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Abstract

The concept of green democracy has been advanced in green political theory as a way to include the natural world in the political and, by that, overcome an alleged wall, a fundamental disunity, separating humans and nature in modernity and substitute it with a unity of identity that would bridge the gap between them. It has also been vested with the coupled power to transform society in a sustainable direction. This study argues that green democracy disqualifies the concept of democracy it adopts and that, instead of bringing humans and nature together in a unity of identity, it reproduces a relation between them according to which they form a unity of difference, a relation where they are connected as if being the inside and outside of a door. Through a historical analysis of medieval, early modern, and modern modes of Western thought, it is shown that modernity does not wall humans off from nature but instead relates them in such a unity of difference and that this particular relation is fundamental for the modern concept of democracy in general, which is shown to have the same meaning as democracy has in the concept of green democracy. A tendency within the modern concept of democracy to disqualify itself is also delineated. The analysis suggests that the conceptualisation of green democracy in green political theory reproduces a unity of difference between humans and nature because it adopts a modern concept of democracy presupposing such a relation, and that it disqualifies its own concept of democracy because modern democracy tends to disqualify itself. Also, this tendency, it is argued, is exacerbated in green democracy.

Key words
human-nature relations, democracy, nature, political order, conceptual analysis, intellectual history, the Anthropocene

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by Rickard Andersson

To Lina,
naturally

— Preface —

I T TOOK ME TWELVE YEARS to write this book. Twelve. Damn. Years. That's a long time! Lots of things have changed during these years, a lot of stuff has happened. At the time of writing, I'm 39 years old, which means I have been working on it for more than a quarter of my life. So in a way, life itself has happened, at least a decent chunk of it. When I was accepted to the PhD programme in political science at Lund University, I was living with my girlfriend in a flat in Malmö, felt young and strong, and spent way too much money on craft beer and restaurant visits. I pretty much had only one goal in life, doing a PhD, and sometimes I even allowed myself to dream about an academic career. Now, I can't say I feel that young or strong anymore, the days of living in Malmö are far gone, and that girlfriend is now my wife and together we have two amazing kids. It has been a long time since I thought finishing a PhD was the most important thing in the world and an academic career is not even on my mind. I've had a full-time job outside of academia for the past five years. Finishing this thesis means I will have no connections left to the academic world.

I don't know why I wanted to pursue a PhD back in those days, I'm not sure I ever had a specific reason. I just really wanted it, and I guess it seemed like a good idea at the time. As an undergraduate student, I really liked studying social science. Loved it, really. And in a way, doing a PhD and the prospect of working in academia seemed to offer a way for me to continue doing what I loved. Now, as I'm writing this and the damned thesis is finally done, I'm glad I managed to pull it off, but other than that I feel surprisingly little. I'm mostly just glad it's done, that this whole thing is over. If I'm being honest—and admittedly, this is somewhat embarrassing to write—before I was accepted to the PhD programme, and in the early phase of my work, I more than once imaged what it would be like being done; to have completed a thesis; to have that degree. Mostly—and this is perhaps even more embarrassing to admit—I expected, perhaps fantasised about even, a sense of achievement, success, confidence; feeling smart, being an expert at something and being confident knowing a lot about a certain subject matter; the start of something really cool, a beginning; perhaps even a sense of pride. Well, surprise, surprise! That didn't happen. Now, as I'm sitting here doing the final stuff before sending my work off to the printing house, I feel nothing of the sort. I don't think finishing this book is much of an achievement, let alone a success. I don't feel confidence and I definitely don't feel smart, whatever that might mean. Nor am I proud of what I have done. But obviously, it's not a failure either. I mean, it's done after all. Neither a success nor a failure, it just is. It is what it is. And whatever that is, I just know that it's done, that this experience, this part of my life, is over. For me, doing a PhD has not been a beginning, it is an ending.

I've had my ups and downs during my years as a PhD student. Some parts of the job have been good, some great, some have been freaking amazing. The best part has easily been the privilege of being able to devote so much time to something I really enjoy. I've had plenty of opportunities to read interesting stuff, to think thoroughly about difficult problems, to approach intellectual puzzles and trying to understand them, figure them out, to follow lines of thought that I knew would lead to nowhere but that deserved exploration simply for the sake of finding out what was there. I have loved pretty much every minute of that kind of work. Having had such opportunities has indeed been a privilege.

Other aspects of the experience, however, were less enjoyable. Some parts of the job turned out to be really difficult for me. I struggled with a lack of confidence, crippling doubts, anxiety, and depression. Actually, I dealt with such issues before, but working as a PhD student certainly did not alleviate them. If anything, it made them worse. I spent long periods feeling down and, as a result, I had long stretches of writer's block. I'm talking months and months here, and, of course, not producing anything made me feel even worse. A classic negative spiral.

When I managed to write something, I never thought it was any good. I just saw its shortcomings and flaws, gaps where there should be none, superficial arguments where there should be depth, triviality instead of profundity. I have indeed never been proud of any of the work I've done. To be honest, more often than not I've been ashamed of it. I never felt I had done enough. I don't know how to put this really, but I often had the feeling that I didn't understand subject matters well enough. Not even my own research topic, which, weirdly enough, I still liked working on. Most of the time, I simply felt dumb. Dumb, and ashamed for being dumb. I know that might sound silly, but I can't seem to find a better way to put it. Of course, one shouldn't think of people in such terms as dumb or smart, and I don't think of other people in that way—that indeed would be dumb. But for some reason, I have a harder time staying away from such judgements of myself.

During the time I was an employee at the university, dealing with my mental health issues I tended to isolate myself from friends and colleagues. When I was at the department, I avoided meeting people, ate my lunch in my office instead of in the lunchroom and stuff like that. Sometimes it could go days without me showing up at the department at all. I kept to myself instead, sometimes working from libraries—one of the few environments in which I always seem to feel fairly comfortable—but most often staying at home. When it got really bad, I had a hard time even getting out of bed. Obviously, this is not a healthy way of living and a difficult situation to be in, hard to handle.

Writing all of this down, I'm not looking for pity, nor do I wish to portray my experiences of being a PhD student as worse than those of others. I don't think they were—and how would I know? PhD studies are hard for most people, I guess. Nor am I complaining or saying that I regret accepting the position I was offered so many years ago. Because I don't. Sure, looking back, there are plenty of things along the way I wish I had done differently. But regretting my decision to start working as a PhD student? My time at the department? Absolutely not. And I certainly don't want to blame anyone for how things turned out for me. Quite the contrary. For I had great people around me, people who in their own different

ways helped me out and made it possible for me to move forward, to get better. I had fantastic colleagues at the department. Friends have been there for me, doing what friends do. And I have a family whose support seems to know no bounds at all. No, the reason I'm sharing this is that it is really hard for me to find the words that properly convey my gratitude to those who provided help, considering what that help has meant to me.

I am indeed deeply grateful to everyone who has been there for me, who has lent me a helping hand in one way or another, or dozens, or uncountable. Usually, there is only one name on the cover of a PhD thesis, only one author. This one is no different, and in this case that name is mine. But the single authored thesis is pretty much a myth. I, at least, would be lying if I said I did all of this on my own. Sure, I've put down all the words on paper (oh, and on that note, all the errors are mine as well of course). But I can say for certain that I would not have been able to do it all without the help of others, without colleagues, friends, and family (except the errors, those I am perfectly capable of doing on my own). Without the people around me, there would have been no book at all.

However, pinpointing the different ways in which different persons have helped me is really difficult and it seems to be beyond my abilities. I gladly acknowledge all the help I've received, all the support. And I have tried to put in writing the specific and individual ways in which people have provided help. But any such attempt seems belittling of their efforts and it never seems to capture what they have meant to me and continue to mean to me. So, I choose not to list any names here or describe specific things people have done for me. Instead, I will just say this: *Thank you all!* And, if you think not being able to mention any names is a failure on my end: *I'm sorry! I really tried.* Perhaps you even chose to read this preface partly to see if your name is mentioned in it—something I've been guilty of doing myself occasionally. Indeed, there are many people who deserve mentioning and rightfully could expect being mentioned. But failing to meet expectations, or at least what I think people might expect of me and what I think they are right to expect of me, seems to be somewhat of a forte of mine.

There are, however, three persons I would like to mention by name and write to directly: Alve, Einar, and Lina. I won't thank you, and I can't, for I can't image my life without you and I fail to see a line where I end and you begin. So thanking you would be like thanking parts of myself, parts of my own being, my own life. And that would certainly be weird, wouldn't it?

You have all had to put up with a lot during these years, so much crap and nonsense. Alve and Einar, I have been working on this book for your whole lives so far, and at times I haven't been a good dad. Sometimes I've been irritated and angry for reasons no one could ask of you to understand, let alone accept. I have been too absent, failed to be there for you in ways you deserve. Sometimes I've been quiet, sometimes I've said too much, things I didn't mean. For all of this, and for countless other reasons, I owe you apologies. I know it might not seem like it, but I have actually tried my best to be a good dad, doing what I thought was best for you. But it's been hard. I don't really know why I have kept working on this book for so long, trying to get it done instead of just calling it quits and doing something else. Perhaps I've forgotten what it feels like not having a thesis hanging over my shoulders,

failed to realise quitting was an option and that quitting would probably not mean anything to anyone else. Least of all to you. But it would probably have meant something to me. Not for the achievement or anything like that. But I don't think I would ever be happy with myself knowing I didn't complete it. I don't nurture any naïve hopes of suddenly becoming the happiest person alive just because this book is done. But I do think finishing it will improve my chances for being a better person to you two, being a better dad, and overall a somewhat more enjoyable—at least less annoying—person to be around. So, if there is a reason why I haven't just shoved it all in the bin, it's you two, my relation to you, and that I think that you, in some way, will be better off without me being haunted by a book that never got finished. I really hope this will turn out to be true, for you mean the world to me. You and your mom.

Lina, I have made many sacrifices during these years. But so have you, and I'm afraid yours have often been greater. This book is yours more than it is mine. If I think it's difficult to describe what people around me have done for me, I find it truly impossible to write what you mean to me. I simply don't have the words for it, not sure there are any. All I can say is that I love you, so very, very much. And if indeed you have had to make sacrifices on my behalf, I feel blessed getting to spend the rest of my life with you trying to make up for it.

Rickard

— Contents —

Das Ganze ist das Unwahre

(Theodor W. Adorno)

Introduction

Begin
(Lord Voldemort)

THIS IS A STUDY of the future of democracy in the Anthropocene and a certain problem associated with the rethinking of democracy as something that pertains only to humans. In the discourse of green political theory, where such efforts are part of a larger ambition to move society away from unsustainable practices, attempts to bring humans and nature closer together and extend democracy into non-human realms end up failing not only once but twice. In what can be referred to as a double short circuit, such attempts fail to bridge the gap between humans and nature as intended and disqualify the concept of democracy they adhere to themselves. My ambition with this study is to provide an answer as to why this double short circuit occurs.

The Anthropocene, it has been suggested, is a new geological epoch of planet Earth, starting sometime between the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the middle of the 20th century and succeeding the epoch of the Holocene, which began at the end of the last ice age some 10 000 to 12 000 years ago. The defining mark of the Anthropocene epoch is humankind being a geological driving force, meaning that humans have planetary impacts on Earth, that human af-

fairs influence the environment on global scales; in the Anthropocene, humans are basically a force of nature, similar to volcanoes, solar radiation, or tectonic plates (Hamilton 2015b, p. 32). The notion of the Anthropocene conveys the image of a planetary 'Age of Man', and since its original introduction in the Earth sciences about 20 years ago, it has become an increasingly powerful imaginary in the social sciences.

Important aspects of the Anthropocene imaginary include, first and foremost, the notion of a convergence of social and natural reality; if there ever was a fundamental or essential difference between the cultural, social, and political world of humans on the one hand, and the natural world of matter and things on the other, the two are now so inextricably entwined that no such difference can be upheld in any meaningful way. Or so the story goes. Second, modern society and modern thought are said to be grounded in and by a differentiation between humans and nature. According to this view, modernity rests on a dualism in which a fundamental or essential difference separates humans from the natural world. Finally, the reality of humankind as a geological force and the entanglement of humans and nature

are said to demand a rethinking of humans, nature, and their relation. Specifically, what is required are new conceptualisations that do not proceed from, assume, or entrench dualisms of humans and nature. From the point of view of the Anthropocene imaginary, dualist thinking is a thing of the past; it is obsolete, out of tune with reality, and in need of renewal.

This proclaimed need for rethinking and renewal pertains to many branches of the social sciences, including major strands of political theory and the concepts therein. To put it straightforwardly, the Anthropocene imaginary seems to pose a challenge to political theory to rethink much of how it makes sense of humans, the natural world, the relation between humans and that world, and how humans ought to live their lives together with and within it; it challenges anthropocentric conceptualisations in general. In a 2015 anthology on the Anthropocene and political theory, the editors criticise political theory for being 'stuck in the Holocene' and give expression exactly to this view:

> The Anthropocene poses a challenge to political theory, which used to see political regimes as purely intra-human contracts and struggles. In political science the Anthropocene concept obliges us to embark on a deep reconceptualisation of political agency and democracy. (Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne 2015b, p. 9)

Some aspects of the Anthropocene imaginary echo of sentiments that have been part of green political theory for quite some time. The view that political theory approaches political order as something that involves only humans and that this needs to change is actually a major tenet in green political theory. Green political theory has also long been occupied with transcending dualisms and rethinking political concepts in non-anthropocentric directions, including the concept of democracy, the latter having been characterised as fundamentally anthropocentric since its very emergence:

> Democracy, however contested a concept, and in however many varieties it has appeared in the last two and a half thousand years, is, if nothing else, anthropocentric. (Dryzek 1996, p. 19; see also Dryzek 2002, p. 147; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, p. 17)

Indeed, if all of this is true, if it is correct to reproach modern political thought for being dualist and democracy for always only being about humans and about humans as unique beings vis-à-vis the natural world, and if such dualist thinking is called into question by the reality of the Anthropocene, there certainly seems to be a need to rethink democracy in such a manner that it does not in any way rely on the belief that humans are fundamentally or essentially different and separate from the natural world. In the Anthropocene epoch, democracy must become non-anthropocentric, so it seems, and this study is concerned with why endeavours to seek out such a non-anthropocentric concept of democracy tend to fail.

At the time of writing, theoretically oriented research on non-anthropocentric democracy apropos the Anthropocene is not particularly extensive. To my knowledge, there are no systematic attempts to develop a thoroughly non-anthropocentric concept of democracy on the basis of the Anthropocene imaginary. Indeed, what will become of democracy in the Anthropocene is very much an open question, and at the moment, any analysis of the implications of the Anthropocene imaginary for democracy and its

conceptualisation would merely be a conjecture. Therefore, I take a slightly different route, approaching the problem indirectly instead by departing from the discourse of green political theory and how non-anthropocentric democracy has been conceptualised therein. Green political theorists have long tried to do away with the perceived separation between humans and nature and build a bridge between them. They have sought to emphasise the belonging of humans to nature and nature to humans, to depart conceptually from the identity of the two rather than their difference. Such endeavours include attempts to extend democracy beyond its human confine and thereby include the natural in the political and the political in the natural.

This circumstance provides the opportunity to approach the problem of democracy in the planetary age of humankind and the prospects of rethinking democracy in a non-anthropocentric fashion suitable for that age indirectly by analysing how democracy beyond humans has been conceptualised in green political theory extrapolating the future of democracy in the Anthropocene from how it is treated and thought of in the present. This is the approach adopted in this study. Actually, this only amounts to the first stage in what will develop into a long historical analysis of how the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation influence how democracy is thought of and what it is thought to be.

The Anthropocene imaginary also comes with a distinguishing concern for the plant's ecological integrity and for the sustainability of social development and how humans live their lives together. The reason for this is pretty straightforward: Many of the global environmental changes associated with humankind as a geological force come with long-term undesirable consequences and ultimately threaten human well-being. Thus, the practices that turn humankind into such a force are in important respects unsustainable; humans, in other words, are not necessarily a benign force of nature, and hitherto the Anthropocene has been an epoch burdened by its own lack of sustainability, which for many is a major cause of concern and something that urgently needs to change (Meadowcroft 2019, p. 230).

Democracy, its rethinking and improvement, has been identified as an important aspect of moving away from unsustainable practices and as vital for achieving long-term sustainability in this new epoch. Similar arguments about the importance of democracy have figured in green political theory for quite some time. Attempts within green political theory to conceptualise democracy in a non-anthropocentric fashion are generally coupled with the argument that extending democracy beyond humankind possibly provides a solution to modern problems of unsustainability. Thus, non-anthropocentric democracy becomes vested with the power to contribute to transformations of society in a more sustainable direction. Such lines of reasoning also figure in the literature on the Anthropocene. A reconceptualisation of democracy appropriate for the Anthropocene epoch, then, is not merely about realigning political concepts to fit better with reality. It is, most importantly, also about the normative affirmation of a certain way of ordering the political world so as to deal with environmental problems and the ecological predicaments of modern and Anthropocene society.

The green support for non-anthropocentric democracy as a means for sustainabil-

ity largely stems from how Western civilisation and modernity are diagnosed and criticised by many environmentalists. It is often claimed in environmentalist circles that Western civilisation broke with the natural world somewhere along its development, that people in Europe at some point in history started to think of themselves as essentially different from nature. The historical split can be located as far back as ancient Greece when philosophers started to distinguish between *physis* and *nomos* and approach human laws and customs as different from natural objects, Plato located ultimate reality in a spiritual world opposite to the material world humans actually experience, and Aristotle said of humans to be speaking *political* animals. It can also be related to the emergence of Christianity and the idea that humans are created in God's image.

Most commonplace, however, is the view that the onset of modernity represents, if not the very moment of the split between humans and nature, then at least its most profound form and scope. Modern society, the argument goes, is the result and manifestation of humans separating themselves—or at least they think they are separating themselves—from the natural world. To use architecturally inspired vocabulary, modernity is said to build a great wall between humans and nature, thus making it possible for humans to live their lives according to their own choosing in a social world safeguarded from the perils of nature. From that point of view, since democracy has always been 'if nothing else, anthropocentric', the modern separation of humans from nature does indeed seem to provide a fertile ground for democracy to flourish, and indeed, if the foundation of modern society in general consists of a wall between humans and

nature, and a walling off of nature, then modern democracy does certainly seem to be conditioned by the same separation.

This dualist understanding of humans and nature, according to which the two form a duality of separate worlds related only by their difference, is also often accused of having negative long-term consequences for the environment. It is said to reduce nature to a mere resource the merit of which is to contribute to human well-being and development; it nourishes beliefs that only humans are valuable in themselves; it fosters attitudes of humans having not only the ability—through the use of reason and the assistance of technological innovations—to conquer and master the wilderness of nature, but also having the right to do so. All in all, this—it is argued—engenders unsustainable social practices. Sure, short-term benefits abound, but in the long run, modern dualism is bad for the environment, the argument goes. And since, as environmentalists are quick to emphasise, human well-being is essentially dependent on the material world, modern society, at the end of the day, is still very much dependent on its natural environment. Thus, contrary to the belief that modernity has managed to wall off nature, modernity is also, in the end, in some sense bad for humans as well since it threatens the sustainability of development and human well-being in the long run. However, insofar as an understanding of democracy fitting for the Anthropocene epoch and imaginary would do away with dualist presuppositions—again making use of architectural metaphors, to the extent that it would instead build a bridge between humans and nature—non-anthropocentric democracy could remedy all of this. By effectively nullifying the human-nature dual-

ism said to be the root of modern problems of unsustainability, non-anthropocentric democracy would serve an environmentalist agenda. Thus, in the discursive context of green political theory, non-anthropocentric democracy is importantly also *green democracy*, and since it is from within that context that I approach the non-anthropocentric rethinking of democracy, throughout this study I refer to *green* democracy rather than *non-anthropocentric* democracy. But it should be noted that the green democracy I am approaching is also always non-anthropocentric.

In the next chapter, I survey and deconstruct three attempts within green political theory to conceptualise green democracy, each drawing on a theoretical tradition unique vis-à-vis the others: ecology, social constructivism, and new materialism. In all of these theoretical approaches to green democracy, democracy is conceptualised generally as an experience of political order and of oneself as a member of political order according to which one can change oneself and the political order one is part of by virtue of being a member of that order. I show further that political order, according to this shared view, involves the creation of meaning in general, that the creation of meaning is understood to be a political act. From this, it follows that to change order is to change the meaning of order *and* anything and everything else, everything that is not order, including the natural world. Thus, the democracy-part of green democracy refers, as a concept, to an experience according to which the world in general can be otherwise as a result of what one does as a member of political order, what one does as a political being.

The experience of order contained within the concept of green democracy presupposes that order has four interrelated properties, as will also be delineated in the next chapter. It is an experience according to which political order

- is self-creative,
- lacks essence,
- has a contingent future,
- consists of members with agency.

These are components of the concept of political order that green democracy presupposes. Political order must be characterised by these four properties, it must be made up of these components, in order for green democracy to appear as a meaningful concept in the discourse of green political theory. However, I argue that in their attempts to bridge the gap between humans and nature by extending democracy to the natural world, these theoretical approaches actually end up disqualifying the possibility of the world being other than what it already is because the bridging of humans and nature deprives political order of these properties. At a theoretical level, then, green democracy tends to revert into something else, into non-democracy. This indicates that these attempts to conceptualise green democracy fail to adhere to the concept of democracy they are themselves advocating.

I furthermore show in the next chapter that the three theories of green democracy presuppose a relation between humans and nature contradicting the one they seek to accommodate, ground themselves on, and affirm. They are, to put it figuratively, not themselves built on the bridge they undertake to assemble. However, the relation they presuppose is not captured particularly well by the metaphor of a wall separating two worlds independent of each other. Such

a relation refers to a duality of worlds, to difference and disunity; a wall establishes a disunity of difference, so to speak. In comparison, with a bridge between humans and nature, humans and nature would be brought together in a unity of identity. But the relation presupposed by the theories of green democracy that I cover herein is rather that of a *unity of difference* in which the two related parties are fundamentally different but still condition each other; each is a necessary condition for the possibility of the other. The parties in this relation are neither fully separated nor do they form a whole, and they do not make sense unless they come together in and as a pair. To keep using architectural metaphors, this relation can be thought of as the relation which holds between the inside and outside of a door. The inside and the outside of a door are most certainly not identical to each other, but their being and their difference come into effect only by the very relation which relates them as inside and outside. Take away the door and the uniqueness of inside and outside as inside and outside vanishes. One is exactly not the other, but they always come in a pair. In this understanding of the relation between humans and nature, the relation consists of a conjunction in which the *and* between them is emphasised; there is always an *and* appearing as soon as either one is brought up. It is always humans *and* nature, nature *and* humans, never just humans *or* nature, nature *or* humans, nor is it ever either-or.

Since they presuppose this kind of rela-

tion between humans and nature, the very attempts to extend democracy to the natural world and to bridge the gap between humans and nature by political means produce a relation between humans and nature contradicting the one they seek to accommodate, ground themselves on, and affirm. Towards the very end of this study, it will be shown that this relation is actually the one characterising modern thought in general, which suggests that green political theory actually reproduces a modern conceptualisation of humans, nature, and their relation.

What happens, then, in these theoretical approaches to green democracy is a kind of double short circuit: while the extension of democracy to the natural world tends to disqualify democracy, the coupled endeavour to bridge the gap between humans and nature fails because of aspirations and presuppositions contradicting each other—the dismantling of the wall separating humans and nature is possible only if there is already a door bringing together the world of humans and the world of nature in a conjunction, in a unity of difference.

The question I seek to answer in this study, then, is why this double short circuit occurs. Methodologically, I situate green political theory and its attempts to conceptualise green democracy as part of the broader tradition of Western political thought,[1] and by means of a historical narrative of how the general structures of Western thought have unfolded since the Middle Ages, I show that modern thought, rather than being built on

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[1] I believe this move to be rather uncontroversial since Western political theory is a prominent feature of green political theory. As Gabrielson and colleagues note, 'many environmental political theorists share the sense that contemporary dilemmas might be better understood by working through the ideas of long-dead Western thinkers' (Gabrielson et al. 2016, p. 6). For an account of how 'canonical' texts in Western political theory have been approached in green political theory, see Wilson (2016).

a complete separation of humans and nature, is centred around exactly the same conceptualisation of this relation as the surveyed theories of green democracy. In other words, modern humans and modern nature are not related as if they were separated by a wall. Rather, they are brought together in a unity of difference as if they were the inside and the outside of a door.

The analysis will also show that the concept of democracy advanced in green political theory is identical to how democracy is conceptualised in modernity in general, and that modern democracy is conceptually tied to a certain relation between humans and nature, a relation in which they form a unity of difference. Modern democracy, I argue, presupposes that the specific relation between humans and nature as the inside and outside of a door is in place. And modern democracy, too, has a tendency to revert into non-democracy, albeit to a lesser extent than the concept of green democracy.

This is, so to speak, the intellectual baggage green political theory comes with and the discursive setting in which it operates. Overall, the analysis in this study suggests that green political theory basically adopts a modern concept of democracy. And doing so, the conceptualisation of green democracy inadvertently reproduces the modern conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature, a conceptualisation which conflicts with what green political theory aims to achieve in terms of bringing humans and nature together, and rehearses and—for reasons still to be disclosed—even exacerbates the shortcomings of modern democracy. This, in the end, implies that to the extent that problems of modern unsustainability hinge on non-anthropocentric democracy, existing theories of green democracy in green political theory might not be fit to contribute to sustainability transformations, and that green democracy might not be a good way forward for democracy in the Anthropocene.

1.1 Research aim

My aim with this study, then, is to provide an answer to the question as to why conceptualisations of green democracy, by which I broadly mean non-anthropocentric democracy meant to facilitate sustainability, within the discourse of green political theory tend to disqualify the concept of democracy they are advancing, and also presuppose, and by that reproduce a relation between humans and nature contradicting the relation they seek to accommodate, ground themselves on, and affirm.

In simplified terms, my ambition is to deliver an explanation as to why green political theory wrestles with the twofold problem I refer to as the double short-circuit of green democracy. For research strategical purposes, the problem can be viewed as consisting of two parts: the human-nature relation and democracy. And it is possible, moreover, to simplify the crux of the matter by focusing on these two parts, and on how they are related, in the following way.

It is commonly claimed within the discourse of green political theory that modernity is built on a dualist understanding of how humans and nature are related and that this ultimately engenders unsustainable practices and causes environmental harm. If dualism leads to unsustainability, it follows that non-dualism emerges as a good candidate for grounding sustainable practices. Non-anthropocentric democracy, then, emerges as a normatively desirable ap-

proach—presupposing that you do think democracy is desirable—to deal politically with problems of unsustainability.

As it is conceptualised in green political theory, democracy is an experience of political order and of oneself as a member of political order according to which the world in general can be otherwise as a result of what one does as a political being. This understanding of democracy presupposes that political order is defined by four qualities, that, as a concept, it is composed of four components according to which it is self-creative, lacks essence, has a contingent future, and consists of members with agency. For simplicity's sake, these four components can be referred to as self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. So basically, as the reasoning underpinning the advancement in green political theory of green democracy goes, extending democracy beyond humans by somehow including the natural world in a political world in which order is composed of these four conceptual components emerges as a theoretical, not necessarily explicitly articulated, prerequisite for green democracy, and in extension for the political achievement of sustainable ways of life lived in common. But proceeding from how green democracy is conceptualised in green political theory, this line of reasoning amounts to a theoretical failure. First, as democracy is extended to the natural world, political order loses the properties presupposed by the concept of democracy so that, in the end, the world in general cannot be otherwise as a result of what one does as a political being. Second, the same concept of democracy presupposes a relation between humans and nature that contradicts the one it is meant to accommodate, ground itself

on, and affirm. So instead of ending up with a bridge between humans and nature, the conceptualisation of green democracy ends up with a door between them, separating humans and nature as inside and outside, as a unity of difference.

Thus, the twofold problem in which green democracy short-circuits itself twice basically consists of how the relation between humans and nature is conceptualised—and coupled to that, of course, how humans and nature themselves are conceptualised—and how political order is conceptualised, and finally, how these fit together in the discourse of green political theory. It is, then, a problem of how humans, nature, and their relation are conceptualised and of how that relation, in turn, relates to the conceptualisation of political order.

Approached in this way, the problem of green democracy in green political theory is a problem of conceptual meaning and conceptual relations. In the next chapter, in a section where I lay out the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study (see page 120 below), I define concepts as the autonomous and historical means of human thought; concepts, thusly defined, are the building blocks of meaningful thought. Being autonomous, concepts are not related to anything but other concepts. A structure of related concepts is what I refer to as a discourse. Also, being historical, concepts and the discourses in which they are structured change in time and space; they are specific to a certain temporal and spatial setting. According to this view, the meaning of a concept is a function of the historical unfolding of conceptual relations, and this, in turn, suggests that discourses should be approached historically; to make sense of discourses in the present, one should

study the past, the past leading up to the present and the discourses of the present. Understanding discourse requires its historical background to be traced. Hence, to answer the question as to why the double short-circuit of green democracy occurs in contemporary green political theory, one should first look into the discourse to which green democracy belongs as a concept, paying particular attention to how meaning emerges in that discourse based on the conceptual relations contained within it. But importantly, one should also trace the discursive settings and conceptual relations of the past, look into the history leading up to that discourse, how and from where it has emerged and which conceptual connections it maintains to the past. This is what I seek to do in this study. Broadly speaking, by situating green political theory as part of Western political thought in general, I investigate why green political theory has such a hard time bridging the divide between humans and nature by means of democracy. I do this by looking into how the conceptualisations of humans, nature, their relation, and political order have changed historically in Western political thought. A characteristic of the historiographic method employed for this end is that it is not primarily concerned with providing an exhaustive account of the events and circumstances of the past. Rather, as a method, it is first and foremost meant to serve as a heuristic for the present; it is primarily meant to have an explanatory value for a present problem.

I draw substantially on Foucault in my treatment of concepts and discourses, most notably his approach to the epistemic configuration of discourse (e.g. Foucault 2002a,b). An epistemic configuration—or an episteme, simply—consists of the rules according to which a discourse is governed; it is the basic ordering of and regularity found in conceptual relations, and as such, the ultimate foundation of conceptual meaning through concepts.[2] An episteme demarcates a historically specific mode of thought, and different epistemes can be treated as coherent modes of thought differing from each other.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault (2002b) argues that since the Italian Renaissance, the discourses of Western thought have been characterised by three such epistemic configurations superseding each other chronologically and corresponding to specific historical periods. Renaissance thought was superseded by Classical thought, which was superseded by modern thought, and these modes of thought are divided by so-called epistemic ruptures denoting qualitative differences between them.

I arrange my historical inquiry based on these three epistemic configurations—albeit with a few notable alterations—by distinguishing three historical periods, each corresponding to a specific epistemic configuration. But whereas Foucault talks about a Renaissance episteme, I extend the period I cover a couple of centuries backwards and prefer to speak of a medieval epistemic configuration instead. Also, rather than speaking of the Classical age—a conceptual use tied to a rather narrow French context— I use the term *early modern* to designate

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[2] In the English translations of Foucault's work, the word episteme is italicised. I take it that it is, however, such an established concept that no such highlighting is necessary. The alternate spelling épistème also sometimes appears in writings on Foucault.

the same period and its mode of thought. More precisely put, my historical narrative is tailored by distinguishing the following periods and corresponding modes of thought: The Middle Ages, stretching from the 12th century towards the end of the Italian Renaissance; Early modernity, spanning roughly the end of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century; Modernity, succeeding the early modern period leading up to the present. On a few occasions, in addition to these, I also delve into earlier periods, the early Middle Ages and Classical Antiquity.[3]

Drawing on Foucault, I gather each epistemic configuration under a single concept denoting its rule of discourse. But I also add that this rule is a product of a particular balance between identity and difference. According to my take on episteme and discourse, a certain logical priority between identity and difference leads to a certain rule of discourse, to a certain mode of thought.

In the historical analysis, I look specifically at how humans, nature, the relation between humans and nature, and political order have been conceptualised and thus made meaningful during these three periods. Regarding political order, special attention is paid to its possible connection to how the relation between humans and nature is conceptualised. Moreover, the particular emphasis is not on the meaning of political order per se, but rather whether the concept of political order during the period and mode of thought under study is composed of the four conceptual components presupposed by democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory. The

emphasis, in other words, is not so much on what political order as such is thought to be, but rather if it is composed of the conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership or not. The reason for this is to determine whether democracy, as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory, could emerge as a meaningful concept as part of the discourses under study. This, in turn, makes it possible to establish the possibility of a connection between human-nature relations on the one hand and political order, and in extension democracy, on the other, and if there is such a connection, what it looks like and how it structures the meaning and very possibility of democracy.

Having made these preliminary remarks regarding what this study is about, my aim with the book can be specified to the following two research objectives: to demonstrate the double short-circuit of green democracy in green political theory, and, in order to trace it, to examine the relations between the concepts of humans, nature, and political order during the Middle Ages, early modernity, and modernity.

1.2 Outline

I demonstrate the double short-circuit of green democracy in the next chapter. Beginning with a more thorough outline of the Anthropocene imaginary and the green critique of modern dualism, I proceed to an account of attempts to theorise green democracy within green political theory. Focusing on three broadly defined versions

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[3]And on this note, I should mention that I actually do use the term *Classical thought*, however, but as a referent of the thought of Classical Antiquity.

of green democracy—ecologist, social constructivist, and new materialist—I highlight how all of them are troubled by the aforementioned double short-circuit. An important substantial aspect of this account is that they all share the notion that democracy can be extended to non-human beings by means of human representation of nature in the political world. Natural things are to become political beings and members of democratic order by means of their political representation by humans.

After that, I present the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study, how I approach the subject matter, and how I intend to achieve my research aim. In that section, the main issues concern concepts and discourses, what they are and how they should be studied. Since I situate green political theory in the broad context of Western thought and approach concepts and discourses as being of historical character, it follows that this study, in terms of what is actually researched, is a study in intellectual history. Of course, political philosophy is of main concern, but since I seek to examine the connection between ideas about political and natural reality and the relation between humans and nature, natural philosophy also plays a crucial role in the historical narrative. In terms of material, I focus on major contributions to intellectual development, works that have had significant impacts on the content of discourse. Given the rather long time span of my historical analysis, many of the big names—or usual suspects—of philosophy in the West appear in the narrative.

I also include in chapter 2 a section dealing with the three main concepts under study: humans, nature, and political order. I do this to clarify some things regarding terminology and what the examination of each concept focuses on.

Then follows three chapters devoted to the second research objective, containing the historical analysis. Each covers a single historical period and mode of thought. Chapter 3 covers the Middle Ages and medieval discourse, chapter 4 early modernity and early modern discourse, and chapter 5 modernity and modern discourse. These chapters are all structured in the same way. They begin with a delineation of the epistemic configuration of the mode of thought in question. Then follows sections on humans, nature, and political order, respectively. For stylistic purposes, the sections on political order are titled *Politics* instead of *Political Order*. Those sections are further divided into two subsections, each corresponding to two of the conceptual components of political order presupposed by democracy as it is conceptualised in green political theory. The first subsection, *Origin & Structure*, corresponds to the components of self-creativity and inessentialism. The discussion therein is couched in terms of the origin of political order and its structure, the first being tied to the conceptual component of self-creativity, the second to inessentialism. The second subsection, *Agency & Change*, corresponds to the components of agentic membership and temporal contingency. *Agency* evidently connects to the component of agentic membership, and *Change* connects to temporal contingency through a discussion about how change in general appears in political order. In my treatment of green democracy in chapter 2, I discuss temporal contingency before agentic membership, but for narrative purposes I find it more suitable to do it the other way around in the chapters containing the historical analysis.

Chapter 3, covering medieval thought, be-

gins by detailing the medieval episteme, in which identity is logically prior to difference and analogy rules discourse. In medieval discourse, humans are conceptualised as unities of soul and body, and as mirrors of the natural world. That world is both material and spiritual. It contains everything, including its own spiritual and divine origin, as well as human beings. Thus, according to medieval thought, humans belong to nature. Here, humans and nature form a unity of identity. This is a time when there indeed is a bridge between humans and nature, bringing them together in a shared world.

The natural world to which medieval humans belong is conceptualised as an organism. It is like a living being in which all parts have proper places and functions. Those functions are determined by nature's structure; whatever happens in nature and whatever comes into existence is directly tied to nature's essential being. Furthermore, medieval nature is also ordered, fully interconnected, teleological in that it develops towards an end, harmonious, hierarchical, and active in itself. It is an inherently meaningful world without a clear-cut distinction between subjects and objects.

Medieval political order is also like a living being with parts functioning according to its structure. Political order is enacted rather than created by humans. It originates in nature and in human belonging to nature; it is essentially tied to a form of sovereign authority meant to achieve an end; its members lack agency as political beings; it does not have a contingent future. Thus, I conclude in chapter 3 that, as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory, democracy could not have been a part of medieval discourse. I also argue that this is a consequence of how the human-nature rela-

tion is conceptualised in medieval discourse.

In chapter 4, I move on to early modern thought. During early modernity, identity and difference are on par with each other, and discourse is ruled by order. Here, humans are uniquely distinguished by their thinking minds. To be human here is to be pure thought. With their minds, humans have the ability to represent the world of nature as it is in itself. That world is not inherently meaningful, for meaning is constructed by humans in the act of thinking. There is a sharp dividing line between the human mind and the world of which it thinks. Humans are purely subjective beings and the world they represent in their minds is purely objective. Humans do not belong to the natural world. Rather, they are separated from it as if there was a wall between them. Thus, early modernity amounts to a duality of worlds, one human and one natural, separated and differentiated. If the medieval human-nature relation is a unity of identity, the early modern human-nature relation is a disunity of difference.

Early modern nature is mechanistic. It is a material world consisting of uniform elementary particles and operating according to universal deterministic laws. It is a world of uniformity, regularity, and order, but not of hierarchy, harmony, purpose, activity, meaning, or subjectivity. It is characterised by a dualism of structure and function; what happens in nature and what comes into existence does not directly resolve into the essence of nature, even if function is still dependent on and grounded in structure. Nature must have an essence if anything is to happen or come into being.

Even if early modern humans are distinguished as beings of pure thought, they still have a corporeal existence. They are split

beings. Furthermore, all of their thoughts are representational, which means that when the human mind thinks of itself, it does so in a representational fashion. This provides a general natural existence to the human being; human beings appear in thought as objective being part of the world thought thinks of in the act of thinking. This has considerable consequences for the early modern conceptualisation of political order. On the one hand, early modern political order is an artificial human construct and a representation of the human separation from nature. It is meant to allow for humans to escape their natural state and become something else than what they are by nature, which in principle is achieved by means of sovereign authority. Early modern political order in general is tied to purposive sovereignty. Thus, political order has a purpose and an essence. It also has a transcendent origin in the human mind and its construction of meaning, from which it follows that the construction of meaning is prior to political order and, therefore, not a political act and that political order does not create itself; early modern political order is not self-creative. Humans might construct political order, but they do not do so as political beings.

On the other hand, in its objective appearance before the mind, political order appears as part of a deterministic natural world. In this respect, political order and human action in general can be viewed as the deterministic results of the unfolding of the material world. This effectively cancels human agency and renders the history of political order non-contingent.

All in all, therefore, the conclusion I reach in chapter 4 regarding political order and the possibility of democracy being part of discourse is similar to that in chapter 3. Democracy as it is conceptualised in green political thought could not have been part of early modern discourse neither. Just like in chapter 3, I argue that this is a consequence of the conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature.

Importantly, regarding the early modern mode of thought, I maintain that it is a thing of the past. It is not a contemporary mode of thought. The present, rather, is dominated by what I refer to as modern thought, the topic of chapter 5. In modernity, difference is prior to identity and discourse is ruled by history. The most significant difference for modern discourse, I argue, is the difference between thought and non-thought, between thought and world, which coincides with the difference between humans and nature.

Being in modernity is historical; it changes in time, which means that there is no fixed human being. Humans are only the difference between thought and world. Thought and world, subject and object, action and thing, activity and passivity, human and nature, come together in human being. There, they form a unity in which the two related parties are indeed fundamentally different from each other while at the same time conditioning and presupposing each other. Thus, they form a unity of difference. To be human in modernity, then, is to be a unity of difference. Hence, modern humans contain their own difference within themselves. I further specify in chapter 5 that modern humans are both determinate existing beings and the transcendental prerequisites of that being.

In modernity, humans create meaning in general and there is no world beyond the world as it is made meaningful in thought. The creation of meaning is an act and part of social reality, which makes it part of polit-

ical practice, an exercise of power. The establishing of meaning is political, and politics is about the determination of meaning in general.

Modern nature is an environment surrounding human action, and as such, its only characteristic is that it only has functions. It has no structure beyond its historically specific appearance; it has no essence. In modernity, nature's structure resolves into its functions. Modern nature is only this or that according to a specific subjective creation of meaning, *according to someone.* There is no determinate nature beyond subjective experience, beyond politics.

In this mode of thought, the relation between humans and nature is indeed like a door. In relation to each other, humans and nature are like the inside and outside of a door, neither completely separated nor belonging to the same whole. Moreover, meaning emerges from this relation, so before they are anything, humans and nature are related to each other as the inside and outside of a door. Each requires and conditions the other.

Regarding modern political order, I argue that, based on the concept of sovereignty, it is a manifestation of the conjunction of action and thing, that it is about the creation of meaning in general, and that it is indeed composed of the components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. Thus, it provides a discursive setting in which democracy, as it is conceptualised in green political theory, could emerge. Furthermore, I show that modern democracy in general is conceptualised in the very same way as in green political theory, that it is an experience, and that it presupposes the very same conceptualisation of political order.

I show in the chapter on modernity that modern political order as such is actually democratic in the sense that it generally makes the democratic experience possible and that the possibility emerges simultaneously with modern order, and that the modern relation between humans and nature as a unity of difference is fundamental for the modern conceptualisation of political order, and therefore, for the presence of democracy in discourse. However, even if political order as such is democratic, it can appear to be otherwise, to be non-democratic. Also, as I argue in chapter 5, the appearance of non-democratic political order in modernity is not opposite democracy, but rather follows from it. There is an inherent tendency in democracy to disqualify itself.

Modern political order is both constitutive and constituted. It is both a determinate, historically specific existing order and the constitutive principle of such an order. It has the power to constitute itself. That power amounts to the transcendental prerequisites of determinate order, it amounts in its principle to a sovereign decision, and determinate order has no ground beyond it.

The sovereign decision is associated with a fundamental openness. Because political order is about the creation of meaning in general, it can always become different and its future can never be fully predicted. Thus, its constitutive process is open-ended and characterised by irreducible uncertainty, unpredictability, and indetermination. However, as I show in my analysis of modern democracy, modern political order constantly negates that principle in its determinate being. In its historical existence, political order gradually moves from the uncertain, unpredictable, and undetermined to the certain, predictable, and determined. Once that pro-

cess has proceeded long enough, the democratic experience disappears, and in its stead appears non-democratic order.

I also emphasise in chapter 5 that the constitutive principle of modern political order is indeed a principle of *self*-creativity, that political agency comes from within order, from the subjects of politics. Conceptually, that subjective creative power is not part of the determinate existence of order and cannot be determined without the disappearance of the democratic experience. Rather, a defining mark of non-democratic political order is the denial of the capacity of political subjects to create and change the world. This denial, the determination of the self-creativity of political order, grows out of determinate political order operating as the creation of meaning. Hence, I argue, modern democracy tends to disqualify itself by displacing its own constitutive principle.

In my analysis of modernity, I explore ideology as a concept of that displacement and the concept of totalitarianism as a way to capture the appearance of a political order in which a seemingly complete such displacement has occurred, a decidedly non-democratic order. I also argue that political representation provides a link between the appearance of democratic and non-democratic order.

Indeed, the function of representation in a totalitarian political order is different compared to its function in a democratic order. Importantly, there is a significant difference between representation as part of determinate political order—which obviously occurs in historically existing democracies, notably through political parties and general elections—and representation of the power to constitute order. The latter, I maintain, is associated with the non-democratic experi-

ence of political order. Totalitarian order encompasses the representation of the transcendental prerequisites of determinate order *in* the determinate being of order, of constitutive power in constituted order. And I argue that constitutive power cannot in principle be represented and that the representation of the capacity to determine meaning and create order is wholly at odds with the modern concept of democracy. The representation of constitutive power renders impossible the democratic experience of political order.

All of this is brought together in the concluding chapter 6, devoted to summaries, a return to the research problem with the ambition to provide an answer to the question as to why the double short circuit of green democracy occurs, and a final discussion, based on the previous findings and arguments, about the future of democracy in the Anthropocene.

1.3 Contribution

What about contributions? Does this study, which is not only quite lengthy but admittedly also somewhat tedious, make any? And if so, to what? Well, I would not say that it contributes to the development of a non-anthropocentric concept of democracy in green political theory. Indeed, I identify a problem green political theory is facing with green democracy. But the analysis herein does not provide a solution to that problem. In fact, by calling into question green political theory's narrative of the history of Western thought, it has more to offer in the region of suspending the arguments of green political theory than in contributing to them. By and large, this is not the place to look for a non-anthropocent-

ric concept of democracy or a defence of such a concept. In fact, since I highlight that various attempts within green political theory to conceptualise non-anthropocentric democracy are burdened by the problem of disqualifying democracy altogether at a conceptual level, the analysis indicates that if modern problems of unsustainability do hinge on a strengthening of democracy, then green political theory proceeding from the concept of green democracy seems poorly fitted at the moment to contribute to political sustainability transformations. If democracy in the Anthropocene takes the route mapped out by green political theory and its conceptualisations of non-anthropocentric democracy, then, from the point of view that I present, its future seems to be a rather bleak one.

Instead, I would say that this study makes three other contributions. The first one is straightforward: it provides an answer to the research problem. This might seem trivial but should not be forgotten. In this sense, the book actually brings clarity as to why green political theory wrestles with the problem I refer to as the double short-circuit of green democracy. And regarding the provided answer, it goes something like this: Green political theory adopts a modern concept of democracy, and that modern concept of democracy presupposes that humans and nature are related in a unity of difference, that there is a door between them, so to speak. Since the concept of democracy adopted by green political theory presupposes that particular relation, it cannot provide the foundation for a different relation. It cannot provide the foundation for a bridge between humans and nature. This is why the ambition within green political theory to build a bridge by means of democracy ends up with

a door instead and the explanation of the first part of the double short circuit. Moving on to the second part, since democracy in green political theory is a repetition of modern democracy, everything said about modern democracy in the analysis also holds for democracy in green political theory. Hence, the tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself is also present in the concept of democracy as it appears in green political theory, and I argue that the tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself is exacerbated as it is repeated in green political theory. The human representation of nature meant to bridge the gap between humans and nature in the conceptualisation of green democracy in green political theory, which I cover in chapter 2, encompasses the representation of nature's creative abilities, the constitutive power natural things are supposed to have as political beings. In short, it encompasses the representation of nature's constitutive power, which, then, is at odds with the modern concept of democracy. That humans are to represent nature's creative powers means that green democracy entrenches, in the heart of the historical determinate being of political order, a kind of representation that makes impossible the democratic experience of political order. It actually proceeds from a non-democratic position.

Much of the conclusions of the study, especially regarding the intricacies of the double short-circuit of green democracy, draws more from the part of the historical analysis about modernity than on those about early modernity and the Middle Ages. In this respect, the chapter on modernity has a greater impact on the final arguments than the chapters on the Middle Ages and early modernity. But those chapters are not

without their merits. For together, the three chapters containing the historical analysis provide a narrative of the history of Western thought that serves as a corrective to the narrative of the same history in which it is portrayed as a single distancing of humans away from nature. This is the second contribution of the study. In my historical narrative, the relation between humans and nature instead goes back and forth. Belonging is followed by separation, which in turn is followed by a conjunction, the latter being a strange mix of two separate things belonging together. I do believe this representation of the history of Western thought to be a better one than the one emphasising only the move away from belonging to separation, in the sense that it fits better with the source material. Here, of special importance is the demonstration that modern thought is not characterised by a wall between humans and nature, that the wall between humans and nature is a thing of the past, and that there is a qualitative difference between the early modern and modern conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature. Since the representation of Western thought according to which it is characterised by a single distancing of humans away from nature and the view of modernity as a time when humans believe that they have successfully walled off nature are so prominent in green political theory, this study might perhaps actually contribute something to green political theory in the sense of showing things in a new light and perhaps disturbing commonly held views.

Third and finally, the study contributes to current discussions about the so-called planetary age of humankind by way of a suggestion, taking stock of its findings, for an alternative to non-anthropocentric democracy for the future of democracy in the Anthropocene. If, as I argue, modern democracy gradually moves away from uncertainty, unpredictability, and indetermination in its historical being, if its tendency to disqualify itself is part of this process, and if the Anthropocene and sustainability transformations do require the improvement of democracy, it is, I suggest, perhaps this movement away from the uncertain, the unpredictable, and the indeterminate that needs to change, the tendency to determine everything, to order and make sense of everything. Based on this line of reasoning, the alternative to non-anthropocentric democracy that I suggest is an alternative in which the need *not* to determine in full the world or what it contains is emphasised; an alternative that points towards the need to live with and encounter the indeterminate as exactly that, as something that does not have a determinate being. This would be a democracy in which some things will remain meaningless, where otherness is treated as otherness, where what is strange might remain strange, and where uncertainty never really goes away.

Indeed, this is but a suggestion sketched out briefly in the concluding chapter, and I do mean sketched out briefly. My ambition is certainly not to conceptualise such a democracy, to detail what it might entail in reality. My ambition with the suggestion is merely to highlight it *as a possible alternative* for the future of democracy in the Anthropocene. It is indeed an alternative to the rethinking of democracy in a non-anthropocentric direction. I suggest that perhaps the important question for democracy in the Anthropocene is not how to think about politics and humankind's place in the world when there is no difference between the human and the natural. New concep-

tualisations of the relation between humans and nature are perhaps not the way forward for the future of democracy in the Anthropocene. My historical analysis shows that in the history of Western thought, other conceptualisations of the relation between humans and nature other than the modern have not been conducive for democracy, at least not as democracy is understood in modern discourse. This is a further merit of the chapters on medieval and early modern thought. They show that, historically, neither a belonging of humans to the natural world nor a separation of humans from it have provided opportunities for democracy in its modern sense to emerge as a meaningful concept in discourse. So far, in the history of Western thought, only a conceptualisation of that relation according to which humans and nature are related as if there is a door between them, where they form a unity of difference, has made possible the democratic experience of political order. Of course, this does not mean that all possible relations of belonging and separation of necessity foreclose democracy. It is, however, an indication that it might prove difficult to maintain the democratic experience of order while trying to reconfigure how humans and nature relate to each other, and perhaps even more difficult to improve democracy on the basis of a rethinking of that relation. From the perspective of this study, the important question for the future of democracy in the Anthropocene is not how to think about politics and humankind's place in the world in a time when there is no difference between the human and the natural. Instead, the important question is perhaps what a democratic political order that proceeds from and together with irreducible uncertainty, unpredictability, and indetermination might look like.

