

Institution: The University of Edinburgh
Unit of Assessment: 32 Philosophy
Title of case study: 'Embodied Values: An Ecological Metaphysics and Ethics'
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Phemister has developed a distinctive body of work that articulates a non-anthropocentric, ecological, relational metaphysics and ethics, a position that she describes as embodied values. This research has had a cultural impact on the artistic output of the prominent ecological artists, Tim Collins and Reiko Goto, in that it has explicitly informed not only their artistic thinking but also directly influenced the production of a particular, and significant, work of art. It has also had an impact on professional practice and theory, in virtue of its direct impact on the therapeutic approach of the respected Romanian psychotherapist, Dr. Alexandra Parvan, who is an influential theorist in her home country with regard to psychotherapeutic theory and practice.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Drawing upon her earlier work on the relevance of Leibniz's work to the philosophy of ecology, Phemister (appointed 2005, Reader since 2007; history of philosophy research cluster) has since the mid-2000s developed a distinctive body of work that articulates a position that she describes as <i>embodied values</i>. This involves a teleological, relational theory of space that is at once physical and psychical, arising not only from relations among the bodies of living creatures, but equally from relations deriving from their conative and perceptual qualities (primarily relations grounded in perceptions of beauty that give rise to feelings of love and a conception of justice as universal benevolence). Phemister's aim has been to find new ways of thinking about spaces and places in terms of their moral, aesthetic and spiritual values.</p> <p>This research led to a series of funded projects, starting in 2007 (see 'grants' below), with which Phemister was centrally involved and which provided her with an opportunity to engage with others interested in ecological issues, not just outside of her subject area, but also outside of academia altogether, such as artists and practising psychotherapists. Both of the finished projects have been judged to have been completed successfully by the relevant funding bodies. This body of research, which has been extensively presented and disseminated to both academic and non-academic interested parties since the mid-2000s, has since been published by internationally respected publishers and in peer-reviewed journals (Phemister 2010; 2011; Brady & Phemister 2012).</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>PUBLICATIONS</p> <p>Phemister, P. (2010). 'Monads and Machines.' In E. H. Smith & O. Nachtomy (eds.), <i>Machines of Nature and Corporeal Substances in Leibniz</i> (The New Historical Synthese Library, vol. 67), 39-60, Dordrecht: Springer. [Included in REF submission]</p> <p>Phemister, P. (2011). 'Relational Space and Places of Value', <i>Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy</i> 14: 89-106. [Included in REF submission]</p> <p>Brady, E., & Phemister, P. (eds.) (2012). <i>Human-Environment Relations: Transformative Values in Theory and Practice</i>, Dordrecht: Springer. [DOI: 10.1007/978-94-007-2825-7]</p> <p>GRANTS</p> <p>2007-08: Co-Investigator, British Academy Workshop Grant, 'Embodied Values: An Exploratory and Critical Study of Reciprocal Transfers of Spiritual, Aesthetic and Ethical Values Between Humans and Environments', £6k [SG-46159].</p> <p>2009-12: Co-Investigator, Mellon Foundation Seminar Grant, 'Embodied Values: Bringing the Senses Back to the Environment', £94k.</p>

2012-13: Principal Investigator, Leverhulme Research Fellowship, 'Philosophies of Nature: Environmental Philosophy After Leibniz', £45k [RF-2012-360].

4. Details of the impact

There are two impacts of Phemister's research on embodied values, one on artistic output and the other on psychotherapeutic theory and practice. In both cases there is clear evidence that the relevant non-academic parties did not merely engage with Phemister's research, but that it also directly influenced their professional practice in important and discernible ways.

(i) **Art**

The first example of impact concerns the artistic output of the prominent ecological artists Tim Collins and Reiko Goto (formerly research fellows at the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, CMU, Pittsburgh, and more recently involved in the EDEN3 five-year project, which brings together artists and scientists in understanding the biogenic interaction of trees with the changing environment and climate of cities; see corroboration [2], [3 a & b]). Collins and Goto participated in the 2007-08 British Academy 'Embodied Values' workshops with which Phemister was centrally involved (see 'grants' above and corroboration [4]). Since this time, Phemister has had many conversations with them, and particularly with Collins, on human-environment relations, especially those grounded in relations based on sympathy or empathy, the role of relations in the formation of individual identity, representation/mirroring, and the possibility of symbiotic transfers of values from humans to environment in places considered as 'value-places'. These interconnected concepts are foundational to the ecological metaphysics that Phemister has been expounding since the mid-2000s—see, especially, Phemister (2011). Accordingly, her work became very influential on Collins's thinking as an artist (and, through him, influential on the work of his main artistic collaborator, Goto, as well). As Collins himself noted, in a (transcribed) talk that he gave while he was a Visiting Fellow at Edinburgh's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) in 2010 (see corroboration [5 a & b]): "This is all very experimental work and the philosophy [...] on the video comes out of the conversations I was having with Pauline [*Phemister*]."

