and sociologists to indicate a shift to a post-carbon capitalism.¹⁵ Ecological modernization has been co-opted to “ecologize” growth rather than avert to a greener society or culture. Literary “eco-criticism” appeals to a sect of progressive literary scholars but appears to be a mumbo jumbo to everybody else. The old “environmentalism,” popularly associated with vegetarian taste, whale protection and counter-globalization movement, is often treated as a project of noble losers.

Ecomodernity is an umbrella term that brings these movements and visions together and interrogates them as part of the same cultural commons. In this sense it is meta-concept

¹⁴E.g. Martin Jaenicke and H. Weideber (eds) *National Environmental Politics: A Comparative Study of Capacity-Building* (Berlin: Springer, 1986); Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage; 1992); Beck et al, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); Beck, “Climate for Change, or How to Create a Green Modernity”, 2000 ([Chttp://tcs.sagepub.com/content/27/2-3/254](http://tcs.sagepub.com/content/27/2-3/254)); Peter Christoff, “Ecological Modernization, Ecological Modernities” in *Environmental Politics*, 5 (3) 1996); John Dryzek, *The Politics of The Earth. Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Robin Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: UCL Press, 1996); Ernst U. Von Weizsacker, *Factor Four: Creating Wealth and Halving Resource Use. A Report to the Club of Rome* (Oxford: Earthscan, 1998) ; Stephen Young, *The Emergence of Ecological Modernization* (London: Routledge, 2000); Anders R. Edwards, *The Sustainability Revolution: Portrait of a Paradigm Shift* (Gabiola Island: New Society Publishers 2005); Anthony Giddens, *The Politics of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth* (Londo: Routledge, 2009); Maarten A. Hajer and Frank Fischer, *Living with Nature: Environmental Politics as a Cultural Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999); Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995);); Hawken et al, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* (Backbay Books, 2008); Jonathan Porrit, *Capitalism: As if the World Matters* (Oxford: Earthscan, 2012).

¹⁵ Out of some 1600 hits from the google search, “eco-efficiency” and “ecological modernization” have been in used mainly by economists and writers of handbooks for corporate governance. It looks like the green transition hijacked by technocrats before the humanists said yes or no.

which codifies the Zeitgeist of the 21st century. We realize that it may be greeted by some as just another word. But, as Quentin Skinner argues – and the success of the American Dream demonstrates - words are not only *saying* things, they are *doing things to us* as well.¹⁶ What does, then, ecomodernity do to us that sustainability does not?

Ecomodernity overcomes, in one “sound gesture”, the legendary apartheid between modernity and nature. The prefix eco – from Greek *oikos* or house - tempers the carbon modernity’s Faustian ambitions and brings it back to the terrestrial home and community. Ecomodernity invites economy, polity and culture to talk to one another, to be part the same household and to share a project of making human and environmental well-being their priority. Most importantly in our context, unlike sustainable development - which talks about limitations - ecomodernity shifts focus to opportunities. It involves our participation in a longed-for environmental and humanist humanist perestroyka which insists on a comprehensive cleaning of the air, water – as well as human minds - from modern poisons. It demands a humanization of medicine, pharmaceutical industry and food production. It insists that issues of health and human and environmental well-being cannot be separated from politics. Last but not least, it announces an aesthetic renewal: it aspires to bring beauty and nature back into education, philosophy, literature, music and the arts.

Ecomodernity’s semantic root gestures towards continuity with the modern project. Again, those who associate modern values with Western imperialism, may protest that this concept threatens to be yet another ethnocentric imposition. However, from a biased Norwegian perspective – one stemming from a modern social democracy which, according to UN, has generated the “best country to live in”¹⁷ - we wish the gifts of modernity to stay. There are

¹⁶ On the performative role of words see Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ In 2012 Norway, for the fifth time in a row, has been declared the “best country to live in”, according the UN human development index. The UN assesses countries according to a measure of well-being expressed in life expectancy, literacy rates, school enrollment, and in country economies. See Nina Witoszek, *The Origins of the Regime of Goodness: Remapping the Norwegian Cultural History* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 2011).

