REPRESENTING NATURE:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VIRTUAL REPRESENTATION
OF NATURE AND ITS CHALLENGES

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I provide an analysis of the representation within the environmental movement that is based in critical theory. In considering the paradox which involves the awareness of an ecological crisis as well as a strong resistance to the creation of meaningful policy, I seek to root this problem in the representation of nature. This type of representation is constrained by a virtual account that is based upon constitutive identity and thus is sensitive to contextual perceptions of the discourse and depiction of the concept of nature. My aim is to give a critical analysis of the environmental movement as well as to explore the use of critical theory and contemporary art to enhance the approach of virtual representation in order to challenge traditional notions of natural beauty that can provide misleading accounts of the relationship between humanity and nature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

The environmental issues we face today have reached a new height. The awareness promoted by the environmental movement, the sophistication and legitimacy proliferated by the environmental sciences, and the urgency invoked in emotive references to what has been deemed a global ecological crisis, are all evidence of this change. Yet we continue to see a failure in the creation of meaningful change, change that transcends the rhetoric of non-binding responses, change that invokes popular participation, change that truly addresses the crisis. An analysis of this paradox reveals a fundamental problem embedded within environmental politics - the issue of the representation of nature. It is not a question of the policy itself, whether we expand carbon trading, place binding emissions restrictions on countries, or ban certain hazardous products. It is a question of the manner in which environmental concerns are represented itself that presents a challenge given the unconventional character of a subject that cannot speak or act for itself.

There is a difficulty in representing nature as such, independently of human interests. Often it becomes confused as an act of guardianship, but representation must differ from this sense of 'caring for' in order for nature to have political agency of its own. Within the political arena, environmental issues are taken up by green political parties, traditional pressure groups or new NGO's and social movements. The political viability of environmental concerns has been taken up insofar as it pertains to human interests (through affected grievance constituencies), but in order to address the issues of nature in itself, irrespective of direct human ties, the status of nature has transformed from that of an object to that of a subject, or a grievance constituency in itself. This has

created a break from the anthropocentric view of nature (seeing it in terms of its instrumental value), and invokes a call of empathy to address the issues of this subject. From this trajectory, we can only give nature a type of virtual, not actual, representation given the lack of a concrete mandate regarding the welfare of nature. Advocates couch their position based on the relevant discourse and data, as well as their own personal conscience and beliefs in order to claim their legitimacy in the formulation of a mandate for nature. Thus, there has emerged an awareness of the need to represent nature as a grievance constituency in its own right, but this awareness is met with the implicit restrictions of virtual representation. This problem presents a challenge for the adequate representation of nature, and thus I will explore the factors involved, from representational theory, to discourse and imagery, and the use of critical theory and contemporary art to enhance approaches to the virtual representation of nature.

The main conceptions of representation generally fall under three categories; the first is traditional democratic representation, in which an advocate is selected explicitly through an electoral process in order to represent the principal within the political arena; the second is a type of symbolic representation, through which we attempt to advocate for something perceived through dialogue and image; the third is a type of mirroring, or identification, consisting of representatives that correspond directly to the subject (like can only represent like, for example, only women can truly represent women and women's issues). From this perspective, some argue that certain groups (aboriginals, for example) are better fit to take up the advocacy of nature because of a stronger identification they may claim to have with nature. Yet nature challenges the boundaries of all such forms of representation, begging the question of how to approach its political

advocacy without a standard of accountability. In order to overcome such inadequacies, nature must be represented in a way that reflects critical discourse and imagery regarding the ways in which the commons have been organized, managed, manipulated or degraded.

In December of 2009, 120 heads of state and government met in Copenhagen to engage in discussion over the issue of climate change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty, was developed in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where 179 nations met with the goal of "making the difficult decisions needed to ensure a healthy planet for generations to come."[1] Its resulting treaty has been accompanied by protocols and accords, the most well known being the Kyoto protocol, which further articulates the goals and objectives, particularly of "stabili[zing] greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system."[2] The global attention given to these conferences illustrates the acknowledgment of the need for a global response to these environmental issues, and highlights the political resurgence of the issues since their global introduction at the first Earth Summit. Such issues are articulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an intergovernmental body established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide a clear scientific account of the growing global environmental challenges as well as a call for action from states to curb "anthropogenic interference with the climate system".[3]

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[1] "UN Conference on Environment and Development" http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html
[2] UNFCCC "The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, 7-19 December 2009" Accessed March, 2010. Available at: http://unfccc.int/press/fact_sheets/items/4978.php
[3] UNFCCC "Copenhagen Accord" Accessed March, 2010. Available at:

Copenhagen was the most recent of these summits, and was projected as an opportunity to redeem the integrity of the treaty, which had been compromised by the generally failed emissions reductions (meant to be binding) and the contentious carbon trading mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.[4] While some praised the conference as a significant step towards an adequate response, many saw the Copenhagen Accord as a failure in garnering a binding, accountable commitment from states.[5] The resulting accord articulates the signatories' "strong political will to urgently combat climate change in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities."[6] With no binding agreement, this statement fails to provide any standard of accountability. The Copenhagen conference was unable to harness enough support to invoke a measurable commitment to mediate environmental issues, specifically climate change. Its loose language, expressing strong commitments, acknowledging the imminence of the issue, and determining the responsibility of states, is well intentioned and arguably a positive step in heightening the awareness and commitment to environmental issues. These positive aspects tend to be outweighed by their negative counterparts though – those that challenge the relevancy of an accord which lacks binding commitments to precise goals and a system of international accountability. The accord is highly debated, but seen as a failure in the eyes of many who had hopes that the conference would take the first step in redefining social, political

http://maindb.unfccc.int/library/view_pdf.pl?url=http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/11a01.pdf

[4]   See UNFCCC "Kyoto Protocol" available at: http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php
[5]   For examples, see Trevors and Saier (2010), Schnoor (2010), or Marshall (2010). Such opinions ranged from the disappointment of some policy analysts, to the outrage of others (particularly NGO's), one of which (Greenpeace) released a press statement titled "Copenhagen Accord recycles old climate commitments, leaving the world heading for catastrophic climate change." (Jan 2010)
[6]   UNFCCC "Report of the Conference of the Parties" Accessed February, 2010. Availavle at: http://maindb.unfccc.int/library/view_pdf.pl?url=http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/11a01.pdf

and economic goals as they relate to the global ecological crisis.

We are left to question why the Copenhagen conference was seen as a failure. With the growing awareness and proliferation of scientific data that supports the notion of a global ecological crisis, the lack of an adequate response seems puzzling. Ulrich Beck asks, "Why is there no storming of the Bastille because of the environmental destruction threatening mankind, why no Red October of ecology?"[7] If environmental degradation is as threatening as many believe it to be, we are left to question the widened gap between theory or belief and practice insofar as environmental representation and legislation is regarded.

1.1 THE CHALLENGE OF REPRESENTING NATURE

Where I seek to situate this apparent disconnection or problem is in the concept of representation. Environmental issues have been plagued with a problem of representation due to the contentious question of who can claim to have a legitimate mandate over nature, a non-speaking entity. Communities affected by environmental issues can represent them as they relate to their particular grievance and location, but nature in itself lacks this capacity. This problem has manifested itself in various ways, from grievance constituencies, to ENGOs to green political parties. Yet, as was seen in Copenhagen this past December, a binding global response has failed in its formulation. The status of environmentalism must be questioned at this point; how is nature being represented, who is representing it, and how is its mandate being formulated?

Questions related to the status, maintenance or preservation of nature must be taken up by representatives and thus issues surrounding the creation of a political

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[7] Beck, Ulrich. "Climate for Change, or How to Create a Green Modernity?" *Theory, Culture & Society.* Los Angeles: Sage. Vol. 27 (2-3), 2010. pp. 254-266. pg. 254

mandate arise. While typically political representation is taken on by a member of the related aggrieved party, the subject of nature obfuscates this traditional process. Its political representation, which is reducible to a form of actual representation, can be accommodated when communities are directly affected by a particular environmental issue. The representation of nature in itself though is relegated to a type of virtual representation which has inherent restrictions. Nature is accounted for through political parties and environmental groups that attempt to bring attention to the issues through political processes and civil society, despite the lack of electoral capacity, whether tacit or explicit, on the part of nature. Representation is also sought symbolically in reference to the surrounding discourse and imagery, which often casts nature in either a scientistic or romantic account, and relies upon subjective depictions sensitive to contexts and dominant perspectives. It may also be taken up by self appointed representatives who claim to identify with the subject, but are not identical to the subject, whereas this identical relationship is often assumed as a prerequisite of representation. In all of these forms, the representation of nature begins with a contentious relation between the principal and the agent that must be explored.

This is not to mention the very issue of the probability of people taking up the advocates' role. While self appointed leadership can work when representatives rise out of a community directly affected by an environmental problem of pressing concern, not all environmental issues are apparently imminent. Many are distanced from our daily realities and thus easy to ignore. Yet when concerns breach the wall of apathy and present themselves and their consequences in apparent ways, people can be moved to act. This relates to an interesting notion tagged as NIMBY, 'Not In My Backyard'. When

environmental concerns are directly affecting people, they are much more likely to act in order to address the problem. We are left to wonder how it is that broader environmental concerns, whose impact is not directly apparent to many, can be adequately accommodated.

1.2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the way in which the argument will couch environmental issues in the problem of representation, representational theory will be explored considerably. A significant contribution to this field was made by Hanna Pitkin, whose analysis of distinctive modes of traditional representational theory illuminates the attempts to include environmentalism in the political arena. Pitkin's theoretical insights illustrate the standard of representational legitimacy against which the juxtaposition of a subject to which there can be no direct accountability poses an intriguing problem.

Also of theoretical importance is the emergence of the popularly termed "green political theory" with the re-emergence of environmentalism. This school of thought typically comes from a critical or constructivist perspective which seeks to understand the factors involved in our conceptions of our relationship with nature and the way in which it should be represented in order to give it some form of political voice. Its theorists foster careful considerations of the terms involved in our ideas about nature and the environmental movement, as well as the ways in which such environmental concerns interact with political economy. The work of green political theory has contributed to my approach insofar as its analysis of the environmental movement illuminates the diversity and complexity of our perceptions of nature and the ways in which we have attempted to give it a political voice.

Work from comparative perspectives of both political culture and new social movement theory offers insightful takes on environmentalism, considering it from an analytical perspective which explores the momentum of the environmental movement and the various aspects that have influenced and shaped it, including discourse and depiction. From the political culture perspective, Ronald Inglehart's well known World Values Surveys, which began in 1970 and continue today, illustrate an observable shift in values, from materialism to post materialism. The notion of a value shift and the re-emergence of environmentalism as examined through the theoretical lens of comparative politics provides a compelling analysis of the environmental movement and its perceived post materialist or progressive foundations. Critical theory from the New Social Movement (NSM) paradigm challenges this perceived progressiveness and illuminates the impact of discourse and depiction in relation to nature which has shaped the current trends in environmental philosophy and advocacy.

Many of the ideas that are contemplated within the paradigm of green political theory and comparative politics are rooted in philosophical predecessors which have considered the complex relation between humanity and its surroundings for centuries. Ideas of our alienation from nature, entrenched in theories regarding the progression of our modes of production and rationality, have been considered at length from various perspectives, those of great interest to this project being that of the Frankfurt school. The work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the concept of the culture industry and the role of nature within this context, as well as the aesthetics of natural beauty and our encounters with them, provides an insightful background to a contemporary analysis of the discourse, depiction and representation of nature and the environmental movement

itself.

In terms of its depiction, aesthetic and pictorial theories will be considered. Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke were among the first to contemplate the aesthetic qualities of natural beauty, illustrating diverse perspectives on how and why nature is appreciated as a source of such beauty or not. These considerations are worked out by Kate Soper, who refers to what she has called the danger of an assumed 'common aesthetic' of nature, as well as to an understanding of depictions of nature and how we react to them. These theoretical considerations are an essential background to the consideration of our encounters with natural beauty, as well as with the theme of the re-enchantment or mystification of nature. They also lead into an exploration of the contribution of contemporary art to the environmental discourse. Thus, art theory and criticism has a role in informing this analysis of the depiction of nature in art works, and the potential of contemporary art to challenge normative discourses.

1.3 TERMINOLOGY

When we refer to the representation of nature, it is often confused with the representation of the environment. These terms must be distinguished in order to analyze how they have been represented in distinct ways. The oft cited quote from Raymond Williams, describing nature as "the most complex word in the language,"[8] points to the elusive character of the term and its malleability to be used in diverse contexts and understandings. This does not mean that it has entirely evaded somewhat of a common or dominant conception though. Nature can be said to have certain commonly assumed characteristics that generally conform with our ideas about it within Western culture.

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[8]   Wilson, Alexander. The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to Exxon Valdez Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991. pg. 12

When defined simply and fundamentally, nature is often referred to as "everything which is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity,"[9] and thus is not man made but created organically (from a perspective of either science or religion). In this basic sense, nature stands in opposition to that which we know and understand. It can be seen as sui generis and indifferent to man, thus fostering a conception of an inability to master it, or defined in an ecological sense as something of which humans are but one part. The complexity of the term insofar as it is defined and applied will be explored in relation to its influence on the discourse, depiction and representation of nature.

Distinct from our conceptions of nature, 'environment' implies human interference. The term invokes a sense of change, in that the natural order is modified by humans - the artificial intermingles with the organic and forms our environment. Humans may sense a distance from nature, but are immersed in their environment and thus feel a greater responsibility to this more anthropocentric definition as it constitutes a matter of human interest (though often taken for granted). The concept of environment alludes to ways in which we interact with and manage nature – nature is changed through anthropogenic interference and it is this conception that has been fostered within the environmental movement.

In order to accommodate the representation of nature within the political sphere, it is as though the term nature was transformed into environment. Since humans commonly associate nature as 'other', environment can be seen as a concept that traditional representation can adequately handle. This has created an inclusive and yet confusing conception of the term 'environment' and leaves us wondering whatever happened to the concept of 'nature' which has seemingly disappeared from the environmental discourse

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[9]   Soper, Kate. <u>What is Nature?</u> Oxford: Blackwell. 1995. pg. 15

altogether. It begs the question – can political representation accommodate a non-anthropocentric or non-instrumental concept of nature?

Another useful examination of terms is found within the environmental movement itself - the distinction between environmentalism and deep ecology. The former encourages more of a "'managerial' approach to environmental problems, secure in the belief that they can be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption."[10] This falls in line with the notion of 'sustainable development' in its ideal of furthering growth while taking environmental considerations into account.[11] With advancements in technology and a business perspective that reflects an awareness of scarcity and environmental degradation, environmentalists see the futility of trying to overthrow the system of production and thus attempt to integrate environmental issues with the existing political system. The latter approach urges for a recollection of the concept of nature which is not defined as being 'other' or outside of humanity. It is that of deep ecology which "presupposes radical changes in our relationship with it [nature], and thus in our mode of social and political life."[12] From this perspective, the entirety of the system of production and consumption is detrimental to the preservation of the planet and must necessarily be reconsidered.

Whether advocating for deep ecology or environmentalism, both perspectives have sought political representation through interest groups or political parties. Environmentalists and ecologists have differing perspectives on what the mandate of nature should consist of, and hence the splintering of issues encompassed within the

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[10] Dobson, Andrew. <u>Green Political Thought</u> London: Unwin Hyman. 1990. pg. 13
[11] The term 'sustainable development' was popularized in the Brundtland Report, suggesting that equity, growth and environmental maintenance are simultaneously possible. The report is also known as Gro Harlem Brundtland's <u>Our Common Future</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
[12] Dobson, 13

environmental movement itself. Some groups seek radical transformation for the entire system of production, an example being Greenpeace International, while others strive for modest goals attainable within the current system, an example being green political parties targeting carbon emissions reductions. The mandates articulated by the various fractions of the environmental movement all depend on particular conceptions of nature and our relationship to it.

Both environmentalist and ecologist perspectives have been represented by interest groups. Within the political arena, interest groups often claim to represent or speak for grievance communities that seek a voice and influence in policy decisions. The term 'grievance constituency' implies that a certain grievance – a justifiable and unbearable suffering, is transformed into a supported claim by a particular community. This community can seek representation through traditional forms in order to voice their grievance within the political arena. This has happened on several occasions when environmental concerns have directly affected a particular group of people who have banded together to influence policy in order to address their concern – and the outcome has provoked new environmental legislation. The morphing of nature into a grievance constituency in itself is an acknowledgement of the need to give nature representation in itself, aside from instances where its degradation impacts human interests directly.

1.4 GRIEVANCE CONSTITUENCIES

Traditional theories of political representation do not give adequate consideration to the challenge of representing nature. Rather, what has been common in political decisions regarding nature, by way of 'environmental politics', has been to take nature into account only when it can be accommodated by traditional political representative

methods. This has been accomplished through the manifestation of grievance constituencies. When a particular community is disproportionately afflicted in a given situation, they can have their wishes represented politically when their grievance is transformed into a supported claim. This term relates to the community ties of the given aggrieved population, and it also points to a single issue or set of issues about which they have particular complaints and seek political action to affect their specific situation.

An example of a grievance constituency pushing for environmental legislation through more traditional forms of representation is found in the case of Love Canal. This is a community in Niagara Falls, New York where citizens came together to draw attention to the toxic waste that had been buried under their land by Hooker Chemical. This company had used the canal as a chemical dumpsite and then covered it with soil and sold it to the city for the price of a dollar.[13] In this situation, the community banded together in protest through a homeowner's association and garnered enough attention to have the situation declared a national state of emergency. This attention successfully brought about the relocation of the inhabitants of Love Canal as well as a clean up of the canal itself. It led to the creation of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), a United States federal law designed to clean up abandoned hazardous waste sites.[14] This law indeed extends federally and thus is beneficial for the push of environmental legislation across the country. Yet the broad application of this law was not the original motivating force behind the formation of the grievance constituency. The community took up the cause because of the direct impact that the particular environmental issues had on their own livelihoods, in

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[13]   Beck, Eckardt C. "The Love Canal Tragedy" EPA Journal, January 1979; available at:
        http://www.epa.gov/history/topics/lovecanal/01.htm
[14]   Beck (1979)

their particular neighbourhood. This direct connection to the issue is what motivated them to act, and without this crucial connection, the issue of hazardous waste sites may have never been of any importance to them at all. In cases like this, legislation which addresses an environmental concern, and even gains national applicability, is created due to the pressure of a constituency group who seeks to have their personal interests and rights protected. Thus in Love Canal, the way in which effective environmental legislation was pursued was through the personal interests of the community represented as a grievance constituency and which depended on a direct connection to a particular environmental issue.

