



Grieving nature in a time of climate change

*An eco-feminist reflection on the contemporary
responses towards eco-grief from a perspective of
injustice*

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to offer a critique of the current responses to a recent phenomenon people are calling ‘eco-grief’. Ecological grief, or eco-grief is “the grief, pain, sadness or suffering that people identify as experiencing when they lose a beloved ecosystem, species or place (Is Climate 2019). More people nowadays seem to express the emotion in the face of accelerating climate change; examples can be found in climate science communities, indigenous cultures and among younger generations. These experiences of eco-grief are however often dismissed as a personal mental health issue and are criticised for being de-motivating. In this thesis I argue that rejecting expressions of eco-grief is not only unwarranted, but also unjust, because this constitutes both an affective and epistemic injustice. In so doing, this thesis points to the wider value that can be gained from reflecting on the barriers to its expression.

Key words: eco-grief, climate change, injustice, eco-feminism

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Introduction

Climate scientists have warned us for decades about human-induced climate change¹ and the impending climate crisis that will result from it (Le Treut et al. 2005). It is becoming increasingly clear that climate change is one of the most demanding contemporary challenges, as it essentially threatens everything we care about: a home on planet Earth, be it for humans, non-human animals, plants, or entire ecosystems.² The world we all live in is already becoming uninhabitable for certain species, as biologists are now reporting that we have entered a sixth mass extinction wave of animal populations and other bodies of nature caused by human activity (Ripple et al. 2017). Scientists agree that we have less than two decades to minimize greenhouse gas emissions if we want to limit the warming of the planet to 1,5 degrees Celsius in order to minimize catastrophic outcomes and prevent Earth from becoming uninhabitable for many more (Masson-Delmotte et al. 2018). Although the facts are undeniably clear and many solutions have already been proposed to reach this goal, we have as yet failed to adequately respond to the imminent climate crisis and we even continue to see a rise in global carbon dioxide levels (UN 2020). Because of the current grave situation and the knowledge that it is highly likely to only worsen in the future, people are now starting to express feelings of ecological grief, or ‘eco-grief’, which is the grief, pain, sadness, or suffering that one may experience as a response to the inevitable loss and environmental degradation of meaningful places, species and ecosystems (Is Climate 2019).

Take for example the 17-year old Swedish Greta Thunberg, whose emotional climate strike actions and speeches have inspired climate protests worldwide, especially among younger generations. Thunberg stated that she was eight years old when she started learning about the changing climate. She was shocked to hear that adults did not seem to take the issue seriously which became a significant factor to her falling into depression.³ Other examples of individuals who have come out with experiences of ecological grief are to be found among those who live close to nature, such as people from indigenous cultures. For them, eco-grief is also connected to a loss of identity, because of the knowledge that their natural environment which is closely connected to their way of life will only

¹ In this thesis, further references to climate change refer to human-induced climate change.

² For me, climate change is a scientific fact rather than an opinion, though there are still those few that question this. The purpose of this thesis is therefore not to prove that climate change is real, knowing that 97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree that humans are causing global warming and climate change (Cook et al. 2016, p. 6).

³ Quoting Thunberg: “Some people can just let things go, but I can’t, especially if there’s something that worries me or makes me sad. I remember when I was younger, and in school, our teachers showed us films of plastic in the ocean, starving polar bears and so on. I cried through all the movies. My classmates were concerned when they watched the film, but when it stopped, they started thinking about other things. I couldn’t do that. Those pictures were stuck in my head [and] I just wondered if I am going to have a future” (Watts 2019).

degrade further. As quoted by one Inuit elder: “We are people of the sea ice. And if there’s no more sea ice, how do we be people of the sea ice?” (Vince 2020). Another example of a group of people who are also starting to speak up about how they are dealing with a profound sense of loss as the climate crisis worsens are climate scientists. They witness the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss first hand in their research, often also over very short periods of time. Those who study the decline of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef for instance now report that they have come to experience feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and despair (Conroy 2019).

These expressions of eco-grief are however often dismissed as a personal mental health issue and are criticised for being de-motivating. There are strong social pressures to remain positive about the future and there is a dominant tendency is “to focus public policy and action on the most optimistic end of the spectrum of possibilities” (Head 2016, p.2) even when the evidence indicates a high chance of catastrophic scenarios. The anxieties of so-called ‘doom and gloom’ griever of nature are, as a result, labelled as a problem belonging to the private sphere as they are told to seek medical help to get over their depressed state of being (Shellenberger 2019, *Why Climate*). This dominant discourse of optimism is supported in the philosophical account “Climate change: Against despair” by McKinnon, in which she argues that our attitude toward climate change should be built upon the positive emotion of hope and that we are therefore obliged to overcome any unfitting and unhelpful feelings of despair (McKinnon 2014).

As a result, Thunberg and her following are met with immense critical judgement, as people warn that her eco-alarmism brings about harmful consequences for children, as they are now developing mental health disorders at an increasingly younger age (Plautz 2020). Climate science researchers face similar pressures not to express any feelings of eco-grief, as allowing such feelings would result into “scientists being overly sensitive, unprofessional or letting their emotions get in the way of their work” (Nexus 2019). Moreover, the eco-grief that indigenous people now claim to experience and the interlinked worry about their loss of identity is largely unacknowledged as an urgent problem in most public discourse (Environment For).

In this thesis, I argue that such responses of dismissal and disapproval of feelings of eco-grief are not justified. I do this by examining the extent to which these current responses constitute both affective and epistemic injustices and by analyzing the wider valuable insights that can be extracted from reflecting on the obstructions to its expression. In so doing, I draw on the feminist philosophical accounts of Amia Srinivasan and her remarks on affective injustice, Shiloh Whitney and the idea of affective marginalization and Alison M. Jaggar’s views on the value of emotions in epistemology, that I link to Miranda Fricker’s concept of epistemic injustice (Srinivasan 2017, Whitney 2018, Jaggar 1989, Fricker 2007). My argument follows from an eco-feminist perspective, from which I argue that eco-grief is an instrumentally apt emotion in the context of climate change, because it can help us cultivate more interconnected and sustainable relationships with non-human life, that are based on values of solidarity and care for each other (Curtin 2007, Plumwood 1993, 2002, Butler 2002, 2006,

2009). Additionally, I will show that eco-grief is however also still apt when we strip the emotion of any moral, instrumental, prudential and practical conditions, which I will establish by analysing eco-grief from a perspective of intrinsic fittingness conditions (d'Arms and Jacobson 2000).

The research question that follows from this line of argument is this:

Do our current responses towards the apt emotion of eco-grief constitute both an affective and epistemic injustice?

What will be uncovered in the process of answering this question is that there is however also a deeper theoretical point I want to make, as I argue that looking into how expressions of eco-grief have been obstructed has the special reflective potential to shine a light on the structural oppression of general forms of grief in Western societies. By doing so, I add a political dimension to the debate of eco-grief, by arguing that there are certain gender norm practices and capitalist institutions in place in our current societies, that not only marginalize and reject people's existing feelings of eco-grief, but also ensure that nature stays a non-grievable thing, such that people cannot easily develop feelings of eco-grief. I will show why it is therefore important that we not only ensure that those whose eco-grief is now suppressed are allowed to express the emotion, but also why we should actively encourage people to develop feelings of eco-grief and explain what this encouragement requires both structurally and in practice. This is because doing so opens up the possibility of a radically different world in which we are able to truly establish the mournability of the natural world, which is necessary to thoroughly rectify the structural injustices that now lie within the suppression of eco-grief.

In order to do so, this thesis will be structured as follows. In the first chapter, I will clarify what eco-grief entails according to one of the few substantial philosophical accounts that has currently been written on eco-grief by Ashlee Cunsolo (2012). I will explain why this thesis, by adding a perspective of injustice to her initial proposals, may be helpful and perhaps even necessary for understanding what is required to give eco-grief its due. Then, I will provide an outline of the responses that are currently expressed towards the emotion of eco-grief that focus on its dismissal and disapproval. In so doing, I will explore how these are imbedded within broader capitalist socio-economic and patriarchal norms that call for the suppression of grief in general. Subsequently, I will clarify why eco-grief should be seen as an apt emotion when looked at from both an instrumental eco-feminist and intrinsic fittingness perspective, after which I move onto a critical analysis about why the earlier outlined responses towards eco-grief could be seen as constituting both an affective and epistemic injustice. As I respond to the possible objection that eco-grief may constitute a problematic anthropocentric image of nature, I will explain why a fuller understanding of what the responses towards eco-grief and how they can be connected to a perspective of injustice remains highly valuable and important if we truly want to do justice to the emotion.

1. The phenomenon called eco-grief

In this first chapter I will clarify what this new phenomenon that people are calling ‘eco-grief’ has come to mean. Because documentation of people expressing eco-grief is only a recent development, despite of some research on eco-grief in psychology (e.g. Randall 2009, Pierce 2019) scholarly discussions on eco-grief are almost non-existent, including in philosophy. In responding to what eco-grief entails, I will therefore mainly focus on the works of Ashlee Cunsolo, as she is one of the few academics who has carried out substantial philosophical research on the concept in the article “Climate Change as the Work of Mourning” (Cunsolo 2012).⁴ I will also explain how this thesis, by looking at eco-grief from a perspective on injustice, will add to her initial account.

1.1 Cunsolo on eco-grief

Cunsolo summarizes eco-grief as the “pain, sadness, or suffering that people identify as experiencing when they lose a beloved ecosystem, valued species or place” (Is Climate 2019). As a form of mourning, eco-grief is therefore strongly connected to the environments we live in that are essential for our overall health, wellbeing and shared cultural identities.⁵

Cunsolo states that although it has become a common experience to feel eco-grief as a response to environmental losses and degradation, discussions of such responses are not present within established political discourse, the media or even academic literature on climate change, “as though animal, vegetal, and mineral bodies are somehow constituted to be ungrievable in these broader narratives” (Cunsolo 2012, p.138-139). Cunsolo explains the discrepancy between such an impressive literature gap and the many actual lived experiences of eco-grief, by saying that not much public attention is being paid to the mournability of nature, because those who are most likely to grieve climate change-induced environmental losses “are themselves bodies that do not usually matter within policy and discourses [as they] are precisely those who are most often marginalized” (Cunsolo, p.154).