Phemister's research has also been instrumental in the development of new works of art. In particular, as Collins makes explicit in his written supporting testimony (see corroboration [1]), Phemister's work was crucial to the development of Collins & Goto's 'Plein Air: The Schelling Piper Experiments' artwork, exhibited in 2010 at the Peacock Centre in Aberdeen as part of the *Plein Air: The Ethical Aesthetic Impulse* exhibition. In his supporting testimony Collins writes that Phemister's "argument for the evolution of a space of relational value, a new conjoined responsibility that is the antithesis of dominion" influenced him to the extent that it "resulted in the production of new work", where by this he means the Collins & Goto 'Plein Air: The Schelling Piper Experiments' artwork. This is a multi-media installation monitoring the life of a single tree in Aberdeen city centre over a 24-hour period, and its response to atmospheric changes, in particular to the effect of CO₂ levels, as an experiential tangible interface with climate change. Data are translated into sounds and the multi-media exhibit is designed to be portable to public forests, gardens and parks. (See corroboration [1], [5 a & b], [6]).

Phemister's research on embodied values has thus not only influenced the work of two important contemporary artists, but directly led to the production of a significant and high-profile work of art.

(ii) **Psychotherapy**

The influential Romanian psychotherapist, Dr. Alexandra Parvan, of the Bucharest-based *Romanian Society for Experiential Psychotherapy—Societatea de Psihoterapie Experiențială Română* (SPER)—has been heavily influenced by Phemister's work on embodied values. As she notes in her written supporting testimony (see corroboration [7]), Phemister's research—in particular, Phemister (2011)—has had a "profound impact on my work as a mental health practitioner." She goes on to say that Phemister's research made her "more aware of the way I am experiencing my own self as being placed within what she [*Phemister*] calls 'physical' and 'psychical' spaces" and prompted her to "consciously explore my relation with the immediate environment and the consequences of my active or passive engagement with it." Phemister's

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research, she writes, “made me realise that philosophical ideas on human beings’ placedness or placed existence can constitute an important resource for psychotherapeutic work.” Given the prominence of Dr. Parvan within Romanian psychotherapeutic practitioners—through, in particular, her engagement with SPER, where she is a leading figure—the influence of Phemister’s research on how Dr. Parvan approaches her professional work has implications beyond her own individual therapeutic practices. (See corroboration [7], [8]).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

CITED LINKS (tinyurl links to archived web content hosted by HEI)

- [1] [Factual statement from an Ecological Artist: can confirm that Phemister’s research has had an influence on his art as described in this impact case study].
- [2] [<http://collinsandgoto.com/>] (or <http://tinyurl.com/lrkbkmv>): webpage for the artists Tim Collins and Reiko Goto which confirms the kind of artwork that they produce].
- [3a] [<http://eden3.net/>] (or <http://tinyurl.com/m9q82yk>): main webpage for the EDEN3 art project which Tim Collins and Reiko Goto are involved with and which involved the production of the art influenced by Phemister’s research];
- [3b] [<http://weadartists.org/scotland-plen-air>] (or <http://tinyurl.com/lzvwc8u>): webpage, part of the Women Environmental Artists Directory (WEAD), which discusses the EDEN3 project and also the specific artwork, *Plein Air: The Ethical Aesthetic Impulse*, which was produced by Tom Collins and Reiko Goto as part of this project, and which Phemister’s research influenced].
- [4] [www.ppls.ed.ac.uk/nature/] (or <http://tinyurl.com/msn8zd8>): webpage for the British Academy Embodied Values project, which Phemister ran and which the artists Tim Collins and Reiko Goto were involved with].
- [5a] [www.eden3.net/dialogue/index.html] (or <http://tinyurl.com/k5xekja>): webpage for the EDEN3 art project which introduces the transcripts of discussions with the artists Tim Collins and Reiko Goto, such as the discussion involving Phemister];
- [5b] [www.eden3.net/dialogue/2010/IASH25sep10.pdf] (or <http://tinyurl.com/ksckf7z>): transcript of Phemister’s discussion with the artist Tim Collins in which he discusses the influence of Phemister’s research on his art].
- [6] [<http://eden3.net/exhibitions/peacock/catalogues/GotoCollins-Peacock2010.pdf>] (or <http://tinyurl.com/kdzluog>): exhibition catalogue for artwork influence by Phemister’s research—*Plein Air: The Ethical Aesthetic Impulse*, by Reiko Goto and Tim Collins, (Peacock Visual Arts, 2010)].
- [7] [Factual statement from a Psychotherapist, at the *Societatea de Psihoterapie Experiențială Română* (SPER): can confirm that Phemister’s research has had the influence on her professional practice as described in this impact case study testimonial].
- [8] [<http://sper.ro/>] (or <http://tinyurl.com/khpn6ja>): webpage of the *Societatea de Psihoterapie Experiențială Română* (SPER), where the Psychotherapist works].