

# **The Negativity of Place: Capital Accumulation and Ecological Limitations**

by

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## **Abstract**

Humanity has achieved planetary scale influence without planetary scale understanding. The historical conceptualization of space has created a rootless understanding of place to the extent that local concerns occurring within place are overruled by the concerns of those who are situated at a distance with an assumption of authority and the resources to dominate conflicts. The rationality of place is conceptualized abstractly to fulfill a particular objectivity that resembles more of an imposition rather than an understanding situated within the social and natural dynamics of a locality. The historical assumption of terra nullius, that land is uninhabited and available for exploitation, remains intact and in use despite many costly attempts by those who reside in that land to contradict this. Framed within the context of anthropogenic climate change, its perceptions, and the struggles surrounding it, this thesis examines, with the help of Frankfurt School Critical Theory and Hannah Arendt's politics of space, the relationship between the dynamics of capitalism and its inherent social and natural place-based limitations. What the contemplation of these dominated places reveals is that another way of understanding the built environment is struggling to emerge

**Keywords:** Anthropocene; Critical Theory; place-based rationality; Politics of place

## Dedication

*To My Parents, Hemant and Arina Reddy*

*Without all they have done and continue to do, none of  
this could have been possible*

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# Chapter 1.

## Introduction

This is insane, why are we putting our economic system - the market - above the very ecology that we all depend upon? - Tamo Campos<sup>1</sup>

Tamo Campos made this statement on November 2014 on Burnaby Mountain after his arrest for protesting the expansion of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline. It provokes us to think about the inherent contradiction between the imperative of capital accumulation, on the one side, and the material limits of the natural ecosystems on which we depend for survival, on the other. Burnaby Mountain is representative of many struggles that can be grounded through an exploration of the dynamics of place, but this particular example is significant not only for its proximity to Simon Fraser University and Vancouver as a locality but also for its connection to capitalist civilization's approach to energy generation and use. The latter in particular is key to addressing the problem of anthropogenic climate change. The practices of citizens and government institutions have material consequences with respect to either deepening or mitigating climate change. The challenge of climate change causes a rift in the normative perceptions that shape reality and experience and stimulates movement toward a reassessment of the way in which capital is constituted on a global scale.

Framed within the context of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion and the struggles, surrounding it, this thesis examines, with the help of Frankfurt School Critical Theory and Hannah Arendt's politics of space, the relationship between the dynamics of capitalism and its inherent social and natural place-based limitations. I also aim to examine, in the context of the metabolic rift between humanity and nature, the manner in which place can constitute an important site of resistance to the

<sup>1</sup><http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/david-szukis-grandsons-speech-after-his-arrest-protesting-kinder-morgan-video>



nihilistic logic of capital accumulation. Resistance in the form of negativity is defined as the “non-identical” of a concept and object and as a rift or split that results in movement. This lies at the heart of the dialectic between subject and object, which can be ultimately understood in terms of desire. A place-based rationality is communicative, but not in the Habermasian sense. Rather, I argue that the idea of grounded normativity, in which a historical relationship with the land establishes the beautiful, sublime, and political qualities, provides a premise for a place-based rationality.

Kinder Morgan proposed to expand the capacity of their Trans Mountain pipeline originating in Alberta and terminating at the Burrard Inlet after passing through the Burnaby Mountain Conservation Area. This would provide increased capacity to transport mined hydrocarbons from the site of extraction to the global market to fuel expanded reproduction of industrial capital in East Asia, China in particular. The struggle around the Burnaby Mountain pipeline expansion represents a moment that brought forth a movement of resistance by Indigenous communities, residents of Burnaby, academics, students, and many other individuals who felt the expansion affected them. I argue the protestors advocated for a rationality that was grounded in place because they attempted to draw attention to consequences that remained outside the imperative of capital accumulation.

An understanding of place as outlined by Jeff Malpas explores the larger structure described by juxtapositions such that place always finds itself positioned among many other places in memory and as “places within places”<sup>2</sup> or a nesting of places within places. Malpas stresses the importance of moving beyond spatiality that conceptualizes by abstracting from the various interactions that are particular to place, and “the exploration of that larger structure will require an elaboration, not merely of spatiality, but of the interconnection between notions of subjectivity, objectivity and inter-subjectivity, as well as of notion of agency and causality.”<sup>3</sup> Primarily drawing on Heidegger, Proust, Bachelard, and Merleau-Ponty, Malpas articulates place as evocative and where memory, objectivity, and subjectivity coincide. The organization of place forms and is formed by human

<sup>2</sup>Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1999), 34

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 43

interaction with the materials in place to the extent that human civilization interacts and shapes natural material, but the emergence of objects through human activity are limited by the landscape and the available material resources.

The protest on Burnaby Mountain was significant because it was a struggle literally grounded in the understanding of place and the public's relationship to it. Crews arrived to set up operations, and those who opposed the expansion assembled peacefully nearby. With nothing but the leverage of their own bodies against the ground they were protecting, the members of the public arranged themselves in opposition to the RCMP, who exemplify, in this case, the retained armed security personnel ordered to protect the interest of private capital. For the safety of the testing crew and the protesters, security forces strung yellow tape to designate an area where the public was no longer able to be without consequences to their freedom. This line became representative of a de facto change in the agreed use of the land enclosed within that new border. Through the authority of the RCMP and the National Energy Board (NEB), which is an independent economic regulatory agency created by the Federal Government, a Texan company demarcated a space within a public Burnaby conservation area, and through the implementation of Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP), this company was able to legitimately suppress resistance to testing prior to acceptance of the development. Extractive industries manage the risks to their ability to shape and direct the movement of natural material with the goal of profit through coercive physical and economic means. Cost associated and incurred by a lawsuit seeking 5.4 million in damages from five of the protestors, acted as a deterrent to opposition, resulting in decreased resistance due to the threat of financial ruin. Byron Sheldrick and Samir Gandesha in a Globe and Mail op-ed titled "B.C. pipeline-protest case shows how lawsuits threaten democratic voices" outline the damaging implications of SLAPP's on the democratic process. SLAPP's decontextualize the issue to the extent that an issue regarding the environmental implications becomes lost within the bureaucratic maze of a captured system complicit in and benefiting from dissuading resistance. Employed by the extractive industry, "SLAPPs are extremely effective political weapons. They remove political issues from their context and transform them into narrow issues of civil liability."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/bc-pipeline-protest-case-shows-how-lawsuits-threaten-democratic-voices/article21789300/>

Derek Corrigan, the Mayor of Burnaby, who campaigned and won an election on an anti-pipeline platform appealed to the Federal Government for authority over the decision making process regarding the outcome of the pipeline project; however, a recent ruling determined that the NEB has authority to override municipal laws if those laws run contrary to its aims. The NEB is comprised of appointed, high-positioned individuals within the public and private sectors whose impartiality was called into question when Marc Eliesen, former head of BC Hydro, resigned, describing the board as “industry captured.” What becomes evident on examination of the power relations between the NEB and the locally appointed political representatives is that local concerns occurring within place are overruled by concerns of those situated at a distance with an assumption of authority and the resources to dominate conflicts. The rationality is conceptualized abstractly to fulfill a particular objectivity that resembles more of an imposition rather than an understanding situated within the social and natural dynamics of a locality. The historical assumption of terra nullius, that land is uninhabited and available for exploitation, remains intact despite many costly attempts by those who reside in that land to contradict this.

The political issue, embodied in the question by Tamo Campos, is the single-minded aim of Canada's agenda to dominate a larger share of the international energy sector without a concomitant aim to understand the consequences of that agenda. Shortly after the Conservatives were elected into power in 2011, Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared in a speech in London that we are witnessing “Canada's emergence as a global energy powerhouse -- the emerging 'energy superpower' our government intends to build.”<sup>5</sup> According to Harper, Canada's intended capacity to extract and sell petrochemicals would require “Brobdingnagian technology and an army of skilled workers. In short, it is an enterprise of epic proportions, akin to the building of the pyramids or China's Great Wall. Only bigger.”<sup>6</sup> This has led to the creation of social conditions favourable to accelerating production through extractivism. Extractivism is a developmental strategy that goes beyond the industries themselves to the extent that resource extraction projects incorporate and reorient the forces of politics, culture, and law

<sup>5</sup><http://business.financialpost.com/fp-comment/terence-corcoran-canadas-energy-superpower-dreams>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.theenergycollective.com/jim-baird/2213981/price-energy-canada-s-challenge-and-opportunity>

to reinforce further development by strengthening the overarching control of monopoly capitalism and its imperative of growth through extractive practices.

The implementation of the Omnibus Bill C-45 under the Harper government, entitled the Jobs and Growth Act, systematically weakened environmental laws. For example, due to this Act, petrochemical pipeline projects and their legislated environmental assessments in some cases would become exempt from the Navigation Protection Act and other laws that would have been triggered. This bill resulted in the budget cuts and diminished oversight for maintenance and risk assessments of pipeline developments. Alongside this omnibus bill grew a political climate characterized by muzzled scientists, shuttered research centers, and consolidated libraries. (Notably, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans felt it necessary to claim in a press release that no books were burnt.)<sup>7</sup> The suppression of public-domain scientific discourse runs contrary to the imperative of capitalist growth and development through innovation, yet the scientific apparatus for studying the environment was partially dismantled through policy changes and budget reductions. The recent clandestine dealings of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) would further wither an already fragile state regulatory power premised on a democratic process by allocating state sanctioned economic freedoms to foreign investors through tariff free zones. This partnership would also guarantee protection against domestic regulations and laws and the ability to attack legitimate laws and policies around the world if it runs contrary to the set upon agreements in the partnership. While the TPP gives powerful rights to foreign investors, it does not attach equivalently enforceable responsibilities to respect basic labour, environmental and anti-corruptions standards, for example, where a country's institution fails to uphold such standard. This allows corporations to operate with less scrutiny while at the same time inhibiting evidence-based policy. This demonstrates a shift in power from the democratic process to a global market that functions at the behest of monopoly capitalism. These conditions within the context of growing awareness of anthropogenic climate change and its disastrous effects has created a rift between the idea of progressive development driven by capital and the natural limitations of the biosphere, creating a space for a critical understanding of the dynamics of capital accumulation. Most importantly, these acts and growing socio-natural

<sup>7</sup><http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/media/npress-communique/2014/20140107-en.html>

climate engendered the mass protests and actions of “Idle No More.” An important form of negativity was itself generated by an awareness of the profoundly negative impact of this legislation on place.

This rift can be examined by understanding the dynamics of capitalism and the premise of unfettered progress defined as growth that necessitates domination of the natural ecosystem and human labour power as mere resources consumed within a schematic of accumulation. However, this boundless expansion of capital accumulation in conjunction with material, biophysical limits reveals a moment that radically shifts the prevailing reified notion of being-in-the-world. As outlined by Georg Lukács, the conception of reification builds on Marx’s conception of commodity fetishism and outlines a highly mechanized, rational objectification of reality. Reification conceals the socio-historical nature of the object, which results from the dialectical relationship between human activity and environmental landscape and the “relations between people takes on the character of a thing.”<sup>8</sup>

Reified being-in-the-world reflects a universalized abstraction, which is used as the basis from which the conceptual understanding of the world emerges to define human activity and existence. Drawing on the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, Malpas’ phenomenological “topoanalysis” reinforces that our most basic relation to reality is not perception as we usually understand it, which he describes as an abstraction from our actual experience; rather, reality is formed through the myriad connections uncovered in the course of everyday experience. Andrew Feenberg states that, for Heidegger, “experience is not simply a subjective overlay on the nature of natural science; it reveals dimensions of reality that science cannot apprehend in its present form.”<sup>9</sup> Reality emerges from our interaction and engagement with the world around us.

Reality within the capitalist framework of accumulation reduces meaning to function, revealing objects and subjects as mere system components. In this context, we do not focus on the objective properties of things but the correct way to handle them.

<sup>8</sup>Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, Trans Andy Blunden (London: Merlin Press, 1967), 83

<sup>9</sup>Andrew Feenberg, *Between Reason and Experience: Essays in Technology and Modernity* (London: MIT Press, 2010), 207.

Heidegger in *Being in Time* uses the example of the act of hammering to elaborate on the relationship between perception and experience. If the subject is engaged in the seamless process of hammering, the component parts that comprise the process are not questioned but become defined within this act. However, the moment the hammer breaks, the object becomes decontextualized and calls for a moment of reassessment of our understanding of experience. Tension generated by a rift is represented by a shift from *zuhandenheit* to *vorhandenheit* or “the ready at hand” to “the presence at hand.” The metabolic rift exemplifies this moment historically because the contradiction between the imperative of accumulation and the finitude of the natural ecosystem creates a moment for reassessing the framework that organizes the activity that comprises civilization. I argue that anthropogenic climate change represents breaking the Heideggerian hammer, creating a rupture in a highly mechanized process. An outcome of this project will be the sketch of a different conception of rationality through the critique of instrumental rationality and its ability to circulate meaning through power and rhetoric. The exploration of how and why instrumental rationality becomes an all-encompassing embodiment of truth is integral to understanding an alternate conception of rationality. What is required is a critical assessment of the ecological crisis that emphasizes the concept of instrumental rationality and its totalizing effects through a collective ideology that seeks freedom yet in actuality mortifies human beings and the natural ecosystem. The solution resides in reformulation of the subject-object dialectic. In other words, assessment will be initiated through examination of humanity’s relationships with nature and will attempt to arrive at a resolution that inflicts the least violence to the ecosystem.

The first chapter expands on Karl Marx’s methodology of historical materialism and his theory of value to include the commodification of natural resources. Further, the chapter contains discussion on the metabolic dialectic between the world of things and the ecosystem. Political economy is a reflection of socio-historical conditions consisting of complex interdependent processes of material exchange and regulatory actions that link human society with non-human nature. The capitalist mode of production exacerbates the progressive, perpetual interactions of these material exchanges. On one hand, Marx views nature as the source of use-value, and the relationship between man and nature remain at the core of human existence, thus, “man lives on nature - means that nature is his body,

which he must remain in continuous intercourse if he is not to die.”<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, labour mediates the relationship between man and nature, perpetuating history and humanity’s species being, because labour exemplifies “the eternal natural necessity, which mediates the metabolism between man and nature and therefore human life itself.”<sup>11</sup> The impetus of the capitalist mode of production estranges and exploits the natural necessity of labour, which mediates the metabolism between man and nature. Labour and nature are re-positioned as means towards capitalist growth, resulting in their simultaneous exploitation. In the “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” Marx states, “The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things.”<sup>12</sup> A consequence of the capitalist mode is that dead labour, or the created world of things, dominates and devalues living labour and the natural ecosystem through a highly purposeful process-driven existence.

Using David Harvey’s understanding of capital and spatial development through his exploration of “accumulation by dispossession,” which builds on Marx’s notion of primitive accumulation and John Bellamy Foster’s understanding of the metabolic rift, I aim to develop the foundation for understanding the dynamics of capital and its relationship to nature. The investigation into “accumulation by dispossession” illuminates the organization of political economy embodying a concept of place that takes into account qualitative experience and socio-historical circumstance in relation to instrumental rationality: the dynamics of reified space. Fixed capital and infrastructure mimic the growth of capital accumulation through geographic expansion. Harvey’s understanding of accumulation by dispossession is integral to understanding the organization of political economy and capital accumulation through the appropriation of land. Foster highlights the tension between the imperative of growth and the material constraints on capitalistic growth as the limitations of the natural ecosystem. Basing himself on Marx’s conception of alienation, Foster describes the difficulty in understanding the full ramifications of the movement of capital for natural ecosystems because of the inherently global and

<sup>10</sup>Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” *The Marx – Engels Reader*, Ed Tucker, Robert (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 75

<sup>11</sup>Karl, Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, vol. 1*, Trans. Ben Fowkes, (England: Penguin, 1976), 133

<sup>12</sup>Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” 71

alienating characteristic of the law of value that necessitates by spatial expansion. By examining Harvey in conjunction with Foster in their analyses of Marx, I hope to sketch a more holistic understanding of the dynamics of capital accumulation, the alienating characteristics of value, and the material, place-based limits that emerge from the movement of capital accumulation.

The second and third chapter examines the selected works of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno in which they elaborate on Marx's understanding of the dynamics of capital, the social and psychological implications of commodity fetishism and Lukács' notion of reification. It is necessary to couple the Frankfurt School with Marx's understanding of capital and the alienation resulting from the expansion of value within a culture of commodity circulation and abstracted labour because Marx and Lukács remain inherently productivist. That is to say, they do not fully examine the implications of the domination of nature and the resulting domination of the self. Feenberg reinforces that "Marx promises a completely humanized nature but that project culminates in the atomic bomb, not utopia."<sup>13</sup> The Frankfurt School extended Marx and Lukács' understanding of the domination of labour to the domination of nature insofar that the domination of nature results in the domination of the self: the destructive dialectic between nature and self. The Frankfurt School, taking into consideration the failures of resistance to the culminating contradictions among the forces, conditions and relations of productive activity, examines the intertwining relationship between social and natural domination through an understanding of the historical manifestation of reason and its relationship to what we create. There is little distinction between Marcuse and Adorno in their analyses of the relationship between subject and object. However, the methods by which Marcuse explains phenomenological and technological understanding of *one-dimensionality* resolved through praxis and revolution and by which Adorno analyzes his idea of natural-history, bringing forth the non-identical or non-anthropomorphic primacy of the object, contribute separately to the discussion of the domination of nature in relation to the conception of place.

<sup>13</sup>Andrew Feenberg, *Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukács and the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2014), 3889



Marcuse takes up Heidegger's phenomenology and reconciles it with Marxist critique of political economy and Freud's in-depth model of psychological dynamics to include a study of the individual consciousness within an inherently alienated world of growing technological power and an increasingly exploitative organization of place signified by the concept of domination. *Basic repression* is an inherent part of the human psyche in that human beings are forced to repress their own libidinal instincts in order to survive in nature by way of building civilization. Marcuse historicizes Freud and argues that *surplus repression* is a consequence of the unequal social organization of resources that have "not been distributed collectively in accordance with individual needs."<sup>14</sup> A lack of resistance to surplus repression is a result of institutional, *repressive de-sublimation* within a technical society where manipulation of the expenditure of instinctual energy perpetuates one-dimensional thinking to the extent that human labour becomes merely an appendage of the technical machinery that organizes modernity. Drawing on Feenberg's synthesis of Marcuse and Heidegger, I examine Marcuse's relationship to Marx, Heidegger, and Freud in order to apply Marcuse's analysis of the emergence of science and technology within a system of domination generated by capital. I attempt to illuminate an understanding of the theoretical assumptions of development discourse premised on insistent preservation in modernity of the "rational character of irrationality."<sup>15</sup>

Regulatory institutions and the conceptualization of reason form the basis of social knowledge and human practice, and those factors shape the distribution of power and the organization of place. The increasingly efficient and abundant world of modernity has resulted in the absence of demonstrable agents of social change. In *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse reinforced that a new form of reason is the *a priori* of science, the precondition of experiencing and understanding the world. Far from constituting value-neutral means, technologies are the embodiment of scientific rationality, and they shape the environment according to an implicit conception of human life. In his book *The Philosophy of Praxis*, Feenberg differentiates Marcuse from Adorno on the account of Marcuse's optimism in modernity and its potential for not only massive destruction but also

<sup>14</sup>Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 36.

<sup>15</sup>Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 10.

a radical shift in perspective through praxis. Within the technological age, society is now more than ever able to gain a fuller understanding of that which constitutes the entirety of the global economy. The implication of modern science is that experience is broken up into measurable components, and the relations between these components are explained causally (through suggestive correlation of observed phenomena) as a kind of natural machinery. Quantification and instrumentalization collapse the purpose of the whole natural ecosystem into system components represented as raw material. Marcuse concluded that the notion of instrumental rationality disseminates a rational structure of science and technology because this view is rooted in the social requirements of capitalism. Individuals within society are detached from the experiential realm and adhere to facts removed from human qualities, resulting in guidance or routing through society based on a reified reality rather than active discovery of an ever-emergent reality based on necessity and experience as embodied in human engagement with nature and aesthetics of beauty and play.

In contrast, Adorno attempts to challenge the mythical representation of rationality and demonstrate how modernity in general and the effects of commodity fetishism in particular embody the un-reconciled elements of domination present within myth that persisted through the Enlightenment project into modernity in an attempt to evoke a mimesis which predates anthropocentric myth. Mimesis returns for Adorno in the most advanced works of modern art as a form of rationality premised on a communicative relation between subject and object. The perpetuation of anthropocentric myth for Adorno is due to the philosophical tradition's relationship to theory and reason. In *Negative Dialectics* Adorno reacts to Marx's statement in his "Thesis on Feuerbach" that the "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it"<sup>16</sup> by describing that a thorough understanding of reason through an understanding of theory has yet to be achieved, and historical praxis has resulted in the perpetuation of dominating forces:

The summary judgment that it had merely interpreted the world, that resignation in the face of reality had crippled it in itself, becomes defeatism

<sup>16</sup>Karl Marx, "Thesis on Feuerbach" *The Marx – Engels Reader*, Ed Tucker, Robert, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 145

of reason after the attempt to change the world miscarried. Philosophy offers no place from which theory as such might be concretely convicted of the anachronisms it is suspected of, now as before.<sup>17</sup>

Through their understanding of Odysseus and what they saw as emergence of the authoritarian personality, or the “prototype for bourgeois consciousness,”<sup>18</sup> embodied within that character, Adorno and Horkheimer demonstrate in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* how the mode of investigation in the historical Enlightenment results, like myth, in an anthropomorphized understanding of nature. Nature becomes anthropomorphized to the extent that the subjective imposition of reason on the material object conceals the essence of the object by failing to grasp not only its historical and qualitative determinations but the inherent connection between nature and human civilization. The tendency of progress to necessitate the domination of nature results in the systematic domination of the self and instinctual development resulting in a mimetic relationship perpetuating domination between nature and self. Identity thinking as brought forth by conceptualization results in the forceful truncation of possible ways of being, which become imposed boundaries through categorization, committing violence to the object. Truthfulness towards the object requires reciprocity between the subject and object through a dialectical relationship in which the object participates in the formation of the subject’s concept through the subject’s experience of the object, and “to experience the object ... provides a haven for ... the element of elective affinity between the knower and the known, but in the total process of enlightenment this element gradually crumbles.”<sup>19</sup> By examining *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno’s lecture on “The Idea of Natural-History” and his essay “On Subject and Object,” I aim to bring to the forefront the place- based inter-subjective relationship embodied in Adorno’s understanding of natural history.

Drawing Primarily on Adorno and Horkheimer’s analysis of the *Odyssey* and Adorno’s analysis of *Endgame*, I develop a thorough understanding of natural-history and the possibility that resides within the non-identical to ground an analysis situated in place and nature through the primacy of the object. Adorno’s conception of experience is one

<sup>17</sup>Theodor, W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Trans E.B. Ashton, (New York: Continuum, 1973), 26

<sup>18</sup>Theodor, W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Trans. Edmund Jephcott (California: Standard University Press, 2002), 35

<sup>19</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 45

grounded in the politics of place because it re-orientates analysis toward a consideration that examines within and through the potentiality of the object and the inter-weaving dialectic between nature and history. Further, Adorno's understanding of the historical manifestation of nature, or the perception of history as nature, helps create a framework for critical engagement with the conceptualization of reason by revealing the implications of social and natural domination. Adorno advocates a non-anthropocentric relationship between humanity and nature through his understanding of determinate negation or non-identity thinking, which results in breaking through conceptualization with the aim of examining non-conceptual particulars and substituting diversity for universals. In the attempt to shatter the monolithic quality of rationalized progress as understood within modernity, Adorno employs the concept of natural-history premised upon a dialectical relationship between subject and object to support the notion of transience. Transience contains a singular, cipher-like experience that has the potential to reveal unique fragments, not simply a movement referring to one incident within the totality of structural history. Unveiling the truth not only requires undoing what the subject imposes through experiential encounter but also involves minimizing the violence imposed from subject to object through a communicative and reciprocal relationship between subject and object: *mimesis*.

The fourth chapter focuses on Arendt's concept of power and agency embodied within the notion of the *vita activa*. Arendt's work is useful to this discussion to the extent that it grounds action within the political sphere. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations* bring forth the argument that an analysis of Arendt in relation to Adorno is useful to the extent that Arendt's analysis addresses the "democratic deficit" of the Frankfurt school. The Frankfurt School, especially Adorno's understanding of the social processes may "complement Arendt's aim of a retrieval of the public world."<sup>20</sup>

Arendt's understanding of the "vita activa" encompasses individual prowess and innovative dynamism within the political realm. Similar to Machiavelli's *virtù*, *vita activa*

<sup>20</sup>Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha, "Understanding Political Modernity: Rereading Arendt and Adorno in Comparative Perspective," *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 15

transforms the socio-historical landscape through action. Unlike Marx's notion of communism where politics and the state supposedly "withers away," Arendt projects a model of power sustained through participation in the political realm through the maintenance of the state. In order to change the conception of rationality, individuals that comprise society must regain a sense of political agency. Arendt shifts the perspective from the modern conception of labour, which fulfills individualist necessity dictated through the capitalist model, to embrace a more political stance that could potentially center on the long-term maintenance of the natural ecosystem. Through the analysis of Arendt's concept of the *vita activa*, I will articulate a model in which the repressed plurality of humanity is re-actualized within the state. It is insufficient simply to realize the need of an alternate conception of rationality; a model of action must be expressed. Only through the plural nature of action is humanity able to liberate itself from a homogenizing notion of rationality that reduces being-in-the-world to a conforming, comprehensive principle or eternal truth.

This chapter expands on Arendt's discussion on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and "reflective judgment", which is the ability to ascend from particular to universal without the mediation of determinate concepts given in advance. This discussion includes the unity of Arendt's "spectator" and "actor", which reveals the individual's ability to reflect upon given representations from a number of different perspectives. Her analysis advocates a rectilinear conception of action opposed to the circular conception of time represented in labour's production and consumption created to fulfill necessary bodily needs. Through Arendt and her model of action, I am able to sketch a conception of the politics of place that fosters conditions for re-emergence of the democratic forum that is quickly withering under the demands of monopoly capitalism and its reductive conception of space.

The historical conceptualization of space has created a rootless understanding of place. Individuals that comprise capitalist social relations have little understanding of the actual consequences of global climate change. Conscious awareness triggers when environmental devastation occurs at a local, known place; however, the subtle changes to atmospheric composition and temperature that cause such problems and humanity's role in releasing those gasses are not widely understood. The artificial environments of work, home, and the totality of the developed infrastructure shield us from understanding

that subtle change is occurring. Local actions have real, forceful, and lasting implications for the global ecosystem that civilization depends on for subsistence. Humanity has achieved planetary scale influence without planetary scale understanding. Modern civilization functions under the premise that what can not be perceived immediately must not be important to the local context and that the global ecosystem is so expansive that there is “always an ‘away’ into which we can throw our waste.”<sup>21</sup> Ecological and climate change require an assessment of the historical collective practices by civilization in order to understand our current state. This does not only require an assessment of the present conditions and forecasts from them but an assessment of the historical practices inherited and their ramifications to sustainability. Naomi Klein reinforces that, confronting climate change not only requires a “new economy but a new way of thinking.”<sup>22</sup> The intent is not to be critical of technology or science but to question the underlying reason that allows capital to appropriate all aspects of society toward the goal of its expanded reproduction. Unique to human beings is the ability to reasonably think ahead, to plan, or to model complex, interdependent systems like the atmosphere and biosphere. However, the logic of capitalism captures use of that unique ability because its logic requires no forethought beyond exploitation of the next niche to perpetuate itself. What is required is the critical and continual reassessment of our current holistic state caused by material historical practices and the understanding that, “if the ideas that rule our culture are stopping us from saving ourselves, then it is within our power to change those ideas.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup><http://www.thenation.com/article/change-within-obstacles-we-face-are-not-just-external/>

<sup>22</sup>Ibid

<sup>23</sup><http://www.thenation.com/article/change-within-obstacles-we-face-are-not-just-external/>

## Chapter 2.

### Marx: Capitalism and the Production of Space

This chapter demonstrates that Marx's reflection on the transformation of English industrialization and capital accumulation in the late nineteenth century is highly relevant to the discussion of place-based understanding of anthropogenic climate change because implementing a Marxist model enables an understanding that reveals the un-reconcilable negativity between the socio-historical relationships that determine the production of place and the imperative of capital. The implication of the circulation of value determined by the logic of capital and its need for a globalized rather than localized economy is that the dynamics of capital perpetuate relationships that are alienated so severely that, for example, determining the specific origin of most food commodities in the Western diet would require research into a distributed production and delivery network with so many nodes that it effectively obscures the individual contributors. In some cases, it may not be possible to determine specifically who laboured when and in which soil. Drawing primarily on Harvey and Foster, I will show the manner in which in the metabolic rift between humanity and nature place can constitute an important site of resistance to the abstract, nihilistic logic of unlimited capital accumulation.

As Marx noted in his comments on the *Gotha Program*, labour and nature are the source of all wealth and culture and the process of production expresses the relationship between them. To support human civilization labour is required to be in constant intercourse with nature. This relationship establishes an inherent interdependence that necessitates an implicit adherence by labour to the natural limitations because, "when man engages in production, he can only proceed as nature does herself, i.e. he can only change the form of the materials."<sup>24</sup> However, the logic of capitalism transforms this interdependent relationship, engendering a process of exchange premised instead on surplus accumulation. Wealth creation under the capitalist mode of production alienates the individual from understanding the nature of capitalist society as a whole, giving rise to a systematic irrationality that blinds agents to the effects on ecosystems of unrestrained

<sup>24</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 133

growth, because capital accumulation as an end-in-itself remains the internal imperative independent of the environmental limitations or, indeed, any other consideration. Surplus accumulation appears as an axiom in the logic of production, resulting in commodities produced because of a rationality that does not include environmental limitations. This is reinforced in the premise of Joel Kovel's book *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World* that,

Each unit of capital must, as the saying goes, 'grow or die', and each capitalist must constantly search to expand markets and profits or lose his position in the hierarchy. Under such a regime the economic dimension consumes all else, nature is continually devalued in the search for profit along expanding frontier, and the ecological crisis follows inevitably.<sup>25</sup>

Kovel outlines an inability for the co-existence of capital accumulation and environmental sustainability because of capital's failure to adhere to the limits of the ecosystem. This contradiction is premised on the separation between humanity and nature: alienation.

The first section of this chapter demonstrates how Marx differentiates himself from his predecessors in German idealism, British political economy, and French politics to the extent that he attempted to *de-reify* the externalized conception of value by grounding his analysis in a historical material approach. I demonstrate that within the context of the transformative critique of Ludwig Feuerbach's critique of religion, Marx's early critique of religion forms the basis of his idea of alienation and that "the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism."<sup>26</sup> The premise of religious self-alienation as outlined by Feuerbach and Marx demonstrates that human powers are projected heavenward and worshipped as what Marx later calls an *alien power*. Capitalist logic posits itself within society as a metaphysical truth in the sense that the conception of value represents a predetermined fact uncritically accepted with no thought about its socio-historical manifestation. Marx examines the implications that result from the externalization of value. The predisposition of religion to externalize a code of ethics forms the historical basis for the evolution of an

<sup>25</sup>Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World*, (London, Zed Books, 2002), 115

<sup>26</sup>Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," *The Marx – Engels Reader*, Ed Tucker, Robert, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 53



externalized notion of value and the subsequent monetization of labour power and nature. Steven Vogel in his essay “On Nature and Alienation” reinforces this when he states,

Our alienation isn't from nature it's from the environment. We are alienated from it not because we don't acknowledge it's otherness but rather because we see it too much as other, because we fail to acknowledge our responsibility for it, in the causal and moral senses of that world. Our social structure is such that each of us can act within it only as an individual and we have no way to think collectively about the consequences of our actions, or to decide collectively what we wish to do.<sup>27</sup>

What differentiates Marx from his predecessors is his ability to reconcile practical, political phenomena with a theoretical framework that embodies the force of productive activity.