⁴ Other works on eco-grief by Cunsolo include “Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief” which is one of the first scholarly collections that mentions ‘ecological mourning’ as a unique form of grief. The eleven chapters provide different perspectives into the concept of eco-grief, as it covers a diverse range of topics from environmental studies to philosophy, religion, art, architecture and music (Cunsolo and Landman 2017).

⁵ It is interesting to point out that eco-grief can be experienced in different ways and stages, according to Cunsolo. There is immediate grief from acute natural disasters, such as forest fires, flooding, hurricanes and storms that is often connected to feelings of fear and anxiety knowing that one stands at the frontlines of irreversible changes. Then there is eco-grief that comes after such events; a more retrospective form of grief for those things that are permanently gone, things that are about to go extinct and expected unknown losses yet to come. Lastly, eco-grief can also be the result of seeing the environment slowly change over time (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, p.276).

She mentions that this holds true for example for various indigenous groups, as their marginalization means that awareness about the vulnerabilities they may experience due to changes in their environment and the potential resulting emotional response of eco-grief, are often disregarded or lacking in public discourse.

According to Cunsolo, we should therefore make the mourning of non-human entities of nature public if we want to reconstitute non-humans entities of nature and those who mourn them, as bodies that matter, and bodies that count in the work of mourning (Cunsolo, p.154). This is because in its ability to show us that we have cared about something; that we felt connected to a certain species, place or other piece of nature, there is a special power to eco-grief, Cunsolo argues, as the emotion works in such a way to make us emotionally aware of the fragility of what was lost and what we inevitably will lose in the future. In so doing, our own susceptibility as ‘beings-towards death’ (a term she borrows from Heidegger) is brought to the forefront of our experience. Such an understanding of *shared vulnerability* therefore “allows us to recognize others, human and non-human, as vulnerable subjects, capable of suffering and destruction, grief and mourning” (Cunsolo, p.149). Cunsolo mentions that mourning nature therefore provides both ethical and political opportunities: the former via acknowledging such a sense of shared fragility and the latter via transforming this acknowledgement into action that marks and shares our loss.

In order get there however, Cunsolo argues that we need new theoretical, political, cultural and social instruments that reframe and extend grievability to non-human bodies of nature and identify them as mournable subjects, especially within discussions of climate change. Examples that she mentions of such tools that can help us constitute public outpourings and testaments of grief, are public and collective mourning rituals in which the names of those non-humans that have been lost or are close to disappearance are read out loud, social gatherings in which we come together to talk about grief as a normal response to climate change or creating works of art, theatre plays, or literature about environmentally-based grief and loss (Cunsolo, p.152).

1.2 The value of a perspective of injustice

As Cunsolo provides good first steps in recognizing why eco-grief is important and how expressions of eco-grief are being discounted and marginalized in our Western society, I would however argue that her suggestions remain a bit thin. This is because I think that we need stronger terms if we want to substantively analyse the value that lies within feelings of eco-grief and the suppression of the emotion in Western discourse. This is because I argue that the discrediting of eco-grief is not just a mere oversight or insensitivity, but instead constitutes, as I will show in this thesis, several injustices.

Cunsolo does briefly point to the idea that the marginalization and discounting of eco-grief may have some connection to issues of injustice, as she argues that it is important to share eco-grief in a public setting, because this is illustrative of both “the injustices perpetuated against the other-than-human world *and* the injustices experienced by those who currently bear the burden of this type of

mourning” (Cunsolo, p.153). She does however not elaborate on this point or examine it further, as she only mentions that we therefore need to develop a sense of shared responsibility and create new ways for eco-grief “to be witnessed and shared by others, whether they have experienced environmentally-based grief due to climate change or not” (Cunsolo, p.152).

As I will thoroughly analyse the phenomenon of eco-grief and its dismissal and disapproval in terms of injustice, I therefore hope to get a more robust understanding as to what doing justice to the emotion of eco-grief would truly entail. This is because I believe that Cunsolo’s existing position is a great start, but as she does not cast the issue in terms injustice, she leaves out an important aspect that may be helpful or even necessary for understanding what is required to give eco-grief its credit.

In this chapter I have given a detailed overview of what Cunsolo’s account of eco-grief entails, in which she points out that eco-grief is valuable because it has the potential to develop within us a sense of shared vulnerability, that in turn offers us a source of insight into the responsibilities that we have for each other, helping us to see non-human bodies of nature as grievable subjects. She argues that is therefore necessary to create instruments of political action that may aid in the development of collective places of mourning. I explained why, although her initial proposals provide us with some interesting insights as to why the now discounted and marginalized emotion of eco-grief is valuable, her account could benefit from looking at eco-grief from a perspective of injustice, which I will do in this thesis.

2. Responses towards eco-grief

In this chapter, I will give a detailed overview of how people are responding to expressions of eco-grief. In clarifying what these responses are, I will thoroughly survey the particular responses given to eco-grief which focus on it being a passive, not useful and de-motivating emotion that easily constitutes mental health problems. Then I will point out that these particular responses, that call for the dismissal and disapproval of the emotion of eco-grief, actually reflect some of the dominant attitudes towards general forms of grief that portray it as a negative emotion that individuals should work to control and deal with in private. I will do this by explaining how such systemic suppression of the emotion of grief is brought about by two different sets of norms that govern our thinking about the emotion: capitalist socio-economic norms that pressure us to always be productive and psychologically well-adjusted citizens and patriarchal gender norms that make us think of grief as a non-political and feminine endeavour.

2.1 The dismissal and disapproval of eco-grief

In Western public discourse people are discouraged from grieving environmental losses. This is because eco-grief is seen as an emotion that is too passive and not effective in leading to possible solutions for climate change related issues. The general idea is that emotions can be useful, only if they are activating us to substantially do something about climate change. As eco-grief is not perceived as an emotion that is able to do this, it is not seen as a fitting response towards climate change (Head 2016, p.8). This reaction towards expressions of eco-grief creates a deep cultural pressure in the West not to be a so-called ‘doom and gloom thinker’ and to move on from any bad feelings, as it is believed that such a negative emotion will only hold us back in effectively dealing with the climate crisis (Head p.2).

Those who express feelings that are less positive are therefore often portrayed as dramatizing the situation and get the response that they should not worry, because by investing into new sustainable technologies the economy will eventually fix any climate change related issues (Hassler 2019). Environmental activist movements such as Thunberg’s, where people have recently started to openly express their feelings of eco-grief, have also been criticised for trying to demotivate the population through negative narratives and doomsday scenarios. They are furthermore disapproved of because they would supposedly lead to mental disorders, especially among younger people (Plautz 2020). As stated before, the eco-grief that people from climate science communities and indigenous cultures are now starting to report, has as a result of this discourse of positivity also been dismissed and not taken seriously. This dominant view of eco-grief as an unfitting response to climate change was even expressed by former UN climate chief Cristiana Figueres, as she stated “the only way we can save the planet is with relentless, stubborn optimism” (Law 2019). There thus seems to be an attitude of cheerfulness and hopefulness that we are conditioned to carry out in the West when it comes to

climate change related issues.

An example of a movement that reflects these dominant responses towards eco-grief is eco-modernism or eco-pragmatism, of which Michael Shellenberger is a key advocate. Shellenberger warns against the eco-anxiety that many people could come to experience if we keep providing them with apocalyptic stories about the unforeseeable future. He strongly advises people to stop “manipulating” others into fearing catastrophic doom scenarios that could be the result of human-induced climate change, because they are not likely to happen at all (Shellenberger 2019, Why Climate). If we would however, in a rare case, have to face such climate change-induced issues, Shellenberger believes that future innovative technology will eventually be able to avert the worst consequences as long as the economy keeps properly investing into new and green innovations (Shellenberger 2019, Why Apocalyptic). Instead of promoting emotions such as eco-grief, people should be taught to keep a rational, factual and calm attitude towards issues that result from climate change. All other reactions should be seen as an overly sensitive exaggeration of reality and are even dangerous according to Shellenberger, because they too easily lead to mental lability and a plethora of psychological problems (Shellenberger 2019, Why Climate).

2.2 McKinnon’s philosophical account against despair

A philosophical account that supports the portrayal of eco-grief as an unfitting response towards climate change, can be found in McKinnon’s paper called “Climate change: Against despair”, in which she argues that our attitude toward climate change should be built upon the positive emotion of hope. According to McKinnon, we are therefore obliged to overcome any feelings of despair (McKinnon 2014, p.18). Even though McKinnon’s paper focusses on the emotion of despair and not on grief, I argue that her comments are applicable to grief as well, as she dismisses and disapproves of despair for the same reasons that are often given to the rejection of eco-grief. That is, she conveys it as a negative, passive and demotivating emotion that cannot aid us in our engagements with climate change.

The form of despair that McKinnon explores is the personal despair about the difference each of us can make to counter climate change. McKinnon acknowledges that the scientific evidence for possible catastrophic outcomes of climate change can easily lead to feelings of despair within people. She argues however, that such personal despair about people’s inability to tackle climate change is not justified when looked at from a philosophical perspective. In so doing she identifies two separate manifestations of personal despair, one that focuses on inefficacy and the other on the inability to make any difference to climate change (McKinnon p.7-8).

The first manifestation of despair about climate change is related to the *inefficacy* of personal emissions reductions. This personal judgement of despair is based on the belief that regardless of what action one might undertake, it will make no difference to climate change. McKinnon argues that

“in the face of the enormous, complex, and (often) invisible threat of climate change, feelings of insignificance and inefficacy are recognizable [however] feeling insignificant and inefficacious is not the same thing as being insignificant and inefficacious and: a person may feel this way and yet soldier on with hard choices, hopeful that somehow they might make a difference” (McKinnon p.8-9).

McKinnon thus emphasises that reducing personal emissions could potentially make a difference. Furthermore, she points out that “it could be that my emissions are the very ones fit to make that perceptible difference” (McKinnon p.12). She states that although no one can ever know whether this is the case, this is unimportant when it comes to expelling despair through hope, as the context of hope is always already one of radical uncertainty. She clarifies that she does not want to argue that the judgement that “I can make no difference” should be substituted with “it is probable that I can make a difference”, as this would mean replacing despair with optimism. Instead, it is a more humble claim that because it is logically possible that one can make a difference, one therefore ought to replace despair with hope (McKinnon p.12-13).

