A Rationale for the Study of Unconscious Motivations of Climate Change, and How Ritual Practices Can Promote Pro-environmental Behaviour

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Abstract

Rationalist approaches to environmental problems such as climate change apply an information deficit model, assuming that if people understand what needs to be done they will act rationally. However, applying a knowledge deficit hypothesis often fails to recognize unconscious motivations revealed by social psychology, cognitive science, and behavioral economics. Applying ecosystems science, data collection, economic incentives, and public education are necessary for solving problems such as climate change, but they are not sufficient. Climate change discourse makes us aware of our mortality and prompts consumerism as a social psychological defensive strategy, which is counterproductive to pro-environmental behavior. Studies in terror management theory, applied to the study of ritual and ecological conscience formation, suggest that ritual expressions of giving thanks can have significant social psychological effects in relation to overconsumption driving climate change. Primary data gathering informing this work included participant observation and interviews with contemporary Heathens in Canada from 2018–2019.

Keywords

climate change discourse – ecological conscience formation – ecological habitus – pro-environmental behavior – terror management theory

Most approaches to environmentalism typically assume that individuals will respond rationally to economic incentives, appropriately framed arguments, and/or scientific knowledge. While scientific knowledge is crucial for understanding the nature, scope, and urgency of ecological problems, it is insufficient for motivating changes in behaviour and politics (Meadows et al. 2004:271). Strategies that privilege the rational-instrumental agency of individuals as consumers or citizens are premised on a partial understanding of human motivation and behaviour that underrates unconscious motivations of behaviour. Problems with this are evident in climate change discourse.

It is increasingly apparent that climate change poses a significant threat to humanity (Gerten et al. 2013, Hansen et al. 2016, Scheffers et al. 2016, Pecl et al. 2017, Schleussner et al. 2017, Dosio et al. 2018, Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018, Ripple et al. 2019). However, the more we are presented with this information, the less likely we are to act on it (Kellstedt et al. 2008:120, Pidgeon 2012, Stoknes 2014). Talking about climate change makes us aware of the fact that we are going to die, and social psychological research in the area known as “terror management theory” finds that this mortality salience prompts psychologically defensive strategies that are significantly counterproductive to environmentalism. However, rituals of giving thanks and the felt experience of gratitude they engender through tacit learning may be effective in generating pro-environmental behaviour.

1 The Limits of Reason

Numerous studies have identified a persistent gap between knowledge and changes in behaviour (Geller 1981, Geller et al. 1983, Finger 1994, Kennedy et al. 2009). Social scientists refer to the supposition that rational action follows knowledge as the “information” or “knowledge deficit hypothesis” (Norgaard 2011), or sometimes simply “the deficit model” (Sturgis and Allum 2004, Stoknes 2014). However, as knowledge about global warming increases, acting on concern about it decreases (Kellstedt et al. 2008:120). It is increasingly evident in climate change discourse that public education is insufficient, and can in fact exacerbate environmental problems. Knowledge about problems on this scale brings paralyzing guilt, fear, and a sense of helplessness (O'Neill 2009, Norgaard 2011, Stoknes 2014, Seymour 2018).

It is not just a matter of information deficit. Social and psychological analysis are just as important as the physical sciences (Stoknes 2014:162). New models in psychology acknowledge conscious and unconscious motivations of human behaviour, and have led to some interesting research on the importance of mes-

sage framing and the removal of barriers to change (Hoffman 2015, Cheng et al. 2011, Davis 1995, McKenzie-Mohr 2000, Pelletier and Sharp, 2008), and the social organization of climate change denial (Norgaard 2011), but scant empirical research exists on unconscious value formation and how it relates to ecologically responsible behaviour.