multiple reasons for which most people would wish to continue to draw on the treasure of the modern humanist agenda as it is preached and practiced in Scandinavia - a corner of the world where justice, equality, human rights and freedoms, care for the underdog, and the importance of critical inquiry are not just empty rhetorics but actual reality, however incomplete and fragile. At the same time, however, it has to be recognized that even here, the greatest challenge of ecomodernity – one which lies in the cultural domain - has not been addressed. Norway is especially interesting because the intense, national romance with nature as a “home” and a national symbol, coexists with a compelling story of an oil-driven “fairy tale” which is supposed to guarantee a sustainable world for future generations.¹⁸ As has been observed at the Arne Næss Symposium 2013, “a popular set of textbooks of our secondary schools frame Norway’s extraction of oil and gas in a positive and adventurous light. They portray oil as a national treasure, and frequently use the trope ‘oil adventure’. In these books, the oil find on Christmas Eve in 1969 is called the “biggest Christmas present ever”.¹⁹

This narrative schizophrenia is the best testimony to Paul Ehrlich’s insistent reminder that “our mind has been profoundly mismatched with modern civilization.”²⁰

How does ecomodernity manifest itself in the economy, politics and culture? To start from economy, the advocates of ecomodernity envisage the firm as a potential agent of change and eco-innovation which fosters new industrial fields. The latter includes transition towards renewable resources, where growth meets fewer limitations. Ecomodernity flaunts the project of investing in resource efficiency and recycling of all products and materials. It preaches and practices expansion of services and the experience economy (where projects related to care

¹⁸ See Nina Witoszek, *The Origins of the Regime of Goodness. Remapping Norwegian Cultural History* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011). See also the Statoil advertisement flaunting the oil fairy tale: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/Watchdog-clears-Statoil-adventure-advert-2923532.html>

¹⁹ Eivind Trædal, «The Young Researchers Challenge», Arne Naess Symposium 2013, SUM, Oslo University.

²⁰ Ehrlich, p. 11.

and aesthetics replace further growth in material goods). The green reorientation of the economy is facilitated by improved methods of resource accounting, as well as further development of life cycle analysis, to mention but a few.

While the era of liberalisation in the 1980s and 1990s emphasized deregulation and efficiency, the emerging era of ecomodernity highlights innovation and transformation. With its focus on green welfare transition, the story of ecomodernity – stressing stimulus rather than restriction - entails a policy of incentives. The core of the story is *opening up, unfolding, diversifying*: Innovation and deployment policies lead to new business options and open up new avenues for a better life. Many sectors of the economy are moving from centralised supply towards decentralized demand side solutions. As user needs are served by a supply of diversified solutions, ecomodernity-inspired business – for instance in the energy sector - brings in energy efficiency and alternative, on-site green production, which reduces consumption of centrally produced energy. While the old economy may experience ecomodernity as chaotic and disruptive, new emerging businesses - and old businesses capable of transformation - see opportunities. In short, there is an ongoing “battle of modernities” where ecomodernity is one of the new and increasingly influential contenders²¹.

In the political realm ecomodernity entails an active civil society that makes use of new communication opportunities facilitated by old and new media. A new “monitory democracy” – flaunting “independent minded, authority testing citizens”²² comes to supplement parliamentary democracy as a major channel of governance. The crucial role played by media and civic engagement shifts the focus from Montesquieu’s traditional power balance between the three branches of the state - executive, legislative and judiciary - to the

²¹ Atle Midttun “The Greening of European Electricity Industry: A Battle of Modernities” *Energy Policy* vol 48, September 2012.

²² See Lars Trägårdh, Nina Witoszek and Bron Taylor, *Civil Society in the Age of Monitory Democracy* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), p. 6.

power balance between the state, business and civil society. This is a Montesquieu model of balance for the 21st century²³.