The second manifestation of despair about climate change is related to the *inability* to make a difference to climate change via personal emissions reductions. This personal judgement of despair is based on the belief that I am unable to make a difference to climate change, even though I think there are things I could do that could make a difference. It is thus about the idea of knowing that doing some things will make a difference, but I am simply unable to do them. McKinnon argues that “once we realise that this type of judgement actually relates to motivational capacities rather than abilities, we can see that it is not justified” (McKinnon p.13). She states that

“it is true that the difference any person is able to make to climate change may not amount to much ... no matter how hard she tries, without giving up, she is right to judge that she will not tend to succeed in making much of a difference. But this does not establish that a person is right to despair of making any difference, nor that she is unable to make any difference” (McKinnon p.15)

This is because being able to make a difference is determined by “whether trying and not giving up would tend to succeed” (McKinnon p.15), which depends on facts completely beyond her control that she most likely will never come to know. Focussing on the issue of climate change and personal emissions reductions, being able to make a difference is therefore totally unrelated to her personal judgement about whether she will make a difference.

McKinnon thus argues that while despair in the face of climate change is tempting, grounding despair in claims of inefficiency and inability are not justified. She concludes the paper by considering the instrumental value of hope in its ability to challenge climate change, as she argues that ‘hope can increase the probability that a person’s agency achieves its purpose, and so can galvanize the person’s

will as it aims at this purpose (McKinnon p.18). She reasons that “hope keeps open a space for agency between the impossible and the fantastical; without it, the small window of time remaining for us to tackle climate change is already closed” (McKinnon p.19). She therefore views hope as an ethical imperative in the context of climate change.

2.3 General attitudes towards grief that are reflected within eco-grief responses

As I carefully worked out the specific responses that are currently given to the emotion of eco-grief, I would like to point out that these responses actually reflect attitudes that are often expressed against more general forms of grief that call for suppression of the emotion. A better understanding as to how and why certain responses towards eco-grief are brought about, therefore requires some comments on these general attitudes that may have downstream effects on the dismissal and disapproval of eco-grief as well.

When referring to general ‘grief’ and ‘mourning’ I mean the expression or sorrow that usually follows death, or the emotional constitution that one can experience when something loved is lost. As death and loss are part of life, grief is a feeling that we all come to experience at one point in time. The particular ways in which grief is expressed however and how we respond to processes of mourning is however culturally, historically and geographically situated and determined, I argue, drawing on the claim that “the expression of grief is always mediated by one’s social context and is always political” (Granek 2014, p.1).

In the West, grief and mourning are generally seen as negative emotions, or at least ones we would choose not to experience if we have the choice. Responses therefore often include that one has to overcome such negative emotions and that one instead should try to cultivate positive feelings. There thus seems to be a general discomfort and awkwardness surrounding grief, as those who grieve often want the emotion to be finished and solved as soon as possible (Gilbert 2006). Freud laid the basis for this attitude against expressions of grief, as he argued that successful mourning would mean that it would eventually come to completion. He stated that healthy mourning implies that the individual replaces the loss of one object for another; or in other words, the connection one had to a former cherished object should again be found in something new, in order to replace what was ‘lost’, resulting in the ego being liberated from the workings of grief (Freud 2018, p.12). As Freud paved the way for grief to be something that should be completed by the individual, unfinished grief became something which we are expected to suppress, control and monitor in private awaiting that completion.

2.4 Capitalist socio-economic norms that serve the pathologisation of grief

I argue that the Western idea that grief should be controlled and overcome by the individual in private, is connected to bigger norms of oppression that govern our thinking about the emotion. First, our thinking is influenced by our current capitalist socio-economic system that promotes the ideals of

productive and efficient citizenship. As grief and the slow process of mourning do not add to that image, people are met with intense pressure to succeed in quickly overcoming their feelings of grief. Therefore, by blocking out any tolerance towards the emotional intensity that grieving entails, an extreme focus is placed on the individual's 'progress' to pursue happiness and other positive emotions such as hope (Granek 2014, p.2). Such a "fun morality", which is essentially "the ethical duty to enjoy oneself and to prove that one is psychologically well-adjusted" (Gorer 1967, p.x), thus places all responsibility for managing the supposed negative emotion of grief on the individual. This serves the current capitalist socio-economic ideal of the good functioning and productive citizen who is entirely self-responsible for her actions.

Because this is not a demand that most grieving people can easily accommodate, many start to develop a sense of shame and discomfort with their feelings of grief. People may become embarrassed by their inadequacy to overcome their feelings of grief as society demands of them (Granek 2014, p.3). This has led many to seek help overcoming their grief as it were some kind of underlying mental issue, which often takes the shape of visiting a psychologist or a prescription for medication. By imagining grief as a pathologised issue, this turns what could be considered a normal and shared human reaction to the loss of a loved one, into a medical disorder that needs psychological intervention, with a clear starting and endpoint (Granek p.2)

Instead of allowing people to just grieve as they wish, our current mental health care system is therefore also imbedded within these underlying socio-economic norms, that make it so that those who are struggling to move on 'well enough' or 'fast enough' from their feelings, are pressured into finding a reason as to why they fail to adapt to the happy, positive and productive standards of the society they live in. They are pushed to find this reason in the idea that something is mentally wrong with them, which is reflected in the numerous popular psychology sources that provide people with useful tips to overcome their grief in order get back on track as efficient citizens (e.g. Nilsen 2010, Zonnebelt-Smeenge and de Vries 2019).

2.5 Patriarchal gender norms that serve the feminisation of grief

Next to the idea that the perception of grief as a personal mental health issue is formed by Western capitalist socio-economic norms, Judith Butler suggests that there are also certain patriarchal gender norms at work in governing our thoughts about grief as a personal and private emotion, as she argues that mourning has been feminized and regulated to the private sphere because of the radical potential that is within the emotion (Butler 2002, p.35, c.f. Stanesco 2012, p.578). Butler points out that in Western societies, "mourning is not only women's task, but also one that is ideally performed inside the boundaries of the home" (Butler p.84, n. 12). This is because just as there is the dominant idea to see feminized labour as cut off from society rather than constitutive of that society, there is also an inclination to see grief as an unpolitical and private issue. These patriarchal norms therefore prevent women's mourning from becoming public, as to make sure that they cannot threaten the current civic

order (Butler p.84, n.12).

Therefore, “the same politics of sexism that sought to isolate women also worked to isolate our feelings of grief “ (Stanescu 2012, p.578). It works to reinforce the dominant patriarchal norms that shape our society today, in order to prevent that the dominant norms that now determine what can be seen as grievable, and therefore as heroic and liveable, can be challenged. The feelings of embarrassment and discomfort that grieving people are now inclined to feel are therefore connected to “the maintenance and administration of the current civic order ... [that is] produced in order to keep mourning at home, in the closet” (Stanescu p.278), so that grief becomes something one should not speak of. Quoting Butler:

“Open grieving is bound up with outrage, and outrage in the face of injustice or indeed of unbearable loss has enormous political potential Whether we are speaking about open grief or outrage, we are talking about affective responses that are highly regulated by regimes of power and sometimes subject to explicit censorship. (Butler 2009, p.39)

In this chapter, I explained how people are currently responding to expressions of eco-grief. I showed that the emotion of eco-grief is often met with dismissal and disapproval, because it is seen as a passive, not useful and de-motivating state of mind that easily constitutes psychological health problems. People are instead encouraged to tell positive and supposedly more effective narratives of climate hope and change. I examined how this dominant view of eco-grief is shared within particular social movements such as eco-modernism and in McKinnon’s philosophical account against despair, in which she argued that despair is wrong because it is not only an unhelpful attitude in the face of climate change, but also because it is based on the unjustified belief that one cannot have an effect on the abatement of climate change. Then I explained that these specific responses towards eco-grief may reflect some of the more general attitudes towards expressions of grief that pressure people to overcome, control and suppress the emotion, which I showed, are governed by both socio-economic and patriarchal norms that bring about the pathologisation and feminisation of grief.

In chapters 4 and 5, I will analyse how the systemic suppression of general forms grief is reflected within the dismissal and disapproval of eco-grief, therefore constituting both affective and epistemic injustice. Before I do this, I however first have to establish that eco-grief is in fact an apt and fitting emotion to feel in the context of climate change.

3. The aptness of eco-grief

As the reactions towards eco-grief seem to revolve around the idea that mourning nature is not an appropriate response towards climate change, it could be said that previously outlined responses towards eco-grief also dismiss the *aptness* of expressions of eco-grief. As the aim of this thesis is to criticize the responses towards feelings of eco-grief by arguing that they constitute different forms of injustice, I therefore first need to establish that eco-grief is in fact an apt emotion in order to ground these critical claims.

I will do this by first of all offering an instrumentalist defence of the aptness of eco-grief, drawing from an ecofeminist perspective that advocates the importance of displays of care towards nature.⁶ I would like to clarify that I am thus not developing my own point of argument when it comes to examining whether displays of emotion and care can legitimately be extended to non-humans, the environment and other pieces of nature, as this has been done many times before by various ecofeminists (e.g. Plumwood 1993, 2002, Curtin 2007). Then I will argue that regardless of such an instrumentalist discussion about whether the emotion of eco-grief leads to better consequences for the climate or not, we can also establish the aptness of eco-grief drawing on a perspective of intrinsic fittingness conditions, from which even counterproductive eco-grief can be constituted as an apt emotion. I will do this by drawing on Srinivasan's remarks on the aptness of emotions and d'Arms' and Jacobson's account on the fittingness of emotions (Srinivasan 2017, d'Arms and Jacobson 2000). Building on their accounts, this will help me to strengthen my points on injustice in the following chapters.