Reality for Marx is the result of historical human engagement with the material world, nature *per se*, and participation is required to move beyond direct observation into a dialectical understanding of totality in which further mediations negate immediate sensory certainty. Engagement with the material world, reality, means to develop an understanding through examination of the manner in which human action shapes and becomes shaped by the land. Marx's framework is considered paradigm shifting because his analysis represents a decisive step towards the de-reification of reality by exposing the inherent contradictions and the representative taken-for-granted beliefs bound within theoretical framework of productive activity. The mode of his analysis enables us to develop an understanding that frames reality as the consequences of the interdependent relationships between human activity and nature, creating a perpetually intertwined socio-natural landscape.

This second section of this chapter expands on Harvey's conception of accumulation by dispossession, which builds on Marx's understanding of primitive accumulation with the aim to reconcile the dynamic interaction between the circulation of capital and the development of place. This section demonstrates how an application of Marx's analysis of the productive process in relation to the political economy better enables an understanding of the socio-historical construction of our natural environment

<sup>27</sup>Steven, Vogel, “On Nature and Alienation” *Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crisis*. Ed by Andrew Biro (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 202

and discloses a tension between the abstracted spatial imposition of capital and place-based limitations encountered by the growth imperative of the productive process. The ever-expanding frontier of capital exhausts local material limits through an intricate network premised on the homogenization of place through the organization of a global productive landscape.

Foster in *The Vulnerable Planet* outlines the historical dynamics of expanding industrialization alongside imperial expansion that led not only to the widening of European influence but the global division of labor and raw material at the command of capital accumulation:

From its very earliest beginnings in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, capitalism has always been a world system, dividing the globe into center and periphery. The existence of such a hierarchy has meant that the people and the ecosystems of the periphery have been treated as appendages to the growth requirements of advanced capitalist center. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prospects for further expansion were limited because most of the earth had been parceled out to one metropolitan power or another.<sup>28</sup>

The expansion of the European influence established a violent global frontier for capital development. This is further reinforced by Foster when he quotes British statesman Cecil Rhodes, who explained the motivation of imperialism in this manner: “we must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies.”<sup>29</sup> This comment by Cecil Rhodes echoes Marx’s comment in *Capital*, that “capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore with blood and dirt.”<sup>30</sup> Conditions are violent in the sense that dispossession resulting from capital accumulation is not peacefully accepted as an ordinary result of the inherent telos of civilization’s progression; rather, “force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new one. It is itself an economic power.”<sup>31</sup> This moment is significant because it reveals the forceful truncation of the old by the new, which provides insight into the appropriation process of capital. Glen

<sup>28</sup>John Bellamy Foster, *The Vulnerable Planet: a Short Economic History of the Environment* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1999), 85

<sup>29</sup>Foster, *The Vulnerable Planet*, 87

<sup>30</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 926

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 916

Coulthard, in his book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, examines this process through the analysis of colonial dispossession within the context of recognition and creates a framework around this moment of violent juxtaposition: “The reproduction of the colonial relationship between indigenous people and what would eventually become Canada depended heavily on the deployment of state power geared around the genocidal practices of forced *exclusion* and *assimilation*.”<sup>32</sup> A historical examination of dispossession reveals an inherent tension between different ways of being in the world that are not simply a continuum from barbarism to civilization. The potentiality in historical conceptions of nature in dominated and colonized cultures may open up meaningful discussion about creating a more sustainable relationship with nature. Coulthard introduces the conception of “grounded normativity”, the human and non-human relationships that comprise being-in-place. He examines the inherent tension between time-based growth of the gross domestic product and place-based ethics. Western notions of growth and development embodied within capitalist relationships remain within a time-phased notion of expansion, meaning that capital requires incremental increases over time to sustain itself, which results in the development of material and political infrastructure that reinforces the internal imperative of accumulation. A place-based understanding requires non-exploitative relationships with the land or, more precisely, an awareness that the relationships *are* the land, necessitating an obligation to the maintenance of a sustainable ecosystem independent of profit through growth. Marx recounts a long history of social and natural resistance to the regulatory hegemony of the capitalist mode of production and its subsequent relationships, which he establishes as the material impetus of historical progression. Place-based resistance to the spatial imposition of capitalism is significant because it reveals inequality and domination as *sine qua non* to the unfettered development of the apparatus accumulation synonymous with growth.

The final section of this chapter develops an understanding of the nihilistic rationality of capital accumulation, and more specifically exchange value, to demonstrate how the division and fragmentation of labour power results in deepening the metabolic rift between humanity and nature as outlined primarily by Foster. Marx enables an

<sup>32</sup>Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 187

examination of civilization where human labour power is the principle organizer of the material social world, but the inherent contradiction resides with the individuals' lack of agency in the world they create. Foster's work on the metabolic rift between the natural landscape and the development of civilization, examines the implications of an inherently alien social existence embodied within the relations of production. The nihilistic calculation of raw material within the schema of growth through accumulation embodies a truth that confronts the individual but does not reveal the whole process as interconnected through a particular social manifestation. Exchange-value erases historical significance by building over remnants, truncating potentialities, multiplicities, and alternative meanings. What is valued through exchange relations simultaneously becomes devalued when the object's holistic properties or alternative determinations of those properties are inhibited, resulting in a diminished categorization as strictly raw material used for the means of production. This becomes problematic when reified abstractions, such as those that justify accumulation, set off a chain of material consequences beneath the surface of appearance that represents a threat to the sustainability of human life as such. If we are interested in opening historical analysis to the difference that resides in the multiplicity of possibilities, then exchange-value must be the target of our critique.

## **2.1. The Historical Becoming of Material Existence: the Dialectical Relationship between Theory and Practice**

Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chain, not in order that man shall bear the chain without caprice or consolation but so that he shall cast off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusioned man so that he will think, act and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he will revolve about himself a his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself... The immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, is to unmask human self-alienation in its *secular* form now that it has been unmasked in its *sacred* form.<sup>33</sup>

As a member of the Young Hegelians and a contemporary of Feuerbach, Marx develops his understanding of alienation through his early work on religion. Marx diverges from

<sup>33</sup>Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," 54

Hegel and Feuerbach when he grounds his investigation in a historical analysis of productive activity, which he revealed as an expression of the dialectical relationship between the theoretical framework, the force of productive activity, and the material components that support productive activity, such as human labour and the natural landscape. Marx, in the “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” defines Hegelian philosophy as “catch-phrases still caught within the confines of philosophy.”<sup>34</sup> For Marx, Hegel remains within the confines of philosophy, because Hegel’s civil society is understood as an expression of the implicit universal conception of the spirit or *Geist*. As Marx writes, “it is not the course of their own life which unites them in the state; on the contrary, it is the idea which is in the course of its life has separated them from itself.”<sup>35</sup> *Geist* is representative of a self-comprehension or a self-manifestation that is separated from experience. Historical patterns in customary and normative behaviour are internalized and emerge as a universal conception, which confronts the individual, resulting in separation of conception and reality. History is perpetuated by the continuous attempt to transcend reality in hopes of achieving self-understanding by unfolding an inner dialectic between *Geist* and civil society. The implication of Hegelian philosophy for Marx is that self-comprehension is external to human experience to the extent that “they are entities determined by a third party, not self-determined entities.”<sup>36</sup> The Hegelian conception of *Geist* necessitates an unfolding of history, which entails *Aufhebung*, or sublation, of experiences to reveal an implicit, universal truth, and, “in the same way, the impression made by a thing on the optic nerve is perceived not as a subjective excitation of that nerve but as the objective form of a thing outside the eye.”<sup>37</sup>

Feuerbach resolves the externalized universal truth embodied within the religious world into its secular base by establishing an understanding of religious self-alienation through the examination of the conceptualization of religion alongside the development of civilization. Feuerbach’s interest lies in examining perception and how we act as mirrors into our own nature in the process of conceptualizing objects encountered in the world.

<sup>34</sup>Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” 69

<sup>35</sup>Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” *The Marx – Engels Reader*, Ed Tucker, Robert, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 17

<sup>36</sup>Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” 17

<sup>37</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 163

However, religion or the establishment of god assumes an inherently alienating characteristic. Human purpose is externalized through self-alienation to the extent that everything required to sustain humanity or the qualities that make humanity unique appear as if passed down by the divine grace of God. To this Feuerbach retorts by questioning, “how can the self-humiliation of man go further than when he disclaims the capability of fulfilling spontaneously the requirements of common decency?”<sup>38</sup> Feuerbach argues that human civilizations, through interaction with historical conceptualizations of existence develop an understanding of the divine that confronts civilization as an essence or ideal virtue, but he aims to demonstrate that “this superhuman being is nothing else than a product and reflex of the supernatural human mind.”<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between humanity and god represents an inverse relationship to the extent that “what man withdraws from himself, what he renounces in himself, he enjoys in a incomparably higher and fuller measure in God.”<sup>40</sup> Feuerbach’s analysis of the inverse relationship between subject and the God it creates parallels Marx’s later examination of the alienating relationship between the power of productive forces and the natural components that sustain the particular conditions of production: “we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of the commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of production.”<sup>41</sup> Examining the historical manifestation of heaven and juxtaposing the ideal of heaven with reality illustrates an externalization of intrinsically human-made value that manifests itself in the creation of god, Geist, and the commodity. Similar to Feuerbach’s inverse relationship between the created god and the subsequent impoverishment of humanity, Marx articulates the impoverishment of both labour and nature within the valorization process of capital accumulation through his analysis of the inherent contradiction between the forces and the social relationships of productive activity.

<sup>38</sup>Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity: a Philosophy and Critique of Religion*, Trans Marian Evans, (London: Trübner & Co, Ludgate Hill, 1881), 31

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, Preface, xv

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, 25

<sup>41</sup>Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” 70

Feuerbach and Marx preserve Hegel's historical dialectic but develop it further through a materialist approach premised on the subject's relationship to the creation of objective value, which can be defined as such because it reconciles the subjective historical manifestation of the conceptualization of objective essence with the perceived externalized and autonomous notion of value. As outlined by Feuerbach and Marx, the multiplicity of sensuous individual perception embodies intrinsic value. Marx acknowledges and adopts Feuerbach's religious self-alienation in his own critique of Hegel but expands on Feuerbach's theory further by including the realm of praxis to recognize further that "the secular basis detaches itself from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavages and self-contradictions within this secular basis."<sup>42</sup> The critique of contemporary society must move beyond contemplation of consciousness and its manifestations within the objects we encounter; rather, critique must incorporate the idea that such perceptions are products of human productive activity premised on labour and its engagement with the material world. Marx criticizes Feuerbach's materialism for ignoring the practical component that shapes individual perception, and in Marx's appraisal, Feuerbach only examines to the extent "that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is only in the form of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively."<sup>43</sup> Marx's value analysis is fundamental to his critique insofar as it expands on his earlier critique of religion by importing religious alienation to value within capitalist production vis-à-vis the political economy. I will discuss the implications of Marx's value analysis and the alienation, and fetishization of the commodity through exchange towards surplus in section three of this chapter. At this point in the analysis, it is sufficient to note that self-alienation in relation to religion, as applied by Feuerbach, is extended by Marx to productive activity and political economy, and the inversely proportional relationship between human and superhuman is extended to the worker and production.

Marx's reflections on industrial expansion and capital accumulation are expressed through his examination of practical productive reality in relation to the theoretical framework of political economy. Through this analysis, Marx stresses the socio-historical

<sup>42</sup>Karl Marx, "Thesis on Feuerbach," 143

<sup>43</sup>Marx, "Thesis on Feuerbach," 143

manifestation of the traditional framework, which is a result of the dialectical relationships between labour and nature embodied within the process of production. Vogel reinforces that the social in Marx's sense does not mean socially variable; "rather, social construction here is meant literally: the environment we inhabit is formed through the socially organized labour of human being."<sup>44</sup> Marx's ontology of labour resides at the core of his analysis and represents the human transformative ability that shapes the world by engaging with it. Man labours, and "through this movement, he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way simultaneously changes his own nature, develops nature's potentialities and subjects it to its own power."<sup>45</sup> Labour in this sense shapes and is shaped by the interconnected and dialectical relationship with the natural and constructed landscape insofar as labour and the socio-natural landscape simultaneously reconstruct the identity of each other through the development of place. Marx reveals experience as a manifestation of a historical dialectic between human activity and the natural ecosystem, which is expressed in the mode of production.

Productive activity is significant for Marx because it connects the social organization of labour and nature to the way individuals live such that "what they are therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produced."<sup>46</sup> Labour, nature, and the fundamental need to reproduce the conditions of production, along with the resulting historical events caused by these forces, are the starting point of Marx's investigation, and "it is the task of history, therefore, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of this world."<sup>47</sup> In the course of establishing the truth of this world, Marx focuses on unfolding an inherent contradiction between the theoretical framework of the political economy and the organization of divided labour power perpetuated through history and sustained through the social relations and forces of productions. The contradiction resides in the fact that political economy assumes an external power where conditions of production and social relationships are directed by

<sup>44</sup>Vogel, "On Nature and Alienation," 198

<sup>45</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 238

<sup>46</sup>Karl Marx, "The German Ideology" *The Marx – Engels Reader*, Ed Tucker, Robert (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 150

<sup>47</sup>Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right: Introduction," 54



the logic of the invisible hand of the market, idealized competition, and not in terms of the intrinsic qualitative aspects of nature and labour.

James O'Connor introduces the *second contradiction* of capital, extending Marx's understanding of the exploitation of labour and the contradiction between forces and relations of production. O'Connor examines the manner in which the conditions of production contribute to the crisis between political economy and the environment, originating from the theory of self-expanding capital, and its universalizing tendencies which tend to "negate principles of site specificity, its lack of ownership of labour power, external nature and space (without state or capitalist planning), capital's inability to prevent itself from impairing its own conditions."<sup>48</sup> Harvey, in *Limits to Capital*, adds that the antagonistic relationship described by Marx is not only formative but also generative by stating that "the contradiction between the productive forces, social relations and mental conceptions of the world become the central source of tension and the perpetual struggle to overcome the contradiction becomes the motor force of history."<sup>49</sup> The significance of the antagonism between the political-economic forces and the relations of production is that the contradictions they engender are representative of moments of resistance that hold the potential for change. A conception of the world closer to observable reality can be established through an analysis of historical inflections resulting from human acts, and those moments of resistance are either perpetuated by the reproduction of the conditions and forces that produced their emergence or attenuated and forgotten through neglect.

Marx is unique in his ability to consider the social and material components and their emergent relationships within the production of capital. Vogel, in his essay "On Nature and Alienation", articulates an examination of Marx's conception of alienation as it relates to nature and labour's interaction with nature. He examines the implications of the perception of otherness and the attribution of nature-like qualities to the market economy, which is ruled and corrected by the metaphor of the "invisible hand" that represents an idealized mutually beneficial competition between market participants that always maximizes self-interest. Vogel extends this examination of otherness in Marx to nature.

<sup>48</sup>James R O'Connor, "The Second Contradiction of Capital," *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1998), 165

<sup>49</sup>David Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 103

Vogel juxtaposes a spider building a web with the technological progression of human civilization. Developing on Marx's argument in the "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" that "man produces universally" Vogel examines the manner in which labour is an active and transformative process with nature. However, like labour, abstracted nature confronts us as a means towards the end of capital accumulation, forming the basis of the relationship between subject and other. Nature is either romanticized for its inaccessible non-anthropocentric intrinsic value and for its allure as material to be dominated and defined by human civilization. In both viewpoints, nature becomes the "other" to humanity, yet humanity as a population of organisms like any other changes with nature in a continual interaction that forms the basis of our sustenance.

## **2.2. Place-Based Qualities and Spatial Imposition**

### **2.2.1. The Production of Place**

Productive forces and the relations of production in the pursuit of value expansion result in a dialectical and dynamic historical becoming of human civilization through physical means. These competing forces produce distinguishable moments of mass change and establish limits to human praxis, but they also produce recurrent conditions as movements test and recoil from the limits of normative conditions, resulting in the reproduction of slightly modified yet mostly similar circumstances and rationalities. The perpetuation of value expansion and the subsequent physical transformation of the socio-natural landscape through industrialization reinforce the rationality of the market. In this way, value expansion industrializes rationality, which then perpetuates through the development of place. Harvey reinforces in his analysis of Marx's critique of capital that "the land market shapes the geographical structure of production, exchange and consumption, the technical division of labour in space, the socio-economic spaces of reproduction and so forth."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Harvey *Limits to Capital*, 369.

The political economy perpetuates through the organization and reproduction of its own productive relationships: the forces of capitalist production. For Marx the general organization of society ascends from the relationships that comprise the process of production, and “industry is the actual, historical relation of nature and therefore of natural science to man.”<sup>51</sup> The historical analysis of production depicts a dynamic organization of place perpetuated by the interaction between political economy and productive capabilities, and these interactions delineate limits insofar as political economy creates regulations that constrain and align individual activity to reinforce the relationships required for production. Marx observes, “The advance of the capitalist production develops a working, which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident natural laws. The organization of the capitalist process of production, once it is fully developed, breaks down all resistance.”<sup>52</sup>

### **2.2.2. Primitive Accumulation: A Systematic Act of Dispossession**

Marx’s critique is concerned with the production of capital, which takes the form of an external universal conception where the production and reproduction of capital becomes an end in itself perceived to be outside of human control. Marx’s critique of the capitalist mode of production is two-fold: the exploitation of labour power parallels the exploitation of ecosystems. Nature provides the materials that labour operates on to sustain life and “the worker can create nothing without nature, without the sensuous external world. It is the material on which labour is manifested, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces.”<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the degradation of labour is a result of dispossession of the materials of production, which are contingent on access to land:

The advance made by the eighteenth century shows itself in this, that the law itself now becomes the instrument by which the people’s land is stolen, although the big farmers made use of their little independent methods as well. The parliamentary form of robbery is that of Bills for Inclosure of Commons, in other words decrees by which the landowners grant

<sup>51</sup>Marx, “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”, 90

<sup>52</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 899

<sup>53</sup>Marx, “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” 72

themselves the people's land as private property decree of expropriation of the people.<sup>54</sup>

In the final chapter of *Capital*, Marx introduces "so-called primitive accumulation," which represents the pre-history of capital and the mode of production corresponding to capital accumulation. For Marx, the capitalist mode of production is not *sui generis* but the result of social re-organization reinforced through political means:

They all employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten as in a hothouse, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode and to shorten the transaction. Force is the midwife of every old society, which is pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.<sup>55</sup>

This moment is simultaneously representative of state-sanctioned removal of the serfs from land through privatization of common property and alteration of the labour processes from private, self-sustaining labour practices to larger monopolized firms premised on the division of labour so that the "great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled on the labour market as free, unprotected and rightless proletariat."<sup>56</sup> Christian Parenti, in his article "The Environment Making the State: Territory, Nature, and Value," describes the State as the "under-theorized political membrane in the ecological metabolism of capitalism and the value form,"<sup>57</sup> highlighting that the state and its acquisitive, territorial quality is fundamental to delivering the use-values of non-human nature to the process of capital accumulation. Nation states are after all the entities that manage the demarcated surface of the earth. Parenti differentiates between possession and property rights, indicating that the state mediates the method by which individuals go about acquiring legitimate control over property. A central argument of his is that the state does not have a singular relationship with nature; rather, the state is a relationship with nature, and any meaningful change requires an understanding and reform of the state and its participation in the process of capital accumulation. Marx

<sup>54</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 885

<sup>55</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 915

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, 876

<sup>57</sup>Christian Parenti, "The Environment Making the State: Territory, Nature, and Value," (Antipode, 2014), 1

outlines the history of dispossession through specific historical events mediated by the state that followed the dissolution of feudal organization, which was reinforced through law, and “the rising bourgeoisie needs the power of the state, to regulate wages, i.e. to force them into the limits suitable for making profit, to lengthen the working day, and to keep the worker himself at his normal level of dependence.”<sup>58</sup> These limitations resulted in the systematic perpetuation of capitalist relationships and a growing dependence on the market. The more material and political infrastructure developed to mirror market rationality, the less autonomy those within society experienced.

This situation has a material reality in Canada when we examine the history of the First Nations and their fight for recognition through the reconciliation of land entitlement. For Marx, colonialism is a movement of primitive accumulation to reproduce and strengthen the relationships that foster surplus through exploitative practices of sequestering material to extract and expand value through exchange. Rosa Luxemburg, in *The Accumulation of Capital*, comments on the uneven movement of capital to colonize under-capitalized zones. Coulthard reinforces in *Red Skin, White Masks* that the a particular form of domination characterizes the settler-colonial relationships:

Where power – in this cases interrelated discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial and state power- has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the dispossession of indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining autonomy.<sup>59</sup>

It is not only the violence of the initial act of dispossession that is detrimental but also the continuing displacement stoked by the potential for further accumulation. Dispossession can occur through the tools of governance such as expropriation and legitimized social contracts like treaties. Physical displacement is, however, distinct from dispossession in the sense that marginalized groups are not simply physically restricted from a location but are continuously dispossessed of their rights and, due to the movement of capital, displaced when forced to participate in a land market without the means to afford the now costly land they once depended on. Displacement for indigenous communities also entails

<sup>58</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 900

<sup>59</sup>Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 253

a loss of traditional values, customs, and norms in addition to the loss of use and access to land, because the pursuit of traditional ways of life becomes untenable. This can be seen as a disruption or an “un-grounding of grounded normativity.” Development of infrastructure that supports the accumulation process of capital redefines natural processes to the extent that indigenous communities are detached from the land that once provided their means of subsistence, narrowing options until dependency on the markets imposed through the settler communities is the only remaining option. An historical analysis of colonial dispossession depicts a moment of violence that aimed to obliterate tradition from memory, limiting possibilities for the emergence and maintenance of new and traditional forms of ethical practices. The interaction reveals a dialectical relationship between opposing rationalities where one eventually dominates through the justification of progress.

First Nations resistance to colonial powers embodies such an alternative to the rationality of capitalism, because their demands for recognition are based primarily on their ability to maintain a relationship premised on grounded normativity that runs contrary to predatory capitalist imperatives. Grounded normativity highlights a relationship between human civilizations and nature founded on reciprocity with nature rather than a model that dominates and ascribes value to land and the operations on it for profit. Coulthard reinforces this point by recounting a statement by Dene Elder, Philip Blake:

We have lived with the land, not tried to conquer or control it or rob it of its riches. We have not tried to get more and more riches and power, we have not tried to conquer new frontiers, or out do our parents, or make sure that every year we are richer than the year before. We have been satisfied to see our wealth as ourselves and the land with live with.<sup>60</sup>

In this sense, human civilization can interact with nature in an indefinitely self-sustainable manner premised on use rather than exchange. Humanity’s relationship with nature can be considered non-exclusionary to the extent that co-existence is reinforced between nature and human civilization when implicit awareness of the consequences emanating from the interactions with nature informs human civilization’s actions.

<sup>60</sup>Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 1412

### **2.2.3. Spatial Developments and the Circulation of Capital: A Place-Based Understanding**

The understanding of social organization in which the access to space and the materials of productive processes determines the level of personal autonomy such that “land serves not only as a means of production but also as a foundation as a place and space providing a basis of operations. Space is required as an element of production and human activity.”<sup>61</sup> The monopolization through spatial development takes over place-based qualities that contradict capital development, controlled through the re-organization of the process of production. The spatial development results in changes to the manner of existence by regulating access to the material required for existence through the reification of space.

Harvey builds on Marx’s conception of primitive accumulation with his understanding of accumulation by dispossession, bringing to the foreground power dynamics and the resultant geographical organization of the political economy through productive activity. Development of fixed capital and technology reinforces the idea of place because production necessitates infrastructure. Spatial materialization of that infrastructure not only shapes behaviour but also perpetuates capital reproduction through the development of place. Rationality is no longer only an abstract internalized conception but a pattern of behaviour reinforced externally through a purposeful reconstruction of political, social, and material space to mirror the rationality that guides civilization, and “the greater the scale on which fixed capital develops, the more does the continuity of the production process of the constant flow of reproduction become an externally compelling condition for the model of production founded on capital.”<sup>62</sup> However, the concept of place represents qualitative socio-historical circumstances to the extent that “location is an active moment within the overall circulation and accumulation of capital.”<sup>63</sup> Tension generated by the oppositional relationship between place-based qualities and spatial development of capital within a location or place is significant because it highlights resistance in an active moment. That resistance, observable by the tension, reveals the

<sup>61</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 334

<sup>62</sup>Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, Trans. Martin Nicolaus (England, Penguin, 1973), 703

<sup>63</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 389

historical social manifestation of place truncated and diverted to align with market properties. An example is the conflict over the Haussmannization of Paris after the Commune mentioned indirectly by Walter Benjamin and more directly in the work of Henri Lefebvre and the Situationists who theorized the “society of the spectacle.” Counter-posed to the spectacle was the situation, understood through psycho-geography experienced by drifting through the city, as a means to win back a sense of human-scaled place and activity against the abstract logic of late capitalism that turned everyone into voyeur.

The tension between place-based qualities and the spatial imposition of capital is exacerbated through the displacement of profit to deter over-accumulation, which devalues capital through local oversupply. Harvey argues, “The inability to accumulate through expanded reproduction on a sustained basis has been paralleled by a rise in attempts to accumulate by dispossession.”<sup>64</sup> Accumulation by dispossession has allowed the bourgeois class to gain power at the global scale through the displacement of surplus for the production of dynamic centers of accumulation created both to prevent the redistribution of wealth and to overcome place-based limitations of environmental and social resources:

On the production side, oligopolies largely based in the core capitalist regions, effectively control the production of seeds, fertilizers, electronics, computer software, pharmaceutical products, petroleum products and much more. Under these conditions, the creation of new market openings does not open up competition but merely creates opportunities to proliferate monopoly powers with all manner of social, ecological, economic and political consequences.<sup>65</sup>

For Harvey, the relations that dictate accumulation by dispossession dispossess elements of the natural ecosystem, labour power, capital, and culture, and this is accomplished by the commodification of these elements. Technological development plays a significant role to the extent that firms with significant capital are able to displace smaller firms by establishing technological efficiency, and “the social consequence of competition is, of course, to force continuous leap-frogging in the adoption of new technologies and new

<sup>64</sup>David Harvey, *The New Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 139

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 71



organizational forms independent of the will of any particular entrepreneur.”<sup>66</sup> The evolution of global productive forces premised on exchange-value also necessitates the development of communication and transportation infrastructure to ensure a level of efficiency sufficient for capital production. This development of infrastructure coupled with a new political consciousness through a loss of autonomy alters the organization of place a physical landscape that resembles and reinforces the image of capital while dispossessing the people, land, and culture. That organization of place occurs by forging new social relations premised on the cooperation and articulation of diverse market systems through which “bourgeois industry and commerce creates the material conditions of the new world in the same way that geological revolutions have created the surface of the earth.”<sup>67</sup> Harvey emphasizes the role of displacing surplus to ensure continual growth, to defer resistance, and to invoke the “annihilation of space with time.”<sup>68</sup> The qualitative differences of place are subordinated to the relations of production over time through a forgetting of the socio-historic origins of place.

The displacement of surplus value as a result of over-accumulation and the capitalization of place is exemplified in the global real estate market. For example, over-accumulation in China forces Chinese capital outward for investment opportunities in European and North American capitals with development projects in need of financing.<sup>69</sup> In cases like Vancouver where investment capital spurs property development, this can cause gentrification and homelessness, particularly for indigenous people. As single room occupancy buildings in the Downtown Eastside are transformed into boutique bars, restaurants, and hotels to encourage more luxury consumption opportunities for the wealthy that act as higher yield revenue streams for investors, the previous inhabitants are dispossessed.

A recent ruling in Vancouver prohibits street vendors from operating on specific blocks within the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood, effectively dismantling a market that

<sup>66</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 121

<sup>67</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 435

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 40

<sup>69</sup><http://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2015-11-02/china-s-money-exodus>

constitutes the 'informal economy' that acts as a focal point for a local community that is already comprised of the most impoverished and marginalized in the country.<sup>70</sup> The city authorities and business stakeholders carefully managed their communications by indicating that these individuals are not required to leave, but they are firmly invited to conduct their unsanctioned commerce in one of the three smaller locations with police patrols. These encouraging invitations are advertised in positive terms as protection of all citizens. In the same breath as concern for the well-being of the citizens, the city stated that the building behind the existing market site will be demolished, and the hoarding and scaffolding would be disturbed by masses of people. The existing improvements on the property, a run-down three-story building housing a busy bottle depot, will be replaced by a 14-storey mixed-use building developed and operated by Atira Women's Resource Society, a social enterprise with a for-profit property management subsidiary. Funding for Atira's developments in the past has come from the City of Vancouver, BC Hydro, the CMHC, and several foundations and individuals; financing has come from Vancity and BC Housing.<sup>71</sup> This development is supported by the City of Vancouver's official community plan for the Downtown Eastside for revitalization without displacement with the aim to encourage economic development while maintaining the neighbourhood for low-income residents.<sup>72</sup> Yet, Vancouver Police Department constable Brian Montague said the construction project will not leave room for vendors.

Capital accumulation through spatial organization is accomplished by global displacement that weakens local agency. Timothy Mitchell in *Carbon Democracy* establishes a link between the organizations of energy infrastructure to that of democracy. Neoliberal precepts of Western democracy model a top down administrative control system premised on private accumulation that can be copied from one place to the next. This portable abstraction is concerned with reproducing a new political subject and with subjecting constituents to new ways of governance rather than promoting critical debate in consideration of alternative rationalities concerning land and labour relations. Mitchell

<sup>70</sup><http://www.straight.com/news/579331/city-sweeps-downtown-eastside-vendors-unit-block-east-hastings>

<sup>71</sup><http://www.atira.bc.ca/sites/default/files/Press%20Release%20-%20Container%20Housing.pdf>

<sup>72</sup><http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/downtown-eastside-plan.pdf>

draws a parallel between methods of appropriating and transporting energy to the force of state-sanctioned hegemonic control over the productive process of capital:

Political possibilities were opened up or narrowed down by the different ways of organizing the flow and concentration of energy and those possibilities were enhanced or limited by the arrangement of people, finance, expertise and violence that were assembled in the relationship to the distribution and control of energy.<sup>73</sup>

The spatial arrangements of place and the social relationships between spaces of energy infrastructure enable new forms of mass politics. The development of a network of purpose-built conduits for commodities forges and solidifies a novel kind of political power. The dispersed energy relations, in particular the flexible and long-ranging development of oil pipelines, do not allow large groups of workers to assemble in one location with appreciable political capacity. The physically separate, technologically mediated work on energy infrastructure prevents individuals from disrupting the energy flows in a way that warrants attention from the state or from the companies that manage the flow. As an analogy for capitalism, the modern energy infrastructure development forms a network that can switch routes to alternate paths to avoid blockages or overcome breakdowns.