Democracy in the Anthropocene

> Sweetheart, what was that? It was bad! It had nothing! No fire, no energy, no nothing! You know I have a show to run here, you know? And it must pop, pop, pop! So tomorrow, from five to seven will you please act like you have more than a two word 'vo-cab-u-lar-ee'? It must be green!
>
> *(Ruby Rhod)*

THE STORY OF the idea of the Anthropocene begins in the early 2000s, in the discourses of the Earth sciences, particularly in geology and its stratigraphy branch, with the publication of two seminal articles by Crutzen and Stoermer (2000; 2002).[1] As a concept in the Earth sciences, the Anthropocene is meant to signify a new geological epoch of planet Earth.

In geology, the history of Earth is divided into different temporal units, which are basically nested segments of time—eons, eras, periods, epochs, and ages. Changes between those segments correspond to changes in the geological strata—rock layers, that is—of the planet. These changes, in turn, correspond to major events in planetary history.[2] At the end of the latest ice age, about ten to twelve millennia ago, Earth entered the epoch known as the Holocene.[3] The Holocene amounts to 'the environment within which human societies themselves have developed' (Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011, p. 741), and as an epoch, it is characterised by continuously increasing influence by humans on that environment (Zalasiewicz, Williams, Smith, et al. 2008, pp. 5–6; see also Crutzen and Stoermer 2000, p. 17). According to the argument underlying the idea of the Anthropocene, this influence has reached such high levels that humanity has become a geophysical force impacting the geological conditions and processes of the planet, and by that, the Holocene has come to an end:

> The term *Anthropocene* ... suggests that the Earth has now left its natural geological epoch, the present interglacial state

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[1] See also Davis (2011), Steffen, Grinevald, et al. (2011, pp. 843–845), Hamilton and Grinevald (2015), and Grinevald et al. (2019) for accounts of precursors to the Anthropocene concept.

[2] On geological time and time scales, see Gradstein et al. (2020a,b), Levin (2013, pp. 29–47), and Ogg, Ogg, and Gradstein (2016).

[3] An exact start time for the Holocene has suggestively been set to 11 700 years ago (Walker et al. 2009).

called the Holocene. Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*. (Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007, p. 614; see also Steffen, Sanderson, et al. 2004, p. 81)

The planetary event, then, associated with this new epoch is the emergence of humankind as something that has impacts of planetary scales on its environment (Steffen, Grinevald, et al. 2011, p. 843). In their relation to planet Earth, humans are presently on par with volcanoes, tectonic plate movements, solar radiation, weathering, asteroid strikes, and life itself (Hamilton 2015b, p. 32; Jamieson 2017, p. 13; Schlosberg 2016, p. 194; see also Jamieson and Di Paola 2016, p. 254; Zalasiewicz 2008, pp. 156–157)

Specifically, the human impact on Earth's geology and on the global environment includes erosion and sediment transportation, ocean acidification, disposal of waste material—particularly plastics—deforestation and other types of land cover change, biotic change in the form of species extinction, changing chemical compositions of soils—for instance in terms of increased concentration of nitrogen and phosphorous—and, most importantly, climate change associated with increasing atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases, most notably carbon dioxide (e.g. Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007; Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011; Waters, Zalasiewicz, Williams, et al. 2014; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Smith, et al. 2008; Zalasiewicz, Waters, Ivar do Sul, et al. 2016). To all of these, there are several corresponding large-scale developments in human activities: agriculture, industrialisation, urbanisation, capitalist production and consumption, burning of fossil fuels, and various other activit-

ies associated with energy and resource use. In other words, it is social practice that has turned humankind into a geological force; 'a human-inclusive Earth System implies that global-scale social and economic processes are now becoming significant features in the functioning of the System' (Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011, p. 740). For the advocates of the Anthropocene

> the larger force that has brought it about is not Mind, Reason, Consciousness or Spirit, or any force that rises above the mere collective…; instead the culprit is humankind understood as *homo faber*, the technological man of modern Western civilization rendered as a new geological force by means of the power to disturb the great cycles that govern the planet's trajectory. (Hamilton and Grinevald 2015, p. 67)

Or, as it is put by Syvitski in a feature article aptly titled 'Anthropocene: An epoch of our making', the Anthropocene concept describes 'the cumulative impact of civilisation' (2012, p. 14).

At the time of writing, the Anthropocene has not been formally accepted as a geological epoch by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS), the authoritative scientific body on issues concerning geological time scales and units. There is, however, a working group on the Anthropocene within the ICS investigating whether the commission ought to include the Anthropocene as a formal geological time unit. In 2016, the working group recommended that the Anthropocene be formally recognised as a geological epoch, a position further solidified by a binding vote within the group in 2019 (Subramanian 2019; Zalasiewicz, Waters, Summerhayes, et al. 2017; Zalasiewicz and Waters 2019; see also Zalasiewicz, Waters, and Summerhayes 2019; Zalasiewicz,

Waters, and Williams 2020). The official stance of the group after the vote is that Anthropocene should be 'treated as a formal chronostratigraphic unit' (Zalasiewicz and Waters 2019, p. 4), and work on a formal proposal is currently underway (Anthropocene Working Group 2020).

Notwithstanding the lack of formal recognition, the concept of the Anthropocene has seen widespread informal adoption far beyond geology and stratigraphy and is by now an established element of many scientific discourses. It has even been rewarded with the somewhat pejorative labels *buzzword* (e.g. Castree 2019, p. 25) and 'catchphrase' (Clark 2015, p. 3).[4] It is particularly prevalent in Earth system science and so-called global change research, and much of its development has, in fact, occurred within those discourses (Hamilton 2015a; see also Castree 2019, pp. 27–34; Uhrqvist and Linnér 2015).[5, 6]

In Earth system science, planet Earth, as an object of knowledge, is approached holistically as a single entity taking the form of a system composed of a host of different subsystems, components, and spheres, and characterised by highly complicated and complex dynamic internal and external interactions (Jacobsen, Charlson, and Rodhe 2000, pp. 4–8; Schellnhuber and Wenzel 1998, in particular pp. 1–215; Schellnhuber 1999; Steffen, Sanderson, et al. 2004, pp. 1–

4; Turner 2018, pp. 14–20). Importantly, this vast object includes human beings as well (Cornell et al. 2012), and as noted by Ehlers and Kraft, the Anthropocene indeed 'demands an Earth System Science, which understands humankind as integrated part of the Earth System' (2006, p. 11). The Earth system encompasses, in other words, a human component, 'the aggregate of all individual human lives, actions and products' as well as the '"metaphysical" sub-component' of subjectivity (Schellnhuber 1999, p. C20); in addition to the atmosphere, the biosphere, the lithosphere, the hydrosphere, and so forth, there is also the 'anthroposphere' (Schellnhuber and Wenzel 1998, pp. 14–15; Schellnhuber 1999, p. C20; Steffen, Sanderson, et al. 2004, pp. 123, 131), or the 'technosphere' (Donges et al. 2017; Haff 2014a; Haff 2014b; Haff 2017; Rosol, Nelson, and Renn 2017; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Waters, et al. 2017); on planet Earth, there is a global socio-economic system that amounts to 'the human part of the Earth System' (Steffen, Broadgate, et al. 2015, p. 93); the Earth system has subsystems in which purposiveness—a characteristic of much human action—is a basic property, thus making 'goal-seeking … behaviour … a fundamental attribute' (Haff 2016, p. 56) of some parts of the overall system. In more general terms, then, in the object of knowledge of the Earth system, social and ecological realities are re-

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[4] For simple yet illustrative keyword search-based mappings of its dispersal in different scientific discourses, see Brondizio et al. (2016) and Chin et al. (2016).

[5] Hamilton (2015a, 2016) even goes so far as to argue that the concept of the Anthropocene cannot be properly grasped outside the discursive context of Earth system science (see also Hamilton 2017, pp. 9–21). For a critique of this position, see Oldfield (2016).

[6] For accounts of the relation between stratigraphic and Earth system approaches to the Anthropocene, see Steffen, Edgeworth, et al. (2016) and Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, Leinfelder, et al. (2017).

[7] On the concept of social-ecological systems and the Anthropocene, see Berkes (2017), Dearing et al. (2015), Glaser et al. (2012), and Verburg et al. (2016), and on the concept of social-ecological systems generally, also Berkes and Folke (1998), Colding and Barthel (2019), and Gunderson and Holling (2002).

lated in such a way that they form social-ecological systems.[7] As an example of what kind of understandings this approach can generate of humans and the planet they live on, Ellis and Haff's account of human-made light is quite illustrative, an account which also highlights the fundamentally social character of humankind as a geological force:

> Human systems represent the integrated effects of humans interacting with each other at scales capable of forcing changes in the atmosphere, lithosphere, biosphere, and other Earth systems. Just as anthills are more than the sum of their ants, human systems are more than the sum of human individuals. For example, the Earth now glows at night. This new earthlight is not the sum of individual human actions but is a societal activity fueled by burning fossil carbon to drive complex electrical systems. This exemplifies just how far human systems have gone beyond the biological and are now forcing the Earth system in new directions, in this case by driving the rapid combustion and atmospheric release of fossil carbon. (Ellis and Haff 2009, p. 473)

From this kind of holistic systems-based point of view, the Anthropocene can be conceptualised as a systemic shift of planet Earth and as a specific state and functioning of the Earth system (Hamilton and Grinevald 2015; Waters, Zalasiewicz, Summerhayes, et al. 2016; see also Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011, p. 755; Steffen, Edgeworth, et al. 2016, p. 335): 'The significance of the Anthropocene lies … in the scale, significance and longevity of change (that happens to be currently human-driven) to the Earth system' (Zalasiewicz, Waters, Williams, et al. 2015, p. 199). The 'cumulative impact of civilisation', so to speak, has effects on 'the functioning of the Earth System as a whole' (Crutzen and Steffen 2003, p. 253; see also Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne 2015b, p. 3):

> Earth is currently operating in a *no-analogue state*. In terms of key environmental parameters, the Earth System has recently moved well outside the range of natural variability exhibited over at least the last half million years. The nature of changes now occurring simultaneously in the Earth System, their magnitudes and rates of change are unprecedented. (Crutzen and Steffen 2003, p. 253)

There has been a couple of different bids on when the Anthropocene supposedly began. Crutzen and Stoermer originally suggested the latter part of the 18th century, a period associated with growing concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Crutzen 2002). With such a start date, the Anthropocene would be coeval with the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, Crutzen and Stoermer also explicitly associate this start date with the invention of the steam engine, a symbol of both the Industrial Revolution and the burning of fossil fuels for energy consumption.

Others have suggested that the Anthropocene began far earlier, many thousands of years ago, and that it might even coincide with the Holocene, or be even older still (e.g. Certini and Scalenghe 2011, 2015; Ellis 2013; Erlandson and Braje 2013; Glikson 2013; Ruddiman 2003, 2013; Smith and Zeder 2013; see also Foley et al. 2013). Currently, however, many, including importantly the ICS Anthropocene working group, adopt the notion that the Anthropocene began in the mid-20th century marked by what has become known as the 'Great Acceleration' (Gaffney and Steffen 2017; Hibbard et al. 2007; McNeill and Engelke 2014; Steffen, Broadgate, et al. 2015; Lewis and Maslin

2015; Zalasiewicz, Waters, Summerhayes, et al. 2017; Zalasiewicz and Waters 2019; Zalasiewicz, Waters, and Summerhayes 2019; Zalasiewicz, Waters, and Williams 2020; see also Waters, Zalasiewicz, Williams, et al. 2014), a relatively brief period in which human activities and the planet where they occur seem to have changed dramatically. 'The term "Great acceleration"', writes Steffen and colleagues,

> aims to capture the holistic, comprehensive and interlinked nature of the post-1950 changes simultaneously sweeping across the socio-economic and biophysical spheres of the Earth System. (Steffen, Broadgate, et al. 2015, p. 82)

The Great Acceleration is often illustrated with a set of graphs on so-called socio-economic and Earth system indicators—including, just to mention a few, gross domestic product, urban population, telecommunications, atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide, ocean acidification and surface temperature—many of which show exponential increases during the second half of the 20th century. These graphs

> record the trajectory of the 'human enterprise' through a number of indicators and ... track the trajectory of key indicators of the structure and functioning of the Earth System. (ibid., p. 82)

The graphs were first introduced in 2004 and were from the beginning situated in relation to the current impacts of that enterprise:

> The second half of the twentieth century

is unique in the entire history of human existence on Earth. Many human activities reached take-off points sometime in the twentieth century and have accelerated sharply towards the end of the century. The last 50 years have without doubt seen the most rapid transformation of the human relationship with the natural world in the history of humankind....

[T]he impacts of these accelerating human changes are now clearly discernible at the level of the Earth System as a whole. Many key indicators of the functioning of the Earth System are now showing responses that are, at least in part, driven by the changing human imprint on the planet. All components of the global environment – oceans, coastal zone, atmosphere, land – are being influenced. (Steffen, Sanderson, et al. 2004, pp. 131–134)

The Anthropocene has also received growing attention in the humanities and the social sciences, in empirical as well as theoretical research. It has gained traction especially in the sections of the humanities and social sciences dealing with environmental issues, and it has been described as 'one of the most influential, most cited, but also most controversial terms in environmental policy, theory, and practice' (Biermann and Lövbrand 2019b, p. 1).[8] And it has been argued, indeed, since 'people by definition are at the heart of the Anthropocene' (Knight 2015, p. 153), that the sciences dealing with people and social reality could and should

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[8]For some major works, overviews, and otherwise noteworthy contributions, see Arias-Maldonado (2015a), Arias-Maldonado and Trachtenberg (2019), Biermann, Abbott, et al. (2012), Biermann (2014a), Biermann and Lövbrand (2019a), Bonneuil and Fressoz (2016), Bowden (2017), Castree (2014b), Chakrabarty (2009), Clark (2015), Clark and Yusoff (2017), Clark and Gunaratnam (2017), Connolly (2017), Davis and Turpin (2015), Davis (2016), Deane-Drummond, Bergmann, and Vogt (2017), Delanty and Mota (2017), Dibley (2012), Dryzek and Pickering (2019), Galaz (2014), Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne (2015a), Hamilton (2017), Hickmann et al. (2019b), Jamieson and Di Paola (2016), Luke (2015b), Nicholson and Jinnah (2016), Oppermann and Iovino (2017), Pattberg and Zelli (2016a), Purdy (2015a), Robin et al. (2014), Schlosberg (2016), Skillington (2015), Trexler (2015), and Wapner (2014).

play a vital role in the continued exploration of what it means to live in an epoch in which the 'human enterprise' has geological impacts on the planet where it unfolds (see e.g. Bostic and Howey 2017; Brondizio et al. 2016; Castree 2014b, 2017b; Chaplin 2017; Dalby 2016; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, p. 6; Ellis, Maslin, et al. 2016; Hickmann et al. 2019a; Johnson and Morehouse 2014; Lövbrand, Beck, et al. 2015; Oldfield 2016; Palsson et al. 2013; Toivanen et al. 2017); and as something that pertains to social reality, the Anthropocene is also political: '*The Anthropocene is political;* it has to be understood as a global political phenomenon' (Biermann 2014b, p. 57).

In these discourses, however, the question of whether the Anthropocene is to be regarded as a formal geological epoch—and if so, exactly when it began—is arguably of secondary importance (Meadowcroft 2019, pp. 234–235).[9] Here, the Anthropocene has become something much broader than a scientific concept of geological time, something of greater scope and meaning (e.g. Dalby 2016, p. 34). As the concept of the Anthropocene has been 'transmitted across disciplinary spheres' it 'has become a *keyword*, capturing the imagination of diverse academic fields and diverse publics concerned about the deteriorating state of the planet' (Di Chiro 2016, p. 363);[10] it 'has become a way in which the human world is re-imagined culturally and politically in terms of its relation with the Earth' (Delanty and Mota 2017, p. 34; see also Strydom 2017, pp. 63–71); a narrative 'of the current global situation and an attempt to tell the story of the civilisation that created this situation.' (Weißpflug 2019, p. 28); 'Despite its scientific trappings, [the idea of the Anthropocene] is mainly a cultural idea' (Purdy 2015a, p. 16). It has become part of imagination (Nikoleris, Stripple, and Tenngart 2019, pp. 67–68; Clark 2015, pp. 16–22), an *imaginary*, the latter being broadly defined as

> the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations…. [T]he … imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. (Taylor 2004, p. 23)

In its broadest sense, the Anthropocene imaginary is 'about humanity and its place

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[9] For more on the issues concerning the geological status and the dating of the Anthropocene, however, see e.g. Braje and Erlandson (2013), Ellis, Fuller, et al. (2013), Finney and Edwards (2016), Gibbard and Walker (2014), Monastersky (2015), Ruddiman et al. (2015), Vince (2011), Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, and Crutzen (2010), and Zalasiewicz, Williams, Haywood, et al. (2011).

[10] On the extensive discursive proliferation of the concept of the Anthropocene, and it becoming a cultural phenomenon beyond academia, Macfarlane and Davison writes respectively, rather similarly, in *The Guardian*: 'the Anthropocene is a massively forceful concept…. Though it has its origin in the Earth sciences and advanced computational technologies, its consequences have rippled across global culture during the last 15 years. Conservationists, environmentalists, policymakers, artists, activists, writers, historians, political and cultural theorists, as well as scientists and social scientists in many specialisms, are all responding to its implications' (Macfarlane 2016); 'it did not seem likely the term would ever travel beyond the abstruse literature produced by institutions preoccupied with things like the nitrogen cycle. But the concept took flight. Environmental scientists latched on to what they saw as a useful catch-all term for the changes to the natural world … that they were already attributing to human activity. Academic articles began to appear with "Anthropocene" in the title, followed by entire journals dedicated to the topic. Soon the idea jumped to the humanities, then newspapers and magazines, and then to the arts, becoming a subject of photography, poetry, opera and a song by Nick Cave' (Davison 2019).

in the world' (Rickards 2015, p. 280) as it conveys the image of a planetary 'Age of Man' (Kolbert 2011). Indeed, many different stories can be told about that image; it can be framed in many different ways; multiple symbols and metaphors can be used to signify it in various ways, and as part of social reality, it will most certainly have different and conflicting political trajectories (Bai et al. 2016; Barry 2019, p. 201; Biermann and Lövbrand 2019b; Bonneuil 2015; Dalby 2016; Lövbrand, Beck, et al. 2015; Nikoleris, Stripple, and Tenngart 2019; Pattberg and Zelli 2016b, p. 1; Rickards 2015; Robbins 2013). Nevertheless, the Anthropocene imaginary still comes with a couple of general, closely related fundamental notions, components shared over many narrative and symbolic borders.

First and foremost, there is the notion that in the Anthropocene epoch, social and natural reality converge (Chakrabarty 2009; see also Chakrabarty 2014, 2015). This is a notion according to which the world of humans—the social, cultural, and political world—and the natural world of matter and things are so entangled with each other and inextricably entwined in 'tightly coupled nature-society assemblages' (Bowden 2017, p. 64) that no meaningful difference between them can be upheld.

Second, there is the notion that modern society and modern thought are generally grounded in and by a differentiation between humans and nature according to which there is a fundamental or essential difference between the two and by virtue of which humans are separate from the natural world. Basically, modernity is said to rest on a dualism of humans and nature.

Lastly, the reality of the Anthropocene and the entanglement of humans and nature are said to demand new ways to understand humankind and its place in the world (see also Luke 2017);[11] they require new conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation—conceptualisations that do not proceed from, assume, or entrench dualisms of humans and nature.[12] Crucially, this need to rethink and move on very much applies to political reality and theory (Rowan 2014): 'The classification of a new epoch in planetary history as the "Anthropocene" is fundamentally changing how we understand our political systems. The transition from the Holocene to an Anthropocene signifies a new role for humankind' (Biermann 2014b, p. 57); 'a new configuration of temporal experience has arisen, which … implies that we must change our understanding of the challenges facing contemporary political theory. The Anthropocene is the name commonly used to describe the kind of changes that I have in mind' (Tønder 2017, p. 129).

The literature on the Anthropocene is teeming with statements reflecting these notions, statements regarding 'the new conceptual reality opened up by renewed attention to the interface between humans and the geological environment' (Bostic and Howey 2017, p. 105), that 'simple nature/culture distinctions are a thing of the past' (ibid., p. 107), and that the 'Anthropocene concept calls for a radical recasting of the dualistic ways that researchers, analysts, and commentators think about interactions between

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[11] For a critique of this demand that still manages to take the Anthropocene imaginary seriously, see Hornborg (2017).

[12] For accounts of how dualisms, including the one between humans and nature, are treated, appear, and function in literature on the Anthropocene, see Autin (2016), Cox (2015), and Yusoff (2016).

two historically distinct worlds: the world of social, economic and political systems and processes, and the biophysical systems of the planet' (Brondizio et al. 2016, p. 319).[13]

These three notions reflect a general perception inherent in the Anthropocene imaginary of the present, the past, and the future. There is a perceived need to engage with what is actually happening on Earth, to get involved with empirical evidence of how humans and the geological environment interact, how they become entangled, intertwined, and even united. This is about understanding human-nature relations on the basis of present experiences and data. Also, previous ways in which human-nature relations have been made intelligible are perceived as being outdated. Inherited modes of thought seem insufficient for making proper sense of the present; past modes of thought do not seem to fit with present experiences. 'The evidence of the Anthropocene requires us to rebuild its own conceptual scaffolding in order to imagine and enact the world differently' (Head 2016, p. 4). Predominately, this has to do with modernity, modern thought, and dualist conceptualisations of the natural world on the one hand, and on the other, the world of humans, society, culture, and politics. Modernity, its categories and distinctions, and

its dualist ways of understanding the world do not cut it for making a proper sense of the present—so the story goes—and they are hampering appropriate scientific, theoretical, and political responses to the conditions and challenges of the present and the future. Lastly, there is a perceived need for conceptual renewal. The concepts and modes of thought of the future must not be those of the past since the latter is outdated and out of tune with reality. Perceptions of the present clash with how past ways of thinking are perceived, and that leads to perceived needs to think in new ways.

So goes the reasoning about the Anthropocene in its discursive proliferation beyond geology. New ways of thinking are required because old ways are either incorrect, insufficient for understanding what is presently happening on planet Earth, or both. Importantly, the Anthropocene imaginary calls for a rethinking both of what it means to be human and what it means to be natural, for, in the Anthropocene, there is neither a nature beyond the reach of humans nor any humans or human societies transcending their earthly locations. 'No more clean breaks', as Davis proclaims, 'that put humans on one side and nature on the other' (2016, p. 8). This is also the sentiment expressed by Wohl who, associating the nat-

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[13]Expressions of these notions often come bundled together. As noted, examples abound in the literature. For just a few, see Arias-Maldonado (2015b, pp. 85, 95), Barry (2019, p. 213), Baskin (2015, p. 24), Biermann and Lövbrand (2019b, pp. 3–4, 8), Bornemann (2019, pp. 59–60), Burke, Fishel, et al. (2016, p. 510), Burke and Fishel (2019, pp. 87, 88), Castree (2019, p. 46), Chakrabarty (2017b, p. 32), Chaplin (2017, p. 511), Clark (2015, p. 9), Clark (2017, pp. 227–228), Connolly and Macdonald (2015, p. 266), Dalby (2016, p. 36, 2017, pp. 240, 246), Delanty and Mota (2017, p. 10), Dibley (2012, p. 142), Dryzek (2016, p. 953), Dryzek and Pickering (2019, pp. 11–12), Eckersley (2015, par. 22–29), Hamilton (2017, p. 52), Hardt (2019, p. 87), Harrington (2016, p. 497), Head (2016, p. 55), Hickmann et al. (2019a, p. 5), Jamieson and Di Paola (2016, p. 257), Johnson and Morehouse (2014, p. 440), Lehman and Nelson (2014, p. 444), Lorimer (2012, p. 593), Lövbrand, Beck, et al. (2015, pp. 211, 213, 215), Müller (2019, p. 73), Oldfield et al. (2014, p. 4), Palsson et al. (2013, p. 9), Purdy (2015a, pp. 21, 50), Rowan (2014, p. 447), Steffen, Grinevald, et al. (2011, pp. 861–862), Tønder (2017, p. 130), Tremmel (2019, p. 226), Trachtenberg (2015, p. 43), Wapner (2014, pp. 49–50, 2019, p. 225), Weißpflug (2019, p. 28), Yusoff (2014, p. 452, 2017, p. 123), and Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, Leinfelder, et al. (2017, p. 98).

ural world with wilderness, claims, in a paper titled 'Wilderness is dead', that the Anthropocene signals the end of wilderness, that wilderness has 'ceased to exist in an era of changing climate and land use' (2013, p. 5). Or, as Ellis puts it:

> From a philosophical point of view, nature is now human nature; there is no more wild nature to be found, just ecosystems in different states of human interaction, differing in wildness and humanness. (Ellis 2011, p. 1027)

On similar notes, Lövbrand and colleagues state that 'in the Anthropocene, nature is domesticated, technologized and capitalized to the extent that it can no longer be considered natural' (Lövbrand, Beck, et al. 2015, p. 213), Trachtenberg that 'Earth is no longer natural in itself' (2015, p. 39), Arias-Maldonado that 'the Anthropocene is the confirmation that nature has ended' (2015b, p. 94), and Purdy that 'the Anthropocene adds nature to the list of things we can no longer regard as natural' (2016, p. 10; see also 2015a, p. 3). Elsewhere, Purdy also writes:

> The most radical thought identified with the Anthropocene is this: the familiar contrast between people and the natural world no longer holds. There is no more *nature* that stands apart from human beings. There is no place or living thing that we haven't changed. Our mark is on the cycle of weather and seasons, the global map of bioregions, and the DNA that organises matter into life. (Purdy 2015b, par. 5; see also Purdy 2015a, pp. 2–3)

And vice versa, since the concept of the Anthropocene 'emphasizes humanity's mater-

ial dependence, embodiment and fragility' (Lövbrand, Beck, et al. 2015, p. 213), 'the scientific thematization of the Anthropocene is as much about the *decentring* of humankind as it is about our rising geological significance' (Clark 2014, p. 25); 'The notion of the Anthropocene ... vividly captures the folding of the human into the air, into the sea, the soil and DNA' (Dibley 2012, p. 139). In the Anthropocene, 'nature is us' (Crutzen and Schwägerl 2011, par. 14).[14] The Anthropocene imaginary also decenters humankind in that it positions humans and civilisational development in the context of geological timescales, which are indeed quite long in comparison to human temporalities:

> The Anthropocene sweeps humankind into the turbulent flow of geohistory.... 'We' ... join the trilobites as actors in the long drama of life on earth: as another planetary force exerting its powers of survival and transformation. More than anything else, the Anthropocene is a way of thinking with deep time. (Davis 2016, pp. 11–12)[15]

The Anthropocene signals the end of nature as much as the end of humankind, at least in the sense of either being distinct from the other: 'Nature has ended, Man is dead', as Dibley proclaims (2012, p. 143); to live during the Anthropocene is to live 'in a post-natural age', an age when 'nothing is natural', which means that 'nothing is exactly unnatural, either' (Purdy 2015a, p. 6)[16] Or, in Hamilton's more elaborate account:

> *Everything* is now in play. Every cubic metre of air and water, and every hectare

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[14] For a good discussion about 'the human' in the literature on the Anthropocene and about its theoretical foundations, see Chernilo (2017). And, respectively, for the concept of nature see (Castree 2019).

[15] Davis (2016) is, indeed, a book-length exposition of the meaning and consequences of, as the author puts it, 'living in deep time'.

[16] Here, the Anthropocene imaginary taps into an older and broader theme in environmentalist thought regarding the end of nature. See Arias-Maldonado (2012), Biro (2005), Blühdorn (2000), McKibben (1990, 2010), Soper (1995), Vogel (2002, 2015, 2016), and Wapner (2010, 2015).

of land, now has a human imprint. . . .

What was distinctive of the social sciences and humanities that emerged in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe was . . . their 'social-only' domain of concern. Sociology, psychology, political science, economics, history and philosophy rest on the assumption that the grand and the everyday events of human life take place against a backdrop of a blind and purposeless nature. . . . Everything worthy of analysis occurs in the sealed world of 'the social', and where the environment is taken into account . . . 'the environment' in question is . . . the natural world 'over there' that surrounds and sometimes intrudes on our plans, but always remains separate.

Yet a mere 'taking into account' misses the essence of the new epoch. We can no longer draw a diagram with 'Society' nested within a larger circle marked 'Nature'. The point of the announcement . . . of the Anthropocene's arrival is that we now live in an epoch in which the human inheres in the total functioning of the natural world. Until this fact is internalised, social science and humanities' scholars will fail to understand the politics, sociology or philosophy of climate change in a way that is true to the science. (Hamilton 2015b, p. 34)

Regarding the conceptualisation of human being and what it means to be human, the Anthropocene specifically calls into question anthropocentrism and advances in its stead non-anthropocentric understandings of humans and their relation to the natural world. For instance, according to Yusoff, the Anthropocene requires of the humanities and social sciences that they '*avoid* anthropocentric valourizations at all times' (2017, p. 123), which is not to say that an-

thropocentrism only concerns value, for as Chakrabarty contends, 'we do not yet know what non-anthropocentrism would practically mean in this age' (2017a, p. 42). Rather, what is opposed in the Anthropocene imaginary is anthropocentrism *in general*, insofar as anthropocentrism broadly refers to ways of reasoning, conceptualisations, and understandings according to which humans are differentiated and separated from nature on the basis of a difference between the two.[17] In the Anthropocene, so the story goes, 'anthropocentrism . . . will increasingly seem inadequate' for the social sciences and their 'obsessively human-centric nature' (ibid., p. 42).

The Anthropocene, then, calls for political theory to rethink its understanding of the political world and to move its concepts away from dualism and anthropocentrism: 'Our anthropocentric . . . image of . . . politics is fundamentally wrong; it perpetuates the wrong reality, the wrong commitments and purposes, the wrong "world-picture"' (Burke, Fishel, et al. 2016, p. 504). In the Anthropocene, politics cannot be understood as something that is only about humans and about humans as unique and separate beings vis-à-vis the natural world. As Wapner argues, the Anthropocene questions 'the exclusive focus on the human sphere in political analysis' (2019, p. 213). It adds a 'crucial yet neglected unit of analysis; namely, the more-than-human world' (ibid., p. 220) to the analysis of politics, and those who research the political world need 'to expand their scholarly gaze . . . to include the non-human in their inquiries and thus be able to

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[17] For an opposing view on the Anthropocene, however, one that argues that it is anthropocentric because of its emphasis on *human* influence on the Earth system, see Hamilton (2017, pp. 36–75) and Arias-Maldonado (2019) (see also Meadowcroft 2019, pp. 232–233). For a critique of this view, in turn, see Davis (2016, p. 7).

capture the broader terrain of Anthropocene politics' (ibid., p. 213):

> Humanity may be the primary force shaping evolution, atmospheric conditions, and terrestrial ecosystems, but it does not do so in a vacuum. It is still part of, dependent upon, and integrated into the natural world. . . . Humans cannot exist for a moment without the ecological conditions that support life and cannot act into the world without intermingling with other creatures and geophysical conditions, and this becomes a matter of politics. Indeed, humans do not act *on* the earth; they act with it. (ibid., p. 221)

As has been noted already, this perceived need for rethinking includes the concept of democracy. As Jamieson and Di Paola also assert, 'the Anthropocene ... puts under pressure some traditional categories and concepts of liberal democratic theory' (Jamieson and Di Paola 2016, p. 254). This arguably begs the question, what happens to democracy in such a world? What will the outcomes be if political theory embarks on the 'deep reconceptualisation of ... democracy' that Hamilton and his colleagues argue that the Anthropocene concept 'obliges' it to do (Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne 2015b, p. 9, see also page 2)? If the human world and Earth 'constitute a hybridity wherein one can no longer draw a boundary dividing the human and nonhuman domains' (Wapner 2019, p. 221), where does this leave democracy? Is there a place for democracy in the Anthropocene? Does it have a future in the planetary age of humankind? Can democracy break free from its alleged anthropocentrism? Can it extend to the natural world and to non-humans? What does a concept of democracy suitable for the Anthropocene look like? In short, and stated with more

general terms, can democracy be reconceptualised in a non-anthropocentric fashion? Attempts to do so are outlined in the next section.

2.1 Green Democracy

Even though the Anthropocene has garnered much scholarly interest, non-anthropocentric democracy apropos the Anthropocene has not seen that much attention. Of course, democracy has indeed been discussed in the burgeoning literature on the Anthropocene (e.g. Arias-Maldonado 2015a, pp. 112–115; Biro 2015; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, in particular pp. 125–161; Eckersley 2015, 2017; Davis 2016, pp. 193–209; Hammond and Ward 2019; Jamieson and Di Paola 2016; Mert 2019; Niemeyer 2014; Purdy 2015a, pp. 48–50, 256–288; Stirling 2014, 2015; Tremmel 2019). However, to my knowledge, there are, as of yet, no systematic attempts to develop a thoroughly non-anthropocentric concept of democracy on the basis of the Anthropocene imaginary. The future of democracy in the Anthropocene is, of course, an open question—as is, one should perhaps add, the future of the Anthropocene in general—with or without a body of literature on the Anthropocene and non-anthropocentric democracy.[18] However, such a body of literature would at least have made it possible to study the consequences of the *imaginary* of the Anthropocene for the concept of democracy. At the moment, however, given the current state of research on the Anthropocene, any direct study of the implications of the Anthropocene for non-anthropocentric democracy would be rather speculative. 'A democratic Anthropocene', as Purdy notes,

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[18]On the theme of the future and the Anthropocene, see Bai et al. (2016), Berkhout (2014), and Knight (2015).

'can be forecast only in fragments. To reflect on it is, in part, to reflect on its nonexistence' (2016, par. 24; see also 2015a, p. 268).

Therefore, I take a slightly different route to the problem of democracy in the Anthropocene and approach it indirectly instead. For rather than speculating on what a non-anthropocentric concept of democracy proceeding from the Anthropocene imaginary might or might not look like, I turn to the discourse of green political theory instead and take advantage of the fact that some of the fundamental notions of the Anthropocene imaginary have precursors in green political theory.[19] Crucially, the notion that modern political theory predominately approaches political order and democracy as something that involves only humans and that this needs to change is a major tenet in green political theory, as is the notion that modernity and modern thought in general are grounded in a dualism of humans and nature. Proceeding from this take on modernity and modern political thought, green political theory has long been occupied with overcoming dualisms and rethinking political concepts, including the con-cept of democracy, in non-anthropocentric directions based on a variety of theoretical positions (Sutton 2004, p. 80). Thus, green political theory provides an opportunity to analyse non-anthropocentric democracy without having to remain within the discursive context of the Anthropocene imaginary. This is what I do in the first part of this study; I analyse how democracy beyond humans has been conceptualised, based on three different theoretical foundations, in green political theory. This makes it possible to make a more qualified guess regarding the future of democracy in the Anthropocene—insofar as this democracy will be non-anthropocentric, that is—based on how it is thought of in the present in green political theory.[20]

It should be stressed that this study covers only theoretical issues—and as will become apparent later on, the historical development of theory—not empirical matters; it is about the prospects of extending democracy to the non-human world on a theoretical level, not about empirically doing so; I am concerned only with what happens to democracy as a *concept* when it is extended

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[19] What I refer to as *green political theory* also goes by the name of *environmental political theory*. I prefer the former term, however, mainly because it highlights the normative commitments that characterises much of the discourse. On 'labeling' this discourse, see Gabrielson et al. (2016, pp. 7–8), which also contains an overall definition of what it is about, which also captures much of my own understanding of it: 'a broad field of inquiry in which some of the tools and techniques honed by political theorists . . . are utilized to develop insights into contemporary environmental challenges' (ibid., p. 3). See also Dobson and Eckersley (2006) in which 'the encounter between mainstream and "green" theory' is said to have taken two forms (1993, p. 1), one being 'a discussion and analysis of the role of environmental politics in the context of modern political ideologies' (ibid., p. 1), and the other 'an interrogation of traditional political concepts from an environmental point of view. Sophisticated reflections on (for example) democracy, freedom and rights, on distributive justice, on the state and political space, on security and citizenship' (ibid., p. 2). For some overviews of green/environmental political theory, see Gabrielson et al. (2016), Luke (2015a), and Meyer (2006).

[20] It is also worth mentioning that to the extent literature on democracy and the Anthropocene covers non-anthropocentric democracy and considers the possible need for extending democracy beyond humans, and how such a rethinking of democracy might proceed, it tends to do so by making use of theoretical approaches already present within the broader confines of the discourse of green political theory (e.g. Purdy 2015a, pp. 266–288; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, pp. 125–127, 145–149), which I am able to cover with the theoretical foundations on which I choose to focus.

to non-humans. I make no claims about the possible future of democracy in the reality of the Anthropocene.

There is a close affinity between the Anthropocene imaginary and green political theory regarding sustainability and what is colloquially referred to as environmental problems. Sustainability, difficulties related to environmental change, and the politics surrounding such change are certainly major concerns in green political theory, and the globalisation of environmental change is, of course, situated at the very core of the concept of the Anthropocene. The knowledge that has led to the understanding of humankind as a geological force has also established with considerable certainty that many of the planetary changes humankind is bringing about have far-reaching negative consequences, with changes to the climate and biodiversity loss being among the most significant examples.[21] Humans are not necessarily a benign force of nature. Rather, the 'human enterprise' is changing the Earth system in such a way and to such an extent that the capacity of the system to support human life is threatened (Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011, e.g. pp. 746–748). Humankind seems to be setting what might be a dangerous trajectory for the earth system (Steffen, Rockström, et al. 2018). Indeed, some of the changes associated with humankind as a geological force are beneficial for human development and possibly long-term sustainable, but importantly others 'are threatening the life support systems upon which we all depend for continuing the high quality of life that many people already enjoy and to which

many others aspire' (Barnosky et al. 2014, p. 81):

> Much … global change will be to the detriment of humans. Not all of it…, but the present and likely future course of environmental change seems set to create substantially more losers, globally, than winners. (Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, and Crutzen 2010, p. 2231)

Social practice is pushing Earth beyond the planetary biophysical boundaries of a 'safe operating space for humanity' (Rockström et al. 2009a).[22] Basically, the well-being of humanity, in general, is under threat, and so far, the Anthropocene is characterised by unsustainable development (Berkhout 2014, pp. 155–156):

> The concept of the Anthropocene *embodies an implicit threat*. Increasingly, humans live in a world they have remade. Yet there is plenty to concern us with this remaking…. The massive environmental transformations at all scales, witnessed particularly over the past half century, and driven by population, technological prowess, and resource use, represent a growing threat to lives and livelihoods and to the future of human societies. The Anthropocene represents a voyage into the unknown, a single unplanned and large-scale 'experiment' with the planetary systems that support human life…. [O]f course, the threat is not just to our own species but also to others with whom we share the planet. (Meadowcroft 2019, p. 230)

Whereas the Holocene proved to be rather beneficial for human development and flourishing, the Anthropocene seems to offer far less a forgiving context for human societies:

> Central to the Anthropocene proposition is the claim that we have left the benign

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[21] On anthropogenic climate change and biodiversity loss, see e.g. IPCC (2014) and IPBES (2019).

[22] On the concept of planetary boundaries, see also Biermann (2012), Castree (2017a), Dryzek (2013, pp. 34–37), Galaz (2015), Lynas (2011), Palsson et al. (2013, pp. 6–7), Rockström et al. (2009b), and Steffen, Richardson, et al. (2015).

era of the Holocene – when human civilizations have developed and thrived – and entered a much more unpredictable and dangerous time when humanity is undermining the planetary life-support systems upon which it depends. (Lövbrand, Beck, et al. 2015, p. 211; see also Dryzek 2016, pp. 937–940; Meadowcroft 2019, p. 230; Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011, pp. 739, 741; Rockström et al. 2009a, p. 472)

Crucially, because social reality and natural reality are so entangled with each other in this new epoch, their destinies are equally bound up with each other; if one goes down, so will the other:

> The Anthropocene represents a new phase in the history of both humankind and of the Earth, when natural forces and human forces became intertwined, so that the fate of one determines the fate of the other. (Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, and Crutzen 2010, p. 2231; see also Ellis and Ramankutty 2008, p. 446; Lövbrand, Beck, et al. 2015, p. 211)

Thus, the Anthropocene also demands a rethinking of environmentalism and sustainability politics (Davis 2016, pp. 193–209). Importantly, from the point of view of the Anthropocene imaginary, environmental and sustainability politics *also* need to rid themselves of dualist conceptualisations of humans and nature (Arias-Maldonado 2013, 2015b; Wapner 2014; see also Barry, Mol, and Zito 2013, pp. 369–372; Biermann and Lövbrand 2019b, pp. 18–19; Palsson et al. 2013, p. 9). In the Anthropocene, 'the lines between human concerns and environmental issues have eroded, and their amalgamation leaves us with few if any normative ethical certainties from which to mount familiar forms of critique' (Allewaert and Ziser 2012, p. 235), and as Skillington notes, 'the challenge now is to push crit-

ical reflexive thinking towards creative new ways of imagining and realizing a more sustainable Anthropocene future for all' (2015, p. 234). In the Anthropocene, for human well-being, 'the whole Earth System has to be functional not just for humans, but also sufficiently functional to maintain a biological diversity of which humans are simply part' (Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, Leinfelder, et al. 2017, p. 98), signalling the need for humans to become stewards of the whole of planet Earth (Steffen, Persson, et al. 2011); humans need to use their power as a geological force 'carefully and sparingly' and seek ways to 'better integrate into the Earth System' (Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, Leinfelder, et al. 2017, p. 98).

In the literature on the Anthropocene, modern dualist thinking is sometimes identified as a culprit in the Anthropocene drama of humans and nature and as a root cause of unsustainable practices. As noted by Olsson and colleagues, 'separation of the social from the ecological is at the heart of the dynamic that has created the current unsustainable pathway' (Olsson et al. 2017, p. 6 of 14). Explicitly targeting modern capitalism as unsustainable practice, Cox argues that

> regardless of which binary we choose to identify it, the ontological notion that humans are extra-natural and nature extra-human set the stage long ago for the systematic exploitation of all human and extra-human natures. Unlimited accumulation of capital is a holographic reality, only plausible if humans are seen as the beneficiaries of nature's 'bounty'. (Cox 2015, pp. 59–60)

In this sense, modernity is to blame for the predicament of the Anthropocene. 'The new epoch', as Meadowcroft notes, 'was brought about by developments that became operative well before its genesis' (2019, p. 234). The

Anthropocene is, so to speak, the result of 'the modern world as it destroys itself' (Allewaert and Ziser 2012, p. 235). According to the Anthropocene imaginary, modernity and its conceptualisation of the human being as the 'liberal subject that begins and ends with itself – that is, where the world ends –' was a failure from the get-go (Wakefield 2014, p. 450); the Anthropocene refers to modernity in order

> to call it a failure. Diachronically and didactically it equates climate change and ecological devastation with the processes of industrialization and humanism … suggesting that this order has been a disaster since its very inception…. [A]longside every barren mountaintop and every marine dead zone that stands as evidence of the Anthropocene, we should include the image of the liberal human that is their other half. (ibid., pp. 450–451)

Overcoming the dualist thinking associated with modernity, then, is not simply about realigning concepts so that they match perceived reality; it is significantly also about the sustainability of the 'human enterprise' and human well-being. To that extent, rethinking the relation between humans and nature becomes a matter of politics (Jamieson and Di Paola 2016, p. 257), and the concept of the Anthropocene thus expands from the confines of geology to political discourse:

> The Anthropocene is now more than a proposed new geological epoch that marks the transformation of the Earth System wrought by humanity; it has become a … lightening rod for political and philosophical arguments about what needs to be done, the future of humanity, the potential of technology and the prospects for civilization. (Dalby 2016, p. 34)

Therefore, the challenge of the Anthropocene to the social sciences is a political challenge as well:

> Social scientists … have much thinking to do about how to facilitate rapid social change away from a global economy powered by fossil fuels premised on high modernist assumptions that nature is external to human affairs…. [T]he overarching questions of how to think about politics in the Anthropocene need to be confronted; we do not have the intellectual tools to do this effectively. (ibid., p. 47)

In turn, moving away from modernity, in a '"totalizing"' break with consequences 'not just for one specific element of political or social life, but for the overall human experience' (Meadowcroft 2019, p. 229), becomes a prerequisite for sustainability:

> For those who regard our past relations with nature as both mistaken and avoidable, a correction of the former might be precisely the point. In other words, a change in the human way of being-in-the-world would constitute a philosophical and political program for radical green change. (Arias-Maldonado 2015b, p. 96)

Also, insofar as the posed challenge involves rethinking democracy, a rethinking of democracy beyond its modern conceptualisation emerges as something that is crucial for moving away from unsustainable ways of life and social practices and as vital for achieving sustainability in the 'Age of Man':

> The Anthropocene … emphasizes … the imperative to act on diverse timescales by building durable institutions of democratic engagement while also responding to the real urgency of ecological crisis. (Lehman and Nelson 2014, pp. 445–446)

As Purdy dramatically puts it, 'the politics of the Anthropocene will be either democratic or horrible' (Purdy 2016, par. 37)

Here, yet another affinity between the Anthropocene imaginary and green political

theory becomes visible, for this way of reasoning about modernity, dualist thinking, sustainability, and democracy has long been part and parcel of the latter. In green political theory, non-anthropocentric conceptualisations of democracy usually come with the associated claim that extending democracy beyond humankind can aid in turning unsustainability into sustainability, that it can politically facilitate so-called sustainability transformations of society.[23]

By and large, the support for and advancement of non-anthropocentric democracy in green political theory follows from the predominant way Western civilisation and modernity are diagnosed and criticised in environmentalist circles.

It is a prevalent view among environmentalists that Western civilisation, at some point in its development, distanced itself from the natural world of matter and things, or at least it thought it did, that at some historical period, European thought started to emphasise that humans are different and separate from the natural world and that people started to believe of themselves to be distinguished from nature: 'Westerners have tended to make a radical distinction between humanity and nature' (Zimmerman 1992, p. 247). Basically, according to this argument, there is a pervasive anthropocentric dualism of humans and nature characterising Western civilisation and its intellectual

expressions and foundations (e.g. Fox 1995, pp. 3–22). According to this view, Western society and thought are or have become characterised by a conceptualisation of human being as 'exceptional' in its relation to natural being and as exempt from the natural world.[24]

The split between humans and nature has, for instance, been located as far back as in Classical Greece (Smith 2011), which would pretty much make human-nature dualism a constant in Western thought. Regarding Classical thought, the split can be related specifically to the sophist distinction between *nomos*—custom, norms, law—and *physis*—the material world of nature. Whereas the natural world, for the sophist philosophers, behaves according to unchangeable principles, human customs, norms, and laws can change arbitrarily in relation to such laws (Herren 2017, p. 39).[25] This distinction, then, is ostensibly indicative of a mode of thought that exempts human societies from the unchangeability of nature. Thus, it lends itself to interpretations seeing it as an indication of a separation of human and natural being.

Another environmentalist gesture is to locate the origin of dualism in the Platonist ascription of ultimate reality to the opposite to the material being that humans actually experience, to an eternal world beyond experience (Plumwood 2002, p. 20). Still an-

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[23]On the concept of sustainability transformations, or green transformations, see Avelino et al. (2016), Meadowcroft (2011), Patterson et al. (2017), and Scoones, Newell, and Leach (2015).

[24]In environmentalist discourse, the concept of 'human exceptionalism'—also referred to as 'human exemptionalism'—is primarily associated with the work of Catton and Dunlap, and their description of modern sociological thought and its basic anthropocentric character (Catton and Dunlap 1978a,b, 1980; Dunlap and Catton 1994; see also Dickens 1992, pp. xi–xiii; Dunlap 2008). Catton and Dunlap (1980) also contains a summary of what the authors call the 'dominant Western worldview' (ibid., in particular pp. 16–18), which is a disclosing illustration of how environmentalists perceive of the development of the Western world as a distancing away from nature.

[25]For this particular rendition of the distinction between *physis* and *nomos*, see Herren (2017, p. 39). I return to the distinction briefly in chapter 3 and refer to more literature there (see footnote 11 on page 159).

other way in which Classical Antiquity can be identified as the origin of human-nature dualism is to emphasise the philosophy of Aristotle, his conceptualisation of humans as the only beings who have language, and his ideas about humans as political animals and that the rest of nature exists for the well-being of humans (Dobson 2006, p. 183, 2008, 2010, 2014, pp. 42–45, 148; Rodman 1974, pp. 20–21).

Anthropocentrism and the split between humans and nature can also be related to the historically subsequent emergence of Christian faith and theology (White, Jr. 1967; see also White, Jr. 1973). Elements of Christian theology and important passages in the Bible can generate beliefs according to which humans are distinguished from the rest of the created world because they are created in God's image and are connected to a transcendent divine world in ways that the rest of creation is not.

Another approach is to locate the split to the Italian Renaissance and the humanist philosophy that developed during that period (Opie 1987). However, the most common version of the environmentalist representation of the development of Western civilisation portrays modernity as the true culprit in the story of human separation from nature (e.g. Botkin 1990; Cobb 1971; Devall and Sessions 1985; Evernden 1993; Latour 1993; Merchant 1989, 1992; Oelschlaeger 1991; Ophuls 1997; Rodman 1974; see also Barry 1999, pp. 16–20, 209–211; Dobson 2007, pp. 6–8; Evernden 1992, pp. 93–99; Franklin 2002, pp. 1–18; Hay 2002, p. 4). If, as the story goes, the onset of modernity does not signal the very emergence of hu-

man-nature dualism, at least it represents its most profound form and scope (Plumwood 2002; LaFreniere 2008). Specific aspects of modernity that can be singled out here include experimental and observational science—and sometimes also the related emergence of a division between natural and social science (e.g. Irwin 2001; Dickens 1992, p. 3, 1996, pp. 18–51; Franklin 2002, pp. 19–38)—mechanical and Enlightenment philosophy and the belief in the possibility of unrestrained human progress, and atomism and the related idea of the autonomous human individual who is independent of its social and natural environment. Among those who are personally identified as particularly important for the development of modern dualism are Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. Also, perhaps more than any other, René Descartes has been portrayed as the bringer of modern dualism and harbinger of its sorrows. In fact, 'Cartesianism'—by which is basically meant a rigid and total distinction between thought and matter, or mind and body, which extends to capture everything that pertains to human being on one side of the distinction and everything that pertains to the natural world on the other—is often treated in environmentalist circles as synonymous with modern ways of thinking. Evernden even suggests that there is an 'official version of the way the world is' in modernity and that it can be referred to as 'the Cartesian worldview' (1993, p. 103).[26] In a similar fashion, atomism and the associated understanding of the human individual as an autonomous subject become equated with political liberalism, which in turn becomes an overarch-

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[26] For a brief overview of the significance of Descartes for environmentalist takes on modernity, see Hay (2002, pp. 120–128).

ing concept for describing modern political order at large—at least its democratic variety (e.g. Mathews 1991, pp. 7–47, 1996b, pp. 4–5,a)—so that modern political order becomes fundamentally associated with dualism and atomism via the intermediary of liberalism (e.g. Ophuls 1997; Eckersley 1992, p. 51). As Kassiola notes, 'whenever … modern society in general is considered, the political philosophy of liberalism must be addressed' (1990, p. 83).

According to this diagnosis of modernity, the moderns have 'lost sight of' nature (Sutton 2004, p. 77). Environmentalists argue that in modernity, 'nature is seen simply as the backdrop for human activity, presenting no limits to what can be achieved' (ibid., p. 77). Or, to use my preferred metaphor, modernity is believed to be built on the notion that there is a wall between the world of humans and the world of nature, leaving the two separate from each other and inserting a fundamental or essential difference between them. According to the environmentalist take on modernity, modern humans believe themselves to be separated from nature by virtue of being different from it.