3.1 Ecofeminism and the importance of displays of care towards nature

Ecofeminism addresses the various ways in which the domination of nature and the domination of women are interconnected (Warren 1990, p.125). It argues that “the patriarchal conceptual framework that has maintained, perpetuated, and justified the oppression of women in Western culture has also, in similar ways maintained, perpetuated and justified the oppression of nonhuman animals and the environment” (Curtin 2007, p.60). By understanding the links between environmental justice and gender justice, ecofeminism seeks to reveal “the intersecting structures of power that reinforce the

⁶ There is no substantial ecofeminist account that I was able to find that looks specifically into the environment as an important object of mourning and grief. It however seems to be an omission, rather than actual opposition to nature or the climate as being mournable, as much has been written on grief but often from an anthropocentric perspective. One of the few scholars who however offers a different perspective is Lori Gruen's chapter “Facing Death and Practicing Grief” in *Ecofeminism: Feminist intersections with other animals & the earth* in which she briefly touches upon the topic of grief from an ecofeminist perspective (Adams and Gruen 2014, p.127-141).

othering of women and non-human animals and that contribute to the increasing destruction of the environment” (Adams and Gruen 2014, p.1). In its claim that patriarchal domination is never justified nor inevitable, its main aim is to reject patriarchy’s *value hierarchal thinking* and *oppositional dualism*, in which socially and culturally constructed binaries (men vs women, human vs nature, rationality vs emotion) justify the subjugation of both women, nature and emotions, as more value is placed on the former side of the binary than its constructed opposite (Plumwood 1993, p.2).

As ecofeminism states that women’s liberation is intertwined with the liberation of the environment from human domination, it argues for this liberation in the possibility of a radically different society, in which we build more equal non-dominating relationships that are based on solidarity and displays of care for each other (Plumwood 2002, p.166-195). Ecofeminist Deane Curtin examines this new sense of relatedness that ecofeminism can achieve as she advocates for an ecofeminist ethics of care to be built around a moral connection between human and nature, in which there is “a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust and appropriate reciprocity-values that presuppose that our relationships to others are central to our understanding of who we are” (Curtin 2007, p.61). From an ecofeminist perspective, there are thus instrumental reasons to establish empathy and compassion as apt or even desirable emotions towards climate change, as by articulating one’s care for nature we create new valuable ways of connecting to one another, which enable us to challenge patriarchal conceptions of nature.

3.2 The aptness of eco-grief from an instrumentalist eco-feminist perspective

I argue that eco-grief can be seen as a valuable example of such an instrumentally apt ecofeminist emotional expression of care, as it enables us to mourn what we all love and care about, but are losing day by day. Eco-grief can help us acknowledge the precariousness of life, and it is exactly this precariousness that is at the core of coming together as a community that ecofeminism values. Mourning the losses of climate change can reveal the deeper relationships between human, non-human life and the environment, as it makes us aware that we can all suffer and be killed. Doing so, we can better recognize kinship and potentially develop a radically different society, in which our relations are based on the ecofeminist values of solidarity and care for the other. Such as society resonates with what Butler argues for as she states that:

“There is no life without the conditions of life that variably sustain that life ... and those conditions are pervasively social, establishing not the discrete ontology of the person, but rather the interdependency of persons, involving reproducible and sustaining social relations, and relations to the environment to non-human forms of life” (Butler 2009, p.19).

Butler argues that mourning therefore creates “a sense of political community of a complex order” (Butler 2006, p.22), because it puts those relationships forward that “have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility” (p.22).

This ‘we-creating’ capacity of mourning is the key-concept on which Cunsolo builds her argument as well. It is what moves our relational ties to others to the front, irrespective of whether those others are known by us or not, she argues, as it points us towards “the potential for enhancing individual and collective resilience to loss through a shared capacity to grieve, to suffer, and to mourn” (Cunsolo 2012, p.149). According to Cunsolo, the idea that eco-grief helps us develop a sense of shared vulnerability and responsibility via acknowledgment of the other, is therefore at the very core of why mourning can be so valuable. It means that through grieving, as we thus recognize the susceptibility and sorrow of others, we come to know the other as vulnerable, as grievable and fully worthy of being mourned (Cunsolo, p.150).

To recognize this shared precariousness and vulnerability therefore not only means that we recognize our own personal interdependence, but also that we honour the idea that society and nature are not apart, but instead part of the same and that we should therefore act accordingly. Collectively grieving therefore provides a way to become aware of the fragility of our interconnected systems of life, and in so doing potentially aids us to cultivate better responses towards climate change, in the form of for example extended feelings of solidarity towards those who suffer and understanding the importance of making sustainable choices. As eco-grief can help us to imagine more meaningful and caring relationships that are based on affective connections with nature, and as ecofeminism argues that expressions of care and affection can legitimately be extended towards non-human animals, nature and the environment, looking at eco-grief from an eco-feminist perspective, it should be seen as an instrumentally apt response towards climate change.

3.3 The aptness of eco-grief from a perspective of intrinsic fittingness conditions

Although looking at eco-grief from an eco-feminist perspective provides us with some interesting insights as to why the emotion should be seen as instrumentally apt, I would argue that it is important for my upcoming discussions about injustice to also look at the aptness of eco-grief from a perspective of intrinsic fittingness conditions. This is because, from this perspective, an emotion’s aptness or fittingness is not bound whatsoever to the moral appropriateness of an emotion, or any instrumental or prudential considerations (d’Arms and Jacobson 2000, p.71). This allows us to move away from discussions about when it is ‘right’ to feel eco-grief or whether it actually is a ‘good’ emotion, as we become aware that these are not at all relevant nor necessary for establishing the intrinsic fittingness of eco-grief to its object of mourning. In so doing, it enables us to counter the dominant shift “from the space of intrinsic reason to the space of instrumental reason” (Srinivasan 2017, p.7), thereby revealing the possibility that someone’s eco-grief can also be apt based on its distinct intrinsic value. This strengthens our point on aptness, because even when critics would still dismiss above instrumental eco-feminist reasons for the aptness of eco-grief, saying that it remains an inherently counterproductive emotion, eco-grief would nevertheless be apt.

As eco-grief’s aptness is not necessarily measured based on moral, prudential or practical

consequences or reasons, what is at stake instead is whether the eco-grief is properly motivated and proportional to the reasons for feeling such a way (Srinivasan, p.8). d'Arms and Jacobson elaborate further on this point, as they argue that looking at the aptness of emotions from a perspective intrinsic fittingness conditions, revolves around the idea that an emotion is apt "in the sense that its intentional object actually has the evaluative features that the respective emotion discloses to the emoter" (Szanto and Landweer 2020, c.f. d'Arms and Jacobson 2000, p. 72). They therefore suggest that there are two dimensions that determine the fittingness of an emotion: its size and shape. An emotion is fitting on grounds of its shape when its object possesses the relevant features (d'Arms and Jacobson p.73). For grief to be fitting for instance, the object must really be grievable. As Cunsolo's account clarified that nature, beloved places, species or entire ecosystems can in fact be an object for people to mourn, we have reason to believe that eco-grief is fitting when it comes to the dimension of shape. An emotion is fitting on grounds of its size when the emotion is relevant and not an overreaction or under-reaction to the descriptive properties of the actual object (d'Arms and Jacobson, p.74). As eco-grief acknowledges the factual evidence that points towards high changes of environmental degradation caused by climate change, I think we should also see it as fitting according the dimension of size.

When we acknowledge that according to these claims eco-grief should be seen as a fitting or apt emotion based on its distinct intrinsic value, Srinivasan clarifies that the emotion therefore becomes a means of affectively registering or acknowledging the injustices of the world. She points out that in this sense our capacity to express and apt emotion should be compared with our capacity for aesthetic appreciation: "Just as appreciating the beautiful or the sublime has a value distinct from the value of knowing that something is beautiful or sublime" (Srinivasan 2017, p.10), there may also be a value to experiencing the injustices of the world via one's apt emotion; which is a distinct value in comparison to simply knowing that there is injustice. This means that expressions of eco-grief can therefore help us see the world as it really is, and these considerations can undermine any counter-productivity arguments: even when one's eco-grief make one's individual's situation worse off, her feelings should therefore nonetheless be seen as apt, as they enable her to recognize the truth of the world around her.⁷

⁷ What also becomes clear from looking at different perspectives that enable us to establish eco-grief as an apt emotion, is that we should no longer see grief as a passive emotion, but instead as an active process, that cannot be overcome, but always remains part of ourselves, as it is internalized in a never fully complete process. It is a way in which we actively engage with and even construct our world and therefore we should see it as an important ongoing transformative process (Attig 1991, p.389). 'Successful' grieving therefore does not emerge from completing a process of overcoming one's grief or no longer remembering what was lost. Instead, "one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever" (Butler 2006, p.21). I see eco-grief in a similar way; as "a companion that will increasingly be with us" (Head 2016, p.2) for

In this chapter, I explained why eco-grief should be seen as an apt response towards climate change, which I defended from both an instrumentalist eco-feminist perspective and also from a perspective of distinct intrinsic fittingness conditions. Because eco-grief encourages interconnected and non-dominating relationships with each other and nature, that are based on eco-feminist values of solidarity and displays of care, and because eco-grief aids people in acknowledging a precariousness of life, and as a result a sense of shared vulnerability and responsibility, I argued that it should be seen as instrumentally apt. As eco-grief also speaks to the characteristic intrinsic concerns of the climate and is genuinely applicable to it, I argued that it should also be seen as a fitting emotion based on intrinsic reasons. Having established the aptness of eco-grief in two different ways, I now move on to a critical analysis of the earlier defined responses towards eco-grief as constituting different forms of injustice, starting with affective injustice in the next chapter.

the losses yet to come. It should therefore not be something we should try to deal with or overcome and instead we should regard it as something valuable that we must acknowledge and hold on to.

4. Eco-grief and affective injustice

In this chapter I will analyse how ignoring eco-grief and dismissing it as a demotivating and passive state of mind actively prevents people from being able to cultivate and properly express the apt emotion, which I argue constitutes an affective injustice. In so doing, I draw on the feminist philosophical accounts of both Amia Srinivasan and her remarks on affective injustice and Shiloh Whitney and her concept of affective marginalization (Srinivasan 2017, Whitney 2018). I will first explain why responses towards eco-grief constitute an affective injustice, after which I will clarify my claims by looking at how they can be connected to themes of marginalization and collective denial.