## **2.3. Domination and Alienation: Exchange-Value**

### **2.3.1. An Alienated Place**

The “immense collection of commodities” moves within and through place, perpetuating a circulation of value that remains external to human control so that value as defined through capital “formally abstracts from the natural basis and substance of wealth.”<sup>74</sup> Determining the parameters of value within the context of the ecological crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is important to understanding the manner in which labour and nature within place are organized. As understood by Marxist ecology, value includes the natural

<sup>73</sup>Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. (Brooklyn: Verso, 2011), 7

<sup>74</sup>Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 83

ecosystem as the necessary counterpart to labour. The exploitation and alienation of labour results in the exploitation and alienation from nature, and as stated by Foster,

Marx's notion of the alienation of nature, which he saw arising out of human practical life, was no more abstract at its core than his alienation of labour. Both were grounded in his understanding of the political-economic thrust of capitalist society - the alienation of labour was a reflection of the fact that labour (power) had become reduced virtually to the status of a commodity the laws of supply and demand and that the land, like man had sunk to the level of a commodity.<sup>75</sup>

Labour and nature assume a dual characteristic of use-value and exchange-value, which are articulated in concrete objects. Use-value can be expressed as the resources required to sustain human life, and exchange-value can be expressed as wage labour and profit. Labour power becomes objectified in the commodity as socially necessary labour-time, embodying a quantifiable abstraction aimed toward generating profit that simultaneously alters the potentiality for both labour and nature. Kovel articulates and differentiates abstraction in the following manner:

Abstraction - including quantification - need not be pathological so long as there remains a differentiated path back to the sensuous-concrete, such as we see in the most fruitful science; or when, as in the case of 'pure' mathematics, abstraction are bracketed away from the external world. That is, the mathematician does not confuse his abstraction with reality - unless his is psychotic, and even if he is psychotic, he lacks the means to bring reality under sway of his abstraction. Not so for capital, which converts the sensuous world into abstraction for the purpose of value. Since the sensuous world remains sensuous, that is, ecosystemic, this conversion becomes a splitting of devastating proportion and leads to a new order of domination.<sup>76</sup>

Objectification and abstraction applied to the external world results in the conceptualization of nature as passive and therefore readily able to be dominant and manipulate and essentially presented as means towards indistinguishable ends. In contrast, Murray Bookchin highlights the active and interdependent specificity of nature when he states,

<sup>75</sup>John Bellamy Foster, Marx's Ecology: *Materialism and Nature*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 75

<sup>76</sup>Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature*, 126

Nature is as much a precondition for the development of society - not merely its emergence - as technics, labour, language, and mind. The affinities between nature and society are more active than we care to admit. Very specific forms of nature - very specific ecosystems - constitute the ground for very specific forms of society. At the risk of using a highly embattled phrase, I might say that a "historical materialism" of natural development could be written that would transform "passive nature" the object "of human labour" into active nature, "the creator of human labour. Labour's "metabolism" with nature cuts both ways, so that nature interacts with humanity to yield the actualization of their common potentialities in the natural and social worlds.<sup>77</sup>

However, the breakdown of material components as a prerequisite to the process of exchange conceals the natural equilibrium required to acknowledge the potentialities of nature and the maintenance of human life on Earth, and "the exchange process is in short perpetually abstracting from the specifics of location through price formation."<sup>78</sup> The individuals within society are alienated from both labour and nature because of the imperative of capital's reproduction and its ability to conceal the social relationships behind the form through commodity fetishism.

The effectiveness of fetishism increases with the introduction of immaterial production that seems to elude the fact that the origins of commodities, like a host of west and central African and southeast Asian regions, production is very material with physical effects on labour and nature. Immaterial production becomes a direct force of production itself and by way of Marx's idea of "general intellect" immaterial production transforms in accordance with forces of production. The distance between the sites of immaterial and material production creates a rift between consumer and producer, resulting in both physical and mental decoupling from the social and natural effects of production required to maintain the circulation of commodities at a rate sufficient for expanded reproduction of capital, and "the phenomenon of separation expresses the core gesture of eco-disintegration, for separation in the physical and social sense corresponds to splitting in the ontological sense."<sup>79</sup> Proximity to the concrete material processes that constitute the object and its relationship to place is required for a sensual understanding of the forms

<sup>77</sup>Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, (Palo Alto: Cheshire Books, 1982), 33

<sup>78</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 383

<sup>79</sup>Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature*, 128

that constitute everyday experience. The very apogee of commodity fetishism in the universal rule of money creates an epistemic crisis, insofar that the understanding of labour and its contribution is required to achieve the standpoint of the concepts totality. The material object now represented as money becomes the instrumental means to the continual expansion of value. This now formal abstraction results in an inversion of the relationship between nature and labour to the material objects produced, characterized in an informal equation where “the increasing value of the world of things precedes in direct proportion the devaluation of the world of men.”<sup>80</sup> What Sohn-Rethel calls the “real abstraction” is signified by the money form and obscures through attenuation and institutionalized exploitation of activity that mediates the metabolism of humanity and nature. Instead of labour as the source of free activity, labour becomes merely a means of survival captured from an individual’s free time as socially necessary labour time.

Marx’s historical examination documents an inherently alienating process. He explains that alienation is perpetuated by fetishizing reality, which results in the commodity-form and the subsequent value-relation of the products of labour power. Commodities and their value-relations are alienating because they do not appear “as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things.”<sup>81</sup> The Marxist conception of fetishism shows the manner in which the social relationships of production are self-concealing, forming a “socially necessary illusion,” and unveils relationships between things perceived as social relationships that underwrite the capitalist mode of production. People no longer relate to each other as “total personalities” within society; they relate to each other through the myriad products encountered in the market.

The ramification of this for Marx is that all the specific effort can not be known. Value produced via the division of labour power goes into making fungible products and value “transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic.”<sup>82</sup> Moving from the production of use-value toward a production of exchange-value, from C-M-C to M-C-M, is the movement from the artisanal creation of objects for their use to development of

<sup>80</sup>Marx, “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” 71

<sup>81</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 166

<sup>82</sup>Ibid, 167

standardized products for exchange. The basis of the shift from production for use to production of commodities for the purpose of exchange is that “use-value of material objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value on the other hand, form a part of them as object.”<sup>83</sup> There is no mystery to use-value, which is consumed as the means of subsistence; however, the commodity perpetuated through exchange maintains an enigmatic quality, and “the mysterious character of the commodity form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things.”<sup>84</sup> The regulative principles that command the exchange of the socio-natural properties in the market are human-made constructs of bourgeois economics that manipulate the historical concept of labour production into an autonomous productive process, and “the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much of men’s social product as is their language.”<sup>85</sup> Instead of individuals dictating the relationship between their labour and the natural materials at hand or acknowledging that their relationship with the economic mode of production is a socio-historical manifestation formative to their individuality in the context of society, “the money-form and the growth of exchange steadily dissolves ties of personal dependence and replaces them with impersonal dependence via the market system.”<sup>86</sup> This lack of engagement results in perception of reality as subject to a natural law of growth with market forces appearing as a quasi-cause rather than as relations that we ourselves *construct* and *deconstruct*. As Steven Vogel states,

We are alienated from our environment when we fail to acknowledge our own responsibility for it, and so instead it starts to look like a natural fact about which there is nothing we can do: global warming simply part of a natural cycle, pollution an inevitable by-product of technology, urban sprawl the inexorable consequences of market forces, and so on.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 177

<sup>84</sup>Ibid, 163

<sup>85</sup>Ibid, 167

<sup>86</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 33

<sup>87</sup>Vogel, “On Nature and Alienation,” 197

Nevertheless by unveiling these relationships, Marx attempts to expose the experiential and social relationships in an attempt to dispel the illusion “that ground rent grows out of the soil, not out of society.”<sup>88</sup> Reality is not a pre-determined, natural manifestation but an agreed or imposed upon relationship that has evolved through history.

### 2.3.2. The Resulting Rift

The highly rationalized world of commodity production not only subordinates labour but also nature by reshaping the socio-political landscape. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx demonstrates the interaction between state and civil society by showing how political antagonism between the institutionally disjointed state apparatus and its articulation to the wider public shapes politics.<sup>89</sup> This separation and opposition results in an estrangement and alienation from the political world. For Marx, alienation was a result of a failure to understand fully both the socio-historical underpinnings of human civilization and the transformative influence of human activity in shaping the natural and social world. The understanding of a separated and oppositional existence that emerges from a state apparatus distanced from civil society could also be applied to the alienation of nature, which is not a failure to comprehend nature’s qualities independent of human contact but the inability to understand how the consequences of production affect nature. Vogel reinforces this in his analysis of Marx by stating “we are alienated from our environment when we fail to recognize it as the consequence of our own actions and so fail to acknowledge our own responsibility for it, and so instead it starts to look like a natural fact.”<sup>90</sup>

Our environment, both natural and constructed, is the product of our interaction with it. Foster adds to this discussion through his understanding of the metabolic rift. The metabolic rift is an expansion on Marx’s understanding of the metabolism whereby the “labour process is a process between man and nature, a process by which man through

<sup>88</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 176

<sup>89</sup>Bob Jessop, “The Political Scene and the Politics of Representation: Periodising Class Struggle and the State in the Eighteenth Brumaire.” *Marx’s Eighteenth Brumaire: (Post) Modern Interpretation*. Ed Mark Cowling and James Martin (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

<sup>90</sup>Vogel, “One Nature and Alienation,” 197



his own action mediates and regulates this relationship.”<sup>91</sup> The metabolism of society parallels that of an organism in an ecological system because the regulatory constraints that govern the interchange between society and the environment are similar to the “complex process of metabolic exchange whereby an organism draws upon materials and energy from its environment and converts these by way of various metabolic reactions into the building blocks of proteins and other compounds necessary for growth.”<sup>92</sup> The parallel is not merely allegorical but describes overlapping matter and energy flows that support the human population.

Foster describes nature and human interaction with nature as “a web or a fabric made up of innumerable processes, relations and interactions.”<sup>93</sup> However, the metabolic interaction between productive activities and the biosphere after the industrial revolution has caused an irreparable rift between civilization and nature, appearing as amnesia specific to the social manifestation and consequence of productive activity. For example, increasing food demand during the early industrialization in England was met temporarily by importing mass quantities of bat and seabird droppings consisting of highly concentrated nitrogen-rich compounds for use as fertilizer by the agricultural industry. Further demand for food requiring greater quantities of fertilizer was met later by converting atmospheric nitrogen to fertilizer through the German innovations of the Haber-Bosch and Ostwald processes at industrial scale. Both the commercial and chemical innovations to supply food for the growing European population resulted in the spatial displacement of material and ultimately a rift in the natural nitrogen cycle. The Haber-Bosch process requires significant amounts of energy and methane supplied by the petrochemical industry.

Sustenance becomes a world of commodities alienated from both those involved in their production and nature alike, and the illusion is sufficiently powerful to obscure the social origins of the rift in amnesia. The compulsion to forget is strong enough to conceal that not all metabolic products are useful or even intentional, and their production

<sup>91</sup>Foster, *Marx's Ecology*, 141

<sup>92</sup>John Bellamy Foster, “Marx’s Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology,” *AJS* September 1999 (105): The University of Chicago, 382

<sup>93</sup>John Bellamy Foster, Bret Clark and Richard York, *Ecological Rift: Capitalism’s War on The Earth*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 45

contributes to the formation of wasted places with depleted soil, bioaccumulated toxins, and acidified water. The source of the rift was not attended to: the inherent imperative of growth necessitated by capital accumulation. The growing concern with anthropogenic climate change is that “biogeochemical cycles, the atmosphere, the ocean and the earth system as a whole can no longer seem impervious to human economy.”<sup>94</sup> Human civilization and its productive activity has resulted in geological reformation.

The forgetting embodied within the rift is an articulation of Marx’s understanding of the material exchange between town and country and an implication of existence within a reified version of reality premised on the relations of production and exchange through the market system, where “Marx employed the concept of rift in the metabolic relation between human beings and the earth to capture the material estrangement of human beings within capitalist society from the natural conditions which formed the basis for their existence.”<sup>95</sup> The metabolic rift between town and country is a phenomenon grounded in Liebig’s soil chemistry and rational agriculture, which states that, if nutrients are taken from the soil to build agriculture, then nutrients should be replaced to achieve a sustainable yield. The implication is that objects produced then shipped far from their origin displace nutrients taken from the soil, diminishing the ability to achieve a sustainable yield. When nutrients are replaced by acquisition from elsewhere, the soil is impoverished at the site of nutrient acquisition. Therefore, devastation or impoverishment occurs not only at the site of production but also elsewhere at the site of displacement, thus, “Intensive agriculture practices were used to increase yields. Food and fiber - along with soil nutrients - were shipped hundreds or even thousands of miles to distant urban markets. The essential soil nutrients accumulated as waste, which polluted cities and rivers.”<sup>96</sup> For Liebig, rational agriculture was based on the principle of restitution, land rights that do not include allowing maximum nutrient extraction that leaves the soil barren, and on the premise that civilization has a responsibility to maintain soil for future generations. This would require de-reification through an acknowledgement of the human contribution to the metabolic rift

<sup>94</sup>Foster, Clark, York, *The Ecological Rift*, 18

<sup>95</sup>Foster, “Marx’s Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology,” 375

<sup>96</sup>Foster, Clark, York, *The Ecological Rift*, 404

and a conscious effort to mitigate additional harm through the re-assessment of the relationships that shape productive activity.

### **2.3.3. The Instrumentalization of Space**

The phenomenon of reification is best understood through analysis of the emergent rationality that reorganized development during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The reorganization was accomplished by individuation and fragmentation of social existence through the division of property and labour. Instrumental rationality fragments and alienates individuals within society from a holistic grasp of the implications of industry which emerged with private small-holdings and enclosures established as described by Marx's understanding of ground rent and a workforce divided through rudimentary bureaucratic practices. This process of alienation self-perpetuated through history, and the peasants disintegrated into individual private citizens engaged in the expanded reproduction of capital. The past and the present were now understood solely through the logic of development. While industrial development was unbound, a highly instrumental rationality formed the basis of a market considered to be free. That freedom was inherently contradictory in the sense that the market was open or less regulated yet there were no decisive steps toward the annihilation of dominating forces that result in marginalization and inequality.

Lukács' conception of reification assists in illuminating the highly mechanized, rational objectification that conceals the qualitative and material character of the thing. The commodity form assumes a "phantom objectivity... an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people."<sup>97</sup> The capitalist mode of production breaks down undifferentiated bulk into abstract, rational, and specialized operations on material. These calculable and fragmented components then confront the worker as fixed and established reality. What becomes evident when examining the social relationships that comprise the history of capitalist society is that the "external iron laws which branch off into different special laws applying to particular areas is finally revealed for what it is: a pretense."<sup>98</sup> The

<sup>97</sup>Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 83

<sup>98</sup>Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 92

consequence is that the connections between things perceived as necessary are in actuality historical and constituted by the relations of production and more specifically by accumulation of capital through exchange and production of surplus value.

Marx tears down the curtain that obscures the realm of production behind the stage of the free market so we may observe that “a certain change takes place, or so it appears, in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*.”<sup>99</sup> The valorization of labour power through the forces of production results in dead labour, or the created world of things, which in turn results in the domination and devaluation of living labour and the natural ecosystem through a highly purposeful process-driven existence or, as Lukács states in *Theory of a Novel*, the “chapel house of long dead interiorities.”<sup>100</sup> Yet, the relentless drive of capital accumulation is nihilistic to the extent that qualitative properties are reduced to resources to further the accumulation of capital. Accumulation through the productive relations and the expropriation of surplus labour time relies on a process of alienation, which underlies the capitalist mode of production. This results in the domination of living by dead labour and such dead labour takes on the appearance of rational necessity and reproduces the future in terms of present and therefore as “second nature.” Fixed capital and the relations of production ascribe value, which confront the individual, subordinating them to externally imposed laws that dictate social life. Like Mary Shelly’s *Dr. Frankenstein*, in which life was consumed by the dead labour embodied in a fabricated monster that demanded its own reproduction through a mate, the commodity form arranges society to support the form’s self-propagation.

Marx, in “The Fragment on Machines” speaks to the manner in which the process of production through fixed capital (machines) creates an automatic system in which both labour power and fixed capital transform into the forces of production, “this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkage.”<sup>101</sup> The automatic force of production

<sup>99</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 280

<sup>100</sup>George Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT, 1978), 54

<sup>101</sup>Marx, *Grundrisse*, 692

through machines now becomes a “moving power that moves itself.”<sup>102</sup> The mechanic system becomes a power that confronts the worker within the process of production and the machine becomes the “means to labour,” resulting in the worker simply becoming “the means of its action.”<sup>103</sup> The introduction of automation (fixed capital) results in a deskilling of the worker and labour is no longer the sole determinate of production and “the entire production process appears as not subsumed under the direct skillfulness of the worker, but rather as the technological application of science.”<sup>104</sup> Through the examination of the productive process and the historical accumulation of means to production Marx brings to the forefront the intrinsic contradiction between the political-economic forces of capital accumulation and relations and conditions of production.

## 2.4. Modern Perceptions and Alternatives

What Marx establishes is a critical framework that identifies that “between the particular and the universal lies a whole mess of untidy organizational arrangements which mediate the dynamics of capital flow within space economy of capitalism and provides multiple and diverse forums in which class and factional struggle can unfold.”<sup>105</sup> For example, modern perceptions to mitigating the effects of anthropogenic climate change arguably fail to address the underlying rationalization that propels capital; instead, this crisis introduces new products designed with the appearance of sustainability. Harvey articulates this when he states that “what matters is that we recognize the general possibility that we often encounter symptoms rather than the underlying causes and that we need to unmask what is truly happening underneath the mystifying surface appearance.”<sup>106</sup> We need to address the relationships and power dynamics that strengthen the rationality that underwrites the capitalist mode of production, and we need to avoid investment in solutions that remain strongly within the market system at the source of the issue. Proffered alternatives or solutions to the environmental limits present

<sup>102</sup>Ibid, 692

<sup>103</sup>Ibid, 693

<sup>104</sup>Ibid, 699

<sup>105</sup>Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 424

<sup>106</sup>David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions' and the End of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8

false dichotomies that result in the individualization of environmental issues and produce, for example, the enlightened consumer who is confronted with consumer products advertised with the appearance of ameliorating the ecological crisis without actually doing so. Also, the market for profitable greenhouse gas emission quantity trading to responsibly mitigate pollution reinforces this individualization of the issues through moralization, and “green capitalism is not just about the (limited) re-regulation of financial markets; it is also promoting financial innovation.”<sup>107</sup> These financial innovations and inventions branded with green guilt as sustainable are commodified and monopolized to generate wealth. Further, government regulations and the organization of imposed political economy allow non-governmental organizations and other innovative, concerned parties to work only in a manner that does not interfere with accumulation of capital so that their work may be later appropriated for exploitation.<sup>108</sup> What becomes evident is that, instead of addressing the inherent contradiction between environmental limits and growth necessitated by capitalist production, society undertakes an ecological modernization that fails to grasp real relationships. Rather, a dialectical balancing of concepts ensures that no real action is undertaken, and only empty signifiers of change embodied within catch-phrases of sustainability and moralizing precepts of value-based decision making are discussed.

<sup>107</sup>Mario, Candeias, *Green Transformation: Competing Strategic Project*, Trans Alexander Gallas (Berlin Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2013), 7

<sup>108</sup>Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions' and the End of Capitalism*, 250

## Chapter 3.

### Being-in-the-Anthropocene: Technological Development of Place

“The future is already here - it's just not very evenly distributed.” - William Gibson

This chapter delves further into the implications of *reification* and *fetishism* when applied to technological efficiency and instrumental rationality as understood by Marcuse. Marcuse was a student of Heidegger, and a prominent member of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. He also was an advocate for the potentiality embodied in the New Left that was emerging in the late 1960s. All of these factors deeply influenced Marcuse's understanding of the historical development of civilization alongside historical technological production. Marcuse attempts to understand the failure of the revolutionary consciousness evoked so strongly in Marx's work. Rather than achieving fruition, the revolution transformed into an all-pervasive containment of change, Fascism, exemplified in the wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the increase of consumption perpetuated through the emergence of mass culture following the Second World War.

Tensions exacerbated by the increasing alienation and exploitation that accompanies unequal distribution of wealth between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour power have resulted in the capitalist roots deepening into the landscape of present society. As reinforced by William Gibson's statement at the beginning of this chapter, individuals within society only benefit heterogeneously from progressive technological development for the reason that the means are inaccessible except for those who retain control through legislation and force. The rights or control of technology provides a means to produce commodities for profit, and those rights or that control can be conserved beyond human lifetimes by governments and corporations. There are notable contemporary exceptions due to the anarcho-utopian open source movement for software and hardware<sup>109</sup>; however, patents secure the means

<sup>109</sup><http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/1642/1781>

to produce commodities at industrial scale.<sup>110</sup> Those who do not control the means of production sell their labour power in a context of stagnating wages, precarious job security, tenuous housing affordability, and increasing food prices, resulting in significant consumer debt. The standard of living ranges in a broad spectrum despite technological innovation.

The acceleration of technological development has not resulted in a democratic egalitarian society resembling a utopia; rather, classes remain divided because resource distribution remains premised on the inequality encompassed in the exploitative processes of accumulation. The rationality of this market and the metabolic waste it produces may push ecosystems beyond the brink of a radical transformation that has the power to change the species-being. However, for Marcuse the question concerning technology moves beyond the forces of production in *One Dimensional Man*. For Marcuse, technology, as it was for Heidegger, is a reductive disclosure of beings: a disclosure that reveals nature and labour as a standing reserve of energy for the productive process. In other words, technology is deeper and more pervasive today insofar as it sets up the world in a particular sort of way. In this context, place-based politics is an alternative, life-affirming constitution of the modern world that takes into consideration the *a priori* technological essence that discloses that world. Place-based politics is not a monolithic, life-denying constitution of a world resistant to reflection into its own historical emergence. Rather, place-based politics aims at resurfacing latent historical understanding of meaning and rationality.

Through the works of Marcuse, this chapter expands on Marx's critique of 19<sup>th</sup> century market economy by examining its wider articulation within the contemporary globalized market and its manifestation through the transformation of individual consciousness. Marcuse employs Marx's historical critique of capitalistic relationships towards a deeper understanding of the emergence of technology and the subsequent industrialization of rationality. With reference to Marx and Freud, Marcuse draws on a Heideggerian phenomenological analysis to his understanding of the dynamic interrelations that comprise the process of capital accumulation, and he investigates the historical emergence of civilization through its relationship with technology. Grounded in

<sup>110</sup>[http://www.wipo.int/patents/en/faq\\_patents.html#protection](http://www.wipo.int/patents/en/faq_patents.html#protection)



a phenomenological understanding of place, Marcuse's analysis examines the manner in which the organization of place is determined by our engagement with the world, and he explores the manner in which the developed technological infrastructure we create determines and constrains the choice of our actions.

Marcuse expands Marx's understanding of fetishism and alienation resulting from capital accumulation to include a discussion of technological domination. In his essay, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," Marcuse investigates the fetish of technical efficiency and "technology, as mode of production, as the totality of instruments, devices and contrivances which characterize the machine age is thus at the same time a mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behaviour patterns, an instrument for control and domination."<sup>111</sup> Marcuse examines the manner in which technological rationality controls civilization by way of organization and necessity and more specifically through the institutional organization of space that deepens the roots of instrumental rationality. Gandesha in his essay "Marcuse, Habermas and the Critique of Technology" examines Marcuse's critique of technology as a critique that situates technological essence in relation to historical practices. Gandesha examines the manner in which technological disclosure highlights an important tension between validity and meaning, and "Technology is not something that can be grasped like a tool in the world, but rather that which discloses the world as meaningful in the first place."<sup>112</sup> When considering anthropogenic climate change, what is required is a critical assessment of the ecological crisis that emphasizes the concept of instrumental rationality and, more specifically, meaning itself as developed through modern technological disclosure. This chapter aims at developing a better understanding of the implications of the ideological essence of technology and the manner in which technology discloses meaning by way of forgetting its own historical emergence, perpetuating through a rationality premised on efficiency and domination.

<sup>111</sup>Herbert Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Edited By Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1985), 138

<sup>112</sup>Samir Gandesha, "Marcuse, Habermas and the Critique of Technology," *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 196

Relying on Marcuse's work and Feenberg's synthesis of Marcuse and Heidegger, the first section of this chapter explores the modern conceptualization of reason in relationship to technology, which operationalizes the subjective perception of the world through a highly instrumental rationality that dominates existence. Technological disclosure results in the collapse of antagonistic plurality into a one-dimensional world. The principles of instrumentality and efficiency challenge forth as externalized atemporal concepts. One-dimensionality refers to the loss or suppression of the sensuous, aesthetic dimension where multiplicity thrives with contradictions, breakdowns, and possible ways of being. This one-dimensional world subsumes subversive faculties, ossifying social relationships.

When applied to the ecological crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a Marcusean analysis assists in re-constituting the lost critical faculties of reason and re-orientating discussion towards a revolutionary transformation of society's relationship to technology and science. Marcuse's analysis examines experiential reality as grounded in the aesthetic principles of beauty and sensibility but also through principles of praxis as embodied in Marcuse's *Great Refusal*. The analysis constitutes Marcuse's critique of technology, science, and the development of a world where reason is *a priori* appropriated by rationalization and technical efficiency. This opens Marcuse's understanding of sensibility to include the internalization of domination, allowing discussion of the close affinity between instinctual and natural domination.

The second section will work through Marcuse's synthesis of Marx and Freud. Marcuse historicizes Freud by tracing the movement and expansion of capital accumulation and the development of civilization through an understanding of "surplus repression," resulting in the transformation of satisfaction via repressive de-sublimation. Liberation from these repressive tendencies is achieved through radical change of the democratic populace and its current understanding of freedom as represented in monopoly capitalism. The third and final section of this chapter will sketch an alternative conception of rationality premised on the aesthetic politics of Marcuse; the politics of the beautiful emphasize the historically denied and arrested aesthetic potentialities of place and the historical potentialities that "haunt established society as subversive tendencies

and forces.”<sup>113</sup> I argue that a Marcusean analysis transcends the operationalized containment of change embodied in industrialized rationality, and an application of his analysis demonstrates that anthropogenic climate change is not only scientific, technological, or political but also perceptual. The aesthetic dimension as proposed by Marcuse illuminates an understanding of place where basic experience is sensuous rather than conceptual.

### 3.1. The Conceptualization of Reason

At the close of the era, knowledge of essence has primarily the function of building the critical freedom of the individual to pre-given, unconditional valid necessities. It is no longer the spontaneity of the concept but the receptivity of intuition that serves as the organ of the doctrine of essence.<sup>114</sup>

Marcuse, in his essay “The Concept of Essence,” explores the metaphysical character of the philosophical conceptualization of essence by examining the sociohistorical roots of thought. Feenberg examines Marcuse’s analysis of essence at the beginning of his book, *Marcuse and Heidegger: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*, alongside the ancient Greek conceptualization of *techne* and its particular way of assuming a mode of revealing that shapes the world. Feenberg states boldly: “I will be provocative and say that the philosophy of technology begins with the Greeks and is in fact the foundation of all Western Philosophy.”<sup>115</sup> *Techne* and its relation to essence, as understood by Plato, establishes that objects formed through *techne* are always poor copies of essence because such essence lies in an otherworldly realm of the forms. Whereas, Aristotle holds that objects realize internal essences to the extent that the act of making forms an interdependent relationship with the finished product insofar as the essence of the thing emerges not only in its finished form but also through the manner in which it was made. Marcuse builds on the Aristotelian notion of *techne* by examining the manner in which objects emerge or are revealed through the process of making. Plato’s

<sup>113</sup>Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 8

<sup>114</sup>Ibid, 32

<sup>115</sup>Andrew Feenberg, *Marcuse and Heidegger: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 268

conceptualization of *techne* does not distinguish between natural self-emergence and technical making, exporting teleological thinking to the natural realm such that “we humans are not the master of nature but work with its potentials to bring an ordered world to function.”<sup>116</sup> Making and being in the natural world are guided through a quest towards an inherent good embodied in essence, which is to be discovered. The implication of Plato’s conceptualization of essence is that it remains independent of the object and outside of empirical reality. Plato, in *The Republic*, articulates the unwavering potentiality in meaning and being in relation to the changing world:

Our argument indicates that the capacity for knowledge is innate in each man’s mind, and that the organ by which he learns is like an eye which cannot be turned from darkness to light unless the whole body is turned; in the same way the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change until its eye can bear to look straight at reality, and at the brightest of all realities which is what we call the good.<sup>117</sup>

Plato mentions above that the good is in the ability to turn away from the world of change. The implication is that static conceptions of truth are external and prior to experience. Essence, reality, or external truth as outlined by Plato is something beyond and independent of any particular object. Therefore, the objects that comprise experience are a priori partly beyond and independent of perception. In Book Seven of *The Republic*, Plato articulates an understanding of the two orders of the thing that embody the subject’s relationship to the object. The two orders represent the object’s expression in the visible and the intelligible world. The visible world is representative of poor imitations or shadows constantly in flux recovered through the senses, and the intelligible world encompasses the unchanging patterns retrieved through the process of reason and memory or anamnesis. When considering the relationship between the sun and sight, for example, Plato shows that the “particulars are objects of sight but not of intelligence, while forms are the objects of intelligence but not sight.”<sup>118</sup> Sight in this sense is tied to the sensational order of the particulars, but the sun is something other: a prototypical, eternal element that is specifically and naturally adapted for the purpose of sight. The sun is the cause of sight, and the sun in this sense represents the unchanging truth. Through this explanation, Plato

<sup>116</sup>Feenberg, *Marcuse and Heidegger*, 257

<sup>117</sup>Plato, *The Republic*, Trans Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Classics, 1955), 245

<sup>118</sup>Ibid, 232

establishes an understanding of visible reality acquired through sight as merely a representation, and truth is obtained when looking past the particulars to an unwavering essence so that, “when the mind’s eye is fixed on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and knows them, and its possession of intelligence is evident; but when it is fixed on the twilight world of change and decay, it can only form opinion; its visions is confused and its opinions shifting.”<sup>119</sup> The imagery of the sun is prominent in the simile of the decrepit, dark conditions of a cave juxtaposed with the clear, bright surface representing the ascent into the “brightest of all realities to which is what is called good.”<sup>120</sup> The similes of the sun and the cave are significant to the conceptualization of reason because they sketch a tension between knowledge of the unchanging object and the object perceived by the senses. The world of the senses is shown to be ephemerally representational of that which is real, so that “the whole procedure involves nothing in the sensible world, but moves solely through forms to forms, and finishes with the forms.”<sup>121</sup> In spite of this separation between essence and existence, making within the Greek context entailed a contemplation of the relationship between means and ends, so, as reiterated by Feenberg, “the Greeks lived in a world of self-sustaining things confronting human being with a rich variety of useful potentialities realized through skillful manipulation.”<sup>122</sup> Skillful manipulation modifies the essence of the thing.