The modern wall between humans and nature, furthermore, is said to be built by humans themselves; the difference between modern humans and modern nature is 'imposed' by humans (Latour 1993, p. 104). In other words, humans are separating and differentiating themselves from nature. The break is a result of humans distancing themselves from nature, delimiting themselves (Beck 1995a, p. 39). Humans wall nature off, so to speak. As Evernden states, 'Descartes builds a barrier between man and nature' (1993, p. 53).

In principle, the wall between humans and nature is perfect and unbreachable; it

is an example of what Simmel has in mind when he states that walls are 'mute' (1994, p. 7): a relation in which the parties form a duality and need not interact with each other, which ultimately means that they do not in principle influence each other in any fundamental way. Insofar as there is such a relation between humans and nature in modernity, then, the modern mute wall between humans and nature makes it possible for humans to go about doing whatever they do unrestrained by and unconcerned with nature; and nature, vice versa, exists independently of human beings. The wall separates two worlds independent of each; it establishes a duality of worlds, 'two entirely distinct ontological zones' (Latour 1993, p. 10). Thus, as environmentalists principally see them, moderns confidently strut around believing they are independent of the natural world that exists on the other side of the wall with which they surround their own world.

The modern wall between humans and nature is also said to divide the world into strictly separated subjects and objects. Modern humans are active, creative, knowing, speaking subjects, whereas the modern natural world of things is a collection of objects empty of subjective content:

> Nature, for modernity, is a second-order exteriority, a faceless surface not in any of its parts but as a whole. Nature as a whole becomes an externality, with nothing behind it and nothing within it…. It is most immediately exterior to the knowing subject, standing outside it as pure object, extension confronting cognition…, an externality that is not spatial but ontological. (Foltz 2004, p. 331)

Thus, being non-subjective, nature does not act. It is not creative, does not hold any knowledge, and does not have anything to

say by itself. The wall, moreover, allows humans to escape the perils of such an unforgiving—hostile, even—nature and live lives of their choosing. According to this view, modern thought centres around the notion that human well-being requires the overcoming of nature (Sutton 2004, pp. 13–14); modern society is the perceived result and continuous manifestation of humans separating themselves from nature. 'The exteriority attributed to objects is not a given encountered through experience, but the result of a quite particular political-scientific history' (Latour 2018, p. 64).

The association of atomism, the autonomous subject, liberalism, and modern political order at large with human-nature dualism is particularly interesting. For to the extent that modern politics is believed to be so deeply enmeshed with liberalism that the latter 'must be addressed' whenever the former is considered, liberalism, as a concept in environmentalist discourse, is of such broad scope that it becomes the 'encapsulation of the public philosophy of contemporary liberal democratic societies' (Meyer 2011, pp. 361–362). This is important since it suggests a connection between anthropocentric dualist thinking and modern democracy, seeing that 'liberal democracy' is also used synonymously with 'modern democracy' (e.g. Mathews 1996b; Plumwood 2002, pp. 81–87; see also Eckersley 2020). One would, so to speak, be hard-pressed to find references to modern non-liberal democracies in green political theory. This suggestion, in turn, hints at a connection between the structure of modern political order—generally centred around the elements of the state, the state system, and the human individual, as well as sovereignty being that which orders those elements—democracy,

and the separation of humans from nature. Modern politics, in other words, is construed as the perceived result and continual manifestation of humans distancing themselves from the natural world (e.g. White, Jr. 1967, p. 1204). The bringing of modern democracy into the mix means that the principle commitments of modern democracy to the liberty, the individual and collective emancipation, and the creative capacities of the subjects of politics *also* appear to be grounded in human separation from nature. If the environmentalist construal of modernity is valid, then, modern democracy does indeed seem to presuppose the existence of a wall between what is social and what is natural, between political order and natural order. In the fertile soils of the modern human world, democracy can germinate and flourish because it is safeguarded by a wall from the forces of nature. Or so it might seem, at least. In the final parts of this study, I will argue that this is indeed not the case, that the modern relation between humans and nature is not really that of a wall, and by implication that this environmentalist representation of modernity misses its mark.

Environmentalists usually also criticise this modern self-understanding and the modern tendency to separate humans from nature, and they do so on two accounts. First, it is emphasised that the belief that humans are separated from nature is simply wrong. As Evernden succinctly concludes, the dual world of humans and nature '*never existed*' (1992, p. 99). Explicitly focusing on modern politics, Ophuls states in a similar tone that 'the fundamental premises of modern polity are false' (1997, p. 3). At the end of the day, environmentalists are quick to point out, humans are living breathing beings and essentially dependent on the material world.

The dependence on nature goes for individuals as well as for collectives: 'Nature is integral to people's bodies. There is therefore no logical way in which nature can be treated as separate from people' (Dickens 1992, p. xiv); 'civilizations … occur *within* nature' (Wilshire and Cooper 2004, p. 304). In fact, given the development—in terms of material living conditions—that some parts of the world and some parts of humanity have experienced during the modern period, human dependence on nature, if anything, has increased as modernity has unfolded; modern social development has not happened because humans have separated themselves from nature, but rather 'because they have mixed together much greater masses of humans and nonhumans' (Latour 1993, p. 41). Accordingly, the modern wall between humans and nature is a myth; dualism is a lie the moderns have told themselves and bought to such an extent that they fully believe in it. As Latour states, 'no one has ever been modern. Modernity has never begun…. [W]e have never been modern' (ibid., p. 47); 'there are not naked humans on one side and nonhuman objects on the other' (Latour 2018, p. 58).

Second, the belief in the duality of human and natural worlds and the conceptualisation of humans as separate from nature is said to belong to the main reasons for the ecological predicament modernity has ended up with (Carter 2007, p. 15). Modernity, it is claimed, is not sustainable (diZerega 1995, p. 239; Sutton 2004, p. 14; see also LaFreniere 2008); it encompasses practices that leave too large ecological footprints on the planet.[27] To return to Ophuls's statement regarding the falsity of the premises of modern politics, not only are they said to be false, but they are also claimed to be 'unsustainable' (Ophuls 1997, p. 3). Or, as Moncrief noted already in 1971, 'the forces of democracy, technology, urbanization, increasing individual wealth, and an aggressive attitude toward nature seem to be directly related to the environmental crisis now being confronted in the Western world' (Moncrief 1971, p. 14). From a political perspective, the modern world is 'locked into the politics of unsustainability' (Blühdorn 2009; see also Blühdorn 2011a, 2013, 2014, 2016); unsustainability is 'an essential feature' of 'the currently dominant frame of mind' in modern societies (Blühdorn 2002, par. 3, 2).

For many, the unsustainability of modernity is related to dualist thinking about humans and nature. For instance, anthropocentric dualism, in general, can be said to reduce nature to a resource, to a heap of things the only use of which is to contribute to human well-being and development, and which can be exchanged as commodities on economic markets seemingly free from ecological constraints (e.g. Evernden 1993, pp. 22–25, 54, 65–69; Plumwood 1996, 2002, pp. 22–31, 110–111, 143–147; Smith 2011, pp. 101–111).[28] Modern humans might indeed claim to be independent of nature, but they still maintain the right to use it as they please.

Dualism also engenders anthropocentric ethical positions according to which only hu-

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[27] On the concept of ecological footprint as an indication of human impact on Earth, see Galli et al. (2016), Wackernagel and Rees (1996), and WWF (2016).

[28] Regarding Plumwood (2002), it should be noted that it offers a particularly rich and extensive account of the theoretical workings of dualism and of its social and ecological implications, and that it covers much of what I highlight regarding the green critique of the unsustainability of modernity.

mans have intrinsic value, or which similarly elevate human preferences and interests at the expense of concern for the non-human world (Carter 2007, pp. 15–19; Eckersley 1992, pp. 26–29; Mathews 2017; Nimmo 2011; Routley and Routley 1979; Sessions 1974; see also Curry 2011, pp. 36, 54–60, 129–130; Dobson 2007, pp. 42–46; Hayward 1997, pp. 50–51; Martell 1994, pp. 77–107; Warren 1993). As the editors of a volume titled *Rethinking Nature* notes—and by alluding to a saying by Shakespeare that it is hard to 'hide the sparks of nature'—'under Bacon's tutelage, we take interest in sparks only to the extent that they can be harnessed into electrical power, subordinating knowledge to human interests' (Foltz and Frodeman 2004, p. 2).

Finally, dualism can also be said to nourish ideas about the mastery or domination of nature, ideas according to which humans, through the instrumental application of reason and aided by technological development and coupled industrial production processes, can take control of nature, domesticate its wilderness, and curb its forces for the benefits of themselves without any concerns for what other consequences such practices might have. These are ideas that also engender practices in which humans dominate not only nature but other humans and themselves as well (Duguid 2010; Hay 2002, p. 4; Lee 1993; Leiss 1994; Mathews 2017; Merchant 1989; Plumwood 1993; Smith 2011).[29]

All in all, this results in an exploitation of nature—said to be based on the fundamental belief in a separation of humans and nature—that cannot be sustained in the long run (cf. Hay 2002, pp. 127–128), Zimmerman even calling 'an exploitative view of nature' a 'hallmark of modernity' (2004, p. 208). It also leads to blindness toward that exploitation. Moderns fail to see that they are heading for disaster; at the end of the modern day, as many environmentalists emphasise, society, being involved in a material 'metabolism' with the natural world,[30] presupposes the provisions of nature. The moderns are just ignoring all of that, arrogantly denying it (Plumwood 2002), or they have simply forgotten it; modernity, as Rachel Carson describes it in her seminal *Silent Spring*, is 'an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival' (2002, p. 39); nature as a walled-off exteriority to the human world is 'the dumb product of our own hands' (Foltz 2004, p. 338). Thus, ultimately, modernity backfires, or at least it will eventually do so. For at some point, the exploitation of nature will have gone so far that nature can no longer provide everything that humans demand from it, and, thereby, threatening human well-being because of the erroneous belief that humans are not dependent on the provision of nature and the material circumstances of life.

Sometimes, the concept of sustainability is couched in terms of humankind as a species. From such a point of view, which emphasises the basic fact that well-being is fundamentally about life, the environmentalist critique of modernity signals that the de-

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[29] The concept of domination of nature draws heavily on critical theory, especially Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002). On environmentalism and critical theory, see also Biro (2016), Dobson (1993), Eckersley (1990, 1992, pp. 97–117), and Vogel (1996), and on the Anthropocene and critical theory, see Stoner and Melathopoulos (2015).

[30] On the concept of social metabolism, see González de Molina and Toledo (2014).

velopment of modern ways of living might threaten the human species' very survival.[31] Nature, then, comes back to haunt modern humans. The wall between society and nature is, in fact, not unbreachable. Rather, it is constantly breaking apart, ghosts are slipping through in the cracks that appear. Hence, modernity is—to purposively use colloquial language—bad for the environment in that the latter gets taxed without much consideration. It is also bad for humans since it threatens the long-term sustainability of human development and well-being, and even the very existence of humans as a species: 'Man poisons Nature; Nature poisons man in return: the universal Golden Rule', as Rodman writes (1974, p. 17). If humans continue as they do, the future might be a bleak one, at least for humans themselves.

From the point of view of this environmentalist diagnosis and critique of modernity, it arguably seems like modernity is on the wrong track and that something needs to be done, something profound. As Bennett asks rhetorically, 'perhaps it is time to think past', the mode of thought passed down since the birth of the modern world, 'unthink' it even (1987, p. 6). Beyond such rhetorical devices, Wilshire and Cooper assert confidently that 'it is time to end this crude and abusive slicing of reality into nature and nurture, the natural and the human' (2004, p. 304). And to the extent that it rises to this challenge, environmentalism calls 'into question an entire world view' (Dobson 1990, p. 8); it calls for 'a metaphysical "paradigm shift"' (Barry 1999, p. 17).

Insofar as modernity is trapped in unsustainability because of a fundamental dualism of humans and nature, then this, it seems, is what needs to change, provided that the current ecological predicaments are of real concern; dualism must be transcended, anthropocentrism transformed. The so-called 'great divide' (Latour 1993, pp. 97–100; Descola 2013, pp. 57–88) between society and nature must be bridged; humans must come 'down to Earth', become 'earthbound' (Latour 2018, p. 86).[32] What is needed, if dualism is to blame, is new ways of thinking: 'the only real solution to our multitude of problems . . . *is to change the way of thinking that caused them*' (Ophuls 1997, p. 1). Specifically, what is called for is a new way of thinking about humans, nature, and their relation, a mode of thought that does not rely on dualism:

> When we pay attention to the requirements of safeguarding the species, and as we make that a matter of public concern, what conclusions do we draw. . .?
>
> What is looked for is not an alternative society but an alternative to society. . . . This is what is gradually modifying the way that society sees itself, and the way that nature is coming to be seen as an end rather than just as a means. . . . This new way of thinking will eventually sweep away the representation of society as an artificial order constituted in a breach with a disorderly and hostile nature. . . . In this emerging vision, society will no longer be seen as functioning to shackle nature. Rather it will come into alliance with it, encouraging beliefs and practices which will tend to enrich the possibilities of the species and increase its prospects for survival. (Moscovici 1990, pp. 7–8)

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[31]On the theme of survivalism in environmentalist discourse, see Dryzek (2013, pp. 27–51) and Eckersley (1992, pp. 11–17). Survivalism is primarily associated with early environmentalist ideas about resource depletion, overpopulation, and material limits to growth (Ehrlich 1971; Goldsmith et al. 1972; Hardin 1968; Meadows et al. 1972).

[32]The quote 'down to Earth' refers to the title of Latour (2018), not a particular section of the text.

According to the environmentalist take on modernity, then, in the name of sustainability, there needs to be a new conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature:

> From an ecological perspective, the arrogance of anthropocentrism is dangerously misguided. As American philosopher David Ray Griffin puts it, 'the continuation of modernity threatens the very survival of life on our planet'. Industrialization and the instrumentalization of nature, justified by the fallacy of a human/nonhuman divide, flirts precariously with ecocide. . . .
>
> [A] post-Modern environmental ontology reaffirms our intimate organic relationship with the webwork we call nature. (Keller 2009, p. 723)[33]

Or, as Botkin writes in his *Discordant Harmonies*:

> We have clouded our perception of nature with false images, and as long as we continue to do that we will cloud our perception of ourselves, cripple our ability to manage natural resources, and choose the wrong approaches to dealing with global environmental concerns. The way to achieve a harmony with nature is first to break free from old metaphors and embrace new ones so that we can lift the veils that prevent us from accepting what we observe, and then to make use of technology to study life and life-supporting systems as they are. . . .
>
> Once we realize that we are part of a living system, global in scale . . . we can feel a part of the world in a way that our nineteenth-century ancestors could not. . . . We can leave behind the metaphors of the machine, which are so uncomfortable psychologically because they separate us from nature. . ., and we can arrive . . . at a new organic view of the Earth, a view in which we are a part of a living and changing system. (Botkin 1990, p. 189)

The relation environmentalists seek between humans and nature is one that takes the form of a bridge rather than a wall; the gap between humans and nature, the argument goes, must be bridged; the wall separating modern politics from modern nature must be disassembled:

> In the western tradition especially, there is a need to stress continuity between self and other, human and nature, in response to the existential gulf created by dominant hyper-separated (radically distanced) and alienated anthropocentric models of nature and of human identity. We stress human continuity and ecological vulnerability in response to those aspects of centric models that define the truly human as (normatively) outside of nature and in opposition to the body and the material world, and conceive nature itself in alienated and mechanistic terms as having no elements of mind. (Plumwood 2002, p. 201)

Environmentalists, then, understand the modern relation between humans and nature as one in which the two are completely separated and different and thus form a duality of worlds. As a metaphor for that relation, the wall designates separation, difference, and such a duality of worlds. It designates a relation of disunity and difference. For humans and nature as concepts, this means that they are conceptualised as being fundamentally separate and different, that they are made meaningful on the basis of their difference and independence from each other.

The bridge, on the other hand, antithetically denotes belonging and identity. Imagine a bridge crossing a river, stretching from one bank to the other. Such a bridge does two things. First, it connects the two

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[33]The quote Keller refers to in this passage is from Griffin (1988, p. xi).

banks; it relates them to each other. By means of the bridge, the two banks appear to lie on each side of the river. Before the bridge, there were no banks lying across each other at all. Thus, the two riverbanks become riverbanks through the relation to each other, their meaning as banks emerges relationally. Second, the meaning they receive as banks is one of identity; they are both *riverbanks*. Whatever they are otherwise, whatever there is on each side, of whatever each side consists, the two sides share the identity of being banks. Moreover, through the bridge, the banks—and what lies beyond them—the river and the bridge itself are brought together into a whole. They form a landscape, so to speak, and in that landscape, the related parties—the two sides of the river—are united by and in their identity. They are identical in their belonging to the same whole. The bridge, then, designates a relation in which that which is related forms a unity of identity; it forms relations of belonging. Those who cross the bridge do not become different by doing so, for they remain in the same landscape, and they end up on a riverbank identical—in its being as a riverbank of the landscape—to the one they left. It does not matter which side of the river they are on; they continue to be part of the same whole.

The workings of the bridge as a metaphor for relation are all captured by Heidegger in a passage in the essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*:

> The bridge … does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood. The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream. (Heidegger 2001, p. 150)

The unity of identity formed by the bridge does not signal that the two sides of the river are exactly the same; the bridge does not designate sameness among the related parties. Indeed, the two sides can be quite different; there might be different things on them, and they might consist of different materials and so on. The two sides are not the same; one is not the other. However, they are identical in the sense of being *sides* and being sides of the same whole; they are *insides* of the whole; they are identical in the sense of belonging to the same whole.

This is the kind of relation between humans and nature that environmentalists seek; this is what needs to replace the modern wall. Thus, environmentalists seek a way of thinking about humans and nature according to which the two share a basic identity as part of a greater whole, a relation in which they form a unity of identity instead of the disunity of difference, so to speak, that is believed to characterise modernity. The two need not be the same; the bridging of humans and nature does not proceed towards a world where everything is exactly the same. It does, however, proceed to *one* world in which the parts are brought together on the basis of their identity and belonging to each other. Environmentalism, to put it succinctly, seeks to transform how humans, nature, and their relation are thought of away from an emphasis on separation and difference towards an emphasis on belonging and identity, and they do so in

the name of sustainability.

One way to proceed in this endeavour, one way to seek a unity of identity between humans and nature, is to seek it on a political level and make the bridge-building a political practice. This is where non-anthropocentric democracy as part of green political theory enters the equation. Within the context of green political theory, non-anthropocentric democracy appears as a viable and normatively acceptable—desirable, even—political solution to modern unsustainability. What non-anthropocentric democracy seems to be able to offer is a transcendence of modern dualism while normatively desirable elements of modern democracy, such as the affirmation of the creativity of political subjects, the principle emphasis on liberty, and its emancipatory potential, are salvaged. Non-anthropocentric democracy would, by extending democracy beyond humans, achieve a bridging of humans and nature by including the natural world in the political world of humans. Doing so, it would pull the dualist rug out from under modernity's feet and, by that, reduce the size of modernity's ecological footprint by effectively nullifying dualism as a root cause of unsustainable development, and it would manage this feat without sacrificing, then, the emancipatory potential associated with democratic political order. For this to be possible, democracy needs to be rescued from its modern unsustainable mode. 'The challenge', writes Smith, 'is to imagine realizable forms of politics that reject human exceptionality … yet still retain the creative possibilities opened up by politics' (Smith 2011, p. 134; see also Ophuls 1997, p. 277). In other words, non-anthropocentric theories of democracy in green political theory seek to disentangle what is normatively de-sirable in modern politics from that which locks it into unsustainability (Barry 1999, pp. 209–210). Since non-anthropocentric democracy would broaden the scope of democracy, it would even expand that potential and improve upon the modern project of liberty and emancipation; '"unbounded democracy"', as Mathews notes, can be seen 'as a key both to environmentalism, and to the re-vitalisation of democracy itself' (1996b, pp. 7–8).

In 1988, already, Paehlke wrote that the solution to environmental problems might indeed lie 'in *more* rather than *less* democracy' (1988, p. 294; see also 1990). To this sentiment, Barry, while acknowledging that modern democracy has a rather poor ecological track record, adds:

> It is *not* the case that the ecological problems of democracy can be solved simply by *more* democracy. *Better* democracy may be a necessary condition for enhanced ecological rationality. (Barry 1999, p. 242)

Non-anthropocentric democracy, as it is theorised in green political theory, is basically an attempt to confirm statements such as these at a political-theoretical level. More and better democracy as a recipe for sustainability, such is the rationale for the green support for non-anthropocentric democracy.

As envisioned in green political theory, then, non-anthropocentric democracy would serve an environmentalist agenda in that it would contribute to a political sustainability transformation of society; it is conceptually invested with the potential to transform unsustainable into sustainable practices. Thus, in the discursive context of green political theory, non-anthropocentric democracy is also *green democracy*, and since

I approach the problem of democracy in the Anthropocene precisely in that context, I prefer the term *green* rather than *non-anthropocentric* democracy. Moreover, insofar as the reality of the Anthropocene calls for a rethinking of democracy, the Anthropocene imaginary, as has been shown already, also frames non-anthropocentric democracy as basically being green democracy. That being said, it is important to remember that the green democracy I am concerned with in this study is also non-anthropocentric.

Before moving on, a few remarks on the identification of green democracy with non-anthropocentric democracy is in order, not least because it restricts the scope of the argument I develop in relation to contemporary green political theory. Environmentalism has historically had a 'notoriously difficult relationship' (Blühdorn 2013, p. 16) with democracy, a problem often framed as a tension between formal and substantial aspects of politics. As Goodin states in an oft-quoted passage, 'to advocate democracy is to advocate procedures, to advocate environmentalism is to advocate substantive outcomes' (1992, p. 168).[34] However, while environmentalism did encompass a considerable amount of anti-democratic sentiments in its early days,[35] there is nowadays a widely accepted belief among

environmentalists in a 'virtuous relationship between democracy and environmental protection' (Eckersley 2006), and pretty much unanimous support for democracy in green political theory. (Barry 1999, pp. 193–247; Blühdorn 2011b; Mathews 1996b).[36] Green political theory harbours a plethora of theories of democracy, sustainability, and how the former can contribute to the latter or how they mutually reinforce each other.[37] However, despite statements such as the 'single – and singular – feature that distinguishes green democracy from other variants ... is surely ... the immense widening of the moral and political community to encompass what Aldo Leopold called the entire "biotic community"' (Ball 2006, p. 136),[38] most of these approaches are not explicitly non-anthropocentric in the sense that they seek to extend democracy beyond humans (Garside 2013, p. 105),[39] and the term 'green democracy' is sometimes used to refer to such *non*-non-anthropocentric approaches to green democracy (e.g. Barry 1999, pp. 193–247; Dryzek 2002; Saward 1993; Torgerson 2008; Wong 2016). So, even though green political theory has a long history of questioning anthropocentric dualism, and despite the principle critique of modern dualist thinking, much theoretical work on democracy in green political the-

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[34] For a similar line of reasoning, see Saward (1993), but also Saward (1996) where he alters his position.

[35] Often-mentioned examples of eco-authoritarian thought include Hardin (1968), Heilbroner (1974), and Ophuls (1977) (see also Bramwell 1989, pp. 6–8). For an important critique of eco-authoritarianism, see Ferry (1995), and for a more recent critique of contemporary eco-authoritarian political tendencies, see Shahar (2015). For brief overviews of eco-authoritarian positions, see Dobson (2007, pp. 105–115) and Whiteside (2002, pp. 223–247).

[36] For a particularly strong defence of democracy as a precondition for sustainability, see Hammond (2019)

[37] See, for instance, various contributions in Doherty and Geus (1996), Lafferty and Meadowcroft (1996), and Minteer and Taylor (2002), and Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg (2020) for a recent overview (also Schlosberg, Bäckstrand, and Pickering 2019).

[38] The work by Leopold referred to here is *The Land Ethic* (1949).

[39] In Doherty and Geus (1996), an important edited volume on democracy and green political theory, for instance, only a few contributions really push democracy in a properly non-anthropocentric direction at a conceptual level. See the contributions by Christoff (1996), Eckersley (1996a), and Mills (1996).

ory does not push conceptual frameworks so far as to move beyond the notion that democracy is something that pertains, at least primarily, to humans.

Since I turn to green political theory as a source for explicitly non-anthropocentric conceptualisations of democracy, this means that major strands of green political theory do not appear in my analysis. Of particular importance here is that liberal green theory (e.g. Arias-Maldonado 2012; Stephens 2016; Wissenburg 1998; Wissenburg and Levy 2004; see also Hay 2002, pp. 194–254), which remains explicitly committed to a modern liberal understanding of politics, is completely left out. What I have to say, then, has evidently little to no bearing on such theories.

To sum up, green democracy, as I use the concept, is a way—or attempt, rather—to do away with human-nature dualism at a political level. It is a way to politically establish a bridge between humans and nature by means of democracy. In the ensuing sections, I study the extent to which three theories of green democracy succeed in this endeavour. All three theories belong to the discourse of green political theory but represent different theoretical approaches present in that discourse. One draws primarily on ecological science and approaches nature in a generally realist fashion, one on post-modern and post-structuralist philosophies of the social construction of knowledge and approaches nature as a human construct, and one on what has become known as new materialism and which

tries to strike a balance between realist ecology and constructivist philosophy. For simplicity's sake, I refer to these three as ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism, which regarding the first also emphasises the difference between ecolog*ism* as political theory and ecolog*y* as natural science. Together, these three reflect major theoretical approaches in green political theory and amount to a good representation of how green democracy has broadly been conceptualised in the discourse of green political theory. Moreover, they also reflect overarching theoretical developments and chronological trends in green political theory. For whereas ecologism was predominant in the early days of the field, from the late 1970s (Hay 2002, pp. 26–71), social constructivism became a major force during the 1990s. For quite some time, realist-ecologist and constructivist approaches dominated the field of green theory in the social sciences (e.g. Biro 2005, pp. 3–58; Soper 1995), but recently new materialism has garnered a lot of interest as a ground for theoretical innovation.

In my examination of ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism, I primarily pay attention to the meaning they ascribe to democracy and how the bridge between humans and nature is constructed. In a deconstructive move, one which highlights presuppositions and implicit assumptions required for the theories to be meaningful and coherent without necessarily questioning that meaningfulness and coherence,[40] I also show that, in all three, there occurs what I refer to as a double short circuit. With

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[40] On this, fairly simple, take on deconstruction as a methodology and a way to read texts, see Culler (1982, pp. 85–89) and Derrida ([1967] 1982b, p. 6, [1971] 1982c, pp. 41–43). Note, the years in brackets in these citations refer to the works' original year of publication. For my inclusion of original year of publication for some but not all cited works, see footnote 1 on page 153. I discuss deconstruction more thoroughly in chapter 5, but as a philosophical concept rather than a method (see page 348).

this term, I wish to capture two things going on in these theories of green democracy. First, that the extension of democracy to the natural world ends up disqualifying democracy as it is conceptualised in the three theories and, second, that their approaches to bridge the gap between humans and nature presuppose a different relation between the two, one in which they are related in a unity of difference rather than a unity of identity.

Ecologism

As noted already, ecologist green political theory draws heavily on ecology. Particularly, it grounds much of its theoretical elaborations on natural scientific ecological understandings of nature and can generally be characterised as an intervention in political theory with the ambition to align political theorising with an ecological concept of nature. As Fox claims, 'science and ecophilosophy . . . should be – and need to be – allies' (1994, p. 212). His addition of the digression 'and need to be', is quite important here, for it hints at the normative character of ecologist political theory. The ecologist intervention is carried out in the name of sustainability; it aspires to contribute to more sustainable ways of living. In other words, it is itself a political project; it has the ambition to achieve something in terms of and by means of politics:

> The central problem that we face in developing a genuine green political theory is to work out how to situate ecological considerations within a coherent theoretical framework. This might, conceivably, require the formulation of a radically new theoretical approach in so far as virtually all mainstream political theory up to this day completely fails to take ecological consequences, never mind ecological theory, into account. . . .

> We are forced by the threat of environmental catastrophe to develop a coherent and relevant political theory if we are to understand the deep-seated causes of, what environmentalists consider to be, the present crisis. (Carter 1999, p. 23)

That ecologism is normative, and a political project is, perhaps, an obvious point to make, but one that nonetheless needs mentioning because of its implications.

Much ecologist theorising proceeds from the conceptually fundamental principle of ontological interconnectedness. As claimed by Commoner, the first 'law' of ecology states that 'everything is connected to everything else' (1971, p. 33). Or, as Morton elaborates: 'Everything is interconnected. This is *the ecological thought.* And the more we consider it, the more our world opens up' (2010, p. 1). According to this principle and the idea that everything is connected, things are what they are and become what they become because of their connections to and dependencies on other things. Thus, nature, as it is understood by ecologism, is characterised by *constitutive* interconnectedness and interdependence:

> The world is an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations in which there are no absolutely discrete entities and no absolute dividing lines between the living and the nonliving, the animate and the inanimate, or the human and the nonhuman. (Eckersley 1992, p. 49)

Fox summarises the ecologist understanding of the world in the following way:

> There is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence. In other words, the world simply is not divided up into independently existing subjects and objects, nor is there any bifurcation in reality between the human and the nonhuman realms. Rather all entities are constituted by their relationships. (Fox 1999, p. 157)

The constitutive, so-called 'intrinsic relations' (Naess 2005f, p. 7) of things draw the natural world together into one great entity; in ecology, 'the conception of one thing', as Callicott argues, 'necessarily involves the conception of others and so on, until the entire system is, in principle, implicated' (1986, p. 311). Ecologism, then, approaches nature holistically (Lucardie 1993); 'nature', Callicott continues, 'is a *structured, differentiated* whole' (1986, p. 313).[41] And ultimately, the whole is foundational in relation to the parts it contains:

> From an ecological perspective, relations are 'prior' to the things related, and the systemic wholes woven from these relations are 'prior' to their component parts. Ecosystemic wholes are 'logically prior' to their component species because the nature of the part is determined by its relationship to the whole. That is, more simply and concretely expressed, a species has the particular characteristics that it has because those characteristics result from its adaptation to a *niche* in an *ecosystem*. (ibid., p. 312)

Similarly, Mathews maintains that 'reality is not divisible into units', that 'individuals are … constituted by their relations with other individuals', and, therefore, that 'the system of relations as a whole … is given, or has ontological priority' in relation to individual beings (1996a, p. 74). Hence, since relations are prior to what they relate, individual beings are not ontologically fundamental. They are, instead, the transitory and spatiotemporally specific manifestations of what is fundamental, namely the relations that make up basic reality. Organisms, then, are 'moments' in the 'network' of nature

(Callicott 1986, p. 310, see also p. 314); they are, as Naess notes, 'knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations' (2005f, p. 7). Living beings, then, are existentially dependent on the whole they are situated in and belong to as parts: 'each living thing … is a dissipative structure, that is, it does not endure in and of itself but only as a result of the continual flow of energy in the system' (Morowitz 1989, p. 48). Hence, 'from this point of view, the reality of individuals is problematic because they do not exist per se but only as local perturbations in this universal energy flow' (ibid., p. 47).

This kind of theoretical reasoning was particularly influential in green political theory during the 1970s, '80s, and early '90s when it was challenged by constructivism. Despite nowadays not being as prevalent in green political theory as it once was, environmentalist discourses, in general, are, however, still very much influenced by ecologist ideas and contain concepts that are, if not explicitly ecologist, then at least in line with an ecologist understanding of nature and humans. For instance, the aforementioned notion of social-ecological systems (see page 21 above) certainly reverberates with an ecologist way of thinking, as does the continued attention to the idea of *Gaia*—the notion that the organic and inorganic parts of Earth form a single living system, like a superorganism; that humans are simply a part of that system, and; that life itself participates in the regulation of the planetary conditions of life.[42]

Ecologist thought approaches nature as something real and absolute. The natural world it designates as an interconnected

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[41] For an account of holism, and the idea of nature as a unity, within contemporary environmentalist discourses, with an emphasis on ecology, see Marshall (2002).

[42] On the concept of Gaia, see (Latour 2017; Lovelock 2000, 2006; Midgley 2001, 2007).

whole is a real thing with its own independent existence. In the context of political thought, the upshot of ecologist thought is the idea that politics occur inside and as part of the natural world. Since, according to ecologism, there are no dividing lines between subjective and objective reality, no 'bifurcation' between human and non-human reality, natural interconnectedness encompasses not only nature as something other to humans, but human beings as well. Humans, just like all other beings, are constituted by the relations they have with other things. There simply are no such things as atomistic human individuals (Wilshire and Cooper 2004, p. 304). As a consequence of the view that 'individual organisms … are less discrete objects than modes of a continuous, albeit differentiated whole, the distinction between self and other is blurred' (Callicott 1986, p. 313; see also Callicott 1985). Furthermore, this general characteristic of ecologist nature holds for the distinction between the human self and the natural other as well. As Naess states rhetorically, 'the skin is not our limit' (2005e, p. 202); the self is ecological, existentially tied up with a world extending beyond the individual material body.[43]

Ecologism does not make otherness and difference disappear from nature, but it makes it impossible to sharply distinguish what is other from the self, what is different from the same. Humans, as ecological selves, 'stand in a holistic relation – a relation of "oneness" – with the cosmos itself' (Mathews 1991, p. 147). In other words, ecologism conceptualises humans as being related to nature on the basis of identity; humans become what they are on the basis of their belonging to and their identification with the natural world:

> Holistic nesting of a self in a wider self-system means a relative identification with that system. Because the self stands in relations of ecological interdependence (direct or indirect) with the elements of that wider self, those elements (or its relations to them) are logically involved in its identity. Individuality in this framework is thus … a relative matter – it is a function of involvement in a wider system, the identity of which is implicated in the identities of each of its participant subsystems. (ibid., p. 144)

Indeed, this relation of identity goes both ways. If humans belong to nature—if, as Naess writes, 'we are a part of the ecosphere just as intimately as we are a part of our own society' (Naess 1989, p. 165)—then nature also belongs to humans. Nature is an extension of the self, a 'greater Self' (Mathews 1991, p. 155). Seen in this light, ecologist nature is replete with subjectivity. 'The world', as Callicott summarises this position, 'is, indeed, one's extended body and one's body is the precipitation, the focus of the world in a particular space-time locale' (1986, p. 314).

Basically, ecologists approach humans as simply a species among others. Politics is just a part of their existence and how they understand themselves; humans are animals who happen to understand themselves as political creatures and some of their interactions with each other as political interactions. Thus, as it is conceptualised by ecologists, politics is interiorly related to the nat-

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[43] For thorough elaborations of the concept of ecological selfhood, see Fox (1995) and Mathews (1991). For a briefer treatment, in which the concept is discussed in relation to sociological theories of the self, see Sutton (2004, pp. 97–114).

ural world; politics is part of nature, it belongs to it because human being in its entirety belongs to it.

Ecologists generally approach politics as something that has to do with meaning and the creation of meaning; politics is believed to be about determining what the world is, how humans fit into that world, and how they should live in it. Importantly, politics encompasses the possibility of *changing* all of that, the possibility of altering the meaning and the ordering of social existence. As Ophuls claims:

> to accept current political reality as not itself subject to radical change is to give away the game at the outset and render the situation hopeless by definition. Indeed, it must be understood that ultimately *politics is about the definition of reality itself*. (Ophuls 1977, p. 223)

Ophuls makes these claims as part of an argument about the importance of ecologist interventions in political theory and of redefining political reality in the light of ecological understandings of nature. Indeed, since ecologism is broadly an attempt to orient political thought in a certain direction—one that takes seriously the science of ecology—ecologism itself is arguably about creation of meaning and a practice of defining and redefining political concepts. From this, in turn, it follows that ecologism itself is political; ecologism is, given the understanding of politics as creation of meaning and determination of reality, itself part of the same political reality it attempts to make sense of and reconfigure. Thus, ecologism is

at a general level about political change and changing political order from within; ecologism is an instance of politics transforming itself. This also suggests that politics, as it is understood by ecologists, has the ability to transform itself; '*Politics*', Ophuls continues with a Bismarckian paraphrase, '*is the art of creating new possibilities*' (ibid., p. 223).

More specifically, the discursive content of ecologism is very much centred around value, rights, and—to a lesser degree—the institutional arrangements promoting certain values and safeguarding and affirming the rights of the subjects of political order.[44] Predominately, it emphasises the moral and ethical dimensions of political order.

Concerning value, there is a widespread defence among ecologists of the attribution of non-anthropocentric intrinsic value, meaning that not only humans are valuable in and of themselves. Other parts of nature are equally valuable in their own right.[45]

The rationale behind the ecologist defence of non-anthropocentric intrinsic value and its emphasis on rights largely has to do with how ecologism approaches differences in nature. In the interconnected world of ecologism, there are no qualitative divides, no absolute limits compartmentalising the world or the things within it (Eckersley 1992, pp. 49–50). Instead, differences have the form of degrees; nature is a gradualist structure in which an arbitrary element is characterised by this or that quality only to a greater, lesser, or equal degree compared to any and all other elements. On the basis

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[44] For examples of the latter, see Christoff (1996), Dryzek (1996), and Mills (1996). There is also a revised version of Dryzek (1996) in Dryzek (2000, pp. 140–161)

[45] The value of concern for most ecologists is moral and existential value rather than, say, economic value, which is not to say that there is a complete disregard of economic value among ecologists. In political theory, for instance, Goodin's so-called green theory of value contains a noteworthy and influential attempt to engage with economic theories of value from a point of view that stresses the intrinsic value of nature (1992).

of this understanding of the composition of the world, humans can be, and are, distinguished from other things by way of the extent to which they display certain qualities. Humans are, so to speak, special in some ways but not in others. Other things are special in their respective ways (Eckersley 1992, p. 50; Fox 1995, p. 15). According to this line of reasoning, there is no legitimate and consistent ground for setting humans apart from other things in nature and valuing the human species and its 'species-specific differentia' (Rodman 1980, p. 54) higher than other natural beings. Such valuations are the outcomes of so-called 'human chauvinism' (Routley and Routley 1979) and are indicative of 'our failure', as Rodman claims, to respect other beings

> for having their own existence, their own character and potentialities, their own forms of excellence, their own integrity, their own grandeur. (Rodman 1977, p. 94)

Concerning the issue of well-being, this understanding of the world furnishes the notion that to treasure human well-being while disregarding the well-being of others is simply inconsistent and untenable given what the world actually looks like beyond anthropocentric misconceptions. Thus, purportedly there are no naturally existing hierarchies (e.g. Devall and Sessions 1985, p. 68); the world is, in a sense, flat. It is characterised by what Naess calls 'biospherical' or

'ecological egalitarianism' (2005f, pp. 7–8; see also e.g. 1995, pp. 117, 222–224).[46] Importantly, ecological egalitarianism and the absence of hierarchies in nature means that intrinsic value is not only possessed by natural beings in general; all such beings have an *equal* intrinsic value; the value any one thing has by and in itself is equal vis-à-vis the value of any other thing (Devall and Sessions 1985, pp. 67–70). As Naess notes:

> living beings have a right (or intrinsic or inherent value, or value in themselves) to live and blossom that is the *same* for all. If we speak of differences in rights or value, we do not speak of the rights or value I have in mind. It is not meaningful to speak of *degrees* of intrinsic or inherent value. (Naess 2005a, p. 68)

Proceeding from such a notion of equal intrinsic value, many ecologists importantly conclude that all beings in nature have a basic and equal right to life (e.g. Devall and Sessions 1985, pp. 67–70; Fox 1999; Naess 2005a,c,d,f; see also French 1995).[47]

The basic right to life is further specified as a right to live a life of high quality. It is not just about being; it is about well-being (Devall and Sessions 1985, p. 70). Proceeding from the works of Naess, this notion of a basic right to high-quality life is often couched in terms of an equal 'right to live and blossom' (e.g. Naess 1989, pp. 166–169, 2005f, p. 8), or most importantly as a right to self-realisation (Devall and Sessions

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[46]The theme of hierarchy and ecology is otherwise most thoroughly explored by Bookchin (1982), who approaches hierarchical relations between groups of people and between humans and nature as a result and aspect of historical social development.

[47]As noted by Fox, the concept of life in this discursive context is of very broad definition and includes, for instance, such notions that a river can be alive (1995, p. 117). In one of his many writings, Naess elaborates on the concept of life thusly: 'The intuitive concept of "life" (or "living being") sometimes includes a river, a landscape, a wilderness, a mountain, and an arctic "waste." The intuition has a little, but not much, to do with biology or neurophysiology. Intrinsic value, as posited by the intuition, is influenced, but not decisively, by "biological news": for example, news about the whale's nervous system complexity being comparable to that of human beings' (Naess 2005a, pp. 69–70; see also e.g. Naess 2005d).

1985, pp. 66–67; Naess 1989, p. 166, 2005d, pp. 52–54), or put differently as a right to realise oneself as a subject (Mathews 1996a, pp. 77–79).

The inclusion of self-realisation in the right to life—and the general emphasis on self-realisation in ecologist thought (e.g. Jonge 2004, pp. 35–59; Eckersley 1992; Fox 1990; Mathews 1991, pp. 147–154; Naess 1987, 1989, pp. 164–176, 196–210, 2005b)—indicates that the right to life contains a temporal dimension. It encompasses the unfolding of being over time; it is about achieving things, fulfilling potentialities and possibilities, and following different paths (Eckersley 1996a, p. 217, 1996b, pp. 176–177, 181; Naess 1989, pp. 166–169, 2005b, pp. 291–292; Devall and Sessions 1985, pp. 67, 126). This, in turn, implies that the right to life includes the right to change; the right shared by all natural beings consists, at least partially, of a right to change what you are, to become something else. What you are in the present, according to this line of reasoning, does not determine what you might be in the future. It is worth emphasising that the self to be realised here is the ecological self extending beyond the singular material body and including the broader natural world within it. Ultimately, then, given the blurring of the dividing line between self and other, ecologism implies that all of nature has a fundamental right to become different.

This is a crucial implication. For ecologism advances non-anthropocentric democracy with reference to the potential of democracy to provide the means for self-realisation; green democracy is advocated because of its prospects for ultimately guaranteeing the right to self-realisation of all of nature, human as well as non-human (e.g. Eckersley 1996a,b). Implicitly, then, green

democracy of this ecologist variety is generally about change; couched in terms of self-realisation, democracy is about becoming something else, becoming other. Not only that, self-realisation as a basis for the legitimisation of democracy means that democracy is about change originating in what is being changed; democracy is about self-change, change brought about by one-self.

The predominant emphasis on moral issues in ecologism has ideas about inclusion in political order and membership in political communities being expressed largely in terms of moral worth (e.g. Eckersley 1992, 1996a; Mathews 1996a; Mills 1996; see also Lucardie 1993). If, the overall argument goes, something is worthy of moral consideration, then it is, in principle, a political being and ought to be considered a member of political community and by that part of political order as a subjective element. Hence, since moral considerability is based on intrinsic value, anything that has intrinsic value is, in principle, included in political order and considered to be a political being. Thus, ecologism seeks to extend democracy as far as possible beyond humans on moral terms:

> A radical democratic and ecological objective would tend ... to maximise the recognition of political relationships and subjects and to recognise the plurality and pervasiveness of power relationships, as appearing for example ... in relationships with nature and animals. (Plumwood 1996, p. 156)

> Radical democratic virtues can be based on the values inherent in participation in a political community as well as on ... care ... yielding a conception of responsibility for the Other that is not just human-centred in application. Communicative and democratic virtues include attentiveness and openness to the Other, toler-

ance, empathy, respect for the Other's difference, preparedness to share the means of life, to negotiate and accommodate needs with the other, generosity to and respect for the Other and recognition of their freedom and agency, and responsibility for one's life impacts on the other. All of these concepts can be applied directly to nature and animals to recognise them as part of the political and moral community. (Plumwood 1996, pp. 159–160)

This, then, is how ecologism means to bridge the divide between humans and nature politically. Since intrinsic value is not limited to humans, political being extends to the natural world, or—as ecologists would have it—to the *non-human* natural world. The wrecking power of moral worth tears down the wall between humans and nature, and humans and nature are brought together by virtue of their intrinsic value and their ability to realise themselves, and thus by their ability to change. Because 'self-realization is a function of ecological interconnectedness' (Mathews 1991, p. 143), human emancipation should be seen as being nested within a larger ecological framework (Eckersley 1992, p. 70). Self-realisation among humans happens together with other parts of the ecological world to which they belong; it happens with nature as part of nature.

Importantly, however, ecologism does not advocate the actual participation of non-human nature in political matters such as decision-making. Indeed, to paraphrase Stone's seminal work on legal rights of nature, one could say that ecologists maintain that 'trees should have standing' (Stone 1974), but they should not hold seats in parliament. Or, as Christoff puts it, 'fish cannot

raise their fins to vote' (1996, p. 156), which allegedly makes their participation in political action rather difficult.

Instead of inclusion manifested in active political participation, non-human nature is included indirectly in political order through the representation by humans. According to ecologists, humans should act as ecological stewards, trustees, or guardians of nature, securing its self-realisation through their actions (e.g. ibid., pp. 156–159). There are some arguments present in ecologist discourse that such stewardship could be realised institutionally, for instance through statutory bodies (Eckersley 1996a, pp. 224–226; Mills 1996, p. 106), or through legal frameworks prioritizing universal ecological values, such as the value of biodiversity for life in general, over particular ones, such as the right of individual humans to deplete natural resources for their short-term benefits (Christoff 1996, p. 161). However, for the most part, ecologists argue for the need for widespread and profound awareness of humankind's place in nature and of the relations that make natural reality what it is. What is needed for entrenched human stewardship of nature that will allow for nature—human as well as non-human—to realise itself is the emergence of an ecological consciousness or an ecological culture, pivotal for which is an ecologist understanding of nature.[48] Ecological consciousness and culture, the argument goes, provide the foundation upon which the human-nature divide can be bridged, upon which humans can represent nature in the political world so that the former is free to realise itself.

Nature, then, is included in the political

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[48] For examples of this line of argument regarding the importance of ecological consciousness and culture, see Devall and Sessions (1985), Eckersley (1992), Fox (1995), and Plumwood (1996, 2002).

world indirectly, with humans serving as its proxy.[49] It is in the minds of humans that ecologism wants to build the foundation for the bridge between humans and nature. 'Sustainable living must be prefaced by sustainable thinking' (Dobson 1990, p. 140). Separation is to be overcome first and foremost by humans realising that they belong to a larger natural world. Thus, the ecologist stress on self-realisation is not only about the self becoming different; it is also about the self realising what the true state of things in nature is and the relation between humans and the rest of nature (Devall and Sessions 1985, pp. 66–67; Fox 1995, pp. 197–268; Mathews 1991, pp. 147–163; Naess 1985, p. 76). Moreover, since ecologists hold that all of nature is connected in a single great whole, such a process of realisation and the concomitant human identification with nature would, if properly followed through, eventually lead to an identification with all of nature, an understanding of the self according to which the greater ecological self in its ultimate manifestation includes the natural world as a whole:

> When humans investigate and see through their layers of anthropocentric self-cherishing, a most profound change in consciousness begins to take place.

> Alienation subsides. The human is no longer an outsider, apart. Your humanness is then recognized as being merely the most recent stage in your existence…you start to get in touch with yourself as mammal, as vertebrate, as a species only recently emerged from the rain forest. As the fog of amnesia disperses, there is a transformation in your relationship to other species, and in your commitment to them….

'I am protecting the rain forest' develops to 'I am part of the rain forest protecting myself. I am that part of the rain forest recently emerged into thinking.'

> What a relief then! The thousands of years of imagined separation are over and we begin to recall our true nature….

> [A]s the implications of evolution and ecology are internalized and replace the outmoded anthropocentric structures in your mind, there is an identification with all life. Then follows the realization that the distinction between 'life' and 'lifeless' is a human construct. Every atom in this body existed before organic life emerged 4,000 million years ago. Remember our childhood as minerals, as lava, as rocks? (Seed 1985, p. 243)[50]

From the foundation in the human mind, the bridge between humans and nature should, according to ecologists, extent towards human practice as well. Ecological consciousness, it is argued, is associated with certain experiences and forms of interaction between human and non-human nature, including communicative processes generating knowledge and understanding of nature, its intricacies, and how it can realise itself (Dryzek 1996; Mathews 1996a; Plumwood 1996). It is in and through such forms of interactions that the particular rights of natural things can surface as human knowledge. Such interactions, therefore, are crucial for the emergence and functioning of green democracy. They are, in sum, the experiences through which green democracy is constituted; green democracy arises from the experiences humans have with the rest of nature.

So far, it has been shown that ecologists understand political order—a concept

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[49] On proxy representation in environmental politics, see also Dobson (1996b), and Ball (2006) on indirect and representative green democracy.

[50] For more examples of statements such as this one, see Lucardie (1993, p. 23) and the literature referred to there.

that for analytical purposes can be broadly defined as the arrangement of life lived in common—as being about determining what reality is; political order is generally conceived of as being about the creation of meaning. This entails determining both what political reality is and what it is not. Hence, political order is equally about the creation of the meaning of political order itself and of the meaning of that which is not political order, what the reality which falls outside the arrangement of life lived in common is. Thus, political order entails the creation of meaning *in general*.

It has also been shown that democracy is conceptualised in ecologism as having to do with self-realisation. Or, put differently, democracy is about change brought about by what is changing. Put in terms of the analytical concept of political order, democracy is conceptualised as an arrangement of life lived in common that allows for that same arrangement to change. Furthermore, democracy here also denotes a political order in which such change originates among those whose lives are being arranged, something that highlights that democratic political order consists of the subjects of change; it is populated by what is colloquially referred to as a political community. To be a subject of self-realisation is, in principle, to be a member of a political community.

Further still, in the discussion of green democracy as something that emerges in the interaction between humans and non-human nature, it has been shown that ecologists see democracy as emerging experientially; it emerges in the interactions among the subjects of change. Since political order consists of members of a political community, democracy is approached here, in general terms, as an experience of order and oneself as a

member of that order—and, it should be added, of other members of order. This experience, it is worth emphasising, entails both the meaning of political order and the meaning of reality in general. Democracy, then, is a particular subjective experience of the world.

Taken together, all of this points to democracy being understood as an experience of order according to which that order and—since that order consists of political subjects—oneself as a member of that order *can change*. Moreover, according to the democratic experience, order and self can change by virtue of the self being a member of political community; order and self can change because of what the self does as part of political order. In a democratic political order, then, change comes from within; democratic political order changes itself.

Now, if the general notion of political order as the creation of meaning is added to this understanding of democracy, the result is a concept of democracy according to which the world in general, not just political order or political reality, can change in the sense that its meaning can become different. The world can be otherwise as a result of what one does as a member of political order; it can become something else as a consequence of political action. What you will be and what the world will be in the future is not determined by what you and the world are in the present.

This concept of democracy rests on four presuppositions regarding political order; it assumes that political order displays four interrelated properties. For democracy is an experience according to which political order is self-creative, lacks essence, has a contingent future, and consists of members with agency.