The creation of environmental protection laws often occurs through the processes instigated by grievance constituencies and support the anthropocentric view of environmental legislation in that its creation is contingent upon human concern which is born out of a direct connection to a particular issue. Other uses of the commons whose effects can be negative, but have no direct impact on any particular community, fall outside of the scope of this kind of representation. Often, in society we are far removed from processes that exploit resources in unsustainable ways and do not feel an imminent need to address these issues through political avenues. Or even if we do, we may feel impotent with the insignificant amount of power we feel we have to induce the level of global change needed to alter the degradation of the environment. We are left to ask what happens to an interest that is vital to all, but affects us often in indirect and unrecognizable ways? This challenge has fostered the noted transformation of nature into a grievance constituency in itself. Yet if many feel such a distance from these issues, who can take up their cause and participate in formulating a mandate for nature, particularly

when nature itself is incapable of contributing to that dialogue? As Jürgen Trittin, co-leader of the caucus of the federal German Green Party has said, "nature can only become political through people."[15] It is in this sense that through the action of taking up the cause for nature and creating its mandate, people have taken up advocacy as representatives or custodians for the environment in various capacities and with a diversity of goals and aims in mind.

In situations such as Love Canal, grievances related to environmental issues can be articulated within the political arena by way of a disproportionately affected constituency. They have the ability to give voice to their concerns, as representatives of their affected community, within the political arena in a way that can be accommodated by the political process (in terms of interest or pressure groups seeking changes in existing legislation, or the creation of new legislation). Environmental issues that lack this direct attachment with a grievance constituency are left to be represented in other ways.

Awareness of an ecological crisis has mounted, particularly with the international attention garnered by the UNFCCC conferences and the international recognition of the scientific account provided by the intergovernmental panel of the IPCC. Yet there remains a basic disconnection between ecological concerns and the responsiveness of the general public. The Gallup poll has shown a decrease among Americans from 2009 to 2010 regarding their concerns over environmental issues, and a general decline over the past 20 years.[16] As an interest, the environment has had to vie against other embedded

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[15] Trittin, Jurgen. "Ecological Materialism: How nature becomes political" *Eurozine* October, 2009. Available at: http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-10-30-trittin-en.html

[16] Jones, Jeffery M. "In U.S., Many Environmental Issues at 20-Year-Low Concern" *Gallup*. March, 2010. Available at: http://www.gallup.com/poll/126716/environmental-issues-year-low-concern.aspx

interests of society, and due to a lack of direct contact with many environmental implications, such as climate change whose effects are more gradual and less evident in our daily lives, many individuals have never sensed an urgency in resolving such issues. Other interest groups within the political arena have been entrenched in our political culture in the West and largely dominate the policy discourse (an example – the Dairy Farmers of Canada, est. 1934); the environment is a newer interest (in terms of popularity, it really did not gain much awareness until its popularization in the 1970s). Because the environment cannot speak for itself, the need has emerged for a representative body to negotiate within the political arena to include environmental issues as a paramount interest in policy. Yet representing the environment as an interest group is an approach that faces considerable challenges.

1.5 THE REPRESENTATIONAL CHALLENGE

How the representation of nature could be approached is thus not through traditional, or 'actual' methods of representation, but rather in a sense of 'virtual' representation. While actual representation is based upon a demonstrable mandate, manifested through either an election or the creation of a legal contract, virtual representation is based on a constitutive identity in which the agent is identical with the principal and thus is able to give agency to an as yet mute principal. Described as "having the essence or effect but not the appearance or form,"[17] the term 'virtual' eludes to a concept of representation in which the representative cannot constitute the subject, but is representative in a more detached and perhaps symbolic way. In the case of nature, the appeal to virtual forms of representation are an attempt to approach the representation of a permanent community which is not bound by constituency lines. It is in reference to the

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[17] www.dictionary.com

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commons that this type of representation is useful, to a concept that is theoretically unbounded and unowned. Its representation is necessary for its preservation, transcending boundaries, ownership, time and distance. This approach is often difficult to separate from guardianship, but must be distinct for the formulation of a politically viable mandate for nature. Advocates of an alternative approach to the representation of nature are thus making a case for its virtual representation and exploring non-traditional methods of giving political attention to a subject whose representation cannot be sufficiently handled by democratic political theory. In this sense that traditional accounts cannot apply, for there exists some extraordinary quality to the subject which is to be represented. Nature is left in a realm that falls outside the scope of traditional political representation, and thus must be accommodated by another form of representation. The ways in which individuals have sought to give nature representation in itself, not only as it relates to a particular space or community, but regarding its intrinsic welfare, need to be considered in light of our conceptions of representation. The exploration of diverse approaches to representation is inherently grounded in our conceptions and ideas of the subject which are born out of dialogue and depiction.

Social movements of the past have sought representation for those subject to mandated and maintained discrimination. The goal of such movements was to realize the emancipation of the subject on the basis of justice, eventually leading to their autonomy and their ability to represent themselves (for examples, the women's movement or the civil rights movement). While environmentalism makes this appeal as well, it is limited by the fact that it can never be expected to represent itself, and therefore the articulation of its mandate remains in the hands of humanity. Unlike women or slaves who were freed

of official discrimination and given the opportunity to represent themselves, nature lacks this emancipatory potential. The transformation of nature into a grievance constituency in itself remains restricted by virtual representation, thus how we approach its representation is a fundamentally important consideration.

My aim in analyzing the complexities involved in representing a voiceless subject is to consider the ways in which our approaches to representation have been informed by, and also in turn how they have themselves shaped, our conceptions of nature based upon its surrounding discourse and depiction. In challenging the ability of traditional representational theories to accommodate this subject, I seek to open a diversity of perceptions to how this process has manifested itself within and outside of the political sphere. Through the consideration of the complex discourse of environmentalism and the intriguing approaches to the depiction of landscape and nature in contemporary art, the potential of alternative approaches to representation will be illustrated based upon a critical analysis of current trends of environmental representation.

1.6 AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO REPRESENTATION

In order to consider the challenge of representation that nature presents, in the second chapter I will take account of traditional political representational theory. Pitkins' analysis and distinctions between various forms of representation will be the focus of this chapter. These include the formalistic approach, which is illustrative of traditional representational theory; the descriptive approach, which relates to a scientific account of nature; the symbolic approach, to which romanticized or enchanted conceptions of natures can be linked; and the substantive approach, which relates most specifically to contemporary environmentalism. These accounts of representation will all be considered

in light of our conceptions of nature, and this analysis reveals the challenge of its representation, begging the question of how it is exactly that the environmental movement has shaped its mandate, and what it seeks to represent. I will take into account the challenges to the validity of the representation of nature given the lack of a standard of accountability. Representational theory can ground the main ideas of the concept of representation and illustrate the inherent difficulty of representing a subject (or object depending on the perceiver) who lacks the capacity to voice their own will.

If it is true that "addressing the challenges posed by our relationship to the physical world is central to what politics is,"[18] then this relationship must be analyzed, and thus the third chapter will explore the discourse of the concept of nature and its relationship to humanity. This relationship can be said to ground our most basic ideas about the organization of space, community, modes of production and consumption, and also the relationships we experience with nature itself and with ourselves and others. Thus the ways in which we set about representing nature is importantly dependent upon our perceptions of this relationship. Such perceptions are grounded in discourse – the ways in which we communicate and exchange ideas about nature. This section will be based in a theoretical framework, drawing on the critical theory of the Frankfurt school which provides insights into the development of the humanity-nature distinction. It will also take green political theory into account, particularly those theorists, such as Andrew Dobson, Robert Goodin, Kate Soper, Robert Boardman, or John M. Meyer, who have given much consideration to the impact of the related discourse on our conceptions of nature and the development of the movement itself. This approach illustrates the expansion of the political sphere to incorporate environmentalism and how this process

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[18]   Meyer, John M. Political Nature. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001. pg. 125

has unfolded and influenced the shape and progress of our understanding of the role of nature, environmental legislation, and the environmental movement itself.

These considerations help shape an understanding of how we have come to represent nature based on our ideas about its value, use, and position in relation to humanity. The sources of this type of information come not only from historical and political accounts, but also from diverse perspectives and depictions of the subject. Considering how nature is understood within social movements contributes to our understanding of how we think about nature and thus how people approach the representation of its 'wishes and welfare'.[19] This chapter will thus also consider the environmental movement in relation to new social movement theory and political culture, particularly focusing on the observed shift in values from materialism to postmaterialism and how this has contributed to the movement itself. The transformative aspects highlighted by both political culture and NSM theory seem to naturally explain the emergence of the environmental movement, coupled by the growing environmental degradation and the increased awareness of this due to technological advances in science, as well as media and communication. Its global importance is at an unprecedented level, but as noted earlier, is met with a paradoxical resistance on the level of policy.

The issues of representation and discourse will be considered in the fourth chapter insofar as they form and inform pictorial depictions of nature. If it is true that art tends to precede social trends, it is particularly interesting to consider the progression of the depiction of nature in artworks from the time of the industrial revolution to the present. In works of the past that have depicted pictorial landscapes nature was often portrayed as a refuge of idyllic scenery, an escape from the everyday free from any constraints against

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[19] Pitkin, Hanna. The Concept of Representation. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

its spontaneous development. It is characteristic of contemporary art to challenge

conventional notions of particular concepts, and this trend is evident in the consideration

of nature in contemporary works. Rather than an idyllic scene of wilderness, new works

confront and shock us with portrayals of nature as a damaged, injured, violated subject.

They generally challenge the notion of harmony between humans and nature and

questioned the freedom of nature's own development given the profound impact of

human intervention. A sculpture displays a dead tree trunk lying in a stone grave

(Goldsworthy, 2007), a photograph captures acres of vast clear cuts in a rich forest

(Adams, 1990-present), a film traverses through sound, speed and imagery to expose the

extent of our rapid growth and its affects on the planet (Koyaanisqatsi, 1982).

'Earthworks' or other environmentally influenced works have grown in their proliferation,

and the increasing trend of the depiction of nature as an injured party has further

encouraged the perception of nature akin to that of a grievance constituency.

The considerations of representational approaches to nature, including traditional

and interest group accounts, will be contrasted to the potential revealed in alternative

methods of depiction. As accounts of the ambiguity of the subject as well the complex

relationship with humanity of which it is involved, the notion of traditional

representational theory is challenged as an inadequate approach to the representation of

nature in order to invoke meaningful policy. Alternative methods of re-enchantment must

be considered through an expansion of the discourse and depiction of nature by way of

critical theory and contemporary art.

CHAPTER 2   REPRESENTATION

In order to take the environment into account, we are forced to come up with a way in which its welfare can be articulated in a political context, and representational theory provides a basis upon which such approaches have been formulated. Hanna Pitkin has offered an account of four representational approaches: traditional, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. An analysis of these distinct forms is illustrative of the attempts to give nature political representation, and also revealing of the challenges and inadequacies involved given the lack of voice or agency of the subject. In this chapter, I will focus on these four forms of representation, as well as the challenge of creating a mandate required for the political representation of nature as it cannot be explicitly articulated.

The notion of establishing a representative is often considered as the transfer of authorization to speak on behalf of someone else (ie. through elections)[20], and nature has no chance to choose its own form of representation. A lack of a concrete conception of the wishes and welfare of nature has opened the discourse to a variety of interpretations, some arguing for the preservation of nature based on its utility for human use (such as the arguable oxymoron of 'sustainable development'), while others argue for the preservation of nature as a good in itself (from a variety of perspectives such as the idea of guardianship or a holistic conception of the relationship between man and nature.) This is reflective of the tensions between the environmental and ecological perspectives, from which different accounts of representation have arisen (from Greenpeace and Earth First!, to green and/or traditional political parties trying to incorporate 'green' issues). Without a speaking subject, the issue is left in the hands of those who purport to represent nature,

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[20]   Pitkin, 43

with different motivations, within the political sphere. In this context, environmental interests vie for political attention just as other interest groups do, and thus the role of power politics in shaping popular environmentalism and the strength of the environmental lobby cannot be ignored. Traditional conceptions of representation have fostered the rise of environmentalism as an interest, and thus have put the issue in a challenging position within the political arena.

2.1 THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNT OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Hanna Pitkin distinguishes between various types of representation. Formalistic representation, for which she draws from Hobbes' concept of representation in Leviathan, implies authorization. In what she considers to be a narrow view of representation, the formalistic account identifies representation as "someone who is authorized to act."[21] Hobbes considers the consent of the represented to be made when they submit to a social contract, explicitly or tacitly (most often the latter), under which they expect to be governed in return for some improved sense of order and security. And thus, "Each man who contracts 'authorizes *all* the actions and judgements' of the representative 'as if they were his own'."[22] Thus representation from this perspective is legitimized by this transfer of power which is based upon consent (tacit or explicit), after which the representative is authorized to act on behalf of those represented. This definition adheres to the basic legal definition of the term and is an important foundational understanding of representation. Pitkin notes that "a legal agent represents just to the extent that his actions are binding on his principal as if the principal himself had acted."[23] The representative is accountable directly to the principal, for the representative's actions are conceived of as a direct

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[21] Pitkin, 38
[22] Pitkin, 30
[23] Pitkin, 35

reflection of the will of the principal. This approach is thus one of practicality, particularly in situations where a constituency is too large for each individual to have their own voice heard, a representative can simplify the situation by invoking a unified, coherent articulation of their interests.

In democratic societies, elections are seen as a 'crucial criterion' in this granting of representative authority and this type of approach provides an important foundation for the concept. It is, however, as Pitkin suggests, far too narrow a definition for many instances of representation. Even if we consider the accountability involved in being subjected to elections, this account fails to address other more complex types of representation. This is clear when we consider nature, for here we have a subject with no agency to cast votes or vocalize its will in order to transfer authority (whether tacit or explicit) to a legitimate representative. Nor can a representative be held accountable to nature directly. The representation of nature thus cannot be explained through the formalistic conception of representation.

2.2 DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION

We must explore other conceptualizations of representation in order to comprehend the attempts to formulate a mandate for nature in order to give it a political voice. Pitkin's second type of representation is called descriptive, which accounts for "a representative body [which] is distinguished by an accurate correspondence or resemblance to what it represents, by reflecting without distortion."[24] This type of representation is also called 'standing for' and involves action not in the sense of authorization or accountability, but in the sense of "giving information about [and]

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[24] Pitkin, 60

making of representations about,"[25] and thus sounds more related to the way in which we may hope to approach the representation of nature. Pitkin points out that "representing means giving information about the represented; being a good representative means giving accurate information; where there is no information to give, no representation can take place."[26] Whereas grievance constituencies can voice their sufferings and a representative can seek to account for these injustices, how are we to garner information about the suffering of nature? Should we seek it from scientists? From experts in ecology and biology? From environmentalists? From deep ecologists? When there is such a diverse range of perspectives regarding the welfare and management of nature, how can we convey information that reflects the interests of all those who claim to have some legitimate connection to its representation? John Meyer states that it is "the existence of diverse attitudes toward nature within a common culture [that] seems necessary to explain the growth of environmentalism itself."[27] With the inclusion of such a range of diverse perspectives, the descriptive account of representation is useful to analyze given the difficulties of conveying information about such a highly debated issue. It is contested not only by way of how we should approach or manage the problem, but in the very problem itself; some still challenge the notion of the existence of a global ecological crisis at all. Though some international consensus about the acknowledgment of the problem has been determined (Copenhagen accord), the lack of international commitment to binding policy begs the question of whether this acknowledgment was made with sincerity.

  The representation of nature invites the imposition of boundaries based on the

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[25] Pitkin, 84
[26] Pitkin, 83
[27] Meyer, pg.9

necessity of providing particular definitions and goals in order to advance the cause. It has thus been left generally to two main accounts of nature. The first of which, the scientific account, generally seeks to convey information about nature by way of observations based in scientific data and hypotheses. It is often linked with the mechanistic view of nature, given its scientistic potential to render environmental issues to technical solutions. The mechanistic view is such that the dominance of human understanding fosters the mastery and subjugation of nature. The scientific approach has been heavily relied upon in appeals for an international consensus regarding climate change, as is evident in the work of the IPCC. Its evidence based account, subject to scientific methodology, can be used by the environmental movement to point out the consequences of the degradation of nature.

The scientific approach fits well in the descriptive type of representation as it can be said to seek the presentation of 'an accurate correspondence or resemblance' to nature through scientific data regarding the vast array of variables of which it is constituted. The science of nature is indeed grounded in claims to legitimate accuracy based upon rigorous methodology and an appeal to objective, testable hypotheses. The UN bases its international call to action regarding environmental issues in the data provided by the IPCC. This scientific body was created precisely for this function, "to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences."[28] Scientific knowledge of the environmental issues that face society are a source of information that is largely trusted (though not without its doubters and cynics, climate change deniers as a main example).

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[28]   Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Organization". Accessed January 2010. Available at: http://www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.htm

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It stands as an example of how descriptive representation is indeed manifest when the scientific community presents information of the subject in order to send a message, or to simply present what they deem are the facts, which relate the issue and point to the immanent need of addressing environmental issues.

