

(Enquete-Kommission “Chancen und Risiken der Gentechnologie”). Worldwide, this committee was the first parliamentary group engaged in discussing the questions of gene technology in its various ways of application. In the course of two years (1984–1986) its members worked intensely on topics ranging from biological raw material supply to the release of genetically modified organisms in the environment, including recent developments in technology assessment. I present different positions on potential regulations and show how they are connected to epistemic and non-epistemic values held by members of the committee. I especially focus on the relationship between responsibility and knowledge, which was brought into the popular and political discourse mainly by Hans Jonas’ influential book *The Imperative of Responsibility - In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*.

The forgetting of the organism, the forgetting of experience: Values in conservation biology

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In this presentation I will analyze the ethical dimension of Conservation Biology. Conservation Biology emerged in the 1980s, linked to a specific problem: the biodiversity crisis. The foundational manuscript of this area, written by Soulé in 1985 and entitled “What is Conservation Biology?”, proposes that this field of study is based on ethical principles. Soulé argues, from an eco-centric point of view, that biodiversity has intrinsic value. More specifically, we will see that this value is mostly attributed to species and ecosystems. However, in the last decades, other anthropocentric perspectives have become relevant. These perspectives consider biodiversity in terms of goods and services for humans. Although both positions are apparently opposed, they have something in common: nonhuman organisms are not considered as intrinsically valuable. This leads to some practices devised by

animal protectionists, such as the use of the “sanitary rifle” in the management of some invasive species. In this research I will try to show that the “forgetting of the organism”, characteristic of different biological subdisciplines and also present in Conservation Biology, has several implications. In particular, I will propose that in forgetting organisms, Conservation Biology also forgets the singular relationships and experiences between people and biodiversity. In this way, the environmental issues concerning biodiversity are turned into “abstract” issues, detached from the emotional and experiential dimensions. These issues are now suited for a committee of experts, who decide what is valuable from “nowhere”.

What can species do?

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The biological term “species” is multifarious, inviting ad hoc redefinition in some contexts and ambiguity in others. Is that a bug or a feature? In his 2018 book *Species: The evolution of the idea*, Australian philosopher John Wilkins suggested species are particular “phenomena in need of explanation.” He concluded, among other things: “We arrange the data we acquire (through naïve or sophisticated techniques) in ways that make the patterns in the data tractable and useful. Species are just such patterns.” However, both scientific and popular accounts commonly refer to species as actors or agents. Species are understood to occupy ranges or territories, even to define the extents of places. They are considered threats or threatened, allies or enemies, resources, pests, keystones, umbrellas, flagships, indicators and invaders. Despite superficial similarities to aspects of natural theology, romanticism, “nature faking”, and biocentrism, it is difficult to argue that these are all just examples of a single persisting tradition. They seem, instead, to represent a recurring problem. If Wilkins is even approximately correct, biologists and their allies tolerate using “species” in disparate, even incommensurable ways extending to apparently absurd category mistakes. Strictly speaking, biological species may not do anything besides existing for awhile, making them dubious objects of evaluation or