GREEN DEMOCRACY – ECOLOGISM

The first of these properties follows straightforwardly from the experience that order provides itself with meaning. In doing so, it determines what it is *as* political order. The democratic experience takes hold of and explicates the understanding of political order as something that constitutes itself. This self-constitutive ability of order can, for instance, be conceptualised by means of systems theory and the notion of autopoiesis (Eckersley 1992, pp. 60–61, 63, 70–71, 1996b, pp. 188–189; Fox 1995, pp. 169–173; Mathews 1991, pp. 91–116, footnote on p. 173).[51] But one can also frame it as a relation of cause and effect where order is an effect of itself; order has no cause external to itself. It causes itself.

Second, since democratic political order determines its own meaning and is the effect of itself as cause, it evidently follows that its being is not limited by any external factors. In fact, it is not limited by anything at all. Hence, it can become anything in the sense that it can, in principle, mean whatever the members of political community come up with; order has no essential meaning. This, in turn, suggests that political order has no essence at all; it does not have a positive substance defining what it is and giving rise to whatever properties it has otherwise. Put in somewhat different terms, political order has no structure around which it unfolds, things happen, or actions take place. Rather,

any kind of structure is the emergent result of what is going on inside political order; structures are always the result of how order functions. Take capitalism, for instance. According to the concept of political order presupposed by the ecologist concept of democracy, a democracy can be characterised by a capitalist economic structure, but that structure is ultimately rooted in certain actions and relations of production and exchange and is decomposable to those actions and relations. In a democratic political order, act is logically prior to structure in the sense that structure analytically resolves into function, whereas function does not resolve into structure. This is not to say, however, that structures are not real or nonsensical as elements in discourse. Rather, it suggests that structure exists only in relation to function; the structure of political order is what the agents make of it. A society of any specific form, as Carter notes, is constituted by individuals relating to each other, which means that 'a society just *is* interrelated individuals' (Carter 1990, p. 37).[52]

Third, since order creates itself, has no essence, and can become anything at all as a result of its creative power, its future forever remains contingent, meaning that order need not be this or that in the future because of what it is today. Instead, it can be completely otherwise; political reality does not evolve according to a fixed path. Im-

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[51] I return briefly to the notion of autopoiesis in chapter 5 when discussing the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann (see page 376).

[52] Indeed, it could be pointed out that this take on structure and essence sits rather uneasily with the ecologist realist and holistic relational understanding of nature. But this objection can be met either by ecologist arguments on their own, on the grounds that ecologism primarily emphasises the whole of interrelationships in nature and approaches the system of such relations as fundamental, not nature per se. In other words, it is generic constitutive interrelationship in general that gives nature its particular character, its structure. Or, without coming to the defence of ecologism, it can also be met simply by noting that the resolving of structure into function is a component of the concept of political order that the ecologist notion of democracy *presupposes* and not something that is explicitly defined, let alone advocated, by ecologists themselves.

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portantly, since politics is about the creation of meaning in general, the concept of democracy as it appears in ecologism presupposes the contingency of the future *in general*; the democratic experience is an experience in which the future as such is not fixed. It is an experience of the world according to which what the world will be in the future is not determined; the present does not dictate the future. Instead, the world of the future is there for the taking by the subjects of that experience.

Lastly, since political order consists of the members of political community, and since it creates itself and determines the meaning of the world in general, it follows that its members have agency, meaning that those who populate a political order participate— and they are the only ones to participate— in the self-creation of order and the determination of what the world means; the members of political community are *active*, and they act by virtue of being such members. In other words, it is as *political* beings that those members act politically. This is the subjective dimension of political reality; political order consists of political subjects, and it is *constituted* by those subjects. Hence, the self-creative power of political order stems from its subjective elements; the power to create meaning and determine what the world is is a power located in those who populate the political world; the determinate world of meaning is created by political subjects. Correspondingly, the power to create meaning is a constitutive power, a power to bring into existence. Thus, it is the creative power of political subjectivity that provides order with its constitutive principle, which indicates that political order provides itself with such a constitutive principle; again, political order

is self-creative.

These four properties of political order presupposed by ecologist democracy can be viewed as components of the very same concept of political order. They are the elements by which that concept of political order is composed. Since democracy hinges on political order containing those elements, it follows that the concept of democracy also presupposes them. Ultimately, they are required for the concept of democracy to make sense; they are conditions required of the democratic experience. Indeed, this is not to say that these four components are the *only* ones required for democracy to make sense. Nor does the above-outlined conceptualisation of democracy as a particular experience of political order imply that democracy is solely about the possibility to change. What it does imply, however, is that this experience is a vital aspect of the ecologist concept of democracy and that the four conceptual components of political order are necessary for that concept to make sense. Without order being self-creative, lacking an essence, having a contingent future, and consisting of agentic members, democracy, as it is conceptualised in ecologism, breaks apart and becomes discursively nonsensical.

There is, however, a major problem with democracy as part of ecologist political theory. It is disqualified by ecologist thought itself. Ecologism does not adhere to its own concept of democracy, and the reason for this is grounded in how ecologism bridges the alleged divide between humans and nature. The notion of democracy as an experience of the world and of oneself as being able to change as a result of what one does as a political being is not compatible with the bridging of the human-nature divide by means of human trustees represent-

ing nature in the political world. This notion of democracy entails the understanding of political subjects having the power to create meaning *by themselves*; to determine on their own what the world is. To create meaning, in turn, entails the ability to represent; a subjective determination of the world is a particular representation of the world. This is exactly what is denied nature by ecologist political thought and its approach to democracy. Nature is not allowed to represent its own world. That is instead something humans are supposed to do in their role as nature's trustees. Thus, nature's power to represent—which it should have by virtue of being a political being—is transferred to humankind.

What happens here, in general terms, is that some members of the political community are denied their power to create meaning, and that happens through a reformulation of that power in such a way that other members represent it. Hence, representative power becomes represented power; the locus of creativity in political order is displaced. However, importantly and in principle, this cannot be done. The power to represent cannot be represented. That would require an antecedent primordial instance of representation, but what is at issue in the political creation of meaning is the very instance of representation. The power to determine what the world is is not itself determined; constitutive power is not part of the world it constitutes. In other words, it is not immanent to that world, which means that the self-creative ability of political order does not truly reside within that order. As a quality of order, it has the contradictory property of not belonging to what it qualifies. However, neither does it belong to something else; political order is still *self*-cre-

ative. Instead, it is a condition of possibility that exists only through what it conditions, and it is visible only by what it brings about.

These difficulties have far-reaching consequences for the democratic character of political order. As the power to determine what the world is is displaced, those who are denied that power can no longer change themselves, nor the world of which they are part; the non-human parts of the political world can no longer change what they are nor can they change that world. For them, the future will not be otherwise because of anything they do as political beings. Indeed, nature can certainly change as a result of humans changing their representation of nature since nature can be represented in a myriad of ways, which implies change of meaning. Nevertheless, one aspect remains unaltered among all of these ways, and that is nature as a kind of being whose political subjectivity must be represented. Nature being in need of representation is a constant in ecologist green democracy, and it follows, therefore, that humans will always have to represent nature. Thus, not only nature but humans as well are denied change. If nature does not change, neither will humans, since they are part of the same world. As Botkin writes:

> Life and the environment are one thing, not two, and people, as all life, are immersed in the one system. When we influence nature, we influence ourselves; when we change nature, we change ourselves. (Botkin 1990, p. 188)

Indeed, if humans change as they change nature, as Botkin argues, because of their belonging to the same system, it follows that they do not change as long as nature remains the same. As long as nature is conceptualised as having intrinsic value manifesting itself as

a right to self-realisation and is part of the political world based on that right but relying on humans for representation, the democratic experience of the world and of oneself as being able to become otherwise does not emerge.

This conundrum does not surface because of some peripheral circumstances in ecologist discourse or because of poor theorising. It surfaces as a result of the very ambition to do green political theory by drawing on the science of ecology. Ecology invests nature with a particular meaning, and according to the concept of democracy ecologism advances that is exactly what democracy is about. Science and scientific statements, according to this latter view, are not separated or safeguarded from politics. Thus, ecology, which ecologism aspires to deploy as a basis for a preferred ordering of political reality, actually exists as part of that reality. As part of political reality, it should be susceptible to change as political practice determines what the world in general is. However, should this be the case, ecologism would lose the ground upon which it builds green democracy. So instead, the truthfulness of the ecological conceptualisation of the natural world must simply be posited while the conceptualisation of politics as the creation of meaning is being ignored. Take, for instance, such claims as these:

> Nature is not passive, inert, and plastic. Instead, this world is truly alive, and pervaded with meanings. (Dryzek 1996, p. 20)

> If we are to understand our own biological dependencies, we require natural systems as a norm, to inform us of the biological laws which we transgress at our peril. (Godfrey-Smith 1979, p. 311)

> The kind of culture that enables us … to flourish as human beings is precisely the culture that understands and represents our interconnectedness with Nature. The reason for this is simply that, on the present view, *this is the way we are*. To represent us as anything less than this is in fact to *misrepresent* us to ourselves, and hence to interfere with our possibilities of self-realization. A central function of culture is … to provide a symbolic representation of the world. This representation may be more or less figurative, more or less universal, but if it is misleading or false in its presentation of the way things are, then neither society nor individual can flourish. Sooner or later they will stub their toe on reality, their predictions and expectations will be disappointed. (Mathews 1991, pp. 156–157)

Such arguments, of which ecologism is teeming, convey natural reality as having a determinate, ecological form, a certain meaning defined irrespective of political practice. This very idea, that such definitions are possible at all, straightforwardly goes against the notion that 'politics is about the definition of reality itself' (Ophuls 1977, p. 223, see also page 49 above). Thus, given its emphasis on ecology, ecologism ultimately does not convey the image of humans creating a meaningful world, despite adhering to a concept of democracy in which this image is a necessary component. Instead, humans, according to ecologism, discover meaning and meaningfulness as they realise their place in nature (Mathews 1991, pp. 147–163).

In the end, the difficulties ecologism experiences with affirming subjective creativity in the political world while bridging a perceived divide between humans and nature result in the complete disqualification of democracy. The four components of political order outlined above as necessary for democracy to make sense are nowhere to be seen once the locus of political creativity has

been displaced. The members of political community are denied their agentic capacity when this line of reasoning is drawn to its very end. It has also been shown that the future is no longer contingent; the future will always entail a nature that must be represented and humans representing it. Thus, political order receives a perennial structure defining how it functions and broadly stakes out the terrain for what is possible to do politically. In this way, it receives essential qualities. Lastly, political order is no longer self-creative since those who make up political order are denied the very power to transform and create that order.

Hence, political order no longer displays the four qualities: being self-creative, lacking essence, having a contingent future, and consisting of agentic members. This indicates that the democratic experience cannot materialise; it is altogether absent from the world. Moreover, it no longer appears that the world could be otherwise, nor the self. Instead, they appear to be necessary and to remain what they are of necessity. Instead of an experience according to which things can change, ecologism ends up with an experience according to which things must remain what they are. Thus, the conceptualisation of green democracy in ecologism actually ends up with the opposite of the notion of democracy it sets out to advance. Ecologist green democracy, then, ends up being something different than democracy, something else, something other. It ends up being the other of democracy.

In addition to its difficulties with adhering to the concept of democracy being advocated, ecologism is also burdened by the problem of presupposing a view of nature and of how humans relate to it that contradicts the view it seeks to accommodate,

ground itself on, and affirm. It presupposes a different relation than the one of a bridge connecting two riverbanks sharing a basic identity. Instead of a bridge between humans and nature and a unity of identity, there is something else brewing under its discursive surface. As with its problems related to the concept of democracy, this is not a peripheral problem easily fixed. It stems from the fundamentals of ecologism as a discourse, and just as its problems with democracy, it relates to ecologism's connection to the science of ecology and what role science is meant to play for political theory.

To delineate how this problem manifests itself discursively, I will take a closer look at Eckersley's seminal work *Environmentalism and political theory* (1992), already referred to quite a few times.

I have already delineated the ecologist notion that science and 'ecophilosophy' should be allies (see page 46 above). Whereas there are those who straightforwardly want simply to derive normative principles for political order from how things are in nature (Meyer 2001, p. 1), Eckersley is much more attentive to the difficulties associated with the role of science in political theory. Nevertheless, she still ends up with conflicting positions on this very issue (Biro 2005, pp. 15–17).

On the one hand, she defends the relevance, importance, and practice of political theory against outright scientism on the basis that science cannot justify moral principles:

> appealing to the authority of nature (as known by ecology) is no substitute for ethical argument. Ecological science cannot perform the task of normative justification in respect of an ecocentric political theory because it does not tell us why we *ought* to orient ourselves toward the world in a particular way. It can in-

form, inspire, and redirect our ethical and political theorizing, but it cannot justify it. *That* is the task of ethical and political theory. (Eckersley 1992, p. 59)

On the other hand, Eckersley maintains that natural science is still equipped with the power to disqualify normative propositions. For instance, she delineates a connection between the so-called 'Newtonian worldview' and the idea that nature is made up of discrete fundamental building blocks and liberal democracy and its foundation in the autonomous human individual (ibid., p. 51). According to this reading, the autonomous human individual is for liberal democracy what the indivisible atom is for Newtonian nature, with the view of nature serving a legitimising function for political order. But as the natural sciences have disclosed the ecological character of the natural world and its subatomic composition, they have also undermined many aspects of the Newtonian view of nature. By that, Eckersley argues, the legitimising foundation for liberal democracy and modern political order has been swept away. This, in turn, *ought* to have resulted in them receiving a fatal blow. In other words, science, according to this view, has in principle the ability to disqualify outdated political ideas and beliefs:

> A general familiarity with new developments in science is important to an ecocentric perspective (the employment of outmoded concepts of nature *does* serve to detract from the force and credibility of ecopolitical argument)…. [A] general familiarity with new developments in science by social and political theorists can enhance our understanding of the world around us, improve the general grounding and credibility of a political theory,

> and provide the basis for challenging opposing worldviews on the grounds that the assumptions on which they are based have been shown to be erroneous. (ibid., pp. 59–60)

Thus, even if science cannot positively justify normative positions, it can at least tell which ones are wrong (Biro 2005, pp. 16–17), and by that, it is nevertheless able to act as an authority on moral issues. An evident ambiguity arises, then, because justifying political matters is said to be both a task exclusive to political theory and something that science can perform.

At base, this ambiguity is related to the ambition of ecologism to prioritise ontological questions over political and normative ones and align political theory with an ecological concept of nature. On this issue, Eckersley writes:

> In terms of fundamental priorities, an ecocentric approach regards the question of our proper place in the rest of nature as logically prior to the question of what are the most appropriate social and political arrangements for human communities. That is, the determination of social and political questions must proceed from, or at least be consistent with, an adequate determination of this more fundamental question. (Eckersley 1992, p. 28)[53]

Indeed, this ambition could easily lend support to ideas about opportunities to derive political principles directly from scientific statements about the world. It is in the attempts to avoid such ideas and safeguard the legitimacy of the practice of political theory that sometimes science is presented as being able to ground normative propositions and principles negatively, while at

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[53] For similar arguments, see Bartlett (1986), Dryzek (1987, pp. 58–60, 204), Kraft (1977, p. 179), and Ophuls (1977, p. 7).

other times, political theory alone is said to have the prerogative to do this kind of work. That ambiguous stance towards science and ethico-political issues, I maintain furthermore, emerges because neither of these two positions is consistent with the idea of green democracy advanced by ecologist political theory and grounded in the principle of natural constitutive interconnectedness, with a belonging of the political world to the natural, or with a relation of identity between humans and nature.

If it is accepted that science is enough for justifying political order, there is no need for political theory. This would arguably disqualify ecologist political thought altogether as a legitimate and meaningful practice.[54] Thus, if ecologism is to assert itself as a valid intellectual and political endeavour, this position cannot be fully endorsed.

On the other hand, if it is maintained that it is *not* possible to derive political principles from a natural scientific understanding of nature, it is also implied that there is a rupture in the constitutive interconnectedness of the political and the natural since this position presupposes that political principles and their intelligibility are separated from the natural world. Thus, ecologism seems to presuppose that political practice—ecologism being itself a political project—is separate from nature. In fact, the very need to engage in political theorising and for an ecologist intervention in political theory suggests a separation between politics and nature.[55]

Thus, these two critical remarks indicate either that politics does not fully belong to the natural world or that nature is, in fact, not an interrelated all-encompassing struc-

ture. Since the latter alternative disqualifies ecologism altogether, the former seems to be the lesser evil to accept. Hence, beneath ecologism's statements regarding the political world being part of nature, it seems reasonable to insert the presupposition that this is not the case. If ecologism is not to disqualify itself entirely as a legitimate endeavour and meaningful discursive practice, it seems forced to commit to an understanding of politics as not fully belonging to the natural world, that it is separate from it, and that political being differs from natural being. Since political theorising is itself political according to ecologism and part of the political practice it is concerned with, ecologism itself appears to be separate from ecological nature. Engendered by the refusal to derive normative and political principles from natural science directly, ecologist political thought seems required to presuppose that ecologism itself is separate from the nature of which it claims to be a part.

Furthermore, the claim that questions regarding humankind's place in the world are logically prior to questions about political order is itself evidently a political statement, seeing that it is part of political discourse that, again, belongs to the political world it theorises. Therefore, the claim itself belongs to the kind of questions it designates as logically secondary. Also, given that the political theory this claim helps to ground is not subjected to the constitutive interconnectedness of nature, after all, it seems like the claim cannot be validated or validate itself within the discourse of which it is part. For the claim and the associated ambition to align political theory to an ecological under-

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[54] See Meyer (2001, p. 1), who makes a similar argument.

[55] Soper (1995, pp. 38–41) makes a similar argument about the presence of an underlying dualism in ecologist thought.

standing of nature to be meaningful, there must first be a political practice not fully belonging to nature articulating that claim and that understanding of nature. Considering how fundamental these issues are for the discourse of ecologist political theory, pretty much every concept in that discourse seems to rely on such a political practice. It turns out that the principle of natural interconnectedness, as a concept in political theory, does not itself belong to the interconnectedness of the world it describes; ecologism itself is separate from the interrelated natural whole to which it claims to belong.

So, basically, ecologism seems unable to accept deriving normative and political principles directly from nature as made intelligible by the natural sciences without calling into question its legitimate existence. In a world where such derivation would be possible, there would be no need for political theory. Hence, ecologism seems forced to accept as a presupposition that politics is somehow separate from the natural world, that there is a qualitative difference between the political and the natural marked as a rupture of interconnectedness. It presupposes that politics and nature are not the same in the sense that they belong to the same whole. By that, they are also different from each other. Thus, they do not share a basic identity; they do not form a unity of identity. The difference between the two, however, is not a simple duality; the political world and the natural world are not separated by a wall making them independent of each other. Politics is not fully dislocated from nature; there is still influence between the two. Even if political order does not belong to nature, it is still *directed towards it;* political order exists only insofar as it renders the world meaningful. For instance, it can exist by determ-

ining the world to be a great interconnected whole in which relations are ontologically prior to the things they relate. Or, to take another example, it can exist by determining humans to be separated from nature. In other words, since political order—including ecologist political theory—is first and foremost a practice of determining meaning; it is always directed towards that which it makes meaningful; politics makes the world meaningful, and in order for it to do so, it requires a world; the determination of meaning requires that there is something to determine. At the most abstract level, this something is only something different from determination; it is purely that which becomes determined. Thus, politics presupposes something different from itself, something other, something that exists outside the practice of determining meaning. The presupposed outside world cannot have any other qualities than being outside of political order because to the extent that politics is the practice of determining meaning in general, that which it provides with meaning can have no positive content prior to its doings. Should it have positive content on its own, politics would be nothing; it would amount to nothing. Thus, the nature presupposed by politics cannot be the nature described by ecology or any other positively defined nature; the natural world presupposed by political order is an empty world, a void, a world bereft of qualities, ecological or otherwise. Nature before politics simply is. However, despite lacking positive content, it is still something. It is a world of pure difference, a world the only defining mark of which is being different from the determination of meaning. Moreover, given that political practice is subjective, that which is different from it is evidently non-subject-

ive. Or, more simply put, the nature presupposed by politics is a purely objective world, a world of thingliness but without determinate things, a material world without form. In this sense, it is also a natural world; it is natural by virtue of being objective.

Lastly, to the extent that subjective practice is at least associated with humans—which seems to be a fairly reasonable assumption to make even regarding ecologism since ecologist political theory is at least practised by human beings—human being is associated with the inside of political order. Thus, when political order is said to be different and separate from nature, humans are also said to be different and separate from nature.

Thus, ecologism presupposes that the political world of humans does not belong to nature. However, since the political world directs itself towards the world beyond it, their relation is not one of complete separation and independence, of disunity. Instead, there is still a unity between humans and nature, but it is a unity of difference in which one related party does not belong to the other; humans and nature are related by virtue of their difference; one always comes with the other, but they do not share a fundamental identity.

So then, to summarise this section on ecologism, it can be concluded that in its take on green democracy, democracy is conceptualised as an experience of order according to which that order and oneself as a member of it can change. This concept, in turn, rests on a notion of political order that includes as conceptual components notions that political order is self-creative, lacks essence, has a contingent future, and consists of agentic members. Defending nature's intrinsic value and right to self-realisation, ecologism maintains that nature is in principle already part

of the political world and should be formally included in political order by way of humans acting as its trustees and representatives. This, however, disqualifies democracy since nature's ability to change itself is displaced, and by that, the whole concept of democracy comes tumbling down. Ecologism, in other words, fails to adhere to the concept of democracy it advocates. Moreover, its bridging of the gap between humans and nature also fails. Instead of ending up with a unity of identity between humans and nature, by presupposing a unity of difference between humans and nature, ecologism ends up reproducing such a unity of difference in its very practice. Hence, ecologism presupposes and reproduces a relation between humans and nature that contradicts the one it seeks to accommodate, ground itself on, and affirm. Despite aspiring, on the surface of discourse, to conceptualise humans as being related to nature based on identity, ecologism ends up conceptualising humans as being related to nature based on their difference. The presupposed relation is such that each part conditions the other. Political order—the form of the human creation of meaning—exists by directing itself towards nature, and nature becomes something else than a mere void the moment it becomes related to politics; each related party is necessary for the intelligibility of the other; they make sense only in tandem. Thus, the presupposed relation is neither simply a belonging nor a separation. It is, instead, a conjunction in which the *and* between the related entities is emphasised.

Ecologism, then, is burdened by two problems concerning green democracy and the bridging of humans and nature. It disqualifies the concept of democracy it advocates, and rather than producing a unity of

identity between humans and nature it reproduces a unity of difference between them. These problems mean that ecologism's attempt to bring humans and nature together politically by extending democracy to the non-human world disqualifies democracy, and presupposes and reproduces a different relation between the two, a relation in which humans and nature form a unity of difference. As will be shown in the ensuing sections, social constructivism and new materialism end up with exactly the same dual problem.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism emerged as a force to be reckoned with in environmentalist discourse largely during the 1990s, and in doing so, came to challenge the dominance of ecologism therein.[56] Ostensibly, social constructivism is in many ways the very opposite of ecologism, and there are indeed evident differences between them. They also have some similarities, however,[57] and in this section, some of their most important differences and affinities will be highlighted as the constructivist approach to green democracy is delineated.

One of the major differences between ecologism and social constructivism has to do with their intellectual inheritance. Whereas ecologism draws heavily on the nat-ural sciences and grounds its understanding of nature on ecology, social constructivism is associated with so-called postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy and sociological theories of 'the social construction of reality'.[58] Based on that inheritance, constructivism conceptualises knowledge and meaning as something that is *constructed*, or created, by humans.[59] Among the most important components of these conceptualisations is the notion that knowledge, because it is constructed by humans, is entangled with social practice and, therefore, with relations of power, a view perhaps associated mostly with Foucault's ideas about power and knowledge existing in a nexus (e.g. Foucault [1976] 1980c, 1996).[60]

A further important component of the constructivist concept of knowledge and meaning is the view that the creation of meaning encompasses human being in its entirety; everything humans do has to do with the creation of meaning. By this, it is suggested that human being in general has a linguistic character; to be human is like living in a book. Moreover, if the entanglement of knowledge and power is associated with Foucault, this aspect of constructivism draws heavily on Derrida and is rhetorically captured by his statement that '*there is nothing outside of the text*' ([1967] 1997, p. 158).[61]

With intellectual affiliations such as these,

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[56] For some seminal contributions, see Bennett and Chaloupka (1993a), Cronon (1995), Eder (1996), Evernden (1992), and Macnaghten and Urry (1998).

[57] For thorough treatments of the theoretical differences and affinities between ecologism and constructivism, see Biro (2005, pp. 3–58), Soper (1995), and Soulé and Lease (1995).

[58] The last phrase is a reference to Berger and Luckmann's seminal work from 1966 on the sociology of knowledge, that bears this title (Berger and Luckmann 1991).

[59] For some general overviews of social constructivism, see Gergen (2015), Hacking (1999), Sismondo (1993), and Weinberg (2014), and for the intellectual inheritance of social constructivism and its relation to postmodernism and poststructuralism, Weinberg (2014, pp. 23–80) in particular.

[60] See also page 359 in chapter 5 below, where I return to Foucault's notion of power.

[61] This too, I return to in chapter 5 (see page 369 below).

one of the major tenets of social constructivism is the notion that, because meaning and knowledge always emerge in a specific social and historical setting, it will also always be conditioned by the idiosyncrasies of that setting. Knowledge and meaning in general, therefore, is reflective of underlying social and historical experiences, and this, in turn, indicates that meaning and knowledge are always mediated, contextual, and contingent. Knowledge, the argument goes, is never a representation of things as they are in themselves. Instead, knowledge of things is always only knowledge of those things *according to someone*. Also, truths, rather than being representative correspondences of what things really are in themselves, has more to do with intersubjective agreements among those who create knowledge; truths are statements accepted as being true.[62]

From this point of view, the ecologist treatment of nature as something absolute—any treatment of nature as absolute, in fact—appears to be philosophically naïve and something that ought to be done away with. As per the view of social constructivism, there is no such thing as a nature existing in and by itself, for nature is constructed in the human creation of meaning. Humans make their own world in their creation of meaning. All claims about nature have a 'discursive character' (Bennett and Chaloupka 1993b, p. xii). Nature is a social construct, 'a part of culture' (Wilson 1992, p. 12), a sign created in human linguistic

practices (Evernden 1992, pp. 22–25). As Baudrillard claims, nature is 'the great Signified, the great Referent … ideally charged with "reality"' (1975, p. 54).[63] Hence, it is also historical:

> What counts as 'nature,' and our experience of nature … is always historical, related to a configuration of historically specific social and representational practices which form the nuts and bolts of our interactions with, and investments in, the world. (Castree and Braun 1998, p. 17)

Approaching nature as a historically specific creation, constructivism insists 'on the human making of what counts as nature' (Lease 1995, p. 10). There is no absolute nature available for human access; there is no nature beyond the one given in the experience of, and articulated by, those who make the world meaningful in terms of nature, and the semantic closure of any such nature is 'provisional and unstable' flanked by 'the always-present possibility of other articulations' (Braun and Wainwright 2001, p. 56). Instead of a single absolute nature, there are only natures in the plural, 'a diversity of contested natures … constituted through a variety of socio-cultural processes from which such natures cannot be plausibly separated' (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, p. 1); a multiplicity of constructed natures, contingent malleable objects of knowledge made meaningful by someone according to some cognitive schema as nature and as natural things.

And because it is relative to subjective experience in this way, nature is indeed con-

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[62] This way of characterising social constructivism is inspired by Meillassoux (2008, e.g. pp. 3–9), and again is something I return to in chapter 5 (see page 371).

[63] For more on the so-called social construction of nature, overviews of different constructivist approaches to nature, and for some examples of constructivist green thought see e.g. Beck (1995a, pp. 36–57), Bird (1987), Blühdorn (2000, pp. 40–48), Burningham and Cooper (1999), Castree and Braun (1998), various contributions in Castree and Braun (2001), such as Castree (2001) and Demeritt (2001), Castree (2005, 2014a), Demeritt (1998, 2002), Franklin (2002, pp. 39–47), Hannigan (1995), Irwin (2001), Simmons (1993), Sutton (2004, pp. 55–75), and Vogel (2015, pp. 33–63).

testable and disputable. For if there are natures in the plural constructed by humans, these can and should be weighed against each other:

> Nature and human are not self-revealing, even to a self-reflective species such as the human one. We and our world may well be real, but intelligible access to that reality is constructed and produced and ultimately incomplete. Yet we need to form judgements about these constructions; otherwise we would not be able to tell our stories. This, in turn, underlines the role of *power* in the contestation over what gets to count in any ruling narrative, and who gets to tell it. (Lease 1995, p. 5)

Hence, constructivism firmly pushes nature into the terrain of politics. Nature, as constructivists see it, is a political category:

> Different conceptions of nature get evoked for quite different political and substantive purposes within the overall flow of conflictual social action. . . .
>
> [D]iscourses about nature internalise a whole range of contradictory impulses and conflictual ideas derived from all of the other moments in the social process. . . . [T]he discourses themselves conceal a concrete political agenda. (Harvey 1996, p. 174)

Being a political category, nature is part, some would even say an effect (Braun and Wainwright 2001, pp. 41–42), of the exercise of power among those who speak of it, by which it is implied that discourses on nature are political discourses:

> Nature is not a thing, a domain, a realm, an ontological territory. It is . . . a way of organizing the division . . . between appearances and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, history and immutability. A fully transcendent, yet a fully historical construct. . . . And also . . . a fully *political* way of distributing power . . . in a sort of unwritten compact between what could be and what could not be *discussed*. (Latour 2010, p. 476)

This means that all matters pertaining to nature are also political. The 'collateral concepts' of nature (Castree 2014a, pp. xxiii, 17–20), so to speak, are just as constructed, contestable and political as the concept of nature itself. Sustainability, for instance, according to the constructivist point of view expressed by Barry, can never be fixed objectively by means of science or metaphysics but can rather 'only be articulated politically (that is intersubjectively created)' (1996, p. 117). 'The essential indeterminateness and normative character of the concept of sustainability implies', Barry argues, 'that it needs to be understood as a discursively "created" rather than an authoritatively "given" product' (ibid., p. 114).

This indicates that social constructivism shares with ecologism the general conception of politics as having to do with the creation of meaning and the determination of what the world is. Since nature is explicitly accepted to be a political concept, that this has to do with the meaning of the world in general is even more apparent here than in ecologism. Also, just like in ecologism, politics is conceptualised as encompassing the possibility of changing the meaning of the world in general.

Sharing this understanding of politics with ecologism, constructivism arguably still approaches nature in quite the opposite way compared to ecologism, and from the point of view of constructivism, ecologism must indeed appear to be rather naïve. For the nature on which ecologism aspires to ground its theoretical reasoning is, according to the constructivist way of arguing, just another contingent nature for someone (Beck 1995a,

p. 40; see also Beck 1995b, p. 125), hardly up for the task of legitimising any political order. Moreover, insofar as nature is always constructed in some way, the very notion of it having intrinsic value even seems to be a contradiction in terms.

On the other hand, it is also fairly straightforward to criticise social constructivism from an ecologist point of view for being the latest and perhaps final instance of what can be referred to as humanist arrogance (Plumwood 2002; Ehrenfeld 1981), which in this instance would denote the belief that the rest of the world exists solely for the sake of humans, that the powers of the human mind are without limits, and that only humans really matter. For not only do constructivists elevate humans above nature, they seem to deny nature altogether since nature, as per their view, does not seem to exist at all, at least not as something humans have not created by themselves. 'The whole idea of nature as something separate from human experience', as Wilson notes, 'is a lie' (Wilson 1992, p. 13)

This also discloses how constructivism can approach the gap between humans and nature. If nature does not exist, then certainly there is not much of a gap to bridge. This line of reasoning, then, simply bridges the gap between humans and nature by declaring nature to be false and by rejecting it altogether. Indeed, not only *can* constructivism approach nature in this way; this is also what constructivism often has amounted to in the context of environmentalism. It has been deployed as a practice of refutation (Demeritt 2001, pp. 33–36, 2002, pp. 769–771), as a means in theoretical and political interventions aiming to expose naturalist arguments, explanations, and claims as incorrect, naïve, or ideological. Put to such use, social constructivism is a project of *denaturalisation*. As such a project it can highlight and reveal the social and political causes behind various phenomena covered up as 'natural' and as occurring beyond human intentions and control. Referring extensively to Barthes' *Mythologies* (2009), Evernden captures this way of arguing succinctly and rather eloquently:

> Barthes makes a surprising assertion in his discussion of mythology: he speaks of the need to 'establish Nature itself as historical.' ... Barthes is especially sensitive to the creation of a 'nature' myth since mythmaking seems to him to be the way in which social ideals—and social injustices—become entrenched. They are immune from analysis or criticism once they cease to appear as human concepts and instead become perceived as eternal givens. In other words, once something is perceived as lying in the realm of nature rather than in the realm of society or history, it seems beyond criticism. By definition, it has nothing to do with us: we are not its architects. Why criticize a sunrise or a frog? That's just the way the frog or the sunrise is, through nobody's fault....
>
> Once we can say, and believe, that a thing is natural, it is beyond reproach: it is now in the realm of the absolute. Through this process we are able to transform 'the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature. And this image has a remarkable feature: it is upside down.' It appears that history or culture rests on nature, when in fact the reverse is true; nature becomes, in effect, a social creation, and 'the passage from the real to the ideological is defined as that from an *antiphysis* to a *pseudo-physis*,' from a con-

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[64] The quoted passages by Barthes Evernden is referring to can be found in Barthes (2009, pp. 122, 168).

[65] For an example of a much more extensive treatment of denaturalisation and this use of constructivism, see Castree

trasting nature to a false or socially constructed nature. (Evernden 1992, pp. 23–24).[64, 65]

Beyond such critical approaches, however, social constructivism can also ground arguments about how to arrange and rearrange democratic politics so as to improve the prospects for more sustainable social practices. There is widespread support for deliberative democratic arrangements in environmentalist circles, backed by plenty of research, and there is a rather straightforward tie between social constructivism and deliberative democracy on a theoretical level.[66]

Theories of deliberative democracy emphasise that democratic political order receives its legitimacy from the quality of deliberation preceding the political decisions providing that order with form. Basically, this rests on the notion that the quality of a political decision is positively correlated with the quality of the deliberation leading to that decision.

Whereas theories that consider voting to be the source of legitimacy for democratic rule approach political decision-making as a process in which preferences and points of view are primarily aggregated, deliberative democrats emphasise that preferences, wills, points of view, and ways of understanding emerge and change as part of, and because of, the political process (Baber and Bartlett 2005, pp. 6, 10; Benhabib 1996, pp. 71–72; Chambers 2003, pp. 208–309; Cohen 1989, pp. 19, 23–26, 1996, pp. 97–102, 1998, pp. 199–201; Dryzek 2000, pp. 1–2; Elster

1997, 1998, pp. 5–6; Fearon 1998, pp. 49–52; Gutmann 1996, p. 344; Gutmann and Thompson 1996, pp. 26, 43–44, 173, 1999, p. 249, 2004, pp. 13–21; Habermas 1996, e.g. pp. 24–25, 28, 1997, in particular pp. 55–61; Lövbrand and Khan 2010, pp. 49–50; Mansbridge et al. 2012, p. 11; Miller 2003, pp. 182–184; O'Neill 2002, pp. 257, 263; Przeworski 1998, p. 140; Smith 2003, p. 56; Young 1996, pp. 120–121). Minds change in political deliberation, so to speak. The democratic process is dynamic (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, pp. 3–7); ideas about oneself and others, knowledge of the world, beliefs, desires, normative ideals, and so on transform as one participates in politics. Put in general terms, meaning changes in political practice.

Deliberative democratic theories often favour extensive subjective, or discursive (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008), inclusion in political decision-making and deliberative procedures. They do so for a couple of different reasons. First, extensive inclusion means that an extensive number of viewpoints and preferences are present in decision-making, with the overall ambition being to include all relevant discourses. In most cases, this should lead to better decisions in terms of outcomes serving the common good. Deliberative democracy can be said, in a way, to lead to better conclusions, at least in principle; it can be argued that it is more likely to generate truthful political decisions (Dobson 1996a, pp. 137–139).

Second, to be included in deliberative procedures is to have one's point of view con-

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(2005, pp. 108–176).

[66] On deliberative democracy, or discursive democracy, as it is also referred to occasionally, environmental politics, and environmentalism, see e.g. Arias-Maldonado (2007, 2012, pp. 140–154), Baber (2004), Baber and Bartlett (2005, 2009, 2015, 2018), Bäckstrand et al. (2010), Dryzek (2013, pp. 236–239), Dryzek and Niemeyer (2019), Goodin (1996), Gundersen (1995), Lepori (2019), Niemeyer (2020), O'Neill (2002), Smith (2003), and Stevenson (2015).

sidered, and—given that deliberation has the capacity to change preferences, and so on—to be able to change that point of view and one's understanding of matters at hand. Extensive inclusion, then, means maximum potential for change for the better.

Thus, the deliberative democracy advocated by social constructivists shares with ecologists the notion that democracy is about change, that the future might be different from the present. Indeed, political decisions are authoritative, but they are not set in stone. As Gutmann and Thompson define deliberative democracy, it is

> a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens *but open to challenge in the future*. (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, p. 7, emphasis added)

The order of deliberative democracy, hence, is provisional (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, p. 356), deliberative democracy has a 'capacity … to encourage changes in its own meaning over time' (ibid., p. 352). Similarly, Cohen maintains that the participants of deliberative decision-making ideally 'do not regard themselves as bound by the existing system of rights…. Instead they regard that system as a potential object of their deliberative judgment' (1989, p. 23; see also 1998, p. 194).[67]

But what kind of change are we dealing with here, and in what ways can the future be different? What changes in democratic deliberation is meaning: the meaning one ascribes to oneself and what one wants, to others, and to the world in which one lives. Hence, what is determined in deliberation, at least in principle, is meaning in general. Just like in its ecologist variety then, green democracy of the social constructivist kind is about change in general; about the becoming other in general. Since this change originates in the democratic process itself, in the actions of the participants of deliberation, social constructivist democracy, again just like its ecologist counterpart, is about self-change, change brought about by that which is changing, by the subject of change.

Given this affinity between ecologist and social constructivist green democracy at the overall level, much of what was said above about ecologist democracy, its underlying assumptions, and how it conceptualises politics and democracy itself also holds for social constructivism.

Political order overall continues to be seen as being about the creation of meaning in general. Evidently, this entails determining both what order itself is and what the world beyond politics is. According to social constructivists, as noted already, whether to label that world as natural or not is a very much part of political practice. Keeping to the analytical definition of political order as the arrangement of life lived in common, social constructivism can be said to conceptualise democracy as an arrangement of life lived in common that allows for that same arrangement to change.

Continuing, since the democratic arrangement of life lived in common is created in deliberation—which is just to say that it is created in linguistic practice—it follows that democratic political order is pop-

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[67] With the proviso that the participants do need to respect that the existing system 'establishes the framework of free deliberation among equals' (Cohen 1989, p. 23; see also Cohen 1998, p. 194).

ulated by the subjects who create meaning and bring about change; political order consists of a political community. Democracy takes place in the actions of the political community; it emerges in the experiences of the members of political order as they interact with each other. Again, then, democracy is conceptualised as an experience of order and of oneself and others as members of that order. Democracy, in other words, is a subjective experience of the world.

Hence, democracy in this constructivist vein is conceptualised in the same way as it is in ecologism. It is, at its core, understood as an experience of order according to which that order and the self and others as members of that order can change. Evidently, since political order, democratic or not, is also conceptualised as the creation of meaning, when this conceptualisation of order is taken into consideration in the context of the concept of democracy, democracy surfaces as a concept delineating an experience of the world according to which the latter can change—in the sense that its meaningful determination can be other—as a result of the actions of political subjects.

Since ecologism and social constructivism share these basic conceptualisations of politics and democracy, social constructivist democracy also appears to presuppose political order displaying the four interrelated properties of being self-creative, lacking essence, having a contingent future, and consisting of members with agency. Just like for ecologist democracy, these four properties emerge as components that political order is necessarily composed of in order for democracy to make sense.

For the most part, it is fairly straightforward to decompose constructivist democracy so as to delineate these four compon-

ents. Starting with self-creativity, social constructivists emphasise that *all* meaning is constructed in social practice, and the democratic experience simply brings to the experiential fore the self-constitutive character of social reality in general and political order in particular. Democracy is, in this sense, not different from non-democratic forms of political order. All forms of order are self-creative, but democracy makes this property explicit, whereas it is hidden in other forms.

That order lacks essence is quite evident since a major tenet in social constructivism is the claim that meaning never corresponds to things themselves but rather always represents a certain point of view. In fact, nothing has essence according to social constructivism, and essence itself is indeed a concept that has a certain meaning 'according to someone'.

Since democratic political order lacks essence, its structure appears as the emergent result of political action, the consequence of how order functions, and once more, political structure resolves into political function.

Third, being self-creative and lacking essence, political order can, in principle, become anything whatsoever. Therefore, it appears to have a contingent future. Like within the discursive context of ecologism, the social constructivist democratic experience is an experience in which the future lacks fixity in the sense that it is not in any way determined by what the world is in the present or what it has been in the past.

Fourth and finally, since order is created by the actions of its members, it follows that those members are agentic, and they are agentic *as members* of political community. Political order and the meaning of the world is constructed by political subjects, suggesting that the creation of meaning is a con-

stitutive power bringing into being a determinate world. This also indicates that the subjective element of political order provides it with its self-creative power. Just as in ecologism, again, it is the creative power of political subjectivity that provides order with constitutive power.

It was stated above that the ecologist concept of democracy presupposes these four components of political order. The same statement holds for social constructivist democracy. The deliberative form of democracy advocated by social constructivists presupposes a concept of political order composed of these four components. If political order would not be self-creative, if it would have an essence, if its future was determined, and if the members populating it would lack agentic capacities, social constructivist democracy would be as nonsensical as ecologist democracy would be.

Much of the constructivist project of denaturalisation stays committed to anthropocentric ways of thinking as it bridges the gap between humans and nature by simply discarding claims about nature as false tales. Moreover, many accounts of deliberative democracy, even within environmentalist discourse, are also thoroughly anthropocentric. Indeed, this is hardly surprising, for given that democracy happens in the linguistic practice of political subjects, it seems futile to try to make democracy happen with non-human subjects since it would arguably be quite difficult to have meaningful conversations with such subjects. However, there is more to constructivism than anthropocentric denaturalisation. Constructivism provides possibilities 'to see how, in both thought and practice, the natural and the social melt into one another' (Castree 2001, p. 10), and there are ways to concep-

tualise democracy in a non-anthropocentric fashion based on social constructivism. A major attempt to do so is found in Eckersley's hugely influential *The Green State* (2004), which I will now discuss at quite some length.

In *The Green State*, which is by and large a green defence of a reconfigured democratic state-based political order grounded in sovereign political authority, Eckersley starts from a straightforwardly constructivist position stating, among other things, that

> claims that there is an objective reality are interpreted as always and unavoidably evaluative, historically contingent, and filtered through different social frames and social standpoints. In short, all knowledge reflects particular social purposes, values, interests, and story lines, and this insight extends as much to our understanding of the so-called natural world as it does to the social world. (ibid., p. 9, see also p. 122)

Thus, all claims about the world, natural or social, are relative to a certain historical social context. Humans, then, have no access to any absolute nature. Rather, the meaning of nature changes with historical circumstances (ibid., pp. 121–125).

Eckersley also embraces deliberative democracy as a normatively preferable form of democratic rule and depicts it as having an intuitive appeal for those who seek a green transformation of society (ibid., pp. 115–119). Regarding democracy in general, Eckersley broadly approaches it in terms of autonomy and emancipation, and she explicitly associates it with temporal contingency and self-change writing, concerning the function of deliberation, that political deliberation

> is the activity through which citizens consciously create a common life and a common future together, including the ecosystem health and integrity that literally

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sustain us all. (Eckersley 2004, p. 115)

She also suggests, in passing, a connection between such change and change in and destabilisation of meaning by noting that 'a certain degree of deconstruction of meanings is always required to clear the ground in order to pursue emancipation in ways that do not unwittingly introduce new forms of oppression' (ibid., p. 123).

One of the major changes to democracy Eckersley advocates consists of a profound redefinition of the subjective constitution of democratic political order. Whereas the modern democratic state consists of a clearly demarcated fixed citizenry, Eckersley expounds a model of democracy in which the subjective element is fluid and transitory. Instead of having a permanent demos, green democracy, as envisioned by Eckersley, would consist of temporary communities emerging in relation to specific issues.

Eckersley specifically wants to anchor democracy to the postulate that

> all those potentially affected by a risk should have some meaningful opportunity to participate or otherwise be represented in the making of the policies or decisions that generate the risk. (ibid., p. 111)

Effectively, a democracy structured around such a postulate would, at any moment in time, be constituted by a particular subjective element equalling all those who are potentially affected by a risk generated by a certain political practice. Key here is that Eckersley does not limit inclusion in such a political community to presently living humans. Rather, the potentially affected include presently living humans and future generations and non-human beings (ibid.,

p. 112).[68] In other words then, the political community can, in principle and in extreme cases, include all present and future living beings, human as well as non-human (ibid., p. 113).

Eckersley readily admits that such a broad understanding of who might be potentially affected and, therefore, part of political community means that the political community will quite often be 'wider than the class of actual deliberators and decision makers' (ibid., p. 112). Hence, not everyone who is a member of the political community can actually participate in deliberation and decision-making, and there will, therefore, always be those who are left outside. Eckersley's preferred terms for absent community members are 'excluded others' or 'differently situated others'. She stresses that even though excluded others are not active political subjects in the sense of participating in political deliberation and decision-making, the fundamental democratic quality of self-change applies to them as much as to those who participate in political practice:

> Within justifiable and practical limits, all differently situated others (human and nonhuman) ought to be free to unfold in their own distinctive ways and therefore should not be subjected to unjustified policies and decisions that impede such unfolding. (ibid., p. 120)

Indeed, Eckersley does not suggest that non-human beings should participate in political deliberation. Instead, she argues that those who do participate should act *as if* the excluded others were participating (Eckersley 2004, pp. 111–112, 119–122; see also Eckersley 2000, pp. 118–120).

Eckersley does not want humans to deliberate with non-humans, then, but asks

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[68] In line with the purposes of this study, I do not discuss the issue of future generations any further.

rather that those who do deliberate do so as if non-humans—all excluded others, really—were there participating in the deliberation. Positioning her argument in relation to the Kantian moral principle that all individuals are ends in themselves, Eckersley writes that her account

> rests on the … ideal of respect for differently situated others as ends in themselves, and is suitably adjusted to reflect this wider moral constituency. Of course, many nonhuman others are not capable of giving approval or consent to proposed norms; however, proceeding *as if* they were is one mechanism that enables human agents to consider the well-being of nonhuman interests in ways that go beyond their service to humans. (Eckersley 2004, p. 112)

Here, democracy is extended beyond human confines by humans acting as if human subjects were present in political deliberation and decision-making; as if they were acting politically.

Effectively, this approach to non-human political subjects means that such subjects necessarily need representation in political practice; excluded others can be included only by being represented by someone else. Thus, for this approach to green democracy, just as for ecologist green democracy, there is a general need for humans to represent non-human beings in political practice (Eckersley 2004, pp. 112–113, 127–135; see also Eckersley 1999, 2000, pp. 127–130, 2011). As such an excluded other, nature emerges as a 'relatively autonomous' (Eckersley 2004, p. 125) political subject with its own 'dignity and inherent value' (ibid., p. 114).

Evidently, even though deliberative democrats, for obvious reasons, often emphasise political participation, the non-anthropocentric reworking of deliberative democratic theory means that the issue of political deliberation between subjects incapable of reciprocal recognition (ibid., p. 113) must be faced head-on. The solution to that problem is to accept that some subjects will have to make do being represented by someone else rather than acting by themselves (see also O'Neill 2001, pp. 494–497). Constructivist green democracy requires 'persons and groups within the polity speaking on behalf of the interests of those living outside the polity, for future generations and for nonhuman species' (Eckersley 2004, p. 114). Hence, despite many differences otherwise, ecologists and social constructivists both end up advocating the need to represent nature in politics as democracy transgresses anthropocentric boundaries. For ecologists and constructivists alike, the political bridging of humans and nature by means of democracy requires humans acting as trustees or stewards of nature.

Representation and people acting as if non-human beings were present in political practice also amount to Eckersley's solution to the problem of including not nature as such but *socially constructed* nature in the political world. Indeed, if nature is a contingent and contestable social construct, and if the divide between nature and humans needs bridging, then certainly the bridge must connect humans and constructed, rather than absolute, nature. Of course, such an endeavour raises significant difficulties:

> As soon as we historicize the concept of nature, that is, approach it as a complex and shifting social construction rather than an objective reality that is there for all plainly to understand, we raise the question … whether it is something that can be meaningfully represented or liberated. (ibid., pp. 121–122)

Nevertheless, it is nature as it appears for humans that is meant to be included in political deliberation here, nature as it is known in a particular way (O'Neill 2001, pp. 493–497); it is up to humans to provide meaning to the nature that should be represented in politics. Moreover, Eckersley argues that it is possible to settle on the meaning of represented nature intersubjectively, suggesting that intersubjectivity substitutes objectivity in the formation of truths about the world:

> To the extent that we can reach such intersubjective understandings that transcend particular standpoints … we can say we have attained a degree of objective knowledge about the world…. [W]e do not have any *shared* access to … reality other than through discourse. This necessarily means that we are talking about contingent rather than absolute understanding of objectivity, since intersubjective understandings of 'reality' will always be historically and culturally specific, provisional, and potentially always vulnerable to challenge and change. (Eckersley 2004, p. 123; see also Eckersley 2002, pp. 64–65)

Thus, meaningful nature is not really brought into politics. It *emerges* in human deliberation and ultimately in political practice itself. The nature being represented in politics by human trustees, then, does not exist prior to and independently of humans making sense of it; represented nature does not precede the political practice in which it is represented. This indicates that the political practice of representing nature includes the determination of what is represented.

The inclusion of nature in politics and bridging the divide between humans and nature by proceeding from constructivist theory can be achieved, then, by a sort of two-step process. First, humans determine the meaning of the non-human world to-gether, and after that, they represent that world as per the determined meaning as they decide how to arrange their lives in common, proceeding as if the determined non-human world is present as they make their decisions.

This points to the bridging of humans and nature emerging from human action. It was shown in the previous section that, for ecologists, the bridging starts in the human mind, in how humans think, and in the emergence of ecological consciousness. Indeed, constructivists also very much pay attention to how people think but, compared to ecologists, they put more emphasis on social action in their reasoning on the political bridging of humans and nature. As constructivists see it, separation is to be overcome by human action; through changes in the ways humans *do* politics. Suggestively, constructivist green democracy arises in the experiences of humans acting together and creating a common world as if nature is part of the action.