4.1 How responses towards eco-grief constitute affective injustice

Srinivasan notes that intrinsic fittingness conditions for an emotion often conflict with instrumental reasons to feel that emotion, which leads to victims of oppression having to “choose between getting aptly angry and acting prudentially” (Srinivasan 2017, p.5). She states that this constitutes a form of unrecognised injustice that she calls affective injustice. She explains that such affective injustice results from the commonly held, but false opposition between anger and reason, which makes it so that “people through no fault of their own [are pushed] into profoundly difficult normative conflicts” (Srinivasan, p.15-16). Such dichotomous normative conflicts revolve around the idea that people have to choose between expressing their apt emotional response, but in so doing risk worsening their situation, or instead abandoning their apt emotional response in order to be heard and possibly improve their oppressed position. She argues that we must be cautious of instances of affective injustice, because they represent “a violation of our basic humanity [as we all have] basic human entitlements to both self-preservation and full emotional lives ... that allow us to exercise our capacity to aptly respond to the world” (Srinivasan, p.16).

Although Srinivasan focusses on the emotion of anger in the context of oppression and discrimination, I argue that similar concerns can be applied to eco-grief in the context of climate change. As expressions of eco-grief are met with disapproval and the expectation that people should suppress such feelings, taking into account that I established that eco-grief is in fact apt, I argue that such responses constitute what Srinivasan would call an affective injustice. This is because, as responses towards eco-grief focus on it being a passive, overly negative and therefore not useful emotion in bringing about efficient action against climate change related issues, those who do feel eco-grief are unwillingly pushed into a normative conflict constituting affective injustice: Those who grieve have to choose between on the one hand expressing their apt emotional response of eco-grief, knowing that it is likely they will be taken less seriously and will perhaps even be seen as a psychiatric patient, or on the other hand, in order to be heard, rejecting their apt expression of eco-grief, giving in to the dominant discourse that discussions about climate change can only exist in a rational and hopeful setting.

4.2 How affective injustice is connected to affective marginalization

An aspect that is worth pointing out in the discussion of how responses towards eco-grief constitute an affective injustice, is related to Srinivasan's remarks that affective injustice often works in such a way that expressions of apt anger disproportionally lead to negative consequences for those whose anger is generally already seen as enough reason to dismiss her from the public sphere, such as those who are already commonly portrayed as "rageful, violent or shrill" (Srinivasan 2017, p.16). Srinivasan argues that such marginalization is the result of the false dichotomy between anger and reason that works to preserve the status quo; "since it is oppressed people who have the greatest reason to be angry, excluding anger from the public sphere is an efficient means of excluding those who most threaten the reigning social order" (Srinivasan p.21). If this is correct, that is if affective injustice is a true injustice that "disproportionately affects those who are already disproportionately affected by more familiar forms of injustice" (Srinivasan p.16), then our civic order is full with hidden injustice, Srinivasan argues. This is the bitter truth that those who dismiss and disapprove of apt emotional responses based on its counter productivity work to keep hidden, either unintentionally or on purpose.

Whitney's account of affective marginalization further elaborates on this point, as she looks into the structural absence of acceptance of the emotions of oppressed groups in our Western society. She explains that affective expressions of suppressed groups are often met with "a muting or amputation of affective intentionality" (Whitney 2018, p.497) that diminishes their emotional reflections to simple affect. This is an injustice of marginalization, Whitney argues, as it expulses those who are already suppressed "from participation in affect circulation that depletes [their] affective agency, influence, or authority" (Whitney, p.497). With this she means that there is an affective structure of oppression at play in our contemporary Western world, in which we disable already marginalized people in their ability to make sense of their emotions. This leads to a reinforcement of their marginalization, as they are refused the social conditions that are needed to counter the fact that their affective sense and force have been disjointed (Whitney, p.512).

In clarifying what such an affective marginalization entails, Whitney refers to the different ways in which we perceive a man's and a woman's emotions, as men's affects are often regarded as being intentionally and therefore validly engaged with the world around them. Women's affects are instead however often seen as a reflection of their 'emotional' nature and "personal affectability or even instability" (Whitney p.498, c.f. Frye 1983), thus rejecting the idea that their emotion may also be able to tell us something about the external world.

As our society works to reinforce such structural patterns of affective marginalization, these processes of refusal of affective uptake leads to burdensome affective by-products for those who are already marginalized: Their affects are "denied constitution as sensible and appropriate in a dominant world of sense" (Whitney p.499), resulting in their affective force being quarantined within them without any possibility of making their affects properly known to the world around them. Whitney

argues that this in turn brings about the situation in which their affect circulates “within and between other marginalized subjects in ways that do further violence that exceeds the harm of the initial denial of uptake, making them vulnerable to being burdened with exploitative affective labour and to affective forms of violence” (Whitney p.499).

4.3 Affective marginalization towards the eco-grief of indigenous people

I argue that these mechanisms of affective injustice and marginalization, which work to benefit the status quo and disproportionally affects those already oppressed, as the sense and force of their emotions are structurally disintegrated, can also be seen in the responses towards the eco-grief expressed by indigenous cultures. This is because indigenous cultures are not only suppressed in their ability to express their feelings of eco-grief, but also in other aspects of their lives (Environment For). As explained earlier, people from such communities were some of the first to express feelings of eco-grief, being more directly impacted by climate change related issues, because of their deep cultural roots in the natural world (Vince 2020).

Instead of acknowledging their experiences of living so close to nature and recognizing their loss of identity that they have to deal with after losing their ways of life, their expressions eco-grief are dismissed and disapproved of, as indigenous people already never mattered in society in the first place (Cunsolo 2012, p.154). Their affective sense-making of the world is disabled and therefore ignored or absent in larger public discourse, as they were already stereotyped as living in the past, as irrational, emotional, underdeveloped and uncivilized people who are less progressed in their way of living than the modern frontrunners of the West (Roothaan 2019, p.139). The affective intent that is within the emotion of eco-grief experienced by indigenous people, is thus cut off from the possibility of being heard in the external world; their affective agency, influence and authority disjointed from reality. Moreover, the reflective power within their emotion of eco-grief is reduced to being a matter of mere personal emotion or mental instability that indigenous supposedly more often experience, because they are already seen as people who are more inclined to follow their supposed “emotional” nature. In this way, their eco-grief potentially being a valuable response that tells us something about the world around us, remains however hidden and quarantined within their personal selves (Whitney 2018, p.500).

As this affective marginalization thus leads to affective experiences of indigenous people being further marginalized and localized to the negligible, the exclusion of their eco-grief from the public sphere also becomes an exploitative efficient means of excluding those people that do not fit the reigning social order of the West, in which politics has to remain rational, progressive and hopeful (Roothaan p.141). Because indigenous people are among those who are currently most susceptible to grieve the loss of the land and climatic and environmental degradation, the dismissal and disapproval of their eco-grief may therefore lead to the reinforcement of their general marginalization, leaving no room for one of the few things they can use to truly express the marginalization that they experience;

their apt emotion of eco-grief (Srinivasan 2017, p.20). Moreover, I argue that the deepening of their marginalization also reiterates the exclusion of the objects that they grieve – that is the species, ecosystems and other aspects of the natural world they once cherished – from having a say or status in human affairs. The marginalization of these objects of mourning resonates with the ecofeminist criticism towards value hierarchal thinking in which intersecting structures of patriarchal power work to devalue and subjugate women, nature and emotion at the same time (Plumwood 1993, p.2). In this sense, the affective marginalization of indigenous people's feelings of eco-grief thus easily turns into a situation in which the disapproval and rejection of their affect, creates further violence on top of the harms that are caused by the initial denial of their eco-grief. This makes them vulnerable to having to also deal with potential affective injustices of exploitation or violence, to both themselves and the objects that they grieve, such as the climate, valuable species and other bodies of nature (Whitney 2018, p. 499).

4.4 How affective injustice towards eco-grief facilitates the problem of collective denial

One aspect that I would like to point out when discussing how responses towards eco-grief constitute an affective injustice is the problem of collective denial. I argue that this issue arises as a result of the normative conflict between one's apt emotional response of eco-grief and the heavy burden that is placed on the individual to move away from one's supposed negative feelings of eco-grief and instead develop positive, hopeful and rational attitudes towards climate change, which is portrayed as the only possibility through which one can truly do something about climate change (recall Shellenberger 2019, McKinnon 2014). As there is thus an implicit obligation for individuals to suppress their apt emotion of eco-grief, I argue that this easily leads to a serious problem of politically passive individuals, who are more inclined to look away and deny the severities of climate change, than to actually partake in a radical change of their behaviour.

As disproportionate attention is paid to creating positive results, people are pressured into thinking that the only thing they should be concerned with is how they, as optimistic modern citizens, can support new energy-efficient technologies and practical sustainable resolutions, such as recycling, flying less, or switching to environmental friendly lightbulbs and electric cars. When individuals fail in fulfilling such virtuous prescribed resolutions, it is likely that at first a feeling of personal guilt arises for the promises that are not kept (Law 2019). Instead of enabling people to develop from such an initial feeling of personal guilt, a deeper and shared expression of eco-grief that can provide us with valuable insights about how we can better address climate change, the affective injustice as constituted by current responses towards eco-grief however works to push us away from being able to do so. Therefore, as we are pressured not to be affected by negative emotions, bigger problems surrounding climate change are placed out of sight again, leading to a collective denial of the possible severity of environmental losses yet to come (Head 2016, p.2).

Looking into the links between affective injustice and collective denial, it becomes clear that

McKinnon's idea that eco-grief is not warranted in virtue of the fact that we do not know what our impact can or will be, does not hold true, and instead leads to the reinforcement of affective injustice and problems such as collective denial (McKinnon 2014). This is because there is actually a tremendous reflective power within the emotion eco-grief that helps us in our ability to affectively make sense of the world around us and to better know what the consequences of our actions entail. In doing so, our affect thus also enables us to affectively register and acknowledge the injustices of our current reality. These traits become however muted by the current dominant economy of affect in which only hope and optimism are allowed to be outwardly expressed. Instead, I would argue that McKinnon's remarks therefore work to reinforce the affective injustice towards the emotion, as they amputate the possibility of outwardly expressing valuable emotional reflections that can make us better understand how we are to act when we want to tackle climate change.