The critique of the scientific approach comes from the theoretical perspective of deep ecology which charges it with being inherently linked to a mechanical view of nature, associated with Galileo, Descartes, and Newton, and referring to its emergence following the seventeenth century scientific revolution in Europe as a reaction to the Aristotelian emphasis of teleology.[29] This is relatable to what Douglas Torgerson has deemed a 'rationalistic scheme' of the management of society, or what Adorno and Horkheimer criticized about the culture industry fostering the dominance of instrumental reason. This is the supposition that "the nonhuman world is considered to be valuable only insofar as it can serve as a means – or insofar as it is instrumental – to human ends."[30] In this anthropocentric sense, some charge the scientistic approach as being reductionist, imposing an understanding upon a complex subject by reducing its particularities to mechanistic, objective facts which can be observed and often mastered and controlled. This anthropocentric characterization is not the only manifestation of the scientific account though, for, increasingly, appeals to scientific data are being made within the environmental movement to encourage the urgency of the issue. Yet this perception of a mechanistic account remains "an especially familiar target among environmentalist writers,"[31] who claim that this type of approach divorces nature from

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[29] Meyer, 45
[30] Fox, Warwick. Toward a Transpersonal Ecology – Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism. Boston: Shambhala, 1990. pg.149
[31] Meyer, 45

society and puts humanity in a better position to impose instrumental reason, to contain, control and dominate nature, using it as a mere resource for our modes of production.

There is an immediate concern here with this critical approach in that it appears to assume an intrinsic value of nature. In this sense, the critique of the scientific approach "presupposes that moral, social, and political views will follow from one's conception of nature"[32] and this reinforces a notion of nature as embodying a directive capacity. The tensions between the scientific approach and its opponents highlight the differences of perception in terms of our relationship with nature, and have informed the environmental movement insofar as how it handles the problem of representing nature.

In reference to Pitkin's original account of descriptive representation, this portrayal of how it is manifest within environmentalism leads us to wonder what legitimizes this process of providing "accurate correspondence or resemblance"[33]? If the information relayed through descriptive representation must accurately correspond and resemble the subject, then as long as it is embedded in a dominant attitude of society it seems that it would be acceptable as a form of representation. Meyer asks "since there are divergent attitudes toward nature within a society, then how is it that certain attitudes become dominant in public decision-making, while others are seemingly relegated to the private sphere?"[34] He is referring here to the dominance of the scientific and even mechanistic conceptions of nature which dominate environmental politics, while more romanticized ideas of nature and the way in which we interact with it is often relegated to our private sphere of life, particularly to the domain of leisure.

In light of the global environmental summits which have garnered international

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[32] Meyer, 46
[33] Pitkin, 84
[34] Meyer, 10

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attention towards environmental issues, it is evident where the dominant view lies. The fact of the creation and promotion of the IPCC by the UN illustrates the influence of the scientific position of descriptive representation. The references in the text of the Copenhagen Accord to scientific data and accuracy; for example, stated in the second paragraph of the first page, the participating countries claim, "We agree that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science, and as documented by the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report with a view to reduce global emissions so as to hold the increase in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius, and take action to meet this objective consistent with science and on the basis of equity."[35] The accord makes it clear upon which standard of legitimacy the international consensus regarding the environment falls, and it is the scientific account which dominates this political arena.

This is not to claim that other conceptions of nature are not used more rhetorically as an emotive plea for participation even within this political arena, but the legitimacy in which such international participation is grounded falls on the side of science. There are concerns with a strictly scientific approach. In consideration of the political theory of George Grant, Katherine Fierlbeck has noted that "what is wrong with scientific rationality is not what it produces but what it leaves out. For in a culture that holds rationality to be the measure of truth, qualities that cannot be measured, classified, and quantified are given little attention or credence."[36] While the scientific community has provided illuminating, methodical and convincing information about the state of global ecology, in terms of giving nature adequate representation, it does seem to have left

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[35] UNFCCC "Report of the Conference of the Parties"
[36] Fierlbeck, Katherine. Political Thought in Canada Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006. pg. 56 – regarding a concern of the encroachment of American life (consumerist culture) on Canadian society, fostering technocracy and leaving values out.

something out. If the science is so clear, the lack of binding commitment at Copenhagen remains a mystery. The scientistic approach often points to single issue aspects of the movement and represents the environment in this descriptive sense as an interest group. In this way its representation has proved inadequate in garnering support to invoke meaningful commitment to ameliorating the negative implications of humanity's effects on the planet.

2.3 SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

The emotive version of nature in contrast with the scientistic approach seems to lack methodological rigour in terms of its ability to relay information about the subject of nature. Yet, its influence has been quite instrumental in shaping Western conceptions of nature throughout centuries. The entire discourse of nature as a refuge of aesthetic beauty, the inclusive ideas invoked in the image of a holistic planet, the idea of nurturing and caring for, these conceptions are entrenched in enchanted ideas of nature that often find as much popular support as scientific data. They are also more accessible. Not everyone may be able to grasp atmospheric science, but people can consider how they *feel* when they experience what may be for them an aesthetic encounter with nature, or empathetic encounter with nature that has been degraded. The enchanted view of nature relies on much of the symbolism fostered by the environmental movement, which relates to another form of representation in Pitkin's account.

Symbolic representation follows the account of descriptive representation, differing from the latter with respect to its aspects of emotive power. Pitkin writes that a symbol is representative insofar as "it calls to mind, and even beyond that evokes

emotions or attitudes appropriate to the absent thing."[37] Humans can act as symbols, and one of the most compelling examples of this is a head of state who symbolically represents the nation and its character. For symbolic representation to be effective it must be believed; people must associate the symbol with the referent in meaningful and often emotional ways. Playing on such a strongly persuasive factor such as emotion, Pitkin notes that "such belief may be fostered or created."[38] We are socialized with certain symbolism that we come to believe is natural, and often new manifestations of symbolic representation are introduced and advertised to the extent that we come to believe them as truths.

Symbolic references constitute a powerful faction within the environmental movement. This sense of representation presents it as a 'power relation' between the leader and the followers, and the symbolism induced in environmentalism can be said to invoke strong responses from many observers, signifying the power of the symbolic image, event or gesture. The tree of life, the circular symbols referring to the planet, among other references, invoke a holistic sense that all things are connected and that humans are but a part of this circle and a part of nature, dependent upon it for our survival. The use of animal images to display our damaging effects on the planet are meant to invoke empathetic responses to subjugation and suffering. A body of feminist literature regarding the links between their theory and environment refers to the well known symbolism of the feminization of nature, as Mother and nurturer. These images and referents all contribute to a symbolic depiction of nature which has been integrated into our understanding of the concept.

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[37]   Pitkin, 96
[38]   Pitkin, 104

Symbolic events that occur in relation to environmentalism – one could consider the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico – can validate the plight of the movement by standing as a symbol of the disastrous consequences to come if such issues are not mediated. Symbolic acts or gestures can be considered as well, such as the opening of a national park, or the classification of an endangered species to benefit from increased protective measures. The images, events and gestures entrenched with symbolic meaning for the environmental movement invoke an assumedly common emotive response. There are underlying assumptions from this conception of representation that those experiencing the relevant symbolism will react in similar ways, largely due to the homogenization of culture generating similar attitudes and beliefs. It also encourages what Meyer refers to as the directive capacity of nature to provide a source of moral and political standards. Deep ecologists can use this type of symbolism to garner support and understanding for their position.

Following a period of extensive control and mastery over nature which reached its height at the peak of the industrial movement, there has been a re-enchantment of nature which entails a re-discovery of its apparent value or aesthetic beauty. This has paradoxically been endorsed by consumerist culture, through which travel and vacation are promoted in terms of tourist destinations where nature could be appreciated in its 'natural' state, places like national parks or unspoilt beaches. The concept of leisure, and the industry which followed, re-invented the ways in which nature is experienced and subsequently worked to 'fragment the land' into predetermined areas of enjoyment, such as the nature trail, the beach, the campground, or the zoo.[39] These sites were infused with

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[39] Wilson, 28

notions of 'getting back to nature' despite the constructed character of their creation.[40]

This process of re-enchantment was built upon the romantic symbolism of nature and assumes a common emotive response, in that people will feel the need to 'discover' nature by way of scenic drives or eco-tourism. It invoked new ways of organizing nature, and as Alexander Wilson has noted, "our experience of the natural world... is always mediated. It is always shaped by rhetorical constructs like photography, industry, advertising, and aesthetics, as well as by institutions like religion, tourism, and education."[41] The appeal of the symbolic approach must be considered in light of the concept of re-enchantment and the acknowledgement of human mediation.

Giving nature symbolic status has fostered its sacralization to a point at which its romantic conception has become mythologized. The perceptions we have of our relation to nature have been affected by this process. Alison Stone explains that "the mode of thought which lies at the root of modern social relations makes it impossible for people to think critically about these relations, which thereby become an unchallengeable framework akin to myth."[42] Symbolism becomes a deeply entrenched way of conveying meaning. The national parks, scenic vistas, areas of 'unspoilt' natural beauty often lead us to believe that nature has been left to develop spontaneously in many contexts, and thus its freedom is not constrained by society, it is just necessarily separated from our daily lives. Symbolic representation accounts for this romanticized association with nature and can be dangerously misleading. The tension here will be further explored in the following chapter, but first Pitkin's final conception of representation must be considered.

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[40] Relates to Foucault's concept of heterotopias – see ch. 3
[41] Wilson,12
[42] Stone, Alison. *Adorno and the disenchantment of nature.* Philosophy Social Criticism 2006; 32; pp. 231-253. pg. 237

2.4 SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

Pitkin claims that while descriptive and symbolic representation give a more comprehensive understanding, they still fail to "exhaust the concept of representation."[43] She notes that from both perspectives, "neither case is the activity an acting for the represented, on behalf of, instead of, in the interest of them; it is in no sense a matter of agency."[44] Thus Pitkin turns to her last type of representation, called substantive or 'acting for' and considers the actual conduct of the representative.

This type of representation includes two main features. The first of which considers the expectations of the representative to act in a way that differs from their decision-making and actions if they were on their own. These types of expectations can limit or give power to the representative, as Pitkin notes that "the divorce of action from certain personal values can cut both ways"[45] While the representative must curb certain behaviour that may be appropriate for himself individually, but not for the principal he represents, other freedoms may be opened up to the representative that would not apply to him individually. For example, "The representative may be free to push his principal's claims and interest to the very limit, to drive a hard bargain, where the principal acting in person would be expected to show much greater modesty and unselfishness."[46] Thus in acting for the principal, acceptable individual behaviour must be contrasted with the expectations and acceptable behaviour of a representative.

The other factor of substantive representation is deliberate action. The representative must act in a way that reflects deliberation and an expectation of

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[43] Pitkin, 111
[44] Pitkin, 111
[45] Pitkin, 118
[46] Pitkin, 118

accountability; "a matter of acting *as if* we would be held to account rather than of institutionalized accountability."[47] But how we hold representatives accountable, and to what criterion, depends on their representative capacity, ie. are they acting as an agent, a trustee, a substitute, a delegate, or a specialist? Do they act freely or are they constricted by their principal? Pitkin considers these various forms of substantive representation and carefully distinguishes between them, outlining which can be considered real accounts of representation and which fall under broader categories such as caring for or being used as a mere tool to advance certain interests. She notes that "the idea of taking care of or looking after the interest or welfare of another... is not by itself equivalent to representing."[48] Pitkin refers to the plausibility of obligations to *care for* in this sense, particularly by experts or specialists, and in this sense seems quite relevant to the issue of environmental 'representation'.

Substantive representation is a useful concept in terms of its insights into representation that occurs without formalities - "without the exercise of another's rights or the ascription of normative consequences, without an 'official' representer". It thus provides "standards for judging the representative's action, for deciding whether he has represented well or ill (as distinct from whether he is a good likeness, a typical man)."[49] Yet it leaves us wondering how we can judge the actions of representatives who have taken up the environmental cause when we lack a definitive account of the mandate of nature? Can we actually represent nature then, or are we only engaging in 'caring for' as "the one who is taken care of has nothing to say about it, is not conceived as being

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47   Pitkin, 119
48   Pitkin, 140
49   Pitkin, 142

capable of saying anything about it or acting for himself."[50] Pitkin's framework here would seem to imply that the representation of nature is thus not representation at all, nor can it be given the importance in representational theory of the subject's ability to judge its representative, this inability in nature poses a significant challenge

Pitkin refutes an authoritarian account of representation in saying that "As the 're' in 'representation' seems to suggest... the represented must be somehow logically prior, the representative must be responsive to him rather than the other way around."[51] A consideration of the environmental movement from this perspective highlights its use of the interest group medium to convey their message. The representatives involved are self appointed, but for them to garner support and engage in the political sphere to encourage the creation of meaningful policy, their position is judged within the public arena as it vies for influence against other issue groups. The legitimacy of this account is therefore based in the public's perceived notions of the 'good' of nature, and whether or not the relevant representatives present this position in a way that could contribute to political processes. This points to Pitkin's claim of it being a conceptual type of accountability which is not institutionalized, and thus in this instance is left to the standard of public support. When the environment is left at the status of an interest group, its success is based upon the performance of its self appointed representatives to present the case and encourage the population that it is in their best interests to join their cause.

With the complex relationship that exists between humanity and nature, the substantive approach leaves much to the actions of the representatives which are judged by the public, whether they are informed or not, whether they are interested or apathetic,

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[50] Pitkin, 142
[51] Pitkin, 140

and whether they feel the importance of invoking their own political agency to support the cause or not. We must consider the representation of nature in the contemporary environmental movement and question whether it is not simply an extension of popular notions of progress rather than an attempt to represent a subject who cannot represent itself. With no orders, no transfer of authority and no accountability, the idea of representing nature must be considered in light of the complex relationship between humanity and nature.

2.5 MANDATE-INDEPENDENCE CONTROVERSY

The mandate-independence controversy that Pitkin refers to illuminates one of the central problematic tensions in the attempt to give nature political representation in the substantive sense. If a representative is meant to be "bound by mandates or instructions from [his constituents]"[52], how are we to interpret the mandate of nature? We are forced to interpret, extrapolate and impose specific definitions, meanings and goals that are tied in with our conceptions of the environment in order to produce a coherent mandate. If, however, the representative must "be free to act as seems best to him in pursuit of [his constituents'] welfare"[53], then again the very idea of the welfare of nature requires an imposition of limiting ideas and definitions of nature. Popular social movements that preceded the rise of environmentalism, including the civil rights movement or the women's movement, had a voice of their own. The subjects exposed to oppression were able to find a way to have their own voices represented. To represent something requires us to employ particular concepts, descriptions or limits regarding the subject that we are considering. When that subject has a voice of its own, its needs and characteristics are

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[52] Pitkin, 145
[53] Pitkin, 145

more easily put into words. Yet when that subject lacks this power, issues of

representation become problematic.

What is 'good' for the environment becomes based upon diverse approaches,

either from the foundation of scientific data, from romantic conceptions of nature, or

from and understanding of it as an interest group. It is humans that give a voice to nature,

but with this voice ultimately comes the imposition of specific perspectives and

understandings of the subject matter. Given the diversity that is involved within the

environmental movement and the subjectivity of many perceived notions regarding

nature, contemporary approaches to its representation must be challenged on the basis of

the seemingly inadequate account of the representation of nature as an interest group.

2.6 QUESTIONING REPRESENTATION

The account of political representation given by Pitkin encompasses an analysis

which links representation with "authorization, accountability, and the looking out for

another's interests."[54] Rehfeld points out the parallels evident between this perspective

and accounts of normative legitimacy. The concept of political representation is rooted in

the notion of democratic legitimacy, entailing the practice of free and fair elections and

the ability to hold representatives accountable for their actions. Yet, as Rehfeld points out,

in many instances of what is accepted as representation there is no adherence to any sense

of legitimacy or accountability at all. The example he gives are elections that do not meet

a standard of legitimacy at all, those in England in the early modern period and other

countries in which there are political leaders in place but where the elections "do not

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[54] Rehfeld, Andrew. "Towards a General Theory of Political Representation" *The Journal of Politics*. Vol
68: 1 (Feb, 2006) pp.1-21, pg. 3

meet any plausible account of legitimacy"[55] due to corruption, inequalities, and any measure of factors that can hinder the process of legitimate elections. The environment falls under this category since it lacks the capacity to engage in the practice of elections or maintaining accountability. In light of such instances of so-called representation Rehfeld asks, "[g]iven the lack of any democratic structures by which those represented can authorize and hold these actors to account, given the fact that they may or may not actually be pursuing the interests of those they purportedly represent, are these even cases of political representation?"[56] Rehfeld questions whether representation must be democratic for it to be considered legitimate political representation. The way in which individuals have attempted to pursue the representation of the environment is revealed to be quite problematic in terms of the conditions given from the standard account; nature cannot authorize a representative, it cannot hold anyone accountable, and it cannot even express its needs in order that they be protected. How a voice has been given to environment has fostered a method of representation which is not grounded in traditional legitimacy but rather is based in what Rehfeld calls 'rules of recognition'.

Rehfeld's analysis of political representation unveils his own approach towards a 'general theory of representation' which "shifts our attention from democratic norms to the more generally important rules of recognition that different audiences use to judge whether this person, but not that one, is a representative."[57] Given the unavoidable problem of environmental representation that stems from its lack of a voice, the representatives that are placed, or that take up, the responsibility of expressing and protecting the interests of nature are thus deemed representatives based on such rules of

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[55]   Rehfeld, 4
[56]   Rehfeld, 2
[57]   Rehfeld, 4

recognition. Since these rules "an audience uses are usually, but not necessarily, derived from a normative theory of legitimacy or justice,"[58] they are based upon preconceived notions of morality that have been conceptualized to stem from nature. This was illustrated in Meyer's account of the directive capacity of nature upon which much deep ecology is based. Yet as Rehfeld argues, these ideas are not necessarily linked to any particular notions of legitimacy or morality given that they are 'completely context-dependent'. Meyer also notes that this presupposition of nature serving as a "directive for human moral, social and political organization and actions,"[59] is a contentious assumption given the context dependence of our understanding of nature. It is in this sense a reaction to the mechanistic conception of nature which grew in the seventeenth century with Newtonian science and the appeal to scientific rationality. Our ideas of the welfare of nature derive from our relationship with the subject which has been shaped throughout the development of society and is limited by contextual understandings of that relationship.

