INTRODUCTION

[It would be up to thought to see all nature, and whatever would install itself as such, as history, and all history as nature.

Theodor W. Adorno (ND 359)

Decades before the environmental movement emerged in the 1960s, Theodor W. Adorno criticized our destructive and self-destructive relation to nature with the ultimate aim of reshaping that relationship in more mutually beneficial ways. His criticisms originally appeared in a 1932 essay, “The Idea of Natural-History”, where he advanced the project of showing that human history is always also natural history and that non-human nature is entwined with history. This project informs all Adorno’s work, including Negative Dialectics and the unfinished, posthumously published Aesthetic Theory.¹ The idea of natural history provides the template for interpretive practice in philosophy: philosophical interpretation “means reading nature from history and history from nature” (HF 134). Philosophy is tasked with demonstrating that human history is linked inextricably to both our own internal, instinctual, nature and non-human nature. But philosophy also shows that nature is historical, not just because nature evolves and constantly changes, but because it has been profoundly – often negatively – affected by human history. Adorno’s idea of natural history reveals the dynamic, and potentially catastrophic, interaction between nature and history.

When philosophy reads nature from history, the idea of natural history becomes “the canon of interpretation for philosophers of history” (ND 359; see also HF 125).² Adorno also made this point in Dialectic of Enlightenment, where he and his co-author, Max Horkheimer, denied that the history of our species could be traced in the development of concepts like freedom and justice. Instead, a serious history of the human race would reveal that all our “ideas, prohibitions, religions, and political creeds” are
tied to conditions that serve either to increase or decrease “the natural survival prospects of the human species on the earth or within the universe” (DE C:222-3, J:184-5). For millennia, we have sought to dominate nature – to predict, control, manipulate and exploit it – in order to improve these prospects. Our history can be interpreted as natural history because its trajectory can be traced in the vicissitudes of our instinctually driven domination of nature. Human history “remains under the spell of blind nature” in the form of the unbridled instinct for self-preservation (HF 124).

Conversely, when history is read from nature, nature “appears as a sign for history” (2006b: 264). Nature’s historical character is evident in the growth, maturation and decline of natural things, but history also leaves its mark on nature when we treat natural things instrumentally and reduce them to their exchange value in the capitalist marketplace. Exchange relations damage human beings as well by expunging differences between them in order to make “nonidentical individuals and performances become commensurable and identical” (ND 146). This damage has only been exacerbated by the forced renunciation of our internal nature in the form of needs and drives. On this point, Adorno largely agrees with Sigmund Freud: our history can be read in the increasingly aggressive behaviours to which civilization gives rise when it demands that we constantly “exercise rational control over ourselves and over external nature”. More critical than Freud, however, Adorno goes on to observe that “the balance sheet which forms the foundation of this entire calculus of the renunciation of instinct and the domination of nature can never be presented because if it were presented, the irrational aspect of that rationality would become inescapably visible” (PMP 139).

A thoroughly “critical concept” (HF 116), the idea of natural history makes visible the damage that has been inflicted on both human and non-human nature by our compulsive attempts to dominate nature to satisfy survival imperatives. To shed greater light on this concept, Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of Adorno’s thesis concerning the preponderance of the object. This thesis postulates the primacy of both internal and external nature in human life, while emphasizing at the same time the preponderance of society, in the guise of exchange value, over individuals. In fact, the idea of natural history complements Adorno’s thesis about the “weightiness” of the objective world because it affirms the preponderance of “first” and “second” nature over individuals as it explores their unending entwine ment (ND 358).

The preponderant objective world is not a mere reflection of mind or spirit. Instead, nature and history are resoundingly real; they are powerful material forces. Chapter 1 also describes the central features of Adorno’s
materialism, taking its point of departure from Brian O'Connor who com­
pared John Searle's account of the non-dualistic and non-reductive relation
between the brain and consciousness to Adorno's account of the relation
between subject and object. However, I also take issue with O'Connor when
I argue that Adorno grounds this epistemological relation in his idea of nat­
ural history. Adopting Karl Marx's ideas about the metabolism between our
species and non-human nature, Adorno speculates that human conscious­
ness first emerged in the struggle for survival. His account of the emer­
gence of consciousness helps to explain why the affinity between nature
and history authorizes neither the reduction of nature to history nor the
reduction of human history to nature. In fact, Chapter 1 ends with the
claim - developed in subsequent chapters - that Adorno's non-reductive
and non-dualistic idea of natural history may help to solve Kant's antinomy
of causality and freedom.

Chapter 2 explores some of the implications of the preponderance of
the objective world for our knowledge of nature. On the one hand, we can
apprehend natural things only because we have an affinity with them as
thingly creatures ourselves. Even the concepts we use to understand nature
derive their meaning from our material encounters with it. On the other
hand, Adorno agrees with Kant that there is an obstacle or block to knowl­
dge. Nature cannot be known as it is in itself; it can never be grasped
fully in concepts. Yet Chapter 2 will argue that our knowledge of nature
is problematic, not simply because it involves conceptual mediation, but
because we have taken an adversarial stance towards nature as a fearsome
Other that threatens our prospects for survival. This antagonistic relation
to nature manifests itself in our subordination of natural things under abstract
concepts and exchange relations. Since we have masked nature's diversity
and thwarted its internal development, I also ask what "nature" might sig­
ify when I assess two attempts to make sense of this concept.

If preponderant external nature always lies beyond our conceptual grasp,
preponderant internal nature eludes our attempts to repress it. Today, the
renunciation of instinct issues in blind aggression towards everything
deemed merely natural. By no means an orthodox Freudian, Adorno none­
theless endorses Freud's theory of instincts, agreeing that instincts have
both somatic and psychological components. In keeping with his idea of
natural history, however, Adorno adds that instincts are thoroughly histor­
ical because they are invariably shaped by prevailing socioeconomic con­
ditions. Discussing Adorno's appropriation of Freud's instinct theory in
the second section of Chapter 2, I also review Joel Whitebook's claim that
Adorno follows Freud's injunction to displace the ego with respect to the id
to promote greater autonomy. Where Whitebook thinks that Adorno needs
(and surreptitiously uses) a concept of sublimation to achieve this goal, Adorno contends that individuals should become more fully conscious of themselves as embodied and instinctual creatures. Critical self-reflection – reflection on nature in the self – is the hallmark of a more enlightened form of reason and the harbinger of freedom.

According to Adorno, the entire programme of Western philosophy has consisted in thinking about thought. Chapter 3 explains how Adorno tries to advance this programme with his critique of the prevailing form of thought: identity thinking. Shaped by socioeconomic conditions and driven by survival instincts, identity thinking reinforces domination in conceptual form when it compulsively identifies particular things with universal concepts. Chapter 3 begins with a brief account of the historical trajectory of Western reason as an organ of adaptation to the natural world, placing special emphasis on the development of its subsumptive, identitarian employment of concepts. Since modern science wields concepts and mathematical formulae in a similar fashion, Chapter 3 includes a discussion of Adorno's critique of science and the concept of causality, rehearsing his objections to the reduction of reason to quantification and calculation.

Following this account of Western reason and modern science, Chapter 3 explores Adorno's alternative cognitive paradigm: non-identity thinking. Here I examine J. M. Bernstein's important gloss on this paradigm while offering a more dialectical reading of it. In contrast to identity thinking, which ignores the particularity of natural things when it substitutes unity for diversity, identity for difference, non-identity thinking deploys concepts to break through concepts with the aim of apprehending non-conceptual particulars, even as it acknowledges the lack of identity between universal and particular. Bernstein is certainly right to say that non-identity thinking tries to circumvent the abstract universality of concepts by turning back to the material particulars that spawn concepts. However, non-identity thinking also has a speculative, proleptic dimension that is reached by means of determinate negation. Adorno calls determinate negation a methodological principle (2008: 28), which, by negating the damage we inflict on nature, offers an indirect glimpse of undamaged life. Deployed in a constellation of concepts, the emphatic ideas derived from determinate negation point to less instrumental and exploitative relationships with nature in a freer and more rational society.

Chapter 4 focuses on the preponderance of society over individuals. It begins by remarking on the isomorphism between identity thinking and exchange relations. Just as identity thinking treats natural things (including human beings) as mere instances of more general kinds with a view to manipulating and controlling them, exchange relations serve survival
imperatives when they turn individual people and things into commensurable units of value. Both identity thinking and exchange relate “all phenomena, everything we encounter, to a unified reference point” when they subsume individual people and things “under a self-identical, rigid unity, and thereby remove them from their dynamic context” (KCPR 114, trans. mod.). Indeed, Adorno claims that identity thinking and exchange relations are isomorphic because thought mirrors the prevailing mode of exchange in a given society.

Chapter 4 also examines Adorno’s critique of the process of individuation under the monopoly conditions that characterize late capitalism. On Adorno’s admittedly bleak view, since late capitalist society obliges us to focus exclusively on our own individual survival, it arrests individuation and places nature as a whole in jeopardy. Like Samuel Beckett in Endgame, Adorno foresaw the catastrophic annihilation of all life on this planet when he warned that society’s “principle of particular private interest” might well lead to “the death of all” (ND 298). At the same time, Adorno explored the prospects for transforming socioeconomic conditions with the aim of avoiding that fate. Highly critical of existing forms of collective action, he claimed that those individuals who have developed their capacity for self-reflection can play an important role in initiating the transformations needed to avert catastrophe because they are able to look critically at the conditions that shape their own thought and behaviour. Critics of our current predicament have the task of analysing the obstacles to social solidarity and the emergence of a global subject, using determinate negation to generate new ideas about solidarity, exchange relations, self-preservation and freedom.

In contrast to the first four chapters, which outline Adorno’s philosophy of nature, the fifth chapter compares and contrasts his ideas with those of three prominent representatives of radical ecology: Arne Naess, Murray Bookchin, and Carolyn Merchant. Like Adorno, these ecologists stress the urgent need to alter our interaction with nature in ways that will benefit both non-human nature and ourselves. Insisting that we become conscious of nature in ourselves, they also echo Adorno when they denounce the current emphasis under capitalism on economic growth for its own sake while advocating substantive changes in society and championing new forms of ecological sustainability that give due weight to both the flourishing of the natural world and the satisfaction of human needs.