Thus, even if nature is approached as a fully constructed thing, and even if it is accepted that humans have no extra-discursive access to the natural world, this does not necessarily lead to arrogance towards nature, unconcern, carelessness, or anything like that. On the contrary, as Eckersley explicates, the constructivist understanding of nature offers an opportunity for a fundamental, green, transformation of how nature is approached politically:

> If we want to respect nature as a relatively autonomous subject yet acknowledge that our understanding of nature is incomplete, culturally filtered, and provisional, *then* we ought to proceed with care, caution and humility rather than with recklessness and arrogance in the way we use and interact with nature. (Eckersley 2004, p. 125)

But just like ecologism, constructivism tends to disqualify its own concept of democracy; at the end of the day, constructivism fails to adhere to the notion of democracy it advocates. Again, the disqualification happens because of how the political bridging of humans and nature is set up. Constructivism shares with ecologism the understanding of democracy as an experience of the world and of oneself as being able to change as a result of one's political actions. However, as was shown earlier, this understanding of democracy is not really compatible with the idea that the divide between humans and nature can be overcome by humans representing nature in the political world. Since the constructivist—and ecologist—concept of democracy comes with the understanding of political subjects having the power to create meaning by themselves, which includes the power to represent, constructivism effectively denies nature its political subjectivity as it includes nature by means of human representatives. In constructivist green democracy, nature is not allowed to represent itself or its own world, and much like in ecologism, its power to represent—which it should have as a political subject—is transferred to humankind. The same general problem happens in both ecologism and constructivism; through a reformulation of the power to represent in which this power becomes a constituted rather than constitutive power, some members of the political community are denied their power to create meaning; representative power turns into represented power; the locus of political creativity is displaced. But again, this is principally impossible to achieve. For the power to represent to be represented, there would have to be a primordial instance of representation, a more basic

source of meaning. However, political order as conceptualised by constructivism—and ecologism—involves the creation of meaning *as such*. There is no source of meaning more profound than political practice itself; the power to determine the world is not itself determined; constitutive power is exactly not a constituted power. The nature of constructivism does not participate in the arrangement of life lived in common. Humans do that for it. It does not arrange that life. It is merely part of the arrangement.

And much like for ecologism, these difficulties have significant consequences for constructivism's concept of democracy and the democratic qualities of the political order constructivism stakes out. Again, with the displacement of the power to determine what the world is, those who are denied that power can no longer change themselves or the world. Specifically, the non-human part of the political world cannot change by itself. Even if the human part of the political world can change the non-human part, such change is restricted. For nature needs always to be determined as a political subject in need of representation. Like in ecologism, nature being necessarily in need of representation is a constant in constructivist green democracy, which in turn means that humans will always have to represent it. Hence, humans are also left with a permanent role, that of representing nature. So, whatever it means to be human otherwise, being a human political being will forever entail being nature's trustee. In defending the need to represent nature, Eckersley notes that 'whenever we represent nature, we, unwittingly or otherwise, also represent ourselves' (2011, p. 255). I agree, but it seems like Eckersley and others fail to recognise that the argument that humans need to

take it upon themselves to speak politically for nature forecloses the opportunity for humans to speak for themselves.

Instead of humans making sure both they and nature can change, humans and nature alike are actually denied unlimited change. This is deeply problematic for democracy as constructivists understand it because, as Castree, citing Urbinati (2010, p. 65),[69] writes,

> in theory 'Democracy ... makes *all* issues an object of public evaluation and all values a matter of opinion and consent'. In other words, in democracies pretty much any question, event, activity, incident, idea, topic or proposal might reasonably become a matter of common concern and public debate. (Castree 2014a, p. 94, emphasis in quote by Urbinati 2010 added by Castree)

But as the constructivist inclusion of nature in political order hinges on the acceptance of nature being in permanent need of representation and of humans being in permanent need of representing it, these 'issues' or 'values' are withheld from such evaluation; these 'ideas' are, so to speak, safeguarded from public debate, they are not a matter of common concern. Or, to refer to Dobson who explicitly affirms that 'discursive democracies are themselves *transformative*—transformative of the real world' (1996a, p. 139) while also maintaining that the interests and autonomy of non-human beings can be represented by humans (ibid., pp. 142–144), that aspect of reality by which humans and non-humans are assigned to these particular political roles is not allowed transformation by the hands of discursive democracy.

Put in slightly different terms, these parts of what it means to be human and non-human cannot be the subject of political de-

liberation. Seen in the light of their basic political roles in relation to each other, then, neither humans nor nature will ever change. Thus, as long as nature is conceptualised in this way and is believed to be in need of humans representing its political subjectivity, the democratic experience of the world and of oneself as being able to change does not emerge.

If one were to keep true to the constructivist approach to knowledge when dealing with the issue of representing nature politically, one seems bound to accept that nature being in need of representation because that understanding of nature is underlined by a certain knowledge must be susceptible to change. Constructivism itself opposes the idea of a nature being in permanent and necessary need of representation by humans. Garside draws constructivist reasoning to its very end and explicitly highlights this conundrum:

> The act of representing nature means rendering nature knowable, taking the unknown, wild, and wonderful, and making it appear knowable or at least representable. The act of representing nature, perhaps even more than other representations, obscures as much as it enlightens. This means that if we are going to politicize nature or speak for nature it is essential to ensure that 'nature' does not become permanently situated in human discourse even if that discourse is radically democratic. Nature must also be able to return to the mysterious realm of the unknown after it has been politicized or figuratively brought into the public sphere through human representations. (Garside 2013, p. 114)

To reiterate, 'nature must ... be able to return to the mysterious realm of the unknown'. Once, however, nature retracts

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[69]Castree refers to this work by Urbinati as being published in 2009, but I believe this is an error.

from politics, once it is no longer represented in the political world by humans, the bridge between humans and nature as envisioned and raised by constructivism also disappears. And by that, the relation between humans and nature is no longer a unity of identity; humans and nature no longer add up to a whole as nature loses itself in otherness, as it disappears outside. Thus, should constructivist reasoning be followed through, constructivism would fail to bridge the perceived gap between humans and nature. Avoiding doing so, constructivism seems to have to let democracy take the hit.

Constructivism, then, disqualifies its own concept of democracy. This predicament emerges from the very heart of the ambition to ground green democracy on constructivist theory. To simplify a bit, constructivism basically says that all statements, regardless of their subject matter, are contestable and historically contingent, and, therefore, all statements are also, in principle, political. From this, it follows that the statement that non-human beings need human representation since they lack the ability to determine their own meaning and the meaning of the world around them ought to be seen as a contestable and historically contingent statement as well; it ought to be approached as part of politics, not its ground. However, indeed, should it be treated in this way, constructivism would effectively lose its case for democracy; constructivist green democracy would collapse in on itself because of a dismantling of its foundations. Rather, just like ecologism requires the truthfulness of the ecologist conceptualisation of nature to be posited, so too does constructivism require a similar positing of the truthfulness of the constructivist concep-

tualisation of nature and its political relation to humans while ignoring at the same time the conceptualisation of political order as the creation of meaning; the positing of nature needing representation goes against the basic constructivist notion that nature is contestable, contingent, and political. If the constructivist argument regarding human access to nature and the inevitable political character of any and all determinations of the natural world is correct, then positing that nature as having any fixed political meaning at all—for instance, that it requires human representation—pre-empts and precludes politics; it makes democratic deliberation regarding the world superfluous. Indeed, the constructivist displacement of subjective creativity in the political world, in the end, leads to the complete disqualification of democracy. The four components of political order necessary for democracy to make sense vanish the moment creativity is denied the subjective constitution of political order. Quite obviously, agentic capacity goes out the window. The future is no longer contingent as humans and non-humans are assigned the permanent roles of representing and represented; humans and nature alike receive permanent and delimited functions. This, in turn, means that political order appears to have an essence; it receives a fixed structure defining its functions and determining what is possible to do politically. Finally, political order loses its self-creative character since those who constitute it are deprived of their constitutive power. In sum, if the constructivist theorising of green democracy is drawn to its very end, political order no longer displays the four qualities of being self-creative, lacking essence, having a contingent future, and consisting of agentic members. A fortiori,

the democratic experience cannot emerge in this context. In the absence of the democratic experience, neither the world nor the self appear to be able to be otherwise. Instead, they appear to be necessarily what they already are. Constructivism, just like ecologism, rather than lending support to an experience according to which things can change, ends up supporting an experience according to which things have to remain the same. Again like ecologism, constructivist green democracy actually ends up being something other than democracy; it is the other of democracy rather than democracy itself.

Social constructivism runs into problems equivalent to those of ecologism in that it disqualifies its own concept of democracy. Furthermore, as I will show in the next couple of pages, just like ecologism, its bridging of humans and nature also disqualifies itself by presupposing a different relation between them.

Constructivism seeks to establish a basic identity between humans and nature in the sense that nature, being something meaningful, belongs to the same world humans do by virtue of being a result of the human construction of meaning; nature belongs to the world of humans as a construct of that world. Thus, it advocates a relation of identity between humans and nature. In a way, therefore, humans and nature are the same because they belong to a common whole, a whole in which humans construct nature by providing it with meaning. Indeed, humans and nature are not identical parts of that whole, one being the constructor and the other being the constructed. However, they are related in a unity of identity by adding up to something complete to which both belong. Hence, constructivism seeks

to establish a bridge bringing together what has allegedly been separated and disunited in modernity in a unity of identity; a bridge between the perceived identical banks, so to speak, of the natural and the humans worlds. Ultimately, however, constructivism's bridge-building endeavour is stymied by its own presuppositions, which importantly involve a different relation between humans and nature.

In order to delineate this conundrum, let me begin with the basic social constructivist claim that knowledge, and meaning in general, is constructed and context-dependent and what consequences this has for nature as an object of knowledge. This claim implies that no object of knowledge is absolute in the sense that knowledge never refers to things in themselves but only to things as they appear for someone according to some specific way of making them meaningful. As I will demonstrate, however, social constructivism presupposes absolute knowledge of the natural world.

To begin, if all knowledge is contingent and non-absolute, then this must also be the case for the knowledge about the relation and distinction between the social and the natural. Since the social is equal to that which constructs and the natural is equal to that which is constructed, it follows that the distinction between constructor and constructed is also contingent and non-absolute. However, if it is accepted that this distinction is indeed contingent, the whole project of social constructivism as a discursive practice seems to collapse; constructivism can no longer reveal something as being constructed socially because it cannot delineate the social as a constructor rather than something that is constructed. Moreover, correspondingly, it cannot designate anything as a con-

struct without also accepting that it might be a constructor. Certainly, much of the theoretical labour of constructivism in green political theory is aimed at the tearing down of rigid distinctions between the social and the natural, but accepting the contingency of the distinction between constructor and constructed means that the distinction between humans and nature breaks down *at the very beginning* of that labour, not at the end of it. If the distinction between the social and natural is itself treated as a construction with a context-dependent meaning, it is exposed to contingency, which implies that it can change, which ultimately means that the very distinction between constructor and constructed implodes. In other words, social constructivism is susceptible to the critique that it is itself constructed, by which it is rendered contingent and contestable. Thus, in order to retain the appearance of theoretical rigour and validity and not to call into question its legitimate existence, constructivism seems required to tacitly accept that this distinction is not contingent. As such, social constructivism, as a legitimate theoretical project, presupposes a stable distinction between the social and the natural.[70] Insofar as a distinction needs something to distinguish, constructivism in extension also presupposes something to label social and natural; it presupposes, so to speak, a constructor and a construct, something that is meaningful and made meaningful, and something else that is the source of that meaning. This distinction between the social and the natural, and by implication the social and the natural worlds between which the distinction holds, are not themselves contingent as they are the abso-

lute requirements for the social constructivist conceptualisation of humans and nature to make sense.

Thus, social constructivism and the social world in which humans construct meaning and determine what the world is are not themselves socially constructed. The same can be said about the natural world. Even if constructivism designates it as a social construct, the natural world must first be assumed not to be constructed for it to do so. Social constructivism comes very close to claim explicitly that nature is absolute. With the claim that there is only a multiplicity of constructed and contested natures *for someone*, it is also implied that the nature that does not exist *absolutely* does not exist. Put differently: the absolute nature which, according to social constructivism, does not exist does not exist absolutely; the inexistence of nature is absolute. Conceding to this arguably creates a bit of a difficulty for social constructivism. The absolute inexistence of absolute nature cannot be a social construct since it would then have to be accepted that nature could be otherwise. In other words, absolute nature—a definite nature beyond human constructs—could exist actually, and if it were admitted that absolute nature could exist and could be available to human knowledge, social constructivism would step out of the bounds it draws around knowledge since that would mean that absolute knowledge would be possible. To safeguard itself against this critical remark and the threat of actually disqualifying itself, social constructivism again seems necessitated to accept presupposing non-constructed objects. Specifically, what is presupposed in this regard is a non-constructed

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[70] See also Soper (1995, p. 39), who makes a similar argument.

non-existent nature. What is presupposed is an empty nature, a nature without positive content, a world without meaning, a 'great amorphous mass of otherness that encloaks the planet' (Evernden 1992, p. xi). As Smith puts it, 'nature is nothing if it is not social' (2008, p. 47).

The nature presupposed by social constructivism must exist—as a void or even a non-existence, as per the argument just presented—separately from the social and political realm; social constructivism presupposes the distinction and thus separation between the social and the natural. Furthermore, this suggests, importantly, that empty nature *must* exist/not exist in order for the constructivist understanding of the social and political world to make sense. The constructivist conceptualisation of politics as the creation of meaning presupposes an absolutely existing empty nature that allows the meaning-creating activity of politics to get off the ground. Nature is the necessary correlate of politics; for politics to make sense, there must be an empty natural world existing separately from it, and politics is required for the natural world to be anything but a brute nothingness. Hence, there is no politics without nature and no nature without politics.

Among the presuppositions of social constructivism, there is a rupture in the belonging of nature and society to the same whole, a rupture separating them and making them different. For to this extent, they are evidently no longer identical in the sense of belonging to a common whole. They are, importantly, not united in identity; they are not related in a unity of identity.

However, the presupposed relation is not a full-blown separation either; it is not a simple duality in which two worlds are com-pletely cut off from each other. There is no wall between humans and nature here. Nature, even if it does not belong to the political world of humans, still receives fundamental attention from that world. Political order—the arrangement of life lived in common through the determination of meaning—is always directed towards the world in general. Existing by rendering the world meaningful, political order hinges on having something to make meaningful. If politics exists by making the world meaningful, it requires a world it can make meaningful. Much like the situation for ecologism, the world which constructivist political order requires is simply a world different from determination, a pure non-determination. Thus, since politics is a practice of determination, it requires that which is different from itself, its other, something existing outside the practice of determining meaning. Again, this outside world cannot have any other qualities than being outside of political order. For should it have any such qualities, politics would no longer be the *general* determination of meaning, which would make it pointless. If the outside world of politics were something, politics would be nothing. The natural world presupposed by social constructivism is a pure emptiness, a world that simply is. It was shown in the previous section that the world which is opposite of meaning, in the context of a concept of political order according to which meaning is a product of subjective political practice, is a world of objectivity. It is a world of thingliness but without things, a material world without form. Thus, it could also be said to be a natural world in the sense of nature being an objective world of things.

Moreover, social constructivism explicitly associates the subjective practice of determ-

ining meaning with human beings. Therefore, humans reside on the inside of political order, whereas the empty natural world on its outside is also a non-human world, which in turn suggests that social constructivism presupposes that humans are separate and different from nature. Again, however, the separation does not amount to a wall between humans and nature. Since political order directs itself towards the natural world, the two are united rather in a unity of difference. Humans and nature are related based on their difference; they always come together but do not share a fundamental identity.

In conclusion, democracy is conceptualised in social constructivism as an experience of order according to which that order and oneself as a member of it can change, a conceptualisation that rests, in turn, on an understanding of political order according to which political order is self-creative, lacks essence, has a contingent future, and consists of agentic members. Also, approaching knowledge and meaning as products of social circumstances, nature—or *natures*, rather—is included in social reality by virtue of being constructed at the hands of humans. Nature, according to social constructivism, is a political category, and natural beings should be included in the political world as political subjects, preferably by human representatives speaking and acting on their behalf. However, with the introduction of such representatives in political order, its appearance as a democracy tends to get lost. This representation displaces nature's ability to change itself, and ultimately it negates democracy. Just like ecologism, then, social constructivism's adherence to the concept of democracy it advocates is a failure, as is its bridging of the gap between humans

and nature. Social constructivism presupposes a unity of difference between humans and nature, and doing so it reproduces that unity in its discursive practice. Thus, instead of ending up with the unity of identity that it seeks to accommodate, ground itself on, and affirm, constructivism ends up affirming a unity of difference between humans and nature. Constructivism might aspire to conceptualise the relation between humans and nature on the basis of their identity, but these aspirations rest on the understanding of humans and nature as being related on the basis of their difference. That relation is such that each side of the relation conditions the other; as political subjects and creators of meaning, humans constitute political orders existing by directing themselves towards nature, and nature becomes something else than a void the moment it becomes related to politics; humans and nature become intelligible in relation to each other. Again, the presupposed relation is neither a simple belonging nor an equally simple separation. It is a conjunction in which the *and* between humans and nature is emphasised.

Constructivism, then, is burdened by the same two problems as ecologism regarding green democracy and the bridging of humans and nature. It disqualifies the concept of democracy it advocates, and instead of producing a unity of identity between humans and nature, it reproduces a unity of difference between them. This means that constructivism's attempt to bring humans and nature together politically by extending democracy to the non-human world presupposes and reproduces a different relation between the two, a relation in which they form a unity of difference.

Ecologist and social constructivist green political theory have similar views on mod-

ernity and how moderns understand the relation between humans and nature. For both, that relation is one where a wall separates the related parties; where they are disunited and different. Both also have the ambition to reconceptualise this relation into one of belonging instead, the overall idea being to bridge their difference. In their view, at least the view they advocate, humans and nature are part of a whole and share a fundamental identity by being parts of such a whole. They are like two parts of land separated by a river but drawn together into a single landscape by a bridge stretching across the river connecting the opposing sides, uniting them into a whole, and establishing them as identical parts of the landscape. As I have argued, however, the advancement of such a unity of identity between humans and nature presupposes a different relation between the two parties. The ecologist and constructivist attempts to bridge the gap between humans and nature presuppose that there is a qualitative difference between them, that they are related in a unity of difference rather than a unity of identity. Also, being a presupposition, that relation, and the unique human-nature separation it entails, re-emerges in the attempt to do away with it; the attempts to bring humans and nature closer to each other make sure they are kept apart. The difference and separation between humans and nature, which as a presupposition must first be in place for bridging to be possible, is reproduced every time there is an ecologist or con-

structivist attempt to transcend it.

It seems ecologists have to accept that their theoretical departure presupposes that the political world does not fully belong to the natural one, that human political practice is not constituted in and through its relation to nature. Similarly, it seems social constructivists have to accept that, according to their theoretical departure, there is a (non-existing) natural world that is not socially constructed.[71] The relation both of them presuppose is not, however, a simple separation, a duality of worlds kept apart by a wall; the presupposition is not one of humans and nature being *disunited* and different.

For ecologism and constructivism alike, politics is generally about determining meaning; according to both, political practice provides meaning to a world that would otherwise be a complete void. Thus, as it is conceptualised by ecologism and constructivism, politics exists only by directing itself to that empty world, which is a natural world in the sense that it is a thingly world, albeit without determinate things. Nature, then, emerges as a necessary correlate to politics; politics exists only in relation to an empty nature; it sustains itself by maintaining a relation to a nature which is different from itself. This suggests that both ecologism and constructivism presuppose that politics does not amount to creation ex nihilo; the creation of meaning and knowledge is not free creation. Meaning does not emerge out of nowhere but only in relation

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[71] Indeed, some constructivists explicitly admit that there is a non-constructed material world. Eckersley, for instance, argues that socially constructed natures are like maps covering a non-constructed natural territory, and that even though humans can only ever navigate that territory by means of such maps one should not confuse the land with the map representing it (2004, 123—125; see also 2002, pp. 64–65). This, however, seems to be an untenable position. For if all knowledge is historically contingent and if the truthfulness of any statement is relative to a certain context, then statements such as these are also contextual and contingent. To say that there is a non-constructed nature beyond the socially constructed natures humans have access to is indeed also a social construct.

to a meaningless natural world.

Hence, while attempting to build bridges between humans and nature and bring them together in a unity of identity, difference and separation still surface in ecologism and constructivism. However, rather than designating a complete separation of two worlds independent of each other, the relation they presuppose is one in which the two related parties are differentiated yet still manage to form a unity. They are drawn together and unthinkable without each other but do not share the basic identity of belonging to the same whole. This is a relation suitably described using the metaphor of a door.

Doors do not merely provide a point of access between a pre-existent inside and a pre-existent outside. Like bridges, they are constitutive of the spaces they connect. However, contrary to bridges, which constitute spaces that are the same vis-à-vis each other, doors bring into being spaces different from each other, one inside and one outside:

> The gate does not simply connect inside and outside nor the door one space and another; rather, the door puts inside and outside into a special relation in which the outside first becomes properly outside and the inside first becomes properly inside. (Siegert 2012, pp. 8–9)

Inside is fundamentally different from outside, and vice versa. Thus, moving through a door is a becoming of difference, contrary to the crossing of a bridge, where those who cross remain the same throughout the process, even as they end up on the other side:

> It makes no difference in meaning in which direction one crosses a bridge, whereas the door displays a complete difference of intention between entering and exiting. (Simmel 1994, p. 8)

By bringing inside and outside into existence and connecting them as inside and outside—by *relating* them as inside and outside—the door also constitutes the very difference between them. Thus, whereas bridges bring forth identity and relations of belonging, doors bring forth difference. Nevertheless, doors still manage to unite what they also separate. Whereas walls establish dualities of worlds, doors bring together and unite, but they unite differences rather than identities; walls are 'mute', as has already been mentioned, 'but the door speaks' (ibid., p. 7). Hence, doors have the somewhat paradoxical ability to juxtapose unity and difference. In the movement through a door, there is present both unity and difference: 'The door represents . . . how separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act' (ibid., p. 7).

So then, in the discourse of green political theory, one encounters three different kinds of relations between humans and nature, represented by the architectural elements of walls, bridges, and doors. The wall establishes a duality of worlds and designates disunity and difference, a disunity of difference, so to speak. The bridge brings into being a unity of difference in which the related parties belong to the same whole. Lastly, the door brings together a unity of difference, a relation in which both parties are mutually implicating without sharing a fundamental identity of belonging. Each side of a wall is outside of the other, each side of a bridge is an inside, and on one side of a door, there is an inside, and on the other, an outside.

Continuing to dwell on the relation both ecologism and constructivism presuppose rather than the one they seek to move away from—the wall—or the one they seek to accommodate, ground themselves on, and affirm—the bridge—the mutual implication of the inside and the outside of a door in-

dicates that neither inside nor outside can exist without the other; one is the condition of possibility of the other. This, in turn, suggests that, according to the presuppositions of ecologism and constructivism alike, meaning is established in the relation between politics and nature. There is never only politics nor only nature. According to this way of reasoning, you will never have pure politics. There is no politics, no determination of meaning, without nature. Thus, you will only always have politics in conjunction with a nature different from political order, an empty natural world upon which political practice operates, so to speak. Correlatively, the very presence of politics, therefore, suggests the simultaneous presence of an empty nature; if there is politics, there is also a void nature outside of that political world. Where there is meaning, there is also non-meaning; where there is something, there is also nothing. In less abstract terms, there is, as per these presuppositions, only always politics *and* nature together in a unity of difference.

Since the publication of Meillassoux's influential *After Finitude* (2008), this way of thinking often goes by the name of correlationism. Meillassoux defines correlationism and delineates its scope as per the following:

> The central notion of modern philosophy since Kant seems to be that of *correlation*. By 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other. We ... call *correlationism* any current of thought which maintains the unsurpassable character of the correlation so defined. ...
>
> Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. Not only

> does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object 'in itself', in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always-already be related to an object. (ibid., p. 5)

Correlationism, then, captures all philosophy in the aftermath of Kant's critical philosophy and his important claim that all knowledge is knowledge of appearances, not of things in themselves.

Meillassoux, however, approaches the ever-present correlation between being and thinking primarily as an exercise of the mind, as a mental process. As has been shown above, however, the determination of meaning as understood in ecologism and constructivism is very much an active doing, being political practice. Thought, as it is made sense of here, is an action, a social action even. To emphasise the activity and practical character of thought and the agency associated with being a political subject, I prefer to speak of *conjunctions* rather than correlations. Indeed, my approach is basically in agreement with Meillassoux's claims about modern philosophy, but as will be shown in chapter 5, where I also revisit Meillassoux's conceptualisation of correlationism (see page 354, and also page 371 below), my approach differs from his on certain key points. As I will argue, modern thought is generally characterised by the bringing together of human *action* and things rather than thought and things. It is as action that thought is correlated to being, and in my treatment of modern thought, I will show that there are other varieties than post-Kantian philosophy of the conjunction of action and thing and that this way of thinking did not originate in

Kant. In my view, Kant's philosophy and its aftermath are but an example of modern thought, albeit a very important one, proceeding from a fundamental conjunction between action and thing. Ecologist and constructivist green political theory—with their conjunction of politics and nature—are other examples of the same general configuration of action and thing, thought and world. This insight about the general conjunction of action and things in modern thought is a crucial part of the overall conclusions of this whole study.

In a condensed manner, it can be concluded that ecologism and social constructivism alike see a wall between humans and nature, want to build a bridge between them, but end up with a door instead. Their ambition is to bring humans and nature together in a unity of identity but instead establish a unity of difference. This relation between humans and nature is a condition that makes it possible for both discourses to make sense; the meaningfulness of ecologist and constructivist statements presupposes that exact relation, suggesting that before humans and nature can be said to be separated by a wall and in need of unification on the basis of their identity, they must first be placed in a relation in which they are different but still united, like the inside and outside of a door.

Moreover, ecologism's and social constructivism's attempts to build bridges are made at a political level; their projects to bridge the divide between humans and nature are political projects. To be more precise, they are democratic projects. Ecologism and social constructivism want to bring humans and nature together in a unity of identity by means of democracy rethought along the lines of non-anthropocentrism. However as has been shown, both run into serious difficulties doing so. Both tend to disqualify their own understanding of democracy. Specifically, by displacing the locus of creativity—which they do as part of the argument that nature is necessarily in need of representation by humans—political order loses the qualities of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. Since democracy is understood in such a way that it presupposes a concept of political order containing these qualities as components, this is a loss amounting to democracy disappearing and becoming something else; when political order is no longer self-creative, when it appears to have an essence, when it has a future set in stone, and when agency is taken away from its members, then there is no experience of order and of oneself as a member of that order according to which order and oneself can change as a result of one's own political actions.

New Materialism

During the latest decade or so, there has been a trend in the social sciences towards analyses that pay considerable attention to the material aspects of social reality. The theoretical side of this trend often goes by the name of new materialism.[72] As per Connolly, summarising a text of his,

> 'new materialism' is the most common name given to a series of movements

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[72] There are adjacent intellectual developments with affinities and similarities to new materialism in philosophy and other theoretical discourses, primarily speculative realism and object-oriented ontology. In this study, I make no clear-cut distinction between such schools of thought and new materialism, but rather treat them as being parts of the same discursive setting.

in several fields that criticise anthropocentrism, rethink subjectivity by playing up the role of inhuman forces within the human, emphasize the self-organizing powers of several nonhuman processes, explore dissonant relations between those processes and cultural practice, rethink the sources of ethics, and commend the need to fold a planetary dimension more actively and regularly into studies of global, interstate and state politics. (Connolly 2013, abstract on p. 399)

If ecologism has its roots in the natural science of ecology, and social constructivism in postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy, then many strands of new materialism are indebted to the idea that all being is hybrid in terms of its natural and social qualities. Everything, this line of reasoning goes, has properties colloquially referred to as natural and as social or cultural. Accordingly, there is no purely natural or social being, and there never has been. Everything is a mixture; nothing is ever only an object or a subject; all beings are hybrid beings.[73]

This heritage makes new materialism sit quite well with the Anthropocene imaginary. Indeed, proceeding from ideas about hybrid being, new materialism pretty much affirms from the get-go what the Anthropocene imaginary conveys in terms of the mixture of the social and the natural. As new materialism has unfolded, there has been an active engagement among those who have contrib-

uted to and discussed it with the idea of a planetary age of humankind and problems such as climate change (Arias-Maldonado 2015a, 2019; Burke and Fishel 2019; Latour 2013, 2017; Morton 2013, 2016).

One of the main considerations in new materialist thought is *things*, what they are and what they can do. Importantly, many in this field subscribe to the view that things have an ontological status in their own right, that things *are* things and that their reality as things is of primary status. To those who have detailed this view most thoroughly belong Harman, who in his work has developed an approach to things that safeguards the ontological indivisibility and fundamental autonomous reality of things against approaches that either 'undermine' or 'overmine' the status of things, approaches that either reduce things downwards to surface effects of a more basic reality or upwards to their evident individual qualities or relations to something external to themselves such as the human mind or other things (Harman 2011c, pp. 7–19; see also Harman 2011b,d, 2013b,c, 2016, pp. 7–13). In opposition to such treatments of things, Harman defines objects as autonomous unities that are more than what they consist of and independent of their relations to other such unities.[74]

With its emphasis on the fundamental reality of things, new materialism's approach

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[73] Seminal contributions to the idea of hybridity as an ontological or existential category include Haraway (1991, 1997), Latour (1993), and Whatmore (2002).

[74] It should be noted that Harman does not position himself as a new materialist though, and has even said that his own position is often 'confused' with the latter (Harman 2016, pp. 1–2). Instead, he refers to his own work as object-oriented philosophy, alternatively object-oriented metaphysics, or object-oriented ontology. He has also criticised new materialism for not treating objects properly. For Harman, all objects are fundamentally real, whether they are material or not is of secondary importance. He has developed his position in an extensive body of work, see for instance Harman (2002, 2005, 2010, 2013a, 2016, 2018a, 2018b, in particular pp. 91–122), and even though he often distinguishes his own position by critically engaging with the work of other contemporary writers, I think it is warranted to treat of it, in general, as part of contemporary new materialism.

to nature is rather similar to how nature is thought of in ecologism. Even though new materialism, for the most part, does not conceptualise nature as an interconnected whole—as does ecologism—it shares with ecologism the assertion that the things of nature really exist, that they are absolute in the sense of existing independently.[75]

If ecologism positions humans as a part of the interconnected whole of nature, new materialism makes the similar move of conceptualising humans as things. However, this is not to say that new materialism reduces humans to some kind of passive entities pushed around by forces beyond their control. Humans are still considered to be fully active and creative subjects. Thus, new materialism echoes social constructivism and, like social constructivism, stresses that humans are makers of their own world. Here comes the upshot of new materialism, however: humans are active and creative by virtue of being things; it is as things that humans make their own world. Crucially, this suggests that such subjectivity possibly pertains to *all* things; things, in general, are potentially subjective; all things have agentic capacities (Bennett 2004, 2010b; Coole and Frost 2010; Coole 2013), and the world is characterised by what Barad calls 'agential realism' (Barad 2007, in particular pp. 132–185; see also Barad 1996, 1999, 2003).[76]

Viewed in terms of its agentic capacity, a thing is what Latour—and others following in his footsteps—calls an 'actant' (La-

tour 1996, 1999, pp. 122–123, 141, 303, 2004a, pp. 75, 237, 2007, pp. 54–55, 71). An actant, writes Bennett, 'is that which *does* something, has sufficient coherence to perform actions, produce effects, and alter situations' (2004, p. 355; see also 2010b, pp. 8–10). As actants, then, things make a change; they bring about difference (Coole 2013, p. 459). Bryant even refers to objects as 'difference engines' and claims that objects are 'powers of producing differences in the world' (2011, p. 92, see also pp. 67–69, 88). Garcia goes even further, claiming that things *are* differences:

> Being comes inside a thing and being goes outside it. A thing is nothing other than the *difference* between being-inside and being-outside. . . .
>
> To reinscribe things in the world is to situate them outside themselves (as substances) and outside us (as subjects). It is to arrange them outside themselves (their self and ourselves) in the world. The price to pay for this arrangement is a circulation of being that systematically distinguishes two senses of things: *that which is in a thing* and *that in which a thing is*, or that which it comprehends and that which comprehends it. (Garcia 2014, p. 11)
>
> A thing is nothing other than the difference between *that which is in this thing* and *that in which this thing is*. (ibid., p. 13)

Moreover, it is a common view among new materialists that things, even though they act, create, and make differences, do

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[75] See also Eckersley (2020, p. 226), who notes that the two approaches are 'philosophically compatible'.

[76] It should be noted, however, that not everyone involved in the development of new materialist discourse maintain that *all* things have agentic capacities. Some restrict the power to act to corporeal things with perception (e.g. Coole 2010). And sometimes, an active and vital principle is located in matter as such, rather than at the organisational level of things (e.g. Bennett 2010a, 2010b, pp. 62–81, 2013; Coole and Frost 2010, p. 9; see also Harman 2011a, p. 130). Still others make use of new materialist thought mostly to reconceptualise human subjectivity as part of the material existence of human being (e.g. Connolly 2010; Orlie 2010). For a brief summary of this conceptualisation of agentic capacities, see Gabrielson (2016, pp. 405–408).

not do so in isolation. Rather, agentic capacities are seen as contextual properties emerging among and between things as they interact and enter relations with each other. 'An actant', notes Bennett, 'never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces' (2010b, p. 21). Disch writes similarly that

> things, like words, are performative in the sense that knowing what an entity is depends on knowing what it can *do* not what it *is* in the abstract. What it can do depends, in turn, on whether and how it is allied to other actors. (Disch 2016, p. 627)

The power of things, then, is a function of their groupings with other things; 'a thing has power by virtue of its operating *in conjunction* with other things' (Bennett 2004, p. 354). From this, it follows that collectives, networks, and assemblages emerge as the proper organisational level of agency (Bennett 2010b, pp. 20–38); that is where things happen.[77] Evidently, such groupings are not homogeneous compositions, and they are not an exclusively human affair: 'the particular matter-energy formation that is a human is always engaged in a working relationship with other formations, some human and some not' (Bennett 2004, p. 354); 'action is a capacity that resides in associations between human and non-human actors; it is neither the property of any one individual nor of humans in isolation from their material entourages' (Disch 2016, p. 628). Latour emphasises that agentic capacities proliferate in the present, as that which was treated as a backdrop to human development in mod-

ernity takes the stage in the Anthropocene:

> Humans have always modified their environment, of course, but the term designated only their surroundings, that which, precisely, encircled them. They remained the central figures, only modifying the decor of their dramas around the edges.
>
> Today, the decor, the wings, the background, the whole building have come on stage and are competing with the actors for the principle role. This changes all the scripts, suggests other endings. Humans are no longer the only actors, even though they still see themselves entrusted with a role that is much too important for them. (Latour 2018, p. 43)

Thus, as per the view of new materialism, there is no fundamental separation between humans, on the one hand, and all other things on the other. There is, rather, a 'kinship between the human and the nonhuman' (Bennett 2010b, p. 112); humans are 'in composition with nonhumanity' (Bennett 2004, p. 365). There is no culture isolated from nature, no nature that is not also culture. Everything is a mixture; all there is are assemblages of what Haraway refers to as 'naturecultures' (Haraway 2003, e.g. pp. 1, 8, 12, 25, 65, 100, see also pp. 6, 16–17; Haraway 2008, e.g. pp. 25, 32, 62, 138, 261). New materialism disrupts any dualist understanding of human-nature relations, for, as Bennett claims, materiality itself has the ability 'to move across' the lines between 'matter and life, inorganic and organic, passive object and active subject' (2004, p. 353). In its embodied being, humanity is 'enveloped in nature' (Coole 2010, p. 113):

> New materialisms focus on the actual entwining of phenomena that have historically been classified as distinct. Thus, it

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[77] Key contributions to this part of new materialist thought include Latour's work on actor-network theory (Latour 2007), and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblage (2004).

is not simply a question of eschewing the subject/object or material/ideal dichotomies that engender problems of epistemology. It also means insisting upon the irreducible imbrication of human/nonhuman or natural/social processes. (Coole 2013, p. 454).

In this way, new materialism seeks to establish a relation of identity between humans and non-humans, between what I refer to as humans and nature. For all its emphasis on difference, that things make a difference or even are differences themselves, new materialism establishes a fundamental identity in being, the identity of all beings being things. Before it is anything else, being is first and foremost objective; things are before anything else, things. As Bryant notes, 'there is only one type of being: objects' and 'all objects … equally exist' (2011, pp. 20, 19). All things share a basic thinghood, an identity of being things. 'All objects', writes Harman, 'are equally *objects*' (2011c, p. 5). To that extent, all beings come together in the same whole in the sense that all things belong together as things. Moreover, since humans are things, it follows that they too participate in this thinghood, that they are identical with other things in their thingly being and that they belong to the same whole as other things. Indeed, all things are not the same in the sense of having the same properties, and humans are quite different from many things in many ways. However, as Coole and Frost suggest, in a way of reasoning reminiscent of ecologist thought, 'the difference between humans and animals, or even between sentient and nonsentient matter, is a question of degree more than of kind' (2010, p. 21). Much like ecologism as well as social constructivism, new materialism draws humans and nature together in a unity of identity. Certainly, the world of new materialism is a world shot through with difference, with things creating differences everywhere and always. Those differences are enveloped by identity, by the identity of all those things being things. Thus, things form a whole, a whole world. They form a world complete in itself, defined by the identity of things and thingly being. Crucially, human and non-human things share a sameness in the form of being things and belonging to the same complete whole, to the same thingly world; together, they add up to something complete; they are, in a way, the same in the sense of belonging to a shared whole world of things. Thus, as parts of such a whole, they are related in a unity of identity.

Moreover, the thingly being of humans, the entanglement of humans and other things, and the emergent capacity of things in general for agency mean that meaningfulness slips over to non-human things. Agentic capacities very much involve making the world meaningful; they encompass the creation of meaning. As new materialists see things, humans make a meaningful world for themselves, but so does other things.

Barad, for instance, locates the place of meaning in the very material existence of things. In the first paragraph of her *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, she states:

> Matter and meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event … can tear them asunder…. Mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance. (Barad 2007, p. 3)

According to this view, human thought and language are not strictly speaking of human origin. Rather, they emerge in the agency of the world and from humans as part of that

world and as entangled with other beings:

> Discursive practices are not human-based activities but specific material (re)configurings of the world through which boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted. ... Discursive practices and material phenomena do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other; the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity. (Barad 2007, pp. 183–184)

Therefore, as humans come to know the world, they contribute to and participate in the becoming of the exact same world:

> We too are part of the world's differential becoming. ... *[P]ractices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world.* ... Making knowledge is not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations . . . in the sense of materially engaging as part of the world in giving it specific material form. (ibid., p. 91)

Knowledge, then, is 'a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part' (ibid., p. 185). In this sense, subjectivity does not refer to something outside objectivity but rather to the active side of objective existence:

> Subjectivity is nature's activity: the creative-destructive power of nature itself. ... What we conventionally call mind is, in short, matter working upon matter. Creative subjectivity is *not* . . . human action *with* or *against* nature. Creative subjectivity is quite literally a manifestation of natural selection, where . . . subtle forms of *physis* . . . work through and select among other forms of *physis*. (Orlie 2010, p. 134)

Hence, the world gets configured in certain ways as human things come to know it in those certain ways. Human creation of meaning is very much a specific construction of the world. Crucially, however, not only human things are doing this. Non-human things also construct the world in their own ways. If it makes sense to say that humans make the world meaningful in certain human ways, then it also makes sense to say that, for instance, trees make it meaningful in certain tree ways, stones make it meaningful in certain stone ways, and so on.

Latour was early in suggesting that objects interpret one another:

> For a long time it has been agreed that the relationship between one text and another is always a matter for interpretation. Why not accept that this is also true between so-called texts and so-called objects, and even between so-called objects themselves? (Latour 1988, p. 166)

Actants translate one another as they relate to each other (e.g. ibid., p. 162), and to translate something is 'to say it in other words' (ibid., p. 181). Therefore, as one actant is interpreted by another, the translation that occurs in their relation does not duplicate it. Something changes along the way, and that change depends not on something in the actant being translated but on the translation itself.

Latour speaks of actants also as propositions and of their relations as articulations (Latour 1999, pp. 141–144, 303, 310). As entities come in contact which each other, they become propositions, each articulating the other, and in those meetings, novelties emerge; propositions 'are surprising events in the histories of other entities' (ibid., p. 143); 'when the propositions are articulated ... [t]hey become "someone, something" else' (ibid., p. 180).

Following Latour, Bryant maintains that 'all objects translate one another' (2011, p. 18)

and similarly notes that what is translated 'is never identical to the original, but rather produces something different from the original' (ibid., p. 178). Thus, if a stone appears for a tree, the appearance of the stone for the tree is not identical to the stone itself. Again, something changes along the way; 'there is no transportation without translation…, there is no transportation without transformation' (ibid., p. 178). To that extent, things serve as mediators for each other (ibid., p. 179). A key component of Bryant's conceptualisation of objects is that objects transform what appears before them based on their own internal organisation (ibid., pp. 141–162, 180). The stone appears for the tree in a tree way because of the way in which the stone itself is organised. Thus, different objects translate objects in different ways. A stone is one thing in its appearance for a tree, another in its appearance for a human, the reason being that trees and humans are differently organised.

For Harman, the potential of objects to appear in different ways means that objects are impossibly or infinitely deep (Harman 2005, p. 105). It is in their reality that objects exist autonomously and are impossibly deep; *real* objects are autonomous and deep. *Sensual* objects, on the other hand, exist only in experience (Harman 2011c, p. 49); they 'exist only for another object that encounters them' (ibid., p. 47). Crucially, however, the concepts of real and sensual objects do not designate different ontological classes of objects. The world does not consist of a real realm, and a sensual realm separated from it, Harman maintains (ibid., p. 110). Rather, the concepts of real and sensual objects refer to *all* objects; an object is always real, and it is sensual if and when it relates to other objects.

Put in somewhat different terms, sensual objects are intentional objects; they are intended by other objects, and therefore, they exist only insofar as they are intended (ibid., p. 115). For human relations to other things, this is rather straightforward to grasp: The activity of the human mind is, in general, directed towards objects, and any specific mental activity is directed towards a specific object. That object is not real; it is not the object as it exists in itself but rather a sensual object existing as being directed at by the human mind. According to Harman, this relation between the mind and its intentional object forms a new real object consisting of the real mind and the real object which the intentional object is beyond its relation to the mind (ibid., pp. 115–116). So, for instance, if a human encounters a tree and thinks of it, the tree as it appears for the mind is a sensual tree, and in the encounter, a new real object is formed by the mind and the tree as it exists independently of any relations to other things, including the human mind by which it is intended on this particular occasion.

However, on the interior of this new object, the I of the human mind still does not encounter the real tree. It encounters only the sensual tree and its sensual qualities, for objects only encounter sensual objects and sensual qualities (ibid., pp. 110, 117). Thus, relations to real objects are only always indirect, with sensual objects serving as mediators between real objects relating to each other (Harman 2011c, pp. 69–81; see also Harman 2005, pp. 169–234, 2012, 2018a, pp. 149–193, 2018b, pp. 111–116). So if the real I of the human mind relates to a real tree, the sensual tree appearing before the mind mediates that relation. However, through such mediators, real objects are 'translated into sensual cari-

catures of themselves' (Harman 2011c, p. 75). In the mind's translations of real objects, the activity of the translation comes from the mind itself; it is the real object that draws caricatures of other real objects. The mind encounters sensual versions of real objects but, those versions do not come with any immanent qualities; a sensual object 'has accidents only for those who experience it' (ibid., p. 76).

Thus, it is according to the human mind that any object it is directed at has this or that quality and, to clarify, the mind has access *only* to such sensual objects. Again, it has no direct access to real objects. Real objects can only be alluded to. To say something about real objects is to say something about 'something that might be real but which cannot become fully present' (Harman 2011c, p. 68; see also Harman 2005, e.g. pp. 141–144, 150–152, 173–182, 213–234, 2012, pp. 194–205). Therefore, knowledge never represents reality in full; meaning is always conditioned by the one who creates it: 'nothing can be modeled adequately by any form of knowledge, or by any sort of translation at all' (Harman 2011c, p. 73).

Much of this way of reasoning is also what social constructivists would say regarding knowledge and meaning, with the added emphasis on social relations: Humans create meaning by themselves according to cognitive schemas emerging in and through social relations, so the social constructivist story goes. Therefore, meaning is conditional; knowledge is always knowledge according to someone; the world is what it is *for someone.*

In comes, however, a major upshot of Harman's philosophy and of new materialism in general: the 'reality is always only reality for someone-model' does not hold only for *human* relations to the world; it is valid for *all* relations between objects. And to that extent, 'the human-world relation has no privilege at all' (ibid., p. 119), it is exactly the same as all other object-world relations:

> The rift between sensual objects and their qualities is not a special feature of human intellect or animal sentience, but a basic feature of relationality in general…. [A]ll objects encounter a sensual realm of caricatures. (ibid., p. 121)

For Harman, then, 'not all experience is of the human or even animal kind' (ibid., p. 75), even 'real stones and trees must encounter sensual incarnations of other entities in some primitive fashion' (ibid., p. 118). All objects allude to real objects that cannot be directly known, 'all relations are on the same footing, and all relations are equally inept of exhausting the depths of their terms' (ibid., p. 120). Perception, according to this view, does not designate a gulf in being; the world is not separated into one part perceiving things and one part non-perceiving things. Rather, the concept of perception refers to different modes of being (ibid., p. 122). Objects 'perceive insofar as they *relate*' (ibid., p. 122). In no such perception is that which is perceived perfectly represented. No object directly makes sense of another object as that object is in itself, and two objects making sense of the same object come up with different meanings:

> The fate of language, as of perception and … of all relation, is forever to translate the dark and inward into the tangible and outward, a task at which it always comes up short given the infinite depth of things. (Harman 2005, p. 105)

Again, according to new materialism, for a tree, the world appears in a tree way, for a stone in a stone way, and for a human in a human way. The world, therefore, is one

thing for trees, another for stones, a third for humans, and so on. Things in general create meaning, and there is no strict separation between meaning, things, and material being. They are all but different 'modes of existence', to use a phrase by Latour.[78]

For many new materialists, the dispersal of agentic capacities to things in general and the relation of identity between humans and nature leads to the conclusion that politics cannot be regarded as a purely human affair. Instead, politics is comprised of all kinds of things, not just humans (Youatt 2016, pp. 216–217), and all kinds of networks. In principle, it follows from the new materialist understanding of things and action that inclusion in the political world should be based not on what a thing is or what qualities it has but on its capacity to act and local manifestations of agency. A thing, according to this view, is not political because of what it is, but because of what it does; humans lead political lives because of their actions, not because being human is associated with a certain quality or because of their species belonging (Frost 2016, pp. 178–180). What is usually associated with human political practice is not purely human at all, not restricted to human being. Take

power, for instance. Discussing the Anthropocene from a new materialist perspective, Burke and Fishel maintain that in the Anthropocene, power 'must … be thought of as shared with nonhuman life and geo-biophysical processes' (2019, p. 90); power in the present 'does not merely express relations between people or governments, but functions across entangled domains of institutions, ecologies, and things that are connected to more than human intention and influence' (ibid., p. 88):

> Power dissipates; influence is difficult to target; and dominance is a chimera. Power, in its nonanthropic sense, crosses the (fictive and modernist) 'boundary' between the human and the nonhuman, between society and nature; power inheres in the very processes of social/nature and cannot be disentangled from them. (ibid., p. 97)

Therefore, political power needs to be understood as something that is 'exercised in complex and distributed ways across "thing-systems" that ineluctably connect society and nature' (ibid., p. 88).

Because agentic capacities and networks of things emerge as a result of the general rather than particular being of things, the world itself can be seen as a political space.

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[78] Latour's notion of different modes of existence, developed in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns,* is a concept accounting for ontological heterogeneity, diversity in being. It is a concept according to which beings have different *ways* of being. Since Latour emphasises that beings interact with other beings in their becoming (Latour 2013, pp. 33–35), that they 'pass through' each other (ibid., p. 42), and that they do so according to a specific mode—a mode thusly delineating a trajectory (ibid., pp. 41–42, 63, 73)—modes of being can be seen as certain regular forms of interaction. They are, furthermore, associated with particular proper forms of truths, and therefore also of falsity. Hence, something can be true or false in various ways (ibid., pp. 18–21, 53–56). And importantly, this is not a question of knowledge, but of being, not the ability to meaningfully express in language what is true of a thing, but about the truth of the thing itself. Thus, Latour even suggests the distinction between words and things be discarded: 'Maintaining oneself in existence, being rather than not being, is without question one of the components—and perhaps the most important one—of what we usually call "true" or "false." Consequently, instead of having on the one hand a language that would say what is true and what is false … and on the other hand "things" enunciated that would be content to verify the utterances by their simple presence or absence, it is more fruitful to give up both notions, "word" and "thing," completely, and to speak from now on only of modes of existence, all real and all capable of truth and falsity' (ibid., p. 86).

According to this view, 'the world does not consist of "nature" and "culture" and their combination, but only of heterogeneous associations that bring together diverse objects, effects and aims' (Braun 2004, p. 171). The universe is characterised by what could be called 'cosmopolitics', with an allusion to the work of Stengers (2011, in particular pp. 303–414; see also 2010); politics is planetary (Burke, Fishel, et al. 2016), entrenched at an ontological level of reality (Pellizzoni 2015; Mol 1999). For this way of thinking, as Braun notes, the world of things

> is not the realm of the given, but the realm of experimentation or practice – a realm of *becoming* in which the final result is not known in advance, but is instead the outcome of innumerable acts of mediation, communication and translation. (Braun 2004, p. 171)

In such a cosmopolitical world, in a world where everything is a social and natural hybrid, politics needs to be 'attuned to *all* the actors in given socionatural networks', and it must consider 'the fate of humans, machines, organisms, plants, animals, and so on … *simultaneously* – and on a case by case basis' (Castree and MacMillan 2001, p. 220).

Democracy, then, is not a purely human affair (Disch 2016; see also Marres 2013), which follows pretty much directly from the view that the world as such is a political space. Among the new materialists it is probably Bennett and Latour who have pushed new materialist thinking furthest into the territory of democratic theory.

Referring to Dewey, Bennett conceptualises a political community—or a 'public', in her and Dewey's terms—as a

> confederation of bodies … pulled together … by a shared experience of harm that, over time, coalesces into a 'problem.' (Bennett 2010b, p. 100)

She specifies further that 'problems give rise to publics, publics are groups of bodies with the capacity to affect and be affected' (ibid., p. 101).[79] Political communities, then, emerge on the basis of action. Put into Bennett's new materialist vocabulary, this means that a political community is an assemblage of actants. Also, as has already been shown, not only humans are actants; political communities, according to this view, can consist of human as well as non-human beings:

> Is it not the case that some of the initiatives that conjoin and cause harm started from (or later became conjoined with) the vibrant bodies of animals, plants, metals, or machines? (ibid., p. 102)

Latour similarly speaks of political collectives consisting of humans and non-humans alike (Latour 2004a, e.g. p. 61), and he conceptualises the political order such collectives constitute as a 'parliament of things' (Latour 1993, pp. 142–145). In such a parliament, humans and nature, subject and objects, would come together standing on the foundation of an abandoned distinction between facts and values, a distinction Latour strongly associates with modernity (e.g. Latour 2004a, pp. 94–102).

