Geoethics, a Philosophical Hybrid of European Origin

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European philosophies shape geoethics. The Culture-Nature-Dichotomy ("appropriate behaviours and practices, wherever human activities interact with the Earth system" [1; p.30]) and the associated anthropocentric interpretation of the human condition [1; p.58-60] is an example.

The European post-medieval cultural models [2, 3] led to engage early with scientific studies of Earth [4, 5], to merge science, research, engineering, economy and applied ethics into a massive societal venture [6, 7], and to shape global hegemonic societal practices [8, 9]. These developments provide the socio-historical foundation of geoethics. It implies depicting Culture and Nature differently, respectively using either idealistic or materialistic philosophies.

Tinted by European cultural models, geoethics is based on geosciences knowledge and applies philosophical materialism when inspecting Nature. However, geoethics displays philosophical idealism when inspecting Culture, e.g. the virtuous individual's societal role [1; p.33-43]. Recently, an academic noticed: "not even a single word [in geoethics] about the structural determinations upon individuals in the particular form of social organisation where they live [a]." Such a critical view (absence to apply philosophical materialism) is valuable when considering that geoethics aims to advise about "appropriate [socio-historical/cultural] behaviours and practices".

Such considerations point at the need to re-inspect the philosophical basis of geoethics. Merely being 'tinted' by European cultural models is unsatisfying. Instead, analyses should show whether to apply idealistic and materialistic philosophies. Investigating, for example, whether to inspect Culture like Nature using philosophical materialism, would test the consistency of the current philosophical hybrid, geoethics; subsequently, such analyses should elucidate geoethics' anthropocentric bearings.

[a] anonymous review published in Quaternary (2019); https://www.mdpi.com/2571-550X/2/2/19/review_report (1st round reviewer 2 report)