The knowledge deficit hypothesis is closely tied to the idea of *Homo economicus*, an ontological model of the human as rationally self-interested. Historically in Western philosophy “ontology” refers to the study of being, the nature of human being, subjectivity, or what it means to be a self, epitomized in Descartes *cogito*. This individualized ontology has been extensively critiqued in philosophy and anthropology, but people keep arguing against it because these critiques have had little impact on the material world of economics and politics in which people are still routinely assumed to be rationally self-interested individuals. Edmund Husserl, and later Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) developed a highly influential phenomenological critique of the Cartesian subject and the modern self, which influenced Gregory Bateson’s *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), and subsequent models of the self in deep ecology, ecofeminism, and ecopsychology (see Roszak et al. 1995 for an overview). Phenomenology also inspired work in intersubjectivity such as Martin Buber’s (1970) I-Thou relations, and Emmanuel Levinas’ (1969, 1998) understanding of ethical subjectivity, as well as Bruno Latour’s (2005) development of actor network theory. Latour’s writings have stimulated fruitful dialogues with anthropologies of Indigenous ontologies. Much of this literature is well known within the environmental humanities, but has had little impact more broadly in environment studies and environmental science, and less still in politics and economics.

Some economists are critical of the presumption of rational self-interest, and the common assumption among economists that markets function best when rational self-interest is pursued unchecked. Political economist Karl Polanyi (1948) argued that society cannot function without social strictures on exchange, resulting in the concomitant formation of state structures constraining market forces. Ecological economist Herman Daly and theologian John Cobb (1994:6), cautioned that faith in the capacity of economies to self-regulate displaces ethical concerns. More recently, political scientist William Ophuls (2011) suggested that society functions only through the remaining traces of what he calls the “fossil lode” of virtue. Remnants of socially responsible, religiously inspired or enchanted views guide our actions less and less as rationalized economics continues to gain strength, with the disembedding of economies from social constraints (Davy and Quilley 2018).

This is not to say that solving environmental problems requires belief in God or can be remedied by individual virtue or acts of “ecopiety,” to use Sarah

McFarland Taylor's term. As she argues (McFarland Taylor 2019:215), government regulation and collective action are necessary, and far more efficient than individual actions in generating the large scale changes needed to deal with environmental problems such as climate change. Economic incentives can be useful in motivating the building of infrastructure such as public transit and renewable power generation options to enable changes in behaviour, because the alternative structures continue to exist after the initial incentive is removed. Non-infrastructure economic incentives demonstrably can shift behaviour, but are often ineffective in the longer term because when economic incentives are removed behaviour tends to revert, following unchanged underlying motivations (Katzev and Johnson 1987, Dwyer et al. 1993).

Mobilizing political will to implement effective changes requires operationalizing the pro-environmental values that most people consciously support, which are often subsumed by the unconscious motivations of consumerism in modern society. We might like to think that scientific knowledge and reason rule our decisions and direct policy making in secular society, but unconscious motivations have not been eradicated by rational analysis. Instead, we have spilt our worldview into a consciously recognized scientifically informed cognized worldview, which is generally pro-environmental in outlook, and an operationalized worldview unconsciously governing our behaviour, which is consumerist. Anthropologist Roy Rappaport (1979) distinguished between the cognized worldview people are aware of holding, and the operationalized worldview unconsciously shaping their behaviour, which is evident in modern industrial society with the gap between the rational scientific outlook and our failure to act on climate change, driven by unconsciously held values supporting consumerism.

The effects of unconscious motivations of human behaviour cannot be reasoned away. And, as Daly noted, citing Alfred North Whitehead, science has not yet dealt with how rationality undermines the influence of ethics (Daly 1999:9). More basically, there is no rational basis for getting from "is" to "ought." There are, however, nonrational ways of getting there—indeed, tacit learning is the usual way people develop conscience, first in imitation of existing societal patterns, and, later in the more participatory processes of tacit learning in ritual practice, among other unconscious or partially unconscious processes.