Adorno also speaks to issues in environmental philosophy such as anthropomorphism, the intrinsic value of nature, speciesism, the origin of our domination of nature, the idea of "good" nature, the feminization of nature and the naturalization of women, and the emancipatory potential
of technology. However, one of the more important points to emerge from this comparison between Adorno and radical ecology concerns the efficacy of collective action today. If radical ecology is to improve our prospects for survival on this planet, the tendencies and trends that often make environmental activism ineffective must be better understood. To bring about the changes that radical ecologists rightly insist are needed, we must first acquire a better understanding of the natural and historical forces that now undermine all types of activism. Since Adorno devoted a great deal of his theoretical and empirical work to studying the impediments to effective praxis under monopoly conditions, Chapter 5 argues that he has much to contribute to the environmental movement.

Another, related, point emerges from this comparative study: radical ecologists are grappling with the perennial philosophical problem of unity in diversity. This problem should concern environmental activists to the extent that activism itself presupposes the unity – in the form of solidarity – of diverse individuals, but it affects our relation to non-human nature as well. Among the pressing questions that Adorno raises are: how can solidarity be achieved such that individuals with divergent viewpoints and concerns can work together effectively to bring about the changes necessary to ensure our survival? And, how might we relate to non-human nature so that it can thrive in all its remarkable diversity? I do not pretend that Adorno definitively answered these questions, but I do claim that they are among the more vexing and important issues he addressed. Radical ecology, and the environmental movement generally, can learn from Adorno's concerted attempts to find new ways to articulate the relationship between unity and diversity, the One and the Many.
CHAPTER FIVE
ADORNO AND RADICAL ECOLOGY

Adorno recognizes that the damage we have inflicted on nature has been extensive, and predicts that it could assume catastrophic proportions if we continue to behave as we do now: as rapaciously acquisitive creatures whose survival instincts are veering so far out of control that we are now destroying not just what we are trying to preserve but need to survive. What we call progress is forcing hundreds of millions of people to renounce the satisfaction of their needs to the point where they suffer horribly from malnutrition, starvation and preventable diseases. In less severe cases, we are forfeiting far richer, more materially and spiritually fulfilling, lives because mere survival remains our primary goal. For its part, non-human nature lies in ruins because we have imposed goals and purposes on it that are far different from those that it would adopt independently. We have ignored and suppressed nature’s autotelic powers.

The looming prospect of environmental catastrophe – the extinction of all life on this planet – now acts as a powerful stimulus to thinking about the changes that must be implemented to ensure the survival of human and non-human nature. As Adorno argues throughout his work, our current idea of progress – the progressive domination of nature – is incompatible with a more emancipated form of progress in which human beings would reconcile themselves with nature (HF 151). Since the clash between these contrary ideas of progress has become acute under late capitalism, emancipation “calls for a critical confrontation with society as it actually exists” (HF 150). On an optimistic note, Adorno states that “progress can begin at any moment”. In a graphic metaphor, he compares a truly progressive humanity to a giant who, “after sleeping from time immemorial, slowly stirs himself awake and then storms forth and tramples everything that gets in his way”. Conceding that this awakening may seem rude or unwieldy, Adorno also contends that it is the only way to achieve political maturity.
A politically mature humanity would ensure that its own tenacious nature does not have the last word (P 150; see also HF 151).

This chapter explores the paths that a more mature humanity might take by examining the work of representatives of three major trends in radical ecology: Arne Naess's deep ecology, Murray Bookchin's social ecology and Carolyn Merchant's ecofeminism. In Adornian terms, each of these ecologists is impelled by survival instincts to search for ways to repair the damage inflicted on human and non-human nature by the unfettered sway of these same instincts. Although their conceptions of nature differ, these ecologists are also prepared to endorse the injunction that we become conscious of nature in ourselves. Like Adorno, they claim that emancipation depends, in part, on acknowledging our own affinity with nature, while echoing Adorno's insistence on the urgent need for radical social change to avert catastrophe.

This comparative discussion will also show that Adorno tackles important issues in environmental philosophy, including anthropomorphism, speciesism, the claim that nature has intrinsic value, the idea of "good" nature and the origin of domination. Yet one of the main points that will emerge from this comparison is the need to reconsider the principle of unity in diversity because Naess, Bookchin and Merchant adopt this principle (albeit in different ways), and end by championing holistic accounts of nature. But, apart from problematizing the holistic principle of unity in diversity, this chapter also stresses a related issue: the need to rethink and reform environmental activism itself. Since Adorno's critical concept of natural history makes visible both the damage done to natural things when we treat them as mere instances of more general kinds and the impediments to social solidarity and collective action today, I argue that his work has a great deal to offer the environmental movement.

ARNE NAESS AND DEEP ECOLOGY

Naess claims that many different, even conflicting, philosophical principles are compatible with radically altered and more mutually beneficial relationships to non-human nature. Since ecologists need not adhere to the same principles, Naess is prepared to accommodate a wide variety of philosophical positions, understanding philosophy in the broadest sense to include religious and other viewpoints, as well as more strictly philosophical views (1999b: 199). However, he also insists that these viewpoints agree with his eight-point Deep Ecology Platform, which provides a general orientation for action that aims to initiate change rather than formulating specific precepts.
for action. It is therefore more important to determine whether Adorno's philosophy of nature is compatible with Naess's eight points than to compare their respective philosophies.

Nevertheless, as his interest in ecology grew during the 1960s and 1970s, Naess began to develop a philosophy of nature, a philosophy influenced, in particular, by Spinoza's *Ethics* and the Advaita Vedanta. He called his philosophy Ecosophy T. Unlike ecological philosophy (or ecophilosophy), which examines problems common to ecology and philosophy, an ecosophy is "a kind of total view which you feel at home with, 'where you philosophically belong'" (Naess 1989: 37). Among its more important features, Ecosophy T promotes self-realization, where the self that is realized is far more comprehensive than the egocentric self because it extends to all nature. Before I begin to discuss the Deep Ecology Platform, I shall look briefly at these ideas about self-realization, but readers should bear in mind that Naess denies that objections to Ecosophy T will fatally undermine his proposals for improving our relation to nature.

Naess postulates the fundamental unity of everything that exists. In a fascinating debate with A. J. Ayer, televised in the Netherlands in 1971, he stated simply: "All living beings are ultimately one" (Naess et al. 1999: 15). His belief in the unity of all things under the sun underlies his account of self-realization: a process in which individuals actualize themselves by identifying with other individuals, including individual animals, insects and plants, as well as individual parts of inorganic nature (mountains, rivers and so on). Recalling Adorno's concern for the particular, Naess develops his ecosophical outlook through an identification with individual beings that is so profound or "deep" that the self "is no longer adequately delimited by the personal ego or the organism". Through identification, which is based more on feelings such as compassion and empathy than on a rational acknowledgement of our place in the natural world, one experiences oneself to be a genuine part of all life (1989: 174).

This assertion about the unity of all things is obviously at odds with Adorno's claims about non-identity. Even, and especially, as part of nature, our species has evolved in such a way that it has acquired the – as yet only partially actualized – capacity to differentiate itself from nature. Radical changes in our relation to nature presuppose the further development of this capacity, not its dissolution. Adorno would therefore reject Naess's quasi-mystical expansion of the individual to embrace all nature, even as he stresses our affinity with it. If he inflicts a narcissistic wound on our self-understanding when he argues that reason is just an organ of adaptation to the enviroring world, Adorno also denies that becoming conscious of nature in ourselves requires blind identification with nature.
On this point, an objection might be raised because Adorno is sometimes said to advocate mimetic interaction with nature. Speaking of our first attempts to create images of nature, Adorno asserts that they must have been “preceded by a mimetic comportment”, which he describes as “the assimilation of the self to its other” (AT 329). On the surface, this description accords with Naess’s idea of identification as a “spontaneous, non-rational, but not irrational, process through which the interest or interests of another being are reacted to as our own interest or interests” (1988b: 261). At issue, however, are both the character of mimesis and the role it plays in Adorno’s work. Mimesis is doubtless central to Adorno’s aesthetics: art is the “indigenous domain of mimesis” (Huhn 2004b: 11, citing AT 41). But artistic mimesis does not involve the assimilation of self to other as it did in human prehistory (or, indeed, as it does in childhood). Rather, mimesis in artworks consists in their “resemblance to themselves” (AT 104). At their best, artworks have a proleptic orientation: they can be said to reflect “being-in-itself” only to the extent that they anticipate “a being-in-itself that does not yet exist, ... an unknown that – by way of the subject – is self-determining” (AT 77). On Tom Huhn’s provocative reading of this often touted but largely misunderstood concept, mimesis provides a model for becoming, transience; it shows “how to forestall becoming fixed and fixated, rigid and further bound up” (2004b: 8).

More to the point, when Bernstein observes that “the meaning deficit caused by the disenchantment of the world is ... a rationality deficit”, he rightly notes that Adorno wants to expand reason by means of a reinscription of conceptuality, not to displace reason with aesthetic praxis (Bernstein 2001: 4). Non-identity thinking can certainly learn from art because the mimetic vestige in art is “the plenipotentiary of an undamaged life in the midst of mutilated life” (AT 117). But such thinking is not as dependent on art as art is on it, because art requires philosophy to give its truth content conceptual form. Where Naess seeks to erase “the experience of a distinction between ego and alter, between me and the sufferer” (1988b: 261), Adorno would counter that the awareness of our affinity with nature becomes untrue when it is posited as something positive because it leads to the “false conclusion that the object is the subject” (ND 150). As a corrective, the subject should use concepts in such a way as to “make up for what it has done to nonidentity” (ND 145).

Although Naess adopts diversity and ecological complexity as normative values (1989: 46) that serve as guidelines for decision-making about environmental issues (ibid. : 42), he also claims that the “earth is an integrated process” (1988a: 128). If we can debate the nature and limitation of this unity, it is nonetheless a basic tenet of Ecosophy T that life is fundamentally
one. Self-realization involves the “mature experience of oneness in diversity” as “inspired by, but not conforming to, Gandhi’s interpretation of the *Bhagavadgita*” (1988a: 128). In fact, Naess alleges that the diversity of life on earth only extends and heightens identity: the “greater the diversity . . . , the greater the Self-realization” (Naess & Bodian 1995: 30). Given this stress on identity, then, Adorno would probably be more inclined to agree with ecofeminist Val Plumwood, who underlined the importance of “relational dynamics, the precarious balance of sameness and difference, of self and other involved in experiencing sameness without obliterating difference” (1999: 209).