As Latour understands modern politics, it rests on that very distinction, and purportedly it deals only with what he occasionally refers to as 'matters of concern' (Latour 2004a, e.g. pp. 24–25, 244,b)—normative issues, that is, which are inherently contestable—and not with 'matters of fact'—questions scientists occupy themselves with concerning the objective world. Thus, according to the modern point of view, as

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[79] The work by Dewey referred to here is his *The Public and its Problems* (1991).

Latour conveys it, humans deal with matters of concern politically, and such practices are intrinsic to their social existence, whereas matters of fact are apolitical and pertain to what exists outside human societies and which is, therefore, in principle politically indisputable. However, Latour's parliament of things would encompass matters of fact by virtue of such matters being reconfigured as matters of concern. Insofar as all things are actants and actants always mediate each other, there are no pure matters of fact. There are only mediators (Latour 1998, p. 232); all matters of fact are also disputable matters of concern; all questions regarding objective existence are also questions of value and contain normative elements.

In *Politics of Nature*, Latour fine-tunes the notion of a parliament of things by conceptualising political order as consisting of two houses reminiscent of the modern political institution of bicameral representative democracy. Latour's upper house is vested with the 'power to take into account' and is responsible for determining who belongs to the collective (Latour 2004a, pp. 108–109, 250). This refers to the function of the political community to constitute itself by answering the question 'how many are we?', and by setting up two requirements for how to answer that question, Latour believes that the answer need not end up only including humans. First, it is required that, as one answers the question, one should not 'simplify the number of propositions to be taken into account in the discussion' (ibid., p. 109), and here Latour uses the term 'proposition' to denote 'not a being of the world or a linguistic form but an association of humans and nonhumans before it becomes a full-fledged member of the collective' (ibid., p. 247). Thus, any assemblage of humans

and non-humans is a potential collective, and it is pivotal that this is recognised and accepted by those who constitute themselves as political beings. Second, it is required that 'the number of voices that participate in the articulation of propositions is not arbitrarily short-circuited' (ibid., p. 109), meaning that all the relevant voices must be called together; the very number of those who decide who make up the political community 'must not itself be limited too quickly or too arbitrarily' (ibid., p. 110).

Continuing, Latour's lower house is meant to answer the question 'can we live together?' (ibid., p. 109, see also p. 246). It has the 'power to arrange in rank order', and it performs the function of providing political order with a determinate form (ibid., p. 111). Moreover, here, for order not to revert to excluding non-humans from the political world, it is required that those who make up the collective 'discuss the compatibility of new propositions with those which are already instituted, in such a way as to maintain them all in the same common world that will give them their legitimate place' and that once propositions have been instituted, their 'legitimate presence at the heart of collective life' is no longer questioned (ibid., p. 109).

In both Bennett's and Latour's views, politics is generally about the creation of meaning, much as it is conceptualised in ecologism and social constructivism. In their interactions with each other, as they come together in their publics or collectives, actants translate and mediate each other, they make sense of each other in various ways, and as a result, the political world and the world in general take on meaning.

In Latour's treatment of politics, it is quite apparent from the get-go that politics is

about meaning. The tasks of the two houses of his parliament of things are both about making sense of things. The upper house determines who is a political subject and who is not, and the lower house provides political order with a determinate form. Thus, political order determines what it is itself, and doing so also determines what it is not, what is not order. Hence, political order denotes a general creation of meaning.

Bennett, for her part, couches the meaning-creating activity of politics in the vocabulary of experiencing harm. Assemblages always act, but they become political only when something is made meaningful as an experience of harm. That very experience, determining something as a shared exposure to harm, is basically the beginning of politics in her view. That something is a harm is not given in advance in a fictive pre-political stage; the harm does not predate its public, the public brings the harm into being as a harm through the actions of actants, and by doing so, those actants also bring themselves as political subjects and the political order they constitute into being. Thus, political order is again something that is inherently about the creation of meaning. Or, to refer

back to Barad's argument about matter and meaning being 'inextricably fused together' (2007, p. 3, see also page 89 above), the discursive practices through which the world is configured and reconfigured are political practices. Political order is an instance of subjectivity as nature's activity.

Moreover, that politics is about meaning for Bennett becomes even more apparent as she hones in on democracy. Taking up the work of Rancière, Bennett theorises democratic action as a certain disruptive force. Any political order, Rancière maintains, involves the distribution of bodies, the arrangement and management of 'places, powers, and functions' (Rancière [1995] 1999, p. 99; see also Bennett 2005, p. 139, 2010b, pp. 104–106); political order is a 'partition of the sensible', a specific determination of what the world is, what it consists of, and how it works.[80] Any such order is associated with claims about having accounted for all political subjects and consequently all those who are not political subjects. However, Rancière maintains, all political orders nevertheless exclude something from the realm of political subjectivity; some subjects are always left out and treated as non-subject-

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[80] 'Partition of the sensible', or 'distribution of the sensible', is a central concept in Rancière's philosophy. Broadly, it refers to the constitution of order by emphasising the duality inherent in that constitution of uniting a community by separating it from its outside. It also highlights that this is an act originating in subjective experience itself, that it is based on perception, certain ways of perceiving the world. For a summary of this concept, see Panagia (2010). See also Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* where he writes: 'I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution…. The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. Having a particular "occupation" thereby determines the ability or inability to take charge of what is common to the community; it defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc. There is thus an "aesthetics" at the core of politics … a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time' (2004, pp. 12–13).

ive and non-political. The democratic political event consists of a disruption of order by those who are excluded disrupting order. They call its legitimacy into question by claiming political subjectivity and, thereby, rightful membership in the community. This disruptive force stems from the demos proper:

> Democracy is … the name of a singular disruption of … [the] order of distribution of bodies as a community…. It is the name of what comes and interrupts the smooth working of this order through a singular mechanism of subjectification….
>
> This mechanism can be summed up in … three aspects…. First, democracy is the kind of community that is defined by the existence of a specific sphere of appearance of the people….
>
> Second, the people occupying this sphere of appearance is a 'people' of a particular kind…. The people through which democracy occurs is a unity that does not consist of any social group but that superimposes the effectiveness of a part of those who have no part on the reckoning of society's parties. Democracy is the designation of subjects that do not coincide with the parties of the state or of society….
>
> Third, the place where the people appear is the place where a dispute is conducted. The political dispute is distinct from all conflicts of interest between constituted parties of the population, for it is a conflict over the very count of those parties. (Rancière [1995] 1999, pp. 99–100)

The disruption of order by the demos is done in the name of recognition. By claiming their subjectivity and asserting their rightful membership in the political community, those who have been excluded rearrange the partition of the sensible, and by so doing, they change what the political world is; they bring new meaning to it. As

they redefine the political world, they also redefine what it is not. Tthey bring new meaning to the world in general; they determine the world anew.

For Rancière, political subjects are always human (Bennett 2005, pp. 139–140), and he explicitly emphasises the linguistic character of democratic action; the disruptive force of the demos hinges on 'the equality of speaking beings' (Rancière [1995] 1999, p. 33; see also Bennett 2010b, p. 105). Discussing the political struggle of the plebeians against the patricians in ancient Rome, Rancière notes that

> the patricians could not even hear that the plebeians were speaking and … the latter had to construct a polemical scene so that the 'noises' that came out of their mouths could count as argumentative utterances. This extreme situation recalls what constitutes the ground of political action: certain subjects that do not count create a common polemical scene where they put into contention the objective status of what is 'given'. (Rancière and Panagia 2000, p. 125)

However, proceeding from her new materialist understanding of agentic capacities, Bennett pushes this take on democratic action beyond its anthropocentric restrictions. As she sees it, non-humans can also disrupt order and rearrange the partition of the sensible; non-humans can also participate in the particular determination of the world. They can also claim political subjectivity and redraw the boundaries of political order and what lies beyond it (e.g. Bennett 2010b, p. 107).

According to this understanding of democracy—both Rancière's and Bennett's non-anthropocentric adaptation of it—democracy is an experience of political order according to which order and oneself as a

member of that order can change. Indeed, they can change because of what one does as a political being. Thus, democratic change comes from within, from within order and the self. These phrases should be quite familiar since the same thing has already been said about ecologist and social constructivist democracy. These different strands of green political theory share the same conceptualisation of democracy; in all of them, democracy is approached in this manner, as an experience of order and of oneself according to which both order and self can change by virtue of what one does as a member of that order.

On that basis, it can also be concluded that this new materialist concept of democracy contains within itself the four components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. For new materialist democracy to possibly emerge as a meaningful concept in discourse, political order must be understood as being created by itself, which is captured, for instance, by Latour's concepts of the power to take into account and the power to put in order, or the notion of actants creating order by themselves as they act together and interact with each other; democracy, as Bennett states, is a 'self-organising system' (2005, p. 138). Order must also not have an essence since that would limit the ability of the demos to provide it with a particular form. Latour does, indeed, maintain that essences are real, but he redefines the term essence in such a way that it denotes the end result of the political power to put into order, the conclusion 'of the process of composition or articulation' (Latour 2004a, p. 241). Here, essence refers to the result of something, not that thing's perennial structure, positive substance, or something like that.

Continuing, order must also be temporally contingent; what it will be in the future cannot be disclosed by its present. Political order is a material reality, and materiality in general, as new materialists see it,

> is not causally determining or determined, and nor are its future forms teleologically prefigured. Its emergence is unpredictable and cannot be read off from antecedents. … New materialists invoke swerves and swarms, the event, rather than causal chains or laws. This has yielded a great deal of stress on contingency and chance. (Coole 2013, p. 453)

All species have 'unique histories and open-ended possibilities' (Burke, Fishel, et al. 2016, p. 517), according to this view of materiality. They are all making history (Bennett 2010b, pp. 95–96). Thus, as Connolly argues, 'just as the future of human culture is not sufficiently determined by efficient causes from the past, in nonhuman nature … the future is not sufficiently contained in the present' (2010, pp. 180–181).

Lastly, political order must consist of members having agentic capacities, and it is quite evident that it does, according to new materialists.

The inclusion of nature in democratic political order is certainly pushed quite far in new materialism, in many respects even further than in ecologism and social constructivism. However, do new materialists really advocate the actual inclusion of non-humans in decision-making procedures? Are we really talking about a true parliament of things here? Do new materialists think humans should sit next to cats, computers, stones, and trees, deliberating and deciding what to do, how to order a common world, how to arrange their lives lived together? On rare occasions, new materialists do seem to argue along those lines, as when Burke and

colleagues state that

> we must consider how pods or communities of dolphins can be seen as analogous to a nation or ethnic group in international law.... It is time to consider whether major ecosystems – such as the Amazon basin, the Arctic and Antarctic, and the Pacific Ocean – should be given the status of nations in the UN General Assembly and other bodies. (Burke, Fishel, et al. 2016, p. 516)

However, this is certainly not the predominant view among new materialists. Generally, they too restrict the inclusion of non-humans in politics to mean the *representation* of non-humans by humans in political matters.

Even Burke and colleagues continue by arguing that the inclusion of non-human beings should go via the route of representation after having suggested ecosystems being considered as analogous to nations in international relations:

> We suggest the creation of an 'Earth System Council' with the task of action and warning – much like the current UN Security Council – that would operate on the basis of majority voting with representation of Earth system scientists, major ecosystems, species groups, and states. (ibid., p. 516)[81]

Bennett is notably vague when it comes to specifying what democracy based on new materialist thinking would look like in a more concrete manner. In *Vibrant Matter*, in a section where one perhaps would have expected suggestions concerning how properly to include non-human actants in the political world, or at least something along

those lines, one finds a rehashing of the *need* for such inclusion. Having detailed her take on what democracy entails and how it functions, Bennett simply concludes that:

> A vital materialist theory of democracy seeks to transform the divide between speaking subjects and mute objects into a set of differential tendencies and variable capacities....
>
> Theories of democracy that assume a world of active subjects and passive objects begin to appear as thin descriptions at a time when the interactions between human, viral, animal, and technological bodies are becoming more and more intense. If human culture is inextricably enmeshed with vibrant, nonhuman agencies, and if human intentionality can be agentic only if accompanied by a vast entourage of nonhumans, then it seems that the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective but the (ontologically heterogeneous) 'public' coalescing around a problem. We need not only to invent or reinvoke concepts ... but also to devise new procedures, technologies, and regimes of perception that enable us to consult nonhumans more closely, or to listen and respond more carefully to their outbreaks, objections, testimonies, and propositions....
>
> [S]urely the scope of democratization can be broadened to acknowledge more nonhumans in more ways, in something like the ways in which we have come to hear the political voices of other humans formerly on the outs. (Bennett 2010b, pp. 108–109; see also Bennett 2005, p. 145)

Vagueness aside, however, Bennett seems to think that new ways of representing

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[81]See also Burke and Fishel (2016), as well as Burke and Fishel (2019, p. 104) where it is noted that: 'A model of thing-systems power strongly suggests that nonhuman animals and ecosystems should increasingly have representation in political assemblies and governance institutions based on innovative models of cross-national and ecosystem-centered deliberative democracy.... Thing-systems power challenges us to add the nonhuman into far more deliberatively rich and responsible forms of environmental governance'.

nature is the way to include it in the political world. Her approach to democracy, just like Rancière's, stresses the communicative character of democratic action. However, she does not limit speech to humans. For her, non-human things also speak, in a sense. Using the example of a major power blackout in North America, she describes the power grid as an assemblage with agentic capacities (Bennett 2010b, pp. 20–28). After the blackout, she mentions, many things were brought to the attention of the affected:

> the shabby condition of the public-utilities infrastructure, the law-abidingness of New York City residents living in the dark, the disproportionate and accelerating consumption of energy by North Americans, and the element of unpredictability marking assemblages composed of intersecting and resonating elements. (ibid., p. 36)

Importantly, Bennett refers to this as speech emanating from the power grid: 'Thus spoke the grid. One might even say that it exhibited a communicative interest' (ibid., p. 36). She admits, though, that such non-human speech is possible only on the basis of humans acting as intermediaries. Nevertheless, noting that human speech is also channelled through intermediaries of different kinds, she argues that the reliance on intermediaries does not disqualify the abilities of non-human things to speak. Thus, non-human being—or nature—speaks *to humans*, and it does so in certain ways. Bennett, with her theoretical endeavour, seeks new ways for *humans* to understand what it is nature is saying to them, new ways of interpreting the action of non-human actants, new ways of perceiving and making sense of the surrounding world:

> I want to highlight what is typically cast in the shadow: the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite-human things. . . .
>
> Why advocate the vitality of matter? Because my hunch is that the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the non-human powers circulating around and within human bodies. . . . The figure of an intrinsically inanimate matter may be one of the impediments to the emergence of more ecological and more materially sustainable modes of production. (ibid., p. ix).

Elsewhere, she also notes that the 'political potential' of 'thing-power materialism . . . resides in its ability to induce *a greater sense* of interconnectedness between humanity and nonhumanity' (Bennett 2004, p. 367, emphasis added).

Bennett does not want humans to sit next to animals, stones, trees, power grids, and so on in political assemblies deciding what to do. She wants humans to find new ways of representing those things, new ways of thinking about non-human beings, ways that take into account the agentic capacities and material thingliness shared by such things with humans.[82]

But there is an important difference between human speech and the capacity that Bennett delineates of nature to speak. Hu-

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[82]The remark could be made about another similar account of the political participation of things, provided by Disch (2016). Disch argues that things have agenda-setting capacities, effect constituency formation, and are 'mediators of environmentally responsible action in their own right' (ibid., p. 626). But despite this ambition to elevate the agentic capacities and political character of things, the account is still primarily targeting if not the need then at least the opportunities for and potential of humans thinking of things in new ways.

mans do not need to have their very capacity to speak represented by anyone else; they can do this on their own. There is, so to speak, no intermediary between a human and its speech itself; there are only intermediaries between the human and of what it speaks. To take up the aforementioned struggle between plebeians and patricians in Rome, the plebeians spoke and constructed their polemical scene by themselves; they made the patricians listen and hear their utterances as voices rather than as noises by themselves. Put differently, humans constitute themselves as political subjects by themselves; they harbour within themselves a constitutive political power. This nature does not, not even according to how Bennett understands it and its capacity to speak. Its ability to speak goes via human intermediaries; it relies on humans accepting that its noise is actually a voice. It cannot speak for itself by itself. Thus, according to the way in which democracy, non-human agency, human-nature relations, and so on are conceptualised by Bennett herself, nature is still not a constitutive political power; it does not create itself as a political subject. Instead, it depends on humans representing it as a political subject, as a member of the political community.

Much the same can be said of Latour and his parliament of things. As per the notion that all actants translate each other in their interactions, they are also what Latour calls spokespersons. In *Politics of Nature*, Latour lexically defines spokesperson as a designation of 'all the speech impedimenta' that explain the dynamics of the collective (2004a, p. 250). Speech impedimenta is defined in a similar fashion as 'the difficulties one has in speaking and the devices one needs for the articulation of the common world' (ibid.,

pp. 249–250). Continuing, articulation is defined as 'that which connects propositions with one another' (ibid., p. 237), and propositions, as has already been covered, designate 'not a being of the world or a linguistic form but an association of humans and nonhumans before it becomes a full-fledged member of the collective' (ibid., p. 247). Taken together, these definitions suggest that associations of humans and non-humans get connected by means of various devices into political collectives, and these devises are called spokespersons. Thus, the spokesperson concept refers to the function of bringing the political community together; it designates the constitution of political order, much like Latour's other concepts of the power to take into account and put in order.

Latour situates the activity of the spokesperson between two extremes: '"I am speaking"' and '"the facts are speaking"' (ibid., p. 64). A spokesperson never speaks for itself on its own behalf, nor does it simply repeat what something else says by itself. Latour, just like Bennett, maintains that nothing ever speaks for itself on its own behalf without intermediaries. One of his major arguments is that human speech about nature and human speech about how their lives lived together should be arranged are not different in kind. In both, humans act as spokespersons speaking on behalf of something more than themselves; humans re-present something in both situations.

Latour often uses the trope of lab coats—basically scientists working in laboratories—to capture human representation of non-human being. The sciences are ways to represent nature, and what scientists do in their work is speaking of nature in certain ways. These ways are the ways of the spokesperson:

the lab coats are the spokespersons of the nonhumans, and, as is the case with all spokespersons, *we have to entertain serious but not definitive doubts* about their capacity to speak in the name of those they represent. (Latour 2004a, pp. 64–65)

There is as much doubt surrounding scientific discourse as there is surrounding political discourse (ibid., p. 65). Hence, scientific representation—or the representation of the non-human world in general—and political representation are characterised by the same presence of doubt and uncertainty (Dobson 2010, pp. 756–758, 2014, pp. 150–154). This is key for the inclusion of nature in democratic politics, for there is no longer a division between speaking of natural matters and speaking of political matters:

Thanks to the notion of spokesperson, a process of assembling can now begin, one that no longer divides up the types of representatives in advance according to whether they demonstrate what things are or declare what humans want. In the single Kyoto forum, each of the interested parties ... agree to consider the other as a spokesperson, without finding it relevant to decide whether the other represents humans, landscapes, chemical-industry lobbies, South Sea plankton, Indonesian forests, the United States economy, nongovernmental organizations, or elected governments. (Latour 2004a, p. 65)

Nature can be included in the political world, then, on the basis of humans representing non-humans just as they represent other humans. It does not matter in advance what is represented. That is instead a question continually present in and part of political deliberation itself; matters of fact are matters of concern, and matters of concern are matters of fact:

All our requirements have the form of an imperative. In other words, they *all* involve the question of what *ought to* be done. It is impossible to begin to ask the moral question *after* the states of the world have been defined. The question of what ought to be ... is not a moment in the process; rather, it is coextensive with the entire process—whence the imposture there would be in seeking to limit oneself to one stage or another. Symmetrically, the famous question of the definition of facts is not reduced to just one or two stages but is distributed through all the stages. (ibid., p. 125)

Latour maintains, again like Bennett, that this way of approaching things means that the ability to speak is dislodged from the existence of human beings: 'speech is no longer a specifically human property, or at least humans are no longer its sole masters' (ibid., p. 65). By that, he can also allow himself to state that the political community, even as it extends to non-human beings, is a collective of beings capable of speaking (ibid., p. 62).

Even so, Latour is still not actually advocating the actual participation of non-human beings in political practice. He does not suggest that animals, stones and trees, ecosystems, and so on should hold actual seats in his parliament of things. That is not necessary at all since, holding such seats, they would still not speak for themselves without mediation. Participation for the purpose of speaking on one's behalf is irrelevant in the light of the notion that speech is always mediated. 'I do not claim that things speak "on their own"', Latour writes, 'since no beings, not even humans, speak on their own, but always *through something or someone else*' (ibid., p. 68).

What Latour is advocating, rather than the actual inclusion of non-humans in polit-

ics, is that humans properly represent in their political world that 'something or someone else' through which they speak; he seeks the inclusion of non-human being in politics by means of human representation. How to do this is to broaden how the non-human world and its entanglement with humans are made meaningful in political deliberation. Whiteside summarises Latour's position by noting that his parliament of things 'would effectively give representation to hybrids by creating an arena of negotiation for all the groups whose activities allow us to see the contours of the hybrid' (2002, p. 134). Indeed, Latour believes it to be paramount for democracy to include more than just human voices. However, it is not non-human voices themselves that should be included. Instead, humans should still do all the talking; nature should be included in democratic politics by virtue of being talked about:

> Democracy can only be conceived if it can freely traverse the now-dismantled border between science and politics, in order to add a series of new voices to the discussion, voices that have been inaudible up to now. . .: *the voices of non-humans*. To limit the discussion to humans, their interests, their subjectivities, and their rights, will appear as strange a few years from now as having denied the right to vote of slaves, poor people, or women. To use the notion of discussion while limiting it to humans alone, without noticing that there are millions of subtle mechanisms capable of adding new voices to the chorus, would be to allow prejudice to deprive us of the formidable power of the sciences. Half of public life is found in laboratories; that is where we have to look for it. (Latour 2004a, p. 69)

Thus, Latour is not so much advocating the broadening of democracy beyond humans as he is the broadening of democracy towards multiplying the human representations of the non-human world, especially towards the sciences.[83] He does not want to look for democracy in nature; he wants to look for it in laboratories. Non-human beings are merely indirectly included in the political community by being represented and talked about in new ways. As Harbers critically remarks, even in Latour's 'extended parliament it is only people who do the talking. . . . [T]hings . . . still . . . get a voice only through human spokespersons' (1995, p. 274). Natural things are not active political subjects here. They are proxy members of the political community depending on humans to take them into account when determining what is and what is not political. As Latour notes, the

> search for good spokespersons is going to necessitate a rather complicated course of action as well for veterinarians, cattle farmers, butchers, and government employees, not to mention cows, calves, sheep, and lambs, who must all be consulted, one way of another, according to procedures that have to be reinvented every time, some coming from the laboratory, others from political assemblies, a third group from the marketplace, a fourth from government, but all converging in the production of authorized or stammering voices. It is clear that the power to take into account is translated into a sort of state of alert imposed on the whole collective: laboratories do research, farmers investigate, consumers worry, veterinarians point out symptoms, epidemiologists analyze their statistics, journalists probe, cows mill about, sheep

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[83] In fact, critics of this approach have pointed out that it actually might result in a representation of nature that is quite restricted: 'The call to include nature's voice in politics . . . seems to lend support to calls to amplify the voices of *some* humans . . . over others' (Archer, Ephraim, and Maxwell 2013, p. 7, emphasis added).

get the shakes. (Latour 2004a, p. 112)

Latour's wager is that novel ways of representing nature politically will result in new and better ways in which humans relate to and treat the non-human world around them, the world of which they actually are a part. In the end, then, his parliament is actually more of a parliament *for* or *about* things than it is a parliament *of* things (Whiteside 2002, p. 136).

Like Bennett, Latour seeks new ways of making sense and thinking about the world, new ways of understanding and representing the activity of non-human actants. However, he too denies non-humans the constitutive political power humans possess. As has been shown, only human spokespersons speak in Latour's parliament of things, and as has also been shown, the concept of spokesperson denotes something more than just someone speaking on behalf of someone else. It refers to the constitution of political order, and since only human spokespersons populate political order it is implied that only they have the power to constitute that order. Thus, non-human things are not in possession of that power. Again, things of the natural world do not create themselves as political subjects. For that, they have to rely on human representation. Importantly, that representation must entail a depiction of the natural world as having political subjectivity, as having agency. In other words, that representation must represent nature in a certain way.

New materialism, then, bridges humans and nature by making humans the spokespersons of non-human things. Nature is included in politics, and its separation from humans overcome, by means of humans representing it in their political actions. So

from the general assertion that the world itself is a political space and the claim that politics cannot be reserved for humans alone, new materialism moves on to advocate the inclusion of nature in democratic political order simply through the mechanism of representation; new materialism bridges the alleged divide between humans and nature politically through human representation of nature.

As I have already argued, however, when dealing with ecologism and social constructivism, this way of including non-human beings, or nature, in politics is rather detrimental to democracy and the prospects for the democratic experience to appear. Both ecologism and social constructivism tend to disqualify their own concept of democracy as they strive to include nature in the political world through representation. So does new materialism. Because of how it brings humans and nature together through representation, new materialism tends to disqualify the concept of democracy on which it relies. Again, democracy as an experience of order and of oneself according to which both of those can change because of what one does as part of political order is not compatible with the inclusion of nature as a political subject by means of humans representing that subjectivity.

New materialism is effectively denying nature the ability to represent as it advances the argument that humans ought to represent non-human beings, their agentic capacities, and their network-based connections to humans. To the extent, however, that nature acts and plays an active role in the creation of a meaningful world, which is exactly the argument new materialism advances, the power to represent is a power nature should possess. An actant creates meaning, and

the creation of meaning arguably includes making representations, and since non-human beings are actants according to new materialism, it follows that they should also have the power to make representations. In other words, nature should be able to represent by itself. Thus, that denial is in conflict with the understanding of nature upon which new materialism is grounded. Indeed, nature being inherently active and containing within itself the process of making and changing meaning is also why nature is inherently political, as new materialism sees things. Hence, one could say that also natural things should have the ability to represent by virtue of being political.

What happens in new materialism, just like in ecologism and social constructivism, is a transformation of nature's powers. Putatively, nature has the power of representation. In the end, however, once theorising arrives at democracy and political inclusion, that power is transformed into represented power. In that process, nature's power to represent is transferred to humans. Nature's power to constitute political order, arrange lives lived in common, and provide the world with meaning, is denied nature and instead taken care of by humans; humans seize nature's constitutive power. Or, in less dramatic terms, nature's constitutive power only surfaces if humans push it upwards. Only if humans make sense of nature in a certain way does it have such power. 'Whatever snags our attention', as Abram notes, 'has its own agency' (2010, p. 70).[84] Thus, the same problem appears here as in ecologism and social constructivism. One

part of the political community assumes the power of the other, and by that, the locus of political creativity is displaced; all purported members of political order are no longer creative and no longer contribute to the determination of order and what lies beyond it.

However, as in ecologism and social constructivism, the transformation of representative power to represented power is a principle impossibility. For a tenet of new materialism is that matter in general is active in itself, and as has been delineated, this activity encompasses the creation of meaning; meaning and the power to represent, according to new materialism, are located in the very material existence of things. There is no more fundamental origin of meaning than material existence, no source of representation more primordial than things in general. Thus, the power to represent is not represented. The determination of the world is not determined; it does not belong to the world it determines. Instead, it exists rather as its condition of possibility. Therefore, things cannot really be part of political order while being denied their constitutive power. If their constitutive power is simply represented, they have no part at all. They become excluded. In the end, new materialist nature does not participate in the arrangement of life lived in common; only humans do; at the end of the proverbial day, only humans are political. Political order is still only populated by human things; natural things are not political subjects. Nature has to make do with being spoken about. At best, it is spoken about as if it is speaking:

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[84] The cited work by Abram is not explicitly new materialist, but is written in the same vein. Also, the quoted passage is part of an argument meant to defend non-human agency, but this notion, that 'our attention' is a determinant of such agency, seems to me to contradict this position since it rather locates non-human agency in human attention or at least channels it through human attention.

> Within the collective, there is … a blend of entities, voices, and actors…. [W]e have discovered the work common to politics and to the sciences alike: stirring the entities of the collective together in order to make them articulable and to *make them speak.* (Latour 2004a, p. 89)

Again, the indirect inclusion of nature in politics and the inability to acknowledge natural things as political subjects have damaging consequences. For things that have to rely on others for representation in politics, the world never changes as a result of what they do. Strictly speaking, they do nothing at all. For them, the world will always remain the same, and they will always be things that rely on others for agency. The future will always be the same in the sense that nature will always be in need of representation; nature in need of representation is a constant in the world of new materialism. This does not only affect natural things and their future prospects. For if nature is forever in need of representation, humans forever need to represent it; humans are left with the permanent role of representing nature, just like in ecologism and social constructivism. Humans will always have to be spokespersons of nature, the ones who 'stir the entities of the collective together', in the words of Latour. Ultimately, then, both humans and nature remain the same. These aspects of what it means to be natural and human are withheld from contingency and political deliberation. These aspects cannot change as a result of the political creation of meaning. They are safeguarded from discussions about what it means to be this or that or about what the world is like. In the end, this results in the no-show of the four conceptual components of political order that the new materialist concept of democracy is built upon. The members of political community are no longer agentic since they cannot change the fundamental aspects of what they are; they cannot create meaning in general anymore. Moreover, the future is evidently no longer contingent, for both humans and non-humans will always have to be in a certain way. By that, political order receives an essential structure. Lastly, since political order is essentially what it is independent of what the members who populate it do, political order no longer appears to be self-creative. All in all, this suggests that the democratic experience cannot surface; it cannot emerge as a meaningful concept. Indeed, new materialism also ends up with an experience according to which everything must remain what it already is instead of it being able to change. In other words, new materialist democracy is the other of democracy rather than anything else.

Why does this occur? Why does new materialist theorising end up in this disconcerting place? It happens because of the attempt to bridge humans and nature politically through representation in tandem with the understanding of politics as the creation of meaning. As long as nature is conceptualised in such a way that its political subjectivity needs representation from humans, neither humans nor nature will change, and the democratic experience—itself conceptualised as an experience of political order and of oneself according to which both can change because of what one does— will, therefore, not emerge; the world and the self will not be experienced as something that can change as a result of what one does. The self will always have to represent the non-human world, and the non-human world will always be in need of representation. Political action can do nothing about that. In-

stead, the basic questions regarding what it means to be human and what the world is, are abandoned and handed over from politics to something else. What 'something else' is that? New materialism and political theory, it seems. If the new materialist bridging of humans and nature is to be realised, the new materialist understanding of humans, nature, and their relation must be accepted as absolutely true. For what would happen to the new materialist arguments about how to order politics if non-human things suddenly were not conceptualised as being in need of representation? The bridge between humans and nature would evidently be retracted as nature would be free to be whatever. Nature could be this, or it could be that, without having to be related to humans in a unity of identity. This possibility threatens the viability of new materialism as democratic theory. Therefore, it seems like the new materialist understanding of humans and nature must be posited instead of exposed to the contingency of political practice. This is indeed very similar to the situation for ecologism and social constructivism. All three require that the truthfulness of their conceptualisations are posited, while their conceptualisation of politics as the general creation of meaning is ignored. With all three, one seems required to accept each one as the apolitical foundation of political practice, which of course begs the question of whether any one of them does not exactly amount to a certain way of understanding humankind, the world in general, and their relation, which is exactly what politics is supposed to be about according to all of them. If democracy is about proceeding towards and creating a determined meaningful world, then ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism seem to foreclose

democracy, for they already provide such determinations.

Much like ecologism and social constructivism, new materialism ends up disqualifying its own concept of democracy. As I will now move on to argue, it also tends to disqualify its bridging of humans and nature by presupposing that they form a unity of difference instead of a unity of identity. To that extent, new materialism presupposes a relation between humans and nature that contradicts the one it seeks to accommodate, ground itself on, and affirm. New materialism is conditioned by a view according to which human things are fundamentally different from other things.

The unity of identity between humans and nature, which new materialism seeks to establish, is based on the thingly being shared by humans and nature and on their belonging to the same whole world of things. Human and non-human things add up to something complete, to a whole, by virtue of their thingly being; being things, humans and non-humans are like the identical banks of a river connected by a bridge.

Most importantly, their thingly being purportedly entails activity; in new materialism, both human and non-human things are asserted to be active in the sense of doing things, making a difference, and creating a meaningful world on their own; all things are said to create a world that is a world *for them*. This conceptualisation of things, this rendition of what the world and the stuff in it are, is meant to be valid in itself, independent of its context or origin. Simply put, it is meant to be independent of the thoughts of those who make it. So, in a way, new materialism claims to speak for things in general as they are in themselves and as they are without being connected to human subjects.

There is, however, a contradiction going on here. If humans, as things, create a world that is a world for themselves according to their way of being things, then the things in that world, and what they are, are only things *for humans*. Therefore, the claim that all things are active and create a world by and for themselves should actually be appended with a 'for humans', or a 'for us'. *For us as humans*, things are active and create a meaningful world. That is what new materialism seems to say. However, this makes that conceptualisation of things, which was meant to be absolutely valid, relative to and contingent on human thingly being and human experience. Thus, it is not a description of the world as it is in itself any longer; it is a description of the world as it appears for humans.

The world beyond thought that new materialism uncovers is actually a world for thought; it is a thought of world. Perhaps the most telling illustration of this is how both Harman and Bennett actually do new materialist theory; how they approach their subject matter and how they arrive at things beyond thought and without connection to humans.

Harman and Bennett argue for the need of a certain naïveté, a naïveté allowing for the proper being of things and their powers to surface in cognition, in the minds of those who try to grasp the objective reality of the world (Bennett 2004, pp. 356–359, 2010b, pp. xiii–xv, 17–19; Harman 2011c, pp. 5–7). It is through naïveté that the ontological primacy of objects is revealed; it is on the basis of naïveté that one can see trees as trees, stones as stones, and so on without pushing further, hoping to find more profound levels of reality. Non-naïve approaches miss this target and proceed, in reference to Harman,

to undermine or overmine objects.

However, what is naïveté but a certain way of reasoning? What is it but a kind of thought that postpones 'a genealogical critique of objects' (Bennett 2010b, p. 17) and lingers on what it encounters immediately? Naïveté is the everyday way of thinking about things; in naïve thinking, the tree before me is a tree and not a bundle of atoms or, for example, something that I conceptualise as a tree because of the historical unfolding of which me standing before the three is a part.

The stuff revealed by naïveté is very much stuff revealed by thought and according to a certain way of thinking. In broader terms, new materialism is an intellectual endeavour as tainted by thought as other endeavours that it positions itself against. Therefore, the objects and their qualities it discourses about are equally tainted by thought. For ways of thinking that undermine objects, objects appear as aggregates of a more profound level of reality and for ways of thinking that overmine objects, they appear as figments of imagination or something along those lines. For the naïve approach adopted by new materialism, objects appear as objects. This does not change, however, the fact that what is thought of *appear for thought.* Again, new materialism for all its naïveté might talk about objects independent of thought, but those objects are nevertheless objects that appear for thought. The world beyond thought is actually a world that, for a certain way of thinking, *appears* to be beyond thought. Therefore, conditioned by a certain way of thinking, the new materialist description of the world is valid for humans; it is not a valid description of the world as it is beyond that way of thinking.

Another critical remark that can be raised

against new materialism along the same lines is, simply, that the things new materialists talk about are always things that make sense in human language. They talk about objects and object relations in ways that make sense for humans; the objects that are supposed to be independent of thought are always presented in very recognisable ways. Just to mention an example, Harman, in a passage in his *The Quadruple Object*, writes about a paperweight lying on a table. There, he argues that

> the paperweight is supported by a table, not by a 'sensual object in general,' since otherwise there would be no reason for it to sit on the table rather than being melted or flying off into space. (Harman 2011c, p. 121)

Here, my concern is not Harman's argument about the paperweight having a relation to a table rather than a sensual object in general. Instead, what is of interest to me is how the reasoning is evidently conditioned by a human way of understanding the situation. Perhaps the paperweight actually perceives itself flying around in space together with the table as parts of the planet Earth? Perhaps it experiences something completely different that does not make sense at all in human terms. Why should it experience a table at all; why should it experience itself as different from the table?

The point here is not so much that there is no way for humans to know these things as it is that however humans do approach them, they are approached in human ways. There is no way to do away with the humanness of human cognition, no way for thought to step outside itself.

Harman might counter these remarks by noting that he takes these issues into account through his theory about objects translat-ing each other. Indeed, it would seem that he would readily admit that humans make sense of the paperweight and the table in human ways, and the paperweight makes sense of the table in a paperweight way, and so on. However, if humans make sense of things in human ways, then this should apply to Harman's philosophy as well. His object-oriented philosophy is a human way of understanding things. Therefore, the description of objects and the theory of reality it delivers are also of human character. This, of course, applies to new materialism in general; new materialism is a human way to understand the world, and it is conditioned by something that belongs to humans in their being. It is not a description of the world as it is in itself; it is a description of the world as it appears for humans. Again, there is a contradiction at the core of new materialist reasoning: if it is said that all things translate other things in ways unique to their being and that humans are also such things, then the first saying is contradicted by adding the second. For then, the purportedly general description of things is also said to be a particular description of things conditioned by a certain way to translate the world.

The activity that new materialism ascribes to all things, then, actually only pertains to things that are human; action only comes from humans. Ultimately, no other things have agency here; no other things create meaning. Things are said to act and participate in meaning-making, but they do not, for they are simply *said* to do that. It seems reasonable to ask what would happen if they did create meaning. If things have agentic capacities and the new materialist rendition of the world is actually a description of the world as it is in itself unconditioned by thought, then humans would be denied

their agentic capacity. For if this is the case, humans would simply reflect in their understanding the creative capacity of the rest of the world; they would not create a world of their own; they would not create meaning but mirror or duplicate the meaning residing in the rest of the world itself. If the statement that things create meaning is a statement valid for things themselves, then the one who is making the statement does not, in making that statement, create meaning. There is no active creation of a meaningful world in such a statement. Thus, if non-human things create meaning and this is something humans truly can know, then humans would not create meaning and not determine a world of their own. In other words, if non-human things are agentic in this way, humans will lose their corresponding agentic capacity.

If this was actually accepted, if new materialists would admit that humans have no agency and do not create meaning, then new materialism would certainly disqualify itself as political theory. If humans have no agency, then why bother doing theory and trying to influence how humans think of their relation to the rest of the world? Thus, in the face of collapse, this position seems impossible to endorse by new materialism if it is to assert itself as a valid theoretical and political project.

Hence, new materialism seems to tacitly require that non-human things are passive. Such things need to be passive if humans are to be conceptualised as active. Non-human things cannot be allowed to create meaning without humans also losing that ability. So unless new materialism is ready to accept that humans are not actively creating a world on their own—and by that face theoretical collapse—then ultimately, humans

are also the only things defined as things that determinate the meaning of other things. Those other things, for their part, are passive, and their meaning is determined by someone else, someone human.

Of course, this conceptual arrangement with active human things and passive non-human things is strictly opposed to what is actually advocated from new materialist positions. Nevertheless, it is presupposed in the way new materialist arguments are set up; new materialism presupposes that humans are active and non-human things are passive. By that, human and non-human things appear fundamentally different, and they are also separated from each other based on that difference. New materialism presupposes humans and non-human things being separate from each other.

What separates human and non-human things is activity. As active things, humans are fundamentally separate from non-human passive things. Thus, if I were to allow myself to call non-human things natural things and the world they comprise nature, humans are, despite what new materialism wants to convey, fundamentally separate from nature. For humans are first and foremost active things, and non-human things are first and foremost passive things. So the new materialist tenet that all things are first and foremost things is actually discursively grounded on a notion that humans are first and foremost active things and non-human things are first and foremost passive things. The world of things is split in two. One half with active things, the other with passive things. All things are not the same, then. Human beings are fundamentally active, whereas natural beings are fundamentally passive. Thus, humans and nature do not belong to the same whole, to the

same thingly world. For humans reside in a world of active things, nature in a world of passive things. By that, they no longer share the identity of belonging to the same world. Therefore, new materialism presupposes that humans and nature do not form a unity of identity.

It has been outlined already that new materialism associates the activity of creating meaning with politics; politics is conceptualised as the creation of meaning in general. However, now, when the human thing appears to be the only active thing, then the human thing certainly also appears to be the only political thing. Thus, insofar as humans are different from natural things, politics is also different from nature; politics is as separate from the natural world as are humans. There is a qualitative difference, a rupture, between the political world of humans and the world of nature.

The relation between politics and nature presupposed by new materialist reasoning is not a complete separation, however. Humans and non-humans are not split up in a duality where the two worlds exist independently of each other. This certainly echoes the previous discussions about the presuppositions of ecologism and social constructivism. For there is no wall between humans and nature here.

Nature receives fundamental attention from the political world. For to the extent that politics is the creation of meaning in general and exists only as it renders the world meaningful, it requires something to make meaningful; the creation of meaning is not creation ex nihilo. The existence of politics hinges on the existence of something its activity can be directed at. That something is the world in general. Just like ecologist and social constructivist political order, new

materialist political order requires a world that is simply different from determination. As a practice of determining meaning, politics requires that which is different from itself, something non-determined. It depends on the existence of something outside itself, something other than the determination of meaning. As is the situation for ecologism and social constructivism, that outside world can have no other qualities than being outside of political order. It is a world of pure difference. Should it have qualities, it would have meaning, and by that, politics would be nothing at all. Thus, as it is conceptualised in new materialism, political order presupposes an outside world that simply is; it presupposes a pure void. That being said, it can still be said to be an objective world insofar as political practice is said to be subjective. It is an objective world, but it has no objects with positive qualities; it is a material world without form. It is, therefore, also in a sense a natural world. Thus, it can be said that new materialism presupposes the existence of an empty nature that simply is outside of political order.

So, on one side, there is an empty nature, and on the other, a political order populated by humans who make the world meaningful in their political practice. Politics, then, directs itself towards the natural world. Therefore, politics is possible only together with that outside natural world. Again, nature surfaces as the necessary correlate of politics. For the concept of politics to make sense, an empty nature must exist separately from political order, and vice versa, if nature is to be something other than a pure void, complete nothingness, then political order must exist as that which provides it with meaning and gives it form. Politics and nature presuppose each other. It has already been shown

above that ecologism and social constructivism presuppose that politics and nature are related in such a fashion that there is no politics without nature and no nature without politics. Exactly the same arrangement is presupposed by new materialism.

The presupposed relation between the human world of politics and nature is one where there is still a unity between the two parties. However, it is not a unity of identity, not a unity in which the parties form something complete and comprise a whole. Rather, it is a unity of difference, a unity in which the parties do not belong together. The parties always come in tandem by presupposing each other, and they are unthinkable without each order—ultimately, they only make sense as a pair. They are nevertheless fundamentally different from each other and do not add up to a whole. They have no basic identity with each other.

Above, I have described such relations by using the metaphor of a door constituting an inside and an outside different from each other. What is inside of a door is fundamentally different from what is outside of it, and that difference emerges only through the presence of the door itself. The door brings about the difference between the two sides it relates. Bridges establish identity, walls dualities of worlds, and doors difference. In so doing, doors still unite what they differentiate; they juxtapose unity and difference.

The relation between humans and nature that is presupposed by new materialism is a relation equivalent to that of a door constituting inside and outside in this way. It is a relation in which humans and nature are constituted as different from each other. One party, the human one, is active and determines the meaning of the other party, and that party, nature, is passive and determined. However, without something to determine, humans would be nothing, and without something determining it, nature would be nothing. Therefore, both humans and nature are required for meaning to arise; according to the presuppositions of new materialism, meaning is established in the relation between politics and nature.

Above, the relation between humans and nature presupposed by ecologism and social constructivism has also been described as a conjunction in which the *and* between humans and nature is emphasised. The same goes for new materialism. It too presupposes a relation between humans and nature in which the *and* between them is emphasised since they become intelligible only together in their difference. In other words, this relation also echoes what Meillassoux would call correlationism. Seeing as this is a relation between thought *as an act* and thingly being, however, rather than thought *as thought* and the world, I prefer to speak of the relation as a conjunction instead, as noted already, distinguishing the argument from Meillassoux's take on modern philosophy.

Importantly, since new materialism presupposes that humans and nature are related in a unity of difference, equivalent to the unity between what is inside and outside a door, it reproduces this relation in its discursive practice. Since this relation is different from the one which is sought to be affirmed from within new materialism, new materialism as a discourse reproduces something different from what it intends to affirm. Hence, just like ecologism and social constructivism, new materialism ends up reproducing and affirming a unity of difference between humans and nature instead of the unity of identity which it seeks. New ma-

terialists also end up with a door instead of a bridge as they try to take on the wall they see dividing humans and nature in modernity. The difference between humans and nature, between the world of politics and the world of nature, must first be in place before new materialism can try to bring them together and in their attempts they inevitably keep them separated.

It is time for a summary of the discussion on new materialism. It has been argued here that the new materialist take on green democracy and the bridging of humans and nature is burdened by the same problems as ecologism and social constructivism. In it, democracy is conceptualised as an experience of political order and of oneself according to which both order and the self can change as a result of one's actions as a member of political order. However, in its attempt to bring nature into politics by means of human representation, it disqualifies this very concept. As humans represent the political subjectivity of non-humans, the locus of political creativity is displaced, and the democratic experience never surfaces as a meaningful concept in discourse. New materialism, too, fails to adhere to the concept of democracy it advocates. Moreover, new materialism also fails to bridge humans and nature and bring them together in a unity of difference. For that enterprise is conditioned by a conceptualisation of that relation according to which the related parties form a unity of difference. New materialism presupposes that humans and nature are fundamentally different yet always come together as a pair. Either side of the pair makes sense only in relation to the other. Thus, the new materialist attempt to politically bridge the divide between humans and nature by extending democracy beyond human confines

fails; the bridge collapses in on itself.

The Double Short-Circuit of Green Democracy

The Anthropocene seems to require new ways of thinking about human-nature relations, and as an imaginary it pushes towards a rethinking of political concepts in general, including the concept of democracy, away from anthropocentrism.

According to the Anthropocene imaginary and the discourse of green political theory, modernity and modern political thought are grounded in and by a separation of humans and nature. Moderns, the story goes, believe they are utterly different from and independent of nature; they believe, or at least assume, there is a wall separating them from the perils of nature, a wall forming two worlds—one human and political, the other natural—independent of each other, disunited and different.

Many environmentalists also approach this believed or assumed dualism as a main driver of undesirable environmental change, as a root cause of unsustainability. Moreover, many environmentalists construe modernity in such a way that modern democracy—and by that the modern project of liberty and emancipation associated with it—is viewed as presupposing the presence of a wall between the human world of politics and the material world of nature. To that extent, dualism grounds both unsustainable practice and democratic politics.

Furthermore, if dualism is to blame for the environmental predicament of the modern world, overcoming it would seem to offer a remedy for unsustainability. Moving away from modern dualism, the wall between humans and nature, disunity and

difference, and human exceptionalism, such is the recipe for sustainability in the Anthropocene. Democracy not built on human-nature dualism, therefore, surfaces as a normatively desirable approach to deal politically with problems of unsustainability. Indeed, the strands of environmentalist thought that have been discussed above very much strive towards such a reconceptualisation of democracy. The parts of the discourse of green political theory that have been the focus of the inquiry seek a way of thinking about humans and nature according to which the two share a basic identity as part of a greater whole and thereby form a unity of identity. A bridge is sought between human and natural being, bringing them together in the same landscape. In this relation, humans and nature need not be the same. Their identity is an identity of belonging, of belonging together; the bridge forms a relation of belonging. The bridge lays the foundation for one world and parts belonging together. For the sake of sustainability, green political theory seeks to move away from thinking about humans and nature in a way that emphasises separation and difference towards a mode of thought emphasising their belonging and identity instead.

In ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism, green democracy—understood as non-anthropocentric democracy, or democracy that includes non-human beings—is vested with the potential to transform unsustainability into sustainability by providing such a bridge between humans and nature. By extending democracy to the natural world and thereby including nature in political order, dualism is seemingly overcome. The wall separating a human world and a natural world from each other is torn down, replaced by a bridge uniting humans and nature in the unity of two parts belonging to the same whole.

Thus, according to the underlying logic of green political theory, green democracy seems to offer a way to politically bridge the gap between humans and nature and an opportunity to move society, in normatively desirable ways, in a direction towards sustainability. Indeed, green democracy is presented as a kind of unbounded democracy and by broadening democracy's scope, green democracy is argued to expand and improve upon the modern project of liberty and emancipation. Green democracy, as it is advocated then, is a case of more and better democracy.

What happens to democracy in this move? In the previous three sections, three attempts to conceptualise green democracy within green political theory have been surveyed and deconstructed, and as has been argued, all of them come up short. To summarise that shortcoming, let me first list what they have in common. Despite different theoretical and intellectual backgrounds, ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism do have a couple of important things in common.

Crucially, they share the overall understanding of politics as the creation of meaning in general. For all of them, politics is about determining what things are in the sense of providing meaning to the world, which includes determining what political order itself is. Political order, in this sense, determines itself and, doing so, also what political order is not, what is not political order.

Furthermore, they share the same concept of democracy. In all three of them, democracy is conceptualised as an experience of political order and of oneself as a member

of political order according to which one can change oneself and the political order one is part of by virtue of being a member of that order. Coupled with the aforementioned understanding of politics as the creation of meaning, this means that democracy is an experience of being able to determine what order is, what things of the world are, and what the self is; democracy is about determination and a certain experience of determination and the creation of meaning.

Moreover, this conceptualisation of democracy presupposes a certain conceptualisation of political order, also shared among ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism. As has been argued, the concept of democracy presupposes that political order has four interrelated properties that amount to components making up political order as a concept. Those four properties or conceptual components are:

➥ *Self-creativity:* Political order creates itself; it entails an element of constitutive power. This power has the peculiar character of being neither immanent to political order nor transcendent of it. Instead, it is as a condition of possibility of order, and it exists only by means of what it conditions and is visible only through that which it brings about. This is a power of determination, and that power is not itself determined; constitutive power is not constituted power. As a power of determination, explicating this component of the concept of political order presupposed by democracy also highlights that democracy denotes a power of self-determination. Democracy, in a way, is a political order that provides the world in general with order. It orders itself, what is inside itself, and what it consists of, and it orders what is outside itself. It determines what

things are; it determines what is political and what is not political. Democracy is an order that creates order, an order of ordering, an order that orders. It is, then, an *ordering*. It exists, thusly, as an ordering, as a determination of the world. As an ordering, it does not itself have an ordering principle, a source that orders it. Political order has no transcendent origin. It only originates in itself and its own creativity, its own constitutive power. Given that this constitutive power is not immanent to political order either, political order originates in its own conditions of possibility. Effectively, its cause is its own conditions of possibility;

➥ *Inessentialism:* Political order has no positive substance determining its properties and what order is in itself. It has no perennial structure around which its being unfolds. Any political structure is merely the result of the activity of political being as such. Structure results from what happens and what is done politically. Thus, for democratic political order, action is logically prior to structure. Or, to use a different term, structure is a result of how politics functions, by which it is implied that structure resolves into function; what political order *is*, its constitution, resolves into what is happening and what is done, into the action of political beings. Democratic political order and what lies beyond it are what the subjects of democratic order make of them;

➥ *Temporal contingency:* Political order need not be in the future what it is in the present. Since order constitutes itself and has no essence, it can become anything at all, and what it can become is not determined by what it already is. Would that be the case, if it would be possible to derive the future of political order from its present being, then it would, by implication, have a

structure around which it unfolds. Thus, its being is necessarily contingent. There is no reason why political order is what it is beyond its own constitutive power, beyond its own activity. Nor will its being in the future have a reason. Order need not be this or that; it can always be otherwise. In other words, the democratic experience is an experience according to which the future is always open because it is about the creation of meaning in general. From the view of democracy, the future can always be otherwise; it is up for grabs by those who act politically, by those who are political. For the subjects of democracy, the future and the world of the future are not determined by the present or what the world presently is, nor by what it has been in the past;

☙ *Agentic membership:* Political order consists of members of a political community; it is subjectively constituted, populated by beings who create meaning, determine things, act, and do things. Thus, it consists of members with agency. Those agents participate in the self-creation of order and the determination of the world, and they are the only ones to do so. And they act by virtue of being members of political order, their agency emerging in their very being as political subjects. Political subjectivity does not derive from a more profound level of subjectivity. The self-creative power of political order simply emerges from the subjective elements of order; the power to create meaning and determine what the world is is but a power located in those who popu-

late the political world. Hence, the world as a determinate, meaningful place is created by political subjects. This also means that the power to create meaning is a power to bring into existence, a power to constitute. The creative power of political subjectivity provides order with its constitutive principle, which is to say, again, that political order provides itself with a constitutive principle.

Ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism also have in common the view that the extension of democracy beyond humans can be achieved by humans representing nature. They all want to bridge the gap between humans and nature through the mechanism of political representation.[85] Importantly, the human representation of nature encompasses humans representing nature's creative abilities. The democratic bridging of humans and nature requires that humans represent the self-creative power of nature, its constitutive power. Put differently, nature's political subjectivity is, in this arrangement, only ever a represented subjectivity. Here, subjectivity itself is represented.

But by representing the self-creative power of nature, green democracy actually starts to crumble; it caves in on itself. Such representation displaces the creative locus of political order. Some subjects are no longer said to be creative. They cannot determine a world on their own, nor can they determine what they are themselves. Therefore, they cannot change the world or themselves. They will forever be in need of repres-

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[85] See Eckersley (2020) for a somewhat different take on the similarities and differences between mainly what I refer to as ecologism and new materialism, but also to some degree social constructivism. There, new materialism is portrayed as primarily emphasising everyday practices and democratic participation, often at levels of local communities. The issue of political representation, and especially the representation of non-human beings, is not dealt with extensively, which, it seems to me, might be a consequence of the selection of literature, which has a fairly narrow focus, engaged with in the text.

entation, and the world is left beyond their reach, determined by someone else in their stead. Whatever they are themselves said to be, is determined by someone else. Furthermore, this also affects the constitutive power of humans. Humans will forever have to represent nature; they will always have to be the stewards of nature. Hence, humans cannot change either, nor can they change the world in general since that world will forever be a world in need of representation. Thus, political order no longer appears to be self-creative and about the determination of the world. Order is no longer an ordering; it is simply ordered. By that, it also starts to appear to have an essence, to have a necessary and perennial structure; humans need to be this or that way, and nature needs to be this or that way, as political beings. Therefore, neither will order be temporally contingent. The future is determined by the present and the past; the world of the future will not be otherwise because of what the subjects of democracy do today, because of what is happening politically. In fact, political agency seems to disappear altogether since political action no longer has any effect. Action no longer brings about change. Thus, order no longer consists of agentic members.

Because of this, because political order is no longer composed of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership, the requirements for democracy to emerge are no longer met. Democracy as an experience of the world and of oneself according to which the world and oneself can change because of what one does as a member of political order makes no sense when order is bereft of these components; there is no place for it as a meaningful concept in discourse. By implication, the democratic experience no longer surfaces. For those who populate the political world, it no longer appears that the world or the self can become otherwise because of what they do as political beings. Instead, the world appears to be necessarily what it is; it appears to be a completely determined world, a world of complete and everlasting order. The world and the self are merely ordered; they are not subjectively ordering. The world is a world that no longer needs someone to order it, for it is ordered already. Thus, the ambition to conceptualise green democracy ends up with a world that necessarily is what it is, a completely determined world.

Green political theory, then, disqualifies the very concept of democracy it adopts in its attempts to extend democracy beyond humans. Green democracy disqualifies itself as its advocates fail to maintain it in discourse. In the end, green political theory, by advocating green democracy, does not expand or improve the modern project of liberty and emancipation. It brings that project to a halt by foreclosing democracy.

Moreover, green political theory—as has also been argued—fails to bridge the gap between humans and nature. Its attempt to politically bridge the divide between humans and nature by extending democracy to the natural side of the relation not only forecloses democracy. It also presupposes that humans and nature are related as the inside and outside of a door. As insides and outsides, humans and nature are different from each other and are not parts of the same whole. Yet, they are unthinkable without each other and always come in and as a pair; they condition each other and make each other meaningful. The door constitutes humans and nature as different yet inseparable. With a door between them, humans and nature form a conjunction in

which the *and* between them is emphasised. Green political theory might indeed push towards a unity of identity between humans and nature, but that push reaches back to a unity of difference.

In that unity of difference, the human side is active, and the natural side is passive. The human side is that which determines. It is a subjective side of pure activity. This is the side that creates meaning, a political side, then. It is the side where determination and ordering occurs. The other side, the natural one, is that towards which the active side directs itself. This is what only ever becomes determined and ordered. It is a passive side. It is also an objective side, insofar as it is the other of the subjective side. It is, however, an objective side without form prior to the form it receives from the human side. It is a pure void, an objective world without objects, a thingly world without things, a material world without content. It is a world of empty materiality. That world of empty materiality, the pure void of nature, must be in place for the political world of humans to be in place.

An important aspect of this relation between humans and nature is that both sides are required for the establishing of meaning. Humans cannot make something meaningful without having that something present; politics exists only by being directed towards that which it determines. Furthermore, empty nature, which becomes determined, if it is to be anything but a void, requires someone to provide it with meaning. Even nature as a void is a meaningful form of nature, insofar as it is an understanding of nature as a void. Thus, even nature as void requires the presence of humans. Meaning, then, emerges according to this way of relating humans and nature, in the very unity

of difference between humans and nature; the world becomes a determined place and receives order by humans and nature being related as the inside and outside of a door. Meaning emerges in and because of the conjunction of humans and nature, not in their separation into two worlds, nor in their belonging to the same whole.

Importantly, because green democracy, as a concept belonging to the discourse of green political theory, and since that discourse, in conceptualising it, presupposes such a relation between humans and nature, it follows that green democracy too presupposes that relation. Specifically, the understanding of democracy adopted in green political theory's conceptualisation of green democracy presupposes that humans and nature form a unity of difference. It presupposes that humans, as members of political communities, create meaning in general and determine the world as such and that there is an empty world for them to make meaningful, determine and order. Thus, the conceptualisation of green democracy ends up with a door between humans and nature instead of a bridge. By presupposing such a door, green political theory reproduces it in the very discursive practice of conceptualising green democracy. Green political theory might indeed seek to accommodate a view of humans and nature according to which they are related by a bridge, but doing so it presupposes a different relation between them. The green democracy of ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism, then, is not itself built on the bridge it seeks to build.

This relation between active humans who order and determine meaning and empty passive nature getting determined and receiving meaning—the relation where they

are like the inside and outside of a door—is not manifest in discourse as a verbalised concept. It is quite opposed to what is actually manifest in discourse. Rather, it is located at a discursive level different from the verbalised one. This other level is not a more fundamental level, a more true discourse hiding behind what is actually said. Instead, it pertains to the very structure of discourse, or perhaps rather to that which provides discourse with its structure. It is what makes it possible to speak of humans and nature in this or that way, as being related through a bridge, for instance. The unity of difference between humans and nature—the conjunction of active humans who determine what void nature is and provides the world with meaning on the one hand and on the other void nature—is a conceptual condition of possibility for green political theory and its attempts to conceptualise green democracy.

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In sum, green democracy fails not once but twice. It disqualifies its own concept of democracy, and it presupposes that humans and nature are related in a unity of difference rather than a unity of identity. In its attempt to tear down the purported modern wall between humans and nature and turn it into a bridge by means of democracy, green political theory ends up reproducing a door instead. It ends up foreclosing democracy altogether. Thus, green democracy, as it is conceptualised in green political theory, short-circuits twice. A double short circuit appears in the attempt to conceptualise green democracy in the discourse of green political theory. Therefore, if overcoming dualism is the key to turning unsustainability into sustainability, then green political theory comes out

as a failure. Moreover, if more and better democracy is the key, then it is also a failure. Green political theory neither manages to overcome dualism in the sense it aspires to do, nor does it manage to extend democracy beyond humans. Thus, the discourse of green political theory struggles with a twofold problem here.

As it has been approached herein, that problem is a problem of conceptualisation and how different concepts are related to each other. Specifically, the problem comes down to how humans, nature, and their relation are conceptualised, how political order is conceptualised—given that democracy in its conceptualisation presupposes a certain understanding of political order—and finally, how all of these concepts fit together in discourse. It is, to chisel it out even further, a problem of the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation, and how their relation relates to political order and its conceptualisation.

In the rest of this study, I shed more light on this twofold problem, on this double short circuit of green democracy in the discourse of green political theory. This is done in order to arrive at an answer to the question as to why it occurs, why green political theory in its conceptualisation of green democracy fails to maintain the concept of democracy it is advancing, and also presuppose and reproduce a relation between humans and nature contradicting the one it seeks to accommodate, ground itself on, and affirm.

Doing so, I will turn to the history of Western thought and seek an answer therein. On the basis of that historical research, I will argue that the two sides of the double short circuit are closely connected. I will show that the modern concept of democracy presupposes that humans and nature are re-

lated in a unity of difference, exactly as described above, that they are related in a conjunction with an emphasis on the *and* between them, that they are like the insides and outsides of a door, and so on. I will also show that the modern concept of democracy is identical to the understanding of democracy that underlies the concept of green democracy in green political theory. This implies that green political theory accepts and adopts the modern conceptualisation of democracy, and in doing so, it also reproduces its presuppositions. This, I argue, is why green political theory reproduces a relation between humans and nature that is different from the one it seeks to accommodate, ground itself on, and affirm. Furthermore, I show that modern democracy has an inherent tendency to disqualify itself, and I argue that this tendency is exacerbated in green political theory.

In the next section, I present the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my attempt to provide an answer to the question why the double short circuit of green democracy occurs. There, I outline concepts and discourses as historically transforming autonomous structures determining meaning, and on the basis of that take on concepts and discourses, I motivate why an answer to this question is best served by a historical approach.

2.2 Theory & Method

So far, I have consistently referred to democracy and political order, and even humans and nature, as concepts. And I have referred to green political theory, ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism as discourse. And indeed, I will keep referring to them in this way, for it is as discourses

and concepts I will treat of them and, more importantly, the Western thought within which they fit.

But what is a concept and what is a discourse? And why is it that answering the question as to why the double short circuit of green democracy occurs demands a historical approach? These questions, and related theoretical and methodological issues, will be dealt with in this section, the ambition of which is not so much to provide a comprehensive theory of concepts and discourses, as it is to stake out heuristic guidance suitable for the research aim.

Discourse

Let me start by provisionally defining a discourse as a group of linguistic practices divided into objects, subjects, strategies, and concepts (Foucault 2002a, pp. 23–85). And insofar as any grouping requires a principle determining how the group is actually put together, a discourse is systemic in character in the sense that the very grouping occurs systemically, and the elements of discourse are therefore systemically dispersed and regulated (ibid., p. 41). Continuing, since linguistic practice is *meaningful* practice—in the sense that it has to do with meaning—a discourse is a system of meaning; it is a meaningful and meaning-producing system. Hence, a discourse can be specified as a system of meaning consisting of objects, subjects, strategies, and concepts.

To go through each of these types of elements, *objects* can be said to be what a discourse is about, what is referred to in linguistic practice (ibid., pp. 44–54). This type of element consists of what in everyday language would be referred to as *things* and encompasses concrete and material things as

well as abstract and immaterial ones. For instance, much of what is captured by the term nature falls within this category—nature as wildlife, resources, matter. Nature, as a word, *refers* to some types of things and to the thingly context of those things, the world to which they belong. This also covers much of the meaning of nature as the term has been discussed so far in this study and as it will continue to be discussed.

But objects also encompass the referents of discourses geared towards less tangible things, including theoretical issues. *The sustainability society,* for instance, is an important object in the discourse of green political theory, and *the Anthropocene,* as has been delineated, is an important object in a growing number of discourses. Moreover, it should also be mentioned—perhaps even with emphasis—that it is perfectly possible to approach human being as objective being. In fact, objectifying at least some aspects of human being has been quite common throughout the history of Western thought. Such objectification has already been encountered above in both ecologism and new materialism, and it will be encountered again in the chapters to come. Much political thought refers to political reality as objective and to some aspects of political being as objective being. For instance, if political order consists of creative subjects, what they create can be understood as objects. And a recurrent theme in the analysis in the next chapters is how, throughout history, the intelligibility of political order as an object tends to display similarities with how material things of nature and nature as such are made meaningful.

Continuing, objects are referred to in discourse by *subjects*. Linguistic practice is always expressed by someone and in a certain manner. Or, rather, all linguistic practice is practised from specific subject positions (ibid., pp. 55–61). Subjects are the ones who speak, those who think and utter words, those who make objects intelligible in a certain manner. However, approaching discourse as linguistic *practice* suggests that thinking and speaking are performative and active in character.[86] Discursive subjects act; they create and they *do* linguistic practice. Subjects, then, are the discursive element that thinks, speaks, and creates other discursive elements. Or, to put it in terms of subject positions instead, subject positions are the locations within discourse from which other discursive components are created.

Evidently, this discursive element is predominately associated with human beings, at least in the history of Western thought. For the most part, for the discourses of Western thought, subjective discursive elements have also been human elements; subject positions have been occupied by humans, or at least by some humans. In many respects, when the term human is used in the following chapters, it is used for analytical purposes to refer to the subject positions in discourse, to the discursive elements that think, speak, and act.

However, this take on subjects does not designate that discourse originates in humans. Since subjects are elements of dis-

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[86] Ideas about language being active, in modern philosophical discourse, goes back to at least the speech act theory associated with Austin, and his conceptualisation of performative utterances (Austin 1975, e.g. pp. 4–7, 98–132), but is not limited to that approach. Other major ideas about the activity of language, in addition to the work of Foucault, can for instance be found in the works of Butler (1993, 1997), Habermas ([1981] 1987b, [1981] 1991), and Derrida (1988, [1967] 1997).

course and, therefore, appear within discourse, humans cannot be said to be the source of discourse; discursive content does not flow from a human source.[87] Therefore, the human being—or something pertaining to human being, such as consciousness, reason, or speech—is not seen as the perennial and stable ground for meaning. Indeed, humans create meaning through linguistic practice, but they are not its origin, for humans too are produced in discourse (e.g. Foucault [1975] 1991, p. 194). Therefore, and since discursive practice can and does change, human being is susceptible to change.[88]

So then, the relation between humans and nature, according to this understanding of discourse, for all intents and purposes signifies a relation between the discursive elements of subjects and objects. Proceeding from that understanding, this is how I treat humans, nature, and their relation in the ensuing analysis.

The third discursive element, *strategies,* can be further divided into theories, themes, and opinions (Foucault 1998a, pp. 318–320, 2002b, pp. 71–78). These are developments within a discourse in which its contents gain specific form and are ordered in a determinate way. In scientific discourses, strategies are primarily theories—such as the theory in Earth system science that the Anthropocene began with the so-called Great Acceleration, or the theory of evolution in biology—whereas in, for instance, political discourse strategies are typically opposing opin-

ions, ideological convictions, and the like. Or, returning to green political theory again, a strategy can be the theme that non-anthropocentric democracy is key for sustainability or that the divide between humans and nature can be bridged by humans representing nature politically.

A strategy should not be confused with discourse tout court. A strategy is a specific formation of discursive content, not the only possible such formation. Indeed, ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism can all be seen as theories within green political theory, specific formations of the same discursive content.

Concepts, lastly, are the means by which discursive strategies are devised (Foucault 2002a, pp. 62–70), their building blocks. Important concepts in green political theory include sustainability, democracy, political order, and of course, humans, nature, and their relation. And as a basic theoretical postulate for this study, I would like to suggest that *concepts are the form thought takes in the act of thinking*.

Concept

One immediate consequence of the postulated definition of concepts as the form thought takes in the act of thinking is that concepts designate an activity; concepts are the practice of thought (Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994, p. 21). As such, they are in principle coextensive with the subjective element of discourse. This reflects, quite simply, the association of the subject with

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[87] This approach to subjects and their relation to discourse is broadly based on Foucault (2002a).

[88] This position, that human being is a discursive construct and susceptible to change, the immediate outcome of which is a destabilisation of what it means to be human and of the foundational role assigned to this meaning in much political thought, is sometimes referred to as anti-humanism and is associated with mostly French structuralist and post-structuralist philosophy. For a treatment of humanism and anti-humanism, see Soper (1986). For humanism and anti-humanism in Foucault, see Han-Pile (2010) and Paden (1987).

thought and thought with concepts. The subjects of discourse act by means of concepts, and this indicates, vice versa, that concepts correspond to the activity in general of discourse.

Having refrained from locating the origin of meaning in a perennial humanness, I still maintain that humans create meaning. Meaning and thought are very much associated, at least insofar as meaningful human experience emerges in thought and is provided by thought; thinking is that by which humans create a meaningful world. This implies that concepts are a prerequisite for meaningful experience. As Winch notes:

> The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world…. [W]hen we speak of the world we are speaking of what we in fact mean by the expression 'the world': there is no way of getting outside the concepts in terms of which we think of the world…. The world *is* for us what is presented through those concepts. That is not to say that our concepts may not change; but when they do, that means that our concept of the world has changed to. (Winch 1988, p. 15)

Because concepts are the form of thought and thought is the ground of meaningful experience, for meaningful experience to be possible, there must be concepts; concepts are a condition of possibility for meaningful experience. Meaning emerges in the formation of concepts.[89] This also means that, to the extent that the notion of thought itself is

meaningful, thought presupposes a *concept of thought*. This, in turn, suggests that all thought is conceptual; thought as such presupposes concepts. Concepts are not only the form thought takes in the act of thinking; they are also the means by which thinking is thought.

Meaningful experience, as it is used herein, refers to experience in which meaning is somehow defined. In experience, meaning is always particular. Indeed, discursive subjects create meaning in general, but any particular discursive subject does not create meaning in general in experience, but rather particular meaning. Meaningful experience, therefore, denotes a mode of being in which being itself is determined; to be meaningful is to be some-thing. As the practice of thought, then, concepts create a determinate world, an ordered world. Because of this, and because concepts provide meaning, they must themselves evade it; concepts cannot be bound by any one definition since that would presuppose another anterior and more fundamental concept. To define concepts, one needs a defined concept, which requires a defined concept, and so on. Therefore, there cannot be a general definition of concepts. Any such definition would merely be a non-definition. A concept, then, is what defines but is not itself defined. Concepts have no meaningful existence beyond their local manifestations and the particular situations they make meaningful.

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[89] This is actually quite a delicate issue. The creation of meaning has already been a central feature in the discussion above on green political theory, as it has been argued that ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism presuppose a relation between humans and nature according to which meaning emerges in their relation. And meaning, and its location vis-à-vis humans, nature, and their relation, will keep playing an important role in the rest of the analysis. So in a way, this position, that meaning emerges conceptually, is part of what will be studied and, given the historical character of the study, historicised. As will become clear towards the end of the analysis, it is a modern understanding of meaning and reflective of a modern way of thinking. As is green political theory, suggesting that green political theory and my own approach are both of modern character; both are located in a modern discursive setting.

Here, there starts to appear important overlaps between what concepts are and do and politics as it is conceived of in green political theory. Both concepts and politics are about the creation of meaning and the creation of an ordered, determined world. This is, in fact, not a coincidence. For as will be shown in chapter 5, it is characteristic of modernity to blur the lines between politics and the establishing of meaning. That establishing is part of political life, and politics in modernity is about the determination of meaning. The formation of concepts, therefore, is political; both politics and concepts are about the creation of meaning. In turn, this points towards a connection also between concepts and democracy. Basically, if democracy is an experience of political order and of oneself according to which order and self can change as a result of what one does as a member of order, and to that extent is a certain experience of determination and creation of meaning, it is in a way also about the formation of concepts and of how meaning through concepts emerges.

So then, how are concepts created? Irrespective of the connection between democracy and the formation of concepts, saying that concepts create meaning begs the question of *how* concepts manage to do so. From where does conceptual meaning originate?

This question has actually already been touched upon since some of its answer is implied in the claim that conceptual meaning does not flow from a perennial humanness. But indeed, more can be said of it, and further questions can be asked. Why is it, for instance, that meaning does not spring from a human well? Also, if it does not originate in something perennially human, does it perhaps stem from the connection of concepts to their referents? Put in terms of discursive

elements, these two alternatives for conceptual meaning would locate it either in the subjects who are expressing it or in the objects to which concepts refer.

According to the position that meaning originates in subjects—or alternatively, human being—conceptual meaning would be the expression of a thinking, speaking, and acting subject, who by means of this power comes to occupy the role of a permanent and secure anchoring point for concepts and their meaning. That would render concepts as mere verbalisations of a pre-conceptual subjectivity. However, this position has already been undermined as per the discussion in the previous paragraphs. Having already situated subjects inside discourse, and having delineated experience in general as conceptual, subjects cannot be said to be the source of concepts. If subjects are located on the same discursive level as concepts, and therefore, are in principle simultaneous with them, they cannot be their genesis. As noted already by Moore in 1899:

> The concept is not a mental fact, nor any part of a mental fact.... It is indifferent to their nature whether anybody thinks them or not. (Moore 1899, p. 179)

Actually, if experience in general is conceptual, subjects appear to depend on concepts rather than the other way around, because any notion of human being requires a concept making that being meaningful.

I move on, therefore, to the second alternative, in which conceptual meaning is turned into a product of the relation between thought and referent, or concept and object. This would render meaning dependent on existence. This would, however, burden concepts with the same problem as the previous one, and the reason for this is that existence *also* presupposes a concept in order

to be meaningful; it presupposes a concept of being (Bartelson 2007, p. 119), or simply a concept of existence. This further implies that all of existence also is conceptual. Referring again to Moore:

> Existence is itself a concept; it is something which we mean; and the great body of propositions, in which existence is joined to other concepts or syntheses of concepts, are simply true or false according to the relation in which it stands to them. . . .
>
> All that exists is thus composed of concepts necessarily related to one another in specific manners, and likewise to the concept of existence. (Moore 1899, pp. 180–181)

Neither subjects nor objects, then, can guarantee conceptual meaning since both are subsumed under the aegis of conceptual practice, and both alternatives under consideration turn out to be insufficient for theorising conceptual meaning. This approach to discourse and concepts implies that subjects and objects alike are conceptual since they presuppose, respectively, a concept of subject and a concept of object. Thus, when the terms subject and object appear in the rest of this study, they refer to *the concepts* of subject and object.

The approach taken here, then, effectively reduces subjects and objects to concepts, which means that all that is left in terms of discursive elements are concepts and strategies. Since strategies are merely specific formations of discursive content, they too must be composed only of concepts. In the end, this indicates that concepts are the only element of discourse; a discourse is merely a group of concepts. To refer to Moore for a third time:

> It seems necessary . . . to regard the world as formed of concepts. These are the only objects of knowledge. They cannot be regarded fundamentally as abstractions either from things or from ideas; since both alike can, if anything is to be true of them, be composed of nothing but concepts. (ibid., p. 182)

Concepts never step outside the boundaries of their own world, for when they seemingly grasp after something beyond themselves, they actually just grasp after other concepts, the reason being that any such undertaking presupposes an antecedent concept. Anything non-conceptual presupposes a concept.

Once more, this touches upon discussions already held, this time to the one about correlationism and modern thought. For if Meillassoux's assertion is correct that according to all modern philosophy after Kant, it is only possible to access the world by way of its correlation to thought, it is also implied that modern thought is unable to get outside itself (Meillassoux 2008, p. 7). Whenever thought reaches out beyond itself—to 'the *great outdoors*', as Meillassoux calls it (ibid., p. 7)—it returns to itself, for thinking what is beyond thought is yet another thought.[90] This, too, is connected to what will be covered in the historical analysis to come. Again, the theoretical position that is sketched here touches upon what will also be revealed through the analysis for which it provides the framework, for I will argue, in line with Meillassoux, that this is a distinctly modern way of thinking about concepts and thought. The inability to reach beyond itself is fundamental for modern thought in general, and importantly, it will be argued that this inability is actually pivotal for the mod-

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[90] Again, for more on Meillassoux, see pages 354 and 371 in chapter 5.

ern conceptualisation of democracy.

Whatever concepts are said to be related to turns out, then, to already presuppose concepts on its own. Or, put differently, concepts turn out always to relate to other concepts. Therefore, conceptual meaning appears to emerge from conceptual relations only (Bartelson 2007). This might seem to oppose the notion, presupposed in green political theory, that meaning emerges in the conjunctural relation between political humans and nature according to which they are like the inside and outside of a door. It does not, however, as long as humans and nature are treated as concepts. To the extent that humans and nature are concepts, then it can certainly be the case that meaning emerges from their relation.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, I would also like to specify that concepts are defined by their components and that these components are themselves concepts consisting of components that are concepts, *ad infinitum* (Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994, pp. 15, 19; see also Bartelson 2007). Accordingly, concepts consist of other concepts, and any concept is delineated by the arrangement of its components; it is individuated by how its components are ordered (Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994, pp. 16, 20). The very centre of a concept is 'the point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its own components' (ibid., p. 20), and its meaning emerges at and as this centre, at the point where its components condense, where they become indistinguishable and form into one. A concept germinates, so to speak, in a soil of concepts acting as its

components and providing it with content. The concept of political order that is presupposed by democracy, as this has been discussed above, is a case in point. As a concept, the political order presupposed by democracy is composed of the four concepts of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. These are components of political order, and where these components coincide is where there emerges a concept of political order that in turn allows for the concept of democracy to emerge.[91]

This activity of concepts germinating and accumulating their own components is the very practice of thought—the act of the concept, so to speak; the concept itself condenses its components and render them indistinguishable. However, as will be added later on, this is a practice ruled by something bigger than the concept itself.

Concepts, then, are relative to their components. This is how relationality comes to determine conceptual meaning. It is, however, merely one aspect of how relationality determines concepts, not the only one. Concepts are also related to other concepts in their temporal vicinity, other concepts that do not function as components of the concept. If a concept's relations to its components would be termed internal relationality, then its relations to other concepts in its present could be termed external relationality. Deleuze and Guattari describe this kind of relations as per the following:

> A concept ... has a *becoming* that involves its relationship with concepts situated on the same plane. Here concepts

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[91]This is not to say that the four concepts of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership are the only four components making up the concept of political order, or that political order conceptualised in this way is sufficient for democracy to surface. Political order built on these four components, however, is necessary for democracy to be conceptualised in this way.

> link up with each other, support one another, coordinate their contours…. In fact, having a finite number of components, every concept will branch off toward other concepts that are differently composed but that constitute other regions of the same plane … and participate in co-creation. (ibid., p. 18)

The totality of any such relational conceptual structure, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a plane (see also ibid., pp. 35–60), is what I refer to as a discourse.

These external relations between concepts within a discourse do not have a fixed appearance or form. They can vary and be quite different; the 'co-creation' of concepts in discourse does not follow a fixed pattern. Two concepts can, for instance, provide an equal amount of support to one another and influence each other to the same degree. Such concepts are not ordered hierarchically vis-à-vis each other. Hierarchy between concepts is also possible, however. The meaning of one concept, for instance, can be dependent on the meaning or presence of another concept. In such a case, the latter concept is fundamental for the former. It also enjoys what can be called logical priority, or primacy, over it. By logical priority, I mean that the meaning of one concept is dependent on the meaning of another concept, the latter being logically primary to the former and the former being logically secondary to the latter. In principle, in this situation, the meaning of the logically prior concept can be settled without reference to the logically secondary one, but the meaning of the logically secondary concept cannot be settled without reference to the logically prior concept.[92] The secondary concept makes sense only in relation to the primary, and, therefore, also requires its presence in discourse. If the secondary is to make sense, then the primary must also be part of discourse, if not explicitly so, then implicitly as a presupposition.

To mention a simplified example of conceptual relations such as these, take the concept of *higher education*. For that concept to make sense in discourse, there obviously needs to be present a concept of *education*. Importantly, however, there also needs to be a concept of *elevation* or *height*. Here, *high* is logically prior to *higher education*. It is possible to think about *height* without making reference to *higher education*, but it is not possible to think about *higher education* in a meaningful way without a reference to *height*. The concept of *high*, moreover, has a relation to the concept of *low*. It is not, however, logically prior to it. It is not possible to think of either *high* or *low* without reference to the other. There is no hierarchy between the concepts of *high* and *low*, but there is a hierarchy between *high education* and *higher education*.

Hierarchical conceptual relations within discourse is of crucial importance in this study. One such relation, with significance for the discourse of green political theory, has already been encountered. As was shown above, the concept of democracy in green political theory presupposes a certain conceptualisation of political order. That concept of political order is logically prior to democracy in green political theory. The presence of democracy presupposes the presence of a certain understanding of order. In the following chapters, I will continue to explore how the presence of a certain concept of order conditions the possibility of

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[92] This understanding of logical priority among concepts is loosely based on Bartelson (2001, p. 5).

democracy to emerge as a meaningful concept in discourse. I also add another hierarchical relation to this; I will show that in the history of Western thought, the concept of political order, in its turn, is logically secondary to the understanding of how humans and nature are related to each other. Overall, I will argue that the conceptualisation of human-nature relations is fundamental for the meaning of political order and, therefore, the possibility of democracy—as it is understood in green political theory—to surface as a meaningful concept.

Should a discourse, however, merely be a synchronic structure with concepts displaying internal and external relationality, each receiving a fixed meaning as each conceptual condensation stabilises in a final ordering of the totality of conceptual relations making up the discourse, concepts would basically have a single perennial meaning. Would that be the case, concepts would, in other words, not change. For the study of concepts, this would imply that any discourse could be fully understood on its own terms in the present. Furthermore, insofar as one engages with the history of thought, the historical study of concepts would be a study of forever reoccurring themes. Such approaches have been hugely influential in the intellectual tradition of the history of ideas, a landmark contribution to which is, just to mention an example, Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* (1964), a study of how one important idea—that being is hierarchically ordered in a grand scheme—has permeated and structured Western thought throughout its temporal unfolding. Even though this seminal work, and others like it, has been valuable for the study at hand, I believe its approach to its subject matter is problematic and that it builds on an insufficient understanding of conceptual meaning. I am certainly not the first to object to the understanding of the history of ideas as being hinged to perennial questions, and my objection is hardly original. In fact, few subscribe to such a view today as most—myself included—accept that qualitative change happens in the history of thought, something that this approach has a very hard time accounting for.

Two influential contemporary alternatives that seek to rectify such shortcomings by emphasising the historical character of political thought and concepts are the so-called Cambridge school in intellectual history, and conceptual history, the former being associated with the works of Skinner and Pocock, and the latter with that of Koselleck, amongst others.[93] Predominately, these approach political thought in relation to a context. Either, that context is narrowly defined as the debate an author of a work participates in, by which conceptual meaning becomes relative to the intentions the author has with the text. Or, the context can be the broader social setting and the particular experiences associated with that setting, by which conceptual meaning becomes relative to factual circumstance. I am sympathetic to these as approaches in the study of

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[93] For overviews of these approaches, see Bevir (2011), Boyd (2015), Hammersley (2015), Laursen and Mannies (2015), Müller (2014), Norberg (2015), Richter (1995, pp. 26–57), Steinmetz and Freeden (2017), Whatmore (2015), and Wimmer (2015). For some comparisons, see also Palonen (1999, 2002, 2017) and Richter (1990, 1995, pp. 124–142). For major theoretical and methodological works by Skinner, Pocock, and Koselleck, see Koselleck (1988, 2002, 2004a), Pocock (2009), and Skinner (1969, 2002).

[94] Just for some seminal works, see Koselleck (1988), Pocock (2003), and Skinner (1978a,b).

political thought, value highly the research they can engender, and do believe they have advanced the field of study considerably.[94] However, for theorising conceptual meaning and change, I believe they are of somewhat lesser use as neither satisfactorily explore the relation between concept and context. For indeed, intention and circumstance are themselves concepts, or at least depend on concepts of intentionality and circumstance. Also, much the same can be said of context itself. Hence, how conceptual meaning emerges and changes is not really solved by relating it to any of these since they all require concepts. The problem is merely displaced.

That being said, I readily admit that the question of *how* concepts change is not a major concern for my ambitions with this study. Of greater importance is *that* concepts change. Since conceptual change cannot come from within discourse, as per the explanation of conceptual condensation above, and since concepts relate only to other concepts in a discourse, I am inclined to approach conceptual change as stemming from other concepts and discourses; it emerges from the encounter between discourses (Bartelson 2007).

The occurrence of encounters between discourses and resulting changes in conceptual meaning implies that concepts maintain relations to other concepts existing before them in time; 'every concept has a history' (Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994, p. 17). This, in turn, means that history leaves marks inside a discourse; bits and pieces of discursive structures tend to live on as parts of new discursive structures even as their original settings are long gone (ibid., pp. 18–19). Moreover, this means that insofar as historical conceptual circumstances come to influence meaning, discourses become locked into the past and fixed to it.

> *Concepts have memories*…. Some of our philosophical problems about concepts are the result of their history. Our perplexities arise not from that deliberate part of our history which we remember, but from that which we forget. (Hacking 2002, p. 37)

Effectively, this hinders conceptual change since meaning becomes dependent on the past. So, basically, despite being historical and contingent, conceptual meaning is quite rigid according to this view, not prone to change. The reason why it changes historically is also the reason why it remains stable. So, even though I emphasise the historicity of conceptual meaning, I still maintain that conceptual change is rather rare and certainly hard to pursue actively. The subjects of discourse are never in total control of what can be meaningfully practised in discourse; some aspects of meaning, some concepts or conceptual components, are always beyond the grasp of those who think, speak, and act, for not everything is on the table at once. There is no stepping outside of the historicity of discourse. As Derrida notes regarding metaphysics and the possibility of its critique:

> There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. (Derrida [1967] 2001a, p. 354)

Moreover, as will be shown in a moment, the theme of conceptual rigidity becomes even more prominent when the issue of how a discourse is regulated is considered.

A consequence of the contingent character of concepts and because meaning is a product of conceptual relations is that the very possibility of any determinate conceptual meaning is historically conditioned. In other words, not all historical situations allow for any arbitrary conceptual meaning to emerge. For any particular meaning to germinate, a whole context of concepts and conceptual relations must first be in place. Take, as an example, the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. That distinction rests on the definition of the human mind as a thing that thinks, the famous 'I think, therefore I am'. That conceptualisation of the human I, in turn, presupposes certain concepts of thinking and being. Thus, for this concept of the I to germinate, certain concepts of and relations between thinking and being must first be in place in discourse.[95] Moreover, to mention something that is absolutely crucial for the argument I am developing here, democracy, as it is conceptualised in green democratic theory, could not have emerged as a meaningful concept before the advent of modern Western thought because the concept of political order that it presupposes could not germinate in Western thought before that. Before modernity, it would not have made sense to conceptualise political order as being self-creative, lacking essence, having a contingent future, and consisting of agentic members. Green political theory's concept of democracy has so far been possible only as part of modern thought and because of the conceptual composition of modern discourse.

All in all, the historicity of conceptual meaning means that the present is tainted by the past; it echoes of past events and circumstances not fully available in the present but still influencing the way thinking is presently thought.

All of this means that the past exercises a peculiar power over the present. It influences and guides the present, and to some degree, enables and restricts present thought. The past contains explanatory material for present-day situations and therewith holds a key for understanding them. So, methodologically speaking, studying the past of the present and the trajectory leading up to the present can yield a certain understanding of the present, one that could not be gained by other methods. Something about present concepts and discourses can be disclosed only by looking at and taking into account their past and what came before them. This is the road I take in trying to shed light on the double short-circuit of green democracy. To understand why it occurs, I study the history of which it is part and which has provided the discursive space where it happens.

A tripartite structure of conceptual meaning thus emerges: A concept is related to its components, other concepts within the discourse of which it is a part, and concepts and discourses of the past. In all, this indicates that conceptual meaning is a result of quite a complex network of conceptual relations. It also suggests that, because of its contingent character, any particular conceptual meaning, when it is made present as a part of discourse—when it is thought, so to speak—activates a host of other concepts it is connected to and dependent on. In that way, any particular concept can bring

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[95]This example is based on Deleuze and Guattari ([1991] 1994, pp. 24–27). I discuss Descartes and his thing that thinks further in chapter 4 (see e.g. pages 248 and 269 below).

other concepts to life, whether this is sub-jectively intended or not. I argued in the previous section that theories of green de-mocracy in green political theory produce a relation between politics and nature as a unity of difference, despite their own inten-tions to accommodate, ground themselves on, and affirm the notion that humans and nature are related in a unity if identity. This intricacy is an example of such a situation in which concepts activate other concepts and bring other meanings into existence. It also highlights the difficulty of breaking free from concepts. Even though one might want to do away with a certain understand-ing of something and actively pursue new conceptualisations, other conceptualisations and unintended consequences might come to haunt such endeavours.

This section began with a provisional definition of discourse as linguistic practice. However, by now, it is evident that the pre-fix *linguistic* is superfluous. Since concepts lack non-conceptual referents while being the practice of thought, discourse amounts to practice tout court. Discourses are not really 'groups of signs' but 'practices that sys-tematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 2002a, p. 54). Also practice is itself, of course, a concept. All practice—all action—is conceptual, and the term dis-course can be seen as basically being inter-changeable with the term practice, as noted by Laclau (Laclau and Bhaskar 1998, p. 9). This suggests that practice and thought are also interchangeable; thought involves ac-tion, and action involves thought. This has the important implication that thought tra-verses all human being, all parts of social life: political thought is not found written on the pages of philosophy books only but per-meates every nook and cranny of the world of humans:

> there is thought in philosophy, but also in a novel, in jurisprudence, in law, in an ad-ministrative system, in a prison. (Foucault 1998b, p. 267)

Admittedly I have not gone looking for polit-ical thought in a prison as part of this study. I still confine myself to written works, books for the most part. The analysis includes, however, literature not usually considered part of the major contributions to Western political thought. Most importantly, the study comprises a fair amount of natural philosophy as well.

My take on concepts and discourses brings thought and social existence as a whole, including politics, understood in line with green political theory's conceptualisa-tion of it as the determination of meaning in general, closely together. It pretty much blurs the line between them.[96] In line with the central place the concepts of humans, nature, and political order occupy in the double short circuit of green democracy, the main issue the analysis deals with is how these concepts, with the terminology estab-lished above, have condensed in different discursive structures throughout the history of Western thought. The inquiry needs to be of very broad scope to cover the sheer width of this conceptual bundle, the dis-parate meanings of the concepts involved and their relations. As broad as possible, even. Most importantly, the inquiry must also remain open to the possibility that the

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[96] And as will be shown in chapter 5, this blurring of the line between human existence, thinking and the determina-tion of meaning, and politics, is a characteristic of modernity in general. Once again, the methodological approach reflects the modern thought it approaches and displays its belonging to a modern discursive setting.

relation between politics and nature is also about thought and nature, and concepts and nature. Also, including thought as part of the conceptual relations under investigation suggests that those relations also possibly contain the question of meaning, where it resides, and how meaningful experience is established. Thus, this study is also a study of where meaning resides and how it emerges. Reversely, this also opens up the opportunity to approach the question as to how humans, nature, and political order are conceptualised and related by looking at them in terms of meaning and where in these relations meaning has been thought, historically, to reside.

So, to conclude this discussion on concepts and discourse: Concepts are the practice of thought, the means by which thinking is thought. They group together in discourses and are related only to other concepts. Conceptual meaning emerges as a product of these relations. Conceptual meaning changes historically, and because concepts are related to historically antecedent concepts, the past provides explanatory material for the present, which means that to make sense of the present, one should study its past. Furthermore, discourse—or thought—and practice are synonymous and accepting the understanding of politics as the creation of a meaningful ordered world, the dividing line between thought, political order, and human social existence as a whole is blurred. Lastly, the relations between humans, nature, and political order can be approached by studying where meaning has historically been thought to be located.

Episteme

Despite having detailed a situation of rather complex conceptual relations already, one more layer of relationality must be added to conceptual meaning. For already the provisional definition of discourse as a group of linguistic practices related to each other in a regular fashion implies that there are rules governing the formation of discourse as a whole. This is further emphasised by the redefinition of discourse as a structure of related concepts. Something according to some principle must be doing the grouping here; something must provide the rules; something must order the relations between concepts and how they condense their components and germinate. Ultimately, what is lacking so far is actually an account of the rules determining how meaning in and among concepts is established. The discussion above merely concludes that meaning emerges from conceptual relations, not *how* this occurs. Following Foucault, I refer to such a set of rules as an *episteme* (see mainly Foucault 2002a,b),[97] or alternatively an *epistemic configuration.*

However, having already ruled out that concepts are related to something non-conceptual, one might wonder what such an epistemic configuration is and how it relates to the discourse it rules?

Because concepts close in on themselves, the rules governing a discourse cannot exist anywhere but on the same level as the discourse itself. They must be interior to the discourse they govern (Foucault 2002a, p. 89; see also Foucault 2002b, p. xiv). The episteme consists of nothing else but the very regulatory patterns of a discourse; it

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[97] Foucault uses the word episteme most frequently in *The Order of Things* (2002b). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002a), he tends to use the term 'discursive regularity' instead.

has no existence on its own; it is the regularity itself of thought. The rules governing discourse, then, exist only as functions and by means of their effects on the formation of concepts into discourses (Foucault 1989a, p. 46, 1989b, p. 58, 2002a, pp. 97–98). Put differently, being that which provides a discourse with its determinate form, the episteme exists only as a condition of possibility, as that which makes conceptual meaning possible (Foucault 2002b, pp. xxiii–xxiv). As such a foundation for the meaning of concepts, the episteme conditions and rules *all* conceptual relations discussed earlier. The epistemic configuration 'is what makes possible at a given moment the appearance of a theory, an opinion, a practice' (Foucault 1998b, p. 261).

Strictly speaking, then, the episteme does not exist. Whenever it materialises, it does so as an analytical reconstruction of what must be in effect for a discourse to be formed the way it is. As such an analytical reconstruction, the episteme itself is conceptual since it is formed by thought. Thus, the episteme itself consists of concepts and conceptual relations. An epistemic configuration is a conceptual structure, just like the discourse it governs.

The epistemic configuration is specific to the discourse it governs, being tied to it as its condition of possibility. The epistemic configuration is not, however, unique to any particular discourse. A multitude of discourses can be governed by one and the same epistemic configuration, and following Foucault, I take this to be the typical case. Between two or more discourses governed by the same epistemic configuration, there is a family resemblance based on isomorphic conceptual relations (Foucault 2002b, p. xi; see also Foucault 1998b, p. 262). Concepts in different discourses configured by the same episteme are simply related in the same way. Such discourses do not necessarily contain the same concepts—although they certainly can—but rather display parallels in terms of how their concepts are related. Family resemblance is not displayed by content but rather by structural properties; discourses governed by the same epistemic configuration bear witness to their joint origin through homologous relations among their elements, not necessarily by shared or duplicated concepts. To that extent, epistemic kinship can also be revealed from mutual presuppositions, shared conditions that need not be explicitly articulated in discourse.

This means that between seemingly utterly different discourses, even discourses explicitly opposing each other, there does not necessarily exist an epistemic divide, a fundamental difference in the structure of thought. An episteme is, rather, the common ground shared by opposing theories, arguments, practices, and opinions that makes it possible for these to engage in meaningful disputes (Foucault 2002b, pp. 83, 131, 196–197). As an example, one could just return to what has already been dealt with above, namely ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism. Indeed, I treat these as different strands of the same discourse. However, they could, of course, be seen as individual discourses as well.[98]

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[98] For a study in which environmentalism and its history is indeed approached as a body of contesting discourses, see e.g. Dryzek (2013). Although, it could be noted that the different environmental discourses identified therein does not directly translate to the strands of green political thought in focus in this study. Nor does its approach to discourse exactly correspond to mine.

Ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism evidently oppose each other to some and differing degrees, but they can still engage in meaningful conflict.

This possibility suggests a shared epistemic configuration between the three. They share certain structural relations and conceptual presuppositions. Indeed, they even share concepts. For instance, the concept of democracy is the same between the three of them, and in all of them, that concept is dependent on a certain conceptualisation of political order. Moreover, they all presuppose a certain understanding of how humans and nature are related. This relation might not be present in discourse in the sense of being explicitly articulated, and it even contradicts what is actually articulated in discourse. However, it is nonetheless present as a prerequisite. For their explicit content to make sense, that certain understanding of human-nature relations must be presupposed. Moreover, the presupposition becomes apparent only by means of analytical reconstruction, much like the epistemic configuration itself. I am not arguing that a certain conceptualisation of human-nature relations is part of the epistemic configuration of green political theory, but rather that the epistemic configuration of green political theory is such that it orders discourse in a way that a certain conceptualisation of human-nature relations is present as a presupposition in the practice of conceptualising green democracy. It is like an unspoken concept, part of discourse because of the very ordering of discourse.

Different and opposing discourses can, then, end up with the same problems, as is evident from the previous discussions on ecologism, social constructivism, and new materialism. Attending to the structure of such discourses, their presuppositions, and the conceptual relations within them—and by that focusing on their epistemic configuration—makes it possible to shed light on why they end up with these joint problems, in this case, why they end up with the double short circuit as defined above. The take on epistemic configurations that I adopt in this study allows for a rendering of the broader structures of thought, explaining why disparate and conflicting discourses display similarities in structure and face the same difficulties.

Typically, then, the episteme determines something much more widespread than a single discourse. It orders a general mode of thought. In his early writings, Foucault goes so far as to state that

> in a society, different bodies of learning, philosophical ideas, everyday opinions, but also institutions, commercial practices and police activities, mores–all refer to a certain implicit knowledge special to that society. (Foucault 1998b, p. 261)

What Foucault is referring to here as 'an implicit knowledge' is what he elsewhere calls episteme, implying that one single epistemic configuration rules all possible thought in a given society at a given time. In fact, in *The Order of Things*, he explicitly makes such a claim:

> In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one *episteme* that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice. (Foucault 2002b, p. 183)

This position is arguably hard to defend for theoretical and empirical reasons alike. Frankly, I do not find it necessary to defend. Indeed, I accept that an epistemic configuration is a historically specific mode of thought, that it is a regularity that ap-

pears at some time and in some place. However, it also seems reasonable to allow for multiple epistemic configurations to exist simultaneously.[99] This caveat notwithstanding, throughout this study, Western thought is treated *as if* it has been governed by a single epistemic configuration at any one time throughout its history since the Middle Ages. Admittedly, this is for the sake of convenience. My intention is that these seemingly all-encompassing epistemic configurations are rather taken to be *dominant* epistemic configurations, which is how I think of them. Specifically, I approach Western thought, again drawing on Foucault, as being ruled since the Middle Ages by three dominant epistemic configurations, which I refer to as medieval, early modern, and modern.

Between two such configurations, there is an epistemic rupture, and to the extent such ruptures happen in time, they partition the history of thought. The history of thought, according to this view, is characterised by discontinuities (Foucault 2002a, pp. 3–19). An epistemic rupture signals a qualitative transformation in the mode of thought; a leap between two different rules of discourse; a fundamental change in the way thought is structured, how it is ordered. Also, to the extent that such ruptures carve up the history of thought into pieces that do not fit together, it is implied that there is no perennial way of thinking, no continuous evolution of what humans think.

As somewhat of a side note, this further stresses the rarity of conceptual change. For if Western thought has been dominated by only three epistemic configurations since the Middle Ages, then true conceptual novelty seems quite rare indeed. On the other hand, discourses can contain many different theories, themes, and opinions, as has also been outlined; the content of any discourse can be formed in many different ways. Thus, discursive variety can certainly appear *within* one epistemic configuration.

Moreover, it also puts further emphasis on the establishing of meaning being more fundamental than something that can be said to derive from either subjects or objects. Subjects and objects have already been positioned as concepts within discourse, and the epistemic configuration, in relation to subjects and objects, is rather that which makes subjects and objects meaningful in any particular way. As a theory of meaning, then, this take on discourses and their epistemic configuration is a theory that assumes that neither subjects nor objects have this or that quality or are essentially the source of meaning. The episteme is prior to both the world and to the subjects who think of it.

Above, I noted that concepts within a discourse can be hierarchically ordered so that one concept is logically prior to another. In such cases, the logically primary concept provides a foundation for the logically secondary one. Now, if the episteme equals the regulatory pattern of discourse and amounts to the condition of possibility of discourse, it too comes out as a logical primacy. The epistemic configuration is logically prior to the discourses it rules, even if it does not exist prior to them. It is, then, not historically prior to those discourses. In this regard, logical priority means that the episteme is not dependent on any particu-

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[99] And to be fair, so did Foucault in his later writings. Indeed, the concept came to occupy a less prominent role in his work after *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

lar discourse it rules, but any discourse as a whole is dependent on the episteme by which it is ruled. Therefore, the concepts by which the episteme is analytically reconstructed can in principle be settled and made meaningful without reference to any particular concepts or conceptual relations they order. The concepts of a discourse, however, are only fully meaningful in relation to their epistemic configuration.

So, concepts within a discourse can be fundamental for other concepts, but the discourse as such—and therefore the concepts it contains—has an ultimate foundation in an episteme, in its regulatory patterns. The epistemic configuration is the foundation of the entirety of a discourse; it is fundamental to discourse as a whole. A concept, then, can be dependent on another concept within discourse and on the episteme. Correlatively, the influence of one concept over another is formed by and represents a manifestation of epistemic rules. In an analytical reconstruction, it is possible, therefore, to refer conceptual relations, even if they are relations of dependence, back to an epistemic configuration.

However, even if it is possible to make sense of the concepts of an epistemic configuration without referring to the concepts it governs, the epistemic configuration still only exists by means of its effects. Therefore, the concepts of an epistemic configuration cannot be encountered anywhere but on the discursive level. Therefore, and since they are only ever analytical reconstructions, the concepts of the episteme are in some way dependent on the concepts of the discourses they rule. Those concepts are what makes visible the ruling of the epistemic configuration. Hence, an analysis of the epistemic configuration of thought must always begin

at the discursive level and only move beyond it to reconstruct the rules governing discourse.

The generality of the epistemic configuration and that one such configuration orders a multiplicity of discourses mean that the analytically reconstructed episteme is principally less complex than the discourses it orders. The episteme disperses discourses, it is a 'system of dispersion' (Foucault 2002a, p. 41). It creates a space larger than itself within which concepts belonging to a certain mode of thought germinate. This suggests that an analysis of epistemic configurations proceeding from discursive concepts will be reductive in character. The epistemic level is less complex than the discursive.

The theoretical position outlined above points to the need for a historical approach to concepts; finding answers to problems of conceptual relations is an endeavour well-served by turning to the historical unfolding of conceptual meaning and relations. This is what I try to do herein. I carry out a historical analysis of the concepts of humans, nature, and political order, and I arrange the inquiry on the basis of Foucault's work on epistemic configurations.