I argue that instead of enabling affective injustice to run its course in creating such a passive individualized society of denial, we therefore urgently need to find ways in which society can bear and acknowledge the shared painful emotion of eco-grief that surrounds climate change. If we do this and manage to overcome the affective injustice and affective marginalization that is constituted by our current responses towards eco-grief, this again confirms that eco-grief is not just instrumentally valuable because it can push us towards the right kinds of changes that are needed to better address the problem of climate change, but also because it can reveal that there is something wrong with how we are currently dealing with the emotion of eco-grief. In so doing it makes us aware that, instead of engaging in practical minor sustainable resolutions that are to be performed by the individual, what we actually need is collective dissent and protest so as to establish structural change. In chapter seven I will further elaborate on this particular idea, as I will examine in what ways we can rectify injustices towards expressions of eco-grief.

In this chapter, I critically analysed the ways in which the responses towards the apt emotion of eco-grief constitute an affective injustice. I have done this by looking into the ways how current expressions of eco-grief are imbedded within a difficult normative conflict, that is constructed in such a way that people who feel eco-grief must to choose between on the one hand expressing their apt emotional response of eco-grief, knowing that this will lead to them being taken less seriously. Or, on the other hand, dismissing their apt expression of eco-grief, which would mean they comply with the dominant discourse in which successfully dealing with climate change can only exist in a rational and hopeful setting. I examined how affective injustice works to reinforce already existing constructions of marginalization of indigenous people, making use of the concept of affective marginalization. Additionally, I clarified my claims by looking at how affective injustice facilitates the problem of collective denial. In the next chapter I will explain that next to an affective injustice, there is another injustice at play within the responses towards eco-grief: epistemic injustice.

5. Eco-grief and epistemic injustice

As I examined the ways in which current responses to eco-grief constitute an affective injustice, I would like to point out that there is another level of injustice at play in these responses. It is not only the affective suppression and marginalization of eco-grief that is demanded in the idea that we should respond to climate change with rational hopefulness and positivism, but also the suppression of valuable knowledge that is within the emotion of eco-grief that its expression can reveal. This is why current responses towards expressions of eco-grief that demand its dismissal and disapproval also constitute an epistemic injustice I argue, a concept that I borrow from Miranda Fricker. I will link Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice to Alison M. Jaggar's account on the value of emotions in epistemology (Jaggar 1989) and clarify my claims by looking at an example of epistemic injustice within eco-grief experiences of climate scientists.

5.1 How denying the epistemic value within emotions constitutes epistemic injustice

In an attempt to bridge the widely perceived gap between emotion and knowledge, Jaggar critiques the dominant idea that emotions cannot be a valid and valuable source of knowledge, and instead claims that emotions may be helpful or even vital to the construction of systematic knowledge, as she argues that:

“Emotions are neither more basic than observation, reason or action in building a theory, nor secondary to them. Each of these human faculties reflects an aspect of human knowing inseparable from the other aspects [because] the development of each of these faculties is a necessary condition for the development of all” (Jaggar 171-172).

Even though Jaggar critiques the current dominant discourse in which knowledge and emotion oppose each other, she does not point to the idea that the denial of the epistemic value within emotions could be called an epistemic injustice. Fricker was the first to coin this term and defined it as “a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower (Fricker 2007, p.1) and mentions that such epistemic injustice often takes the form of what she calls ‘hermeneutical injustice’, which entails a wrong in the sense that supposed facts are constructed in such a way that it creates “a gap in collective interpretative resources [that put the suppressed] at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences (Fricker, p.1). I would argue that Jaggar's account of the value of emotions can be connected to Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, as Jaggar points at the way in which our current society constructs knowledge that only benefits the status quo and denies the existence of any epistemic value within the emotions of oppressed people. As this obscures their reality, this could be said to constitute a wrong done to them in their capacities as knowers.

I argue that the wrongs constituted in the denial of the epistemic value of emotions also reveal a hermeneutical injustice, as Jaggar explains that individuals who experience important knowledge in

their emotions are discouraged from finding ways to share and validate these emotions with others. This easily leads to a state of confusion for those concerned as they are prevented from naming their experiences, which could cause them to even start doubting their own sanity (Jaggar 1989, p.166). An example that Jaggar mentions is that “women may come to believe that they are 'emotionally disturbed' and that the embarrassment or fear aroused in them by male sexual innuendo is prudery or paranoia” (Jaggar p.166). I argue that Jaggar herself even hints to the idea of hermeneutical injustice in the claim that:

“Not only do these conservative responses hamper and disrupt our attempts to live in or prefigure alternative social forms but also, and in so far as we take them to be natural responses, they blinker us theoretically ... they limit our capacity for outrage; they either prevent us from despising or encourage us to despise; they lend plausibility to the belief that greed and domination are inevitable human motivations; in sum, they blind us to the possibility of alternative ways of living” (Jaggar p.166).

5.2 How responses to the eco-grief of climate scientists constitute epistemic injustice

I will now examine how the responses towards the epistemically valuable emotion of eco-grief constitute an epistemic injustice, by focussing on the experiences of *climate scientists*, as I believe that they are particularly heavily affected by the attitude of the dismissal and disapproval of eco-grief and the idea that people should instead develop rational and optimistic states of mind (Nexus 2019). This is because it is highly probable that climate scientists come to feel eco-grief as a result of the natural degradation and losses that are seeing and reporting on every day, as they now profess to having strong emotional reactions to things they currently see and experience at work (e.g. Gordon 2019, Weston 2019). They are however presented with no opportunities to address their feelings of eco-grief professionally, because climate science is mostly framed in terms of whether it with help of the economy, is settled enough to make the correct, practical and reasonable long-term decisions (Head 2016, p.1). This reaction is imbedded in the Western dominant idea that scientists are expected to always distance themselves from their subjects to ensure that their work is free of bias, as emotions are not seen as a valid source of knowledge (Nexus 2019).

I argue that this response constitutes an epistemic injustice towards the eco-grief that climate scientists are experiencing, because they find themselves a situation in which they are forced to be "dispassionate observers" and “providers of evidence” in order to secure what is produced as the greatest good in science: its objectivity (Nexus 2019). By constructing the facts about what counts as knowledge again in such a way that it reproduces the dominant western dichotomy of knowledge vs emotion, this wrongs climate scientists in their capacity as knowers, I argue. It also constitutes a hermeneutical epistemic injustice, because the important knowledge that exists within their emotions of eco-grief becomes however obscured by the demand of the status quo that knowledge must always

oppose emotion. Such an obstruction could easily lead to climate scientists believing that there is something mentally wrong with them, potentially even resulting into feelings of embarrassment and shame that they cannot carry out their jobs correctly and professionally. Therefore, the idea that climate scientists must behave in a purely objective manner makes it so that they are simply unable to make sense of their feelings of eco-grief, as they are not provided with collective interpretive resources to do so. This works to actively prevent those climate scientists who have to deal with climate change most intimately in their research from finding a possibility through which they can express, share and validate their emotion of eco-grief with other climate scientists.

5.3 How the outlawing of emotions brings about further epistemic value

Jaggar however makes us aware that the collective denial and the outlawing of emotions that entail epistemic value, which I argued constitute an epistemic injustice, actually also creates further epistemic value within the emotion. This because such ‘outlaw emotions’ enable people to experience that the emotion that they are feeling towards a certain object is not conventionally acceptable. As such, it makes people aware of bigger hidden structures of injustice that are at play in the rejection of their emotion, creating an added epistemic value to that emotion. An example of such an outlaw emotion that Jaggar mentions is that “people of colour are more likely to experience anger than amusement when a racist joke is recounted” (Jaggar p.166).

As outlaw emotions are defined by their incompatibility with dominant Western views and values of epistemology, Jaggar believes that they create an opportunity to contribute to “the re-education, refinement, and eventual reconstruction of our emotional constitution [and] prevailing dominant conceptions of reality” (Jaggar p.167). This is because outlaw emotions provide us with the first signs that something is wrong with the way supposed facts have been constructed, Jaggar argues. When we therefore reflect on our initial confusing feelings of revulsion, fear, anger or, irritability, we may “bring to consciousness our ‘gut-level’ awareness that we are in a situation of coercion, cruelty, injustice or danger” (Jaggar p.167). Conventionally inappropriate or unexpected emotions may therefore enable us to make non-compliant remarks that confront the dominant conceptions of the status quo. They may aid in the realisation that the supposed factual knowledge has been produced in such a way that it conceals the reality of subordinated people. Jaggar believes that by recognizing this epistemic value that is within these neglected outlaw emotions, it is possible to eventually create “a better and less ideologically biased account of how knowledge is, and so ought to be, constructed” (Jaggar p.154).

What I therefore take from Jaggar’s account is that there are two reasons to believe there is epistemic value within outlaw emotions. First, because outlaw emotions point us toward new ways of knowing, to alternatives that allow us to see the world in a different way. Second, because outlaw emotions can make us aware that we are in a situation of hidden epistemic injustice in our current

societies, as those who are able to make claims about what is regarded as valuable and legitimate knowledge often do so in a way to benefit the status quo but conceal the reality of subordinated people.

5.4 Eco-grief as an outlaw emotion

I argue that eco-grief can be seen working as an outlaw emotion, in for example a situation of public debate in which the conventional expected attitude is to stay rational, positive and hopeful, towards the challenges of climate change. When individuals do not act in accordance with this dominant emotional constitution and instead express feelings of sadness, pain and suffering and then notice that these feelings are disapproved of and rejected, eco-grief becomes an outlaw emotion, that could, following Jaggar's line of thought, potentially challenge the prevailing dominant status quo conceptions of nature being non-grievable. This is because when people reflect upon their initially raw and perhaps unexpected emotion of eco-grief, it opens up the possibility for them to develop "a gut-level awareness" (Jaggar p. 167) that reveals the epistemic injustice within the way how facts about emotion, nature and climate change have been constructed.

Eco-grief is therefore first of all epistemically valuable because it entails important knowledge about how and why non-human bodies such as nature and the environment, that are usually thought of as ungrievable in dominant Western discourse, could and should be made grievable. Jaggar points to this, as she argues that "emotions are appropriate if they are characteristic of a society in which all humans and perhaps ... non-human life too, thrive, or if they are conducive to establishing such a society" (Jaggar p.168). This is most definitely the case for the emotion of eco-grief, as it shows us that instead of living in a reality that is founded on constructed binaries such as nature vs human, women vs man, knowledge vs emotion that work to suppress the reality of subordinated people, we could move towards an anti-foundational and non-hierarchical society that thrives on eco-feminist values of solidarity and interconnectedness. In this way, Jaggar's account also works to strengthen the ecofeminist claims about the aptness of eco-grief as outlined in the third chapter, I argue, as the epistemic value within the outlaw emotion of eco-grief is a further reason to think that eco-grief is in fact an instrumentally apt response to climate change.