More germane to this discussion is the question of the extent to which Adorno would agree with the Deep Ecology Platform, which Naess first developed with George Sessions in 1984. Very generally, the platform consists in key terms and phrases that are “tentatively proposed as basic to deep ecology” (Naess 1995b: 67). Although these terms admit a variety of interpretations, and are not meant to be taken dogmatically, Naess states that those who completely dismiss any one of the eight points cannot be considered supporters of deep ecology (*ibid.*: 68). Yet Naess later cautions against viewing the points as either “the philosophy characteristic of the Deep Ecology movement, or even *the* principles of Deep Ecology”. Here the eight points seem to have a more heuristic status: they “only present an attempt to formulate what might be accepted by the great majority of the supporters of the movement at a fairly general and abstract level”. Moreover, deep ecologists in less industrialized parts of the world will need different sets of formulations to express something similar to the eight points because the points “are in a sense provincial – adapted primarily to discussions among formally well-educated people in rich countries” (1995a: 220).

Each point in the Deep Ecology Platform is open to interpretation. This is especially obvious in the controversy that was sparked by the original formulation of the first point: “The flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth has intrinsic value. The value of nonhuman life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes” (1999a: 8). Since critics objected to the idea that nature (or its flourishing) has an intrinsic value, Naess accepted Jon Wetlesen’s proposal to use the phrase “value in itself” as a generic term, with “intrinsic value” or “inherent value” serving as “specifications” (Wetlesen 1999: 406; see also Naess 1999c: 418–19). Point 1 was revised to read: “The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes” (1995b: 68).
In defence of Naess, Andrew McLaughlin writes that the first point in the platform essentially targets anthropocentrism; it does not imply a commitment to any philosophically precise theory about intrinsic or inherent value. Rather than trying to “construct a formal ethical theory”, Naess is using a language that can communicate in popular contexts. He wants to say that “we can care for the rest of nature for reasons which have nothing to do with whether or not it has intrinsic, inherent, or whatever sort of value” (McLaughlin 1995: 86-7). Ecologist Per Ariansen notes that a less confusing term, which Naess used “in his work on the history of philosophy, is autotelic value, the value something has in being sought as an end, not as a means” (1999: 423). In fact, Naess also used this phrase when he argued that the radical shift that accompanies more mutually beneficial relationships to nature will require recognition of the autotelic value of every living being (1988b: 266), a recognition that identification allegedly makes possible (1986: 506).

For his part, Adorno acknowledged the autotelic powers – rather than value – of non-human nature when he referred to nature’s independent purposiveness. Naess acknowledges these powers as well when he states that self-realization can be rendered in the phrase “realizing inherent potentialities”. The questions addressed by deep ecology are: “What are the inherent potentialities of the beings of species X?” and “What are the inherent potentialities of this specimen X of the species Y?” (1995f: 229). For Naess, moreover, the “mature human individual, with a widened self, acknowledges a right to self-realization that is universal, and seeks a social order, or rather a biospherical order, which maximizes the potential for self-realization of all kinds of beings” (1995d: 257).

With some qualifications, Adorno would accept the second point in the Deep Ecology Platform: “Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values [the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life] and are also values in themselves” (1995b: 68). But Adorno did not consider the richness and diversity of life forms to be inherent or intrinsic values. Instead, when he stated that the “matters of true philosophical interest at this point in history” are “nonconceptuality, individuality, and particularity” (ND 8), he suggested that diversity, the limitless profusion of individuated things, is philosophically interesting because it continues to elude us in our cognitive pursuit of unity, identity and permanence, thereby ensuring that we remain ignorant about natural things and ourselves.

To be sure, Adorno did hold as values, in the broadest sense of that word, the well-being and flourishing of both human and non-human life. His proleptic apprehension of the potential inherent in things seeks to evoke
conditions under which human and non-human nature would thrive. Moreover, his new categorical imperative – that nothing like Auschwitz should happen again – is a response to a situation in which human and non-human nature have been reduced to so many commensurable units of value, to lifeless, reified objects, and are either literally destroyed or damaged to the point where it can plausibly be said that they no longer live because they are prevented from developing freely. This new imperative is experienced somatically; it is “a bodily sensation of the moral addendum – bodily because it is now the practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony to which individuals are exposed” (ND 365).

For Naess, suffering is “perhaps the most potent source of identification” because most people find it difficult to inhibit their spontaneous aversion to it. However, Naess also criticizes Kant’s “strange doctrine” that we should abstain from maltreating animals only because we are averse to suffering, while noting with approval that Kant would consider the spontaneous urge to eliminate suffering to be beautiful, and encouraging beautiful action (1988b: 264). In his own gloss on Kant, Adorno observes that Kantian ethics accords affection, not respect, to other animals (ND 299). Praising the philosophy of Arnold Schopenhauer, with its compassion for non-human animals, Adorno (PMP 145) contends that our exploitation and maltreatment of animals are the most tangible and obvious expression of our blind domination of nature. In Dialectic of Enlightenment, moreover, he was particularly critical of animal experimentation (DE C:245–6, J:204).

Since domination must end, the only remaining “social morality” is to abolish the “vicious system of compensatory exchange”. As for individuals, they are left with “no more than the morality for which Kantian ethics … can muster only disdain: to try to live so that one may believe oneself to have been a good animal” (ND 299). Commenting on Adorno’s idea about living life as a good animal, Fabian Freyenhagen interprets it to mean that we should “show solidarity with the tormentable body” (2008: 108; ND 285). Although he mistakenly thinks that solidarity should be based on identification, Freyenhagen rightly observes that solidarity “arises out of the abhorrence of physical suffering, which has direct motivational force for human animals and for other animals as well in so far as Adorno situates this abhorrence within the context of natural evolution” (2008: 108). This abhorrence is instinctive, impulsive. In fact, Adorno insists that “there can be no room for freedom and humanity” without the kind of impulsive action that Nietzsche is said (perhaps apocryphally) to have exhibited in response to the maltreatment of a horse. For Adorno, the “true primal phenomenon of moral behaviour … occurs when the element of impulse joins
forces with the element of consciousness to bring about a spontaneous act” 
(HF 239–40 passim).\(^8\)

Given the intrinsic value of diversity, Point 3 in the Deep Ecology Platform states that we “have no right to reduce ... richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs” (1995b: 68). Here, Naess is deliberately leaving the term “vital needs” vague to allow for “considerable latitude in judgment” owing to differences in “climate and related factors, together with differences in the structures of societies as they now exist” (ibid.: 69). But the vagueness of this term does not make it any easier to determine whether Adorno would agree. Even assuming that Adorno would limit vital needs to food, clothing and shelter (he was concerned about starvation in particular: “there is tenderness only in the coarsest demand: that no one shall go hungry any more” [MM 156]), much remains to be determined – how much food? of what kind? – as Naess himself admits.

Adorno also stressed the difficulty in distinguishing between true and false, primary and secondary, needs.\(^9\) Yet he never suggested that the satisfaction of needs could be traded off against reductions in richness and diversity. Perhaps naively, he seemed at times to believe that such trade-offs would not be necessary. A society that has rid itself of “the irrationality in which production for profit is entangled” is one in which production “would act on need in a true, not distorted, sense: not because unsatisfied need is allayed by something useless, but because the allayed need relates to the world without damaging it through universal utility” (1972d: 396). So, while Adorno envisaged a society in which human needs would be met without damaging non-human nature, the extent to which he would accept that vital needs may trump diversity is moot.

Trade-offs between the satisfaction of vital human needs and the diversity of non-human nature might well be less frequent and problematic if the human population were smaller. Point 4 reads: “The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population” (Naess 1995b: 68). Although the stabilization and reduction of the human population will take centuries to achieve, without them, “substantial decreases in richness and diversity are liable to occur: the rate of extinction of species will be ten to one hundred or more times greater than in any other short period of earth history” (ibid.: 69). Unfortunately, Adorno never directly addressed this pressing (and controversial) issue. But it could be argued that his goal of satisfying the needs of all the living could be met far more easily if there were fewer human needs to satisfy. A smaller human population might also place fewer demands on the natural world, potentially freeing more of nature from exploitation.
There is no doubt that Adorno would adopt Point 5: “Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening” (ibid.: 68). This point should be read in conjunction with Point 6: “Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present” (ibid.). Indeed, Naess criticizes those factions of “the new green wave” in philosophy and religion that fail to acknowledge the need for “substantial change” (1995c: 211). Since economic growth, as “conceived and implemented today by the industrial states, is incompatible” with the first five points (1995b: 69), Naess targets capitalism, noting that the “most forceful and systematic critique of capitalism is to be found in socialist literature”. Although some socialist goals, such as centralizing and maximizing production, are not compatible with deep ecology, many are: “no excessive aggressive individualism .... Community, production for use, low income differentials, local production for local needs, participative involvement, solidarity” (1989: 157).

Deep ecology also seeks to realize the goals of global peace, social justice and “long-range, local, district, regional, national, and global wide ecological sustainability” (1995e: 447). On this point too, Naess is deliberately vague: by “ecological sustainability”, for example, he means “protecting the full richness and diversity of Life on Earth” (1995a: 219). The platform provides no more than a general orientation; individuals and groups in different regions and countries must decide for themselves how to make ecological sustainability a reality. Concrete decisions about how to establish more mutually beneficial relationships between human and non-human nature are left to those who are carrying them out in practice (although, with his Gandhian adherence to non-violence, Naess seems to envisage incremental change).

Adorno too refuses to offer specific proposals for change. Philosophy is needed “only as critique, as resistance” (1998o: 10); it wants to know, not how the world should be changed, but “why the world – which could be paradise here and now – can become hell itself tomorrow” (ibid.: 14). In fact, Adorno charged that socialist proposals for change were often barbaric because they endorsed the constant revolutionizing of relations of production that characterizes capitalism, namely “unfettered activity, ... uninterrupted procreation, ... chubby insatiability, ... freedom as frantic bustle”. They also fed on the “bourgeois concept of nature that has always served solely to proclaim social violence as unchangeable, a piece of healthy eternity”. By contrast, a more rational society would free itself from production for production’s sake and unfettered economic growth: “Perhaps the true society will grow tired of development and, out of freedom, leave
possibilities unused, instead of storming under a confused compulsion to the conquest of strange stars" (MM 156).

The policy changes mentioned in Point 6 will affect what Naess calls ideological structures. Point 7 explains how these structures may be improved:

The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to a constantly rising standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness. (Naess 1995b: 68)

Against aggressive, acquisitive individualism, Naess advocates the peaceful coexistence of human and non-human nature in societies that allow each individual life form to develop its potentialities to the fullest. On his view, moreover, self-preservation requires “self-expression or realisation”, or “life-unfolding”, “life-expansion” (1989: 85). Today, however, self-realization is impeded by a crisis of consumption; this crisis points to our “inability to question deeply what is and is not worthwhile in life”, and underscores the need for dramatic changes in our lifestyles. Such changes will occur only when we engage in activities that satisfy our whole being, living lives that are “simple in means and rich in ends” (Naess & Bogdian 1995: 30).