2 Unconscious Motivations

Research on message framing and behavioural economics explains a variety of unconscious factors influencing environmental behaviour, and recommends pragmatic approaches grounded in empirical research. Environmental sociologist Andrew Hoffman recognizes the limits of rational approaches, indicating that “increased knowledge tends to strengthen our position on climate change, regardless of what that position is” (Hoffman 2015:5). The wealth of information available on the internet and through social media does not make us better informed, but simply makes us more certain that we are right (Hoffman 2015:45). This indicates a need to address “the deeper ideological, cultural, and social filters that are triggered by this issue” (Hoffman 2015:5), the values and worldview that shape how people see the facts. Hence he focuses on message framing (see Hoffman 2015:62–63), offering pragmatic strategies for more effective knowledge translation and motivation through unconscious factors such as associative meanings grounded in the different symbol systems of cultural sub-groups and trusted authorities within them.

Similarly, research in behavioural economics recommends strategic approaches based on empirical findings about unconscious motivations to use nudging, choice architecture, and “priming” to produce pro-environmental behaviour. Psychologist Per Espen Stoknes explains, “Small changes in choice architecture, e.g. by shifting from an active choice to a passive choice by default, may have a large impact on consumer behavior, potentially even larger than that of economic incentives” (Stoknes 2014:167). Behavioural economist Daniel Kahneman explains how unconscious priming affects behaviour. Exposure to specific stimuli changes affect, or emotional disposition, and is reciprocal between reception of the prime and the physical effects such stimuli provoke. He illustrates this with examples of how changing facial expression changes affect: holding a pencil in one’s mouth gives the physical effect of smiling without knowing one is smiling, which makes comics seem funnier than to those told to hold their eyebrows together, which gives the effect of unconscious frowning (Kahneman 2011:53–54). Cognitive frame shifts can thus be triggered through bodily movement as a priming effect.

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff (2014: xiv) cites evidence from studies in neurolinguistic programming indicating that such associations are embedded in the physical structures of the brain, meaning that compartmentalization, or “biconceptualism” in Lakoff’s terms, is physiological. This explains how people can hold mutually exclusive views without generally being aware of doing so. This matters a great deal, because unconscious associative meanings can override discursive information such as our consciously held scientific knowledge:

“Facts matter enormously, but to be meaningful they must be framed in terms of their moral importance. Remember, you can only understand what the frames in your brain allow you to understand. If the facts don’t fit the frames in your brain, the frames in your brain stay and the facts are ignored or challenged or belittled” (Lakoff 2014: xiv).

The unconscious effects of the associative meanings of symbolic primes direct behaviour in specific ways. Money primes independence, selfishness, and individualism (Kahneman 2011:55–56). The pervasiveness of economic language in modern affluent society of terms such as “cost”, “pay”, “debt”, and “bottom line” etc. increasingly form people into *Homo economicus*, generating an economic habitus such that we are increasingly “consumers.” “Habitus” is a term used by sociologists Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu to indicate the personality structures generated by different societal configurations, somewhat like Emile Durkheim’s (1984) description of differing “collective consciences” within society with the division of labour. Anthropologists have developed various terms to express similar concepts, such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s (1966) “mentalities,” and more recently, different sorts of ontologies (see Holbraad & Pedersen 2017), but Bourdieu (1977:115) indicates that he sees “habitus” as more variable than interpretations of “mentalities” as culturally fixed. Different sub-cultures generate diverse habitus, but culturally dominant traditions exert generalized influences. Habitus is grown and shaped in each person, but this process of socialization takes place within shared systems of meaning. The dominant cultural system of modern society forms people into an economic habitus as consumers, and seems to be more effective in producing this habitus the more affluent people are (Norgaard 2011: loc 1146), but some sub-cultures are more resistant than others, some overtly counter-cultural, and some more effective in this than others.