The way in which nature is actually given representation within our society today is through individuals who seek to push what they consider to be a legitimate mandate concerning the interests of nature. Such representatives claim to have adequate understanding of and connection with nature in order to formulate a mandate that voices the needs of a subject who cannot articulate them itself. Concern over environmental issues dates back centuries, peaking particularly during the industrial revolution as the pervasiveness of human development became profoundly apparent, and often disturbingly so.

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[58] Rehfeld, 15
[59] Meyer, 47

The birth of the contemporary environmental movement is often linked to the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* which fostered an explosive reaction and heightened awareness and concern regarding environmental issues to a level never before seen. The historical context of the rise of environmentalism also encouraged its success as a social movement given the excitement and popularization of other preceding movements, including the civil rights movement, suffrage, and the peace movement. Thus environmentalism appealed to those who had been attracted to the romantic lure of social activism and with Carson's immensely influential book, the movement took momentum from those that preceded it and grew in relevance and popularity.

What brought a new perspective to environmental issues with Carson's publication was not only the extent of the biological damage being done to the planet, but "at another level, Carson's book was also an indictment of our arrogant conception of our place in the larger scheme of things."[60] This approach encouraged a reconsideration of the way in which humans have been using, managing, controlling and dominating nature. Silent Spring thus fostered a re-emergence not only of environmentalism, but of what is now referred to as 'green political theory', which considers environmental issues not in terms of technology, or 'sustainable development', but from a fundamentally different perspective which questions the relationship between humans and nature as the source from which our treatment of the environment has arisen. Without addressing this fundamental relationship it is often opined that environmental issues will be perpetuated given the entrenched ways in which society has been socialized to perceive of nature in terms of instrumental value. Carson's book was important in this purpose as her main "critique was to suggest to many people that what was needed first and foremost in

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[60]   Fox, 5

regard to ecological problems was not bigger and better technical solutions but rather a thorough rethinking of our most fundamental attitudes concerning our place in the larger scheme of things." This critique of anthropocentrism is evident in works of the "philosophical and religious tradition that informs the modern environmental movement,"[61] but failed to become largely popularized until the modern environmental movement gained ground as a legitimate societal concern. The legacy of anthropocentrism is entrenched in our societal values and seems largely intuitive among many human beings. It is thus a difficult frame of mind to escape, and we must question whether or not the environmental movement has actually done so.

One of the accomplishments of the resurgence of the environmental movement has been the encouragement of the consideration to represent nature at all. As the use and depletion of resources contributed to more efficient modes of production and increased prosperity, the focus was often on growth. Taking time to stop and consider the environmental implications involved was generally left to philosophers while the 'progress' of society continued on at a heightened pace. The environmental movement has fostered the conception of nature as an interest in which sense it could enter the arena of political representation.

Presenting the environment as a general interest was promoted as a way in which the political sphere could accommodate the issue. Yet this method has proved inadequate as it positions the environment in competition with other interests, making it quite difficult for contemporary environmental concerns to garner attention and support when they vie for influence against other interests that are familiar and have been entrenched

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61   Fox, 7. Fox notes here the work of St. Francis, Spinoza, Thoreau, John Muir, Santayana, Robinson
     Jeffers, Aldo Leopold, and the later Heidegger.

within the political system for a much longer time. Meyer notes that the mainstream view of the environment as a general interest has led to particular consequences, namely that "while environmental concerns are now a recognizable part of the political landscape in a great many places, they often have been politically marginalized by powerful economic, social, or national security interests."[62] Such stronger influences can not only override support for addressing environmental concerns, but the issues often become misrepresented and construed within this arena. We can consider the commitments of big business to 'green wash' their corporate models and endorse sustainable development. Thus as corporate interests define political decisions, they acknowledge the environment simultaneously in order to give the appearance that both interests are being adequately represented. In regards to such notions as sustainable development, Simon Dresner has said that it was essentially co-opted by the mainstream as "old-fashioned development through economic growth, while paying lip service to concern about the environment."[63] When the environments' political viability rests on the status of an interest group, this type of co-optation has seemed rather inevitable.

Representation in this sense is a disservice to environmentalism despite its well intentioned political goals. As a general interest, the environment does not have adequate political support for a sufficient amount of influence that would be able to create or change policy. Its potential is thus limited by this status; the environment continues to be shadowed by other more dominant interests. This is why Meyer claims that "much of the philosophical work on environmental concerns reacts against the limitations of this view

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[62] Meyer, 21
[63] Dresner, Simon. The Principles of Sustainability. Earthscan; London. 2002. pg.80

of the environment as one issue area among many in a pluralist system."[64] Through the reconsideration of our relationship to nature can we begin to gain an understanding of the process involved in attempts to formulate its political representation and to envisage an approach that is distinct from the manifestation of the issue as an interest group, and more adequately represents nature in itself.

Because nature lacks the emancipatory potential to ever represent itself, its representation is entirely based upon self-appointed and self-directed individuals who claim some legitimate tie to the creation of a mandate for the interests of the environment. Earth First! makes a biocentric claim that the environment must trump all other concerns[65]; Greenpeace's mission is to protect biodiversity and "ensure the ability of Earth to nurture life in all its diversity;"[66] the Sierra Club seeks to "empower people to protect, restore and enjoy a healthy and safe planet;"[67] and the David Suzuki Foundation considers not only the protection of biodiversity, but the restoration of our relationship with nature, to one of interconnectedness and interdependence, to be of the greatest importance.[68] These are only some of the more widely-known environmental activist groups, and each one has distinct visions and methodologies on how the protection of the planet can be fostered in an increasingly fast paced and growing world economy. But they all have one thing in common in that they treat nature as something to be protected and valued as a good in itself and for itself.

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[64] Meyer, 21
[65] Earth First! Accessed March, 2010. Available at: http://www.earthfirst.org/about.htm
[66] Greenpeace Canada. Accessed March, 2010. Available at: http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/About-us/Mission/
[67] The Sierra Club. Accessed March, 2010. Available at: http://www.sierraclub.ca/en/national/aboutus/index.html%20#Mission
[68] The David Suzuki Foundation. Accessed March, 2010. Available at: http://www.davidsuzuki.org/about/

2.7 POSSIBILITIES OF EXPANDING DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Traditional democratic theory is insufficient in addressing the representation of nature. Such representational approaches are restricted by mediated views of nature, making the claim of representation presumptuous. The approach must rely upon conceptions of conservation, protection, and the value of nature that come from the most prominent environmentalists, the self appointed leaders (independently or through their various organizations) of the movement. If advocacy is characterized as "the representative's 'passionate' link to the elector's cause and the representative's relative autonomy of judgement,"[69] the issue with environmental representation is that there can be no possible electoral component that actually clarifies the needs of the subject. As such, nature, in terms of representation, has been treated as an object - one to protect, conserve, value and revere. The most popular environmental motifs only speak of nature insofar as it relates to human life – how we can continue to benefit from it, how we enjoy it, how we can use it to our advantage without spoiling it for future generations?

If our relationship to nature is revealed to foster social and cultural biases, they must be put into question before political representation can be legitimately pursued. Traditional conceptions of democratic representation, such as those aptly described by Pitkin, cannot account for this problem as it falls outside of their scope. Environmental representation challenges the claims of democratic representational theory and embodies a capacity to transform the theory itself as diverse avenues of acting for a voiceless subject are considered. Considerations of the discourse which has fostered the development of such representation must be explored in order to develop a more

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[69]   Urbinati, Nadia. "Representation as Advocacy: A Study of Democratic Deliberation" *Political Theory.* Vol. 28, No. 6 (Dec. 2000) pp. 758-786. pg. 773

comprehensive understanding of the ways in which we approach the issue of nature and

its position within the political sphere.

CHAPTER 3   THE DISCOURSE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

If Robert Boardman is correct in asserting that "discourses are important, not merely derivative; and they are seen to grow in specific spatial, cultural and temporal contexts,"[70] then to understand a concept it must be seen as crucial to delve into an analysis of its surrounding discourse. How we refer to and use the terms of environmental discourse can be informative of certain beliefs we hold about the concept of nature, and thus how we approach its representation. There is a constitutive aspect to representation wherein the principal is in a way 'created' through a process of poiesis ('bringing forth')[71] or mimesis[72]. Nature can be seen as *sui generis*, as imperturbable and indifferent to the history of humankind, fostering a denial of the cause of environmental degradation being rooted in human interference. Yet it can also be seen as being inevitably subjected to anthropogenic domination and abuse given human desires for expansion and conquest. These fundamental beliefs about nature and the ways in which we 'create' a principal through poiesis or mimesis foster our attempts to represent nature, and these inform and are in turn shaped by its surrounding discourse and depiction. In this chapter, I will first consider the concept of nature and its various definitions. I will also consider the critique of instrumental reason that is expanded by Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as their theory of disenchantment. The various applications of ecology will then be explored in order to give an account of the dominant diffusion of the scientistic account of nature. The environmental movement itself will be examined in relation to New Social Movement (NSM) theory and a political culture perspective, and finally a critical perspective of the movement will lead into alternative considerations for the

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[70]   Boardman, Robert. <u>The Political Economy of Nature</u>. New York: Palgrave. 2001. pg. 56
[71]   See Young (2002) for Heidegger's conception of poesies
[72]   See Stone (2006) or Martin (2006) on mimesis

representation of nature.

While at first the concept of nature seems simple, its ambiguity becomes apparent when we consider the various definitions and applications of the term. Kate Soper considers three conceptualizations of nature, the first of which entails that "in its commonest and most fundamental sense, the term 'nature' refers to everything which is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity."[73] It is thus defined through its 'otherness' to humanity as "'nature' is the idea through which we conceptualize what is 'other' to ourselves."[74] This position invites an empathetic response with the notion of nature as an oppressed 'other'. Nature in this sense is a concrete idea of that which exists independently of humans, and is fostered by a discourse of binaries; "the observer and the observed... the knower and the known, or the subject and the object."[75] Such distinctions, which are argued to support the subordination of nature, are a familiar source of critique from the position of deep ecology, but are not the only ways in which nature has been conceptualized.

There are other uses of the term which do not presuppose the 'humanity-nature antithesis'.[76] The first of these is the holistic concept which includes humanity as a part of nature, the 'cosmological nature' as Soper describes it. In this sense, humans are incorporated into a natural order of which we are but a part of the whole, the "totality of being"[77]. This is a common perspective upheld by those endorsing deep ecology today, but dates back to the early middle ages, when humanity held a rank among nature rather

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[73] Soper, 15
[74] Soper, 16
[75] Von Maltzhan, Kraft E. <u>Nature as Landscape: Dwelling and Understanding</u>. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994. pg. 18
[76] Soper, 15
[77] Soper, 21

than a position defined as separate and superior. Common acceptance of, and belief in this perspective began to disintegrate in the late eighteenth century, when the influence of scientific rationalism became dominant in our thoughts and perceptions of nature.[78]

The other sense of the concept refers to its semiotics, or "the 'nature' of humanity itself."[79] This is considered particularly in its role "in mediating access to the 'reality' it names," and fostering the "oppressive use of the idea to legitimate social and sexual hierarchies and cultural norms."[80] Soper considers this sense of nature in depth, referring to the "ways it is spoken of and represented in cultural discourse and imagery"[81] In her analysis, Soper considers the ways in which humanity relies on a distinction between humans, the cultural, the mental and spiritual or the so-called higher forms or functions of life, and nature, animals, the bestial or carnal dimensions of the body and the feminine or weak aspects of life. This distinction allows us to celebrate humanity as a higher form of existence than others, and fosters relations of domination over these supposed 'lower forms' of life.

The three distinct conceptions of nature have all had some influence in our perceptions of environmental issues. Soper argues that it is these often incompatible conceptions of nature that have shaped contemporary environmental discourse, and by exploring the tensions between them we can gain a better understanding of the ways in which they have contributed to our ideas of the concept itself. Clearly, the concept of nature is not as simple as it first appears, yet "its complexity is concealed by the ease and

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[78]   Soper 21
[79]   Soper, 9
[80]   Soper, 3
[81]   Soper, 71

regularity with which we put it to use in a wide variety of contexts."[82] Addressing the

ways in which the concept answers to its various uses is problematic in the sense that its

meaning has become obfuscated. The 'ease and regularity' of use that Boardman speaks of

refers to the uses of the concept ('nature' or 'natural') which have become incorporated

into the mainstream discourse to the point at which their use and meaning is no longer

questioned. This development of the environmental discourse has shaped and been

shaped by our common conceptions of nature and its connection to society, which

together form a profoundly influential basis upon which our approaches to its

representation have been built.

3.1 ENVIRONMENTALISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY

Deep ecology and environmentalism are the leading perspectives that influence

and are also in turn shaped by the discourse surrounding nature and ideas of its value, use

and/or sustainability. The rise of green political theory has focused on the distinctions,

tensions and overlaps between these perspectives, with the general aim of illuminating

aspects of the ways in which we perceive environmental issues; an approach that

encourages "reflecting upon [humanity's] larger setting."[83] Theorists of green politics

often share the "belief that our social, political and economic problems are substantially

caused by our intellectual relationship with the world and the practices that stem from

it."[84] The growth of this theoretical camp has fostered a dialogue surrounding

environmental issues that has a potential to open the discourse and encourage re-

conceptualizations of our relationship to nature in order to foster a more sustainable

system of production and growth. It encourages us to reconsider our relationship to nature

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[82] Soper, 1
[83] Goodin, Robert. <u>Green Political Theory</u>. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992. pg. 52
[84] Dobson, 37

and our conceptions of 'natural order', whether they be associative - incorporating humanity as but a part of the natural order, or dissociative - separating humanity from nature in an anthropocentric sense.

The distinction between the associative and dissociative accounts is what John Meyer describes as the dualist or derivative account of our relationship to nature. The derivative interpretation, which views "Western political thought as replete with normative theories derived from conceptions of nature, whether that conception be the teleology of Aristotelians, the clocklike mechanism of early modern scientists, or the invisible hand of Darwinian selection."[85] This account is based in holistic conceptions of nature, of which humanity is but a part, and as such it is the one which grounds the general approach of deep ecology.

Contrary to this account is what Meyer refers to as the dualist position, in which "the distinguishing characteristic of Western thought is that politics (and human culture generally) is completely divorced from nature."[86] Meyer explains that this account is approached by theorists who point to seventeenth century social contract theory which highlights the inorganic character of political agreement, or the origin of Christianity or even Western philosophy itself.[87] This approach fosters the basic definition of nature as being 'other', separate and distinct from humanity, in a position where it is more easily objectified. Though this does not necessarily entail its subjugation, the separation of nature from humanity and the reliance on the distinction of humanity arguably tends to foster such a dominant relation. Soper notes that this distinction, which separates the natural from the artificial, has been crucial to Western ideas about nature, and "implies

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[85] Meyer, 2
[86] Meyer, 2
[87] Meyer, 2

that there is a type of productive activity or creativity that is exclusive to human

beings."[88] This perspective can support the anthropocentric view that humanity sees itself

as different and often superior to that which lacks this capacity. It is this approach whose

prevalence in Western philosophy fostered the mechanization of nature which peaked at

the height of the industrial revolution. Theorists who have considered the deranged

relationship to nature which was born out of the dualist conception see this

mechanization as an integral aspect of natures' domination.

3.2 THE DISENCHANTMENT OF NATURE

Considerations of our relationship to nature have preceded the newer trends in

environmental political philosophy, notably going back to the Frankfurt school in their

critique of the culture industry and instrumental reason. Theodor Adorno and Max

Horkheimer explore these ideas in their 1947 book, <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>. The first

section considers the 'concept of enlightenment' as the context in which certain ideals,

specifically reason and objectivity, came to dominate all social relations. While the

Enlightenment brought about the advancement of vastly important tools of logic, reason

and critical thought, Adorno and Horkheimer point to the contradictory way in which the

power of these tools has constrained our ability to use them in order to transcend

barbarity. In reviewing Dialectic of Enlightenment, Hiram Canton notes that

Enlightenment "is the discovery of human freedom, including the wrestle with nature for

mastery. From this germ modern enlightenment matured into the scientific and industrial

domination of nature for the relief of man's estate; and yet both practically and

theoretically enlightened men are enslaved by the instruments of liberation."[89] According

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88   Soper, 37
89   Canton, Hiram. "Review: Dialectic of Enlightenment". *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68,

to Canton, the tools of the enlightenment have not delivered what they promised, but only an illusion of the ideals of freedom. They have come to act as a powerful constraint of further progress as illusory freedom works to entrench existing social norms and relationships as they are, and in this sense these original ideals are not only abandoned, but their repression becomes reified within the culture industry. As such, the system is conceived of as natural and immutable. Thus the title is considering "how modern enlightenment thinking reversed its own radical potential."[90]

Unable to escape this enveloping process, nature became subject to demystification; its mystery and inherent power were subverted by a positivistic obsession to understand and control nature through scientific and instrumental methodology. Adorno and Horkheimer claim that "man imagines himself free from fear when there is no longer anything unknown,"[91] and Adorno further expressed that "wherever nature was not actually mastered, the image of its untamed condition terrified."[92] Enlightenment ideals of freedom and knowledge thus encouraged a positivist conception of reality in which everything is amenable to human understanding and thus to human mastery and control.