Of course, Adorno also condemns the vicious cycle of unrestrained production and torpid consumption. However, much of his work is devoted to understanding why monopoly capitalism has so far met with little effective resistance. Needs are now hammered into psychologically weak individuals by the increasingly sophisticated psychotechnology of the culture industry. Dependency on, and conformity to, the existing system are constantly reinforced. The affirmative refrain of the prevailing ideology – that is just the way things are; things are like this – implies that nothing can change, while suggesting that what exists should exist simply because it exists.

Given this situation, there are serious obstacles to meaningful change, including changes in lifestyle. Indeed, Adorno is arguably more realistic than Naess. The environmental policies adopted by governments over the past few decades have been completely watered down, and even these diluted targets have not been met. Furthermore, while the call to reduce consumption would almost certainly have far-reaching consequences if answered immediately by everyone everywhere, the kind of changes Naess advocates will not be achieved if (as is more likely) a few individuals adopt “green” lifestyles in a society that successfully commodifies lifestyle choices, including green ones. Radical change presupposes a critical understanding
of the tendencies and behaviours that now thwart effective political action; it requires a better understanding of our current predicament, a predicament in which the most well-meaning individuals often sustain the very system they oppose, even in their resistance to it. If resistance is ever to be anything other than futile, the forces that now weaken it must be thoroughly plumbed.

Change that affects not just economic, technological and ideological structures, but political organizations, social interaction, psychological make-up and cognitive “structures”, ultimately requires the emergence of a global subject. However, since the solidarity in which a global subject would take shape is now blocked by reification and pathologies such as narcissism, Adorno calls for an uncompromising critique of impediments to solidarity, while outlining alternative forms that would sublate divergent individual interests (ND 282). For his part, Naess agrees that reification is pervasive because Western technology “reduces everything to mere objects of manipulation”, treating human and non-human animals as “mere factors – mostly causing trouble – in the production process” (Naess 1989: 172 passim). Yet, in contrast to Adorno, Naess believes that reification can be overcome, and solidarity achieved, by means of identification.

Naess also alleges that the solidarity generated by identification will not exclude diversity: the “widening and deepening of individual selves” through identification “somehow never makes them into one ‘mass’” (ibid.: 172–3). At the same time, he admits that he does not know how to articulate the relationship between unity and diversity: “In unity diversity!, yes, but how? As a vague postulate it has a specific function within a total view, however imperfectly” (ibid: 173). Naess raises an important issue here: how to appreciate and foster diversity in both human beings and non-human nature. How can solidarity be achieved among disparate individuals such that they are capable of working together effectively to promote change without being subsumed completely under an organization, institution or party? How might human beings relate to non-human nature such that nature can thrive in all its diversity?

Although Adorno would reject identification as a viable solution to these problems, he need not endorse identification because it is not a plank in the platform but an ecosophical postulate. As I shall continue to argue in my discussion of Bookchin and Merchant, Adorno’s attempts to square the circle of identity and difference – attempts outlined in the previous chapters – contribute to both the theory and the future practice of radical ecology because they address a crucial issue in environmental philosophy as a whole. According to Adorno, reconciliation between human beings and non-human nature does not require “the identity of all as subsumed
beneath a totality, a concept, an integrated society’. Rather, a truly achieved identity requires “the consciousness of non-identity”, and “the creation of a reconciled non-identity” (HF 55).

To return to an earlier point, Adorno thinks we must defer the action urgently needed to effect radical change because we can do nothing today “that will not threaten to turn out for the worst even if meant for the best” (ND 245). Yet his insistence on the prior need for an uncompromisingly critical understanding of our current predicament is compatible with Point 8 of Naess’s platform: “Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes” (1995b: 68). Again, Adorno claims that critical thought is itself a force of resistance, a comportment, a form of practice (1998: 293). Critical theory plumbs our natural history, examining the tendencies and trends that now undermine effective practice – including practices geared to solving environmental problems – while pointing towards a society that would negate “the physical suffering of even the least of its members”, along with the “internal reflexive forms of that suffering”. Agreeing with Naess about the importance of solidarity, Adorno writes: “By now, this negation in the interest of all can be realized only in a solidarity that is transparent to itself and all the living” (ND 204).

MURRAY BOOKCHIN AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

A social ecologist for more than fifty years, Bookchin engaged polemically with many different figures, including Naess and Adorno. Suggesting, often without naming him directly, that Naess succumbed to mysticism, Bookchin (1990: 10) lambasts – to the point of ridicule at times – Naess’s stress on unity, even as he adopts unity in diversity as one of the central principles of his social ecology. Bookchin is critical of Adorno as well. Much like Habermas, he considers Adorno to be too pessimistic, and points to counter-tendencies in existing social arrangements that may foster change. Yet he also believes that his social ecology keeps faith with the promise of critical theory:

that humanity could have found its sense of self-identity and individuation through ecological differentiation rather than hierarchical opposition; that the “I” could have formed itself around mutuality, with its wealth of uniqueness, rather than around the commanding “lordship”, with all its reversals, of Hegel’s “master–slave” relationship. (Ibid.: 87–8 passim)
Bookchin devoted one of his major works, *The Ecology of Freedom*, to exploring the origin and historical trajectory of domination in the West. In human prehistory, Bookchin alleges, societies were not riven by distinctions between old and young, men and women, or by blood and family ties. Rather, they “visualized people, things, and relations in terms of their uniqueness”. People and things were neither ranked nor rated; they were simply viewed as dissimilar (1991a: 44). Equally important, the feeling of unity, of profound social solidarity, that bound people together in these “organic” societies also generated a feeling of unity between human beings and the environing world, precluding the domination of nature. According to Bookchin, the “notion that man is destined to dominate nature ... is almost completely alien to the outlook of so-called primitive or preliterate communities” (ibid.: 43) because the non-hierarchical, harmonious coexistence of individuals in organic societies fostered non-hierarchical, harmonious relations with nature.

Bookchin criticizes the “traditional left” generally for assuming that “the ‘domination of man by man’ ... was, an historically unavoidable evil that emerged directly out of the objective human need to ‘dominate nature’” (1991b: 56). He claims that our antagonistic relation to nature developed only after human beings began to dominate other human beings in gerontocracies. Gerontocracy is “hierarchy in its most nascent form: hierarchy embedded in the matrix of equality” (1991a: 83). Moreover, on this account, gerontocracies effectively precipitated our fall from a state of grace, a state of virtually complete social harmony, where “differences between individuals, age groups, sexes— and between humanity and the natural manifold of living and nonliving phenomena— were seen (to use Hegel’s superb phrase) as a ‘unity of differences’ or ‘unity of diversity’, not as hierarchies” (ibid.: 5).

Basing this account of human prehistory on the work of anthropologists Dorothy Lee and Paul Radin, *inter alia*, Bookchin contends that “otherness” originally took “the form of differentiation, of articulation, of complementarity”. Prehistorical societies exhibited features such as:

- complete parity or equality ...; usufruct, and later reciprocity;
- the avoidance of coercion in dealing with internal affairs; and finally, ... the “inalienable right” ... of every individual in the community “to food, shelter and clothing” irrespective of the amount of work contributed by the individual to the acquisition of the means of life.

Although “the ‘otherness’ of complementarity was often subverted by emerging status groups, and slowly gave way to ‘otherness’ based on domination”
(ibid.: xlvii), complementary forms of otherness persist. Human evolution has unfolded equivocally, and continues to offer alternatives to domination.

Adorno would counter that Bookchin romanticizes our prehistory by accepting the myth of the Golden Age. According to Adorno, the origin of domination cannot be settled with facts because these "fade away in the mists of primitive history" (ND 321). Still, Adorno does speculate about the origin of domination when he comments on Marx and Engels's claim that domination originated in stratified class relations. Noting that this claim was motivated by a rejection of anarchism, Adorno would agree with Bookchin—a self-professed anarchist—to the extent that the former Soviet Union showed that domination may outlast the planned economy (ND 322). Here, however, Adorno also conjectures that our domination of nature may have originated in a catastrophic event, while denying that the domination of human beings by human beings is more primordial than the domination of nature. He would also contest Bookchin's belief that the establishment of non-hierarchical social relations will put an end to our domination of nature because it is entirely uncertain that harmonious social relations will necessarily lead (or necessarily led in human prehistory) to harmonious relations with non-human nature.

Where Adorno places great emphasis on humanity's underground instinctual history, Bookchin's view of the role of survival instincts in human history is somewhat ambivalent. At times, he warns against "placing the capabilities of human beings and their intellectuality on a par with animal skills for survival" because this would denigrate human beings (1991a: xxxvi). Once we began to distinguish ourselves from the natural world, we were no longer "limited to the bedrock existence of seeking mere survival" (ibid.: xlv). At other times, however, Bookchin sounds much like Adorno. For example, he remarks in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* that the "great historic splits that destroyed early organic societies, dividing man from nature and man from man, had their origins in the problems of survival, in problems that involved the mere maintenance of human existence" (1986: 11). In *The Ecology of Freedom*, he maintains that survival instincts gave rise to our "capacities to think conceptually, to create extrabiological tools and machines, and to do this with a high degree of collective organization and intentionality". A product of natural evolution, these cognitive capacities in turn enabled us "to evolve along social lines and produce a second nature that profoundly affects the evolution and life-forms of first nature" (1991a: xxx).

This distinction between natural evolution and social evolution is equally problematic. Again, for Adorno, human beings remain all too natural, and nature has become all too human. But Bookchin adopts Marx's goal in the
According to Bookchin, "[t]o recover human nature is to 'renature' it, to restore its continuity with the creative process of natural evolution, its freedom and participation in that evolution conceived as a realm of incipient freedom and as a participatory process" (1990: 118). Conversely, non-human nature is given a human face when we recognize that we evolved from nature and that human beings are not wholly Other than nature. Since "humanity's vast capacities to alter 'first nature' are themselves a product of natural evolution", they reveal "the thrust of natural evolution toward organic complexity and subjectivity – the potentiality of 'first nature' to actualize itself in self-conscious intellectual" (ibid.: 42–3).

Nature can be humanized "by seeing in human consciousness a natural world rendered self-conscious and self-active" (1980b: 70).

