

Andreas Weber (2013):

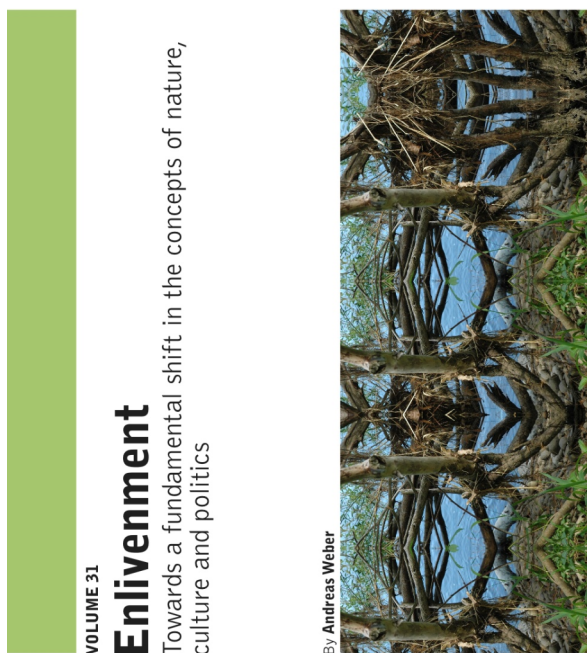
Enlivenment.

Towards a fundamental shift in the concepts of nature, culture and politics.

Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

People often call for "changing the system" and seek to reform the "free market" approach that turns everything, including life itself, into a commodity. But it is impossible to alter our prevailing "operating system" for economics, politics and culture if the underlying "bios" – our unexamined, foundational assumptions about reality – remain the same. And that is

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literally our biggest problem today: our understanding of "bios" -- the nature of life itself -- is wrong. Our civilisation operates as if reality is all about organising inert, dead matter in more efficient ways. This is the heritage of the Enlightenment, which claims that physical bodies are entirely separate from immaterial minds. Once this assumption is made, no serious systemic change is really possible, as much as we might try. This viewpoint has profound implications for what we call "environmental protection."

To suggest a more promising, alternative future, this essay proposes a new paradigm of "bios" called "Enlivenment." Based on recent research findings in the biological sciences, the idea of Enlivenment explains how nature -- and our role in it -- is irrefutably individualistic, cooperative, and centered on experiences and meaning. The world is not simply an elaborate machine driven by impersonal

macro-forces. It is *alive!* From an Enlivenment perspective, nature itself is a living commons. The biosphere is not just about various forms of competition, but equally about the commoning activities of a myriad of individual agents living in an ecosystem. This new perspective can help us realize that only an "enlivened" economy will be truly sustainable. Humans and the more-than-human world must realize that they both must struggle, always, to achieve a fuller aliveness. --Andreas Weber

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