There is however also an added epistemic in eco-grief as an outlaw emotion is, as it enables us to see the hidden structures of epistemic injustice that are at play in our current societies. We come to learn this by reflecting upon the barriers of expressions eco-grief, which mostly focus on continued calls to move past and ignore the emotion. From such a reflection it becomes clear that those who experience eco-grief are wronged in their capacities as a knower, because the important epistemic capacities that are within the emotion are not acknowledged but are instead systematically suppressed.

Now that I established that the apt emotion of eco-grief indicates important knowledge in at least two different ways, this allows me to, from yet another perspective, counter McKinnon's view on despair being a wrong response to climate change. She argued that despair would not only be unhelpful, but also based on unjustified beliefs that one cannot effectively tackle climate change and

explained these beliefs to be unjustified because we lack full knowledge of what our impact will be (McKinnon 2014). As I showed that there actually is important epistemic value within the emotion of eco-grief, that makes enables us to see the consequences of our actions if we were to reconstruct the knowledge surrounding our emotional constitution. Therefore, I argue that McKinnon's appeal to uncertainty is misguided, as eco-grief actually more correctly and thus with more certainty tracks the nature of the wrongs that our brought about by the process of dismissing and disapproving of eco-grief.

In this chapter, I argued that the current responses towards eco-grief constitute an epistemic injustice, because of the way in which they demand the suppression of the valuable knowledge that lies within the emotion of eco-grief. In did this by drawing on Jaggar's account of the value of emotions in epistemology in which she advocates that emotions may be helpful or even vital to the construction of systematic knowledge, that I connected Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice. I clarified my claims by looking into how epistemic value is obscured by the responses towards the eco-grief that climate scientists experience. From this analysis, I established that there is first of all epistemic value within eco-grief, because of its ability to point us to different ways of constructing knowledge about the climate, emotion and nature that may guide us towards possible beginnings of a society in which all could thrive. I then argued that the denial and outlawing of the epistemic value within the emotion of eco-grief, also points to another added epistemic value, as the emotion enables us to see bigger hidden structures of injustice that are at play in the suppression of eco-grief in our current societies.

6. Eco-grief as an anthropocentric concept

In this chapter, I will look into a possible objection that could be given to my argument, which focusses on the claim that eco-grief may reflect an undesirable anthropocentric attitude towards nature and the environment. In response, I will argue that while some expressions of eco-grief here may indeed reflect the wrong kind of attitude, however not all do, not the kind that is apt.

6.1 Why eco-grief may constitute an anthropocentric image of nature

One possible objection that one could give to my argument, is that the emotion of eco-grief is not without blame itself. This is because of the idea that when we scrutinize the claims of people who report they are feeling eco-grief, we come to see that they can actually be regarded as constituting a rather anthropocentric or even egocentric image of nature, the environment and non-human animals (McShane 2016). One could argue that eco-grief therefore emanates from the wrong kind of attitude, as it only teaches us to project our anthropocentric interpretations of life and death onto non-human bodies, which easily leads to selfish behaviour in the sense that people claim to feel sadness and suffering about things lost in nature that they actually never knew. The direct experience of loss is often not there, it is only in the rational reflection upon the catastrophic outcomes of climate change that people report they are starting to feel what could be described as eco-grief. It can therefore seem as if people experiencing eco-grief problematically appropriate the pain and suffering of those beings in nature⁸ that people are never able to truly know, which easily results in an egocentric attitude of melancholia and self-pity (Lertzman 2015, p. xiii).

Moreover, one could argue that eco-grief should not only be criticised because it easily constitutes an attitude of self-pity, but also because the compassion that the emotion of eco-grief claims to cultivate can actually be regarded as demeaning towards those non-human bodies of nature that we force our compassion upon. The care towards others that is within the emotion of eco-grief therefore can be blamed for actually creating a form of pity in which those who are superior; humans, look down upon those ‘poor’ recipients who are in desperate need of our care; non-humans. Kant pointed to this idea as he referred to compassion as “an insulting kind of benevolence” (qtd. in Adams and Gruen 2014, p.42). This again shows the anthropocentric view of nature that eco-grief reflects, critics could argue, as it may be the case that climate change and the consequences that result from it are only bad, because humans feel bad about it (Shellenberger 2019, Why Climate).

⁸ For now, I think the pain and suffering that I am talking about here mostly applies to non-human animals and not so much to plants or other similar organisms, as the capacity to ‘feel’ and therefore experience pain and suffering, has been linked in Western discourse to the idea that a minimal form of mental activity has to be present. It would however be interesting to investigate whether there are non-western environmental ethics that challenge this view.

6.2 How the apt kind of eco-grief is able to challenge this critique

I would like to acknowledge that while some expressions of eco-grief may indeed reflect such a problematic anthropocentric appropriation, I argue that not all do, not the kind that is apt. Both points of objection that are put forward, therefore reflect a misunderstanding of the attitudes that are behind the expression of eco-grief, as they are again limited by the assumption that there is a categorical divide between reason and emotion, between human bodies and non-human bodies; both dichotomies I set out to challenge in this thesis. I argue that instead of framing expressions of eco-grief within the dominant Western discourse in which reason is constructed as “objective, dispassionate and universal [and] emotion as subjective, flighty and dangerous to self and others” (Adams and Gruen 2014, p.42), we should move towards a radically different way of making sense of the world, in which reason and emotion, and nature and human are two sides of the same coin that cannot exist without each other.

This would prevent us from getting bogged down in discussions about whether eco-grief constitutes anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric views of nature, and instead we could come to learn about eco-feminist values of interconnectedness and solidarity that grieving nature can reveal. This recalls our earlier discussion on the aptness of eco-grief, in which it was established that those forms of eco-grief are apt when they become a sort of base mechanism for “recognizing the vulnerability of others through our own fragility, a fragility that, through climate change and the resulting impacts, we all share to varying degrees and in varying ways on this planet” (Cunsolo 2012, p 149).

Casting aside the dominant focus that frames expressions of eco-grief within an opposition of human and non-human, therefore enables us to experience a form of apt eco-grief in which ecological losses as a result of climate change are not framed in the sense that this animal or this piece of nature is no longer here for *me*, but instead it is grieving about those things these non-human bodies will never get to experience, the lives they will no longer be able to live. In this way, identifying with them is not an appropriation of their pain or suffering, as we acknowledge that we do not know them and that they may have different interests that we remain unaware of. Therefore, as we “must attain solidarity with the other in the recognition of their difference” (Plumwood 2002, p.200), apt eco-grief does not make us mourn ourselves but others, as the fact that we mourn is an expression of those interconnected relations of precariousness that we have come to value.

In this chapter, I considered a possible objection that could be put forward to critique my argument, as I discussed the criticism that eco-grief may actually be based on a wrongful anthropocentric appropriation of nature and the environment. I responded by explaining that while some expressions of eco-grief here may indeed reflect the wrong kind of attitude, there are also those that are apt. Now that I provided a detailed overview as to what the specific responses towards the apt emotions of eco-grief are and how they are connected to bigger patterns of oppression that constitute both an affective and

epistemic injustice, in the next chapter I will explain what it would actually mean to rectify these injustices as to actually validate the importance of eco-grief in a time of climate change.

7. How to rectify the injustice

In this chapter, I will be explaining what it would mean to rectify the injustices that are constituted in the responses to eco-grief. As I will argue that simply tolerating the emotion as an apt response towards climate change is not enough, I will instead propose that when we want to establish an actual mournability of the natural world, we should try to tackle to bigger systems of oppression that call for the rejection of grief. I will explain how we can do this by encouraging people to develop feelings of eco-grief and share this emotion in public settings of mourning, as I believe that only this can bring about structural change to established practices of grief and revolutionary changes to dominant understandings of emotion, gender, and the non-human world.

7.1 Why being tolerant of expressions of eco-grief is not enough

I would like to point out that what may be behind the objection as mentioned in the previous chapter is the initial feeling that the apt kind of eco-grief is not at all easily attainable, as many people actually do not feel eco-grief nor are they quickly inclined to do so. Some therefore argue that even when we acknowledge the aptness of eco-grief and allow people to express the emotion, there would however still be no urgency to actively encourage people to cultivate feelings of eco-grief, because this would be an unrealistic and ultimately unhelpful endeavour. What we may really need instead is a more pragmatic and practical approach to solving ecological problems (Minteer 2011). This attitude is currently expressed by many and it cannot be denied that due to this approach, environments, non-human animals and other pieces of nature are being saved from extinction by those who set out to protect them (Baumann 2019).

By giving a fuller understanding as to what the different responses towards eco-grief are and how they are connected to broader mechanisms of oppression, that are revealed by examining in what ways they constitute both affective and epistemic injustices, I hope to have shown that such calls for pragmatism wrongly frame the discussion on eco-grief as just an individual issue about whether or not we should tolerate the emotion. This is because, by thoroughly reflecting upon the barriers of the expression of eco-grief, it becomes clear that the fact that many people simply do not feel eco-grief is not a simple natural reaction, but instead a rather intricate social affair that is connected to issues of injustice. Therefore, I argue that it is not enough to counter the dismissal and disapproval of the emotion by simply proposing that people should be allowed to feel eco-grief; simply restoring it as an apt emotion that should be accepted and tolerated, as this would not rectify the wrongs that are constituted in the responses towards eco-grief.

7.2 Becoming aware of the ways in which injustices are perpetuated

Instead, I argue that a better first step to tackle the injustices that are imbedded in our responses towards eco-grief, is to acknowledge that the discrediting of eco-grief does not constitute a mere

oversight or insensitivity, but instead reflects broader social norms that make us think of grief as an emotion that should be suppressed. In so doing, we become aware of the fact that the responses towards eco-grief not only marginalize and reject people's existing feelings of eco-grief, but also ensure that nature and the environment stays a non-grievable thing, so that people cannot easily develop feelings of eco-grief, as to perpetuate those underlying affective and epistemic injustices.