Where Adorno thinks our species has not yet distinguished itself fully from nature by becoming aware of its own natural history, Bookchin could be accused of "speciesism" because he regards human beings as the apogée of natural evolution. Although he denies that our place in the evolutionary chain makes us superior to nature, Bookchin believes that human beings are more advanced than other animals, and that nature expresses itself most completely in human consciousness and reason. Reason subtends nature "as the self-organizing attributes of substance"; it is the latent subjectivity in the inorganic and organic levels of reality that reveal an inherent striving toward consciousness" (1991a: 11). In other words, this latent subjectivity "ultimately yields mind, will, and the capacity for freedom" (1990: 172–3). To defend this claim, Bookchin argues (invalidly, in my view) that, "[t]o deny the existence of subjectivity in nonhuman nature, is to deny that it can exist either in its given human form or in any form at all" (1991a: 236).

Effectively subsuming nature under mind, Bookchin espouses Hegel's view of mind as the absolute prius. He identifies nature with reason such that human beings are natural only because nature is implicitly rational, because nature harbours reason within itself. This subsumption of nature under reason simplifies Bookchin's goal of humanizing nature and naturalizing humanity. Since nature and mind are ultimately identical, since both converge in reason, humanizing nature and naturalizing the human involves showing that reason underlies both. In fact, Bookchin would like to see human sociality conform to a much greater degree to its more rational, "organic", origins in a kind of return to nature, which effectively amounts to a return to reason.

Interestingly, Bookchin sometimes dismisses teleological accounts of natural history. In the introduction to The Ecology of Freedom, for example,
he denies “that there are predetermined ends or a telos in natural evolution that guides life's development inexorably toward consciousness and freedom” Instead, we can say only that “the potentiality for achieving consciousness and freedom does exist” (1991a: xxviii). However, towards the end of The Ecology of Freedom, Bookchin complains that we “have lost sight of the telos that renders us an aspect of nature” (ibid.: 315). Later still, he writes:

> From the ever-greater complexity and variety that results subatomic particles through the course of evolution to those conscious, self-reflective life forms we call human beings, we cannot help but speculate about the existence of a broadly conceived telos and a latent subjectivity in substance itself that eventually leads to mind and intellectuality. (Ibid.: 364)

Bookchin would like to recover the “notion of an immanent world reason, albeit without the archaic, quasi-theological trappings”. But when he attributes this goal to Adorno (ibid.: 10), Bookchin fails to see that Adorno unequivocally rejected Hegel's view of mind or spirit as the immanent telos of all nature. To be sure, Adorno recognized that reason was once believed to be immanent in reality, but he did not adopt this belief himself. In fact, Adorno was highly critical of teleological accounts of history, even the dystopian one that is sometimes attributed to him. If he would agree that “[t]he history of ‘civilization’ has been a steady process of estrangement from nature that has increasingly developed into outright antagonism” (ibid.: 315), he nonetheless insisted that change can begin at any moment. Giving the lie to the tired charge of pessimism levelled by Bookchin and others, Adorno remarked that “the critical yardstick that … compels and obliges reason to oppose the superior strength of the course of the world is always the fact that in every situation there is a concrete possibility of doing things differently” (HF 68).

Bookchin also revises Darwin’s theory of evolution on the grounds that Darwinians and neo-Darwinians tend to regard life forms “as ‘objects’ of selective forces exogenous to them”. He adopts a participatory account of evolution (1990: 108), which reveals that “mutual cooperation–symbiosis – is as important in evolution as the so-called ‘struggle’ for survival” (ibid.: 78). In this account, the concept of matter must also be revised because life and all its attributes are already latent in matter. In other words, “what we call ‘matter’ may more properly be characterized as active substance” (ibid.: 79). By extension, “nature” refers to an evolutionary development … that should be conceived as an aeons-long process of ever-greater differentiation” (1991a: xx).
Bookchin wants to foster a new sensibility, which is informed by what he calls "libertarian reason" with its symbiotic relation to nature. The germinial conditions for this sensibility lie in the early formative process that introduces the newborn child to culture (ibid.: 304). In maternal care, "human 'second nature'... is structured around nurture, support, and a deobjectified world of experience rather than a world guided by domination, self-interest, and exploitation" (ibid.: 307). Although history has been blighted by our attempts to extirpate the seeds of libertarian reason, it continues to harbour these seeds. In libertarian terms, human nature is defined as "a biologically rooted process of consociation, a process in which cooperation, mutual support, and love are natural as well as cultural attributes" (ibid.: 317). Since it exhibits these quintessentially human traits, maternal care reveals "the enduring features of a subterranean libertarian realm that has lived in cunning accommodation with the prevailing order of domination" (ibid.: 318).

It is in this context that Bookchin endorses an ethics of complementarity. Imbued with the values of mutualism, subjectivity and freedom, it was this ethics that informed prehistorical organic societies. Although we cannot return to these societies because our "values and practices now demand a degree of consciousness and intellectual sophistication that early bands, clans, and tribes never required to maintain their freedom as a lived phenomenon", Bookchin also believes that "organic societies spontaneously evolved values that we rarely can improve" (ibid.: 319). Oriented towards freedom, his ethics aims to accommodate difference much as organic societies once did (and maternal care allegedly still does) by making "every effort to compensate for the unavoidable inequalities in physical differences, degrees of intellectuality, and needs among individual human beings" (ibid.: lxi).

Against this Adorno argued, not just that we can know little about our prehistory, but that the idea of an originally good nature is a mere "phantasm". Acknowledging that this idea is seductive, Adorno also objected that the concept of origin is both a category of domination and an ideological principle because "it confirms that a man ranks first because he was there first; it confirms the autochthon against the newcomer, the settler against the migrant" (ND 155). In a criticism that can be levelled against Bookchin as well, Adorno challenged Hegel's philosophy of origins. With its "return to the starting point of the motion", Hegelian philosophy ends by positing the continuous identity of subject and object (ND 156). By contrast, the task of Adorno's negative dialectics is "to break the compulsion to achieve identity, and to break it by means of the energy stored up in that compulsion and congealed in its objectifications" (ND 157).

Of course, Adorno also objected to Hegel's progressive subsumption of matter under mind. But if he tried to counter Hegel's idealism with his non-
reductive and non-dualistic conception of nature and history, Bookchin occasionally seems to do something similar. Although we are distinct from non-human nature because human reason is the more advanced form of reason, Bookchin nonetheless rejects dualism when he asserts that "human history can never disengage itself or disembed itself from nature" (1991a: 34). Dualism is illusory; it is an outgrowth of our problematic social evolution with its increasingly antagonistic stance towards nature. Concealed by our dualist conception of nature and mind is a more complementary relationship, a more "natural" relation to otherness, that we ought to revive. On this point, however, Adorno would also disagree: a more complementary relation to nature is something that has yet to be achieved, rather than something we can potentially (or will eventually) recuperate. Humanity too has yet to come into being. This is precisely why Adorno states that nothing is original except the goal. Bookchin's ideologically suspect return to origins is especially obvious in his view that maternal care continues to exhibit values that can serve as an antidote to our antagonism towards nature. For he implies that women are immune to the vicissitudes of history. Against this, one could simply point out that maternal care is neither an ahistorical phenomenon, nor an activity completely devoid of domination, self-interest and exploitation. Indeed, this uncritical view of mother love seems remarkably naive and is arguably sexist because it regards women as placeholders for nature.

Bookchin rejects reductionism as well. Like Adorno, he maintains that our capacity for thought distinguishes us from non-human nature because it enables us to think beyond the given state of affairs, thereby distancing us, in potentially emancipatory ways, from "an imperturbable existence that consists of eating, digesting, and defecating". Implicitly targeting Naess, he contends that "the danger that confronts ecological thinking is less a matter of a dualistic sensibility" than of "reductionism, an intellectual dissolution of all difference into an undefinable 'Oneness' that excludes the possibility of creativity and turns a concept like 'interconnectedness' into the bonds of a mental and emotional straightjacket" (ibid.: xlv-xlvi).

Nevertheless, it should already be clear that Bookchin does not avoid reductionism. Attempting to embrace otherness, his ethics effectively sublataes otherness into sameness in Hegelian fashion. Bookchin's remarks on unity in diversity - a central principle in his ethics - illustrate this. Unity in diversity means that "nature is conceived not merely as a constellation of ecosystems but also as a meaningful natural history, a developing, creative, and fecund nature that yields an increasing complexity of forms and interrelationships" (ibid.: 274). And, developing, creative, fecund nature is fundamentally One: its unity takes the form of an "ineffable sensibilité" that
is a function of increasingly complex patterns of integration. Again, for Bookchin, nature as a whole is a subjectivity that "expresses itself in various gradations, not only as the mentalism of reason, but also as the interactivity, reactivity, and the growing purposive activity of forms". This subjectivity "is the history of reason – or, more precisely, of a slowly forming mentality that exists on a wider terrain of reality than human cerebral activity." Substance is subject because substance "actively functions to maintain its identity, equilibrium, fecundity, and place in a given constellation of phenomena" (ibid.: 275).

This stress on unity is also apparent when Bookchin champions the fusion of natural and social evolution "in a new transcendence such that all the splits that separate us from the biological world will be sublated into a rational society" because humanity would finally live "in harmony with itself". To facilitate this harmonious fusion, however, Bookchin adopts his own version of the injunction that nature should become conscious of itself: humanity should become "natural evolution rendered self-conscious, guided by a humanistic ethics of complementarity" (1995: 9). Attributing this phrase to Johann Fichte in Die Bestimmung des Menschen, Bookchin observes that the idea of nature becoming conscious of itself appeared much earlier in the Presocratic concept of nous, or mind, a concept that, "in Fichte's stirring prose, envisions consciousness 'no longer as that stranger in Nature whose connection and existence is so incomprehensible'". Rather than seeing nature as alien, humanity must understand that it is part of nature as "one of its necessary manifestations" (1980c: 110).

To be sure, we are not yet fully conscious of nature in ourselves. Mistakenly charging that Adorno despaired of reason, Bookchin actually seems to follow his lead when he insists that reason alone will enable us to play the pivotal role of self-conscious nature, thereby facilitating our reconciliation with nature. But if the dialectical reason he endorses systematically explores "processes of change" to discover "how a living entity is so constructed as a potentiality to phase from one stage of its development into another" (1990: 14), Bookchin ultimately ontologizes reason and succumbs to the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity. Like Hegel, he believes that our human, all-too-human, categories are "the truth, objectivity, and actual being of ... things themselves" (Hegel 1970, cited in Stone 2008: 49).

Nevertheless, Bookchin does share Adorno's goal of fostering the rational potential in society (1990: 32). He too stresses the urgent need for radical social change: our world "will either undergo revolutionary changes so far-reaching in character that humanity will totally transform its social relations and its very conception of life, or it will suffer an apocalypse that may
well end humanity’s tenure on the planet” (1991a: 18). Although the abolition of capitalism will not, by itself, abolish hierarchical social relations, Bookchin denounces capitalism because it has subverted the integrity of the human community (ibid.: 260). Like Adorno, he recognizes that capitalism has become far more than an economic system because it now affects society as a whole. He emphatically rejects capitalism’s emphasis on economic growth for its own sake, and is equally critical of consumerism and the pernicious role that the media play in fostering consumption.

