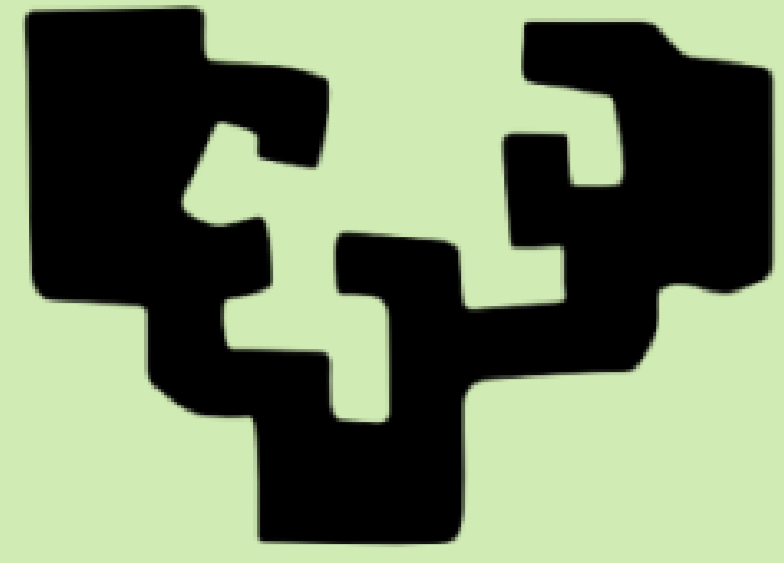
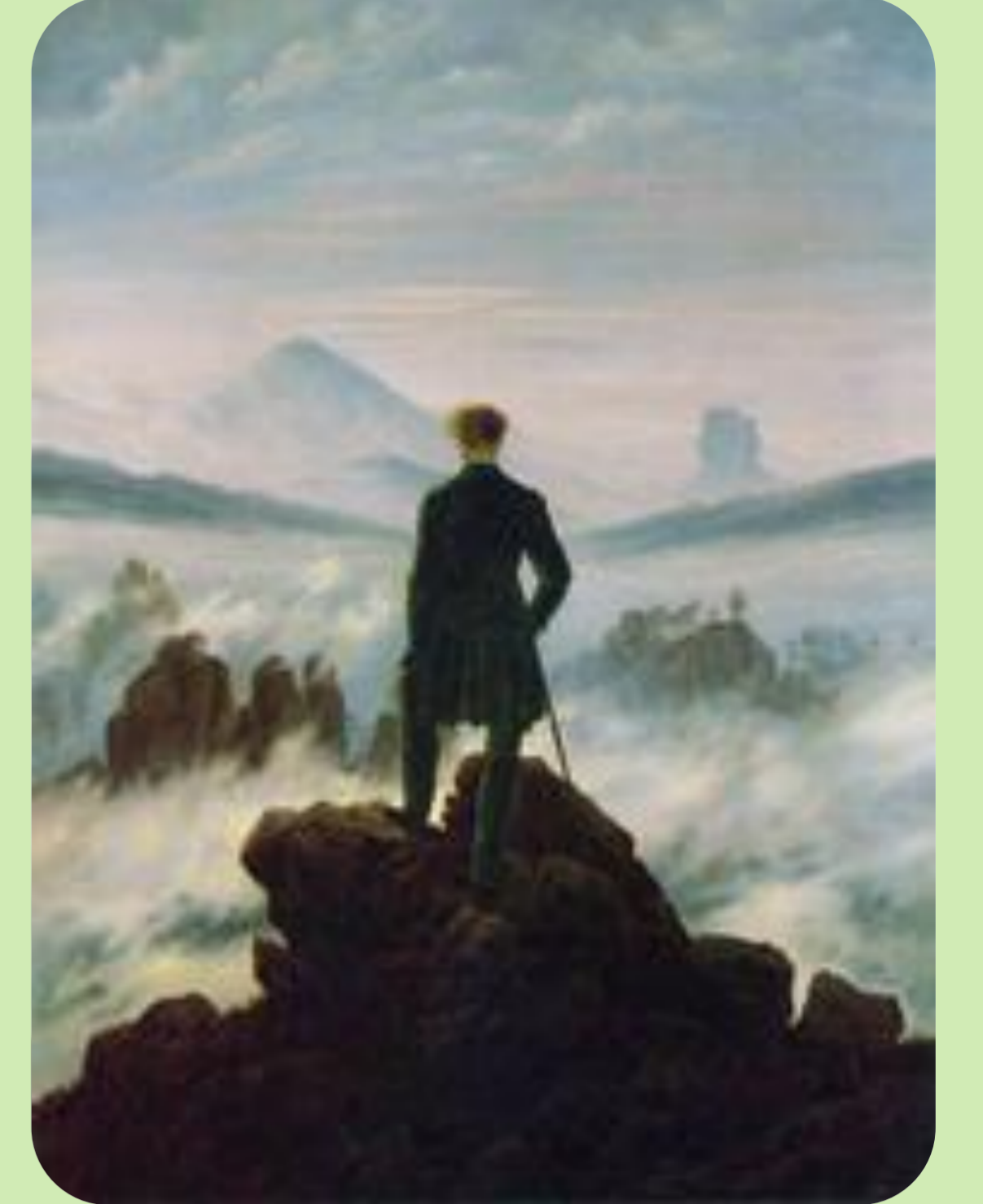