In “The Concept of Essence,” Marcuse examines how the historical conceptualization of essence results in an object of thought that is different than an object of immediate experience, and, “if the concept never denotes one particular concrete thing, if it is always abstract and general, it is so because the concept comprehends more and other than a particular thing, which determines the form in which it appeals as a concrete object of experience.”<sup>123</sup> Marcuse recalls Plato’s early conceptualization of essence as a tension between the ever-changing sensual development of the world we inhabit and the externalized, fixed conception of truth, because it is “in Plato’s theory of ideas, where the

<sup>119</sup>Plato, *The Republic*, 234

<sup>120</sup>Ibid, 245

<sup>121</sup>Ibid, 239

<sup>122</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 362

<sup>123</sup>Herbert Marcuse, “The Concept of Essence” *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, Trans Jeremy J. Shapiro (London, Penguin Press, 1968), 83

concept of essence was first clearly formulated, it was an outcome of the quest for the unity and universality of being in view of the multiplicity and changeability of beings.”<sup>124</sup> The preoccupation with idea of essence stems for the need to create unity through a conceptual understanding of truth and so “much of men’s real struggle and desires went into the metaphysical quest for an ultimate unity, truth and universality of being.”<sup>125</sup> The implication of Plato’s Theory of Forms is that the established essence of the object as unchangeable or atemporal alters the perception of the object by abolishing the historical and social dynamics of its emergence, and “in philosophy, there are fundamental concepts whose metaphysical character sets them apart from the socio-historical roots of thought.”<sup>126</sup> The contrast outlined by Plato between the visible and the intelligible demonstrates an early philosophical conceptualization of reason so highly influential on thought that Marcuse states, “From Plato on the ancient theory of essence was impelled by the unrest of the unresolved tension between essence and existence.”<sup>127</sup> The visible-intelligible or existence-essence duality of the object is well entrenched, and what Marcuse describes here is what Heidegger calls “western metaphysics.”

### **3.2. Reason and Technology: The Industrialization of Reason**

Drawing on ancient Greek thought and modern philosophical interpretations of the Enlightenment period, Marcuse examines primary experience and its relation to the conceptualization of essence, leading to the observation that “the irreducible difference between the universal and its particulars seems to be rooted in the primary experience of the unconquerable difference between potentiality and actuality - between the two dimensions of the one experienced world.”<sup>128</sup> The desire to unify the universal and its particulars manifests in templates, models, and symbols that have been problematic since their invention, and these abstractions appear as if eternal truths for their usefulness to satisfy that desire. These abstractions provide such accurate predictive ability that they

<sup>124</sup>Ibid, 33

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, 31

<sup>126</sup>Ibid, 83

<sup>127</sup>Ibid, 33

<sup>128</sup>Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 149

take on the aspect of objectively imposed laws, “thus pre-scientific basis of science in the world of practice (*Lebenswelt*), which determined the theoretical structure, was not questioned by Galileo; moreover, it was cancelled by the further development of science. The result was the illusion that the mathematization of nature created an autonomous absolute truth, while in reality it remained a specific method and technique.”<sup>129</sup> Rationality becomes heteronomous, and reason in relation to existence becomes dependent on an idea of truth that resides outside of experiential reality. The emergence of science and technology within this historical context results in the atomization and operationalization of nature and society, reconciling contradictions between essence and appearance. The aim of establishing the validity of experiential reality obscures the critical faculties of the second dimension. Marcuse explains further that

Under the rule of formal logic, the notion of conflict between essence and appearance is expendable if not meaningless, the material content is neutralized; the principle of identity is separated from the principle contradiction (contradictions are the result of incorrect thinking) final causes are removed from the logical order.<sup>130</sup>

The unresolvable contradictory relationship between essence and existence for Marcuse “determines the historical image for reality in the shape of universal social contradiction.”<sup>131</sup> The implication of his understanding of one-dimensionality and modern technology is that the tension between essence and existence has lost its critical dimension. Contradictions between the universal and its particulars are reconciled within the form of recognition, and “it is no longer the spontaneity of the concept but the receptivity of intuition that serves as the organ of the doctrine of essence.”<sup>132</sup> Spontaneity of the concept relates to the freedom embodied in the thinking individual and the manner in which the meaning of the world emerges through the preponderance of the object and its relation to the subject. With the emergence of instrumental rationality and the technological organization of the world, individual knowledge of the concept’s essence is receptive to intuition, which primarily binds the “critical freedom of the individual to pre-

<sup>129</sup>Ibid, 119

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, 101

<sup>131</sup>Marcuse, “The Concept of Essence,” 48

<sup>132</sup>Marcuse, “The Concept of Essence,” 32

given unconditionally valid necessities.”<sup>133</sup> The loss of the critical dimension is largely due to scientific and technological reason perpetuating through a forgetfulness of historical development that project forward based on a present understanding and categorization of the world and closes historical alternatives. The critical dimension can yet be accessed by looking at “unmutilated” reality that has not been collapsed into *a priori* reason. It is insufficient to observe the object in the context of a method to unify contradictions; local knowledge of the dynamic interactions in place is the requisite for understanding material limits to the rationality of value expansion. Modern technology transforms existence so that the production of efficient means no longer requires purpose beyond its own reproduction, yet Marcuse retains empiricism as the recoverable aesthetic dimension.

Both Heidegger and Marcuse attempt to work through the distinction between the act of making via *techne* and modern technology. In contrast with the Aristotelian notion of *techne*, modern technology separates means and ends so that “this world is understood mechanistically not teleologically.”<sup>134</sup> Feenberg explores the relationship between Heidegger, Hegel and Marx in Marcuse’s work and the dynamics of Heideggerian Marxism. The purpose of this section is not to work through the complexity of this relationship or examine whether these categorizations are valid. This chapter acknowledges Marcuse’s unique understanding of the emergence of existence through a revealing premised on technological disclosure grounded in place and shaped by the process of capital accumulation. This quality is reminiscent of Heidegger’s understating of revealing. The hammer metaphor introduced above conceptualizes being-in-the-world for Heidegger, which is developed through our involvement with the natural and artificial components we encounter. Feenberg states, “Heidegger can only be understood as always already involved in a world. The things of the world are revealed in *Dasien* as they are encountered in use and so Heidegger calls them equipment.”<sup>135</sup> In his essay “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger describes the challenging forth of modern technology that results in *enframing* and differentiates this with *physis*, i.e., nature, and the bringing forth of *techne* as craft or art. Natural revealing in *physis* and artificial revealing in *techne* differ in relation to purpose. For nature, existence is fused with *eidos*, i.e., form,

<sup>133</sup>Ibid, 32

<sup>134</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 332

<sup>135</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 161



idea, or essence, because the object's essence emerges alongside its existence as a flower emerges from a seed, for example. In contrast, artifacts brought forth through *techne* require planning for an outcome as the result of thought. Essence embodied in *techne* is imposed by or on perceptions of the world, which are shaped through socio-historical relationships. In both *physis* and *techne*, revealing entails achieving purpose in relation to self-understanding, and the entity or artifact is not isolated from the process of its emergence.

Modern technology separates ends and means while "it expedites in that it unlocks and exposes."<sup>136</sup> With no inner purpose, modern technology achieves a mode of revealing as pure means that *enframes*, for the purpose of revealing, all of nature into a standing reserve. As a way of being in the world, enframing occurs through the replacement of intrinsic value with the perception of value-neutrality and allows a mode of ordering the fragmented relationship between means and ends in a framework of unfettered exploitation. In this sense, modern technology unlocks and exposes raw material yet presumes a lack of inherent meaning, isolating the process of emergence. Productive nature embodying the instrumental rationality of capital accumulation conceals any inherent qualities of primordial nature, and the employment of technology at the behest of capital systematizes and organizes the world into something other than might naturally emerge.

Through a model of technological revealing, or world disclosure as presented in Heidegger's understanding of modern technology, and the historical manifestation of essence in relation to *techne*, Marcuse proceeds to demonstrate rationality in light of modern technology in conjunction with the circulation of capital, and "in the epoch of monopoly capitalism, reason is replaced by the acquiescent acknowledgment of essential givens, in whose verification reason initially plays only a derivative role and subsequently none at all."<sup>137</sup> Instrumental rationality operationalizes reason through logic of efficiency and administration so that, as Marcuse states, "domination is transfigured into

<sup>136</sup>Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (Toronto: Harper and Row, 1977), 7

<sup>137</sup>Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 46

administration.”<sup>138</sup> Instrumental rationality precipitates a perception of both labour and nature as raw material within the grand scheme of exchange premised on the accumulation of surplus. Modernity formalizes logic through technologically efficient use of means, qualitatively transforming being-in-the-world so that “containment of social change is perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society.”<sup>139</sup> This is the result of a highly operationalized technical reality and institutional organization mimicking an external truth that discounts material and social limitations. However useful to analysis of anthropogenic climate change, Marx’s application is somewhat problematic due to the inherently Promethean valorization of productive activity and the anthropocentric understanding of history and labour’s relation to nature. Marcuse is able to reconcile productive activity and technological development as dictated by the rationality of the market economy with a comprehensive understanding of being-in-the-world that includes consideration of the intrinsic value of both nature and civilization.

For Marcuse modern technology in conjunction with the circulation of global capital strips all inherent meaning outside of instrumental use, and the formal rationality that remains is “concerned uniquely with the efficiency of means and contains no intrinsic reference to a good.”<sup>140</sup> The conceptualization of reason by ascribing value as universally defined through capital pertains to a reality that exists beyond the experiential realm to the extent that it does not recognize material limits. The universalized conceptualization of reason operates on the object in question by truncating its ever-changing, socio-historical manifestation, allowing its essence to be fully determined from elsewhere.

Marcuse suggests that a reified reality establishes itself *a priori* to perceived experience. Modern technological revealing discloses the world as meaningful and individuals are shaped by this world such that, “when cities and highways and National Parks replace the villages, valleys and forests; when motorboats race over lakes and planes cut through the skies - then these areas lose their character as a qualitatively different reality, as areas of contradiction.”<sup>141</sup> Technological organization like the highway

<sup>138</sup>Ibid, 33

<sup>139</sup>Ibid, 9

<sup>140</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 342

<sup>141</sup>Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 57

system shapes the landscape through the manipulation of the way in which we interact with place by constraining our behaviour through an idea of necessity and false objectivity. Meaning disappears behind a veil of facts premised on necessity and resistant to critical reflection. Technological relation to place is premised on a separation between humanity and nature: a separation derived from a historically justified assumption of boundless availability causing alienation. The challenging forth of modern technology modifies the object's meaning, quelling contradictions and historical emergence by giving the object a *priori* significance as raw material or standing reserve, so that we acquire a homogenized world full of means rendering distinctive and intrinsic qualities of place unimportant or pre-determined.

The implication of modern technology and technoscience is not inevitable destruction through catastrophic nuclear warfare or climate change; rather, as stated by Feenberg, the danger resides in the potential “obliteration of humanity’s special status and dignity as the being through whom the world takes on intelligibility and meaning.”<sup>142</sup> Modern technology truncates possibilities of the object, which is to say that the object is “always already” forced to correspond to a new, primary significance that was previously one of many. One set of definite qualities is chosen without subsequent critical engagement, marooning the object in one reality. However, potential ways of being can be rediscovered despite what Plato implied about the Theory of Forms. The examination of essence through Marcuse demonstrates history as a progression of abstractions extant for their utility in decoupling material from its origin for the purpose of accumulating capital.

### **3.3. Historical Materialism and the Destructive Dialectic between Nature and Self**

As understood by Heidegger and Marcuse, meaning within ancient Greek civilization retains an understanding of intrinsic value. However, an implication of modern technology is that its effects can be re-appropriated within an externalized framework of reason. When coupled with the formalized yet disorganized law of the market, instrumental

<sup>142</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 369

rationality sheds any quality capital's valorization process is unable subsume as though "everything is exposed to an analytical intelligence that decomposes into useable parts."<sup>143</sup> Modern technology and its concomitant alienation results in homogenization of not only the natural elements of place but also the individual consciousness. This homogenization intimately connects natural and social domination through "the scientific method which came to provide the pure concepts as well as the instrumentalities for the ever more effective domination of man by man through the domination of nature."<sup>144</sup> Alienation manifested through the decoupling of humanity and nature is not opposed but tolerated and even celebrated by identification with the employment of science and technology within a system of rationalized domination:

We live and die rationally and productively. We know that destruction is the price of progress as death is the price of life that renunciation and toil are the prerequisite for gratification and joy, that business must go on and that alternatives are utopian. This ideology belongs to the established societal apparatus; it is a requisite for its continuous functioning and part of its rationality.<sup>145</sup>

In his essay "Foundation of Historical Materialism," Marcuse works through Marx's "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" to reveal the sensual relationship between labour and nature that has become estranged through the historical manifestation of political economy in private property and alienated labour. Marcuse examines the manner in which estrangement within a highly rational world is perpetuated by the loss of active sensibility to the objects encountered in the world. Marcuse aims to demonstrate that Marx looks beyond the economic dimension and examines the totality of human existence perverted through economic development. Marx's understanding of estrangement, according to Marcuse, is not simply a matter of "economism" but develops on the "alienation of man, the devaluation of life, the perversion and loss of human reality."<sup>146</sup> For Marx is not simply demonstrating the mutilated sensual relationship between nature and the worker or the economic subject but the "history of man and his

<sup>143</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 336

<sup>144</sup>Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 115

<sup>145</sup>Ibid, 149

<sup>146</sup>Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundations of Historical Materialism," *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, Trans by Joris De Bres, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 7-8

reality.”<sup>147</sup> The relationship between the individual and nature is premised on human labour and its ability to interact with nature holistically rather than strictly to produce for necessity, because “man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object.”<sup>148</sup> The individual can produce through labour “in accordance with the laws of beauty and not merely in accordance with the standard of his own needs.”<sup>149</sup>

In relation to the world, the individual is both a natural being and an objective being to the extent that being emerges among the relationships to real objects outside of itself to construct a world.<sup>150</sup> Within and through transformation and appropriation of objects, being modifies nature and its own life. In this sense, life is a matter of creating and being created by objects posited by other objects *ad infinitum* situated within place, and this is the fundamental connection of being to sensuousness for Marcuse as represented in Marx: interaction with objects requires use of the senses. The body is the mediation to place, and if place is damaged, so too will the body be damaged in a material way. If place flourishes, so will the body; therefore, there is a greater need for change of place for the individual to realize a beautiful or good life. However, because this objective world resides outside of the individual, “it makes it possible for man completely to ‘lose’ the object as part of his essence and let it become independent and overpowering. This possibility becomes a reality in estranged labour and private property.”<sup>151</sup> Human perception grounded in sensuousness is either passive or actively receptive, which is determined largely through the relationship with the objective world characterized by the degree of separation and loss of the object as part of the essence or affinity in confrontation with it through labour. Ultimately, labour and its relationship to nature embodies the ability to retain the matter of human essence and the degree to which the object is lost. An individual fully engaged with the objective world requires insight into “how and through what man and his objective world as *social relations* have become what they are.”<sup>152</sup> A highly

<sup>147</sup>Ibid, 8

<sup>148</sup>Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844,” 76

<sup>149</sup>Ibid, 76

<sup>150</sup>Marcuse, “The Foundations of Historical Materialism,” 18

<sup>151</sup>Marcuse, “The Foundations of Historical Materialism,” 18

<sup>152</sup>Ibid, 34-35

estranged objective world creates a distance between the individual and the objective world of their creation, resulting in passive rather than active sensuous free activity. The domination of nature through the possession and commodification of both land and labour power coupled with the lack of ownership that is a result of this relationship results in the domination of the individual within civilization.

Marcuse merges Marx's critique of political economy with a Freudian model of psychological dynamics to demonstrate, through a socio-historical reconciliation of the movement of capital and individual consciousness, how capital accumulation results in and requires the surplus repression of individual libidinal instincts. An understanding of the development of civilization alongside capital accumulation introduces a growing repressive tendency:

As psychology tears the ideological veil and traces the construction of the personality, it is led to dissolve the individual: his autonomous personality appears as the frozen manifestation of the general repression of mankind. Self-consciousness and reason, which have conquered and shaped the historical world have done so in the image of repression internal and external and reveals the power of the universal in and over the individual.<sup>153</sup>

Human beings are naturally dominated by the interest of satisfying needs, which is a source of repression. Basic repression is an inherent part of the human psyche, because human beings are forced to repress their own libidinal instincts in order to survive in this world by delaying gratification, and "the repressive modification of the instincts under the reality principle is enforced and sustained by the external primordial struggle for existence (...) scarcity teaches men that they cannot freely gratify their instinctual impulses, that they cannot live under the pleasure principle."<sup>154</sup> However, Marcuse argues that the social technological organization of capitalism has resulted in surplus repression through a systematic perpetuation of scarcity premised on the unequal distribution of resources, and "throughout the recorded history of civilization, the instinctual constraint enforced by scarcity is intensified by hierarchical distribution of scarcity and labour; the interest of domination added surplus repression to the organization of the instincts under the reality

<sup>153</sup>Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 86

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid*, 45

principle.”<sup>155</sup> Surplus repression is maintained through the systematic perpetuation of capitalism, which results in repressive de-sublimation within a technical society that quells meaningful refusal of the surplus repression. This is achieved through arresting and diverting potentialities of instinctual energy expenditure, which reinforces one-dimensional thinking, and “the psychoanalytic interpretation reveals that the reality principle enforces a change not only in the form and timing of pleasure but in the very substance - a de-sublimation.”<sup>156</sup>

The reality principle and its repressive tendencies materialize and constrain individual action within institutional systems, resulting in manipulation of instinctual energy or institutionalized de-sublimation. Within this system, desired skills and behaviours are reinforced through the systematic division of labour and pleasure so “repression disappears in the grand objective order of things which rewards more or less adequately the complying individuals and in doing so, reproduces more or less adequately society as a whole.”<sup>157</sup> Surplus repression and repressive de-sublimation are justified through a highly rationalized and operationalized system that defines civilization. The increasingly efficient and abundant world of contemporary civilization has resulted in the marginalization to absence of demonstrable, unrestricted agents of social change and a quelled, obedient nature available for domination without protest. Contemporary civilization has resulted in the creation of an impotent agent and a mute ecosystem because these components are subsumed in a one-dimensional world of value expansion, revealing the perpetuation of instrumental rationality through technological means that leads to the administration of things rather than of people and place.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud demonstrates the development of civilization alongside the psychoanalytic dynamics of the individual, and Marcuse employs this model to demonstrate that “what shapes the instincts as well as their needs and satisfaction is a socio-historical world.”<sup>158</sup> Marcuse historicizes Freud in *Eros and*

<sup>155</sup>Ibid, 75

<sup>156</sup>Ibid, 39

<sup>157</sup>Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 78

<sup>158</sup>Ibid, 39

*Civilization* and states that, “according to Freud, the history of man is the history of repression. Culture constrains not only his societal but also his biological existence, not only parts of the human but his instinctual structure.”<sup>159</sup> Freud articulates an interconnected historical development of the social, instinctual, and biological existence and furthermore claims, “we can hold fast to the fact that it is rather the rule than the exception for the past to be preserved in mental life.”<sup>160</sup> For Freud the emergence of civilization manifests from a historical weakening and transformation of individual’s instinctual development, and “the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction.”<sup>161</sup> The implication of the dialectic between life and destruction is that civilization necessitates domination to the extent that “the instinct of destruction must when it is directed towards objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and control over nature.”<sup>162</sup> According to Freud, we stabilize the anxiety perpetuated by civilization by subduing natural and social threats to our well being; however, this results in a destructive dialectic to the extent that we create and maintain the very things that continue to repress our instinctual structures, shaping a history of progress that is simultaneously a history of social and natural domination.

The entire progress of civilization is rendered possible only by the transformation and utilization of the death instinct or its derivatives. The diversion of primary destructiveness from the ego to the external world feeds technological progress and the use of the death instinct for the formation of the superego achieves punitive submission of the pleasure ego to the reality principle and assures civilized morality. <sup>163</sup>

In a lecture given by Marcuse entitled “Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society,” the ego’s primary destructiveness is paralleled to the destructive tendencies toward nature when he states:

<sup>159</sup>Ibid, 35

<sup>160</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Trans by James Strachey (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1962), 19

<sup>161</sup>Ibid, 69

<sup>162</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 69

<sup>163</sup>Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 83



The specter, which haunts advanced industrial society today, is the obsolescence of full time alienation. The death and destruction instinct strives to attain a negation of life through externalization. That means that this drive is directed away from the individual. It is directed to life outside the individual. The drive is externalized. It is directed towards the destruction of the other living things, of other living beings and of nature.<sup>164</sup>

The destructive dialectic is a consequence of alienation, humanity's predisposition to valorize external objects through pattern recognition, and the resultant perceptions govern life with little further interaction. The commodity form premised on exchange confronts the individual, subordinating them to objectively imposed laws that dictate social life. The world of commodities appears as if produced by an obscured daemon so that "the pain, frustration, impotence of the individual derive from a highly productive and efficiently functioning system in which he makes a better living than ever before."<sup>165</sup> The object lost from essence becomes value-neutral technology continually re-appropriated for satisfying needs and subduing threats due to heterogeneous distribution of scarcity, directing the instinct for destruction at nature. This ideology of advanced industrial society results in a self-reproducing autonomous system that subjugates the individual.

### **3.4. The Politics of the Beautiful: A Place-Based Understanding**

I argue that the advent of capitalism introduced the most effective and all-encompassing rationalization by self-propagating a rift between humanity and nature. The all-encompassing nature of the rationalization is even more pernicious in that it alters the notion of existence to limit the space of freedom and even "the longing, the need for such an environment."<sup>166</sup> However, through an understanding of aesthetics, Marcuse evokes the potentialities within sensual, experiential reality. Incorporating a phenomenological understanding of meaning emergent from the subject's experience and the consequences to the ecosystem and society resulting from the exploitative conditions of instrumental

<sup>164</sup>Herbert Marcuse, "Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 3.3 (1992), 35

<sup>165</sup>Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 143

<sup>166</sup>Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 18

rationality, Marcuse determines a relationship between subject and the world encountered through action directed at meaningful objects. Marcuse writes, “The philosophical effort to mediate, in the aesthetic dimension, between sensuousness and reason thus appears as an attempt to reconcile the two spheres of the human existence which were torn asunder by a repressive reality principle.”<sup>167</sup> Meaning for Marcuse emerges from the individual at the site of experience with external (and internal) sensual objects, not with raw material, but “the laws of reason must be reconciled with the interest of the senses.”<sup>168</sup> I argue such an understanding presents a resurgence of a place-based ethics. Marcuse’s aesthetics theory suggests an alternative to being-in-the-world by emphasizing the preponderance of the object, a means to understand our relationship with nature better, and a framework that considers the long-term implications of the world we create. The given essence of an object and its emergence through existence is not enshrined in static conceptions of truth but develop through a constant process of revealing, and “things do not have fixed essences, rather they belong to a field of interactions which establishes their inner coherence and their boundaries. These interactions are a source of tensions that drive things forward toward their developmental potentialities.”<sup>169</sup>

For Marcuse, “the basic experience in this dimension is sensuous rather than conceptual. Aesthetic perception is essentially intuition not notion. Nature of sensuousness is receptivity, cognition through being affected by given objects.”<sup>170</sup> Marcuse expands the sensual reality to include the structure of beauty and freedom, which are both grounded in the primary instincts and assume the harmonious union of sensuousness, imagination, and reason as they release potentialities of man and nature. Feenberg notes that,

According to Marcuse, aesthetic form is a kind of reduction and idealization that reveals the true essence of things sensuously, things as they would be redeemed in a better world. Form is active in sensation as well, giving rise

<sup>167</sup>Ibid, 242

<sup>168</sup>Ibid, 254

<sup>169</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 427

<sup>170</sup>Ibid, 238

not only to appreciation of beauty but also to a critical repulsion towards all that is life destroying and ugly”<sup>171</sup>

Marcuse engages experiential reality with the overall purpose of establishing harmony with nature, liberating possibilities, and adhering to the material limits of place.

As outlined by Marcuse, the understanding of aesthetics as beauty and imaginative play are not conceptions that are simply introduced into radical political judgment, but aesthetics, as Feenberg states, “describes the *a priori* form of a new type of experience belonging to a new social order.”<sup>172</sup> His critique of the principle tenets of critical theory as outlined in “An Essay on Liberation” is their predisposition to “deprive utopia of its traditional unreal content: what is denounced as utopia is no longer that which has no place and cannot have any place in the historical universe, but rather that which is blocked from coming about by the power of the established societies.”<sup>173</sup> The denial of utopia results in a change that remains within the confines of one-dimensionality. As outlined by Marcuse, the Great Refusal requires instead forceful dismantling of the relationships that comprise civilization to break the cycle of domination, and “the revolution must be at the same time a revolution in perception which will accompany the material and intellectual reconstruction of society, creating a new aesthetic environment.”<sup>174</sup> This act is definitive and energetic, and the demands are developed in the course of action in the political realm. Decomposing the edifice of administration necessitates a change in the very biology of the individual to integrate objects so that “the essences of things are no longer reified as things themselves but understood from out of their place in everyday practical activity, phenomenologically interpreted.”<sup>175</sup> These changes are necessary because exploitation is not merely caused by modern technology and capital accumulation but by the order of sensibility and rationality: institutional and technological repressive de-sublimation. Change in the Marcusean sense also means purposefully crafting the environment in which we interact:

<sup>171</sup>Feenberg, *Between Reason and Experience*, 205

<sup>172</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, xiii

<sup>173</sup>Herbert, Marcuse, “An Essay on Liberation” (New York: Beacon Press, 1971), 9

<sup>174</sup>Marcuse, “An Essay on Liberation,” 30

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid*, 28

The new sensibility has become, by this very token, praxis: it emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the Form of the society itself. <sup>176</sup>

This new sensibility as outlined by Marcuse is extremely pertinent to the ecological movement of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century to the extent that it mobilizes groups of individuals from all facets and classes of life to advocate for a new way of being. This action is met with solidarity and premised on freedom through a change in perception and rationality currently contained by the dominating hold of capital. Marcuse attests to this when commenting on the environmental movement: “The ecology movement reveals itself in the last analysis as a political and psychological movement of liberation. It is political because it confronts the concerted power of big capital, whose vital interests the movement threatens. It is psychological because the pacification of external nature, the protection of the life-environment, will also pacify nature within men and women.”<sup>177</sup>

In the 2012 documentary *Chasing Ice*, director Jeff Orlowski documents *National Geographic* photographer James Balog during his assignment to capture climate change through a multiyear chronicle of the Earth’s rapidly melting glaciers. Jeff Balog, initially pursuing a Masters degree in geomorphology, switched from science to photojournalism in order to pursue a more direct connection with the natural world. Balog’s photography is reminiscent of Marcuse’s relationship to aesthetics and the ability of art to reshape our perceptions of the world. In “The Essay on Liberation,” Marcuse states, “as such a force, art would be an integral factor in shaping the quality and the appearance of things, in shaping the reality, the way of life.”<sup>178</sup> Balog achieves this by producing provocative images of the immense yet frangible glaciers to evoke the tension between the huge enduring power of a glacier and its fragility. Paraphrasing Balog, the public does not want more statistical studies, computer models, or projections; rather, they need believable,

<sup>176</sup>Ibid, 25

<sup>177</sup>Herbert Marcuse, “Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society,” 36

<sup>178</sup>Marcuse, “An Essay on Liberation,” 27

understandable visual evidence with visceral appeal.<sup>179</sup> The public needs to be engaged by experiencing a monolith of ice fracturing in order to point directly at the ecological limits to capitalism. The images depict violent rifts in seemingly eternal units of nature and expose the mystifying characteristics of the ecosystem, promising changes of unknown magnitude to our existence. In this sense, Balog captures the dialectic between human activity and nature while he captures the historical memories of the landscape through photography. The analysis of this history in relation to the landscape depicts the instability of the Arctic climate, which has become an increasingly necessary depiction of the effects of climate change on our biosphere; for example, the implications of rapidly melting permafrost and ice for our civilization are overshadowed by the potential for more efficient shipping lanes opening and the reduced barrier to underwater drilling for oil extraction. Industrialization puts pressure on sensitive, globally connected ecosystems, yet the political mandate is currently focused on state control of the circumpolar region to secure resources to increase the capacity of industrialization, which is exactly the opposite of addressing the oceanic and atmospheric temperature increase causing ecosystems to be pressured. Discussion continues among members of the Arctic Council regarding sovereignty of the claimed Arctic Ocean floor territories through the establishment of the continental shelf as a frontier. James Balog argues that anthropogenic climate change is not only a matter of politics, technology, or science but also a matter of perception. His photography offers an example of a place-based understanding by adhering to the sensual, material limits and perceptions dictated by the historical development of civilization on the land.

According to Marcuse, the world is revealed as raw, boundless material and energy to no end because of the conceptualization of modern rationality. Surplus repression perpetuated through instrumental rationality results in the impotent agent and the mute ecosystem, constraining society into one dimension where aesthetic form is subdued and diverted. Instrumental rationality, tracing from the concept of essence, collapses possible states so that a rift between humanity and nature is the only remaining outcome, resulting in a self-propagating, mechanized system of domination that has planetary-scale effects on life, climate, oceans, and geology: the Anthropocene. The

<sup>179</sup>[http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie\\_script.php?movie=chasing-ice](http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=chasing-ice)

alternatives to instrumental rationality necessitate closure of the mutilated material feedback loop between the human population and the ecosystems that support it. Like Heidegger's broken hammer, breakdowns in the Anthropocene era signal decomposition of the monolithic understanding of being-in-the-world into being-in-place.

## Chapter 4.

### Adorno and the Spellbound Fetish: Capital and the Conceptual

The whole place stinks of corpses... the whole universe.<sup>180</sup> - Samuel Beckett

In *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács explores the implications of the concept of *second nature*, in which reified objects circulate within an estranged and alienated world. The world of convention, or second nature, “is not mute, corporeal and foreign to the senses like first nature: it is a petrified estranged complex of meaning that is no longer able to awaken inwardness; it is the charnel-house of rotted interiorities.”<sup>181</sup> Beckett, in his play *Endgame*, visually depicts this “charnel-house of rotted interiorities” through four characters, Nagg, Nell, Hamm, and Clov, whose “few more squirms”<sup>182</sup> serve as an absurdist mirror to civilization, yet “Beckett juxtaposes no world view, rather he takes it as its word.”<sup>183</sup> *Endgame* takes place on a post-apocalyptic stage where space and time have degenerated to a cold and dark wasteland, leaving only a colorless, lifeless, and atemporal landscape inside and out. Everything is “corpsed.”<sup>184</sup> The characters, apparently the last humans, banter about the meaninglessness of life once “there’s no more nature,”<sup>185</sup> while deteriorating towards death in their shelter. The characters suffer explicitly, yet they are unwilling or unable to change or leave. After nature, the exaggerated, repetitive remnants in their words and actions perform now unneeded functions, so they appear ludicrous, and the double binds to which they subject themselves become superfluous.

<sup>180</sup>Samuel Beckett, “Endgame” *Endgame and Act Without Words 1*, (New York: Grove Press 1956), 45

<sup>181</sup>Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel*, 54

<sup>182</sup>Beckett, “Endgame,” 83

<sup>183</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, “Trying to Understand Endgame” *New German Critique*, No. 26, *Critical Theory and Modernity* (Spring - Summer, 1982), 128

<sup>184</sup>Samuel Beckett, “Endgame,” 30

<sup>185</sup>*Ibid*, 163

This chapter works through Adorno's idea of natural history, which I argue attempts to transcend the destructive dialectic between humanity and nature as exemplified in *Endgame*. Natural history, as stated by Deborah Cook, provides a "template for imperative practice in philosophy"<sup>186</sup> because it is premised on an analysis of concrete reality in relation to the philosophical conceptualization of the theoretical framework. Natural history explores reality as emergent from the constellation of nature and history. Adorno examines not only the conceptualization of both nature and history but also at the points at which they intersect: in transience, where nature is the most historical and history the most natural. This investigation allows for the possibility of new qualities, because "it is a movement that does not play itself out in mere identity, mere reproduction of what has always been, but rather one in which the new occurs; it is a movement that gains its true character through what appears in it as new."<sup>187</sup> The analysis is not accomplished through yet another mode of categorization but the awareness of the constellation of objects within space and time. The means by which we observe that constellation of objects is through the examination of moments within their temporal dimension as fragments of history that represent the non-identical or that which refuses categorization.

