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Perceiving Cape-Town-Geoethics (CTG) through Symbolic Universes (SU)

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Cultural milieus determine the worldviews and practices of individuals and groups, including the reception of norms that guide them. Semiotic Cultural Psychological Theory (SCPT) methods, such as Symbolic Universes (SU), describe relationships of reception, worldviews and practice, which also applies to geo-philosophical matters [1]. This essay outlines how geoethics, for example, the Cape Town Geoethics (CTG), might be received in different cultural milieus.

The Cape Town Statement on Geoethics was proposed in 2016 at the 36th IGC [2] and is the most accessible resource on geoethics. It bundles various concepts in a Kantian/Aristotelian virtue ethics framework, illustrated, for example, by the Geoethical Promise [3].

The SU method describes the understanding, insights, and behaviour of groups of people expressing their respective cultural milieus. Extensive fieldwork identified five SU for people of European (Western) cultures [4]. The SUs called "Ordered Universe", "Interpersonal Bond", "Caring Society", "Niche of Belongingness", and "Others' World" categorise milieus, for example, in terms of relation to power and institutions or sources of trust. They corroborated with the Kohlberg hierarchy of the level of societal coordination [5] that is applicable to associate CTG and the worldviews of individuals and groups [6].

Comparing CTG and SU indicates: (1) CTG resonates most positively with people of the cultural milieu "Ordered Universe" (highest Kohlberg level); (2) in other milieus, the reception of the CTG will be "*measured*"; (3) reception will be adverse for the milieu "Others' World" (lowest Kohlberg level). Hence, considering the quantitative distribution of SUs (in Europe), European citizens' reception of CTG is likely restrained.

Given complex-adaptive social-ecological systems of the World and Nature couple world views, human practices, and societal and natural systems [7] (see example: [8]), whether variants of CTG "*fitted to different milieus*" should be developed is of practical relevance. The perception of norms and their acceptance or rejection is a system feature, of which geoethics should not be agnostic.

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