Bookchin also thinks that we can now provide adequately for everyone on earth. One of the central tasks of his social ecology is to dispel the illusion, propagated under capitalism, that resources are scarce and sacrifices must continue to be made. Given advances in technology, we can satisfy the reasonable needs of everyone everywhere. In Post-Scarcity Anarchism, for example, he declares: “for the first time in history we stand on the threshold of a post-scarcity society”. Technology already enables us “to provide food, shelter, garments, and a broad spectrum of luxuries without devouring the precious time of humanity and without dissipating its invaluable reservoir of creative energy in mindless labor” (1986: 12). But since capitalism thwarts the better potential of technology, and justifies its exploitation of nature on the largely specious grounds of scarcity, its “systems of production, distribution, and promotion of goods and needs are not just grossly irrational but antiecological” (1991a: 262).

The transformation of our death-oriented society into a life-oriented one demands “a revolution in all areas of life – social as well as natural, political as well as personal, economic as well as cultural” (1991c: 76). (Like Naess, Bookchin warns that, if ecologists are not sufficiently radical, the ecology movement will “gradually degenerate into a safety valve for the established order” [ibid.].) Moreover, ecologist Janet Biehl remarks that Bookchin looks to grass-roots politics to promote change. Characterized by “the popular self-management of the community by free citizens”, grass-roots politics represents the democratic dimension of anarchism because it “seeks to create a vital public sphere based on cooperation and community”. Today, the urban neighbourhood is the privileged site for grass-roots activity with radical potential. In local assemblies, for example, individuals can become active citizens who “recreate the public sphere, democratically making decisions on matters that affect their common life”. Optimally, they will not only “municipalize” the economy, managing their community’s economic life, but abolish private property, and distribute goods according to need. At the root of this transformation are post-scarcity technologies that can “minimize the time consumed by labor, making possible broad political participation” (Biehl 1997: 172).
Adorno shares some of Bookchin's optimism about the emancipatory potential of technology. Although there are serious psychological, social, political and economic impediments to the realization of more substantively democratic polities, Adorno is not entirely without hope. On the one hand, individuals "are continuously molded from above" in order to maintain "the over-all economic pattern". On the other hand, "the amount of energy that goes into this process bears a direct relation to the amount of potential, residing within people, for moving in a different direction" (Adorno et al. 1982: 480). This countervailing potential is linked to our capacity for self-criticism. To become more autonomous, individuals must recognize the extent to which their own ideas, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours have been shaped and conditioned by both socioeconomic institutions and their instincts and needs. Such critical self-awareness is the precondition for more genuinely democratic forms of government because it fosters the capacity to think for oneself rather than merely parroting others, to form ideas and opinions independently of prevailing opinion and the influence of authorities. In short, critical self-reflection engenders a form of political maturity that is essential for democracy (1998b: 281).

Where Bookchin seems to believe that it is now possible to create a viable and vibrant public sphere, Adorno maintains that economic conditions are such that they severely impair the interpersonal relations required to sustain it. Although the public sphere is "the most important medium of all politically effective criticism", it has become so commodified that it "works against the critical principle in order to better market itself" (ibid.: 283). In fact, Adorno decries the absence of an independent sphere in which citizens could form opinions about what lies in the general interest. Relying in part on his empirical analyses of the role of the privately owned media in forming public opinion, he claims that what passes for public opinion today has been imposed on people "by the overall structure of society and hence by relations of domination" (1998h: 121), thereby making a mockery of the liberal ideal of autonomous opinion-formation. The dominant opinion disseminated by the culture industry merely reflects the opinion of the economic and political elite; it is entangled in particular interests in profit and power that try to pass themselves off as universal (ibid.: 117).

Adorno did say that public opinion could play a positive role by averting "the worst in an antagonistic society". It had already done so during the Dreyfus affair, and when students in Göttingen forced a Nazi sympathizer to resign from his government post (ibid.). Hence, the concept of public opinion should be respected. Today, however, public opinion often takes a pathological form: the form of collective narcissism that gives "individuals some of the self-esteem the same collective strips from them and that they..."
hope to fully recover through their delusive identification with it". This is why public opinion must also be disdained (ibid.: 118). Independent opinion- and will-formation are possible only in a society of free, equal and emancipated people. But "society’s actual organization hinders all of that and produces and reproduces a condition of permanent regression among its subjects" (ibid.: 119). This point is also made in "Kann das Publikum Wollen?" The public wills only "what has already been imposed upon it". Its identification with what perpetuates its political immaturity must "be broken, and the weak ego ... built up" before opinion- and will-formation become autonomous (1986: 343).

Bookchin’s claims about the prospects for establishing a viable public sphere seem unwarranted. For on his own account, capitalism, with its distinctive and deeply embedded “cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command” (1991a: 4), must first be dismantled before the public sphere is able to accommodate the “equality of unequals” (ibid.: 167). To establish a freer and more rational society, in which each individual participates “directly in the formulation of social policy”, we must confront and eradicate “the psychic problems of hierarchy as well as social problems of domination” (ibid.: 340–41). Yet Bookchin has no solutions to these crippling psychological and social problems. And, as long as these problems persist, they will undermine environmental movements and compromise grass-roots politics. Adorno’s assessment of the impediments to radical change may appear bleak at times, but it does have the merit of recognizing the gravity of our predicament. By becoming more fully aware of our own natural history, we may finally transform those attitudes, behaviours, ideas and goals that have led, either directly or indirectly, to our destructive and self-destructive domination of human and non-human nature. In the final analysis, Bookchin’s optimism is tied to his teleological view of history, but his idealist account of natural history, with its return to an originally “good” nature, is far too tendentious to support a positive outlook on our future prospects.

CAROLYN MERCHANT AND ECOFEMINISM

Merchant examines the narratives that have helped to shape our relationships to nature. Her first book, The Death of Nature, explores the cultural impact and the historical trajectory of narratives that have gendered nature as female. Living for millennia “in daily, immediate, organic relation with the natural order for their sustenance”, human beings once regarded nature as a benign and beneficent earth mother. Although an opposing conception
saw female nature as wild, disorderly and uncontrolled (Merchant 1980: 1), it would only supersede the view of nature as earth mother in the seventeenth century when the "organically oriented mentality in which female principles played an important role was undermined and replaced by a mechanically oriented mentality" (ibid.: 2). The replacement of one mentality by the other marks the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

This account differs from Adorno's in at least one important respect. To be sure, both Merchant and Adorno observe that nature was once thought to possess immanent powers or hidden properties. They also agree that nature was gendered as female. On Adorno's account, however, the animistic worldview resembles the enlightenment view that succeeded it because both portray nature as a hostile force. Indeed, Merchant indirectly challenges Adorno with her claims about the prevailing conception of nature prior to the seventeenth century. For she contends that animism was far less pernicious to both nature and women than the mechanistic view that succeeded it. A projection of the ways that people experienced nature in their daily lives, animism saw female nature as "God's involuntary agent, a benevolent teacher of the hidden pattern and values that God employed in creating the visible cosmos (natura naturata, the natural creation)" (ibid.: 7).

In *Earthcare* and *Reinventing Eden*, Merchant covers new ground when she examines the "recovery narratives" that aim to restore the earthly paradise we supposedly lost when we fell from grace. Here too, nature is gendered: it is identified specifically with the figure of Eve, and seen either as an untamed, virgin wilderness to be ravished and conquered, or as a "powerful female to be revered" (2003: 118).17 The first image of nature informs "progressive" stories about recovering Eden, while the second has been a feature of the "declensionist" narratives that only began to emerge in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, both narratives share the aim of recovering nature. Whether recovery involves the progressive ascent from untamed wilderness to a domesticated garden of Eden, or the reversal of a decline from Edenic nature and an egalitarian society (as in Bookchin, for example [ibid.: 192]), the recovery narrative is "perhaps the most important mythology humans have developed to make sense of their relationship to the earth" (ibid.: 2).

*The Death of Nature* describes conflicting conceptions of female nature in the West: nature is a living organism that nurtures humankind, or a passive, atomistic, machine. However, Merchant seems to have revised her views about the predominance of the first conception in *Earthcare* and *Reinventing Eden* where Christianity plays a more central role in her account of Western history. The story of our fall from grace and banish-
moment from Eden has shaped Western culture from its “earliest times”. In this narrative, which was secularized when it “merged with science, technology, and capitalism to form the mainstream Recovery Narrative” (ibid.: 11), nature is seen as wild, unpredictable and savage. It is this progressive recovery narrative, with its “ideology of domination over nature and other people” (ibid.: 36), that has predominated in the West, becoming even more pronounced after the seventeenth century.

By shaping our perceptions of nature, narratives like these have also affected our interaction with it. According to Merchant, every narrative “contains an ethic and the ethic gives permission to act in a particular way toward nature and other people” (ibid.: 37). In turn, however, ethically informed narratives are themselves shaped by prevailing socioeconomic conditions. Although Merchant denies that the economic base completely determines the cultural superstructure (1989: 4), she also argues that narratives are not just “socially constructed from a real, material world by real bodies”, but “mediated through modes of production and reproduction” (1995: xxi). Subordinate to both production (where “human actions have their most direct and immediate impact on nonhuman nature”) and reproduction, narratives are “[t]wo steps removed from the immediate impact on the habitat”, and “must be translated into social and economic actions … to affect the nonhuman world” (1989: 5).

Throughout her work, Merchant explores the radical changes in production and reproduction – the ecological revolution – that accompanied the rise of capitalism and the birth of modern mechanistic science. She also shows that the prevailing modes of production and human reproduction interact dialectically (ibid.: 11). In Ecological Revolutions, she studies the connections between the capitalist mode of production and patriarchal relations of reproduction, remarking, *inter alia*, that the transition from subsistence farming to industrial production “split production and reproduction into two separate spheres”: production was a male prerogative, and reproduction (biological, social and material – the reproduction of everyday life) was women’s work. More controversially, Merchant maintains that this “structural split between productive and reproductive spheres was necessary for the maintenance of the market economy” (ibid.: 233).