Adorno and Marcuse both examine the domination of humanity through the domination of nature and the consequences of capital and instrumental rationality within the context of modernity, but I argue that Marcuse's examination of technology and Adorno's examination of natural history via enlightenment, myth, and mass culture bear separate treatment. Marcuse envisages a moment of change embodied in the movement of the New Left, whereas Adorno remains skeptical. Adorno is concerned primarily with an attempt to improve understanding of the philosophical conceptualizations of nature and history and the emergence of being with the intent to rid this array of concepts of the vestiges of domination. This chapter examines Adorno's idea of natural history, which aims to arrive at a non-anthropocentric understanding of nature by exploring the relationship between subjective experience and objective appearance perpetuated by myth and commodity fetishism.

<sup>186</sup>Deborah Cook, *Adorno on Nature*, (New York: New York, Routledge, 2011), 1

<sup>187</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, "The Idea of Natural History," trans by Bob Hullot-Kentor, *Telos* 60 (1984), 111



The first section of this chapter examines the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, a work co-authored by Adorno and Horkheimer. In this section, I explore the implications of myth and the process of enlightenment as understood via Max Weber as a disenchantment through rationalization. Through a reading of Homer's *Odyssey*, in particular the scenes where Odysseus encounters the Cyclopes and the Sirens, Adorno and Horkheimer examine the rise of the authoritarian personality at the expense of nature and humanity's domination. I will unfold their argument regarding the domination of humanity through the domination of nature. The second part of this section sets a contemporary example, *Endgame*, beside *The Odyssey* to trace the annihilation of space through cunning and reason to the emergence of the dominated and dead landscape. Forced into mutual dependence and detesting each other's existence in the extremity of their situation, each character in *Endgame* appears as a grotesque outgrowth of identity. The second and third sections delve deeper into Adorno's work surrounding natural history and the primacy of the object as a continuation to the analysis brought forth in the first section. The second section explores Adorno's idea of natural history, supplemented by the work of Max Pensky, Susan Buck-Morss, and Deborah Cook, to demonstrate that this framework could assist in creating a new perspective on our relationship to nature in light of climate change. The third section explores the non-identity of place through an examination of the relationship between subject and object in attempts to develop a non-anthropocentric understanding of nature through his examination of the primacy of the object that exists within the constellation rather than the static, categorical conceptualization. Adorno's exploration of the spatio-temporal multiplicity of the concept, which represents the subject's relationship to the object, has the potential for the establishment of new methods with which we might improve our understanding of the historical relationship to nature as a continual reformation and movement rather than a construct of rigid laws that perpetuate mythic notions of domination.

## 4.1. The Development of the Authoritarian Personality: Philosophic Fragments

### 4.1.1. The Odyssey and Enlightenment

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer demonstrate the emergence of the bourgeois authoritarian personality from a mythic natural world, and Odysseus serves as “prototype of the bourgeois individual.”<sup>188</sup> Odysseus, for Adorno and Horkheimer, embodies the logic of positivism represented in the Enlightenment project in which the instrumental power of thought to understand and control the natural world grows in proportion to its mimetic subordination to nature. Instrumental rationality intended to “dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge.”<sup>189</sup> However, since the enlightened process of rationalization (myth) seeks to dominate what it attempts to understand, it fails to understand humanity’s relations to nature and retains the inherent fear embodied in humanity’s mythic confrontation with nature. Instrumental rationality induces mimesis of the void, and the self disappears in adaptation to nothingness. In denying the object of its inherent value, subjectivity is gained at the cost of denying one’s identity because the affinity between subject and object is lost within the dynamics of instrumental rationality. Knowledge perpetuates the very domination it promises to overthrow, resulting in self-repudiation, and humanity mimetically denies in itself what it denies in nature because humanity is coterminous with nature.

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* portrays the story of Odysseus as an allegorical account of the rise of rational labour and its juxtaposition to the fate-driven, cyclical representation of myth. Habit and repetitive acts of necessity drive the creatures that he encounters. On his journey, he does not succeed by avoiding these creatures or confronting them with physical strength rather, Odysseus achieves success through deliberate sacrifice of both himself and his crew and calculated acts derived from observations of predictable patterns and assessments of risk: *cunning*. Odysseus acknowledges and manipulates nature’s patterns to act intelligently; however, “any

<sup>188</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 35

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid*, 1

attempt to break the compulsion of nature by breaking nature only succumbs more deeply to that compulsion.”<sup>190</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer argue that Homer’s epic juxtaposes rational labour with primeval myth, presenting a narrative in which instrumental rationality prevails over myth by representing the realm of mythical fate as submissive to the will of the hero. Rational labour subverts the historical assumption of fate by acknowledging then dominating the power of nature and myth. However, despite representations of fate’s submission to will or subversion through understanding, civilization nevertheless succumbs to the rigid, externally imposed order the Enlightenment attempted to escape. Despite chasing away myth, the fear of the other abides in the dark recesses of nature, yet “the more the illusion of magic vanishes, the more implacably repetition, in the guise of regularity, imprisons human beings in the cycle now objectified in the laws of nature, to which they believe they owe their security as free subjects.”<sup>191</sup> The need for security remains, but burnt offerings around the hearth must yield to internal sacrifice to quell anxiety once the last mythical creature has been chased off the edge of the earth and the gods have been silent for an age.

Homer wrote *The Odyssey* during approximately the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE in the Archaic Age. Greek civilization was emerging from the Dark Ages that followed the collapse of the vibrant Mycenaean society. Internal wars, raids by the Sea Peoples, and natural disasters that triggered migration likely precipitated the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization. In the later period during which Homer wrote, the Greeks were developing intensely local identities through the appearance of the city-states, or *poleis*, which resulted in a culture rooted in place. During this period, strong identification and fidelity to their specific city-state shaped Greek culture. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were products of this time, and they became central to Greek identity for centuries. These epic poems became two of the most influential texts of western civilization.

*The Odyssey* follows the hero, Odysseus, as he travels homeward after the Trojan War. After the war ended, re-attainment of his private property became Odysseus’ sole purpose, which is a narrative that signifies the beginning of a new social order premised

<sup>190</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 9

<sup>191</sup>Ibid, 8

on the laws of fixed property.<sup>192</sup> Odysseus aims to return not only to his native soil of Ithaca but also to his home: estate, wife, and son. During this journey, he encounters natural and primeval entities that represent a formidable and overpowering force deterring him from his “unambiguous purpose.”<sup>193</sup> “Royal son of Laertes, Odysseus famed at exploits”<sup>194</sup> annihilates mystical and natural space with his cunning and pragmatic reckoning, and Adorno and Horkheimer affirm Odysseus’ “adventures bestow names on each of these places, and the names give rise to a rational overview of space.”<sup>195</sup> The narrator describes both the cultural characteristics and natural landscape of each place, which are subject to the contemplative efforts of Odysseus for his intent to undermine them. Rather than strength, Odysseus uses reason instrumentally and the resources available, including his own men, to overpower the mythical elements hidden within caves or deep in forests that occupy the fringes of civilization. The manner of conquest results in the secularization of space, and as Adorno and Horkheimer state in the *Odyssey*, “the primeval world is secularized as the space he measures out; the old demons populate only the distant margins and islands of the civilized Mediterranean, retreating into the forms of rock and cave from which they had originally sprung in the face of primal dread.”<sup>196</sup> The main premise of Adorno and Horkheimer’s examination of *The Odyssey* is that it exemplifies a journey of self-formation through flight out of myth. The self confronts the power of nature through denunciation of its own relationship with nature, necessitating the purposeful subjugation and suppression of the self, and “the faculty by which the self survives adventures, throwing itself away in order to preserve itself, is cunning.”<sup>197</sup>

The internal struggle of Odysseus’ single-minded purpose to return home and the obstacles encountered highlight “the contrast between the single surviving ego and the multiplicity of fate [reflecting] the antithesis between myth and enlightenment.”<sup>198</sup> Purpose as ascribed through rational labour exemplifies one of the larger themes in *The Odyssey*.

<sup>192</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 9

<sup>193</sup>Ibid, 38

<sup>194</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, Trans by Robert Fagles, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), Book 11: ll.708

<sup>195</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 38

<sup>196</sup>Ibid, 38

<sup>197</sup>Ibid, 39

<sup>198</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 38

The narrative is evidence of the attempt to transform myth-based rationalizations to rational acts through the denunciation of sensual reality and to mimetically adapt labour to the cyclical movement of myth and nature. In Book 9 of *The Odyssey*, Odysseus and his crew arrive on the island of the lotus-eaters, who are represented as placated and aimless plant-eating people. The curse of those who succumb to the effect of the food suffer no real harm; instead, “they are threatened only by the forgetfulness and loss of will. The curse condemns them to nothing worse than a primal state exempt from labour and struggle in the fertile land.”<sup>199</sup> The crewmen Odysseus sent to report back are approached by the native inhabitants of the island, who give the crew soporific fruit. The blissful condition contrasts that of productive labour. The members of the crew not only forget the initial reason they were sent by Odysseus but also the memory of the mission home to the extent that they “only wish to linger ... lost all memory of their journey home.”<sup>200</sup> Indicative of the tension between his sensual drives and his rational aim, Odysseus has no choice but to re-assert dominance over the crew despite the allure of the fruit, and “I brought them back, back to the hollow ships, and streaming tears - I forced them, hauled them under the rowing benches, lashed them fast and shouted out commands ... they sat to the oars in ranks and in rhythm churned the water.”<sup>201</sup> Odysseus reasserts his position over both his weak crew and the sensual allure of the narcotic fruit, establishing a juxtaposition between sensual experience and productive, end-driven labour with the recognition that the “self-preserving reason can no longer tolerate this bliss.”<sup>202</sup> The coerced rhythm of labour triumphs over the sensual fruit of idleness.

After the experience with the lotus-eaters, Odysseus and his crew approach the island of the Cyclopes. The interaction between Odysseus and the Cyclopes elaborates the perceived mastery of enlightened rationality and its instrumental use of abstract conceptualization of the self in the context of primitive barbarism that is “sunk deep in the earth.”<sup>203</sup> This interaction demonstrates the manner in which Odysseus, through the aim

<sup>199</sup>Ibid, 49

<sup>200</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 9: 106-7

<sup>201</sup>Ibid, Book 9: ll. 110-15

<sup>202</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 49

<sup>203</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 9: ll. 206

of self-preservation, suppresses the power of nature and the barbarous primitive qualities through the loss of his own name, a loss that he engineers through his cunning. Odysseus did not panic when confronted with the Cyclopes, and his “wits kept weaving, weaving, cunning schemes.”<sup>204</sup> According to Adorno and Horkheimer, unlike the lotus-eaters, the Cyclopes represent “a truly barbaric age”<sup>205</sup> arguably embodying the primordial fear of nature in the absence of civilization. They have no laws, nor do they practice any form of organized agriculture; rather, they “trust so to the everlasting gods.”<sup>206</sup> The Cyclopes’ lack of organized labour is juxtaposed to the landscape’s potential to be worked by a skilled farmer, and “such an artisan would have made this island too a decent place to live in ... harvest on harvest, a man could reap a healthy stand of grain - the subsoil’s dark and rich.”<sup>207</sup> The narrator expands at length on the pristine environment, elaborating on the potentiality of the ecosystem if harnessed by labour. In contrast, the Cyclopes trust in the gods and the natural cycle of the weather to provide sustenance. The lack of community and agriculture demonstrates a parallel lack of organized thinking, allowing Odysseus to exploit the simplicity of his immense Cyclops adversary, Polyphemus.

At first meeting, Polyphemus dismissed the tradition of guest right, stating that he does not believe in Zeus’ power. As Poseidon’s son, Polyphemus boasts that he is not required to obey Zeus because his father is stronger and prior to Zeus. Despite an appeal to the authority of Poseidon, highlighting the tension between the elemental gods and the logo-centric gods, Odysseus adapts and remains undeterred because he is able to subvert the power of the enormous sub-human by outwitting him. Eventually conceding to the conventions of hospitality despite the earlier dismissal, Odysseus convinces Polyphemus to eat him last, allowing him time to plan. He assumes the identity of nobody, renouncing all position and possession by changing his name and claiming the destruction of his ship. Trapped in a cave by Polyphemus, Odysseus persuades Polyphemus to drink wine in order to gain the opportunity to escape in the morning after his stupor. Odysseus observes Polyphemus’ predictable cycle of feeding and sheltering his large sheep, and he calculates the risk that some of his men, but importantly not he, would perish in the attempt. Rather

<sup>204</sup>Ibid, Book 9: ll.472

<sup>205</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 50

<sup>206</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 9: ll.120

<sup>207</sup>Ibid, Book 9: ll. 140-9

than confront the giant directly in battle, he induces the giant's stupor in order to blind him, allowing his men to hide tied to the bellies of the sheep. Polyphemus awakens briefly to confront his attacker, but Odysseus employs a pseudonym to discredit Polyphemus' claims. Polyphemus attributes the attack to "nobody," which sounds similar to Odysseus' name in Greek, inciting only ridicule from the tribe. Odysseus uses his observations to extract his crew undetected as the sheep left the cave in accordance with their pattern.

The primitive barbarism occupying the land resembles senseless unorganized elements, and that disorganization allows Odysseus to persevere despite his relative weakness. Through his ability to control meaning of a word and the object to which it refers, Odysseus obfuscates the connection between him and his name because, for the trusting Cyclopes, "the distinction between word and object was unknown. The word was thought to have direct power over the thing as expression merged with intention. Cunning, however, consists in exploiting the difference."<sup>208</sup> Exploitation of the opposition between the word and what it imitates is reconciled through formalism, which attributes meaning at the cost of distance from the content. Odysseus's act of self-denial is read by Adorno and Horkheimer as exemplary of the mimetic relationship between rationality and nature, which is represented as shapeless, lawless, and primitive:

In reality, Odysseus, the subject, denies his own identity, which makes him a subject, and preserves his life by mimicking the amorphous realm. He calls himself nobody because Polyphemus is not a self, and confusion of the name with the thing prevents the duped barbarian from escaping the trap: his cry for retribution remains magically tied to the name of the one on whom he wants to avenge himself, and this name condemns the cry to impotence. For by inserting his own intention into the name, Odysseus has withdrawn it from the magical sphere.<sup>209</sup>

By the self-classification as nobody, Odysseus assumes power over the situation through the insertion of his own intention into his name and "withdraws it from the magical sphere."<sup>210</sup> Nature and Polyphemus remain bound to the name, yet Odysseus is not. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, by mimicking the perceived nothingness in nature, Odysseus reasserts himself in the mythic relation to nature, and "the self is drawn back

<sup>208</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 47

<sup>209</sup>Ibid, 53

<sup>210</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 47

into the same compulsive circle of natural connections from which it sought through adaptation to escape. The man who, for the sake of his own self, calls himself Nobody and manipulates resemblance to the natural state as a means of controlling nature, gives way to hubris."<sup>211</sup> Despite the fact that Odysseus commands control of the situation by adapting himself to the environment, he gives way to his own hubris by the need to re-assert supremacy. The moment he achieves a safe distance from the Cyclopes, Odysseus reveals his identity out of the fear that led him to become nobody, deepening the tension between him and Poseidon. His boastfulness resembles not only the aim to manipulate but also to establish a claim of superiority, resulting in further deaths of his crewmen through the wrath of Poseidon reinforcing the destructive dialectic of modernity where "self-preservation destroys the very thing which is to be preserved."<sup>212</sup>

Odysseus later encounters the Sirens and Charybdis and Scylla. These interactions represent the disenchantment of nature through the rational mastery through rationalization, which results in displacing mimesis through the internalization of sacrifice and sensual constraint. The confronted threats represent not only the repetitive patterns of myth but also of nature. The creatures populate an elaborate allegory describing the cycles and metabolic interactions of nature that are predictable due to regularity, respond when provoked by external stimuli, and grounded within place. Odysseus' tactic is not to avoid these threats but to examine their workings through the application of reason.

The Sirens, represented as nymph-like creatures, project an alluring and thrilling song that transfixes anyone in earshot, deviating them from their original purpose and drawing them to ruin. Their island is surrounded by "heaps of corpses,"<sup>213</sup> signifying the death that accompanies their song and the power of the demigoddesses. Odysseus masterfully negates the power of the Siren's magic at the cost of inner sacrifice, and "such a mastery of nature is itself conditional upon the progressive displacement of mimesis as approximation to nature, as manifested in magic, by a deathly form of imitation. The latter is a morbid imitation of, and consequent adaptation to, a nature that, by virtue of the

<sup>211</sup>Ibid

<sup>212</sup>Ibid, 43

<sup>213</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 12: ll.51



process of rationalization and disenchantment, has become lifeless.”<sup>214</sup> In the attempt to subvert the power of the Sirens, Odysseus not only maintains the otherness of nature but also dominates through imitation of the disenchanted identity projected towards nature through rigid restraint of the self. Adorno and Horkheimer describe Odysseus’ simultaneous concession to and denunciation of the song’s power to the extent that the “technically enlightened Odysseus acknowledges the archaic supremacy of the song by having himself bound. By yielding to the song of pleasure he thwarts both it and death.”<sup>215</sup> Odysseus, through the advice of Circe, lashes himself to the ship’s mast and plugs the ears of the crewmen with wax. This is done so the crewmen are incapable of being overcome by the song or Odysseus’ pleas to be released. At each plea, designated members of the crew bind Odysseus even tighter to the mast, coupling the power of the demigoddesses with tightening of the restraints to deter submission to his desire evoked through their song. The Sirens represent a life of their own, but the power of the song is nullified through the nullification of Odysseus’ sensual responsiveness to nature. Their purposeful neutralization represents bourgeois pre-history.<sup>216</sup> By designing a system that ensures no deviation through the creation of constraints, Odysseus is able to project the sacrifice required for self-preservation inward. The crewmen are unaffected by the song and continue laboring towards the pre-established destination.

Throughout his exploits, Odysseus conquers space and perseveres towards his goal of reaching home by sacrificing himself and his crew. Adorno and Horkheimer examine the transformation of the sacrificial victim and conclude, “The history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice.”<sup>217</sup> They examine the transformation of sacrifice within a self-preserving rationality, and they demonstrate that sacrifice does not disappear but is transformed through the conceptualization of nature in relation to civilization. Further, “in class society, the self’s hostility to sacrifice included a sacrifice of the self, since it was paid for by a denial of nature in the human being for the

<sup>214</sup>Samir Gandesha, “Homeless Philosophy: The Exile of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Exile in Arendt and Adorno,” *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 262

<sup>215</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 46

<sup>216</sup>Ibid, 46

<sup>217</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 43

sake of mastery over extrahuman nature and over other human beings.”<sup>218</sup> Nature’s exclusion from the human being at “the core of all civilizing rationality is the germ cell of proliferating mythical irrationality.”<sup>219</sup> Self-preservation now embodies destruction because of the estrangement of civilization from nature, and “the reason that represses mimesis is not merely its opposite. It is itself mimesis: of death.”<sup>220</sup>

This examination by Adorno and Horkheimer highlights a significant transformation represented in the *Odyssey*: death and defeat predicate survival. When contemplating the options between Scylla and Charybdis, Odysseus is reluctant to consult with his crew because he does not wish to scare them into distraction from the final destination. He calculates in advance the potential deaths at the hands of Scylla as a forgone conclusion to prevent the deaths of the entire crew and Charybdis’s destruction of the ship. Odysseus detaches himself from the reality at hand to be able to use instrumental rationalizations that support his goal, and “the formula for Odysseus’s cunning is that the detached, instrumental mind, by submissively embracing nature, renders to nature what is hers and thereby cheats her.”<sup>221</sup> The infeasible claim on the lives of the crew by the mythical monsters resemble a “petrified contract” that is overrun by modern religion and rationality; however, modern rationality contains fragments and traces of myth insofar as domination is transformed in transience rather than abolished. Necessity and abstracted labor are so far removed from sensual experience through confrontation with mythical inevitability that domination of both nature and the self appears as a universal law.

#### 4.1.2. Endgame and Modernity

CLOV: Let’s see. (He looks, moving the telescope.) Zero... (he looks)  
...zero... (he looks) ...and zero.

HAMM: Nothing stirs. All is—

CLOV: Zero—

<sup>218</sup>ibid, 42

<sup>219</sup>ibid, 42

<sup>220</sup>ibid, 44

<sup>221</sup>ibid, 45

HAMM (violently): Wait till you're spoken to! (Normal voice.) All is... all is... all is what? (Violently.) All is what?

CLOV: What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know? Just a moment.

(He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.)

Corpsed. (Pause.) Well? Content?<sup>222</sup>

Beckett's *Endgame* forces the audience to witness the effects of total reification of nature and civilization, and Adorno states that *Endgame* demonstrates "the implications of completed reification of the world."<sup>223</sup> Clov describes the offstage kitchen as "ten feet by ten feet by ten feet... nice dimensions, nice proportions."<sup>224</sup> The space is measured and the movement is repetitive hollow necessity, which represents a life degraded to minimal function. With no purpose, Clov says, "I'll lean on the table, and look at the wall, and wait from him to whistle me."<sup>225</sup> Through his own actions, Clov perpetuates the order that binds him, and he proclaims, "I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still, and each thing in its last place, under the last dust."<sup>226</sup> An absolute stillness and quietness in which everything is placed within a conceptualized unifying whole mimics the disenchanting world presented on stage, and Adorno and Horkheimer state, "the arid wisdom which acknowledges nothing new under the sun, because all the pieces in the meaningless game have been played out, all the great thoughts have been thought, all possible discoveries can be constructed in advance, and human beings are defined by self-preservation through adaptation - this barren wisdom merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects."<sup>227</sup>

The characters range from oblivious indifference to malicious contempt for each other, and they are not connected by genuine feelings of love but an interdependent historical relationship premised on necessity. Throughout the play, both Hamm and Clov

<sup>222</sup>Beckett, "Endgame," 28-29

<sup>223</sup>Adorno, "Trying to Understand Endgame," 122

<sup>224</sup>Beckett, "Endgame," 2

<sup>225</sup>Ibid

<sup>226</sup>Ibid, 57

<sup>227</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 8

threaten to leave, contemplate their own death, consider the murder of the other, and ponder other imagined cruelties. When Hamm asks Clov why he does not simply end him, Clov responds by stating he does not have the combination to the larder. Only Clov can walk to the larder, but Hamm, who cannot walk, has the combination. Without each other, they will starve; however, they will starve in any case. Clov cannot sit, and Hamm cannot stand, leading Hamm to observe, "Every man his specialty."<sup>228</sup> This logic is reminiscent of modern bureaucracy and rationality insofar as it highlights that those who wield power and those who produce are interdependent. Because of their fragmented identities, Hamm reiterates this by stating that, "Gone from me you'd be dead," with Clov responding, "And vice versa."<sup>229</sup> This fragmentation is a result of the categorization of operational reality and of how meaning defined within these parameters truncates both nature and labour. Hamm symbolizes, according to Adorno, "the key to power and the helpless at the same time,"<sup>230</sup> which can be represented in his command of the room despite his immobility. The physically mutilated form and conception of being of the last subjects represents ultimate and total destruction in the post-apocalyptic landscape of *Endgame*. Adorno comments, "While recent ontology subsists on the unfilled promise of creation of its abstraction, concreteness in Beckett - that shell - like, self enclosed existence which is no longer capable of universality, but rather exhaust itself in pure self-positing - is obviously the same as an abstractness which is no longer capable of experience."<sup>231</sup>

Ultimate meaninglessness of both humanity and nature results from an ontology premised on self-preservation that necessitates the domination of nature and the estrangement of humanity as a component part of nature. Experience as projected by the dynamics of the play demonstrate the destructive mimetic relationship between nature and civilization, depicting a permanent catastrophe where "history is excluded, because it itself has dehydrated the power of consciousness to think history, the power of remembrance."<sup>232</sup> The event is decontextualized and de-mythologized from modern

<sup>228</sup>Beckett, "Endgame," 10

<sup>229</sup>Ibid, 70

<sup>230</sup>Adorno, "Trying to Understand Endgame," 130

<sup>231</sup>Ibid, 133

<sup>232</sup>Adorno, "Trying to Understand Endgame," 125

perception of purpose, exposing the results of historical nature. Adorno comments, “isolated, thought no longer pretends, as the idea once did, to be itself the structure’s meaning - a transcendence which would be engendered and guaranteed by the work’s own immanence.”<sup>233</sup> Adorno’s analysis of *Endgame* suggests that Hamm’s manner of speech and stage direction represent the voice of reason, which proves itself irrational. He establishes himself at the center of the room somewhat inexactly because he not only refuses exact measurements but also contradicts himself. Hamm commands attention by breaking into narration and directing his parents’ and Clov’s actions, tormenting them under a thin pretense varying between maudlin and irreverent good humour. However, Hamm is entirely dependent on Clov, who frequently questions his own obedient nature, asking “Why this farce, day after day?” To which Hamm responds, “Routine. One never knows.”<sup>234</sup> Hamm’s perception of the world never fully aligns with reality because of his limited sensual access; instead, he relies on his old stories to structure his life.

Throughout the play, Hamm builds on a story that represents domination and abject suffering, which he recounts *ad nauseam*. He ponders the possibility of new characters but seems unable to create anything new because of his affinity for the “old questions, the old answers.”<sup>235</sup> The story and characters are presumably a narrative he remembers from experience and continues to draw from, similar to his appeals to religion, which illustrates a connection to historic myth. This continual return to a cruel narrative represents the immutability of this thought, highlighted by his physical immobility, and “immutability, the epitome of transience, is its ideology.”<sup>236</sup> Thinking and ideas become merely gestural and shell like, and, devoid of any real contemplation, the “mind itself has become a reified residue of education.”<sup>237</sup> For example

HAMM: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!

CLOV: That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid, 120

<sup>234</sup>Beckett, “Endgame,” 14

<sup>235</sup>Ibid, 38

<sup>236</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 143

<sup>237</sup>Adorno, “Trying to Understand Endgame,” 122

HAMM: To hell with the universe. Think of something.

CLOV: What?

HAMM: An idea, have an idea. A bright idea!

CLOV: Ah good.<sup>238</sup>

The characters senselessly communicate their pains, and like “flies that twitch after the swatter”<sup>239</sup> they attempt to reconcile the experience of their existence to a world in which nature has forgotten them.

Nature is dead, all is corpsed, and the earth is “light black from pole to pole.”<sup>240</sup> Everything non-human ceased to exist. Hamm’s cherished dog is made of stuffed fabric, and the water and living soil of a once-lush landscape has disappeared. Planted seeds will never sprout. Despite the end of nature, Hamm continually inquires for evidence of nature’s existence, yet he is appalled at the thought of fleas and rats in the house because “humanity might start from them all over again.”<sup>241</sup> Hamm resides in a destructive dialectic in which he “hesitates to end”<sup>242</sup> and nihilism transforms his experience. The absence of nature means the absence of history and time. The time is always zero, and every day is the same as yesterday. This play represents a fragment of ahistorical reason, a rigid timelessness, in which the unifying and purpose-driven principles and ideologies of modernity have been removed, revealing the bare social relations of reality, and “because there was no other life than the false one, the catalogue of its defects become the mirror image of ontology.”<sup>243</sup> We are confronted by the horror of reality when “there are no more painkillers.”<sup>244</sup> Meaning has disappeared, and “not meaning anything becomes the only meaning.”<sup>245</sup>

<sup>238</sup>Beckett, “Endgame,” 43-44

<sup>239</sup>Adorno, “Trying to Understand Endgame,” 128

<sup>240</sup>Beckett, “Endgame,” 32

<sup>241</sup>Ibid, 33

<sup>242</sup>Ibid, 3

<sup>243</sup>Adorno, “Trying to Understand Endgame,” 133

<sup>244</sup>Beckett, “Endgame,” 6

<sup>245</sup>Ibid, 137

Beckett's play brings to the forefront Adorno's conception of the non-identical insofar as elements within the play are graphically estranged from the unifying whole, from the promises of modernity, and from the familiar power-relations. Reality unhinged from the totalizing rationality displays the inherent suffering and the inherent contradiction of the world. As Adorno states, "The need to let suffering speak is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject."<sup>246</sup> Beckett, in *Endgame* does not simply demonstrate the refuge of what was once civilization as a thematic backdrop but attempts to render de-reified reality itself to confront the meaning that shapes the contemporary landscape. The morbid scene of nature's corpse among the ruins of reification makes the contradiction between the promises of modernity and concrete reality actuality visible.

## 4.2. Adorno and Natural History: Nature in Transience

The discussion surrounding *Odyssey* and *Endgame* supports Adorno's analysis informed by natural history. Odysseus conquers a mythical representation of the natural landscape through the application of reason, and that application deepens the rift between humanity and nature by assuming estrangement from the inherently interconnected relationship with nature. Adorno and Horkheimer, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, demonstrate that the divergence from myth in the Enlightenment project nonetheless results in a totalizing quality all the same, because the organization of thought around a few rational propositions merely replaces fate with a set of rigid laws engendered through the instinct for self-preservation by domination. For Odysseus, subduing nature for the sake of security required internal sacrifice and sensual detachment from nature, and productive labour incisively neutralizes nature's threat while subduing the self. Nature is established as the other in order to dominate it, and Odysseus is already always returning to home as a place that promises production. Out of historical context, nature appears as a vast disenchanting object from which humanity subtracts, organizes, and manipulates towards particular ends. *Endgame*, on the other hand, represents a cipher-like ahistorical fragment of the total reification of the modern world, or de-reified reality, after nature has died. There is no possibility of survival for life and nowhere else, rendering the actions of

<sup>246</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 17

the remaining organisms pointless and absurd as they repeat their instinctual and social patterns purposelessly. As studied by Adorno, natural history is an exploration into the ontological conceptualization of nature and history; however, beyond historical categorization, the concept, as articulated by Max Pensky, “performs, rather than simply denotes, a set of tense relationships between opposed alternatives.”<sup>247</sup> In contrast to idealist introspection, “natural history implies a philosophical anthropology”<sup>248</sup> that discovers the human condition in the context of abyssal time. Adorno contrasted idealism with spiritualism as he explored the dialectical relationship between nature and history. This relationship was significant to the extent that nature and history not only represent distinct poles but also convergences, and Adorno explains that “the elements of nature and history are not fused with each other, rather they break apart and interweave at the same time in such a fashion that the natural appears as a sign for history and history, where it seems to be historical, appears as a sign for nature.”<sup>249</sup>

The conceptualization of history as outlined in the study of ontology replaces subjectivism along with the classification of thought and being by a new trans-subjective conceptualization of being. Adorno aims to demonstrate that an ontological understanding of nature and history results in the return to mythic idealism. Through a historical notion of truth, Adorno destroys the mythical power of nature and history, “a power which was the source of a fatalistic and passive acceptance of the status quo.”<sup>250</sup> In “The Idea of Natural History,” Adorno examines the ontological question of being, which can be articulated through two methods: the question of being itself or the meaning of being. The examination of autonomous reason is the starting point for these two questions. Distinction of these two methods is imperative for Adorno to the extent that “only when reason perceives the reality that is in opposition to it as something foreign and lost to it, as a complex of things, that is, only when reality is no longer immediately accessible and reality and reason have no common meaning, only then can the question of meaning be asked

<sup>247</sup>Max Pensky, “Natural History: The Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno” *Critical Horizons: a Journal of Philosophy and Social Theory*, Vol.5 (1), 2004, 228

<sup>248</sup>Ibid, 238

<sup>249</sup>Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History,” 121

<sup>250</sup>Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and The Frankfurt Institute*, (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 49



at all.”<sup>251</sup> However, contemporary conceptualizations of being no longer maintain a sharp platonic divide of static ideal separated from experience, so “the tension disappears; the existing itself becomes meaning and a grounding of being beyond history is replaced by a project of being as historicity.”<sup>252</sup> Being assumed under historicity does not only result in a loss of the capacity for reflection but becomes reduced to a formal framework where history is hollowed out of its particular content and reconciled with a universalized totality in “the arbitrary production of absolutes.”<sup>253</sup> Meaning derived through Adorno’s natural history aims at abolishing “the status of an ontological first principle”<sup>254</sup> of nature and history as outlined in the philosophical understanding of ontology through a spatial-temporal movement. History in the study of natural history is not simply a structural whole but a dynamic and contingent analysis riddled with discrepancies. The examination of nature reveals a second nature as a socio-historical manifestation characterized by suffering and decay. The disjointed discrepancies within history and a decaying natural landscape demonstrate for Adorno that “the attempt to master the empirical has misfired.”<sup>255</sup> Through a dialectical understanding of nature and history depicted as transitory, Adorno reveals that the notion of progress is actually a progression of disintegration.