Bourdieu indicates that habitus operates unconsciously (Bourdieu 1998:97–98). Sociologist Randolph Haluza-Delay, drawing together findings from informal and experiential learning in education literature with ethnographic research on social movements, finds that environmental organizations can shape ecological habitus (Haluza-Delay 2008). Haluza-Delay’s description of informal and incidental learning sounds much like Michael Polanyi’s (1974) “practical knowledge.” Haluza-Delay discusses it as tacit learning, a term Polanyi introduced. From Polanyi’s description, much of tacit learning is initially conscious, but subsides into subsidiary awareness. People learn values in this fashion, but core values are picked up through imitation without conscious awareness. It is just a matter of “how things are done,” unexamined rather than consciously adopted, but values can also be internalized, become second nature, through explicit instruction and enforcement.

Sociologist Kari Norgaard, in her ethnographic study of climate change denial in Norway, indicates that people have “separate mental categories” (Norgaard 2011: loc 795) for knowledge of climate change and daily life. She describes a disjunction between Norwegians’ “double reality” of everyday life in which climate change is ignored, and scientific understanding of the problem in terms of cognitive dissonance (Norgaard 2011: loc 196). This sounds like compartmentalization, although frame shifting would be another way to look at it when people know about the problem in an abstract way that is not “integrated into the sense of immediate reality” (Norgaard 2011: loc 800). She found that knowledge about climate change is socially organized such that it is perceived as a “distant” problem that is “outside the sphere of everyday reality” (Norgaard 2011: loc 917). The abstract knowledge is detached from our daily experience, and lacks direct motivational links to our behaviour. It is not that people experience cognitive dissonance between our actions that contribute to climate change and our knowledge about it, but that we generally are not aware of dissonance on this because our knowledge is compartmentalized and we repress knowledge that challenges our sense of self. Following Lakoff’s research, this compartmentalization (biconceptualism in his terms) is physically embodied in the firing of our neurons. Alternative priming can trigger cognitive shifting to activate pro-environmental values.

Developing an ecological habitus is partly a matter of shifting cognitive frames by making pro-environmental values salient, but also frames of reference through language-use and associative metaphors to activate different patterns of interaction by stimulating different neural pathways. The economic frame of mind has become more and more dominant, structuring habits of thought so pervasively that people typically do not notice, and misrecognize their worldview as scientific rather than consumerist. What people identify as their “way of life” can be reframed partly through conscious means, but tacit learning through embodied practice is common. An effective means of doing this is through ritual practice, but with regard to climate change discourse is also necessary to address how environmental fears stimulate unconscious defense of consumerism.

3 Unconscious Effects of Mortality Salience

Talking about climate change brings up feelings of helplessness and despair (Norgaard 2011: loc 881), which leads to apathy and repression of awareness of environmental problems. As deep ecologist Joanna Macy (1983) recognized, apathy is a defensive response to feeling pain from environmental awareness.

The Greek root *apatheia* means “refusal or inability to experience pain” (Norgaard 2011: loc 903), which psychotherapist Shierry Nichol森 describes as a normal defensive response to feeling overwhelmed (Norgaard 2011: loc 904). People block out awareness of climate change and other threats to protect their worldviews, shield themselves from fear and grief, and maintain their sense of self-worth (Norgaard 2011: loc 1355–1356).

Unfortunately, a great deal of media reporting and environmental discourse uses fear as a rhetorical strategy. Sensationalistic headlines and news stories grab consumer attention (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009:359). O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole's qualitative empirical study finds that images arousing fear raise awareness, but do not promote pro-environmental behaviour. People become desensitized over time, and apathy sets in regarding things that individual action cannot remedy (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009:363). People find nonthreatening images most inspiring for themselves, yet still suggest using images inspiring fear to motivate others (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009:369). The scary images that make climate change seem most important (images of starvation and famine, e.g.) are some of the ones that are least likely to make people feel like they can do anything about it (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009:373).