We are given the illusion that nature remains free when we go to a national park or sink our toes into the sand at the beach, and yet the commodification of nature has become so pervasive that the appearance of its total domination has been camouflaged within the culture industry. Nature, as all other things, is instrumentalized under the

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No. 3, 1974. pp. 1307-1308. pg. 1308

[90] Helming, Steven. "A Martyr to Happiness: Why Adorno Matters". *Kenyon Review*. Vol. 28, No. 4, 2006. pp.156-172. pg. 159

[91] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>, trans. John Cumming, Continuum: New York. 1993. pg. 16

[92] Adorno, Theodor. <u>Aesthetic Theory</u>, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1997, pg. 65

process of rationalization and becomes an object which we can understand, control and master to our will. Adorno explains the rationality that upholds this relationship in his 1966 book Negative Dialectics:

> The animal to be devoured must be evil. The sublimation of this anthropological schema extends all the way to epistemology. Idealism... gives unconscious sway to the ideology that the not-I, l'autrui, and finally all that reminds us of nature is inferior, so the unity of the self-preserving thought may devour it without misgivings. This justifies the principle of the thought as much as it increases the appetite.[93]

As commodification pervades all social relations, the particular is subsumed by the general and things lose their inherent use-values. In this process, rationally reified relations replace 'natural' relations. Nature as an object valued on its exchange potential is subsumed within the commodity fetishism of culture and this process is reified, entrenched within the system, to the extent at which it appears not only justified, but necessary and progressive. The process of commodification is achieved by "displacing the intrinsic properties of things for the sake of ends extrinsic to them."[94] The particularities and inherent values of objects are subsumed under an illusory universality which pervades over all dimensions of society. In this sense, "cultural reification... reconciles the individual to the status quo and to the social reproduction of the established society."[95] The dominant relationship over nature becomes so well entrenched within the system in the culture industry that it becomes inconceivable of change.

3.3 APPLICATIONS OF ECOLOGY

Ecological knowledge began to cross disciplinary boundaries once the diverse

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[93] Adorno, Theodor. Negative Dialectics, trans. E.B. Ashton. The Seabury Press: New York, 1973. pg. 22-3

[94] Bernstein, JM. "Introduction" in The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture by Theodor Adorno. London: Routledge, 2001. pg. 5

[95] Darrell Alt, John. "Leisure, Labor, and Consumption: A Critical Sociology of Reification" Thesis Dissertation, Washington University. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977. pg. 77

potentials of its applicability became known. Traditionally confined within the domain of science, specifically biology, studies in ecology came to be seen as imperative to questions of political science and sociology. As the domain of international political economy itself expanded, questions concerning the environment began to be seen as complexly interwoven with questions of economics and community. Ecology traditionally refers to the science of the natural world, concerned with the "relations among biological and physical things" and the 'significant applications' of this type of scientific inquiry.[96] It thus has a naturalistic scientific tradition, embedded in Enlightenment ideals, which "[strive] to represent the factual stable truth of the outer reality."[97] Themes of the mastery of nature and the belief in scientific observation became entrenched through Enlightenment thought, "which stressed rational means of discerning knowledge and which rejected the authority of ideas not based upon a scientific epistemological framework."[98] This type of logic was diffused as means to observe and convey information about nature and was dependent on such instrumental rationality.

The appeal of objective science regarding the environment gave this approach to representation, through the provision of scientific data, a basis of legitimacy that other representational forms lacked. This type of descriptive representation is still relied upon today, particularly in international forums, to convey observations of the ecological crisis based in the legitimacy of scientific methodologies. Yet the movement has had to move beyond this basic type of representation given the lack of an adequate global response to scientific illustrations of the problem. Slavoj Zizek refers to this as an 'obvious paradox',

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[96] Boardman, 36
[97] Von Maltzhan, 14
[98] Fierlbeck, Katherine. <u>Globalizing Democracy</u>, 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008. pg. 59

in that despite the growing awareness of the ecological crisis and the internationally supported scientific data that illustrates the problem[99], there remains a lack of meaningful (binding/accountable) action to address the problems. Zizek reflects on this in saying that it is as if when we consider ecology we "simply do not believe that this can be destroyed. That's the horror of visiting sites of a catastrophe like Chernobyl, in a way... we are not wired to even imagine something like that, it's in a way unimaginable"[100] Because of this inability to conceive of ecological consequences, we distance ourselves from the conception of such possibilities and thus fail to respond to them, even when they are understood as conceivable outcomes. Given this paradox, the interpretation of environmental problems by other disciplines can be seen as a way in which the representation of nature has been approached through a diversity of methods and perspectives. The interdisciplinary adoption of ecological information and awareness has been approached from some domains to encourage representation through identification with the movement and to garner participation and support, but it has also been used manipulatively to relay information that depends on seemingly 'natural' social orders.

Domains other than science had use for the information provided by the "substantive and methodological tools" the discipline of ecology had to offer. Ecology in some ways was co-opted by various schools of thought who capitalized on the holistic notions that subordinated the individual to the 'collective social whole'. Boardman evidences this by referring to the development of authoritarianism in continental Europe in the 19th century.[101] He also refers to another form of the transition of 'ecology into

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[99] See the Copenhagen Accord, specifically the references to the IPCC
[100] Zizek, Slovaj. "Examined Life". Accessed July, 2010. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGCfiv1xtoU
[101] Boardman, 42

society' in terms of social Darwinism evident "in the context of capitalist expansion in the United States in the late nineteenth century."[102] This reference considers the capitalist perspective in that those capable of benefiting from the system would, and could do so quite well, but those without those skills would be at the peril of that very system, and such was the 'natural' order. Soper's considerations of the semiotics of nature, as well as feminist critiques of 'naturalized' social hierarchies refer to this same transition as the 'science' of nature was adapted to meaningful social implications.[103] The ability of theorists to adapt ecological ideas and knowledge to such a variety of purposes speaks to the malleability of the concept of ecology, which, "it would appear, is an almost infinitely pliable tool in the hands of social engineers."[104]

The scientific legitimacy of ecological studies could thus be interpreted for various aims, and this is evident in the distinct perspectives of deep ecology and environmentalism. While it is often considered socially beneficial that ecological issues have entered into the public and political arenas, some see this expansion paralleled by a 'loss of direction' in the field. Deep ecology generally holds onto the holistic notions assumptions of the natural order and the GAIA hypothesis, which postulates that the earth is "a kind of self regulating physiological organism."[105] Yet these basic assumptions are contested in popular environmentalism, where they come up against corporate interests and a system which challenges the presumption of holism given our seemingly insatiable desire for human mastery and continued growth, despite the environmental costs. In this

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[102] Boardman, 42
[103] For an example of a critical perspective see Bruce D. Martin "Mimetic Moments: Adorno and Ecofeminism" in Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno. ed. Renee Heberle. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.
[104] Boardman, 42
[105] Boardman, 67

sense, "a hankering after the supposed theoretical unity of an earlier age, and an urge to recreate something like it out of a fragmented present, has thus recurred in ecological self-examinations since the late 1960s."[106] This type of self-examination is evident in the re-emergence of environmental philosophy and also in the emergence of 'earthworks' and considerations of landscape and the picturesque in contemporary art which will be considered in the final chapter.

The scientific account of nature fosters the emergence of the environment as an interest group, yet this position is challenged by deep ecologists who see it as an inadequate form of representation. Dobson is generally dismissive of environmentalism, emphasizing that "the Green agenda remains distinct;"[107] Deep ecology encourages drastic changes to the prevailing system of production and the use of resources, while environmentalism seeks fixes that can be accommodated while maintaining the system of production as is. This is why Dobson notes that while ecology differs from other political ideologies by invoking new, radical conceptions of 'the Good Life', environmentalism "could be a subplot (although likely to be embedded rather uneasily) in a main story such as liberalism or socialism."[108] Theorists of green politics do not want to consider such issues as simply one aspect of life, separate from other political, social and economic factors. Rather, theorists such as Dobson encourage the idea that the "best knowledge is held to be acquired not by the isolated examination of the parts of a system but by examining the way in which the parts interact."[109] This illustrates the holism of deep ecology which presumes that nature is an essential part of the whole, and if considered

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[106] Boardman, 37
[107] Dobson, 15
[108] Dobson, 13
[109] Dobson, 37

separately, risks putting the entire system at jeopardy (which ecologists argue is exactly what we have done by prioritizing economic growth at the peril of finite resources). It also points to the claim that representing the environment as a singular interest group in a realm of competing interests is an insufficient way of responding to an issue of such great impact and interdependence. Rather than the environment being something that is valuable to use in terms of resources, the holistic notion of ecology encourages a concept of an integrated nature of life. It can also refer to the intrinsic value of nature, it being valuable in itself rather than solely based on its value insofar as it fulfils human need. This distinction between concepts of value has an important role in green political theory, given that how we conceptualize the value of nature pertains to how we set about using, managing, and/or exploiting its resources for human production, creation and desire.

Ecologism is often labeled 'radical' and can thus face stronger popular opposition given the powerful entrenchment of the prevailing system of production. This relates to the processes of commodification and reification, wherein certain concepts and modes of production become so engrained within the system they reproduce themselves, taking on a seemingly 'natural' appearance. It is also relatable to the 'cult of the new' defined by Adorno and Horkheimer, in which the culture industry continuously reproduces the old under a novel facade, making individuals believe that they are experiencing something new and revolutionary, when in reality they are consuming the same controlled messages that are reproduced perpetually throughout the system.[110] Thus even as we are surrounded by 'green' discourse, the terminology can often be used in situations where the dominant system of production is in fact perpetuated under a misleading label.

As such, "the word 'green' has been appropriated by many people who cannot be

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[110] See <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>, Horkheimer and Adorno

said to subscribe to a Green position at all"[111] One thinks here of various ironic 'green' labels on products whose very existence encourages a system of production which continues to exploit natural resources. Wilson observes this in saying that "a broadening environmental consciousness had provided many corporations with new marketing opportunities."[112] He remarks on a variety of products who make claims to helping 'save the planet' through the use of new technologies and recycling, while little effort is geared towards reducing and re-using. Environmentalism as an interest group often becomes subsumed by more powerful corporate and industrial interests in the struggle for economic power. This fosters a deranged presentation of environmental representation which, to the unobservant consumer, may give the impression that environmental concerns are being adequately addressed. If the environmental movement does not open up a truly new discourse about the possibility of changing our relationship to nature, it is in danger of reinforcing the instrumental framework upon which current environmental concerns have arisen (such as corporate green washing). This is not progressive, but under the appearance of progress it is in danger of becoming reified as a positive aspect of society.

3.4 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The environmental discourse has manifested itself through the proliferation of social movements that have arisen with the aim of representing nature by providing a coherent mandate. Considering the environmental movement itself thus provides insights into the powerful ways in which discourse has been used and has been shaped in particular ways and by certain segments of the population. Given what Soper has

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[111] Wilson, 14
[112] Wilson, 80

explained as the "tendency for environmentalist discussions of 'human' feelings for nature to overlook their historicity and dependency on culturally specific systems of belief,"[113] examining this environmentalist discourse becomes quite relevant. Considering this in a comparative political context, recent work on new social movement theory and political culture can provide a greater understanding of some of the most prominent aspects of approaches to representation within the environmental movement.

Social scientists working within the analytical paradigm of political culture point to values, attitudes and beliefs that guide action. This perspective has helped accommodate for the deficiencies of rational choice models that failed to take such variables into account. As aspirations invoked by the Enlightenment, those that endorsed the explanatory power of reason, fell short in explaining the horrors of reality such as world war, human rights abuses or environmental degradation, theorists were motivated to seek other relevant variables to understand political action. Gabriel Almond explains that the new popularity of political culture was fostered by "the increasingly evident failure of enlightenment expectations and the incapacity of a comparative politics based on these expectations to explain the variety of political phenomena."[114] Thus, theorists began to consider structural, historical and social changes that have fostered changes to our set of values and beliefs. Political culture, defined as "the pattern of distribution of orientations members of a political community have towards politics,"[115] was posited to help further our understanding of the reasons fuelling changes in attitudes and actions.

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[113] Soper, 219

[114] Almond, G.A. "The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept" in The Civic Culture Revisited. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1989. p.15

[115] Dawson and Prewitt, Political Socialization. p. 27; quoted in Carole Pateman, "Political Culture, Political Structure and Political Change" British Journal of Political Science. Vol. 1: 3, July 1971, pp. 291-305. pg. 293

Explanations for the changing nature of our attitude towards the environment from this perspective depend on such shifts (if they do actually materialize), from a relationship with nature constituted by instrumental rationality to one which is defined in postmaterialist terms. This is reflective of the ecological self examinations that emerged in the 1960's which encouraged consideration of the relationship between humanity and nature, and the ways in which the environment was being represented within and outside of political arenas.

Ronald Inglehart's observations account for an observable shift in values, from materialism to postmaterialism. He claims that the main driving force of this shift is based in security, given "the fact that there is a fundamental difference between growing up with an awareness that survival is precarious, and growing up with the feeling that one's survival can be taken for granted."[116] Less constrained by the anxieties of world war and economic depression, the generations now emerging into adulthood have been bestowed with a distinct set of values that considers factors other than security. Inglehart notes that the emergence of postmaterialism marks "the shift from giving top priority to economic and physical security, to giving top priority to self-expression and the quality of life."[117] This also appears to make room for alternative perspectives from the system of positivist logic as individuals begin to question the status quo and the relations that had been imposed within the context of industrialism. Thus it follows that environmentalism would become a more prominent social and even political concern which fostered its emergence as a general interest. Ingleharts' observations illustrate the notion that the environmental movement should be transcending conceptions of instrumental

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[116] Inglehart, Ronald. Modernization and Postmodernization. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. pg. 31
[117] Inglehart (1997), 32

representation, and fostering a sense of identification with the movement, and yet still we face the notion of Zizek's 'obvious paradox'.[118]

The character of environmental concerns has been largely influenced by the disconnection between society and such issues. Environmentalism in the past had been largely conceived of as lacking an urgency that economic and physical security issues had. Given that the historical context, as Inglehart has postulated, quieted security concerns, we can observe a transformation of values that transcends questions of security to embrace questions of self-expression, existentialism, creativity and fulfillment. Our relationship to nature has become more open to consideration as this shift fostered a questioning of the imposition of instrumental reason which had shaped our treatment, mastery and domination of nature throughout the industrial movement. The prevalence of representational approaches which are embedded in scientistic and instrumental accounts of nature challenges the notion that such observable shifts have occurred to a sufficient extent that the fundamental approach to the representation of nature, based upon conceptions of its relationship with humanity, has changed at all.

Inglehart noted that "prosperity engenders a cultural shift toward postmaterialist values, which eventually leads to a less intense emphasis on economic growth."[119] Yet, his predictions are faced with paradoxical notion of change, for how can economic affluence be a precursor for the constraint of affluence? This is explained by Bramwell; "the argument that environmentalism is a by-product of economic affluence is problematic in that environmentalism demands a reduced standard of living, because it blames environmental destruction on the very process that (in a superficial sense,

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[118] Zizek (2008)
[119] Inglehart, Ronald. "The Renaissance of Political Culture" *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 82: 4, December 1988. pg. 1226

according to environmentalists) produces higher standards of living."[120] The new

generation of supposed postmaterialists have enjoyed the luxury of their transformed

values based on high levels of economic affluence that were created by the very

processes seen as inherently problematic in terms of environmentalism. This forces us to

question the true nature of the shift in values that Inglehart has predicted; would it ever be

enough to transcend this contradiction and foster a new generation focused on real

change? And in light of Zizek's considerations, would it ever be enough to overcome our

inability to confront the possibilities of ecological catastrophe? To consider these

questions in relation to actual manifestations of environmentalism, an analysis of NSM

theory helps to illustrate the approaches to environmental representation which embrace

the ideals of 'progressive' change.

3.5 ENVIRONMENTALISM AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Inglehart's predictions about the emergence of postmaterialism are complimented

by much of the work done on new social movements that considers their discontinuity

with traditional movements of the past. Canel notes that they transcend what he has

categorized as the commercial and industrial concerns of past movements and that the

characteristics of movements in the post industrial era are reflective of this shift in values;

> the new movements operate at the communicative level of action and are
> concerned with cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization (Cohen,
> 1983: 106; Habermas, 1981: 33). They fight for the right to realize their own
> identity, for 'the possibility of disposing of their personal creativity, their affective
> life, and their biological and interpersonal experience' (Melucci, 1980: 218).
> They are struggles for 'the reappropriation of time, of space, and of relationships
> in the individual's daily experience'.[121]

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[120] Bramwell, Anna. The Fading of the Greens. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. pg. 13
[121] Canel, Eduardo. "New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization Theory: The Need for
Integration" Accessed February, 2010. Available at: http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-54446-201-1-
DO_TOPIC.html

Movements reflective of such pursuits are seen as embodying a paradigmatically different approach which abandons the traditional social movement framework. Guided by a postindustrial perspective, new social movements such as the environmental movement thus appear as manifestations of the value shift predicted by Inglehart. NSM's have been seen as "product[s] of the postmaterialist age," which have "moved away from the instrumental issues of industrialism to the quality of life issues of postmaterialism."[122] Thus transformed values have found their expression within these movements, and yet, this does not appear to be the entire story given the resistance mounted against real environmental change. If society has undergone such a massive transformation of values, why does the environmental movement continue to fail in harnessing popular global action? The perceived progressiveness of the movement, the lure of 'green' platforms and products, the general appeal of 'environment words', and participation that satisfies our empathetic feelings for, or identification with the earth, all of these aspects of the movement must be considered and contrasted with the lack of a coherent global response to pressing ecological issues.