At a more advanced level – in mature economies - ecomodernity may have to revisit its own visions and the relations between its goals and means. The reasons for this project are easy to imagine: The original purpose of the economy has been to provide livelihood and a material and service fundament for well-being. Since well-being is difficult to measure, a more tangible criterion of “economic growth” has become proxy measure. In this way a key performance indicator, involving remuneration and prestige, has taken on a life of its own. Following important initiatives from leading Nobel Prize winners to stop “mis-measuring our lives”²⁴, ecomodernity will entail further exploration of avenues to restore meaningful goals for business and the economy. The front- runners in this endeavor include the foreign minister of Bhutan, Mr. Thinley, who proposes to replace the concept of gross national product with gross national happiness.

In the cultural realm, ecomodernity has been making a sluggish, but increasingly notable entrance. Certainly “postmodernity” – feted for the last thirty years has turned out to be rather visionless and exhausted by its own deconstructive zeal. As we are writing, there are environmental actions and initiatives going on in all corners of the world. There is interest in eco-architecture, eco-design and transition towns. There are films like Avatar which, however marred by the Hollywood cliches, attempt to draft a compelling environmental utopia. There are poignant ecomodern masterpieces – such as Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* or Amitav Ghosh’s *Hungry Tide* – which map out the contours of the coming environmental apocalypse and speak about the meaning and fragility of place.

²³ See Atle Midttun : “Civil Society as a Driver of Governance Innovation: A Montesquieu Perspective” Chapter 12 in Lars Trägårdh, Nina Witoszek et al. (eds): *Civil Society in the Age of Monitory Democracy*..

²⁴ Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, Jean Paul Fitoussi, *Mismeasuring our Lives: Why GDP doesn't Add Up* (London, New York: New Press, 2010).

These are all signs and symptoms of a new mindset. In order to make it robust we would need a cultural project starting from a redefinition of modern identity: no longer a mere *homo economicus* - a rational, interest driven being. Rather, a *caring creative*: a *homo curator* who believes more in adaptation than radical revolution, invests more in green, public-minded innovation and entrepreneurship and less in competitive rivalry over scarce resources.²⁵ The caring creative advocates solidarity and “dugnad” as more efficient than individualist and fragmented initiatives. Finally, the caring creative searches not just for knowledge, but for wisdom, i.e. the ability to employ a long term perspective and to act in such a manner that the consequences of one’s actions enhance the well-being and flourishing of humans and nature.²⁶

To conclude: Ecomodernity – based on an overarching vision and a synergic “coalition of the willing” in the realms of culture, business and politics - is a challenge. It is far from being a monolithic project; it is an ongoing battle of the books, ideas and stories of a greener future, a battle which is carried in different languages and idioms. As we have tried to argue in our Aristotelian, persuasion-oriented preamble, the way forward it is to drop the negative, “puritan” tales and tell stories that chime with people’s dreams and aspirations. As we have argued, “positive” narratives are not just “comforting lies”; they have a basis in solid research that points to imaginative and profitable ways of facing the environmental crisis. We hope that ecomodernity as a story - even if still in the making – has the right balance of ethos, pathos, logos and mythos, and offers enough opportunities to inspire a Chinese businessman, a Norwegian composer and a Ghanaian politician to work on saving life on Earth.

²⁵ Interestingly enough, in a study of the ten richest Norwegian business tycoons, the author Hanne Lisa Mats, has found out that most of them like to define themselves as “caring creative”. See Hanne Lisa Mats, “Eco-narratives and the Norwegian Financial Elites”, Master Thesis (SUM: University of Oslo, 2013):

²⁶ This is a modified and extended ethics of responsibility as outlined by Hans Jonas. Drawing on the Judeo-Christian concept of «stewardship», Jonas postulated that we should not jeopardize the conditions for an indefinite continuation of mankind. By contrast, the ecomodern agenda as we envisage it, would stress the well-being of human natural world and the transformative and life-enhancing aspect of the project. See Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility. In Search for an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.11.