Merchant is justifiably critical of the division between male and female, public and private labour that accompanied capitalism and persists to this day. Like other radical ecologists, she targets capitalism’s relentless pursuit of economic growth. However she does so, not just because of its harmful effects on non-human nature, but because it has had a direct, and profoundly negative, impact on women and human reproduction generally. She hopes that we will “move toward a stable no- or low-growth economy as

Given the serious environmental problems caused by our exploitation of nature under capitalism, Merchant advocates a fundamental transformation in our relation to nature. This transformation would require a “global social and economic revolution”. In fact, this revolution may already be occurring, prompted by a “global ecological crisis that transcends national boundaries” – a crisis that may “trigger a transition to a sustainable earth” (1989: 264, emphasis added). Despite her abiding interest in our conceptions of nature, Merchant certainly realizes that a symbolic revolution will not succeed “without a simultaneous revolution in the social, sexual, and economic structures that exploit both women and Nature” (1995: 142). On her view, “[e]nvironmental, technological, social, and linguistic revolutions” must all take place at the same time if we are to have any chance at all of ensuring “the future of life on Earth” (ibid.: 166).

In Earthcare and later work, Merchant offers a glimpse of the direction this radical transformation might take when she advances a partnership ethic of earthcare. This ethic holds “that the greatest good for the human and nonhuman communities is in their mutual living interdependence” (2003: 223). The four precepts that guide her partnership ethic in Earthcare are: equity between the human and non-human communities; moral consideration for humans and non-human nature; respect for cultural diversity and biodiversity; and inclusion of women, minorities and non-human nature in the code of ethical accountability (1995: 217). In Reinventing Eden, however, the second precept is revised to read “moral consideration for both humans and other species”, and a fifth is added: “an ecologically sound management that is consistent with the continued health of both the human and non-human communities” (2003: 224; cf. 1989: 263).

The goal of partnership ethics – the mutual living interdependence of human and non-human communities – is somewhat vague. Among other things, it could be objected that human and non-human nature are already mutually interdependent. On a more charitable reading, however, Merchant is gesturing towards improved relations between them. Grounded in the concept of relation, her partnership ethic is “an ethic of the connections between a human and a nonhuman community”. These connections have
both local and global dimensions. In the first instance, the relationship between human and non-human nature is "situational and contextual within the local community". For its part, however, the community is "embedded in and connected to the wider earth, especially national and global economies" (1995: 217). We should begin by building and expanding on local environmental concerns, while working to establish a new global balance between ourselves and nature, a balance that will make us "equal partners, neither having the upper hand, yet cooperating with each other" (ibid.: 218).

Since she views both non-human nature and human beings as active agents, Merchant wants to give equal consideration to "the needs of nature to continue to exist and the basic needs of human beings" (ibid.). But while she proposes an equal partnership between human and non-human nature, she never clarifies what precise form equality would take. This problem is especially vexing because Merchant is keen to avoid the "ecocentric dilemma" in which some deep ecologists find themselves, namely that humans are only "one of many equal parts of an ecological web and therefore morally equivalent to a bacterium or a mosquito" (ibid.: 8). She also rejects the claim that "all nonhuman organisms have moral consideration equal to human beings" because it "undercuts the real struggles of the poor and of disadvantaged minorities for a better life" (2003: 217).

The problem of equality takes on a different cast when seen in light of Adorno’s criticisms of equality as the ideological counterpart of the exchange principle. In law, for example, "the formal principle of equivalence becomes the norm; everyone is treated alike". Since differences are obscured in equality, equality "secretly serves to promote inequality" (ND 309). On the one hand, the norms and procedures employed by bureaucratic organizations (such as welfare agencies) enable these organizations to "deal with every case automatically and without consideration for the person". They do promise an element of justice to the extent they guarantee that "arbitrariness, accident, and nepotism do not rule people’s destiny". On the other hand, bureaucratic norms and procedures lead to depersonalization and reification (Adorno 1972b: 447) because they treat everyone and everything as "the same" without regard for their particular and concrete circumstances. Moreover, Adorno criticizes the appeal to equity as a corrective to injustice because this appeal is easily "knocked down by the rational legal system as favoritism, as inequitable privilege". Rather than treating people fairly and impartially qua individual, the legal system must first reduce their interests "to the common denominator of a totality" (ND 311).

But if viewing human and non-human nature as equal partners is problematic in a society based on exchange where equality tends to level all differences, problems also arise with the second and fourth precepts, which
give moral consideration to other species and include nature in ethical accountability. In so doing, the fourth precept implies that nature can and should be seen as ethically accountable in a completely unspecified sense, and the second precept presupposes that other species have an intrinsic value that makes them worthy of moral consideration. This presupposition is all the more striking because Merchant acknowledges that the search for “a philosophically adequate justification for the intrinsic value of non-human beings has been called by some environmental philosophers the central axiological problem of environmental ethics” (1992: 78). In fact, Soper has argued that we need to reflect further on this problem: the insistence of some ecologists on the intrinsic value of nature should “invite us to think more seriously about how nature may be said to have value, and about the incoherence of attempting to speak for this except by reference to human utilitarianism, moral or aesthetic interests and predispositions” (1995: 257).

Nevertheless, Bernstein has argued that it is not incoherent to speak about the intrinsic value of natural things. Although it is trivially true that an object cannot be “accepted as having worth, unless it is recognized as having worth”, Bernstein claims that it does not follow logically from this “that its worth is constituted, conferred upon the object through our activities” (2001: 248). In other words, the fact that we alone give value to things does not preclude things having value in themselves. But when Bernstein interprets Adorno as a moral realist, he ignores Adorno’s stress on the non-identity of concepts and objects: conceptual mediation does not invariably distort objects, but it always remains a block to objectivity because it “fails to absorb entity [Seiendes], which objectivity is in essence” (ND 185).

As I have already argued, the emphatic concepts that Adorno deploys in his critique of late capitalism derive their critical force from their non-identity with existing states of affairs. Moreover, Bernstein’s argument can be reversed: although moral values may be significantly object-dependent (Bernstein 2001: 35) – because they are derived from the negation of the negative conditions that cause suffering – moral realism does not follow logically from this object-dependency.

If Adorno would question Merchant’s second and fourth precepts, he does share the general concern expressed in the third: respect for cultural diversity and biodiversity. However, his conception of diversity is far more radical than that of many ecologists, including Merchant’s. Non-identity thinking involves a profound regard for an infinitely variegated “otherness” that is not predetermined by any conceptual schema (ND 13). Hence, respect for otherness goes well beyond respecting the otherness of age, sex, gender, race or species (indeed, it is telling that we tend to conceptualize difference
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in abstract categories like these). For the “Other” is uniquely individuated. If reification turns individuals into lifeless equivalents, suggesting invariant concepts of both human and non-human nature (ND 96), humanity – and, by extension, nature – should be conceived only through the most “extreme form of differentiation, individuation”, not subordinated to and identified with, “comprehensive generic” concepts (P 151). Reconciliation will take place, not between generically conceived “human beings” and “nature”, or “women” and “men”, but between highly individuated persons and things.

Adorno would endorse Merchant’s fifth precept: ecologically sound management consistent with the continued health of both human and non-human nature. With some qualifications, he would also agree that the “health” of human and non-human nature requires that the current relationship between the process of production and the reproduction of human and non-human life be reversed. Production should serve human and non-human reproduction in all senses of that term: biological, social and material (Merchant 1995: 17). Referring to self-preservation – rather than to reproduction – Adorno insists that a more rational society would make self-preservation its primary goal (MTP 272–3). And, since the “self” that is preserved is always also part of nature, self-preservation requires that we improve the metabolism between our species and the natural world.

With its five precepts, Merchant’s partnership ethics outlines a major transformation in our interaction with nature. Underlying this ethic is a view of nature as process (1995: xxii). Merchant associates this view with holistic philosophies of nature in The Death of Nature and Ecological Revolutions (1980: 293; 1989: 263), but she later rejects holism on the grounds that chaos and complexity theories “undercut assumptions of a stable, harmonious nature and question holism as a foundation for ecology” (2003: 216). At the same time, she continues to approve of David Bohm’s non-mechanistic process physics because it “starts with undivided, multidirectional wholeness (a flow of energy called the ‘holomovement’) and derives the three-dimensional world of classical mechanics as a secondary phenomenon” (ibid.: 209). To this endorsement of Bohm, however, one could offer the obvious objection that his physics is a type of holism, as the very word “holomovement” implies. In fact, Merchant herself described Bohm’s physics as a theory of holism in Radical Ecology (1992: 59). And, of course, in a holistic conception of nature, unity ultimately trumps diversity.

When she champions chaos and complexity theories as an antidote to mechanistic science, Merchant argues that these theories are:

based on a different set of assumptions about the nature of reality than mechanism: wholeness rather than atomistic units, pro-
cess rather than the rearrangement of parts, internal rather than external relations, the nonlinearity and unpredictability of fundamental change, and pluralism rather than reductionism.

(2003: 220)

She even goes so far as to say that these new theories may herald “the breakdown of modernism, mechanism, and, potentially, capitalism”, making possible “a new birth, a new world, a new millennium” (1995: 53) because they “challenge humanity to rethink its ethical relationship to nature” by suggesting that we “should consider ourselves as partners with the nonhuman world” (2003: 6).

However, Merchant’s enthusiasm seems misplaced: while it is doubtless the case that chaos and complexity theories mark a change in our conception of nature, it is far less clear that this change is as radical and salutary as she believes. For these sciences continue to identify nature with mathematical constructs and see it as causally determined. Their aim is to find the laws governing irregularities in nature, the hidden structures in apparently random systems, and underlying deterministic causes. Furthermore, they do so to facilitate the domination of nature. As one theorist quips: “we seek not to destroy chaos but to tame it” (Stewart 1989: 1). If chaos theory has displaced mechanistic science, and makes it more difficult to predict the precise behaviour of some natural phenomena – while simultaneously making it easier to predict chaotic events – it abandons neither the goal of prediction nor “the hubris of dominating nature” (Merchant 2003: 206).

Criticizing mechanistic conceptions of nature, Merchant effectively revives the Weberian thesis that is central to Dialectic of Enlightenment: capitalism and modern science disenchanted the world. And, whether disenchantment consists in displacing an organic worldview, or in secularizing the Christian narrative of our fall from grace, Merchant often echoes Marx’s critique of the fetish character of commodities in her discussion of it. Capitalism converts “living nature into dead matter”, while “changing inert metals into living money” (Merchant 1995: 49). It became second nature (a phrase Merchant eschews) when “animate nature died” and “dead inanimate money was endowed with life”. Substituting themselves for nature, “capital and the market would assume the organic attributes of growth, strength, activity, pregnancy, weakness, decay, and collapse, obscuring and mystifying the new underlying social relations of production and reproduction that make economic growth and progress possible”. Echoing Adorno, Merchant adds: “Perhaps the ultimate irony in these transformations was the new name given them: rationality” (1980: 288).
When Merchant criticizes the disenchantment of nature, she also appears to retain the hope for some sort of re-enchantment of it. Earlier, she seemed to advocate a return to origins in the form of a partial revival of the animistic, organic worldview (Eckersley 1998). Yet re-enchantment takes a somewhat different form in her partnership ethic where “nature becomes a subject”. Human beings should communicate with nature on an equal footing, thereby opening up “the possibility of non-dominating, nonhierarchical modes of interaction”. Both human and non-human nature have “voices”, and it is imperative that these voices be heard (Merchant 2003: 229). Here Merchant could be said to promote re-enchantment by viewing nature as a speaking, active subject in its own right.