Natural history for Adorno is the attempt to “comprehend historical being in its most extreme historical determinacy, where it is most historical, as natural being, or if it were possible to comprehend nature as an historical being where it seems to rest most deeply in itself as nature.”<sup>256</sup> What appears as natural is in actuality second nature and, therefore, historically produced, and what appears by the examination of history is a petrified first nature. Adorno’s natural history is a synthesis of the work of Lukács and Benjamin. Lukács, as above, examines the differentiation between first and second nature. Second nature embodies the world of convention or “the world of things created by man, yet lost

<sup>251</sup>Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History,” 112

<sup>252</sup>Ibid, 113

<sup>253</sup>Ibid, 114

<sup>254</sup>Buck- Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 49

<sup>255</sup>Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History,” 115

<sup>256</sup>Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History,” 117

to him.”<sup>257</sup> Human action and the natural ecosystems shape existence, yet individuals within the world of convention lose that understanding. The socio-historical manifestation of the nature is forgotten or misrecognized and confronts us as progress; however, when examined temporally, progress is revealed as human action drained of any meaning or inner coherence. Immobilizing the project of progress allows products to reappear as natural objects that decay or die. “This world of estranged things,” according to Adorno, “cannot be decoded but encounter us as ciphers.”<sup>258</sup> The process of dealing with forgetting that nature is historically produced is not merely remembering a previously dismembered unit or, as brought forth by Jay, the “the recovery of a perfect wholeness or original plenitude. It meant rather the restoration of difference, non-identity to their proper place in the non-hierarchical constellation of subjective and objective forces.”<sup>259</sup> This is the starting point for Adorno, who aims to examine how “the problem of natural history presents itself in the first place as the question of how it is possible to know and interpret this alienated, reified and dead world.”<sup>260</sup> Adorno, through Lukács, understands this world through the examination of reified reality or the “charnel house of rotted interiorities.”<sup>261</sup> The examination reveals that “petrified history is nature, or the petrified life of nature is a mere product of historical development.”<sup>262</sup> This petrification is illustrated by Beckett in *Endgame*, who, Adorno states, “took the world at its word.”<sup>263</sup> Adorno reconciles Lukács with Benjamin to refine the concept of natural history through Benjamin’s analysis of allegory, which seeks the “awakening of enciphered and petrified object”<sup>264</sup> through the reconciliation of physical matter and the production of meaning. Through Benjamin’s understanding of allegory’s use in practical historical expression, Adorno is able to draw a connection between the concept and the transience of history and nature to the effect that “the relationship of allegory to its meaning is not accidental signification, but the playing out of a particularity; it is expression ... it is nothing but a historical relationship ...

<sup>257</sup>Ibid, 118

<sup>258</sup>Ibid, 118

<sup>259</sup>Martin Jay, *Adorno*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984), 68

<sup>260</sup>Ibid, 118

<sup>261</sup>Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel*, 54

<sup>262</sup>Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History,” 118

<sup>263</sup>Adorno, “Trying to Understand *Endgame*,” 122

<sup>264</sup>Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History,” 119

at issue is an historical relationship between what appears - nature and its meaning, i.e. transience."<sup>265</sup> The examination of allegory as a particular historical relationship highlights the spatial and transient character in the signification of history and nature, and in the allegory "the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history, a petrified primordial landscape."<sup>266</sup> The main premise of natural history is that examining a universal concept of being does not suffice to confront the complexity of being-in-the-world. Rather, examination must span a non-hierarchical constellation of concepts that occupies space and time. This is achieved through non-conceptual or non-identity discourse that defies any universal understanding of the world, and "it is precisely here that we can demonstrate the ways in which critique refers to the non-identity of nature - not as something unchangeable that pre-exists social constructions, but rather as something that *appears within human experience only through a critique of social construction processes*."<sup>267</sup> By examining history as natural to the extent that examination is grounded in material reality, the disparate non-conceptual or non-identical elements that diverge from the totality display competing understandings of reality. By examining petrified nature and the real suffering resulting from modernity's promise, we are able to see the implications that might lead to a solution to mitigate the damage.

### **4.3. The Interconnected Subject and Object: An exploration of the Non-identity**

Identity thinking via the development of the concept is what shapes nature and history. Through his understanding of natural history, Adorno acknowledges that nature has its own movements and laws; however, our understanding of them has been limited and distorted because of identity thinking. Identity thinking ascribes a single universal conception to encompass being, resulting in the captivity of both subject and object to the

<sup>265</sup>Ibid, 119

<sup>266</sup>Ibid, 120

<sup>267</sup>Christoph Görg "Societal Relationships with Nature: A Dialectical Approach to Environmental Politics". *Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crisis*. Ed by Andrew Biro, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 43

extent that “the subject remains harnessed within everything objective it thinks.”<sup>268</sup> In his essay “On Subject and Object,” Adorno examines the embeddedness of the individual within space and time and the individual’s relationship to forms of thought as a type of imprisonment so internalized that “even the view of consciousness that allows it to see through the captivity is determined by the forms, it has implanted in the individual.”<sup>269</sup> In “On Subject and Object,” Adorno examines closely the development of the concept through the relationship between subject and object. For Adorno, both subject and object hold objective properties to the extent that the formation of the concept requires material particulars, and the subjects themselves have a material dimension in the formation of concepts. The cognizing subject can experience things because the subject is not completely other than the object because “he to whom something is given belongs *a priori* to the same sphere as the given thing.”<sup>270</sup> Cook reiterates, “by emphasizing the materiality of the subject and the material ground of its concepts, Adorno underscores the resemblance between subject and object.”<sup>271</sup> This resemblance is key to repairing the estrangement between subject and object caused by identity thinking. For Adorno, the subject’s experience is reliant on its objective counterpart, and “no matter how the subject is defined, the existent being cannot be conjured away from it.”<sup>272</sup> However, the objects are not “so thoroughly dependent upon the subject as subject is dependent upon objectivity.”<sup>273</sup> To be a subject is to be positioned against an object, whereas an object maintains its objectivity regardless of the subject. Objects display a multiplicity of meaning and are situated within a non-conceptual whole. Adorno develops an understanding of the non-conceptual whole in which the concept derives meaning, and “to be a mind at all, it must know that what it touches upon does not exhaust it, that the finiteness that is its like does not exhaust it.”<sup>274</sup> Cook states, “what concerns Adorno is not the mere fact that nature

<sup>268</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, Trans by Henry W. Pickford, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 249

<sup>269</sup>Ibid, 252

<sup>270</sup>Adorno, “Natural History,” 196

<sup>271</sup>Deborah Cook, *Adorno and Nature*, 12

<sup>272</sup>Adorno, “Subject and Object,” 250

<sup>273</sup>Ibid, 249-50

<sup>274</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 392

is socially mediated, but rather the way in which nature has been historically mediated.”<sup>275</sup> For Adorno, the perpetual interaction between subject and object is the basis for civilization and its contemporary experience. The manner of historical mediation is not a reversion to pristine nature but a consideration that does the least violence to the object. To inflict the least violence on the object is to understand the subjective relationship to the object and to recognize that the preponderance of the object is a reflection of the historically developed subject. As Cook states, “the preponderance of the object also implies that the cognizing subject is itself a material object. It is the part of the meaning of subjectivity to object.”<sup>276</sup> Reducing the role of subjectivity for the object would not be useful to Adorno because it would, as Cook states, “ignore the preponderance of the object by abstracting from the subject’s material encounter with the objects as an embodied object itself,”<sup>277</sup> which would be self-defeating. For Adorno, objects can be apprehended by subjects only through these experienced qualities, and as he proposes in “On Subject and Object,” “unlike the indeterminate substrate of reductionism, the object of undiminished experience is more objective than the substrate.”<sup>278</sup>

Through his process of determinate negation, Adorno attempts to confront the conceptual with the non-conceptual that does not identify itself with the reified notion of the whole, and through subjective contingency he allows the “primacy of the object shimmer through.”<sup>279</sup> As Buck-Morss states, “to avoid the enchantment of history, the historical had to be interpreted in terms of the concrete first nature which passed away within it.”<sup>280</sup> Nature provided the key for exposing the non-identical because it acted as an historical sediment recording human action, and the “transitoriness of nature was the source of suffering but at the same time because its essence was change it was the source of hope.”<sup>281</sup> A negative dialectics acknowledges what Adorno calls the preponderance of an object, which Jay explains as “irreducible to - although not entirely unmediated by - an

<sup>275</sup>Cook, *Adorno and Nature*, 11

<sup>276</sup>Ibid

<sup>277</sup>Ibid

<sup>278</sup>Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” 250

<sup>279</sup>Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” 254

<sup>280</sup>Buck-Morass, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics*, 56

<sup>281</sup>Ibid, 57

active subjectivity.”<sup>282</sup> Through the process of determinate negation, Adorno attempts to negate the damage we inflict on nature through the constellation of concepts. Pinsky reinforces that the constellation is not a solution to the problem; rather, “such solutions are to be regarded as directions towards a political practice that would seek to dissolve the puzzle-like character of the real, rather than merely solving it.”<sup>283</sup> This puzzle-like character is unfolded through the constellation because it deploys, through non-identity thinking, concepts that apprehend the non-conceptual particulars as they acknowledge the lack of identity between the universal and the particular. As Jay states, the constellation is not “relativistic chaos of unrelated factors, but a dialectical model of negations that simultaneously constituted and deconstructed patterns of fluid reality.”<sup>284</sup> As stated by Adorno, the non-identical or the “irreducible residue,”<sup>285</sup> allows forging a new path by examining the fragments and ruins of history and rescuing nature from the misappropriation in identity thinking. Non-identity thinking contingently examines the object through the employment of a constellation of conceptuality in the attempt to develop significance, and “knowledge of the object is brought closer by the act of the subject rendering the veil it weaves about the object. It can do this only when passive, without anxiety, it entrusts itself to its own experience.”<sup>286</sup> Adorno declares that the object is more than its conceptual understanding such that “what is, is more than it is.”<sup>287</sup> However, the non-identity of an object is not “imposed upon the object but remains immanent to it, as that which has been pushed out of it.”<sup>288</sup> He continues: “in that sense, the non-identical would be the thing’s own identity against its identification.”<sup>289</sup> This analysis of non-identity opens up the discussion through the acknowledgment of sublime multiplicity in the object and confronts the logic of capital perpetuated by commodity fetishism, which conceptualizes the natural world we inhabit and the actions that constitute history.

<sup>282</sup>Jay, *Adorno*, 63

<sup>283</sup>Max Pinsky, “Natural History: The Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno,” 234

<sup>284</sup>Jay, *Adorno*, 15

<sup>285</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 140

<sup>286</sup>Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” 254

<sup>287</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>288</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 161

<sup>289</sup>*Ibid*

For Adorno, the transformation of class society into mass society resulted in an increase of reification because it further homogenized distinctions between groups, and Shane Gunster, in his analysis of Adorno, states that “this logic of mimetic adaptation to mythic, natural(ized) powers is at its most insidious in the cultural industry.”<sup>290</sup> This is because the culture industry strives to eliminate the difference between concept and object, between the representation and the thing itself. Adorno argues that the instincts that initially determine our relationship to the object are historical and shaped by the prevailing socio-economic conditions, and societal objectivity is ultimately an expression of the priority of the object. The prevalent framework of exchange and the subsequent fetish pervade mass culture in conjunction with instinctual responses of fear and survival perpetuates identity thinking that reinforces domination in conceptual form by naturalizing reality presented in mass culture. Christoph Görg states, “society as a whole is not governed by the actors who in general are supposed to make history, but rather by the law of value, which works behind the back of the actors.”<sup>291</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer reiterate this when they state, “the whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry. The familiar experience of the moviegoer, who perceived the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left because the film seeks strictly to reproduce the world of everyday perception, has become the guideline for production.”<sup>292</sup> For Adorno as well as Marcuse, modern society collapses the aesthetic axis, leaving instrumental rationality as the last dimension. Nature and human labour are instrumentally conceptualized because of exchange relations. Similar to Marx, Adorno adopts the critique of capital as second nature, with which he aims to understand the conditions of first nature. Identity thinking summarily identifies objects with concepts as a form of concept fetishism. These concepts, like commodities, are simply static points of reference, yet they continue to evoke their own reality and animate the particulars towards the conceptual whole. Through exchange, the commodity shapes the manner in which we conceptualize the

<sup>290</sup>Shane Gunster, “Fear and Unknown: Nature, Culture, and the Limits of Reason” A Dialectical Approach to Environmental Politics”. *Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crisis*. Ed by Andrew Biro, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 217

<sup>291</sup>Christoph Görg, “Societal Relationships with Nature: A Dialectical Approach to Environmental Politics,”52

<sup>292</sup>Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 99

world and the totality of human and non-human life within it. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer state:

Just as the occupants of city centers are uniformly summoned there for purposes of work and leisure, as producers and consumers, so the living cell crystallizes into homogenous, well-organized complexes. The conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm confront human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular.<sup>293</sup>

Adorno aims to be “rid of concept fetishism” and to work towards a model of philosophy that “extinguishes the autarky of the concept, strips the blindfold from our eyes.”<sup>294</sup> Spellbound individuals under the sway of the same fetish see their similarity to others while becoming less tolerant of differences between them until the spell, the reified consciousness, has become total. In reverence of the concept, “the spell-made thing becomes a thing-in-itself, from what the self cannot escape any more; in the dominating faith in fact as such, in their positive acceptance, the subject venerates its mirror image.”<sup>295</sup> Like identity thinking, which ignores the particularity of natural things by treating them as mere generalized instances, exchange value “imposes on the whole world an obligation to become identical to become total.”<sup>296</sup> Imprisoned within our conceptual schema, tolerating nothing outside of this framework we now instantaneously identify nature with our concepts in order to predict its behaviours and control it for our own ends. “In fear,” Adorno writes, “bondage to nature is perpetuated by a thinking that identifies and equalizes everything unequal.”<sup>297</sup>

#### **4.4. The Non-Identity of Place**

Adorno’s analysis is pertinent to the study of place and anthropogenic climate change to the extent that it forces a reassessment of our relationship to nature. The assessment of natural history reveals humanity’s catastrophic interaction with nature. The spellbinding conception of progress through the means of capitalist growth has serious

<sup>293</sup>Ibid, 95

<sup>294</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 12

<sup>295</sup>Ibid, 346

<sup>296</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 146

<sup>297</sup>Ibid, 172



implications to the manner in which we live. Examination of the non-identical reconciled with the conceptualization of place provides a basis to evoke the non-conceptual as a powerful force against the prevailing identical conceptualization. This does not overextend Adorno, because he advocates for the realization of change and freedom through a different relationship to nature that integrates the primacy of the object examined through its immanent properties: mimesis. I argue such an understanding is already present in society; however, that thread has been marginalized by capitalist growth. The First Nations groups of the Pacific Ocean watershed and surrounding areas are a pivotal force against the prevailing rationality primarily due to their inherently interconnected relationship with nature. At the “State of Extraction” conference at Simon Fraser University in March 2015 during a roundtable discussion on Indigenous Rights, Land and Alternatives, Dini Ze Toghestiy, member of the Unist’ot’en Camp, spoke to the manner his ancestors taught him to live with the land. He juxtaposed western understandings of food and consumption with “wanting to taste the earth.” As articulated by Coulthard through grounded normativity, indigenous understanding of the land suggests a mimetic relationship with the nature in which both land and labor interact to shape each other insofar as humanity is a relationship with the land. Nature and human interaction with nature as represented in history are examined through consideration of inherent properties of nature with the understanding of Adorno’s observation that “mimesis imitates the environment but false projection makes the environment like itself.”<sup>298</sup> Ancestral roots tie individuals inherently within familial structures, and ancestral interconnection with nature is an affinity towards the past, which seriously calls into question the imperatives of capitalist growth. In the Adornoean sense, I argue indigenous rationality embodies the non-identical that holds the potential to repair the West’s petrified relation to nature.

A recent example of a challenge to the universal conceptualization perpetuated by identity thinking with regard to the inherent understanding of place is the tension between the British Columbian government and the Penelakut Tribe’s ancestral burial cairns on Grace Islet off Salt Spring Island.<sup>299</sup> Barry Slawsky, an Edmonton businessman, bought the land with the intent to build a luxury retirement home. This dispute between a private

<sup>298</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 187

<sup>299</sup><http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/edmonton-businessman-begins-construction-on-b-c-burial-ground-1.2683530>

businessman, the provincial government, and a First Nations group brings to the forefront an interesting understanding of place that reflects the tension between the homogenized notion of identical space and the inherent qualities of the place, uncovering the politics that reinforce a specific identity of place. The Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Steve Thomson, acknowledged that the site was a known archaeological site that was also privately owned due to its zoning as residential property. He justified the lack of consideration because the site was not a registered cemetery with the BC government. An important issue regarding this dispute was that many government officials had the authority to allow Slawsky's permits to be accepted, but none had or exercised the power to stop the process.<sup>300</sup> The law and the process were in this sense working over and above the officials. This would hardly have reached the level of a dispute if the land were a burial site recognized by the government, such as one already recorded from the colonial period for a British settlement registered as a historic place. The Province issued Slawsky a permit despite possession of an impact assessment by the BC Heritage Branch that confirmed burial sites on the islet, and the Province later bought the land back with a large settlement to Slawsky before a reconciliation ceremony with the local First Nations people.

This oversight and lack of regard for an unrecognized historic site is nothing new to the struggle for the preservation of indigenous life and tradition. Canadian history shows continuous marginalization of their way of life that is so deeply connected to their relationship with the land. This relationship has changed immensely due to the relentless challenges of the imposed social status, but acts of self-determination pierce the veil of reification by pointing out the inherent inequality in the prevalent rationality. Indigenous groups are committed to rebuilding communities and re-establishing a presence in relation to the Provincial and Federal government. The way we manage the state is premised primarily in re-establishing a relationship with the land and nature; the converse statement is that managing the state without re-establishing a relationship with nature implies a submission by unconscious default to some other guiding ideological principle. First Nations are not themselves non-identical components; they are able to see the non-identical components through an application of grounded normativity. With the growing

<sup>300</sup>[http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2013-2017/2015flnr0013-000194.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2013-2017/2015flnr0013-000194.htm)

awareness in the deepening social inequality of capitalist relationships and of anthropogenic climate change, many non-aboriginal groups joining this struggle are providing unprecedented momentum to the realization of the non-conceptual. Adorno is commonly reproached for his lack of belief in existing collective action because, Cook states, “he claimed that those individuals who have developed their capacity for self-reflection can play an important role in the initiating the transformations needed to avert catastrophe because they are able to look critically at the conditions that shape their own thought and behavior.”<sup>301</sup> Conversely, First Nations groups’ collective actions are not premised on a transitory popular sentiment or a movement parallel to mass culture, such as the quest for authenticity as represented in the hipster culture, but an authenticity grounded in the historical roots of the past. Their actions are premised on perpetual reflection on the effects their actions may have on future generations. The reciprocal relationship with nature is an interconnected whole of past and future that represents a continuous reassessment of land and the material limits.

<sup>301</sup>Cook, *Adorno on Nature*, 8

## Chapter 5.

### Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Space

The fourth and final chapter concludes with an analysis of Arendt and her valuation of place as a meaningful world articulated through political action. Action for Arendt is represented as an end in and of itself, a form of action as aesthetics insofar as art and politics is a manner of experience. For Arendt, the human condition is one of plurality, where political action actualizes freedom through the resurfacing of the latent particularity, which has been subsumed by the universal conceptualization of history as a naturalized process. Arendt, similar to the Frankfurt School, critiques modernity and especially the emergence of worldlessness, which Weber described as a rationalization and disenchantment of the world. The critique of worldlessness can aid with understanding and intervening in the politics of global climate change; Arendt's examination of meaning and the manner by which meaning emerges as "world" provides a framework to engage politically with the growing "rift" between the politics of natural and social domination on the one hand and the forces and relations of capitalist production and accumulation on the other.

As stated throughout the project, the discussion surrounding anthropogenic climate change has created a platform to question the underlying assumption of the way we live in the world. The chapters on Marx, Marcuse, and Adorno demonstrate the manner in which the logic of capital accumulation results in a nihilistic understanding of place. Marcuse and Adorno's analyses work through the failure of the proletariat revolution, which was a result of the inability to transcend the inherent contradiction between the relations and forces of capitalist production. Both thinkers expand on Marx's understanding of the dynamics of capital and the historical perception of capital by examining the implications of instrumental rationality. The logic of accumulation and consequently mass culture instrumentalizes the subject's relation to the object through the theoretical and institutional organization of place.

Marcuse and Adorno reiterate that the subject's relation to the object is the site of experience, and an examination of the historical relationship brings to the forefront the

tension between the spontaneity of the intersubjective interaction and the historical perception embodied within the universal or “false abstractions”. Adorno argues that we must work on undoing the subject’s relationship to the object by attempting to understand the “non-identity” of the object through the “primacy of the object.” Marcuse maintains that change resides in the aesthetic dimension that requires refusal of “all that is life-destroying and ugly”<sup>302</sup> and in the biological dimension of our being, including rechanneling the instinctual responses already captured by the process of technological domination and capital accumulation. Decomposing the edifice of administration requires wresting control of our own instinctual and learned responses. Arendt adds to this discussion through her attempt to work through the space of “the political” and the relationship between the state and the citizen. In the context of place and drawing on Arendt, I aim to address Parenti’s argument that the state is a relationship with nature to the extent that land is distributed by the state in accordance to its relationship with its citizens, capital, and nature.

Despite her explicit critique of Marx and the Frankfurt School, Arendt’s work remains sympathetic with their ideas. Rensmann and Gandesha examine the shared concerns between Arendt and Adorno and the loss of meaning and experience in modern culture, which is a result of a false abstraction from particulars. Within the context of Kant’s theory of reflective judgment in conjunction with what Seyla Benhabib articulates as the Benjaminian moment to think anew,<sup>303</sup> Arendt and Adorno ascend from the particular or “non-identical” toward a universal, taking into consideration the multiplicity of place. I argue that her writing is complementary to Marx, Marcuse, and Adorno to the extent that her work continues an analysis rooted in negativity, in the dialectical sense, between the theoretical framework, which is grounded in a normative understanding of the human condition, and the spontaneity of human activity and its inter-subjective relationship with the world we encounter and create. For Arendt, negativity can be understood through her idea of the self-conscious pariah as described in “We Refugees.” The pariah refuses to become an upstart or to assimilate to normative social standards that cause fear that society will not accept them. Arendt also examines and challenges the idea of progress

<sup>302</sup>Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse*, 204

<sup>303</sup>Seyla Benhabib, “Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian Moment” *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, Ed by Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 33

by revealing a historical landscape of domination in the service of capital accumulation and the manner in which this has culminated in a political and social context of indifference perpetuated by mass culture and self-interest. However, Arendt's thought diverges significantly in her critique of Marx's conception of social utopia, where labour and work are emancipatory activities. She analyzes the implications of the emergence of the social realm and the subsequent "withering away of the state."<sup>304</sup> She states specifically:

What we traditionally call state and government gives place here to pure administration - a state of affairs which Marx was rightly predicted as the withering away of the state, though he was wrong in assuming that only a revolution could bring that about, and even more wrong when he believed that this complete victory of society would mean the eventual emergence of the realm of freedom.<sup>305</sup>

Arendt brings to the forefront the politics of space sustained through a tension brought forth by a political space grounded in the presence of "sameness with utter diversity."<sup>306</sup> This is maintained through the *vita activa*, which distinguishes labour, work, and action, in relation to the *vita contemplativa*: thinking, willing, and judging. She examines these activities through an analysis of the spaces in which they emerge: social, private, or public. Political action is the driving force in her work, providing an understanding of being-in-the-world that relies on the ability to present oneself within the "space of appearance."<sup>307</sup> embodying the space of the political. Further, Arendt's framework extends to the perception and consequent organization of representative democracy and its ability to facilitate material change and foster debate among the plurality of individuals within society as opposed to functioning at the behest of large business organizations that operate within the logic of capital accumulation.

The first section of this chapter examines the transformation of the political landscape and the undercurrent of disempowerment and *dis-place-ment* as outlined by Arendt in *Origins of Totalitarianism*. She argues that the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia in the 1930s were not aberrations from history but the

<sup>304</sup>Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) 878

<sup>305</sup>Ibid, 878

<sup>306</sup>Ibid, 1064

<sup>307</sup>Ibid, 3042

consequence of expansion and more specifically capital's appropriation of state control. Growing out of colonization and premised on expansion, imperialism was a new concept introduced indirectly in political thought and action because, she argues, it was "not really political at all, but has its origins in the realm of business speculation, where expansion meant the permanent broadening of industrial production and economic transactions characteristics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>308</sup> She discusses the normative understanding of history that naturalizes the dynamics of politics while disintegrating both the plurality of individuals and the spaces in which citizens act and participate: "de-worlding of the world." Arendt argues that the logic of expansion and imperialism collapsed the nation-state, resulting in the systemization of violence through a nihilistic rationality in which accumulation of power and wealth became the essence of political activity. She states:

Billions of dollars have been spent in political and economic wastelands where corruption and incompetence have caused them to disappear before anything productive could be started, and this money is no longer the superfluous capital that could not be invested productively and profitably in the home country but the weird outgrowth of sheer abundance that the rich countries, the haves as against the have notes, can afford to lose.<sup>309</sup>

Arendt draws primarily on the work of Rosa Luxemburg and her analysis in *Accumulation of Capital*. Specifically, Arendt applies Luxemburg's discussion of the growth of capitalism in under-capitalized zones alongside the politics of imperialism and the emergence of a distinction between the politics of the nation and that of the colony. The distinction between nation and colony came to justify the domination of people and distant lands with the intent to transcend the limits and restrain competition in the economy of origin. To examine colonization and repression of the politics of plurality among the colonized, I engage Arendt's analysis of domination in conjunction with Franz Fanon's analysis of decolonization and the deep-seated Manichean rationality that perpetuates the separation of spaces and people within spaces subject to colonization. With this analysis, I aim to bring to the fore the manner in which the organization of politics as dictated by the imperatives of imperialism not only fostered and justified the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s but also concretized existing dynamics premised on mass indifference in the political realm. The politics of mass indifference quell plurality, transforming meaning

<sup>308</sup>Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: A Harvest Book, 1968), 125

<sup>309</sup>Ibid, 253

derived from action to a meaningless functionary role that upholds a process that deepens the rift of historical domination by a powerful minority. Stripped of diversity and freedom, social discourse is the “complacent repetition of truths which have become trivial and empty.”<sup>310</sup>

Arendt identifies the foundation of neoliberal precepts of contemporary western politics beginning with the emancipation of the bourgeoisies in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that led to a government that operates on account of private capital interest, and “for the first time investment of power did not pave the way for investment of money, but export of power followed meekly in the train of exported money.”<sup>311</sup> As stated in the introductory remarks of this thesis, trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) override local politics at the behest of a global conglomerate of commercial organizations oriented exclusively toward growth and profit. This results not in the flourishing but destruction of the places into which modernization has expanded; overridden local decision-making and control produces wastelands in proximity to operations while extracted surplus capital flows back into the city centers, thousands of kilometers away. As Naomi Klein describes, “the mega-mergers” of corporations manipulate and utilize the political apparatus of the economy that provides the labor and resources for the benefit of profit-seeking industrial processes. In this section, I examine Arendt’s understanding of imperialism and the relationship between private interest and political power.

The second section examines the instrumentalization of action through Arendt’s analysis in *The Human Condition* where she expands on the arguments presented in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by introducing the concepts of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. Arendt’s notion of action bears similarity to the Machiavellian notion of *virtù* in that action shapes reality toward a political end represented as a rectilinear divergence of time or a new direction. Akin to the necessity of prowess articulated by Machiavelli for the Prince, the citizens of a state must begin by doing “nothing more than to think”<sup>312</sup> and to engage with the world by forming it through action, which is political in and of itself. The *vita activa* takes precedence, forms matter, and ascribes political purposefulness.

<sup>310</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 354

<sup>311</sup>Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 135

<sup>312</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 356



According to Arendt, Marx uncritically accepted the concept of labor, and it's predisposition to mimic the metabolic process through production and consumption, which deters its ability to take precedence and create anew. For Arendt, labour falls into a monotonous, metabolic cycle despite the fact that labor is the capability to form matter. To conceive of politics as labor and making is to ignore human plurality in theory and to coerce individuals in practice. Arendt argues that,

Unlike the productivity of work which adds new objects to the human artifice, the productivity of labor power produces objects only incidentally and is primarily concerned with the means of its own reproduction; since its power is not exhausted when its own reproduction has been secured, it can be used for the reproduction of more than one like process, but it never produced anything but life.<sup>313</sup>

She presents Marx's understanding of the social realm as confined to the collective life of the human species devoted to the metabolic relationship between production and consumption. For Arendt, this devotion reveals a modern society where economic concerns have come to dominate both politics and human self-consciousness. Because it can set off unpredictable consequences that may affect the status quo, the historical understanding of action is an antisocial phenomenon. Action, especially conspicuous public action, has been discouraged as haphazard or chaotic, not behaviours associated with decorous, productive citizens. Labour and nature are cyclical, but action, according to Arendt, can force cyclical nature in a divergent, linear fashion. Like the conception of time imposed by the calendar, in which months have been named and renamed for political figures as much as advancements in astronomy, the historical conception of action is imposed by the appropriate legal or personal channels for civilized acts. For that reason, action is described within the terms of another unifying concept: labor. The implication is that a social realm premised on the maintenance of civil liberties and necessity is not free by any standards according to Arendt; rather, freedom resides in the ability to act in the clearly delimited political realm. Arendt's model of emancipatory activity is distinct from Marx, Marcuse, or Adorno's model to the extent that she distinguishes between action, labour, and work. In this section, I examine Arendt and her analysis of action in relation to work and labour and the places that emerge as a result.