The fear of death activates value defense. A growing body of research in terror management theory demonstrates the significance of mortality salience on behaviour (Burke et al. 2010, Solomon et al. 2015). Social psychologists Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldon Solomon (1986) developed terror management theory to test cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker's (1962, 1973) ideas about mortality and existential anxiety. Terror management theory explains how thoughts of death and challenges to one's world view create a sense of threat to one's self-esteem by endangering the system in which self-worth is vested. More than 500 studies have now empirically tested the psychological effects of mortality salience (Solomon et al. 2015: 211). Making people aware of the fact we are going to die in modern industrial society usually prompts us to consume (Arndt et al. 2004). The dominant worldview of modernity is consumerism, so when we are reminded of the fact we are going to die this unconsciously makes us want to defend our worldview of consumerism by buying things. The resulting overconsumption is counterproductive in terms of promoting pro-environmental behaviour.

Talking to people about climate change, because it makes people aware of their own mortality, actually spurs them to consume more, which causes more damage (Dickinson 2009). However, some studies in terror management theory (Jonas et al. 2002, Cozzolino et al. 2004, Gailliot et al. 2008, Hirschberger et al. 2008) suggest specific ways to motivate pro-social behaviour through raising the salience of other values, such as helping, and tolerance in conjunction with

mortality salience. Mortality salience increases environmentalists' identification with pro-environmental values (Vess and Arndt 2008). Pro-environmental priming regarding waste disposal and common interest also increases pro-environmental behaviour (Fritzsche et al. 2010). My ethnographic study of contemporary Heathen ritual, conducted via participant observation and interviews from 2018–2019 in Canada, suggests that sharing, inclusion, generosity, and reciprocity can be similarly activated in ritual when these are part of practitioners' worldviews.

Terror management theory does not just indicate that we avoid thinking about scary things like climate change, but that mortality salience makes people actively hostile to new ideas, and makes us act more irresponsibly in terms of increasing consumption. Warnings about ecosystem collapse stimulate these fears, and thus worldview defense. We dismiss empirical data because we do not want to believe it applies to us. It makes us uncomfortable, so we make rationalizations about how it cannot be real, or cannot apply to us. This applies also to our knowledge of the findings of terror management theory and other studies of the unconscious motivations of human behaviour. We want to think we can be fully rational, that if we raise awareness of a problem it will go away, yet we remain unconsciously affected by mortality salience. While the effects can be dealt with temporarily by bringing the phenomena to mind, it returns into subsidiary awareness and continues to influence our behaviour, no matter how educated and rational we are. Medical professionals, public-health professionals, and statisticians have been shown to be just as prone to most unconscious effects as the general public (see Kahneman 2011:5, 81, 367, 369, 183). The fact that we continue to be influenced by unconscious factors regardless of education level means that rational argument alone is unlikely to result in the behavioural and political changes we need to curb emissions.

4 Why Ritual?

Ritual has the capacity to raise value salience, to negotiate and maintain value operationalization (Rappaport 1979, 1999, Seligman et al. 2008), and to initiate a process of what sociologist Tanya Luhrmann (1989) refers to as “interpretive drift.” Study of contemporary Heathen gifting rituals illustrates how ritual operationalizes environmental values and contributes to conscience formation and the development of ecological habitus.

We co-construct our habitus first in childhood learning of how to relate with others, but also participate in perpetuating and shaping habitus through our ongoing relations, sometimes more consciously than others. Ritual is one loca-

tion in which tacit learning of how to relate can be a more or less collaborative and participatory process of habitus construction and negotiation. It can also be more or less conscious, depending on the ritual and social context. We are often conscious of what groups we identify with, and act partly consciously to maintain in-group status, which may mean consciously choosing some actions as well as unconsciously following others. Ritual provides a context, a practice through which people navigate shared meaning.