Although Merchant cites Horkheimer’s Eclipse of Reason when she refers to nature’s voice (ibid.: 227; see also 1995: 265), Horkheimer did not anthropomorphize nature in the passage Merchant quotes. Instead, he complained that “nature’s tongue is taken away” when philosophers and artists, who formerly served as the voice of nature, are turned into technicians of language in the service of industry (Horkheimer 1974: 101). Nor can Adorno be accused of anthropomorphism, as I argued in Chapter 2 when I criticized Bernstein’s claim that Adorno wants “to resurrect ... an anthropomorphic nature that is somewhere between the mythic extremes of myth ... and enlightenment” (2001: 196-7). If Merchant seems to agree with Adorno when she acknowledges that nature remains wholly other than our ideas of it, her appeal to nature’s voice risks “resurrecting” an anthropomorphic nature.

Nevertheless, when attempts to “re-enchant” nature more modestly stress the importance of recognizing nature’s autotelic powers, they can avoid anthropomorphism. At times, Bernstein himself appears to modify his views about resurrecting anthropomorphic nature when he limits the project of re-enchanting nature to regarding things as having ends for themselves. Bernstein calls this view the “nonprojective core of animism”. On his reading, Adorno relates “the excess beyond phenomenal appearing” to “what has powers of resistance to the subject and its own ends, possesses a ‘life’ of its own” (Bernstein 2001: 192–3). For her part, Merchant occasionally limits re-enchantment in a similar fashion. Although she does not use the word “reification”, she objects in all her work to the suppression of nature when it is treated instrumentally as an object of exchange, or reduced to numerical equations, on the grounds that nature should be respected as a power or force in its own right.

To claim that non-human organisms exhibit autotelic powers or forces is not necessarily tantamount to resurrecting an anthropomorphic nature, as Bernstein suggests on more than one occasion. Similarly, to assert that
non-human organisms have their own powers of growth, responsiveness or even reflexivity, is not to endorse Merchant's view that nature is "a free autonomous actor, just as humans are free, autonomous agents" (2003: 220). For this is an anthropomorphic projection of human traits (or values) onto non-human nature. It fails to respect nature as something other, non-identical. Moreover, where animism projected human powers onto nature, seeing the forces of nature as divine or quasi-divine, as manifestations of gods or spirits, Adorno's claim that natural things must be distinguished from our concepts of them is explicitly intended to avoid anthropomorphism, or the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity.

Merchant also runs the risk of anthropomorphism when she constructs nature as an equal partner, albeit a genderless one, in new stories or narratives (1995: 8). Rather than rejecting anthropomorphic constructs, she seems to want to exchange one such construct for another. More generally, however, Adorno might agree with Merchant's view that our narratives about nature should be altered because they adversely affect our relation to it. As we have seen, imprisonment is one of his central metaphors, including our imprisonment in prevailing forms of objectivity or thought. Since Merchant effectively believes that we are "imprisoned" in our narratives, she devotes her work to examining the stories that have shaped our acquisitive and rapacious interaction with nature, while searching for new narratives that may help to foster more beneficial relationships. When she points to the ideological dimension in existing stories, she also contends that, by rewriting them, "we can challenge the structures of power". Indeed, while we cannot dispense with them, "all stories can and should be challenged" (ibid.: 55).

Insisting on the need to rewrite the stories we tell about nature, Merchant also responds to the pressing issue of how to implement a partnership ethic when she recommends that all parties in, and representatives of, the human and non-human biotic community should sit "as partners at the same table", including "individuals, corporate and tribal representatives, foresters, dam builders, conservation trusts, scientists, community representatives, and spokespersons for wetlands, mountain lions, and gnatcatchers". In their discussions, full recognition would be given to the needs of other species and complex environmental systems. Such partnerships already exist today in "resource advisory committees, watershed councils, self-governing democratic councils, collaborative processes, and cooperative management plans" (2003: 238–9).

So, where Horkheimer lamented that philosophers and artists no longer play a significant role as the voice of nature, Merchant claims that various groups and individuals can, and do, speak on nature's behalf, voicing its concerns. In Earthcare, for example, she documents women's groups
that have spoken out on behalf of nature in the United States, Sweden and Australia (see Merchant 1995: chs 7–9). Here she also comments favourably on the Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability developed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, claiming that it exemplifies a partnership ethic of earthcare. Partnership between the human and non-human communities is featured in Article 7 of the Rio Declaration, which calls on nations to “cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect, and restore the health of the Earth’s Ecosystem”. Partnership is also invoked in the title of a Miami-based group, the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment – Partners in Life (ibid.: 218–19).

At the same time, Merchant admits that “the implementation of partnership ethic is not easy”. In *Reinventing Eden*, she describes three major obstacles to the implementation of a partnership ethic. The greatest challenge comes from “the free-market economy’s growth-oriented ethic, which uses both natural and human resources inequitably to create profits”. But a partnership ethic also faces resistance from “the property rights movement, which in many ways is a backlash against both environmentalism and ecology”. Finally, there are “deep, long-standing, cultural differences among environmental advocates, corporate interests, and community governments”. These differences “may be intractable because of historically bitter debates or the continuing presence of uncompromising personalities” (2003: 239–40).

Unfortunately, Merchant does not respond to the question of how to stem capitalism’s calamitous pursuit of growth; nor does she have any suggestions for dealing with “cultural differences” between groups that represent divergent – if not completely incompatible – interests. Instead, she simply seems to hope that solutions to these problems will be found as we confront a global environmental crisis. Equally important, Merchant does not explain how non-human nature can play the role of an equal partner when it cannot express its concerns and interests (assuming it can be said to have them). Indeed, this anthropomorphic conception of nature as a partner obscures nature when it offers the thin and easily defeasible reassurance that nature is just like us: we are all “the same”. Much like self-realization in Naess’s and Bookchin’s ethics of complementarity, Merchant’s partnership ethic tends to stress unity over diversity, a problem to which I shall return in the Conclusion. To end this chapter, however, I shall take up some of the points I have raised about political action today. In order to have a significant impact on the development and implementation of environmental policies, radical ecologists must first consider how to make themselves and their organizations more socially solidary, democratic and politically efficacious.
I said earlier that if resistance is ever to be anything other than futile, the forces that now weaken it must be thoroughly understood. On Adorno's view, socioeconomic conditions either stultify political action, making it largely impotent, or suppress it completely. In response to those who accuse Adorno of being too pessimistic, I would counter that his so-called pessimism about prospects for radical social change is well grounded in arguments culled from decades of both theoretical and empirical research on the character and limits of collective action in the twentieth century. Like Marcuse, Adorno thought long and hard about the myriad ways in which individuals, groups and organizations are "contained", and resistance thwarted, under capitalism. They agreed that "we cannot think any more as Marx thought, namely that the revolution was immanent" because, at the time Marx wrote, "the proletariat was not integrated into bourgeois society and, ... bourgeois society did not yet possess the vast instruments of power, both actual physical instruments of power and also psychological instruments in the broadest sense, that it now has" (Adorno 2008: 45). Rather than simply dismissing Adorno with the claim that he "overlooks ... collective practices and institutions" (Zuidervaart 2007: 161), or rejecting his views about the viability of political action today as too pessimistic, critics must address these views directly. They need to look critically and self-critically at the factors that foil prospects for truly radical change.

Political activism now confronts an impasse. On the one hand, to speak of a "we" with whom one identifies "already implies complicity with what is wrong"? Speaking of a "we" implies complicity because it subsumes individuals without remainder under a collective, summarily identifying them with it. It also fosters the "illusion that goodwill and a readiness to engage in communal action can achieve something" under conditions in which "every will is powerless". On the other hand, a "purist attitude that refrains from intervening likewise reinforces that from which it timorously recoils". Doing nothing allows an already bad situation to grow worse. Attributing this impasse to the "constitution of reality", Adorno thought that it lent some credence to "paltry reforms" which may now "presume more right than they are in fact due" (1998a: 4). On his view, then, those who seek radical change must chart a difficult course between the Scylla of quietistic withdrawal and the Charybdis of pathological forms of collective action.

To make the transition from what is to what ought to be, difference must be accommodated within collectivities rather than suppressed by them. Adorno's global subject is an internally differentiated one, not a monolithic party with a univocal party line. In the final analysis, of course, what is...
needed are more robust forms of solidarity that extend universally to all, while respecting the singularity of each. And, to build solidarity, activists first need to think critically about the wide-ranging tendencies and trends that undermine solidarity today. Again, Adorno claims that the solidarity needed for the emergence of a global subject is the inverted image of the adaptation and conformity that now damage collectivities. The forces that promote adaptation and conformity must be understood; effective counters to them must be found. But if solidarity should be rethought and remodelled with a view to creating the conditions needed for the emergence of a socially solidary global subject, so too must individuality. A humanity that preserves the species in all its diversity by rising above the “bad universal” must also transcend the individual, its “microcosmic copy” (ND 283).

To prepare for the now-deferred transition from critical thought to practical action, Adorno endorsed consciousness-raising educational strategies in a number of essays (see e.g. Adorno 1998n: 69–70). More to the point, in “Education after Auschwitz”, he declared that the “only education that has any sense at all is education toward critical self-reflection” (1998c: 193). But Adorno realized that the road to a more humane and rational society is fraught with almost insurmountable obstacles, and he openly despaired on many occasions about the possibility of achieving this goal. Events over the past century have demonstrated that extremely destructive tendencies drive the socioeconomic order of late capitalism, hell-bent as it is on realizing its particular interests in profit and power no matter what the cost to life on this planet. Although he refused to capitulate to these tendencies, Adorno could scarcely ignore them. In an epigraph to part two of *Minima Moralia*, he defended his engagement with critical social theory in a phrase he borrowed from the English philosopher, F. H. Bradley: “Where everything is bad, it must be good to know the worst”.

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