Theorists involved with NSM theory have tried to overcome the deficiencies of the resource mobilization approach, which considered the capacity of social movements to address grievances given the availability of sufficient resources. Francesca Polletta and James Jasper note in their work that "their emphasis on the how of mobilization over the why of it, their focus on the state as target of action, and their dependence on rationalistic images of individual action left important issues unexamined"[123] Thus many theorists

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[122] Pichardo, Nelson A. "New Social Movements: A Critical Review", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23, 1997. pp. 411-430. pg. 412

[123] Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements", *Annual Review of Sociology.* Volume 27, 2001. pp. 283–305. pg. 283, emphasis added

turned to identity to explain collective action. Considering how people define themselves

through identities which are reflected through participation in certain movements can

illuminate information about the movement itself which process and mobilization

theories overlooked. Looking at collective identities considers why movements form,

what motivates people to become involved, the strategic choices of the movement and its

cultural effects.[124] The focus on identity is helpful in that it focuses on the why rather

than the how. In this sense we could further our understanding of why people choose to

speak on behalf of the environment for reasons other than the superficial explanation of

changing environmental policy or, more radically, the relationship between humans and

non-human nature.

The consideration of identity relates to the problem of representation of a non-

identical subject. Those taking up the cause of environmentalism must feel a connection

with nature on some identical level, as perhaps those of the deep ecology view point do,

in order to feel persuaded to take up the challenge of advocacy. Polletta and Jasper note

that "one of the chief causes of movement decline is that collective identity stops lining

up with the movement. We stop believing that the movement 'represents; us."[125] The co-

optation of environmentalism by corporate interests could be a reflection of this in the

contemporary movement. Yet given the confused and subjective notions of our identity

with nature, it seems that the authors may be correct in saying that the concept of identity

has been "forced to do too much analytically."[126] Katherine Fierlbeck further explores

this concept and finds that cultural identity is overvalued - not irrelevant, but "to stress

the primacy of particular group bonds is to deter individuals from breaking free of these

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[124] Polletta and Jasper, 284
[125] Polletta and Jasper, 292
[126] Polletta and Jasper, 292

bonds and experiencing the vulnerability of being unique in one's own identity."[127] This sense of vulnerability is precisely what "enhances people's sensitivity and tolerance"[128] and also gives them the opportunity to contemplate the motivations and ideals of a group from a different perspective. The "inviolability of the value placed on cultural identity"[129] can save strong social movements from critique given the momentum of a popular sense of identification felt with its cause, regardless of any inherent problems of the way in which the group approaches their issues of concern. Understanding aspects of identity could reveal some of the motivations and outcomes of social movements, but the approach fails to address the prevalence of instrumentality in our identification with the environmental movement which constrains the possibility of re-conceptualizing our relationship to nature.

3.6 THE METAPHOR OF MOVEMENT

Considering the analysis of environmentalism as a 'progressive social movement', Torgerson has argued that this very momentum, the emphasis on movement and progress, has fostered a perpetuated concept of nature based in instrumental reason. The pressure for parsimony, for a streamlined, efficient approach, has forced the movement into a position embedded in metaphors of progress and advancement. Common to all NSMs is the empathy associated with the oppressed 'other' which creates a presumptive identification of nature as a 'victim'. Nature is thus seen as a subject in need of aid, and this identification provides the legitimacy for attempts of virtual representation which are inevitably restricted by the lack of a concrete mandate. Such identifications and ideas of progress foster a momentum within the environmental movement. A theoretical challenge

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[127] Fierlbeck (2008), 127
[128] Fierlbeck (2008), 127
[129] Fierlbeck (2008), 126

to the movement as such can reveal the concealment that such metaphors encourage, and question the viability of the environmental movement as a democratic and meaningful social expression of concern.

Torgerson claims that "the green movement itself often appears distinctly and paradoxically instrumentalist."[130] From both reformism and radicalism within the green movement, there is a sense of commitment to specific goals; the former advocating change within the prevailing system, while the latter endorses social transformation. The metaphor of 'movement', he claims, is 'overdone' and conceals the instrumentalist basis of these positions, manifested in what he has categorized as functional and constitutive politics. A key characteristic of the green movement has been its struggle to promote a parsimonious position. It is thus "amid demands for the movement to have a definite direction, indeed, [that] the instrumental character of the metaphor becomes evident. A clear identity and a concerted direction are seen as essential to a coherent green strategy."[131] These concerns impose an instrumental framework on the movement as this is seen as the only route to take in order to create any change. Yet the change conceivable from this type of framework falls hopelessly into either the maintenance of the status quo with minor environmental reforms, or the imposition of a new, but still instrumental, set of social relationships.

Torgerson discusses three types of politics which can help further our understanding of the adoption of environmentalism within the political sphere. The first, functional politics, considers "public policy changes aimed at making advanced industrial

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[130] Torgerson, Douglas. "Farewell to the green movement? Political action and the green public sphere" *Environmental Politics* Vol. 9: 4, 2000. pp. 1-19, pg. 1
[131] Torgerson, 7

society more ecologically rational,"[132] and thus is descriptive of environmental reformism. This position does not encourage a radical social transformation but advocates change that is possible within the current system.

The tension between radical goals and the pressures of the political arena which has affected green political parties also affects movements that have formed not in the political sphere but in civil society. The American environmental movement can be seen in this light and faces similar pressures to endorse a parsimonious and more reformatory path. Bramwell notes that the tension between reform and radicalism has "affect[ed] the self-image of environmentalists in America, who are able to use local issues to score points with some success, but who feel powerless against the might of oppressive big business and organized capitalism."[133] Reform oriented environmental groups within the U.S. have had some success in creating environmental legislation, specifically when certain grievance communities have been directly affected by environmental issues, as in the case of Love Canal.[134] Yet, where environmental concerns lack direct connections and impacts on a particular community, there is a void of political action given the inability to articulate such concerns other than by 'environmentalists' who have taken up such mandates and claim a legitimate connection to their pursuit.

Yet more radical groups meet fierce opposition from business and political interests. Torgerson considers the aims of transformatory movements under the label 'constitutive politics' which "deals with constructing or changing a civilization as a cultural artifice, from the shape of its institutions to the identities of its inhabitants and

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[132] Torgerson, 3
[133] Torgerson, 57
[134] Beck (1979)

the character of their discourse."[135] Environmental groups such as Greenpeace that seek fundamental changes to the social system and our relationship with nature is exemplary of the constitutive political approach. The proliferation of environmental groups in the U.S. has fostered a variety of radical and reform perspectives towards what must be done to address the pressing concerns of environmentalism, keeping these issues out of the traditional political arena. Thus, "the surprising success of the environmental lobby in the USA that vitiated the need for party political activity"[136] has kept the movement out of the strictly political realm of which green political parties have become a part. These interest groups in the U.S. operate at a different level, which can be understood in reference to social movement theory.

From this perspective, radical social transformation is the goal, which from the framework of social movement theory, can operate in three different ways. This activity can be considered as separate from the political sphere according to Touraine.[137] It can also be considered as an extension of the political sphere, which resembles what Laclau and Mouffe have considered as "multiple points of antagonism that have emerged have led to the expansion of the political through the proliferation of political spaces. As social conflict expands into new areas of social life, the field of politics is enlarged."[138] This coincides with the popular phrase, 'the personal is political', yet Torgerson warns that this is quickly reduced to 'politics is everywhere' which is thus reduced to power relations[139] These approaches do not escape the instrumental framework, and "framed in instrumental terms, challenges to objectionable features of modern governance have no alternative to

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[135] Torgerson, 3
[136] Bramwell, 56
[137] Touraine, in Canel (2010)
[138] Canel (2010)
[139] Torgerson, 5

offer except a realignment of power."[140] As an extension of political power, social

movements are often constricted in their ability to be radical and thus end up basing

themselves on the very notion of instrumentality they may be trying to resist.

Finally, social transformation can operate in the Habermasian notion of "an

intermediary space between civil society and the state."[141] Torgerson notes that, "for

Habermas, the principle thus points to the possibility of a public sphere in modern society

where the path of social development can be discussed and assessed."[142] Yet this still does

not avoid instrumentality, "for the goal ultimately is one of giving authoritative direction

to social development."[143] Imposing answers, policies and directions for the 'progress' of

the movement reinforces an instrumentalist framework for environmentalism. In this

sense, none of the three proposed understandings of radical social movements avoid the

instrumental framework that is cast when a movement must define goals, directions,

definitions, etc. Torgerson notes that "the metaphor of movement reinforces green

concerns about what it means to be green,"[144] which then invites the need for

authoritative conceptions of the purpose and progress of the movement in instrumental

terms. Seeking an alternative framework that is non-instrumental, the environmental

'movement' must be reconceptualized in order to avoid a narrow perspective and

authoritative ideas of 'progress'. Torgerson explains that

> Putting an end to debate has actually been central to the modern tendency of
> politics to be eclipsed by rationalistic schemes, through either the technocratic
> management of mass society or - what amounts to its mirror image - the
> comprehensive transformation of society by a social movement under the aegis of

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[140] Torgerson, 5
[141] Canel (2010)
[142] Torgerson, 5
[143] Torgerson, 5
[144] Torgerson, 7

a coherent linking of theory and practice.[145]

To avoid this, Torgerson considers a third type of politics labelled 'performative', which considers the potential for a non-instrumental framework for the environmental movement to foster a proliferation of environmental awareness which could reframe the discourse.[146] By embracing the value of political dialogue and action in themselves, he claims that the importance of environmentalism lies in its potential to open a new discourse, a new "green public sphere" which "promotes a way of speaking about the environment that before was not possible or even imaginable."[147] Rather than the metaphor of 'movement' forcing environmentalism into a coherent 'direction', the performative approach challenges the supposed parsimony and 'progressiveness' and invites a variety of perspectives and dialogues concerning issues that no one person can claim a legitimate mandate for to begin with.

The momentum of the movement risks sweeping over legitimate voices and concerns in its desperate search for 'progress'. Abandoning linear conceptions of progress and opening an inclusive dialogue about environmental issues can be the greatest achievement of the movement in that it could foster a re-conceptualization of our relationship with nature and a more democratic approach to its representation. In this sense, Torgerson's approach relates to the considerations of representation of nature in light of its surrounding discourse and depiction which shape the approaches of advocacy. Rather than encouraging sweeping statements and a preference for the general, the importance of diverse perspectives, particularities and critical theory is illustrated through

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[145] Torgerson, 8
[146] Torgerson, 6
[147] Torgerson, 6

such considerations. Torgerson's theory begs the question of what exactly a performative approach would entail, but looking to the depiction of landscape and nature in contemporary art leads to an intriguing conception of alternative approaches of the representation of nature.

CHAPTER 4   DEPICTIONS OF NATURE

The considerations of the representation of nature that have been analyzed thus far lead to a new dimension of representation which breaks from both traditional political or legal forms as well as from more diverse approaches of advocacy through interest groups and new social movements. In this chapter, I seek to explore the potential of Torgerson's notion of performative politics to foster a reconceptualization of nature, through discourse and depiction, in a way which could foster a break with traditional instrumental understandings of the term, as well as an expansion of the discourse to incorporate more adequate forms of the representation of nature. Specifically, I will consider how art can contribute to this discourse. As art has the potential to anticipate, preempt and shape social change, an analysis of the depiction of nature in art works provides an alternative conception to popular environmentalism, opening the discourse to critical thought. First, I will explain how Adorno's theory of re-enchantment and dialectics can contribute to the discourse of environmentalism and the challenges of virtual representation. Adorno problematizes the allure of natural beauty, as depicted in art as well as in direct experiences in the world, and how aesthetics have informed our perceptions of nature. This leads into theoretical considerations of aesthetics and the picturesque, and how contemporary art works can help to challenge such entrenched notions of natural beauty in relation to traditional concepts of landscape and space. Finally I will consider how the depiction of nature in art, particularly in 'Land Art' and photography, has reflected a shift in our conception of nature from an idyllic, serene source of beauty, to a violated, injured subject. This transformation has fostered a new approach for representation based on the subject hood of nature, encouraging its consideration as a quasi grievance constituency in

itself, rather than a general interest.

4.1 DE-MYSTIFICATION AND RE-ENCHANTMENT

The notion of de-mystification was explored in relation to the development of Enlightenment ideals and the progress of scientific rationality. Fear and myth were suppressed by the comforts of positivist logic which made everything amenable to human understanding; as Adorno and Horkheimer noted, "the program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy."[148] In this sense, instrumental rationality became the dominant framework, turning against freedom, imposing positivism in all spheres of knowledge and disconnecting society from any other points of view. The prevalence of this mode of thought is what upholds the culture industry, as its "effectiveness depends not on its parading an ideology, on disguising the true nature of things, but in removing the thought that there is any alternative to the status quo."[149] This process of reification fosters what Adorno describes as 're-mystification', when the imposed relations of instrumental reason become so fully absorbed within the system that they are neutralized and seen as organic.

Adorno sees the relationships that are altered within the culture industry as ultimately irreversible. As they become reified, the subordinate role of nature is entrenched by paradoxically 're-echanting' nature and concealing, under a pretense of the idyllic serenity of unspoilt wilderness, the true character of the relationship between nature and society which is one of domination and subordination. This is what leads the authors to say that "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to

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[148] Horkheimer and Adorno, 3
[149] Bernstein, 9

mythology."[150] Commodified relations of instrumental rationality are reified and extended into everyday life and culture.[151] Their pervasiveness becomes so extensive that all activities become subject to them, "[taking] on the appearance of a formal relation between objectified things, and are seen from the human point of view as beyond the reach of intervention and control."[152] Theorists of the Frankfurt school have commonly referred to the culture industry's greatest achievement as its ability to foster a culture industry that appears impenetrable to change. The framework of instrumental reason has distorted our relationships to the extent to which they appear as having originated naturally. This nullifies any problematic aspects of these relationships and fosters a sense of normalcy in the existing order, making it appear as organic and thus resistant to change. Alison Stone explains that "the mode of thought which lies at the root of modern social relations makes it impossible for people to think critically about these relations, which thereby become an unchallengeable framework akin to myth."[153] She notes that this is supported by an instrumental understanding of the world, as well as the division of labour which "facilitates control of nature, and since reason functions to identify and prescribe ways of controlling nature, modern individuals cannot rationally criticize, but must endorse, the division of labour."[154] The alienation experienced from the division of labour also works to disconnect us from more profound relationships with oneself, others, and non-human nature.

To escape these processes, one is led to consider the re-enchantment of nature. If only we could experience natural beauty in its untamed, spontaneous state of being and

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[150] Horkheimer and Adorno, xvi
[151] Darrell Alt, 70
[152] Darrell Alt, 69
[153] Stone, 237
[154] Stone, 237

regain a 'mindfulness' of nature.[155] Yet the trend of re-enchanted nature has been

subsumed by the culture industry, notably the tourism and leisure industries, which

misleads us to believe that our direct experiences of natural beauty are actual

manifestations of its freedom. They lead us to believe that aspects of nature have in fact

been left to develop, free of the control of humans. Yet the pervasiveness of the

domination of nature assures us that this is not so. The very fact that areas such as parks

have not escaped human domination, but have rather been *allowed* to remain

undeveloped reflects the human hand evident in even the most 'rugged' or 'wild' spaces.

We cannot truly grasp the subjugation of nature by experiencing it directly. These

encounters foster romanticized conceptions of nature and are in danger of misleading

observers to believe that nature remains a powerful and even indestructible source of life

which cannot be entirely dominated or degraded. This points to Zizek's comments

regarding our incapacity to imagine the destruction of the planet given direct experiences

of its assumed power.[156]

     Adorno paints a bleak picture of the seeming inevitability of instrumental thought

and commodification which could hint at the impossibility of a representational account

which avoids the subjugation of nature under such transformations. Yet he offers some

amount of hope in saying that in order to reconsider our relationship to nature and avoid

the problematic re-enchantment that occurs still within the culture industry, the very same

Enlightenment ideals that currently work to constrain any opposition to the status quo can

be used within the context of critical theory. Through a negative dialectic, which, "by

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[155] Differing from Heidegger's conception of the 'recollection of being' which fostered a sense of 'magically
invoked' mindfulness through processes of 'poesis'; Adorno's perceptions, in contrast, focused on the use
of critical theory to invoke a 'mindfulness' of nature; for more on this see Young, 2002

[156] Zizek (2008)

discovering the contradictions within a society, achieves a critical distance by negating, in thought, the status quo,"[157] we can reawaken a resistance to the imposition of instrumental reason in our relationship. The potential of science cannot be discarded because of its barbaric capacity, but its potential to shape critical theory must be harnessed in order to conceive of alternative ways of understanding our relationship to nature. It is in this sense that "although in a 'social context which induces blindness' science becomes an instrument whereby people embrace the status quo, science could just as readily let enlightenment fulfill itself by daring 'to abolish [*aufzuheben*] the false absolute, the principle of blind power [*Herrschaft*]. The spirit of such unyielding theory would be able to turn back from its goal even the spirit of pitiless progress."[158] The power of thought must be checked, as in reality it can foster the rise of facism, but when used dialectically, it is the only conceivable way out of the cyclical barbarity of the culture industry.

To apply this method of critical theory though, Adorno warns of turning to direct experiences of natural beauty in themselves, the problem being that "natural beauty can only appear as long as nature is being dominated. That is how its ambiguous and distant beauty is made possible."[159] Because nature is contained, distanced, and re-enchanted within the culture industry, its direct experiences conceal the existing relationship between humans and nature. Adorno's perceived pessimism should serve as a warning that we can never return to some idyllic state in which relations were not defined by power and commodity fetishization. The only conceivable way out is through the process

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[157] Caton, 1308
[158] Zuidervaarte, Lambert. Social Philosophy after Adorno. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007. pg. 115
[159] Hammer, Epsen. Adorno & the Political. Routledge: London, 2006. pg. 141

of dialectical thought, through 'conceptual recognition' of "power [Herrschaft] even within thought as unreconciled nature."[160] This process does not promote a total deconstruction of reason as the postmodernists would encourage, but rather it uses the capacity of reason and critical thought in order to engage alternative perceptions of the relations that characterize our reality. Adorno does not think this process "stands outside the scientific enterprise. Rather it is a hidden and suppressed dimension of science itself, without which science loses its emancipatory potential."[161] Thus Adorno is emphasizing the power of the tools of Enlightenment when unconstrained by the seemingly immutable categorizations to which they have succumbed under the culture industry. When reason can be used critically, rather than instrumentally, it can help foster new conceptions of social issues rather than working to reify existing relations.

