Starting points for research in the
impactDAO and ReFi space

Reframing encounter>>>

The goal of Nonhuman Inquiry Project is to initiate a research vector that would integrate applied philosophy of the nonhuman with design practices in regenerative finance and the impactDAO space. For now the project is the sole work of myself,[1] though my highest hope is that it "goes viral," becomes contagious as a hub for nonhumanist researchers, eventually to the point of embodying its own insights in the form of a DAO or a collective.

A first principle of the project is the conviction that **empiricism** is a necessary precursor to and generator of ethical action. Some seem to forget that empiricism has a life and significance outside of the sciences. Though elements of the scientific method have become intractably entangled with the term, empiricism really means the belief that knowledge is gained from sensory-experience; that is, that knowledge comes from outside, that the knowledge-seeker should approach the world without prejudice, with an attitude of openness.

Those "intractables" of the scientific life of empiricism are, for the most part, wonderful: that sense-experience can be systematized & repeated, that it can be refined with the use of instruments/technology, and that it can benefit from rigorous processes of abstract reasoning. If adventurous curiosity and openness to the world *as it is* is the very foundation of ethics, we should consider these refined practices to be ethical technologies, technologies of informed, empathic experience. My first proposal is that the ReFi and ImpactDAO space take open investigation of the world to be a core mission, alongside and within the projects of reconceiving and delivering value and rethinking organization. Aid isn't enough, encounter is necessary.

First proposal: Organizations and individuals adopt an ethos of **aid** & **encounter**.

Many empiricisms>>>

There are those intractables that – effective as they are in the domain of scientific empiricism – can and should be shed when thinking about empiricism as such. The emphasis on objectivity, and the effacement or discrediting of interior, subjective experience that follows is perfectly appropriate in the domain of the sciences. In fact, supremacist or chauvinist worldviews have often suffered or been outright toppled by the discipline's gestures to objectivity and measurement. When thoughtlessly applied outside of its proper domain, this conviction becomes perverse and destructive. In fact, this misapplication of the thesis of objectivity has propped up a supremacist ideology – a **human chauvinism** - that has led to species and ecosystem catastrophe that we should expect to continue as long as it remains. Something, our very conception of "the thing," has to change.

Core to the thesis of Regenerative Finance is the assertion that **value is multidimensional**, taking many forms, and that capital should reflect that nuance. We recognize the sinister capacity for financial capital to not only erase other conceptions of value, but to naturalize itself in a way that conceals that erasure and **closes the conversation on alternatives**. And we saw that a solution could be to take the positive elements of financialization, its game theory and its precision in coordination, and use it to expand and pluralize our societies' practical relationship to value.

If we suffer from an analogous issue with regard to empiricism, the solution is the same. Where the sciences may depend on the effacement of interior life, selling short internal dimensions of empowerment, enlightenment, gnosis, and harmony that are essential to peaceful and pluralist worlds, it can be supplemented and expanded by **other empiricisms** which borrow its best and most permissive practices while counterbalancing its prejudices. It may be useful to think of the scientific position as an

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1 **Ens**: exeunt.eth **twitter**: @_exeuntomnes **discord**: detactical

exoteric empiricism – accounting for important dimensions of discovery and truth, but nonetheless only a piece of the holistic or integrated ethical practice our moment demands. Against human chauvinism, the second proposal is for the discovery and labor of an **esoteric empiricism**, that is, a rigorous experimental method which foregrounds the unspeakable or unaccountable interior lives of people and groups as valid compasses for instituting or regularizing just practices.[2]

The fields of psychedelic research and ecology, as well some inner life-oriented religious traditions, offer examples of such an approach: Terrence McKenna's **True Hallucinations** reads as a kind of psychic-interior ethnography, recounting experiments with hallucinogens from a deeply rational perspective. The practice manages to be wonderfully thorough in its nonobjectivity, toiling away in abstract reasoning without ever discrediting or reducing its many non-ordinary individual or group experiences. Shunyru Suzuki's **Zen Mind, Beginners Mind** is an example of a book which recommends practices for achieving transcendence with a deeply empirical, though non-scientific, rigor. ReFi and ImpactDAOs could borrow from this type of literature to develop language for understanding and communicating subjective or group-subjective experiences, especially those that come from open encounters with the nonhuman world. If we don't develop the tools to talk about these things, we will never be able to learn from or repeat them.

Second proposal: Organizations and individuals take seriously subjective and intersubjective results of encounter as guideposts for action and transformation.

The nonhuman>>>

Finally, as a kind of summation, I want to propose that the ReFi and ImpactDAO space work to shed the filtered lens of an anthropocentric cosmos, that we develop an empirically-grounded interest in the plurality of nonhuman entities, be they biological organisms, ecosystems, weather systems, geological processes, concepts, memes. Decentering the human means taking the existence and metaphysical validity of these entities seriously, as peers and wellsprings of organizational inspiration. Doing this work, as I hope I've argued, is an ethical prerogative that will support and enhance our expanded vision of value and our attempts at building harmony and **interdependence** with a many-worlded earth. Unrestrained by the burden of objective facticity, nothing stops us from engaging the world with a creative, results-based lens that can reveal, borrow, or forge new modes of organism and organization, in experiments and adventures of bio-socio-ideomimesis.

Third proposal: Orgs and individuals use refined, empirical practices of encounter to build mimetic and empathic bridges of solidarity with the nonhuman world.

These more abstract claims and proposals are preliminary or probationary by design. Too many of the conceptual forebears of this expanded vision of realism have fallen into traps of magical thinking or cult-like group think, not remembering ethos of balance and pragmatic action that make virtual notions actual. The more remote or alien to our shared overton windows, the more they should be expected to prove their value as recommendations of **pragmatic action**. That in mind, I hope to propose three research vectors which might aid the development of new capacities for **encounter** in web3.

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2 My suspicion is that the koan-like, nondualistic character of gnostic or empowered experiences might point the way to semantic upheaval, forging mysterious negotiations of self-possession and joyful abandon, discipline and freedom… but that's just my suspicion.

Tl;dr
First proposal: Empiricism, a worldview that calls for open, direct engagement with the world without prejudice or assumption, is the foundation of practical ethics.
Second proposal: Empirical methods can be extended beyond the domain of science, and multiple applications of empirical principles of rigor and investigation – esp. in subjective or esoteric realms – will be necessary in the struggle for peace and pluralism.
Third proposal: A holistic empirical practice will inevitably direct us to nonhuman worlds, where principles of organizational design and patterned behavior, won by contagion and mimesis, conspire to make us more free.