<sup>313</sup>Ibid, 1454

Arendt reconciles her analysis of action with the *vita contemplativa*, which consists of a tripartite delineation of thinking, willing, and judging. I end this section with an examination of Arendt's analysis of judgment. Her analysis is primarily an elaboration on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and more specifically, reflective judgment. Reflective judgment moves from the particular to the universal, taking into consideration multiple perspectives and attempts to derive meaning through imagination or "enlarged thinking", and she states, "the condition sine qua non for the existence of beautiful objects is communicability; the judgment of the spectator creates the space without which no objects could appear at all."<sup>314</sup> Arendt, in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, distinguishes "actor" from "spectator" and "reflective" from "determinate judgment." These categorizations defend plurality through the critical assessment of the perception of a naturalized historical process that perpetuates "world alienation." For Arendt, experience emerges through the examination and contemplation of singular historical events that, similar to Adorno's notion of the non-identical, bring to the fore the particular fragments subsumed by a universal abstraction, and that experience calls into question the historical notion of normative progress. Arendt maintains that judgment is obtained through a political space that fosters communication through inter-subjective plurality. Gandesha, in his essay on "Homeless Philosophy," examines Arendt's idea of judgment in relationship to Adorno's conception of experience by revealing the idea of natural history in Arendt and demonstrating not only the progressive "de-worlding of the world" but also the manner in which the meaningful emerges through the what Arendt calls the "self-conscious pariah." In the political sense, acting and judging necessitate a consideration of the world in which we live, a world that has grown distant through a rift premised on "false universals". The outcomes of acting and judging shape the perception and organization of place through the reestablishment of worldliness.

The final section applies this analysis to the contemporary politics of space and the issues surrounding the tension between the need for freedom and the power of the state. I attempt to demonstrate the manner in which Arendt's analysis illuminates the way citizens need to regain the space of plurality through the reestablishment of the political sphere. I argue that this is achieved through the politicization of place. In this section, I

<sup>314</sup>Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Edited by Ronald Beiner, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 63

examine the materialist politics of place by drawing on the events at Tahrir Square, Taksim Gezi Park, and Hong Kong, and I examine the manner in which the idea of place challenges the dominating instrumental conceptualization of space. The presence of individuals in these spaces is what creates the political realm in which substantial social change may emerge. The plurality of subjects interacting within the public square is the site of experience, but the square itself is only a facility; the site of experience though physical intervention in the world can be made to happen anywhere that action for the public good needs to be taken.

## 5.1. Imperialism, Dispossession and Modern Domination

Having read the histories of other countries, I saw that expansion was everything, and that the world's surface being limited, the great object of present humanity should be to take as much of the world as it possibly could. - Cecil Rhodes

This section engages Arendt's analysis of the transformation of the political landscape, where she maps the origins of total domination as exemplified in Nazi Germany as emanating from the dynamics of colonialism and imperialism. This section addresses the manner in which this transformation lead to a progressive "de-worlding of world" through a process of modern rationalization and displacement of the undesired "other" as embodied in the non-citizen. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt examines the disintegration of the nation-state alongside the rise of imperialism. Arendt advocates that state's practices remain separated from national imperatives to deter allocating civil liberties on the grounds of national imperatives, which in reality are historically premised on domination and racism rather than de-limited by state law applied to all equally. Collapsing the functions of the state with national imperatives through the practices of imperialism occurs when the idea of nationhood highjacks and degrades the apparatus of the state so that only the function of upholding the politics of expansion and power remain, leaving a governing apparatus premised on the accumulation of more land, power, and capital. The ideological imperatives of nationhood redirect the bureaucratic mechanisms that comprise the state toward expansion, and Ronald Beiner in his analysis of Ardent, states that, "Nationalism is a pathology of citizenship that, having subordinated the state to the idea of the nation, generates a further pathology in a more expansionary notion of

nationhood surpassing the boundaries (and therefore the moral limits) of the state: with this double pathology, the nation-state itself gets utterly subverted.”<sup>315</sup>

Private capital influenced the apparatus of the nation-state by funding imperial practices to legislate through politics and enforce through police with the intent to restrain the market to foster the accumulation of capital. Thus legally sanctioned, culturally tolerated, and supported through force, the rationality was extended until “only the unlimited accumulation of power could bring about the unlimited accumulation of capital.”<sup>316</sup> Capital abhors a border. Unfettering power and capital from regional limitations on access to the global landscape resulted in the decline of the state interest and a preoccupation with the acquisition of boundless power through expansion. This marked a significant moment where business became a chief concern of politics and political action. What Arendt demonstrates is the transformation of the political landscape, and she traces the emergence of a nation-state appropriated by self-interest and the accumulation of capital and power embodied in the practices of business cemented by the law of economics. In this sense, private needs that coincided with individual wealth became the driving force of political action.

The shift away from the practices of colonialism to imperialism as articulated by Arendt can be applied to Canada in particular, where colonial institutions, like the Hudson’s Bay Company, were closely connected to the national institutions of imperialism, like the English monarchy. After the British North America Act of 1867 created the federal dominion of the Dominion of Canada, England’s established institutions in North America moved toward practices marked by more pronounced separation between colonial and national administrative institutions, such as the institution of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 1869 to hear civil and criminal cases and the proliferation of mining corporations. Some colonial institutions, such as the Indian Register, remain in use.<sup>317</sup> Limitless accumulation driven by speculative finance coupled with the distance between shareholders and the sites of production resulted in the implementation of brutal

<sup>315</sup>Ronald Beiner, “Arendt and Nationalism” *The Cambridge Companion To Hannah Arendt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 50

<sup>316</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 136

<sup>317</sup><http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/constitution-act-1867/>

administration to ensure conditions that maintain predictable profit for the shareholders regardless of the devastation at the site of production. The significance of this transformation was not simply the excessive degree of the administration of violence and power but the sense that the expanding administration was done merely because “everything was possible,” similar to the motivation for Smerdyakov’s rebellious acts against God in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The new feature of this imperialist political philosophy is not the predominant place it gave violence, nor the discovery that power is one of the basic political realities. Violence has always been *ultima ratio* in political action and power has been the visible expression of rule and government. But neither had ever been the conscious aim of the body politic of the ultimate goal of any definite policy. For power left to itself can achieve nothing but more power, and violence administered for power’s (and not for law’s) sake turns into a destructive principle that will not stop until there nothing left to violate.<sup>318</sup>

In this passage, Arendt articulates the decisive transformation of politics and power where politics emerged as a normative administrative process and where power became the end per se, legitimizing violence through organized genocidal practices. For Arendt, the organizational structure that enabled a totalitarian German government capable of the acts of the 1930s and 1940s was already in place because of the systematic organization of racism and force that underpinned the movement of colonialism, imperialism, and a nation-state that bent compliantly to the command of private interest and power. Imperialism and colonization created the conditions where everything is possible, and one extreme and amoral conclusion is the total governance of life. In *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, Enzo Traverso examines imperialism as understood by Arendt and especially the manner in which colonialism represented an initial moment that synthesized massacre and administration. The Nazis perfected the synthesis, and “the conquest of this continent [Africa], achieved with modern weaponry and planned by the military and civilian bureaucracy, revealed a hitherto unprecedented potential for violence.”<sup>319</sup>

<sup>318</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 137

<sup>319</sup>Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, Trans by Janet Lloyd, (New York, The New Press, 2003), 50

The “owning class” realized that wealth is obtained better through destruction, and “in the imperialistic epoch a philosophy of power became the philosophy of the elite, who quickly discovered and readily admit that the thirst for power could be quenched only through destruction.”<sup>320</sup> This philosophy existed in conjunction with the unfettering of the fiscal regulation of national limits of private capital that changed the essence of political action such that “power became the essence of political action and the center of political thought when it was separated from the political community which it should serve.”<sup>321</sup> The belief that destruction is the inevitable result of progress was the source of their nihilism, so the owning class “repressed the superstition of progress with the superstition of doom while they preached automatic annihilation with the same enthusiasm that the fanatics of automatic progress had preached the irresistibility of economic laws.”<sup>322</sup> The philosophy of the elite epitomizes progress by annihilation due to seemingly immutable economic laws as if those outcomes were the result of simple self-regulating, goal-seeking systems with easily discernable elements in relationship to one another. Discussions occur on the level of national and international units of commerce as if the future actions of every participating human could be reduced with great certitude to patterns of behaviour and feedback loops akin to meteorology or mapping the migration of birds. The practices of totalitarianism take up that tendency to make hasty categorizations and nebulous associations.

According to Arendt, two factors drove imperialism: emancipation of the bourgeois class and predisposition to Manichean rationality that developed out of the era of colonization. The national landscape that spurred imperialism was private capital’s inability to escape diminishing returns within the confines of the nation-state. According to Arendt, “Imperialism was born when the ruling class in capitalist production came up against national limitations to its economic expansion,”<sup>323</sup> and those who controlled capital appealed to politics out of necessity to ensure that the capitalist machine kept turning in their favour.

<sup>320</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 143

<sup>321</sup>Ibid, 138

<sup>322</sup>Ibid, 143

<sup>323</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 125

Universalizing processes, which are representative of bureaucracy, transcend people and places and provide the basis for the emergence of imperialism. Through the logic of the accumulation of power and capital and marked by a social, biological, and geographical separation of shareholders from sites of production, these bureaucratic processes were perpetuated through a flawed and ideological understanding of human species diversity, because “in theory there is an abyss between nationalism and imperialism; in practice it can and has been bridged by tribal, national and outright racism.”<sup>324</sup> Arendt characterizes the transformation from colonial to imperialistic rule as a “mixture of arrogance and respect”<sup>325</sup> to the extent that colonial arrogance toward the lesser and greater breeds of men remained embedded in cultural belief systems; however, agreements between nations were established such that no nation had the right to impose its laws on foreign people. In the under-capitalized territory where the law and protection of the nation-state did not yet extend, as demonstrated in Canadian history, “the so-called laws of capitalism were actually allowed to create realities.”<sup>326</sup> These realities were a result of power, capital, and imperialism, providing the basis for capital to accumulate through the dispossession of places outside the metropolitan nodes of capital accumulation as articulated by Luxembour. In this sense, places at the perimeter relative to the center of accumulation become what I call “wasted places” because of capitalization through “modernization” rather than industrialization. Capitalization by industrialization is distinct from modernization, because modernization does not result in fixed capital, such as factories or public infrastructure, resulting in the historical underdevelopment of these societies. These modernized, under-capitalized zones created realities resulting from exploitation and dispossession of lands and people, and these realities become artificially separate wasted places where anything is permissible because they are beyond the horizon of civilization, like the Wild West or the Partition of India. Violent actions were justified because of a predisposition to view native inhabitants of wasted places as sub-human animals closer to nature, and “they were, as it were, natural human beings who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality so that when

<sup>324</sup>Ibid, 153

<sup>325</sup>Ibid, 130

<sup>326</sup>Ibid, 136

European men massacred them they somehow were not aware they had committed murder.”<sup>327</sup>

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon depicts the dehumanization of the colonized with the intent of repressing plurality and action through imposed categorizations justified through the Manichean principles of good and evil, dark and light, and civilized and barbaric.

The colonial world is a Manichean world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically that is to say with the help of the army and the police force the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a quintessence of evil (...) The native is declared insensible to ethics; he presents not only the absence of values, but the negation of values.<sup>328</sup>

Fanon examines the consciousness of the colonized and the manner in which the settler systematically removes the colonized from place along with any remnant of personhood through the act of dehumanization. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt writes of the prisoners in Auschwitz dispossessed of humanity and place in the world. The intent of total control in both circumstances, colonization and internment, is the attempt to dehumanize by removing the individuals' ability to act by reducing and constraining the space in which they may act, and “it is not so much the barbed wire as the skillfully manufactured unreality of those whom it fences in that provokes such enormous cruelties and ultimately makes extermination look like a perfectly normal measure.”<sup>329</sup> The masses as described by Fanon when distinguishing between the native towns and those of settlers depicts the natives as confined to a “world without spaciousness; men live one on top of the other and their huts are built one on top of the other.”<sup>330</sup> Arendt similarly describes that “the iron band of total terror leaves no space for such private life, and the self-coercion of totalitarian logic destroys man's capacity for action.”<sup>331</sup> Traverso reiterates that domination necessitates a

<sup>327</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 92

<sup>328</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth*, Trans by Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 41

<sup>329</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 445

<sup>330</sup>Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 39

<sup>331</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 474



manipulation of space that aims at mental and physical displacement and specifically the “invented spaces founded on a fantasized otherness designed to legitimize its own values and forms of domination.”<sup>332</sup>

As a consequence of colonization, the imperialistic era transformed the political landscape to provide favourable conditions, such as racial domination, mechanization, and organization of people and places, for the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin that rose to power in the 1930s. The scale of the later organized inhumanity masks the earlier, historical actions that prepared the ground for the emergence of the politics of total control and destruction, and the nation-state’s “political narrowness and short-sightedness ended in the disaster of totalitarianism, whose unprecedented horrors have overshadowed the ominous events and the even more ominous mentality of the preceding period.”<sup>333</sup> Arendt roots imperialism’s imperative of expansion in the colonial drive to acquire as much power through territory as possible, which manifested itself in the dynamics of the totalitarian governments of the 1930s. She employs this framework of total domination to forewarn citizens that totalitarian practices do not disappear with the collapse of a specific government or the removal of a dictator. Authoritarian, autocratic, and otherwise dominating elements remain in the historical practices that shape civilizations, and those practices can persist intact if not acknowledged and actively challenged. She demonstrates that the political regimes that emerged as a result of Hitler and Stalin’s actions were far from deviations of history; rather, totalitarian regimes are a concretization of the politics of power, expansion, and progress. In the geopolitical sense, progress is a perception that a normative idea of development toward improvement relative to values over time forms the foundation of world politics. Progress loses the connotation of individual actors who exercise the ability to judge and then act, and as reiterated by Dana Villa, “Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism were not aberrations born of peculiarly dysfunction national character or political histories; rather, they were phenomena made possible by a particular constellation of events and tendencies within modern European history and culture.”<sup>334</sup>

<sup>332</sup>Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, 18

<sup>333</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, loc, 282

<sup>334</sup>Dana Villa, “Introduction: the development of Arendt’s political thought” *The Cambridge Companion To Hannah Arendt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3

The movement of capital and the need to accumulate both more capital and power created a self-centered and indifferent political body predisposed to the function-like logic of capital production. As exemplified in the idea of the invisible hand of the market or the rule of no one, the movement of capital creates a consistent social and natural landscape where people and nature are expendable, eliminating all potential contradictions along with all personal responsibility, thought, and action. The organization of this process was greater and larger than any individual because it was imposed yet deemed normative. The ideological imperative of expansion and power created limitless opportunity, and for Arendt, Auschwitz was evidence of the claim that “everything is possible.”<sup>335</sup> The process of accumulation aimed to eliminate inconsistencies, and nation building was an ideology grounded in a natural imperative, yet such gruesome acts occurred in what Arendt calls a “phantom world, which however has materialized as it were into a world which is complete with all sensual data of reality but lacks that structure of consequence and responsibility without which reality remains for us a mass of incompressible data.”<sup>336</sup> This highlights one of Arendt’s main points, which is that totalitarian politics and governments flourish when individuals are no longer responsible for their actions and when they live in a world where the logic of an idea homogenizes inconsistencies by creating distance between individuals and empirical reality: world alienation. Ideologies grow under the protection of organizational consistency, not axiomatic, evidence-based discourse, because “What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented fact, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part.”<sup>337</sup>

Decoupling the nation-state from the market allowed everything to be possible without the need for purpose. Purposeless action outside of state control and cultural sanction became admissible as states decoupled from direct control of the economy. Unfettering capital creates avenues for purposeless action, and Auschwitz was a systematic outgrowth in the conditions of purposelessness. The transformation of the landscape of the state in relation to private capital resulted in systematized purposelessness or organization without thinking. The common thread of organized purposelessness is systematic inhumanity, which resulted in the way Indigenous, African,

<sup>335</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 387

<sup>336</sup>*Ibid*, 445

<sup>337</sup>Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 351

Indian, and other non-European populations were treated during colonization and in cases of internment, such as Auschwitz. The lack of personal responsibility, which is consideration of the consequences of actions demanded by an organization, is a determining factor in the degree of purposefulness of a movement or a process. The internment camp system facilitated the development of the capacity for total domination as an instrument of total government, and a lack of personal responsibility allowed that program to succeed unimpeded for many years.

## 5.2. Vita Activa: Re-emergence of Plurality

*The Human Condition* begins in 1957 with the launch of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, into geocentric orbit. For Arendt, this triggers an important moment for the understanding of the human condition because a human-made artifact was orbiting the Earth, indicating that humanity had successfully transcended the terrestrial limits of existence, forcing a shift in perspective “that considers the Earth from the viewpoint of the universe.”<sup>338</sup> Space exploration provides an excellent example of Arendt’s understanding of the politics of space and the manner in which meaning emerges through the development and perception of being-in-the-world. In my introductory remarks, I examined the Heideggerian hammer and how meaning emerges, for Heidegger, through an existing subject’s involvement with the world by self-disclosure. Benhabib articulates that Heidegger is concerned more with the singularity of the self, *Dasien*, while Arendt examines freedom and meaning as emergent from the uniqueness of the person. Gandesha states, “Arendt transforms the Heideggerian concept of world by emphasizing being-with-others.”<sup>339</sup> This section elaborates on Arendt’s conception of the world, the implications of modern subjectivism and atomization to meaning and experience, and the manner Arendt attempts to reconcile the growing rift in democratic politics.

Space, generally referring to the entirety of the Solar System outside of the Earth’s atmosphere, is representative of a modern frontier because private interest in owning and using properties in space has continued to grow over the past century. In November 2015,

<sup>338</sup>Arendt, *Human Condition*, 3784

<sup>339</sup>Gandesha, “Homeless Philosophy,” 265

President Obama signed the U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act, which recognizes the entitlement of U.S. citizens to own, use, and sell asteroid resources they obtain and encourages the commercial exploration and utilization of resources from asteroids. The U.S. government aims “To facilitate a pro-growth environment for the developing commercial space industry by encouraging private sector investment and creating more stable and predictable regulatory conditions”<sup>340</sup>, and the act includes a disclaimer of sovereignty over any celestial body. Justifications include acquiring water and mineral resources outside of the ecosystems with the hope of mitigating the imminent threats of anthropogenic climate change and habitat destruction or allowing the free market to develop the means to avert disastrous asteroid impacts on the Earth. However, the physics and engineering required to undertake the process of capturing, processing, and transporting the material back to the surface of the Earth are far from certain. Regardless, a nascent speculative market exists with government support outside the confines of earthly existence.

The intent of the U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act and space exploration in general bears a similarity to Arendt’s understanding of imperialism to the extent that the accelerated discovery of the world driven by accumulation resulted in the rationalization and disenchantment of the world. With the satellite launch into orbit in 1957, contemporary civilization accelerated the trajectory set into motion by colonization by moving further away from local, national, and even planetary concerns that need immediate examination and corrective action. Contemporary governmental practices are inherently “industry captured”, and corporate interests perpetuate and dominate because of a progressive systematic deregulation, which fosters conditions for private capital growth at the expense of the majority of humanity and nature. The manner in which contemporary society is organized may appear on the surface as free; however, the ability to conform to the normative standards of accumulation of power and capital predicate the contemporary conception of freedom. Whether by chance or by systematic, historical exclusion as the result of the schema of competitive capital, those who prove to be less free lack the space to act, speak, and enact their identities within the political space. Freedom is not simply the degree of physical constraint but the ability to express one’s

<sup>340</sup><https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2262/text>

plurality through lasting “words and speeches” within the political realm. Arendt’s examination of political membership and freedom as they relate to judgment and action in the space of appearance is important in regaining meaning and experience in the political realm that has continued to deteriorate in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The systemization of purposelessness or “de-worlding” resulted from an unbounded yet highly organized system of domination crystalized as a whole within the imperialistic and totalitarian periods of the history mentioned above. Arendt demonstrates that the events during the totalitarian regimes exemplify contradictions to the narrative of progress by revealing the dynamics of domination. Arendt expresses how the preoccupation with power through expansion resulted in unfettered violence and the totalizing logic of capital accumulation that reduced people and places by a universalizing tendency that connects the world through exploitation and displacement of nonconforming elements. Margaret Canovan states that Arendt’s commentary is propelled by observations of a “paradoxical combination of conviction: on the one hand the belief that everything is possible and on the other that human beings are merely animal species governed by the laws of nature or history in the service of which individuals are entirely dispensable.”<sup>341</sup> The culmination of these two paradoxical forces results in “false universals” that abstract from the particularity and singularity of experience. Rensmann and Gandesha describe that “authoritarian populism” reincarnates conceptualizations of the particular historical fragments as particularism; in other words, particular events become independent interests asserted as causative or authentic, and “apolitical forms of the false concrete of the natural life conceptually eclipses the very space for freedom and politics.”<sup>342</sup> The ability to think about the particular in critical relation to the universal is the only means to overcome this process of reification or world alienation.

Arendt states that her purpose in writing *The Human Condition* is to trace a historical analysis in world alienation to its origin, which consists in a “twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self.”<sup>343</sup> World alienation results in

<sup>341</sup>Margaret Canovan, “Introduction,” *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1998), 127

<sup>342</sup>Rensmann and Gandesha, “Understanding Political Modernity,” 11

<sup>343</sup>Arendt, “Prologue,” *The Human Condition*, 366

a loss of experience when “false abstraction” and a forgetting of the “common sense” or collective memory of a diverse public realm reify the inter-subjective practices that comprise the world. The loss of this meaningful world or “worldlessness” through rationalization and disenchantment tends toward differentiation and homogenization where the interconnected whole of the socio-historical world is fragmented and repurposed by a universalizing process that embodies the particularities by imposing its power over them. Rensmann and Gandesha refer to this as “societal rationalization.”<sup>344</sup> This results in the shrinkage of space through the abolition of distance between subject and object or world and actor, and more specifically Arendt states,

Through railroads, steamships, and airplanes, there is the infinitely greater and more effective shrinkage which comes about through surveying capacity of the human mind, whose use of number, symbols and models can condense and scale earthly physical distance down to the size of the human body’s natural sense and understanding.<sup>345</sup>

Arendt explains that the nature of human surveying capacity means that man “disentangles himself from all involvement in and concern with the close at hand,”<sup>346</sup> resulting in withdrawal from the world. Arendt articulates this reductive measuring ability through the visualization of the physical distance created between individuals and nature through the invention of land, sea, air, and space transportation. These technological means distort the individual view of nature until distances, times, and forces appear diminished to the point that they are conquered under a universal banner. The universalizing principles perpetuated through administrative processes confront and subsume singular particularity. The atomization and concurrent universalization isolates individuals through a total administrative process that quells contradictions by force of a normative abstraction. This section examines how the historical philosophical conceptualization of action through making has resulted in the instrumentalization of action, according to Arendt. Arendt responds to the instrumentalization of action by developing an understanding of place and action grounded primarily in the political world

<sup>344</sup>Ibid, 12

<sup>345</sup>Ibid, 3817

<sup>346</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3822

where freedom emerges through “sameness with diversity” that manifests when individuals act in concert toward political ends in the public realm.

Arendt’s critique of Marx calls for a deeper understanding of the concept of labour in relation to politics. She sees the failure in his inability to distinguish among the activities of action, labour, and work. She argues that the collapse of action and work in Marx’s understanding of labour is the very thing that exacerbates consumption within a capitalist market: the creation of a world of consumable things. According to Arendt, Marx failed to critique the reified idea of labour to the extent that he did not present a theory on labour; rather, he presented theories on labour value and estranged labour. Labour was *sine qua non* to man’s transformative ability, and Marx’s critique of political economy examined individual estrangement from the objects of their production. For Marx, individuals within civil society and labour are tied inherently through labour’s productive ability to create products for consumption; however, labour is primarily concerned with the means of its own reproduction and creates products only incidentally. Marx explains labour as “a process between man and nature” that is tied intimately with the life process, and Marx proceeds along this line when he states, referring to man, “He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the material of nature and adopt it to its own needs.”<sup>347</sup> For Arendt, labour is a species level understanding of human development (*animal laborans*), and labour corresponds to the biological processes of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to necessities. As labour power reproduces life, products as capital derive from the unused metabolism of the wage earner because labour power is not exhausted once its own reproduction has been secured, extending productive capability many times past one human life’s necessities. Labour power can result in the reproduction of more than one life’s processes, allowing redirection of surplus to creating products disconnected from the labourer.

Arendt’s critique of the rise of labour’s productive capability and the lack of distinction between work and labour is that “all work would have become labour because all things would be understood, not in their worldly, object quality but as result of living

<sup>347</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 283

labour power and functions of the life process.”<sup>348</sup> By not distinguishing between labour and making (*homo faber*), the fabricated world mirrors a metabolism between consumption and production that is unable to transcend its inherent cyclical nature because of the destructive dialectic between labour and the objects it creates, and “labour’s products, the products of man’s metabolism with nature, do not stay in world long enough to become a part of it, and the labouring activity itself concentrated exclusively on life and its maintenance, is oblivious of the world to the point of worldlessness.”<sup>349</sup> Labour is the human condition for life according to Arendt and occurs in the private realm driven by necessity. Therefore, labour is inherently unreflective because individuals are preoccupied with maintaining and securing the necessities of life. This results in worldlessness because labour requires isolation and withdrawal from the public world. Necessity drives the life process, mimicking not only strict hierarchy, as in a household, but also competition and force that perpetuate through rigid laws and unbounded frontiers. For Arendt, similar to Hobbes’ state of nature, necessity and labour represent the pre-political act condoning violence for self-preservation, and she reiterates, “because all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the pre-political act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life, from the freedom of the world.”<sup>350</sup>

Arendt examines the implications of the rise of the social realm as a mass society in which the distinction between private and public blurs, and “in our understanding the dividing line is entirely blurred, because we see the body of people and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping.”<sup>351</sup> She argues that Marx’s analysis of the social realm continued the ideas of past liberal economics insofar as the social realm was characterized by the invisible hand of the market or the rule of no one, which is “not necessarily no-rule; it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its cruelest and most tyrannical versions.”<sup>352</sup> The implications of the rule

<sup>348</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1448

<sup>349</sup>Ibid, 1859

<sup>350</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 690

<sup>351</sup>Ibid, 656

<sup>352</sup>Ibid, 818



of nobody is that society proceeds on a normative basis of historical progress resulting in the unnatural growth of the natural; in other words, when the state apparatus decouples from the productive apparatus, the pre-existing capabilities are free to become grotesque, like cancerous cells. Communities transform into societies defined by a competitive market of jobholders who act as commodity consumers, exemplifying the amalgamation of private and public realms. Working consumers are related to each other through necessities they cannot produce themselves, and their lives “became centered at once around the one activity necessary to sustain life:”<sup>353</sup> earning capital. For example, this manifests in the retail housing market in which economic forces and public policies govern a consumer product that represents shelter, one of life’s necessities, and that necessity can not be produced literally by the consumer in most cases. Instead, they must amass or borrow the capital. Consumer markets in practice end up unequally distributing products, and the resultant inequality due to inaccessibility is a result of laws of economics, which appear unchangeable or self-evident. The markets remain a relationship between the state and its citizens and a result of historical policies based on ideologies, traditions, and even rational argumentation, not an outgrowth from a hermetically sealed space beyond the reach of action.

The contemporary social context of labour replaces action with behaviour, organizing society by a shared perspective, and “to gauge the extent of the society’s victory in the modern age, its early substitution of behaviour for action and its eventual substitution of bureaucracy for the rule of nobody, for personal rulership.”<sup>354</sup> Intertwining labour with work allowed for a homogenous organization of the social world to the extent that systematic control of labour became possible. Homogeneous organization is a matter of conforming to behavioural standards, because “nothing can be mechanized more easily and less artificially than the rhythm of the labour process, which in its turn corresponds to the equally automatic repetitive rhythm of the life process and its metabolism with nature.”<sup>355</sup> The results are a dynamically stable set of continuous processes to which labour conforms for the narrative of willing personal rulership, not for a stable, lasting world

<sup>353</sup>Ibid, 902

<sup>354</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 882

<sup>355</sup>Ibid, 2246

produced *ad hoc* for reasons determined through observation, debate, and planning. Process captures life. Arbeit nicht macht frei.

Arendt's *vita activa* distinguishes activity through a tripartite analysis of labour, work, and action. Her analysis of the creation of the fabricated world through making and its relation to labour and action is pertinent to the understanding of anthropogenic climate change, because she highlights an understanding of place and action premised on responsibility, thoughtfulness, and stability established through political limitations. Political limitations are meant to ensure that the man-made world maintains a level of durability, and "the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life and their objectivity lies in the fact that men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table."<sup>356</sup> The processes that comprise work wrest nature for development into a habitable environment; work shapes the objectivity of the world.

*Homo faber* conducts itself as the builder of the human-made world as it alters nature to the extent that "the creator of the human artifice has always been the destroyer of nature."<sup>357</sup> However, what guides the work of fabrication is outside the fabricator in the form of a model or plan that precedes the actual work and survives in the object as the model whose shape guides the fabrication process. The model or plan "survives intact, present as it were, to lend itself to an infinite continuation of fabrication."<sup>358</sup> The repetition of work is, however, distinct from the labour process to the extent that work terminates in a particular object that may be multiplied at the whim of the maker and labour continues a cyclical repetition grounded in necessity. The repetition of labour remains subject to the biological cycle, whereas the categories of means and ends determine work and the process of making. Work reproduces pure means when appropriated by the labour process, which is only concerned with its own reproduction, and "in this motion, the tools lose their instrumental character, and the clear distinction between man and his

<sup>356</sup>Ibid, 2142

<sup>357</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2168

<sup>358</sup>Ibid, 2188

implements, as well as his ends, becomes blurred.”<sup>359</sup> When the mode of labouring governs work processes, the outcome does not reflect a purpose or desire but “the motion of the process itself and the rhythm it imposes upon the labourers.”<sup>360</sup>

The world of fabrication and the processes of work establish worldliness, which defines, as set out by Arendt, the way we act through the institutional, technological, and ideological organization of the world. Similar to Marcuse’s understanding of the manner by which technological domination directs us through the landscape like a highway, Arendt examines the influences of technology on thought and action. She examines how modern organizations induce thoughtlessness, and she states that we have indeed become a “helpless slave, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is.”<sup>361</sup> Organized knowledge and tools challenge the human condition. The desire to amplify effort to satisfy needs resulted in a proliferation of objects and systems to govern them, and “then man adjusted himself to an environment of machines the moment he designed them.”<sup>362</sup> The fabricated world is a product of thought and durability, and the human environment can be a place of permanence that fosters plurality if combined with the plurality of action rather than dominated by the labour process of necessity.