When entering an unfamiliar field we lack the knowledge of how to get along in it, but over time our perspective shifts to fit new parameters, recognizing new patterns, and we fit ourselves to the norms we find and begin to share in the shaping of them. Luhmann describes this process as “interpretive drift,” and explains how the process can be initiated through ritual practice. She describes practitioners changing their beliefs as a process of interpretive drift that is “characteristic of many cultural processes, where ideas about the world becomes persuasive as a by-product of a practice” (Luhmann 1989:321). She likens it to the process of becoming a specialist: “when someone becomes a specialist, he finds his practice progressively more persuasive through the very process of interpreting and making sense of his involvement; this changing understanding may become progressively more opaque to outsiders” (Luhmann 1989:8, see also 312). Each specialization (academic or otherwise) in complex society develops its own collective conscience and habitus. This relates to Michael Polanyi’s (1974:18–20, 52–55) description of the development of personal knowledge in training scientists, which we might say generates a specialized habitus through a logic of practice, in a process of acculturating to the norms, expectations and habits of a specialization.

Participation in ritual can change habitus and ontology through tacit learning. Luhmann describes how “perception of [the practitioners’] world—what they noticed and experienced—altered, and the way they interpreted these perceptions altered They acquired the basic knowledge—common knowledge—and basic assumptions, sometimes explicitly articulated, other times implied, which affected the way they noticed and could observe the events around them” (Luhmann 1989:11). Changes in practice generate changes in what people notice, pay attention to, their perception, sense of patterns, how they interpret events, and rationalize what they are doing. She observed that “Intellectual and experiential changes shift in tandem, a ragged co-evolution of intellectual habits and phenomenological involvement” (Luhmann 1989:315). Interpretation and rationalization, through practice becomes personal knowledge, embodied knowledge acquired through tacit learning.

This is not a deliberate process, but one of picking up “intellectual habits” (Luhmann 1989:12). She indicates that interpretive drift is largely unconscious,

not articulated, but brought on through practice (Luhrmann 1989:316). It involves more than a shift in the language people use (Luhrmann 1989:315, 321). It is not just cognitive, not just a new interpretive framework, but a shift in ontology and habitus, though Luhrmann uses the term “interpretive” drift. It is an acculturative process of change, but not an entirely passive internalization of culture. It is an interactive, though not necessarily conscious ongoing collaboration. We do this partly through imitation, but also growing skills in ourselves, as Michael Polanyi describes of tacit learning of personal knowledge.

The habitus formed through processes of interpretive drift is not naturally logically coherent, nor is ontology generally in the modern world. People routinely shift discourses, or frames of reference, without any difficulty when shifting social roles in day to day life (Luhrmann 1989:8). It is only when we become aware of inconsistencies in our thought processes that we experience what Leon Festinger (1957) called “cognitive dissonance,” a term for the discomfort people feel when they discover logical inconsistencies in their beliefs, or between their beliefs and behaviour. Luhrmann quotes Festinger regarding people wanting to reduce dissonance: “The reality which impinges upon a person will exert changes in the direction of bringing the appropriate cognitive elements into correspondence with that reality” (Festinger, as cited in Luhrmann 1989:271). It is because of cognitive dissonance that people try to fit the facts to their cognitive frames, which accords with Lakoff’s discussion of this, and the climate change denial analysis of others. However, Luhrmann’s research indicates that people change their cognitive frames through the process of interpretive drift. This matters a great deal for understanding how to we might generate pro-environmental behaviour through encouraging ritual practices that generate ecological habitus.

To a degree, complex societies engender a differentiated and multimodal habitus that is context and role-sensitive. However, we also share an overarching and dominant individualized ontology that operates primarily in a logic of economization and consumerism. Economic metaphors and language dominate, and keep shifting our frame of reference back to economy. It is consumerism that is most often and consistently enacted in worldview defense when confronted with mortality salience in modern society.