# A Comparative Study on the Onto-epistemological Presuppositions in Landscape Descriptions of Romantics and Naturalists



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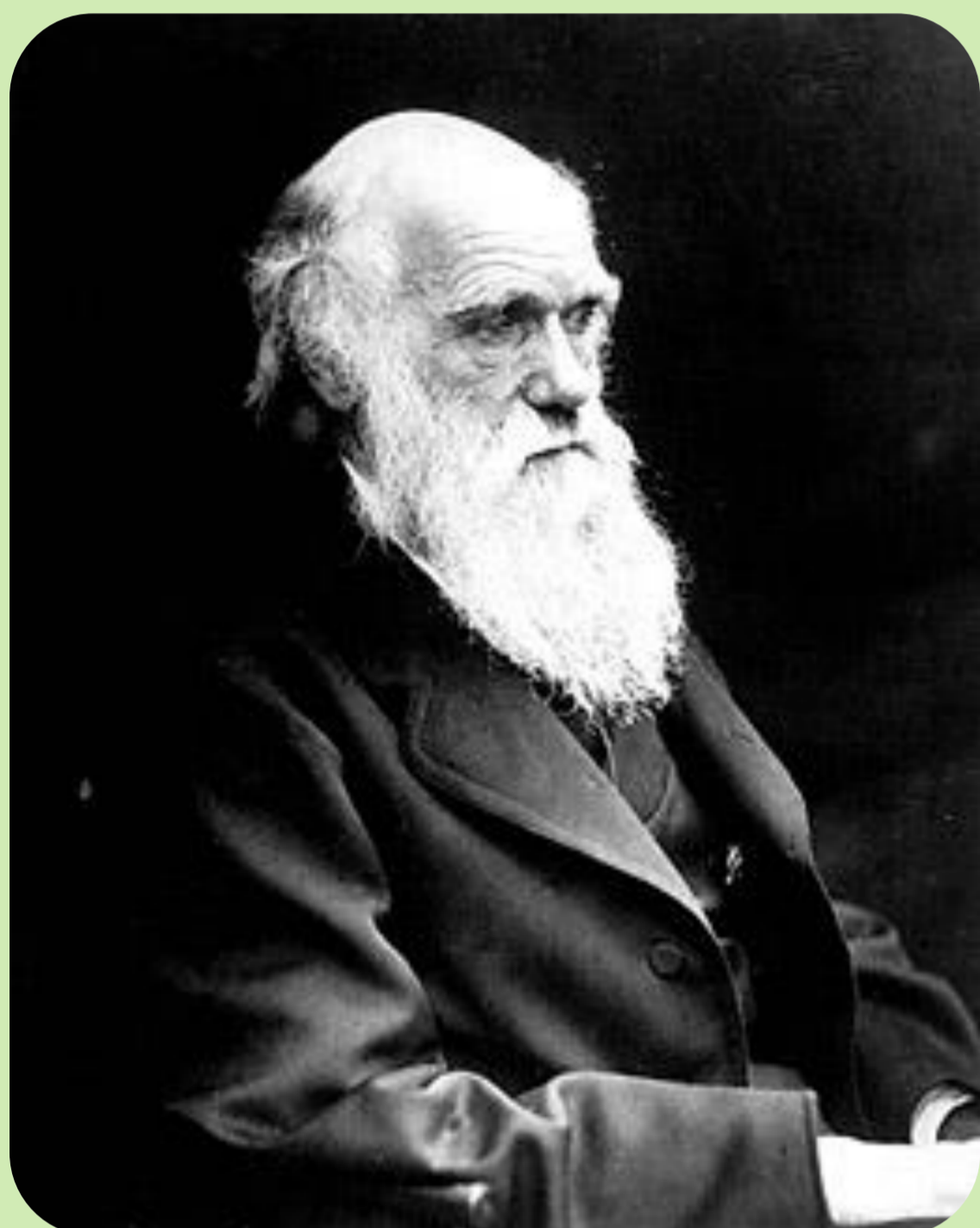