Power preserves the public realm and the space of appearance, and as such it is also the lifeblood of the human artifice, which, unless it is the scene of action and speech, of the web of human affairs and relationships and the stories engendered by them, lack the ultimate *raison d’être*.<sup>363</sup>

The analysis of power and the space in which it appears is a prominent concern for Arendt and frames her discussion on truth and freedom within the political sphere. Political activity and judgment are emancipatory or action par excellence for Arendt because political action and judgment require direct consideration of the way society is organized to ensure equality among citizens. Political action speaks for the marginalized and becomes the means to induce the democratic process to incorporate the plurality of people beyond the

<sup>359</sup>Ibid, 2233

<sup>360</sup>Ibid

<sup>361</sup>Ibid, 322

<sup>362</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2249

<sup>363</sup>Ibid, 3126

election period. Action moves beyond party politics and ideology to include councils who represent the varied groups inhabiting a particular location. Truth and political freedom are communicative and aimed toward creating a space that, through the promotion of freedom and equality, simulates the uniqueness of a place. For Arendt, this first requires building a stable state and constitution that enable the conditions for political participation, and as Conavan states, "To be able to appear and act in our human plurality we need the frame, the limits and the setting provided by the human world of civilization, and that world is very fragile."<sup>364</sup>

The space of appearance emerges when actors find a space in the world commonly perceptible to them in which they can communicate freely without coercion and repression. Power appears only between people when they act in concert through speech and actions and "when the word and deed have not parted company."<sup>365</sup> According to Arendt, power is not stored but exists only when actualized, and power is not "used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities."<sup>366</sup> The ability to act in the political sphere while disclosing one's individuality and uniqueness presupposes the potential for power and freedom. Action proper is the manner in which the plurality of humanity emerges in the context of the constitution and rule of law aimed toward durability of the political realm rather than the monotonous context of production and consumption. Action is the ability, long suppressed or currently used, to initiate a new way of being in the world by jarring the smooth functioning of society. This novelty and plurality does not need to be chaotic or presented under another unifying principle; rather, the communication of people acting in thoughtful cooperation can influence the human condition. As George Kateb states, "We could say that Arendt, like Machiavelli, tends to substitute aesthetics for morality as a restraint on political action."<sup>367</sup> The development of politics does not necessitate development along moral lines, yet politics is aesthetic because it is a relationship premised on inter-subjective experience. Taking beauty, in the senses of excellence and

<sup>364</sup>Margaret Canovan, "Arendt's theory of Totalitarianism: a Reassessment," *The Cambridge Companion To Hannah Arendt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 34

<sup>365</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3051

<sup>366</sup>Ibid, 3059

<sup>367</sup>George Kateb, "Political Action: its Nature and Advantages," *The Cambridge Companion To Hannah Arendt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 139

harmony, and the limits of objects within the particular space into consideration, a finite act that contributes to lasting peace and stability of the common world is sufficient for political action. For Arendt, action is the one activity that occurs between people who share the same purpose yet retain their diverse origins. This idea is key to her understanding of politics to the extent that individuals maintain relationships by acting in concert while maintaining individuality. Action is a method of self-disclosure because the results can never be anonymous, and “action without the name, a ‘who’ attached to it is meaningless.”<sup>368</sup> Contrary to labour, action occurs in the public realm and concerns worldly things, which “physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective worldly interest.”<sup>369</sup> She articulates this through the analogy of a table at which every seated individual is connected yet separate.

Similar to action, judgment considers the multiplicity and examines the normative, historical understanding of progress. As Jerome Kohn describes, “Her engagement is not to destroy but to dismantle the past, to see history’s victories naked and strip progress of its necessity.”<sup>370</sup> In Arendt’s *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, she examines the role of judgment in relation to action and thinking. This is first accomplished through the distinction between practical reason and judgment, and she states that “practical reason ‘reasons’ and tells me what to do and what not to do; it lays down the law and is identical with will, which utters commands; it speaks in imperatives. Judgment on the contrary arises from a merely contemplative pleasure and inactive delight.”<sup>371</sup> For Arendt, judging could be understood as thinking par excellence because judging concerns worldly issues, not metaphysical or private thoughts. She states that, distinct from the “thinking activity, which deals with the invisibles in all experience and always tends to generalize, [judging activities] always deal with particulars and are much closer to the world of appearance.”<sup>372</sup> Judgment begins with enlarged thinking, which aims toward impartiality by disregarding notions of self-interest in the attempt to consider multiple viewpoints. Arendt demonstrates

<sup>368</sup>Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2176

<sup>369</sup>*Ibid*, 2779

<sup>370</sup>Jerome Kohn, “Freedom: the Priority of the Political” *The Cambridge Companion To Hannah Arendt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115

<sup>371</sup>Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, 15

<sup>372</sup>Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, (New York: A Harvest Book, 1971), 213

that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is a practice that requires periodic removal and re-introduction into the political public realm as a way to move beyond human laws and rules to deal with particularities while simultaneously moving among the generalities: oscillation or concurrent reconciliation of particular and general discourse. However, these generalities under consideration are not deduced from general concepts but inferred from particular events inductively.

Arendt further expands on her analysis of Kant's understanding of judgment by examining the role of the "actor" and "spectator" alongside "reflective" and "determinate judgment". Determinate judgment entails subsuming particular events under a general rule. Reflective judgment, on the other hand, attempts to conclude from evidence, and "such an imagination determines the sensibility *a priori*."<sup>373</sup> Through this analysis, Arendt is able to create a framework to understand the sublimity of the event and to challenge, in a dialectical sense, the progressive understanding of history. She states, "Progress as the standard by which to judge history somehow reverses the old principle that the meaning of a story reveal itself only at the end."<sup>374</sup> Drawing on Kant, Arendt places emphasis on the beginning of a historical narrative, where new horizons of the future remain possible, not on the end. This aligns with Arendt's understanding of the potentiality within action through natality or the potential for literally "a new beginning." However, the spectator rather than the actor is able to judge the events of history better. The spectator, through the evaluation of history, reflects on the representation of objects transformed by the process of making them perceptible to the senses. Through this process, the spectator attempts to arouse pleasure or displeasure and not merely to convey the direct perception of the object. The aesthetic interaction with the historical object is the operation of imagination, which prepares the operation of reflection. Arendt explains that imagination, for this purpose, does not include various fantastical ideas but the ability of the spectator to consider multiple viewpoints to see the whole and the given meaning to particular events. In this manner, the spectator critically engages the particular fragments in an attempt to re-establish the lost connection of individual experience and meaning understood as world, which only manifests by opening a space in which citizens may

<sup>373</sup>Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 83

<sup>374</sup>Ibid, 56

appear, act, and speak while bringing to the fore their individual identities yet adhering to the “common sense.”

Arendt’s essay “We Refugees” exemplifies judgment’s revelation of irreconcilable negativity, in the dialectical sense, and her distinction between the pariah and its counterpart, the social parvenu. Negativity, understood as the “non-identical”, represents a gap or split that results in movement, and, according to Arendt, negativity is applied to those who refuse to uphold the normative narratives and who, despite unpopularity, would rather voice the truth as they conceive it to the point of indecency. This is exemplified in the efforts of the Indigenous communities and their relentless effort against the most pervasive forms of domination to refuse the hegemonic practice of settlers in order to preserve their traditional ways of life. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel in their essay, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism” state that the “imperative of the warrior is to awaken and enliven the truth and to get people to invest belief and energy into that truth. The battle is a spiritual and physical one fought against the political manipulation of the people’s own innate fears and the embedding of complacency, that metastasizing weakness, into their psyches.”<sup>375</sup> For Arendt, telling the truth opens history and politics to voiceless groups, and Arendt states that one priceless advantage is that “history is no longer a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of the Gentiles.”<sup>376</sup> The conscious pariah is one who unwilling to forget the past, assimilate to the dominant culture, or become overly fascinated by every “new nationality in the same way as a women of a tidy size is delighted with every new dress only as long she as she believes in its miraculous qualities, and she will throw it away as soon as she discovers that it does not change her stature – or, for that matter, her status.”<sup>377</sup> Using her own experience as an example, Arendt describes that parvenus or social upstarts quickly attempt to align with the “nice little fairy-tale that has been invented to describe our behaviour.”<sup>378</sup> By assimilating, the parvenu falls in line with history. The conscious pariah employs the faculty of judgment to assess the past in its totality through

<sup>375</sup>Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgence against Contemporary Colonialism” *Politics of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 603

<sup>376</sup>Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees” *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, (New York: A Harvest Book, 1996), 119

<sup>377</sup>*Ibid*, 118

<sup>378</sup>*Ibid*, 114

the lenses of humanity and disinterested intelligence, and they remain unpersuaded by the potential success as a parvenu through the process of forgetting. Who we are individually or as a body politic is not only a matter of examining the past but a manner of undertaking an examination that actively discards biases and reflectively judges as an impartial spectator, making the events of the past intelligible through sensory imagination.

### 5.3. The Politics of Space

In contemporary society, the state, party politics, and representative democracy have resulted in passive citizens and a governing apparatus highly captured by the interest of private capital and power. The administrative power lending historical impetus to capital has created an existence where “invisible processes have engulfed every tangible thing, every individual entity that is visible to us, degrading them into functions of an overall process.”<sup>379</sup> Philosophical conceptualizations of history and political action perpetuates through a normative abstraction that subsumes the particular events and homogenizes through fragmentation, resulting in an administrative process of “de-worlding the world.” Judgment and action, however, create a space in which individuals can reflect and act. Through reflection on the singular event, Arendt demonstrates that history is made in the interruptions, the “single deeds and instances,”<sup>380</sup> rather than a normative growth process. For Arendt, these interruptions emerge because freedom remains the human condition, and the power of amassed people can materialize when they choose to create the space by establishing communication through action in the realm of appearance. As Tamo Campos states, “It is our responsibility to act when our government fails us.”

In 2011 at Tahrir Square in Cairo, people gathered in the city’s symbolic center of power and continued the discourse that had been building on social media about government corruption, poverty, and unemployment. The nation-state spends considerable effort preparing for this type of risk, and the authoritarian individuals in control of the apparatus of force demonstrated their prowess by matching the actualized power

<sup>379</sup>Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 63

<sup>380</sup>Ibid, 42



of nearly a million assembled and purposeful citizens. Deployed police and military personnel and equipment, usually employed for protection and defense, clashed with the assembled protesters. As demands for the autocratic leader, Mubarak, to step down from power escalated, so did the lethal demonstrations of force by the government.<sup>381</sup> The government commanded Egypt's four Internet service providers, including the UK based telecommunications company Vodafone, to cut all Internet traffic to hinder the crowd's communication.<sup>382</sup> Conflict escalated while the protesters brought the economic apparatus to inaction while they physically held the square. After many injuries and deaths, Mubarak reluctantly stepped down and the military took power. In this instance, the citizens demanded freedom to eradicate an unjust ruler who governed on the grounds of fear and force. The occupation of the square by the Egyptian citizens embodies Arendt's notion of the space of appearance, because citizens assembled and acted in concert toward a political end: an aesthetic act. The political end was an aesthetic act in the sense that the actions intended to create harmony, stability, and a meaningful world premised on a reciprocal and experiential relationship with the political realm rather than a relationship premised on domination and violence.

In 2013, in the context of years of unrest in the region, citizens assembled in Taksim Square in Istanbul after the government disproportionately retaliated against protesters who assembled to prevent demolition equipment from removing nearby Gezi Park. Hundreds of thousands of protesters blocked off many parts of Istanbul, and the government responded with lethal force. The police created tactical lines and deployed tear gas and water cannons to delimit or fragment the masses of people. Turkey's government cut off access to Twitter, which the assembled citizens were using to coordinate movements and communicate news. The local economy suffered, and Turkey's stock exchange fell when the Prime Minister Erdogan indicated the park's demolition would proceed for the mall's development despite the unmistakable protestations of the populace.<sup>383</sup> The government was not only undemocratic but also actively arrogant and threatening to the citizens; the government failed the people. This event exemplifies the transformation of space and the manner in which production mimics

<sup>381</sup><http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112515334871490.html>

<sup>382</sup><http://www.rawstory.com/2011/01/vodafone-confirms-role-egypts-cellular-internet-blackout/>

<sup>383</sup><http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/34174/>

the logic of capital. The park, one of the few green spaces left in the city, was to be demolished to erect a replica of Ottoman military barracks fitted with luxury flats and shops. This protest began with the intent to save the green space but escalated because of growing suppression of freedom of expression and assembly that represented an encroachment by the government on Turkish secularism. The protestors utilized social media to open channels of communication and to deter the misrepresentation of the protest by mainstream media. Public action resulted in an eruption of violence made public and brought to light the contradiction inherent in progress understood through growth. The manner in which these citizens appeared in the public realm disrupted the power relationships and created awareness surrounding the dominating dynamics of the ostensible democracy, creating a moment for reflective judgment and political transformation.

In 2014, Hong Kong citizens assembled to demand universal suffrage, providing a focal point for thousands on the street who had been subject to intimidation and prosecution by the government for voicing their concerns. The government demonstrated lethal force as a response to the actualized power of the assembled people, and they employed the products of the Golden Shield Project to track movements, intercept communications, and block access to the Internet. The protesters responded by using a technology that circumvented the government controls, creating an ad hoc mesh network that allowed large-scale communications within the crowds.

In these cases, people assembled against the threatening, repressive controls of a government and created their own space for fostering plurality where action as an end in itself is a form of aesthetics. This type of action could assist in intervening in the politics of climate change to the extent that action with the aim of stability and harmony, where individual freedom is secured so that people are free to act and speak in a manner that acknowledges difference alongside the consideration of the totality of place, can be taken without fear. Individual self-interest may have contributed to the rise of the authoritarian or totalitarian governments that opposes people in the streets of their own cities, but purposeful, thoughtful action and communication between individuals has the power to create a stable, lasting state.

The threat humanity faces because of the effects of anthropogenic climate change necessitates action at the planetary scale due to the immediacy and magnitude of the problem, and the failure of governments to address the threat decisively constitutes a continual failure for every citizen. The concept of the entire Earth as a place of permanence and responsibility is key to fostering action sufficient to root out the instrumental rationality driving the expansion of industries that emit greenhouse gasses, particles, and aerosols into the atmosphere.

## Chapter 6.

### Conclusion: Acceleration

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath - a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace."- Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Manifesto of Futurism*<sup>384</sup>

Marinetti, in the *Manifesto of Futurism*, proclaims the rise of a new age where Italians discard their past and partake in the dynamism and speed of industrialization with these imperatives: "Let's break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let's give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!"<sup>385</sup> The historical and intellectual roots of futurism, the art of the future, can be traced to European nationalism in the years prior to 1914, which led to the disaster of World War I. Futurism exemplified a naively positivistic faith in progress while discarding the admiration of the past, and "to admire an old picture is to pour our sensibility into a funeral urn instead of casting it forward with violent spurts of creation and action."<sup>386</sup> They proclaimed that mythology and the mystic ideals were behind them, and they were about to witness the birth of the centaur, which is a poetic fusion of humanity and machinery. Futurism sings the praise of imperialism, glorifying the sublime nature of war, which they describe as "the world's only hygiene."<sup>387</sup> They celebrated violence, cruelty, and injustice as the art of social Darwinism, where the strong and youthful prevail over the weak and old. Their boastful adolescent celebration of force and speed and the fascination with destruction and cruelty leave no time for the historical landscape, and they abrogate the existing power relationships, proclaim superiority, and launch defiance at the stars for the simple reason

<sup>384</sup>Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," Trans by R.W. Flint (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 1

<sup>385</sup>Ibid, 2

<sup>386</sup>Ibid

<sup>387</sup>Ibid

that everything is possible. Futurism is speed without direction or into all directions at once: expansion.

In the name of the future, Marinetti advocated the immediate destruction of libraries, museums, universities, and by extension the whole traditional European culture. Destruction, conflated with liberation, attempts to free the people of their invisible fettering chain. They construct a shadow of the future outside of space and time and force their way without heeding objections. Dynamism, motion, and speed embodied the Futurist schema, which exulted in the same power of technology and speed that led to the emergence of Fascism soon after. In *Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ingo F. Walther, describes Futurism as an “orgy of destruction” that was “unscrupled in both its methods and its aims.”<sup>388</sup> Thematically, the Futurist focused on the simultaneity of various views; however, instead of depicting their object in a state of immobility they painted rotating, plunging, or thrusting motions. Motion itself, or the various phases of its process, was represented on canvas. Umberto Boccioni, a Futurist painter and sculptor states, “I wish to paint the new, the fruit of our industrial age.”<sup>389</sup> Futurism was an attempt to include time or speed through introduction of the fourth dimension. This is exemplified in Boccioni’s rendering of *The Street Penetrates the Building*. In this painting, movement is revealed through forms that grow transparent; the interpenetration and interlocking of exterior and interior depict a simultaneous overlap of events taking place in both the streets and in the building. This painting brings to forefront the tumultuous unrest of urban life but also a preoccupation with speed. Futurism came to a halt once the dynamism of Fascism emerged. However, in their time, the Futurists proclaimed in the Manifesto that they were “standing on the top of the world, where we once again fling our challenge to the stars.”<sup>390</sup>

Paul Virilio critiques the deafening images of forceful violence in technological processes in *Art and Fear*, and the predisposition of the imagery to focus on the weapons rather than the wound,<sup>391</sup> highlighting the modern paradox between ethics and aesthetics. He considers the representation of art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to understand the influence of

<sup>388</sup>Ingo F. Walther, *Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Köln: Taschen, 2005), 84

<sup>389</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>390</sup>Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” 2

<sup>391</sup>Paul Virilio, *Art and Fear*, trans by Julie Rose, (London: Continuum, 2003), 16

new information and communication technology on democratic institutions and how that influence manifests in political representation. He states, "At the end of the millennium, what abstraction once tried to pull off is in fact being accomplished before our very eyes: the end of representative art and the substitution of a counter-culture, of a presentative art."<sup>392</sup> That substitution affects representation to the extent that "the transformation of art has resulted in the polluting of our representations."<sup>393</sup> Virilio speaks to the prevalence of excess, desensitization to the shock of images, and the meaninglessness of words, and "here brutality is no longer so much aimed at warning as at destroying, paving the way for the actual torturing of the viewer, the listener, which will not be coming back thanks to that cybernetic artefact: The interactive feedback of virtual reality."<sup>394</sup> The interactive feedback embodies the destructive dialectic between technology and civilization and the manner in which unchecked technology has resulted in catastrophic events of inhumanity. Even so, the democratic populace remains mostly passive, suspended in a vast space beyond or above materiality. Virilio comments on how the destructive dialectic is the result of the nihilistic rationality growing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that rationality's proliferation through restrictions on freedom and new, unbounded frontiers. To Adorno's assertion that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric Virilio responds, "whether Adorno likes it or not, the spectacle of abjection remains the same, after as before Auschwitz. But it has become politically incorrect to say so."<sup>395</sup> This largely due to the aesthetics of disappearance and counter-culture that emerged as an attempt to discard the ethical concerns of the past and future to perform instead in a manner that valorizes immediacy and speed, extending the sense that "Not only is everything possible. It is inevitable."<sup>396</sup>

For Virilio, the responsibility of the artist is to attempt to illuminate the fragments that are hidden from view inside the silent circuits of technology and the pervading rationality. Virilio highlights the negation in art through art's ability to be pitiful and silent in order to evoke history and the implications of the event veiled by the narrative of progress.

<sup>392</sup>Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 19

<sup>393</sup>*Ibid*, 79

<sup>394</sup>*Ibid*, 20

<sup>395</sup>*Ibid*, 30

<sup>396</sup>*Ibid*, 29

The silence of art, a space which allows for contemplation of the image and its meaning, is destroyed in contemporary society, and “silence no longer has a voice. It lost it half century ago.”<sup>397</sup> The silence of the visible disappears behind the sound of progress, and:

How will the silence of the infinite space of art subsist, this silence that seems to terrify the makers of the motors of any kind, from the logical interference motor of the computer to the research engine of the network of networks. All these questions that today remain unanswered make enigmas of contemporary ethics and aesthetics. <sup>398</sup>

Pitiless art negates the space of Virilio’s understanding of silence through the noise of hypermodernity and the dynamism of violent, technological progress.

Accelerationism as outlined by Nick Srnicek and Alex William in *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* and in their “Accelerationist Manifesto” is a position that has been gaining attention. Srnicek and William outline a future that moves beyond the austerity measures of capitalism and neo-liberal politics to technoutopianism. They argue from a position of universalized technological organization and systematization where common ends guide technoscience, and “we declare that only a Promethean politics of maximal mastery over society and its environment is capable of either dealing with global problems or achieving victory over capital.”<sup>399</sup> They propose that their movement embodies a counter-hegemonic program premised on emancipation from the toil of labour through automation, universal income, and mitigation of anthropogenic climate change through geo-engineering or, as they state, through “geo-social artistry and cunning rationality,”<sup>400</sup> which entails organizational models premised on complex predictive calculation of probabilistically likely ranges of outcomes. The Accelerationists propose to achieve their goals by unleashing productive and technological potentiality and by dominating the inherent complexities of our global world through manipulation. Further, they state, “If complexity presently outstrips humanity’s capacities to think and control,

<sup>397</sup>Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 36

<sup>398</sup>*Ibid*, 39

<sup>399</sup>Nick Srnicek and Alex William, “Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics,” 2014 <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/> (Section 3: Para. 21)

<sup>400</sup>Srnicek and William, “Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics,” Section 3: Para. 21

there are two options: one is to reduce complexity down to a human scale; the other is to expand humanity's capacities. We endorse the latter position."<sup>401</sup> By endorsing the expansion of humanity's capacities, they employ the very rationality premised on domination and instrumentality that got us to the current impasse of austerity.

Their main point of contention is with what they label as leftist "folk politics." Folk politics for the Accelerationists represents a movement grounded on emotional immediacy, and "the habitual tactics of marching, holding signs, and establishing temporary autonomous zones risk becoming comforting substitutes for effective success."<sup>402</sup> The Accelerationist critique is that a focus on local particularity is not only incompatible with the geopolitical landscape but also facile:

They expend considerable energy on internal direct-democratic process and affective self-valorization over strategic efficiency, and frequently propound a variant of neo-primitivism localism, as if to oppose the abstract violence of globalized capital with the flimsy and ephemeral "authenticity" of communal immediacy.<sup>403</sup>

They articulate their viewpoint not for the complete dismissal of folk politics but for a stalling, attenuation, or irrelevance. Srnicek and William predict that, once we as a civilization have broken the shackles of capital, appropriated all that is good from society, which amounts to a return to Enlightenment thinking, and discarded the bad, we will then be able to address the plurality of contemporary global civilization. Developing along the same lines as Marx and Engel's *Communist Manifesto*, they argue the transcendence of capitalism is achievable because their model advocates that, after the technological utopia when we are free and self-sufficient, the organizational structure will sustain itself through constant challenges revealed through autonomous experimentation in ways of life supported by automation and universal income allotment.

This speculative and highly contentious perspective falls back on a universal rationalization premised on disenchantment. Similar to the Futurists, the Accelerationists

<sup>401</sup>Nick Srnicek and Alex William, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, (London, Verso, 2015), 16

<sup>402</sup>Srnicek and William, "Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," (Section 3: Para. 12)

<sup>403</sup>Ibid, (Section 1: Para. 5)



argue for a break from history that completely overlooks the historical Indigenous resistance to settler logic and communal organization premised on a deeply interconnected relationship with the land. Nature is silent in the Accelerationist plan of the future to the extent that the ecosystems are dominated and fitted towards human ends.

In his essay “On Alienation”, Vogel examined the manner in which the perception of nature dichotomizes into romantic or productive means. However, whether we act reciprocally and respectfully or dominate and control nature, we are always changing nature. We are deeply alienated from the way we change nature, yet we are a relationship that is mutually transformative because we are the literally the same. The Accelerationists ignore the social and natural implications of the technologies to which they refer to build their plan, and the unintended consequences for the interdependent totality of nature and society that created the metabolic rift remain unacknowledged. This disenchantment is reminiscent of the calculating actions of Odysseus, where the execution of “cunning rationality” premised on a separation from nature and myth resulted in a separation from the self: the sacrifice of nature is a sacrifice of the self. I argue that Srnicek and William perpetuate the same destructive dialectic, and we risk the same fate in appropriating the promises of capitalism. As Martin Luther King Jr. stated when speaking to the rights and freedoms outlined in The Constitution of the United States and The Declaration of Independence, “Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds.’”<sup>404</sup> This comment is a reminder of a history of promises that fortunes are always about to change, but they never do when we consistently fail to acknowledge the non-identical, the undercurrent of negativity, and aim instead to further subsume and marginalize latent particularities. Industrialization is premised on inherently unequal standards of living where the most affluent bear little to no consequences of their behaviour. Connected by rare earth metals and fueled by petroleum, the city centers are not confronted with the contamination that these means entail; rather, the displaced and dispossessed bear the risks with little reward.

<sup>404</sup>[https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/revisiting-kings-metaphor-about-a-nations-debt/2011/07/26/gIQA\\_rshBaJ\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/revisiting-kings-metaphor-about-a-nations-debt/2011/07/26/gIQA_rshBaJ_story.html)

In response, we need to undertake a reflective understanding of the events that comprise and contribute to our historical landscape. Taiaiake Alfred, in *Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* begins by demonstrating how his book will follow a path similar to a ritual of condolence, and he describes that this sacred ritual is “an expression of the transformative power inherent in many healing conditions.”<sup>405</sup> He indicates, “It is a gift promising comfort, recovery of balance and revival of spirit to those who are suffering.”<sup>406</sup> This illustrates how the moments leading to transformation and to cultural change require reflective judgment, acceptance, and healing. These moments are absent in the “challenging forth” of accelerationism, which I argue is inherently problematic. In response to concerns regarding colonization and race, Srnicek and William concede that “these are all agreeable, of course, but ultimately remain empty signifiers.”<sup>407</sup> The Accelerationists do not ascribe significance to Folk Politics because they argue that concerns for such “empty signifiers” do not provide imminent solutions. However, in agreement with Taiaiake Alfred, I argue that moment of condolence is necessary. We as civilization need to understand the past in its totality and proceed from there with the intent of reconciling by initiating dialogue with as many voices as possible. Indigenous place-based rationality is extremely valuable to understanding respect for nature and the responsibility of our collective action. In contrast to place-based politics, Srnicek and William proceed towards a means-based practice that bears striking similarity to instrumental rationality and the nihilism that it entails. Through total domination and technological organization, we continue to separate ourselves from our inherent connection to the ecosystems through alienating political economies both real and imagined. The acquisition of freedom, balance, harmony, or even any approach to a technoscientific post-capitalist utopia must proceed by means other than universal abstractions; otherwise, we risk only perpetuating the circumstances in which we find ourselves now.

The aim of this thesis project was to create a framework to better understand the normative perception of progress and the inherently irreconcilable social and natural forms

<sup>405</sup>Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, (Don Mills, Oxford, 1999), xii

<sup>406</sup>*Ibid*, xxiii

<sup>407</sup>Srnicek and William, *Inventing the Future*, 13

of negativity that occur within place when examining the processes that comprise the movement of capital. Through Marx, I examined the manner in which the worker is disenfranchised from within the labour process through the expropriation of land and subsequently the means of production. Marx, however, is inherently problematic to the extent that he thought the productive process of capital would result in a socialist utopia once the proletariat revolution occurred and technology eased the production process. Adorno and Marcuse demonstrated that the productive process of capital deepened the rift between those who owned the means and those who sold their labour power, because the conditions of production remained unquestioned. Rather, the proletariat did not challenge the inequality and destructive nature in which capital thrives but satisfied itself with the chance at a greater share within the same conditions. The irreconcilable negativity is a result of the destructive dialectic between the conditions and the social relationships of capital production.

Throughout this project, I examined the manner in which physical space and the perception of place function as an important site of resistance to the nihilistic logic of capital accumulation. Further, I demonstrated how a place-based rationality challenges the precepts of instrumental rationality that brings to the fore the negativity of place. Examining place from a social perspective, in the sense that place emerges through the interaction between human civilization and nature, reveals the damaging repercussions of capital accumulation. I advocated that an alternative to capital, a place-based rationality formed particularly through the preponderance of the object and a mimetic relation between subject and object grounded in reciprocity, establishes limits based on the specific landscape. A place-based alternative to capital is life-affirming, not a life-denying instrumental rationality.

The condition of the atmosphere and the natural ecosystems has brought forth a question concerning the limits to capital accumulation and the infrastructure that sustains its growth. However, little has changed concerning these limits, at least in the West. The Paris Climate Conference (COP21) in November 2015 resulted in grand promises but no contractual obligations, regulations, or policy. Jason Box, the lead author of the Greenland section of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's annual climate change report, was the first to scientist to warn that surface ice would melt across the entirety of

Greenland within a decade. In an interview with Amy Goodman at the Paris Climate Conference, Box comments on why voluntary pledges are not enough:

This is like goodwill rhetoric. It makes us feel good, but it - without a binding mechanism with teeth, a legally binding mechanism, they can say whatever numbers they want and make us feel good, but, again, the emissions reductions scenarios that are on the table from the United States and Canada fall far short of hitting that or going through that temperature target.<sup>408</sup>

This type of rhetoric is prevalent in Canada, especially with the newly appointed Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who stated in February during the opening of the Globe 2016 Leadership Summit that pipeline development will lead the way for a transition to cleaner energy. Prime Minister Trudeau claimed that, "To get there, we need to make smart strategic investments in clean growth and new infrastructure, but we must also continue to generate wealth from our abundant natural resources to fund this transition to a low-carbon economy."<sup>409</sup> Trudeau dodged questions surrounding the particularities of the Energy East pipeline development and the consequences that the development would have on emissions targets, commenting instead on the increased national funding going towards innovative technological solutions to help combat the effects of climate change and to move towards a transition into clean energy infrastructure. He encouraged citizens to choose cleaner, energy-efficient vehicles. He ended the question period by congratulating "all on standing united in the quest for economic growth and clean energy."<sup>410</sup>

The central issue that this thesis project aimed to address is the inherent contradiction within the Prime Minister's closing argument above: economic growth and adherence to environmental limits are incompatible. The contradiction between expanding the capacity for creating emissions while simultaneously reducing emissions remains unresolved. The movement of capital abhors limits, and a logic rooted in accumulation

<sup>408</sup>[http://www.democracynow.org/2015/12/11/voluntary\\_pledges\\_arent\\_enough\\_glaciologist\\_says](http://www.democracynow.org/2015/12/11/voluntary_pledges_arent_enough_glaciologist_says)

<sup>409</sup><http://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/03/02/news/trudeau-says-pipelines-will-pay-canadas-transition-green-economy>

<sup>410</sup><http://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/03/02/news/trudeau-says-pipelines-will-pay-canadas-transition-green-economy>

and consumption necessitates natural destruction and social inequality to produce capital. Arendt, when commenting on the historical progression of capital accumulation, states, “The greatest threat to the existence of the finished work arises precisely from the mentality which brought it about.”<sup>411</sup> I have aimed to demonstrate the historical development of capital and the subsequent growth of social and natural domination. All these thinkers after Marx questioned the inherent progressive nature of history, and an examination of specific historical events demonstrates, as Feenberg states, that the “genocidal twentieth century is now followed by a new century in environmental crisis.”<sup>412</sup> Traverso, in the beginning of his book on *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, examines historical turning points through the fall of the Roman Republic to the French Revolution. All these events fundamentally changed the manner in which state and the citizenship interact. The point he attempts to make is that little changed in the organizational structure of society following the repeated, rational, and systematic killing of millions of innocent victims. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt demonstrates that the total control of Nazism was not merely the direction of one man but a historical progression that valorized national power at the expense of the other, and the acts of colonization initiated that progression. The deafening noise of the processes and forces of production in that historical progression deterred individuals from acting against the cacophony.

What this project aims to demonstrate, through the critique of instrumental rationality and action, is the inherent plurality in the world around us. Arendt claims “world alienation” is a result of intensive measuring and plotting, and the world becomes smaller as the space for wonder and contradiction disappear. Adorno similarly speaks to the primacy of the object and a better understanding of the subjective relationship between the objects we encounter in the world. The promises of the technological acceleration that allows civilization to continue accumulating at the current rate while maintaining an atmospheric temperature in the habitable zone for ecosystems as we know them are hopelessly utopic. Rather, as reinforced by Marcuse, we must change the *a priori* industrialized rationality. Science and technology are the means by which we understand and interact with the world, and the manner of their use is inherently political. I argue that

<sup>411</sup>Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 213

<sup>412</sup>Feenberg, *Between Reason and Experience*, 181

we, as a civilization, are not only alienated from nature but also from the world we have created, and we do not examine the prevalent rationality that drives us to recreate that world in our image. What is required is not simply to move forward but to undo consciously and manage the decline in production until we satisfy the ecological limit, which is accomplished through a de-centering of human production, understood as growth, and to consider the limits and the plurality of place. Such a life would be premised on need for self- sustainability of both human and non-human elements. This life would create and foster a more experiential realm premised in the aesthetics of being at the planetary scale measured in geological time rather than a fabricated world not built to last beyond the next quarter.

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