This recalls the earlier discussion we had at the end of chapter three in which I looked into the bigger capitalist socio-economic and patriarchal norms that shape how we think of grief in general and bring about a pathologisation and feminisation of the emotion. I argue that my analysis on how responses towards the apt emotion of eco-grief constitute both affective and epistemic injustice, confirms the idea that grief is now thought of in such a way that it "serves to turn the gaze of the mourner inward toward what is wrong with them ... instead of outward toward the social conditions that have caused these losses"(Granek 2014, p.63). For eco-grief this means that the focus on the individual mourning nature in private comes at the expense of being aware of the social conditions that caused the ecological losses they are mourning, therefore perpetuating the injustices that have created nature as a non-grievable and therefore destructible object.

7.3 What it would mean to do justice to eco-grief

Therefore, to do real justice to the emotion of eco-grief would mean that we have to rectify the injustices that people who now feel eco-grief have to deal with, which would mean we have to somehow take away the obstacles that work to suppress the emotion and in doing so undermine the grievability of nature. As I have stated that this can only be done by moving beyond the idea that we merely need attitudes of acceptance towards those who express eco-grief, I argue that we should therefore encourage people to cultivate emotions of eco-grief, as I have shown that there is a tremendous value within the emotion that can help us understand how we could potentially live in a radically different society in which we base our relationships with others on ecofeminist values of solidarity and interconnectedness.

In this proposal, I am calling for what bell hooks names a radical transformation of our social systems (hooks 2000 p. 1-14). This is because I believe that substantive structural changes to established practices of grief and revolutionary changes to dominant understandings of emotion, gender, and the non-human world are necessary, if we want to truly establish the mournability of the natural world. As only a radical transformation of our social system would enable us to constitute these substantive and evolutionary changes, we therefore need to create public markers of eco-grief that encourage people to express their radical voices thereby influencing more people to be enlightened in their witnesses (hooks p. 8). This in turn can eventually transform our society into a less oppressive one in which more people have the right kind of attitude towards nature that does justice to the emotion of eco-grief.

7.4 Suggestions for public practices of eco-grief

In order to eventually be able to reach such a radical transformation, we should thus start with encouraging people to partake in practices that make eco-grief more publically accessible, which can be done by creating shared spaces in which we can mourn nature.

This recalls our earlier discussion on Cunsolo and her account on eco-grief, in which she advocated for the implementation of practical instruments that could help us mark and share our ecological losses, as to raise more consciousness and empathy for the mournability of nature. Cunsolo emphasized the importance of such instruments as she argued that they could potentially assist in exposing “the inherent injustice in silenced deaths [and] counteract the derealisation of non-humans, and those who mourn them, in dominant climate change discourses” (Cunsolo 2012 p.150). As I thoroughly investigated what the specific responses to eco-grief are and how they constitute such inherent injustices that Cunsolo briefly pointed to, I argue that we can now see that that the initial consciousness-raising instruments that she proposed are actually incredibly important and valuable. This is because they make us deal with the rejection of eco-grief as a social and political issue that we can share together in public, and not as a mere individual matter of intolerance.

It is good to see that people are now also starting to get engaged in such public practices of eco-grief, as for example a group of climate scientists created an online initiative called “Is This How You Feel?”, in which they want to bring researchers together who are looking for spaces to share their feelings, including eco-grief (Is This 2014). Another recent example was the public mourning ritual for a non-human body of nature in Iceland, where the people of Iceland, including their prime minister, came together to say their last goodbyes to their once beloved Ok glacier that was officially declared dead (Bloemerink 2020). I believe that when we continue to partake in such mourning practices that make eco-grief publically expressible and in which we create shared feelings of vulnerability and precariousness, such events will eventually create spaces for cultural change, and even political action in the context of climate change.

In this chapter, I explained why my analysis of what the responses towards eco-grief are and how they constitute both affective and epistemic injustices is useful in revealing the hidden knowledge about how to truly do justice to the emotion of eco-grief. It makes us aware that we should not merely frame the dismissal and disapproval of the emotion as a simple, individual issue of intolerance, but instead it should be seen as a social affair that is imbedded within systems of suppression that work to perpetuate those affective and epistemic injustices. I argued that when we truly want to rectify the injustice, we should therefore not only allow people to feel the apt emotion of eco-grief, but also actively encourage people to cultivate the emotion. This is because expressions of eco-grief are valuable in their capacity to make us understand what it would mean to move towards a radically different transformed society, in which there is an actual mournability of the natural world. The first

steps in this direction should therefore be the creation of public spaces for mourning where people can share their feelings and experiences of eco-grief.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explain why the dismissal and disapproval of the emotion that has been called ‘eco-grief’ are not justified. I have done this by looking into what the specific responses towards eco-grief are and how they constitute both affective and epistemic injustices, that are embedded within capitalist socio-economic and patriarchal norms that call for the suppression of general forms of grief.

First, I explained what this recent phenomenon that people are calling eco-grief actually entails. I gave an overview of Cunsolo’s philosophical account of the emotion, in which she pointed to the important potential of eco-grief to help us develop a sense of shared vulnerability, and in doing so to see non-human others as grievable subjects. I explained how my thesis is meant to add credit to her initial thoughts about the importance of eco-grief and the marginalization of it, by looking at how the responses towards eco-grief constitute not just insensitivity or oversight, but inherent injustice.

Then I sought to give a fuller understanding as to how people are responding to expressions of eco-grief. I showed that the dominant responses towards eco-grief revolve around the idea of it being a passive, not useful and de-motivating emotion that easily constitutes mental health problems. I also pointed out that these particular responses reflect some of the more general attitudes towards the overall emotion of grief, that call for the suppression of the emotion. In so doing, I clarified how the idea that grief should be overcome and dealt with in private, is in fact imbedded within capitalist socio-economic and patriarchal gender norms that govern our thinking of grief as a pathological and feminine issue.

In the third chapter, I clarified why eco-grief should be seen as an apt response to climate change when looked at from both an instrumental ecofeminist and an intrinsic fittingness perspective. As eco-grief makes us acknowledge the precariousness of life and enables us to experience a sense of shared and interconnected relations of vulnerability, in which we re-establish non-human bodies of nature as mournable, it should be seen as an instrumental apt and even desired emotion when it comes to climate change. Additionally, because eco-grief is genuinely applicable to the objects that it mourns and affectively relates to the characteristic intrinsic concerns of these objects, I argued that it should also be seen as a fitting emotion based on its intrinsic value.

Then I analysed how and why the responses towards the apt emotion of eco-grief as outlined in the second chapter constitute what Srinivasan calls an affective injustice. I looked into how current expressions of eco-grief are imbedded within normative conflicts and are constructed in such a way that people who feel eco-grief must choose between expressing or dismissing their apt emotional response, knowing that when they do the former they will be taken less seriously. I examined how affective injustice works to reinforce already existing constructions of marginalization in the context of the eco-grief that indigenous people experience and drawing from Whitney’s concept of affective marginalization, I showed how their affective capability of making sense of the world has been

amputated and rendered useless. I also explained why affective injustice within the dismissal and disapproval of eco-grief easily facilitates the problem of collective denial.

In the fifth chapter, I argued that the current responses towards eco-grief also constitute an epistemic injustice because of the way that they demand the suppression of the valuable knowledge that is within the emotion of eco-grief. In order to make this point, I used Jaggar's account on the value of emotions in epistemology that I linked to Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice. I clarified my claims by analysing how the dismissal and disapproval of the eco-grief experienced by climate scientists wrongs them in their capacity as a knower. I also explained that there is an added epistemic value that is revealed in the outlawing of the emotion of eco-grief, because by experiencing that one is expressing an unconventional emotion, eco-grief as an outlaw emotion points us to bigger hidden patterns of injustice.

Then I provided a possible objection that could be put forward to critique my argument, which revolved around the idea that expressions of eco-grief may actually be based on a problematic anthropocentric appropriation of nature and the environment. I responded by explaining that while some expressions of eco-grief may indeed reflect the wrong kind of attitude, those that are apt do however not do so.

In the last chapter I explained why it becomes clear from my analysis about what the specific responses towards eco-grief are and how they constitute both affective and epistemic injustices, that when we truly want to do justice to the emotion of eco-grief, we should not merely frame the dismissal and disapproval of the emotion as a simple, individual issue of intolerance, but instead as a social affair that is connected to inherent injustice. I then argued that when we want to rectify these injustices, we should therefore not only allow people to feel the apt emotion of eco-grief, but also actively encourage people to cultivate and publically share the emotion, because of the value that is within expressions of eco-grief that enables us to see how we could move towards a radically different transformed society, in which there could be an actual mournability and non-othering of the natural world.

In this thesis, I have attempted to build on Cunsolo's initial remarks on the importance of eco-grief, in particular by adding substance and theoretical support to explaining why it is important that we support proposals for publically grieving nature together. I hope that my thesis can therefore be one of the first works into understanding what it could mean to truly do justice to the eco-grief now experienced by climate scientists, indigenous cultures, younger generations and all others, in order to rectify the injustices that have been done to them.

Due to limitation of scope, I was not able to dive deeper into analysing how exactly the affective and epistemic injustices to those who feel eco-grief are connected bigger systems of oppression, that are imbedded within our current dominant capitalist socio-economic ideas and patriarchal gender norms. It would be interesting to do further research on this topic, perhaps in the form of a case-study that looks at how people respond to the eco-grief experienced by Greta Thunberg for example, or a particular indigenous culture such as the Inuit. Perhaps there are other injustices to

be found as well in the responses towards eco-grief, next to the affective and epistemic that I was able to find that provide us with further answers to the question what it would mean to do justice to the emotion of eco-grief.

I also hope that his thesis inspires others to further engage in philosophical discussions on how emotions play a role in climate change and related issues. It would for example be interesting to investigate whether there are perhaps other emotions, such as anger or fear, that could also be seen as an apt response towards climate change and that face similar injustices in how people respond to it. Lastly, it would also be interesting to further investigate in what ways the emotion of grief may be politically, socially and culturally used to pressure people into feeling the emotion for certain instances, such as for wars or 9/11, perhaps obscuring the possibility that grief can be felt for other objects as well.

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