## PROBLEM

Two facts are noteworthy in standard historiography on the perception and description of nature:

- Apart from occasional exceptions (Hard 1970), there is no conceptual analysis of the onto-epistemological presuppositions implicit in the texts while it is usually carried out in studies of the concept of nature focused on philosophical and scientific theories.
- The prevalence of the analysis of descriptions made in poetic contexts, excluding descriptions of natural scenery contained in the work of prominent naturalists. However, both types are elements of the same culture that shape the world picture of their own epoch.

A comparative conceptual analysis of texts belonging to both areas, made in search of their onto-epistemological commitments, would be relevant within a philosophical theory about world pictures and their cultural role (Sellars 1963).



## HYPOTHESIS

The world picture of a given culture is built on onto-epistemological presuppositions about the world and man (Avenarius 1927, Sellars 1963, Kearney 1984). These presuppositions affect the perception and description of nature in the world picture of each culture (Dux 1982; Pacho 2010). However, alterations in the knowledge of nature should modify its explanation, as well as the perception and the description, including aesthetics.

A scientific naturalism such as Darwinian Evolutionism implies a complete conceptual revision of basic ontological presuppositions relating to nature ('species', 'substance', 'natural law', 'teleology', etc.). These modifications should have correlations in perceptions of nature, including their aesthetic perception and, therefore, also in descriptions of nature.

This general hypothesis can be specified on the basis of its ontological and epistemological implications.

SUB-HYPOTHESIS	ROMANTICISM	NATURALISM (Charles Darwin)
FROM THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW (Explain-Comprehend paradigm)	The lack of explanatory-causal knowledge of nature should lead the romantic poet to make subjective descriptions. As a result, descriptions about the feelings of the poet should predominate.	The descriptions of landscape made in naturalistic contexts should contain more explanatory elements, including, when appropriate, descriptions about the subjective repercussion of the observer.
FROM THE ONTOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW (From "Enchantment" to "Disenchantment" of nature)	The use of a lexicon which is more prone to a sentimental analysis of landscape should imply the existence of an implicit ontology of nature considered as trans-natural reality.	The descriptive-explicative knowledge of nature would cause perceptions and descriptions of landscape with less subjective ontological descriptors. These descriptors weaken the <i>enchanted</i> vision of nature in favor of a <i>disenchanted</i> vision.

The hypothesis and sub-hypothesis are tested by comparing texts of two XIX century movements, Romanticism and Naturalism, for they belong to temporal and geo-culturally close contexts.

## RESULTS

-The comparison of texts belonging to the two movements reveals that there are two different visions of nature.

1. The romantic terms that describe the poet's feelings have a strong onto-theological sense. The lexical data infer that although the romantic author does not lack interest in science and scientific explanation of natural phenomena, the lack of knowledge about the mechanisms of nature makes romantic descriptions become "magic" descriptions.

2. A modification is produced by the move from an *enchanted* explanation of the workings of nature to an explanation that does not require a mystical element. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, the secularized view of the world that Darwinism promotes carries with it neither a devaluation of moral or aesthetic sentiments nor the dehumanization of existence. The *disenchantment*, in Max Weber's words, that Darwin's theory produces should not be understood in a pejorative, but rather in a literal sense. The theory of evolution, in effect, divests nature of its magical character and begins to explain it in terms of natural selection, according it, in the process a new and more intense attraction.



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