The way in which these tools can be used for an alternative method of re-enchantment is through Adorno's concept of constellations through which "we can gain a sense of what is unique in particular natural things, and of the domination that these things have suffered."[162] The culture industry became pervasive in the subsumption of the particular by the universal, thus robbing anything of its specific qualities or uniqueness. Thinking in terms of constellations fosters a remembrance of such particularities which portray instances of a type rather than being categorized as universal types. The concept of constellations allows for a type of thought in which it is possible to "think critically in ways that modify the function and character of critical thought from within."[163] It is in this sense that Adorno's work can contribute to a critical discourse of environmentalism

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[160] Zuidervaarte, 114
[161] Zuidervaarte, 114
[162] Stone, 233
[163] Stone, 233

given his thoughts on the denial of the aesthetics of natural beauty and avoid forms of misleading representation based upon enchanted nature. His method is one that rejects universal knowledge, or knowledge of objects as such, but focuses on the relations between concepts and the surrounding specificities of a concept, which reinvokes the importance of the particular against the universal and in this sense is an alternate form of re-echantment.[164]

4.2 THE ASSUMPTION OF A COMMON AESTHETIC

The notion of re-enchanted nature leads to an analysis of aesthetics. Soper considers the presupposition from some environmental positions of a "general aesthetic, as opposed to utilitarian, interest in the preservation of nature,"[165] which is appealed to for support. Or even if environmentalists seek to conserve nature based on its 'intrinsic value' rather than its appeal for humans, these positions are commonly based upon "the seemingly timeless and universal responses that nature elicits in 'humanity'," which is again reducible to aesthetics.[166] Soper hastens to acknowledge the possibility of such common responses, but is also quick to point to the cultural influences that have powerfully shaped our sentiments towards nature;

> as environmental and ecological politics presumes common forms of appreciation of landscape or capacities to value nature, it should acknowledge how problematic it may be to imply that all human beings are as united in their aesthetic responses to nature as they are in their reliance upon it as utility and means of satisfying material need.[167]

The failure to take account of the instrumental motivations involved in our appreciation of nature obscure the conception of aesthetics, invoking a perception of a

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[164] Stone, 240-1
[165] Soper, 216
[166] Soper, 216
[167] One could consider here the concepts of 'harmonic landscape' which fostered totalitarian notions of nature as described in Boardman, 42

Kantian 'pure' aesthetic judgment, void of instrumental influence, despite the failure to account for nature as an "object of unmediated phenomenological response."[168] Given the culturally bounded character of the concept, 'pure' aesthetic judgements of nature must be challenged in relation to their contextual dependence. Soper parallels our aesthetic encounters with landscape with the example of our feelings towards animals, which have varied from vivisection to animal beauty parlours, pointing to the "separate, if interlocking, registers of feeling of which we need to take account."[169] The observable tensions in our experiences of nature that waiver between terror and serenity highlight the changes in such perceptions.

Yet our experiences of nature must be rooted in some basic common responses for cultural mediation to have any basis or affect. Soper explains that "cultural forces may mould preferences in landscape, and to some extent fashion even our tastes in roses or sunsets, but its mediations would not be possible were it not for the existence of certain phenomenological responses upon which they go to work and by which they are themselves informed and circumscribed."[170] The use of nature as a 'criteria of aesthetic judgement' presupposes some fundamental ideas about nature which inform our ideas of aesthetics. But even this acknowledgment does not detract from the "extent to which the history of the aesthetic of nature has to be thought in relation to the history of human domination."[171] Representational approaches to nature that depend upon an appeal to a common aesthetic thus tend to ignore the instrumental basis of aesthetic experience which has shaped and been shaped by our historical relationship with nature. This relates

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[168] Soper, 218
[169] Soper, 221
[170] Soper, 244
[171] Soper, 245

to Torgersons' claim that despite the supposed 'progressiveness' of contemporary environmental movements, they still tend to be based upon instrumental understandings of the concept and ignore the contextually sensitive character of the relationship.

It is noticeable in analyzing the historical development of environmentalism that our conceptions of nature have been generally context specific, varying with changes in our relationship with the external world and even with each other, given our ideas about the 'nature' of humanity itself. Aesthetic experiences of nature have reflected such changing attitudes, despite the apparent lack of acknowledgement of this contextual dependence by two of the most prominent thinkers on the subject, Kant and Burke, who both "offer universalist explanations of the appreciation of the sublime in nature."[172] Soper analyzes their positions extensively in order to frame the ties between aesthetic appreciation and natural beauty. Kant seeks to express our aesthetic experience of nature as a way in which we appreciate the dominance of human reason, describing the sublime as "appalling because we cannot accommodate the immensity with which it confronts us, and wonderful because this failure itself indicates the superior power of human reason to anything encountered in the natural world."[173] Thus Kant's position is based upon the 'internal power of human reason', while Burke's theory embeds our experience of the sublime in the reassurance of human mastery. His position thus considers the fear we experience when faced with nature, and the sublimity we experience in "our ability to feel secure in the midst of danger."[174] As humans are conceived as the sole species capable of modifying such a powerful force into subjugation, we experience the sublime through this process of control and mastery over nature. Thus both theorists "relate the

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[172] Soper, 225
[173] Soper, 229
[174] Soper, 228

particularity of the experience to an element of human transcendence,"[175] but the contexts

which shape our appreciation of nature are ignored. The reliance on this assumed

aesthetic appreciation of beauty and the sublime which is based upon inherent ideas of

human mastery of nature has shaped the appeals to environmental protection.

> Soper contends that Kant and Burke's
>
> focus on the enabling conditions in human nature necessarily abstracts from the political dimensions of the sublime aesthetic, and from the particular social conditions responsible for its emergence. (...) neither Kant nor Burke shows much awareness of the need to link the fascination with the sublime to scientific Enlightenment, the growth of industry and the increasing domestication of nature. Even less do they consider the extent to which their theorization of the aesthetic of the sublime may be reliant on attitudes to nature engendered by those developments.[176]

Taking account of the economic, social and political contexts that have influenced, and in

return been shaped by, our perception of aesthetics can illuminate important factors of

how we have come to represent nature.

4.3 CONSIDERATIONS OF THE PICTURESQUE

Theories of the picturesque were influenced by these original considerations of

beauty and the sublime. One of the first theorists of the picturesque, Reverend William

Gilpin, referred to "physical characteristics and sensations" like Burke, but extended his

"category of beauty to include the species 'picturesque' in addition to the 'beautiful'."[177]

His theory of the picturesque thus discriminated between aesthetic experiences of *natural*

beauty and those of *illustrated* beauty, particularly through painting, which involved

human mediation. Landscape painting was a way in which the picturesque was conveyed,

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[175] Soper, 228
[176] Soper, 226
[177] Bermingham, Ann. Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. pg. 63

in which nature served as the archetype,[178] and through which the beauty of the natural landscape came to be seen as an authoritative source of true beauty. It also rendered landscape as a source of aesthetic experience which invoked a sense of refuge and sentimental longing.

Uvedale Price is referred to as the second theorist of the picturesque and takes Gilpin's considerations further by exploring the linkages between aesthetics and ideology, challenging Burke's idealist notions of aesthetics in claiming that "the picturesque... requires greater variety."[179] Price incorporated the actual land into his theory of the picturesque, as his background in farming presented him with the evident tensions between agricultural production and aesthetics. Price sought to develop a "more practical and pragmatic view of the landscape,"[180] rooted in the curiosity invoked in our perceptions of actual land. In this sense, Price's considerations of the "chance and change in the material order of nature"[181] illustrated the notion of a dialectical conception of landscape based upon a conceptions of the relations between landscape, nature and place. Price's theory of the picturesque was thus influential to earth art given its concern with the ongoing relationship with place or site, yet such considerations took hold in the art world before the diffusion of earth art popularly succeeded in challenging traditional notions of landscape and nature.

4.4 SPACES OF DISCONTENT

A development that occurred during the break from modernism was the challenge manifested towards the institutionalism of art and the space of the gallery itself. This

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[178] Bermingham, 64
[179] Jeffery Kastner ed. Brian Wallis surveyor. Land and Environmental Art. Phaidon. pg. 27
[180] Kastner, 27
[181] Kastner, 27

resistance was mounted not only at the seemingly inevitable institutionalism of the art world, but against the commodification of everyday life more generally. Art works that frame the human-nature dynamic in contemplative or critical ways invoke thoughtfulness towards the ways in which we have organized natural space and production. The main points of view through which nature has been considered – on one side reduced to its scientific character and on the other in its more emotive aspects – have proved inadequate insofar as their ability to promote a depiction of nature that fosters meaningful social change in terms of our relationship with it. The notion of the significance of the site in which a work was shown had gained much momentum in the popular context of resistance which was manifest in the 1960s, as a "fundamental reordering of critical and representational practices conceived at the time."[182] This was expressed in the development of the critique of everyday life as suggested by Henri Lefebvre, and the development of postmodernism, which embraced a "thorough interpretation of culture and nature, regarding both as discursive fields not fully apprehendable as 'fact'."[183] The tension between postmodern critiques, who see the "nature-culture division... as entirely politically instituted, and hence indefinitely mutable,"[184] and the ecological approach, which is "concerned with the limits of nature, and with our need to value, conserve, and recognize our dependence upon it"[185] are dynamically related to the artistic depictions of nature. The ecological account can still slip into rhetorical concepts with 'definite political affects'[186], but the critique need not be entirely reduced to anti essentialist foundations. Dialectical approaches, embedded in the work of Adorno, of the relationship

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[182] Kastner, 23
[183] Kastner, 23
[184] Soper, 8
[185] Soper, 7
[186] Soper, 9

with nature which explore these tensions through depiction reveal the complex historical background and social implications of the representation of nature.

Artists and theorists who challenge spatial and institutional assumptions, who provide criticism levelled against the common acceptance of everyday reality and who posit new alternative understandings lend powerful and unconventional insights for the possibility of dialectical thought. Critical theory seeks to destabilize common understandings of reality and open the discourse to the potential latent problems underlying how we live, interact, think and learn. Art responds to social and political situations and changes in a different way than traditional venues of social and political commentary. Surely the institutionalism of the art world itself cannot be ignored, but one must acknowledge the position of an artist to present their work in unique and unconventional ways. Because of this, art can contribute to a conception of performative politics in the formation of an interdisciplinary account of the representation of nature.

The artist Hans Haacke has said that "art is utterly unsuited as a political tool."[187] His pessimism regarding the political potential of art was magnified in a further statement in which he said that "absolutely nothing is changed by whatever type of painting or sculpture or happening you produce on the level where it counts, the political level."[188] His remarks do not come from nowhere; following the period in which Haacke produced some of his most contentious pieces, movements such as Dada and Pop Art were swept up in a new phase of commercialization of art, acting as reminders of the "work of art as the inevitable object of commodity exchange."[189] This reminds us of Adorno's claim that

[187] Hans Haacke as quoted in Burnham, Jack. "Steps in the Formulation of Real-Time Political Art", Framing and Being Framed. New York: NYU Press, 1975. pg. 130
[188] Haacke as quoted in Burnham, 130
[189] Foster, et al. Art Since 1900, Volume 2. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004. pg. 549

nothing can avoid the transformation into commodity status within the culture industry. Yet this period of intensive commodification was followed again by another movement which critically reflected the character of commodity fetishism.

Lucy Lippard discussed the concept of the dematerialization of the art-object which was meant to help escape the commodification of art within the capitalist system. By doing away with the art-object and focusing on the underlying concept of a work, Lippard wanted to free the work from the status of a commodified good in the capitalist enterprise of the art world. Although conceptualism did not achieve this goal, ideas of decommodification began to shed a new light on the art world as an industry by solidifying the connection between the art object and its commodity status. Lippard criticized this connection as being a negative underlying foundation of the institution of art and thereby granting free market economics as having great influence over it. She claimed that "the art establishment depends so greatly on objects which can be bought and sold that I don't expect it to do much about an art that is opposed to the prevailing systems"[190] Lippard saw her idea of conceptualism succumb to the seemingly omnipotent flow of capitalism. The system needed something stronger to penetrate capitalistic forces, something Lippard saw as the "artist working as an interruptive device, a jolt, in present societal systems."[191] This rupture formulated as a movement of institutional critique began, in which the concept of the site in which a work was shown was imbued with meaning and provoked the use and commodification of social and private space, and nature. Art produced under the general themes of Land Art or Earthworks thus did not

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[190] Lippard, Lucy. "'Interview with Ursula Meyer' and 'Postface' to Six Years" pp. 893-6. <u>Art in Theory 1900-1990 "An Anthology of Changing Ideas"</u>. Ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers,1992. p. 893
[191] Lippard, 894

focus on objects of nature, landscape or environment as such, but rather focused on the concepts of space, place and the everyday which provided provocative grounds upon which the conceptualizations of our relationships with our environment are manifested and articulated within industrial society. Such works speak to the constitutive nature of the virtual representation of nature, given the influence of its surrounding discourse and depiction and the attempts of invoking natural beauty as a source of motivation to join the movement.

Haacke's pieces work as tools that challenge the boundaries of other artistic movements, as well as the institution of art itself. Haacke inverts the concept of objectivity through the presentation of neutral, unbiased information that illuminates direct ties between the gallery space and contentious institutionalism within which it is embedded in his work "Shapolski et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings" (1971). This work includes photographs of a network of real estate dealings that included an extensive amount of slum housing. Not only did Haacke call into question the so called "philanthropy" of bourgeois art patrons linked with unethical capitalist deals, he also juxtaposed the slum housing against the space of the gallery, revealing its institutionalism and functionality as exclusive and upper class.[192] Daniel Buren's 'Peinture-Sculpture', involving a large bannerlike work with his characteristic striped painting, hung from the atrium at the Guggenheim in a similarly challenging fashion. Critical of the minimalist presumption of the neutrality of the space in which a work is perceived, Buren's concept of works *in situ* illustrated that their chosen "location is the proposition itself,"[193] revealing the interaction with the work and the impossibility of any permanent location

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[192] Foster, Hal et al. pg.546; referring to Rosalyn Deutsche's critical analysis
[193] Lippard, 855

for his conception. In "realizing that painting, in the state to which he had taken it, no longer had any value per se, [he] deduced that the striped fabric's only value derived from the place where it was exhibited."[194] This revealed a profound relationship between the work and its site which in turn revealed such spaces from a critical perspective, forcing the viewer to consider the location's significance in relation to the institutional interests.

The genre of institutional critique fostered a movement of artists that distanced themselves from the restrictive space of the gallery, thus interactions with public space became a crucial point of contemplation for their works. The general critique saw that "institutional interests, which are always mediated by economic and ideological interests, inevitably reframe and redefine the production, the reading, and the visual experience of the artistic object"[195] This relates not only to the artistic object, but to the experience of natural aesthetics as well, as they are mediated by such institutions as tourism and leisure. The momentum of the challenges levelled against these institutional mediations fostered the proliferation of earth art and its critical commentary on the relationship of humanity with space, place, or nature.

Space is a common theme for artists concerned with cultural critique given its vulnerability to social influence and control in juxtaposition with certain ideologies that promote specific spaces as being void of influence and essentially neutral (for example, the art gallery or the national park). Michel Foucault discusses space in terms of what he calls heterotopias, which are "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are

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[194]   Lelong, Guy. "Daniel Buren" Rome: Flammarion, 2001. p.37
[195]   Foster, et al. 546

simultaneously represented, contested, and in- verted."[196] Examples are prisons, cemeteries, libraries, parks, or museums - all sites that confirm some social construct through the institution by reifying it for public consumption. These sites have specific functions in society and many retain a sacred status that remains entrenched because "our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break [these divides] down."[197] Heterotopias are seen as unavoidable manifestations of the limits set by such social constructs. The museum is an example of such a site that proposes to present a neutral perspective of its given social institution - that of art and culture, but actually works to set limits of what it proposes to provide - enlightenment and truth founded upon an unbiased framework. Actual public space that is left over in between heterotopias has to function within all of the limits set by them, leaving little room for the reversal of socially entrenched institutionalism.

Artists such as Haacke and Buren play on Foucault's idea of the heterotopia "presupposing a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable."[198] The art establishment isolates the public to some degree since it appears as being of some higher functionality that is generally not accessible to all. By entering a gallery, one is assuming certain fantastical ideologies based on that space within the context of the art world. Such an assumption is the neutrality of the gallery in presenting unbiased, enlightened and uncensored points of view. Yet the revelation of the gallery as a heterotopia also creates an access point to its penetrability; in exposing it as a socially constructed site it becomes vulnerable to institutional critique. By questioning the gallery

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[196] Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec. "Of Other Spaces". *Diacritics*, Vol. 16: 1, Spring, 1986. pp. 22-27. pg.24
[197] Foucault, 23
[198] Foucault, 26

space, the institutionalism of art is revealed which in turn opens a forum for its criticism.

What is also opened is the access to art works, given this depiction of the gallery space as exclusive and limiting. Earthworks have been such that they denied this exclusivity and embraced a discourse which incorporated the tensions of ecological and institutional or industrial concerns. They were "clearly oppositional in that it demonstrated an intention to move the conception of art beyond the spatial confinements of the studio and the gallery,"[199] and thus became intriguingly interactive with the sites in which they were set, performed, or related to. Provocative examples are Robert Smithson's "Asphalt Rundown" (1969), Haacke's "Grass Grows" (1969), or Christo and Jeanne-Claude's "The Gates" (1975-2005) to name but a few. The significance of the sites and landscapes engaged in these works fostered a theoretical break from traditional conceptions of nature as they open the possibility of "the dialectic of landscape as a 'process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region.'"[200] This dialectical approach encourages a reconsideration of our interactions with nature and our experiences of natural aesthetics, as well as challenging the legitimacy of such confirmed sites.