However, my ethnographic research on inclusive Heathens in Canada finds that rituals of giving offerings to ancestors prompts gratitude for what people have, and reduces the desire to consume, as well as fostering a long view of history and sense of obligation to future generations. Giving offerings to the regenerative powers of the land (*genius loci*, or *landvaettir* in Heathen terms) generates a sense of responsibility to nonhuman others. Giving offerings makes one aware of what one has already received, and that all we can give is already

a gift to us from another part of systems we are embedded within, and that our “wastes” should also be gifts that feed others rather than poison or displace them. Giving offerings in this community supports a preference for ethical consumption, and prioritizes humane, pro-environmental production.

Heathen rituals of sharing drinks and making toasts give public recognition of the value of others that lessens the sting of mortality salience in building up a sense of relational worth (“self-esteem,” in terror management literature). My findings indicate that Heathen habitus supports a sense of self as more distributed, a relational ontology, that is less fragile than the individualized ontology terror management theory takes as the norm. There is reason to think that the effects of mortality salience are different in relational ontology. Contemporary Heathens are a particular sort of hybrid in living in modern society and emerging out of individualized ontologies, but forming incipient gift economies and expressing what I term a “gift ethic,” with an appreciation for what we receive from others, and desire to give in turn, sustaining social ecological systems as distributed networks of adaptive relations.

Ritual practice embeds tacit knowledge. Its bodily actions enact meaning and operationalize values. The bodily motions of ritual actions, such as physically sharing drinks and food, and giving gifts, matters because of the reciprocal ideomotor effects of unconscious priming (Kahneman 2011:53). As Lakoff explains, there are connections between metaphoric meanings and bodily actions such that metaphoric associations are embedded in the structures of our brains. Compartmentalism, or “biconceptualism” in his terms, is physical in our brains, and frame shifts can be triggered through bodily movement with priming effects. “Going through the motions” of ritual will have some effects even for those who start off feeling silly for doing it.

5 Conclusion

Climate change communications often raise mortality salience, which for most people prompts consumption. This psychological response cannot be combated by pointing out that it is irrational. Instead, it is necessary to raise the salience of pro-environmental values, and use resonant metaphors to get people to repeatedly publicly espouse them so that they become functional norms guiding behaviour. Ritual practices can initiate a process of interpretive drift toward ecological habitus by changing what we pay attention to, what patterns we notice, what we regard as important and real. It does not require a suspension of disbelief, just practice. But why should people who do not do ritual want to start? It can be pleasurable and convivial, and give a sense of

ontological security lacking in modern society. It can build social capital and community resilience, and contribute to social ecological resilience. It can generate ecological habitus. We can get there either by immersion, or by changing our practices. It sounds tautological to say that environmental practices generate environmental behaviour, but we can shape behaviour through stimulation of unconscious motivations by focusing on the pleasurable aspects of ritual activities, and how they make our lives better. We can use rationally informed practices to harness unconscious forces. This is abundantly clear from advertising, marketing, and public relations.

Modern society supports a dismissive attitude toward the emotional, psycho-social, and religious roots of human ethics. The rationalist assumption is that unconscious motivations are unimportant because they are irrational, that science and education will save us and that anyone who does not act on the basis of science is ignorant and foolish. But empirical science itself, in the form of experiments in social psychology, indicates that we are all motivated by unconscious factors, no matter how well educated we are. Not taking this into account allows the advertising industry to direct human society because they know all too well how easy it is to influence human behaviour through our unconscious motivations, using sex and the manipulation of self-esteem to get us to buy more than we need.

Environmental values have largely been mainstreamed, but they are not brought to mind as effectively as consumerist values. They are part of our cognized worldview, but not operationalized. To do this we need to understand what creates ecologically responsible attitudes and behaviour, and consistently and repeatedly inspire these in the general population. Empirical studies in cognitive science and social psychology, integrated with the broader historical perspective offered by anthropology, indicate that ethical sensibility develops in human populations through repetition and public endorsement of values using culturally resonant metaphors that frame values as part of identity or community membership. This needs to be done carefully, with attention to detail in communications, and ongoing assessment of the efficacy of campaigns, with national and regional variations as culturally appropriate.

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