4.6 SITES OF NATURAL BEAUTY

The notion of heterotopias can be considered in a parallel way to the creation of national parks. The industrialist character of society in the early twentieth century fostered the commodification of nature for production and leisure. The introduction of parks, rural vacation getaways or urban planning that aimed to included constructed sites of 'natural beauty' to balance the industrialism of city dwelling – all such things were

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[199] Kastner, 24
[200] Kastner, 27

promoted as representing a conservation of natural space, or an acknowledgement of its inherent value and importance. Yet such spaces illustrate the commodification of nature that has been championed by consumer culture. Natural sites have become sites of consumption and mediated attractiveness which perpetuate the subjugation of nature in seemingly apolitical ways. We are encouraged to pay park fees, enter the cordoned off site, follow the planned paths to the recommended viewpoints, and feel reassured that nature is in fact protected and left to its own spontaneous development in many situations. Wilson notes that "the designers of the great national parkways of North America have quite literally instructed their users in the 'beauties' of nature, he argues, by promoting some landscapes at the expense of others, by removing whatever bits of it were deemed unsightly, and by restricting all activities incompatible with parkway aesthetic."[201] The tensions, contradictions and compromises that have characterized the creation of many National Parks have largely been tied to the 'political economy of tourism'; an example of which is the creation of Banff National Park in Alberta, established as a "luxury resort for the Canadian Pacific Railway."[202] Powerful economic influences have fostered a distorted notion of conservationism (though this often came after the economically minded creation of a park), so that its goals must balance with economic interests in order to keep the parks open but also to ensure that they can be amply 'experienced', despite the ecological impacts of tourism itself.

Contemplations of such ideas are provoked if one has the opportunity to actually explore some of the more 'rugged' parks in Canada. An example is the Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park outside of Lake Cowichan, British Columbia. This park, which protects

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[201] Wilson, 242
[202] Wilson, 227

old growth forest, including the world's largest Sitka spruce tree, is accessible only by private logging roads; a disclaimer on the parks' website warns that active hauling may be in progress, and that the route is very rugged. The parks' borders are hugged by clear cuts – massive old growth stumps sitting in juxtaposition to their protected neighbours, some towering over 95 meters high.[203] The boundaries of parks illustrate the limits to the conservation of nature and the concealment of our relation to it that they often provide. One does not think of logging when they can gaze in wonder at the extension of the 'Heaven Tree' – the tallest sitka spruce in the world – whose top half is lost in the clouds and to the eye from the ground. It's description provided on the BC Parks website even describes it as a "luxuriously forested sanctuary that is without a doubt one of the most remarkable wild places on Vancouver Island."[204] Yet this park, and the scarce other remaining old growth forests in North America, are always at risk of conflicting with industrial and economic demands given their resource value.[205]

This is not to say that the conservation movement has been insincere. The aims of conservationists, the creation of protected areas and the preservation of certain sites is a manifestation of a valiant effort in many cases to preserve nature and keep it from the reach of commodification and exploitation. Yet there is a tension involved in the resources needed to establish and preserve such spaces without subjecting them to an excessive amount of tourist impact. Individuals such as Randy Stoltmann, whose efforts to save the old-growth in Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park led to the parks' creation in

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[203] BC Parks, "Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park" Accessed May, 2010. Available at: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/carmanah/
[204] BC Parks
[205] Wilson, 244

1990,[206] take up the advocacy and representation of nature with admirable intentions. Yet the parks cannot escape commodification, and one needs only to drive through those that have grown prolifically in popularity, say Banff or Jasper, to see the confusion between conservation and tourism or recreation. The transformation of nature into established sites of natural beauty is exemplary of Adorno's distrust in such direct experiences, and Foucault's notion of heterotopias. Invoking natural beauty as a tool to garner support for environmentalism has led the movement into a static position where it struggles to advance the general interest of environmentalism. What Adorno encouraged was a critical perspective, which is also reflected in certain art works, about the aesthetics of nature.

Art works that contemplate such aesthetics as well as the use and organization of space provide insightful commentary on the development of constructed sites such as parks, whose construction has provided mixed messages of conservation and the expansion of tourism and vacation destinations. In a work executed in New York, artist Alan Sonfist's "Time Landscape" intention was to convert landscape located within the city to recreate its seventeenth-century pre-colonial state. By restoring damaged soil, re-planting native vegetation and reconstructing original elevations, Sonfist created a space with "metaphorical impact and moralizing intent", standing as a mystical and haunting reminder of the landscape that once was. Yet such a work relates to the romanticized aspects of the parks, which portray an image of undeveloped, undisturbed, rugged land as an idyllic space that can no longer co-exist in the everyday.

This is reminiscent of the majestic portrayal of the parks in Ken Burns' mini-series, "The National Parks: America's best idea" (2009). This miniseries gave a depiction

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[206] BC Parks

of the spectacular landscape and scenery of the parks, as well as the courageous plights to conserve them. The references to 'wild' nature as the only remaining sense of true natural beauty manifest the danger of romantic or idyllic depictions of nature which refer to a sense of loss. Jeffery Kaster claims that "such measures simply disguise the actual problems of modern-day environmentalism by fixing an image of the landscape frozen in the past, privileging one moment in ecological history over all others."[207] In this sense, our encounters with such sites do not help us identify with the ecological crisis or the ways in which we can give it political representation. Rather, it encourages its treatment as a general issue, and sites such as the parks reassure us that it is an interest which is being adequately addressed. Their carefully structured view sites and scenic routes guide the viewers aesthetic experience, leading Wilson to note that "the designers of the great national parkways of North America have quite literally instructed their users in the 'beauties' of nature... by promoting some landscapes at the expense of others, by removing whatever bits of it were deemed unsightly, and by restricting all activities incompatible with parkway aesthetic."[208] In this sense they act as 'living monuments' whose construction provides a misleading account of conservation. The ways in which art works reveal these constructed sites as areas engaged in provocative relations with nature and humanity provides an alternative conceptualization of they ways in which nature has been organized.

4.7 THE POTENTIAL OF ART TO INVOKE CRITIQUE

How art can contribute to the environmental paradox is through its potential to invoke a transformation of nature into a subject, and to foster critical thought and

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[207] Kastner, 33
[208] Wilson, 242

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dialogue regarding attempts of virtual representation. Such approaches can foster

dialectical conceptualizations of landscape, and this can be seen in the depiction of nature

in contemporary art. The ability of art works to challenge political norms can be

provocative, even if it is not political per se, by invoking critical thought. Art theorist Leo

Steinberg has said that it is precisely this "intru[sion] in the supposed apolitical context of

art"[209] which can be most profound as it destabilizes not only the presumed neutrality of

the art world, but fosters a different kind of viewing experience in which the people

perceiving the works are encouraged to give thought to the challenges or contradictions

regarding social relations that the artist presents. It is in this sense that a shift in the way

nature is depicted in art works encourages an analysis of the environmental movement

and our relationship to nature more generally.

The Land Art category is generalized by one of its principle influences, Robert

Smithson, as consisting of three main propositions. The first is the challenge the works

present to formalist views of sculpture. Earthworks were generally "impermanent anti-

monuments"[210] whose lack of form problematized the formal characteristics of sculpture

and also challenged the notion of the art object as conceptual art had done. The second

proposition is that such works have "little to do with conventional notions of landscape or

nature,"[211] but were instead concerned with the concepts involved in our experiences of

space and boundaries. Considered as a concept rather than a place, Earthworks illustrated

not only the spatial tensions involved in our relation to nature, but also the temporality of

such a concept, hinting at a more fragile and damageable conception of the earth. As

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[209]   Steinberg, Leo. *Some of Hans Haacke's Works Considered as Fine Art.* Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business. Ed. Brian Wellis. M.I.T.Press; Cambridge. 1986. pp.8-19. p.15
[210] Kastner, 26
[211] Kastner, 25

such, the third proposition, which involves the concern with the site in which the work is related or situated, magnifies the contemplation involved with nature as it is seen as a concept, reflective of our relationship to our environment and the ways in which we have managed common and private space.

By inverting common conceptions of aesthetics and the picturesque, art works that cast the traditional notions of landscape and space into provocative relations challenge dominant conceptions of nature and aesthetics, as well as the way in which nature has been situated as the 'other' and subjugated to anthropocentric dominance. Due to the vastness of their medium – the land itself – artists who use the environment to shape their work and in turn provoke thought regarding the relation between their work and the space it occupies, can invoke profound impressions from the viewer. Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 'Wrapped Coast' is a haunting example. The work consists of 93 square kms of erosion control fabric wrapped over an area 2.5m long, 46 to 244m wide and from 26m high to sea level along the cliff lined shore in Little Bay, Australia. In blocking out the landscape in this way, the artists invite us to discover it in a different form, influenced by notions of territory, mapping, human mastery and preservation.

Romantic conceptions of nature within the context of increasing industrialization were depicted through images that exuded its awesome power and idyllic sense of refuge, juxtaposed against the removal or destruction of nature in urban dwellings, and the commodification of the rural landscape as well. Yet the awareness of the damage that has been inflicted upon nature in light of development and the scouring of finite resources, has made romantic depictions of nature appear as insincere. The once inspiring and attractive portrayals of nature now can be seen to be idealized representations of

something that has changed beyond repair. Canadian curator and art historian Joan

Murray notes that "Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven fashioned something from the

environment that was complex and complete: a self-contained universe that was

internally coherent and connected exhilaratingly with a wider world. Throughout the

century, the environment has been transformed; so has the art that attempts to convey that

environment to a broad public."[212] The depiction of nature in artworks provides an

account of varying perceptions on our relationship with it that have developed throughout

the course of history, often theorizing, predicting or responding to changes in such

relations. Considering the transition from romantic portrayals that were popularized

during a period of intense industrialization to contemporary works that represent aspects

of the relationship between human society and the natural world, there are marked

differences in the depiction of nature.

     A trend has developed which invokes a different type of response than did such

romantic depictions, as this trend points to an image of nature which appears as injured,

subjugated and degraded. This reflects a movement away from traditional notions of

aesthetics and natural beauty, challenging them as false representations entrenched in the

leisure industry which project nature as an object of desire. Art works and critical theory

that challenge this notion of nature have reversed this perception, revealing nature as a

creature of degradation. Its depiction as serene, beautiful or idyllic thus appears as

insincere and untrustworthy, while its depiction as an injured, violated subject invokes a

sense of subject-hood, which relates to attempts of virtual representation and challenges

common aesthetic assumptions upon which such approaches are based. Because of its

constitutive nature, attempts at virtual representation risk rooting themselves in common

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[212] Murray, Joan. Canadian Art in the 20th Century. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1999. pg. 246

discourse and assumed emotive responses to the aesthetics of nature. Critical theory and art works that target such assumptions provide a needed challenge to the contentious issue of virtual representation.

CHAPTER 5   CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I attempted to show that current attempts to represent nature as a general interest have not been adequate in providing a compelling account for its political viability. Given the paradox involved in environmentalism (the awareness and general international acknowledgement of a crisis coupled with a failure in the creation of binding policy), I have considered the challenges of representation regarding this issue as one of the roots of this problem. As nature has transformed into a subject and a concern to represent it in itself has arisen, the approach of virtual representation has been pursued by environmentalists, artists and theorists, but risks rooting itself in assumed common experiences and responses to nature. Engaging our discourse of environmentalism with critical theory and commentary encouraged in contemporary art can aid in mediating this risk, with the aim of fostering a reframing of the discourse that is not based on instrumental reason.

The discourse of environmentalism is not a newly emerging trend, for concerns regarding nature and the surrounding environment are accounted for from centuries ago. Boardman references "arguments that began to appear from the mid-nineteenth century about the consequences of modern societies' exploitation of natural resources."[213] The use or exploitation of nature has confronted humanity more recently as an immanently contentious issue, and yet we continue to face a paradox given the acknowledgement of the ecological crisis and the lack of an adequate response to mitigate its consequences. The failure of the creation of binding policy at the Copenhagen conference was evidence of this global dilemma.

The basis of this problem can be traced to representational approaches, which

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[213] Boardman, 36

until now have not provided an adequate account of the representation of nature. Traditional democratic theories of representation have not been able to sufficiently cope with the concept of 'environment'. Grievance constituencies can invoke legislation for particular issues directly affecting them, but broader issues of global relevance have only been taken on by self appointed representatives through the approach of virtual representation. The problem has thus been cast as a general interest, and faces the often insurmountable challenge of competing with other dominant interests within the political arena. The inadequacy of contemporary approaches to the representation of nature frame the paradox of inaction in an interesting perspective in consideration of how it can be more meaningfully addressed in a way that avoids an instrumental framework.

The transformation of nature into a principal, or an oppressed 'other', invokes its conceptualization as a subject in need of representation. Yet, given its incapacity to ever truly represent itself, nature remains dependent upon virtual representation taken up by self appointed advocates. The pursuit of virtual representation presents a more coherent approach to giving agency to nature, but is tainted by false and misleading conceptions of nature that have been entrenched in social and historical perceptions and beliefs. Torgerson's notion of performative politics, Adorno's concept of constellations, and theoretical considerations of contemporary art help contribute to a new understanding of nature which reveals a sense of injury, damage, distortion and subjugation. The delegitimized appeals to natural beauty cannot be sincerely upheld in light of the current ecological crisis, given the complete diffusion of environmental degradation. Illustrating the suffering of nature invokes a representational approach to nature that is reflected as a quasi grievance constituency in itself. The approach of virtual representation is receptive

to an emerging critical depiction of nature in art which shows dialectical sensitivity to the critical idea of unspoilt nature. In this sense it fosters the projection of nature as a quasi grievance constituency in itself with an apparent suppressed subject character. This approach rejects the inherent instrumentalist framework of contemporary environmentalism while simultaneously opening the discourse to provocative dialectical alternatives of the depiction of nature and considerations of our relationship to space, place, the commons, ecology or environment.

The momentum of the environmental movement has encouraged the narrowing of the discourse, with the result of streamlining a conception of goals and desires in relation to the management of the environment. In order to attempt the political representation of a subject, it is inevitable to impose particular understandings, definitions and boundaries upon it. There is a tendency to force non-traditional instances of representation into the traditionally conceived model in order to be able to deal with them politically. Without such processes, representation becomes problematic given the difficulty of speaking for something whose needs and desires are unclear. For reasons such as this, Danto exclaims that the "political reality of the present seems to consist in drawing and defining boundaries wherever possible."[214] To give information about the subject being represented is generally to rely on these interpretations and limitations that have fostered our understanding of nature.

The act of speaking for nature through the mandates adopted by the popular environmental movement has been seen as a positive political advancement for the cause. Yet, green political parties often lack popular support, Copenhagen failed to create

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[214] Danto, Arthur C. After the End of Art – Contemporary Art and the Pale of History. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1997. pg. 14

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binding policy, deep ecologists' cries of urgency fall on deaf ears while environmentalism is criticized for failing to truly address the issues but rather covering them up with 'green washed' ideas that making small adjustments to the preserved system of growth and development is sustainable. The idea of transforming lifestyles in order to accommodate a silent interest whose negative effects are so far away that they are rarely seen or felt, is not one that is easily accepted by a population raised in the affluence of plentitude. That is, unless there truly has been an intergenerational shift in values towards a postmaterialist ethic. If this explains the rise of environmentalism though, it cannot explain the lack of meaningful change to address environmental issues. The movement is sold as being progressive, advancing an interest that affects all inhabitants of the world and addressing it in a way that is politically viable.

Challenges to the popular movement are a necessary form of addressing the inadequacy of representational approaches to the environment. From distinct perspectives that are not reduced to emotive or scientific depictions of nature, and which do not stress the inviolability of identification with the so-called progressive social movement of environmentalism, the use of critical theory and contemporary art reveals the contentious relation between humanity and nature based upon instrumental reason, a framework which the contemporary environmental movement fails to avoid.

This problematic aspect is not restricted to the movement itself, but extends to 'green political theory' more generally insofar as we consider the influence of bias in theoretical arenas. The discipline of environmental politics is much younger than many areas of the social sciences. Its progress in terms of developing as a discipline in itself has fostered the adaptation of environmental issues by other disciplines, as well as the

expansion of those other disciplines in order to include questions of environmental security, integrity, and/or sustainability. This is what Boardman has termed a "two-way flow of enquiries"[215] given that "environmental questions are best approached through study of the interactions between the critical issues of political economy, eclectically defined, and ecology."[216] As the relevance of environmental issues became increasingly apparent, the other disciplines in the social sciences had to learn how to handle such questions. The global character of the issues made them particularly relevant to international politics, but the growing concerns also related to questions in sociology and philosophy. It falls in line with the claim that "disciplines naturally like to make use of problems that fit nicely into their unfolding narratives,"[217] when we consider how questions of environment have been adopted by various theoretical positions. Ecologists argue on behalf of the planet by referring to its intrinsic worth as well as notions of holism. Environmentalists refer to the 'natural' tendency towards anthropocentrism and the importance of human needs which can be balanced with the sustainability of the planet. Each position refers to notions of the environment and naturalism which they claim to be objective and observable, and yet they typically stand in opposition to one another.

Analyzing the tensions involved in the movement, discourse, depiction, and application of ecological concerns to other disciplines reveals the malleability and elusive character of the subject of nature. Being led by the 'progress' of environmentalism appeals to many individuals, but the lack of critical perspectives involved in the popularized form of environmentalism begs the question of the direction of this progress,

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215 Boardman, 20
216 Boardman, 9
217 Boardman, 21

and what kind of relationship with nature it envisages. A dialectical conception of landscape and space encouraged by an engagement with critical theory and provocative works of art is paramount to our approaches to the representation of nature both within the political arena as well as in the general social and private spheres of everyday life. An understanding of this dialectical relationship as well as the conceptual problems involved in virtual representation can enable environmentalists to better approach the creation of a mandate for nature.

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