In *The Order of Things,* Foucault delineates three epistemes governing Western thought since the time of the Italian Renaissance, each providing the ground for a specific mode of thought. According to Foucault, the *Renaissance episteme* is one in which discourse is ruled by resemblance, or similitude, the *classical episteme* rules discourse by means of order, and lastly, with the *modern episteme* discourse is ruled by history. All of these are specific to a certain period, meaning that each period corresponds to a specific mode of thought.

However, my approach differs in a few

respects from Foucault's, however, some of which are minor and some are more important.

Beginning with the minor stuff, Foucault's work is concentrated on knowledge, especially scientific knowledge and the history of what he refers to as the human sciences, rather than thought in general. My account is not limited to knowledge or scientific discourses but is rather geared towards the specific concepts of humans, nature, and political order. Whether these are part of purported scientific discourses is of secondary importance to me.

I also believe that *analogy* is a more appropriate concept than resemblance to capture the epistemic configuration of Renaissance discourse. Also, analogy as epistemic rule, I maintain, is older than the Italian Renaissance, stretching at least as far back as to what is sometimes referred to as the 12th century Renaissance. Hence, analogical thought is a mode of thought more associated with the Middle Ages than the Italian Renaissance, wherefore I prefer to call it the medieval episteme instead.

The 12th century marks the historical starting point of this study. I do, however, make a few remarks about earlier periods as well, the early Middle Ages and Classical Antiquity. Analogy plays a crucial role for discourse before the 12th century as well. Importantly, it connects the material world with the divine creator of that world. It does not, however, connect things in that world to each other. This changes with the 12th century Renaissance as analogy becomes a general rule for a mode of thought. The connection of things in the material world by analogy has significant consequences for the conceptualisation of nature and how humans relate to it. Therefore, this period serves as a suitable point of departure for the historical analysis conducted herein.

Concerning the period that Foucault refers to as the Classical age, it must be admitted that the very term *Classical age* is not often used outside of a French context, and I choose to speak of early modernity and the early modern configuration of discourse instead. However, this is not a mere terminological difference, for it also signals that there is a fair amount of continuity between early modern and modern modes of thought. Often, Foucault seems to hold the opinion that an epistemic rupture is absolute and that different modes of thought are completely discontinuous. I do not, however. As I approach concepts herein, and as per the above outlining of conceptual meaning, they maintain relations to other antecedent concepts. That history leaves marks inside discourse, and I see no theoretically motivated reasons why such temporal relations cannot straddle epistemic divides. Hence, I allow for the possibility of conceptual continuity between different modes of thought; discourses ruled by different epistemes can, in principle, display some similarities without the validity of the epistemic rupture being called into question. For instance, between early modern and modern discourse, there is an important continuity in political discourse regarding concepts related to contractualism. Another continuity, this time in scientific discourse, would be concepts regarding proper methods in scientific inquiry and the emphasis on observation and experimentation for acquiring true knowledge. In more general terms, not every single aspect of early modern thought is alien to modern discourse.

Regarding modern discourse, an important difference between my approach and

Foucault's is the importance placed on the human individual. Foucault pretty much equates modern knowledge with an individual human being placed in its centre as something that is both the object of knowledge and the subjective condition of possibility of that knowledge (Foucault 2002b, pp. 330–374).[100] As the former, the human being is the transcendental condition of knowledge in general and of itself as an object.

I think the emphasis on the human individual results in too narrow of an interpretation of modern thought. Rather, I maintain that the union of the objective and the subjective in general characterises modern discourse; the conjunction of the empirical and the transcendental, so to speak, is modern, not its manifestation in the human individual. The latter is merely one of its manifestations. Again, the discussion comes back to Meillassoux's concept of correlationism and the idea that thought and being are always correlated with each other. This, as I have mentioned, is characteristic of modern thought in my view. As I have also mentioned, however, in order to emphasise the practical character of modern thought and to distinguish my argument from Meillassoux's, I prefer to speak of a conjunction rather than a correlation between thought and world, for I believe that it is the bringing together human action and being that characterises modern discourse. It is action and thought as action that is brought together with the world and things in it in modernity. In this conjunction, the political world of humans is different from the world of nature but still primordially connected to it. Before they are anything else, modern humans are connected to the natural world as something different from it.

This modern relation between humans and nature is a direct consequence of the epistemic configuration of modern thought. Also, speaking of epistemic configurations, perhaps the most significant difference between my approach and Foucault's is that I take the epistemic configuration of thought to fundamentally be about identity and difference, and importantly the balance between identity and difference. Foucault brings together each of the three epistemes of the Renaissance, the Classical age, and the modern age, under a single concept: resemblance, order, and history. Basically, he argues that during the Renaissance, resemblance rules discourse, during the Classical age order, and during modernity history. I do a slightly different take and emphasise a more generic relation between identity and difference at work at the epistemic level of discourse. Indeed, I also make use of such single concepts in my analytical reconstruction of the rules of discourse to refer to those rules, though preferring *analogy* over *resemblance*. As I see it, however, these are themselves products of a balance between identity and difference. Identity and difference are, so to speak, the conceptual components of the epistemic concepts of analogy, order, and history. A certain relation between identity and difference leads to a certain ruling of discourse, and the rules of discourse I deal with can be conceptualised as analogy, order, and history.

I actually hesitate and prefer not to specify what identity and difference mean here and what exactly they apply to or qualify. Rather, this pertains to identity and differ-

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[100] See also a further discussion on this issue on page 343 in chapter 5 below.

ence, and their balance, *in general*. Indeed, since I approach epistemic configurations as analytical reconstructions and, therefore, being themselves conceptual, this is about the balance between identity and difference as epistemic conceptual components, or as concepts in their own right, for that matter. In particular, I place a lot of emphasis on whether identity is logically prior to difference, if it is the other way around, or if they are on par with each other. Also, I connect a particular balance between identity and difference with my adaptations of Foucault's concepts capturing the rule of discourse. Basically, I trace a relation between the logical priority of identity over difference with medieval thought and analogy as epistemic rule, the equal priority of identity and difference with early modern thought and order as epistemic rule, and lastly, the logical priority of difference over identity with modernity and the epistemic rule of history.

Thus, perhaps one could say that I add a rather generic element to the otherwise quite Foucauldian approach to discourse I adopt. With that element added, an epistemic rupture very much becomes associated with a rearrangement of identity and difference. Also, although the form of my analysis is Foucauldian, the same thing cannot really be said about its content, as I do not deal with the same historical stuff Foucault deals with.

If my treatment of the epistemic level of discourse focuses on identity and difference, my treatment of discourse itself focuses quite a lot on the concepts of subject and object. My reasons for this are rather straightforward. For not only do the concepts of subject and object have a rather obvious connection to the concepts of humans and nature. As per the theorising of discourse above, sub-

jects and objects emerge as basic conceptual building blocks of discourse. Objects are the things a discourse is about, and subjects are those who create other discursive elements. Simply put, subjects create and objects are what is created in discourse. And how subjects and objects are conceptualised and related as concepts is settled by the epistemic configuration and the balance therein between identity and difference. To go slightly ahead of myself and reveal what is to be argued in the chapters to come, if there is a logical priority of identity over difference and analogy provides the epistemic rule of discourse, the result is an identity between subjects and objects and a belonging of the two together; if identity and difference are levelled on equal footing and discourse is ruled by order, the result is a complete separation of subjects and objects; and if difference is logically prior to identity and history rules discourse, the result is a unity of difference between subjects and objects and a conjunction of humans and nature.

Before moving on—the next part to deal with being method and material—I would like to just briefly mention that, as they are used here, the terms Middle Ages, early modernity, and modernity refer to modes of thought as much as they refer to periods of time; they prefixes to discourses ruled by particular epistemic configurations and also segments of time. As noted, I treat them as dominant modes of thought, and while also considering their historical specificity, they thus appear as historically specific dominant modes of thought. Or, put differently, medieval, early modern, and modern discourse are modes of thought that have dominated Western thought during different periods and to quite some degree have characterised, perhaps even defined, those periods.

Example

The theoretical elaborations above are primarily for heuristic purposes. This study is first and foremost oriented towards a present-day problem, the double short circuit of green democracy. This is indeed the puzzle I seek to investigate, and the theoretical musings above are meant to facilitate that investigation. The historical analysis I embark on, then, is meant to furnish an explanation as to why the double short-circuit occurs.

In the wake of Foucault's work, perhaps mostly what is on occasion referred to as his genealogical period, this kind of analysis sometimes goes by the name of *history of the present*.[101] A history of the present, rather than detailing historical events for their own sake, starts with a problem in the present and a *problematisation* of the present. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes, regarding the history of the prison:

> I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present. (Foucault [1975] 1991, pp. 30–31)

And to an interviewer, he states that

> I set out from a problem expressed in the terms current today and I try to work out its genealogy. Genealogy means that I begin my analysis from a question posed in the present. (Foucault [1984] 1990a, p. 262)

From there, from a particular problem of the present, a history of the present proceeds to seek the historical trajectories and contingencies leading up to the present and its problems.[102] It is an approach to the present that emphasises the contingencies 'out of which, the present arises out of the past' (Garland 2014, p. 380; see also Foucault 1984, pp. 83–86), rather than viewing it as the final state of one coherent historical development.

With the emphasis on the present and on proceeding from problems of the present, it is accepted with this approach that all historical narratives are formed and made possible by present circumstances. 'Writing a history *of* the present', Roth notes, 'means writing a history *in* the present; self-consciously writing in a field of power relations and political struggle' (Roth 1981, p. 43; see also Tazzioli, Fuggle, and Lanci 2015, p. 5). There is no such thing as an innocent history dislocated from politics and told from a detached and neutral point of view. History is always narrated by someone, in a certain manner, from a particular perspective. Again, history is written *in* history. Of course, this implication of all historical narratives, so to speak, applies to the constructions of historical periods as well. History is not carved up in discrete segments or stages existing before the historical analysis itself, and the construction of periods is itself part of the social history and political reality it is meant to describe. This point, especially as it pertains to the division between the Middle Ages and modernity and the connection of that division to the political concept of sovereignty,

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[101] Foucault's work is sometimes said to fall into three periods, the first of which is associated with studies of epistemic configurations, the second with genealogies of subjectivities and with regimes of truth, and the third with techniques of the self (e.g. Han 2002).

[102] For overviews of the approach of the history of the present, see Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983, pp. 118–125), Garland (2014), Roth (1981), and Tazzioli, Fuggle, and Lanci (2015).

has been put forth by Davis (2008). It is also worth mentioning that, as Fasolt emphasises, historical inquiry hinges on demarcating the past from the present and that this basic division itself has a history (Fasolt 2004, in particular pp. 3–45; see also Bartelson 2007, pp. 121–122). If all divisions of time are nested in social and political reality, it follows that historical inquiry is bound up with politics.

Obviously, I make use of historical periods in my historical narrative. However, the lines between those periods are drawn not primarily between different times but between different modes of thought. Indeed, those different modes of thought correspond to different times, and effectively the lines drawn result in a partitioning of history. The ambition here is not, however, to delineate a past that is not ours from a present that is. The ambition is to delineate what mode of thought is ours, how that came to be, and what modes of thought are not ours. From that perspective, I think it is warranted to work with categories corresponding to historical periods. Identifying the discontinuities between the Middle Ages, early modernity, and modernity is meant to aid the analytical work making sense of green political theory and the double short circuit of green democracy. Whether these ruptures in the mode of thought are real is not my major concern.

As I have already made clear, I approach epistemic configurations as analytical reconstructions. Notwithstanding the caveat about epistemic ruptures being real or not, what I actually *do* maintain is that it is possible to reconstruct the broad structures of Western thought and its development over time *as if* it has undergone such changes and that such a procedure brings insights about the present.

Another prominent feature of writing histories of the present is that exhaustive historical accuracy is generally not of primary concern. Of course, accounts of historical facts need to be correct (Garland 2014, p. 373), but the important thing is not to write a 'total history' (Foucault 2002a, p. 10). From this point of view, the value of historical analysis lies in its ability to serve as an explanation of the present and of how the present came about; 'history serves the concerns of the present', as noted by Roth (1981, p. 42). For my part, this translates into the historical analysis being of principle value as a means to explain the occurrence of the double short circuit in green political theory. The most important thing here is not the historical narrative itself but its ability to shed light on green political theory's struggles with the concept of green democracy.

Since the ambition here is not to provide an exhaustive, total account of Western thought and its history or to delineate the epistemic configuration of *all* of Western thought, the analysed material need not actually be representative of a larger universe of thought. However, neither has the material been selected through cherry-picking in order to fabricate a new history. As Castel notes, 'the right to choose one's materials and refocus them in light of a current issue … is not permission to rewrite history. It is not a right to make historical errors' (1994, p. 252). Rather, the material is meant to illustrate certain ways of thinking about humans, nature, and political order, and their relations. I do not seek to provide a total survey of historical circumstances, events, trajectories, and structures. The ambition is rather to focus on 'effective history' (Dean

1994, in particular pp. 7–22; see also Foucault 1984), and to concentrate the included material on contributions that have had major impacts on posterior intellectual practices and development; contribution having, so to speak, made a difference and influenced subsequent thought—those major contributions to Western thought that have been accepted and even taken for granted, but also those that have just garnered a lot of attention or fostered debates, or those that have sparked controversy and disagreement. The focus of this analysis in terms of material, then, is the canon—or at least parts of the canon—of Western thought. The ambition is certainly not to excavate counter-histories or challenges to the ubiquity of dominant ways of thinking, highlight alternatives or oppositions to how the history of Western thought has usually been narrated, or something like that. Rather, the key here is to uncover the broad structures of dominant ways of thinking and show that perhaps those structures have not always been what they are often believed to be. It is important, then, to tie the material selection to the history of Western thought as that history is portrayed in the discourse of green political theory and represented in the latter's take on modernity. Hence, those who figure in the following chapters are some of the characters who often appear when the history of Western thought is written and appear in the green representation of that history. There will be an Augustine and an Aquinas, a Descartes, a Hobbes and a Locke, a Kant and a Hegel, and so on.

The analysed material illustrates effective history. To that extent, the contributions to the canon of Western thought amount to important examples of certain ways of thinking. This is how I treat the material included

herein. I treat it as a series of examples. Consequently, what I do is exemplary readings of Western thought. This is also how the contributions to green political theory discussed above have been treated. But what is an example, really?

Etymologically, the phrase *for example* is related to the term *paradigm*, the Latin word *paradigma* meaning *pattern* or just *example*. *Paradigma*, in turn, comes from the Greek *paradeigma* and *paradeiknynai*, the later literally meaning 'to show beside' or 'show side by side'. On that note, Agamben writes that the example is 'that which is shown alongside…. Hence the proper place of the example is always beside itself' (1993, p. 10; see also 2009a, p. 24). The example, then, is a paradigmatic case, a case whose proper place is always beside itself. Or, reversely stated, the paradigmatic case is an example.

Interestingly, this notion of the paradigmatic case plays an important role in Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*—a seminal work on how science develops historically and on the role paradigms have for how science operates and for the practices of scientific communities. An important argument Kuhn advances is that normal scientific practices are 'paradigm-determined' (2012, p. 126), the term 'paradigm' suggesting that

> some accepted examples of actual scientific practice—examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together—provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research. (ibid., p. 11)

In a postscript, written a couple of years after the book's original publication in 1962, Kuhn admits that he uses the concept of paradigm in two different ways. 'On the one hand', he writes, paradigm

stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science. (ibid., p. 174)

So, basically, as Kuhn uses it, a paradigm refers either to a 'disciplinary matrix' (ibid., p. 181) or to a singular example shared among the members of a community. He further specifies that a disciplinary matrix consists of:

☞ *symbolic generalisations:* formal or readily formalisable expressions that are deployed by group members without question or dissent, often having the appearance of laws or general rules;

☞ *beliefs in particular models:* commitments to beliefs about the accuracy of heuristic and ontological abstractions, for instance, that 'heat is the kinetic energy of the constituent parts of bodies', or that 'the molecules of a gas behave like tiny elastic billiard balls in random motion';

☞ *values:* normative aspects of what constitutes good and bad scientific practice, such as the requirements for proper predictions, and what levels of accuracy and certainty are deemed appropriate;

☞ *exemplars:* shared examples used as concrete problem-solutions (ibid., 182–186, see also 186-190).

The fourth element in this list, shared examples, doubles as a component of a paradigm and as a paradigm in itself. Exemplars are paradigms on their own. An important function of the example, in Kuhn's

view, is to illustrate (ibid., p. 186). The example is illustrative of, for instance, a symbolic generalisation. To that extent, it illustrates laws or general rules. It acts as a stand-in. It replaces the rule contained in the symbolic generalisation. Newton's *Principia*, for instance, serves as an important example in mechanics, the laws of motion formulated therein being symbolic generalisations (Agamben 2009a, p. 11; Kuhn 2012, pp. 187–188).[103]

Practically, students of science learn—as they actually do science—to work with examples, Kuhn argues, and they learn to design versions of the example in order to solve new problems and make sense of otherwise unintelligible situations and encounters (Kuhn 2012, pp. 188–189). For instance, Newton's laws of motion can be restated and adapted to a wide variety of situations and provide explanations to a host of different phenomena. By continually returning to the example of Newton's *Principia*, the example comes to substitute the law it illustrates so that the law and its formal expression are no longer needed in order to solve new problems. Instead, all that is needed is the example. 'Newton' becomes the solution to new problems in mechanics, instead of the general laws of motion formulated by Newton. In this case, 'Newton' becomes a paradigmatic case of mechanics.

In more general terms, new problems, situations, and encounters become interrelated through the functional logic of the example (ibid., p. 188). The example operates by establishing a likeness between something new and what is already known (ibid., p. 188). The example functions 'as a tool, informing the student what similarities to look

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[103] I return briefly to Newton's laws of motion in chapter 4 (see page 280 below).

for', and it results in an 'ability to see a variety of situations as like each other' (Kuhn 2012, p. 188). Novelties are made intelligible by establishing likenesses to what is already well-known. Examples are guides pointing out where to go; they pave the way for certain ways of seeing and understand things. Through the example, different situations appear to be 'subjects for the application of the same' general rule or law (ibid., pp. 189–190). Also, and importantly, as it substitutes the symbolic generalisation it illustrates, the example comes to operate in a phase prior to that symbolic generalization. In many situations, 'Newton' makes more sense than, for instance, $\vec{F} = m\vec{a}$, the formal representation of his second law of motion. And even otherwise, if the formula is recognised, it is only sensible in relation to knowledge of Newton and his work. The example is needed in order for the general rule to make sense.

The example, moreover, functions by means of its own singularity; it speaks of something general with the terms of a singular case. Examples do not substitute a general rule with another generality but rather with something unique. In that substitution, 'the universal logic of the law is replaced by the specific and singular logic of the example' (Agamben 2009a, pp. 11–12). And the example is paradigmatic only by virtue of its singularity: 'it is never possible to separate' a paradigm's 'exemplarity from its singularity' (ibid., p. 31).

When speaking of a paradigm, Agamben speaks of it in a way that corresponds to Kuhn's notion that a paradigm is an exemplary case. 'A paradigm is simply an example', he writes (ibid., p. 11). He emphasises two significant features of the paradigm as example: First, the paradigm destabilises the distinction between the universal and the particular, and second, it constitutes something greater than itself which it is still merely also a part of:

> A paradigm ... is a singular object that, standing equally for all others of the same class, defines the intelligibility of the group of which it is a part and which, at the same time, it constitutes.... Paradigms establish a broader problematic context that they both constitute and make intelligible. (ibid., p. 17)

> The paradigm is a singular case that is isolated from its context only insofar as, by exhibiting its own singularity, it makes intelligible a new ensemble, whose homogeneity it itself constitutes. (ibid., p. 18)

> The paradigm ... calls into question the dichotomous opposition between the particular and the universal ... and presents instead a singularity irreducible to any of the dichotomy's two terms. (Agamben 2009a, p. 19; see also Agamben 1993, pp. 9–11)

An example, then, brings together a whole; something larger is formed around the example, and the example is both part of that whole and constitutes it. The example brings meaning to a whole: 'the whole only results from the paradigmatic exposition of individual cases' (Agamben 2009a, p. 27).

This is quite apposite, I think, to the present discussion about discourse and how to study it. At least for heuristic purposes. For such a whole that the example brings into being can, I believe, be a discourse. A discourse, in this sense, coalesces around examples functioning paradigmatically and an

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[104] For an insightful take on political thought ordered paradigmatically in a Kuhnian sense, see Pocock (1989).

exemplary case of a discourse can, of course, be a text.[104]

One could perhaps object that this seems to contradict the theoretical position outlined above on how meaning forms in discourse. However, I do not think such an objection is valid. I still maintain that meaning emerges from conceptual relations governed by epistemic rules. However, empirically, some contributions to a discourse are simply of greater weight than others, and those contributions are the exemplary cases of a discourse. Some texts are simply more important than others.

So when I say that I treat the analysed material as a series of examples, I mean that the studied texts are considered to be examples of discourses of Western thought. It also means that I consider this to be a study of paradigmatic cases of discourses. The included texts are those from which 'particular coherent traditions' have sprung, to refer back to Kuhn; the texts that have illustrated general rules, principles and so forth; the texts that others have used to make sense of new problems, situations, and encounters; the texts that have guided people telling them what to look for and where to go, and related things to each other; the texts that have turned different situations into subjects of the same general rule; the texts that have made a broader problematic or ensemble intelligible; the texts that have gathered other texts into groups and classes, into discourses.

These paradigmatic cases are singular, unique texts around which discourses have coalesced. They are, however, not studied for their uniqueness. They are studied instead for how, in their singularity, they have been effective in the historical unfolding of thought and for what they make intelligible, namely various discourses. The texts, then,

do not merely say something about themselves. Each text is 'one singularity among others', but as an exemplar, it also 'stands for ... and serves' all other texts of the same discourse it defines (Agamben 1993, p. 10). As examples, the texts 'stand beside' themselves in relation to a broader discursive space, and as I treat them, they are meant to say something of themselves *and* of what they stand beside, of all cases for which they stand. Simply put, they are meant to say something general about the discourse of which they are part.

An example in this sense is a typical case of effective history. In their very exemplarity, examples have necessarily had effects in and on history. To return to Kuhn, according to him a scientific revolution is a non-cumulative change in scientific knowledge and practice (2012, p. 92). Such a change is a change of paradigms, hence a change of examples. A change of examples signals a change of 'group commitments' (ibid., p. 180). People do things differently in the light of new examples; they think in new ways. Reversely, an example is something that makes people do things in a certain way, that makes them think in a certain way. An example, then, has effects; it is effective, thus a component of effective history. To focus on canonical texts is, therefore, a straightforward way to access components of effective history.

Moreover, examples also provide access points to general rules. For in them, general rules emerge indirectly through singular content. Epistemic configurations, therefore, can be reconstructed by means of a study of the exemplary texts of discourse. As Agamben notes,

> The rule ... is not a generality preexisting the singular cases and applicable to them, nor is it something resulting from

the exhaustive enumeration of specific cases. Instead, it is the exhibition alone of the paradigmatic case that constitutes a rule. (Agamben 2009a, p. 21)

My ambition with this study is to cover a lot of ground in terms of both historical time frames and which discourses are included. I adopt such an extensive approach for reasons both theoretical and relating to the subject matter. With the theoretical emphasis on historically contingent but nonetheless fairly stable epistemic configurations determining conceptual meaning, there comes a need to look at quite a big picture in terms of time scale. Moreover, epistemic configurations are of a general character and their intricacies are easily missed with too narrow a focus. If the episteme is what different and seemingly opposing discourses have in common in terms of conceptual relations, an extensive approach is suitable for the purpose of its uncovering. Moreover, with the understanding of thought as something that permeates all aspects of human existence and its general association with action, there is certainly no need to limit the analysed material to explicitly *political* thought. This is indeed a study of a problem in political theory, but shedding light on that problem requires a broader approach, one that does not focus solely on political discourse. One of the main aspects of the problem I am concerned with is the relation between nature and the political world, and to that extent, it seems straightforward to consider political thought *and* discourses that are not first and foremost or explicitly about political issues. Therefore, in addition to examples of political thought, I include and study contributions to such discourses as medieval cos-

mology, early modern science, and modern mathematics. In this broad generalist approach, I take inspiration from Mumford:

> The generalist has a special office, that of bringing together widely separated fields, prudently fenced in by specialists, into a larger common area, visible only from the air. Only by forfeiting the detail can the over-all pattern be seen, though once the pattern is visible new details ... may become visible. The generalist's competence lies not in unearthing new evidence but in putting together authentic fragments that are accidentally, or sometimes arbitrarily, separated. (Mumford 1967, pp. 16–17)

With my generalist and surveying approach—with which 'what is sought is pattern, not detail' (Evernden 1993, p. ix), to quote someone else in green political theory who has taken inspiration from Mumford[105]—I hope to take note of stuff that would have been looked past with a narrower focus, the idea being that with this approach it is possible to unveil shared foundations between literary works that otherwise might seem utterly different and even outright opposing each other. Insofar as the very concept of epistemic configurations refers to the broad structures of thought, any attempt to study them need to be equally broad.

The ambition to cover this much ground, however, comes at the cost of producing somewhat of a fragmentary analysis. Admittedly, I do not delve deeply into the discourses I cover, often only including material from a single author.

Another potential drawback with the generalist approach I adopt is that the included material is not treated very thoroughly. But again, 'unearthing new evidence' is not the

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[105] Yet another could be Castree (2014a, p. 8).

ambition here, but to show an overall pattern by bringing together material from different discourses, and from that overall pattern make something new become visible. That 'something new' pertains to the overall pattern rather than the details.

Hence, I maintain that my approach is suitable for the research aim and for meeting the research objectives. Specifically, it is sufficient for reconstructing epistemic configurations and how they relate to the concepts of humans, nature, and political order. That reconstructive work is, in principle, a comparative endeavour, and its comparisons rely not on quantitative enumerations. They are instead about identifying isomorphic conceptual relations between discourses. How many such relations there are, or how frequent they are, are of less importance than that they exist at all.

2.3 Humans, Nature, & Political Order

A few things need to be clarified before moving on, and some important limitations of the scope of the study need to be mentioned.

To start things off, this is by and large a study ,of three concepts and how they relate to each other: humans, nature, and political order. The double short-circuit of green democracy is, as I approach it, a problem of conceptual meaning and relations. Basically, it consists of how humans and nature are conceptualised and related to each other in discourse and how political order is conceptualised and related to the concepts of hu-

mans and nature. It is a problem of how these three concepts fit together in discourse.

However, this is not a study of the history of the meaning of either of these concepts. By that, I mean that it is not a study of the changing meaning of humans, nature, or political order as stand-alone concepts or pairwise combinations. There is quite a lot of that kind of research, especially on the concept of nature and on the relation between humans and nature, parts of which I have made valuable use of as reference material.[106]

Rather, this is a study of the coevolution of these *three* concepts, of how *all of them* have been related and fitted together in discourse, how they have influenced each other and been influenced together. This emphasis on, and the simultaneous treatment of, the three concepts of humans, nature, and political order and their relations is, I believe, fairly unique to this study, especially accompanied by the theoretical framework regarding the epistemic configuration of discourse.

There is, however, a fairly significant problem associated with this ambition to study conceptual coevolution. According to the theoretical approach I have sketched above, conceptual meaning changes historically. Therefore, what a concept means in the present is not necessarily what it meant in the past. Hence, past meaning cannot be pinpointed in advance of the historical analysis by looking at the present. It is not suitable to let present meaning guide what to look for historically. That would result in

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[106] For accounts of the meaning of nature, many of which also cover aspects of the relation of nature to humans, see Burtt (1932), Castree (2014a), Coates (1998), Collingwood (1960), Descola (2013), Dupré (1993b), Glacken (1976), Hadot (2006), Lewis (1960, pp. 24–74), Merleau-Ponty (2003), Oelschlaeger (1991), Torrance (1992), Whitehead (2004), and Williams (1976, pp. 184–189, 1980). For some studies of the conceptual relations of nature and politics, see Dobson (2008) and Meyer (2001).

anachronisms. What is more, concept and word are arguably not the same. Concepts are indeed expressed through words, but it is quite possible to verbally express the form thought takes in the act of thinking in different ways. As Hacking argues:

> Concepts and words are not identical. This is because ... the same words may, through various kinds of change, come to express different concepts. ... In parity, we must admit that at different times the same concept may be expressed by different words. (Hacking 2002, p. 35)

A concept can be signified with different words, then, and one and the same word can signify more than one concept. Hence, neither is it suitable to let terminology guide what to look for. However, if concepts change and have no necessary connections to words, what does one look for when studying conceptual meaning?[107]

I do not believe there is a perfect solution to this problem. Pragmatically and for heuristic purposes, I think an adequate solution is still to specify some very broad content of the concept under study, to define some very general features of what you aspire to study before actually studying it. Indeed, that approach means projecting present meaning onto historical circumstances and risks resulting in anachronistic readings, but so be it. Key for such specifications still to allow for proper historical treatments of conceptual meaning is their generality in relation to the subject matter of the study.

Regarding humans and nature, these are broadly about the relation between human being and the world *writ large*. They are about one kind of being called *human*, or something along those lines, and what relation that kind has to the rest of being. More-

over, humans and nature have already been delineated above as subjects and objects, the former being the active element of discourse and the other belonging to what discourse is about. To that end, subjects and objects, what is subjective and what is objective, are prominent features in the chapters to come.

Furthermore, much of my take on nature concentrates on thingly being, the material world, and the totality of that world. What is of concern in the analysis of the concept of nature is often either the world of things, the material world or both. The reason for this has to do with the present of which this study is a history. It has to do with the Anthropocene imaginary and the nature of green political theory. By and large, it is the material world of things that is of the most concern in the discussions about the planetary age of humankind and for those who contribute to green political theory. It this world that the human world is becoming ever more entangled with, and it is this world that matters for sustainability concerns. It is also to this world that the bridge from the human world should be built, as the argument goes. Hence, it seems fitting to focus the historical analysis of the concept of nature on that nature.

I also make heavy use of the understandings of nature as organism, mechanism, and environment, nature as a living being, as a machine, and as the surrounding of human beings. As these conceptualisations appear in my analysis, each corresponds to a separate period and mode of thought. Nature as organism belongs to medieval discourse, nature as mechanism to early modernity, and nature as environment to modernity. For analytical and heuristic purposes, I also

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[107] This way of setting up this problem draws on Bartelson (2007).

add to these substantial understandings of nature by loosely drawing on Collingwood (1960, pp. 16–17), a coupled understanding of the relation between structure and function. Doing so, I take structure to be largely about something's very being, what something is, what it is constituted of, and how it is constituted. Structure, in this sense, refers to essence. Function, on the other hand, refers to what that something does or what goes on or happens inside it, to actions. It also has to do with the coming into existence of that thing and refers to what things become. Taking inspiration from Collingwood, I argue that to each substantial understanding of nature, there corresponds a specific relation between structure and function.[108] Broadly speaking, when nature is an organism, function resolves into structure. When it is a machine, structure and function are separated and stand on equal footing. When it is an environment, structure resolves into function.

As for humans, in addition to them amounting to subjective being, much of what they are thought to be emerges in their relation to the rest of being, to the natural world, if you may. That relation, as it is approached in this study, is broadly about belonging and separation. It is very much about whether humans belong to the same world as nature, or if they are separated from it, belonging to something else, to a world of their own; whether there is something exceptional to humans setting them apart from other beings.

However, even if human being is conceptualised in relation to nature, and this study often focuses on that relation, this does not mean that the role of the epistemic configuration of discourse is neglected or forgotten. It is still the case that much of what it means to be human—and nature, for that matter—is determined at the level of the episteme. The episteme works at a more general level influencing conceptual meaning in its entirety. As well, of course, it also influences the meaning of political order, what life lived in common is thought to be, the third of the concepts of primary concern in this study.

Throughout the analysis in the next three chapters, I repeatedly reconstruct the historical meaning of political order, of life lived in common, using similar terms as in the reconstructions of the concept of nature. Importantly, I make use of the coupled relation between the analytical concepts of structure and function in these discussions as well. Political order, too, can be an organism, for instance, and in political order too, function can resolve into structure. The distinction and relation between structure and function have indeed already been put to use in relation to the concept of political order in the discussion above on the concept of political order presupposed by the conceptualisation of democracy in green political theory. In this context, it has appeared as part of the conceptual component of inessentialism, according to which the structure of political order resolves into its function.

The peculiarity that things that might be completely unrelated—as nature and political order are in parts of the material analysed herein—still share something basic

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[108] In his discussion on structure and function in relation to the concept of nature, Collingwood focuses on the emergence of the modern concept of nature and the move away from a mechanistic understanding of nature. He does not refer to modern nature as an environment, nor does he discuss medieval nature on the basis of structure and function.

in terms of their conceptual composition, echoes of the episteme and is a direct consequence of discourse having an epistemic configuration. The episteme results in the appearance of isomorphic conceptual relations between discourses, and it is largely the episteme that makes it possible for political order to be made sense of in the same way as nature, whether the former is seen to belong to the latter or not.

There is, however, one feature of the conceptualisation of political order that appears in all three modes of thought I deal with in this study, one reappearing feature of life lived in common. Much of the discussions on political order in the subsequent chapters is, indeed, geared towards that feature, which is the notion that legitimate authority is authorised. During large parts of the covered historical period, that notion is predominately couched explicitly in terms of sovereignty, and the concept of sovereignty does indeed occupy a very important place in the analysis herein, and not just in the analysis of political order, it is of importance for the analysis as a whole.

Broadly speaking, sovereignty is, perhaps evidently, a configuration of authority, and a very general one, at that. As a conceptualisation of authority being authorised, it denotes a form of power, and it belongs to an understanding of political order according to which the manifestation of political order—real order, so to speak—depends on something that is more fundamental than that manifestation, that there is more to political order than its actual manifestation. If authority is authorised, then someone or something is doing the authorisation.

That 'more' to manifest political order can broadly be said to consist just of sovereign power. Sovereign power, in this sense, amounts to that upon which manifest political order depends. Political order and power understood in this way are split between something that actually exists and something that brings that into existence. Different versions of this understanding of political order are indeed present in all historical periods and modes of thought covered in this study—albeit not necessarily explicitly couched in terms of sovereignty, which especially pertains to the Middle Ages—hence my inclination to focus on it.[109] This focus, as it will turn out, is also key for insights regarding the double short circuit of green democracy, especially as to why green political theory tends to disqualify its own concept of democracy.

Indeed, even though I study the historically varying conceptualisation of political order, my primary focus in these parts of the analysis is not the meaning per se of political order. Instead—and this follows from the research aim and the character of the double short circuit of green democracy—I pay particular attention to whether the concept of political order during the different periods and in the different modes of thought is composed of the four conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. I do this to determine if democracy, as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory, could emerge as a meaningful concept in the studied discourses; if a cer-

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[109] But just as this is not a study of either humans or nature in isolation or as a pair, neither is it a study of the concept of sovereignty in isolation. For treatments and studies of the concept of sovereignty and its history, see for instance, Bartelson (1995, 2014), Hinsley (1986), Jackson (2007), Kalmo and Skinner (2010b), Krasner (1999, pp. 9–25), and Philpott (1997).

tain mode of thought makes it possible for such a concept of democracy to surface in discourse.

Lastly, a few limitations need mentioning. Perhaps the most significant limitation of the scope of this study is that it covers only Western thought, and here 'Western' basically means Western European. Intellectual developments from other parts of the world are simply not considered here.

It should also be emphasised that, regarding political order, this is not a study of the *reality* of political order. This is not an empirical study of politics. In fact, it is not a study of any empirical subject at all. This is a study of discourse, political ideas, thoughts about nature, and so on. Broadly speaking, it is a study in intellectual history. I do not approach the material I cover, which simply consists of written works, as empirical material. Instead, I approach those works as something through which conceptual meaning and modes of thought can be reconstructed.

Moreover, as noted already, my interest lies in effective history and dominant modes of thought wherefore minor modes of thought, counter-histories, or similar things along those lines, do not appear in the analysis. And as has also already been noted, the analysis often only covers a limited range of material from each discourse under study.

By and large, this is a practical consequence following from the ambition to cover a lot of ground. I have, however, focused on using primary source material first and foremost. Secondary sources appear as well, but they are primarily complementary to the primary source material. This, too, relates to the emphasis on effective history. Simply put, I see great value in studying the actual examples of the effective history of thought.

The emphasis on primary sources also adds to the problematisation of the green political theory of the present and of its representation of human-nature relations in Western thought, for I will show that representation to fit rather poorly with the examples of the effective history of Western thought.

I must admit, however, that my language skills have restricted my ambition to use primary source material. I am not proficient in all of the languages in which the material that needs coverage in this study is written. My solution to this shortcoming has generally been to use published English translations. In the text, I also refer to translated passages of primary material appearing in secondary sources. In those cases, I cite the secondary source and an edition I have consulted of the primary source in the original language. On a few occasions, I also refer to unpublished translations.

The Middle Ages:
The Bridge between Humans and Nature

My log has something to tell you.

(Log Lady)

Dᴜʀɪɴɢ ᴛʜᴇ Mɪᴅᴅʟᴇ Aɢᴇꜱ, identity assumes precedence over difference in the epistemic configuration of discourse; identity is logically prior to difference in the formation of medieval thought. Indeed, this is not to say that everything is exactly the same but rather that things must be the same before they can be different (Gierke 1900, pp. 9–10). 'Before the many', as Aquinas notes in reference to Plato in his *Summa Theologiæ*, 'you must place the one' ([1265–1274] 1967b, p. 7).[1]

Therefore, to the extent that there are differences—that things in the world are different from each other—there must first be identity. Two things differing from each other must also share an identity, and that identity precedes their difference. Identity is general, difference is particular, bound to specific cases. Aquinas writes accordingly on this issue:

> Diverging, strictly speaking, means diverging in some particular—you look for divergence in the strict sense where there is also concurrence. And this is why divergent things must be complex in some way, since they diverge in some respect and concur in another. But according to this precise use of words, while everything that diverges is thereby other, not everything that is other thereby diverges. … For incomplex things are other in themselves, but they do not diverge by divergent factors which enter into their make-up. Thus man diverges from donkey in the divergent factor of rational and irrational (while they concur in the common factor of animal); but you cannot go on to say that the rational and irrational diverge from each other in some further divergent factor—they are simply other. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1964b, p. 7)

What Aquinas is saying here specifically is

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[1] Some notes on citations: In the secondary literature on many of the works I refer to, the works are referred to with specialised formats, such as using abbreviations, standardised paragraph numbering, and so on. I do not, however, use any such formats and instead refer to all sources in the same way: by author name, publication year, and, when suitable, page numbers to the consulted edition. Exceptions to this format, in cases for which it has not been possible to follow it, are mentioned in the footnotes. It should also be noted that in the citations to all primary sources, in addition to the publication year of the consulted edition, I generally also include original year of publication, completion, or writing—to the extent such information is known—if that year differs from the publication year of the consulted edition. Exceptions to this are also mentioned in the footnotes. References to author names generally follow the consulted editions. Again, exceptions are mentioned in the footnotes.

that rational and irrational are identical to each other in the sense of being simple in their composition. Because each of them is compositionally simple, both are internally identical; they are both equally identical to themselves. This makes them externally identical as well in the sense that both are self-identical; they share between them an identity of being self-identical. They might be other but they are other in a simple way and share a fundamental simplicity which is equal in both of them.

If two things must be identical before they can be different, it follows, when not only two things in particular but things in general are taken into consideration, that all things in the world share with all other things a fundamental identity. They share the identity of identity, so to speak. According to medieval thought, the world itself is a unity, a unified whole. Writing about unity as a principle for created life, Bernardus Silvestris states that unity has 'no beginning' and that it is 'simple, inviolate, remote, complete in and of itself, infinite, and eternal' ([ca. 1147] 1973, p. 118). The world can, and does indeed, contain differing things but the differences of those things are subsumed under the fundamental identity of the unified whole: 'every multitude is derived from unity', Aquinas writes ([1267] 2002, p. 11). In the Middle Ages, differences are played out inside a context of identity; differing things participate in a world of identity. Difference is enclosed by identity. In the century before Aquinas's *Summa Theologiæ*, Hugh of Saint Victor writes:

> If you gaze at the structure of this universe, you will find that the composition of all things is perfect because of wonderful thought and wisdom. … In it not only do similar things protect concord,

but also diverse and incompatible things … come together in some way in one friendship and federation. What could be more incompatible than water and fire? Yet, the foresight of God has so mixed them in the natural world that not only do they not dissolve the common bond of association between them, but they are also able to provide vital nourishment to all growing things so that they can subsist. … Thus does all nature love itself and in the same wondrous way a concord of many dissimilar things joined together in unity fashions one harmonious whole in all of them. (Hugh of St Victor [ca. 1120?] 2010, p. 65)

And Alain de Lille describes the creation of a world of fundamental identity as a process of differentiation circumscribed by unity:

> just as the concordant discord of the four elements, a uniform plurality, a dissonant consonance, a dissenting consensus, holds together the structure of the cosmic realm, so the compatible incompatibility of four temperaments, an unequal equality, a dissident conformity, a differing identity, holds together the edifice of the human body. (Alan of Lille [ca. 1160–1170] 2013b, p. 71)

This passage is illustrative not only of the epistemic priority of identity in medieval discourse, it also serves as a first indication of what will be a leading theme in this chapter, namely that humans are encompassed by the fundamental identity of the world which means that they *belong* to that world. When Alain states that the human body is created in the same way as 'the cosmic realm' he also identifies their identity. The cosmos and the human edifice, to use Alain's vocabulary, are built in the same way and their building blocks, as will be shown throughout this chapter—are identical.

The belonging of humans to the world is the topic of the next two sections. There,

I will delineate how humans and nature are conceptualised in medieval discourse and show that the medieval relation between humans and nature is one according to which humans belong to the natural world. Having done that, I then turn to the medieval conceptualisation of political order, paying particular attention to whether political order contains the four conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. On this issue, I will argue, briefly put, that the medieval concept of political order does not contain these components and could not be part of discourse as such conceptual components in a meaningful way. Furthermore, I will also show that this absence is related to the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation.

The chapter covers the period between the so-called Renaissance of the 12th century to the more well-known Italian Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries,[2] and adds to this a brief prehistory. Regarding content, it predominantly deals with Christian scholastic thought, and Renaissance humanism and natural philosophy. Earlier material from Classical Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, mainly writings by ancient Greek philosophers and the Christian

Church Fathers, is also covered but to a lesser extent. Classical discourse deserves particular mention as practically all medieval thought is influenced in some way by it, if not directly then through tradition. The biggest names here are of course Plato and Aristotle, and, crudely speaking, one can say that in the material I cover, the influence of Plato and Neoplatonism is most evident in early scholasticism, patristic writings, and some parts of Renaissance discourse. Many of Aristotle's works were translated into Latin during the second half of the 12th century and the 13th century, their influence on subsequent thought was enormous, and most later works I cover herein are positioned in relation to Aristotle.[3]

Things, to continue, are fundamentally identical according to medieval thought. However, at the same time, things are also different from each other, despite their fundamental identity. Thus, things are neither completely identical nor wholly different; they are, somehow, different while being identical. Therefore, they always appear as similar to each other; things, in the Middle Ages, *resemble* each other, they are equivalent but not equal (Bonaventure [1254] 1992, pp. 86, 92).[4] Hence, the epistemic priority of identity results in resemblance being

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[2] On the 12th century Renaissance, see Benson and Constable (1982), Haskins (1957), Knowles (1988, pp. 65–136), Luscombe and Evans (1988), Luscombe (1997, pp. 39–60), and Swanson (1999).

[3] I have chosen not to discuss the transmission and dissemination of Classical works any further than this. The secondary literature on early medieval and medieval—in which I include the Italian Renaissance, it bears repeating— Platonism, Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism is huge and I would certainly not claim to be familiar with it all. However, for just a few entry points, introductions, and overviews, see Aertsen (2010), Bianchi (2007), Celenza (2007), Copenhaver (1988b, pp. 77–86), Copenhaver and Schmitt (1992, pp. 60–195), Chenu (1968b), Ebbesen (2017), Gersh (1982, 1986, pp. 779–807), Gersh and Hoenen (2002), Gersh (2011a,b), Grafton (1988), Grant (1987, 2010a,b), Hankins (1990, 2004), Haren (1992), Klibanski (1939), Knowles (1988, pp. 3–61, 167–174), Kristeller (1979, pp. 32–65), Luscombe (1997, pp. 7–28, 61–73), Marenbon (2011), Marrone (2003, pp. 32–36), Nederman (1991, 1996), Pasnau (2010, pp. 793–832), Schmitt (1983), and Wieland (1987), as well as various contributions in Armstrong (1970), Kretzmann et al. (1982), Marenbon (2012, in particular part I), and O'Meara (1982a, in particular parts III and IV).

[4] For a somewhat differing point of view, regarding 12th century thought, see Hicks (2017, p. 35), who goes further and maintains that 'the reduction of inequality to equality, was a crucial component in understanding' the world.

foundational for what things are, it situates resemblance as the basis for the determination of what things are and what they mean.

One thing resembling another thing means that the two things are proportionally related; two things between which a resemblance holds are in some way corresponding based on proportions. Such a proportion can be, just to mention an example, that the two things are made from the same number of components related to each other in the same fashion, to refer back to the quote above by Alain de Lille. Or they can share one or more defining qualities. This is often how the Christian belief that humans are created in God's image is substantiated in the Middle Ages. Hugh of Saint Victor, for instance, as part of a teaching on how humans can improve upon their situation in the aftermath of the fall states that:

> there are two things which restore the divine likeness in man, namely the contemplation of truth and the practice of virtue. For man resembles God in being wise and just—though, to be sure, man is but changeably so while God stands changelessly both wise and just. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1127] 1961, pp. 54–55).[5]

Thus, a relation of resemblance is a relation of analogy, analogy denoting a relation in which the related entities display a corresponding proportion (Delany 1990b, p. 20; Ashworth 2003, p. 88). To the extent that things in general display such relations to each other—as they do in the Middle Ages—analogy appears to be a suitable concept for describing the epistemic configuration of discourse. This is the point of departure for the analysis of medieval discourse in this study, that it is ruled by analogy (Delany 1990b, see also; Descola 2013, pp. 202–207; Foucault 2002b, pp. 19–28; Gilson 1965, pp. 185–214; Koenigsberger 1979; Mazzeo 1954; Rosemann 1996); for about 400 years, in the period between the 12th century and the Italian renaissances, conceptual meaning emerges from analogical relations. Things, according to the medieval mode of thought, are what they are based on their resemblance to other things, and the words and concepts used to make sense of them are themselves likenesses of the things they make meaningful (Foucault 2002b, pp. 28–34).

One analogical relation of particular importance in Christian medieval discourse is the one between the material world and the spiritual world, between temporal ad eternal being, earth and heaven, the visible world of the here and now and the invisible world beyond. These two realms come face to face in human beings, in the meeting of the human soul and the human body. Humans, according to medieval thought, contain within their being the analogy between the material and the spiritual. In the 12th century, Bernardus writes in his *Cosmographia*—a creation narrative drawing extensively on Plato's *Timaeus* and very influential for subsequent cosmogenetic speculations during the Middle Ages:

> Observe, O keen of mind, how the world is formed, and by what means the elements are interwoven. …
>
> You have learned what harmonious proportion unites souls to bodily members, so that a single bond of love links unlike natures. (Bernardus Silvestris [ca. 1147] 1973, p. 109)[6]

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[5]Note also how Hugh deems the qualities of being wise and just not to be completely identical in humans and in God, but only similar. For God, according to Hugh, is always wise and just while humans are not.

[6]On Bernardus and the influence of his work, see Kauntze (2014), Stock (1972), and Wetherbee (1973).

And in the following century, Saint Bonaventure, commenting on the creation of humankind as described in scripture, notes that 'the body of the first man [Adam], formed from the slime of the earth, was created subject to the soul and yet proportioned to it in its own way' (Bonaventure [ca. 1257] 2005, p. 89, brackets in original).[7]

One way in which the body is seen to be proportional to the soul by the medievals is its upright posture. According to Bonaventure, as the soul seeks and reaches for heaven, so does the body stand straight with its head raised towards the skies (ibid., p. 91), and according to Bernardus, the stature of man bears 'witness to the majesty of his mind' as he lifts 'up his noble head toward the stars' (Bernardus Silvestris [ca. 1147] 1973, p. 113).[8] Through such proportional correspondences, the identity of the material and the spiritual worlds is affirmed: 'God fashioned' the human being, as Bonaventure states,

> from the two natures that were the maximum distance from one another, united in a single person or nature. These are the body and the soul, the former being a corporeal substance, the later a spiritual and immaterial one. (Bonaventure [ca. 1257] 2005, p. 90)

Bonaventure's conceptualisation of the human soul, according to which the soul 'confers not simply existence, but also life, sensation, and intelligence' (ibid., p. 87), is, as many others', influenced by Aristotle's definition of the soul as the essence of body,

meaning that the soul is what determines what kind of living thing any such thing is and what brings the thing to life (Aristotle 1957b, pp. 67–73).[9] Similarly, and drawing heavily on Aristotle—as he does in much of his work—Aquinas approaches the soul as the form of the body (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1970a, pp. 5–87, [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, pp. 215–227). Because 'form and matter must always be mutually proportioned and, as it were, naturally adapted' (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, p. 262, see also p. 283), as he maintains, it follows that there is a proportional relation between the spiritual and the material (ibid., p. 216).

A couple of centuries later, at the verge of the Italian Renaissance, Nicholas of Cusa—who often goes by his Latin moniker Cusanus—basically repeats this position by inferring that since

> the mind has a function because of which it is termed soul, it requires the fitting disposition of a body properly proportioned to it. …. [J]ust as the identity of proportion cannot be multiplied, neither can the identity of mind, which cannot animate a body without the proper proportion. (Nicholas de Cusa [1450] 1979, p. 83; see also Führer 2014, pp. 107–110)[10]

According to Cusanus, the body must be proportional to the mind in order for the body to be animated by the mind, implying thereby that the analogy between soul and body, and a fortiori the spiritual and material, is essential for human life; for human existence to be possible at all, there must be an

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[7] On the notion of Adam being formed from the slime of the earth—which derives from the Bible (Genesis 2:7, the New Revised Standard Version)—see footnote 40 on page 178 in this chapter.

[8] On the prevalence of the idea about the importance of the upright posture of the human being during in medieval discourse, see Patrides (1982, pp. 83–89).

[9] The dates of Aristotle's works are unknown, beyond the fact that Aristotle lived in the 4th century BCE.

[10] Führer (2014) provides overall a very good comparison of Aquinas's and Cusanus's understandings of human being and its place in the world.

analogical relation between the material and the spiritual.

The analogy between matter and the spirit manifested in the human being establishes and sustains a connection between the created world and its divine creator, between earth and heaven; it secures a correspondence between the material and the spiritual. As such, it can be specified as a *vertical* analogy, an analogy connecting things at different levels and drawing those levels together by explicating their shared identities. This kind of analogy is by no means a novelty for the Middle Ages since it plays a significant role for conceptual meaning and the intelligibility of the world in both ancient and early medieval thought. Thusly, it connects, rather, medieval discourse with a past. However, beginning in the 12th century, analogy is generalised in such a way that vertical analogies are complemented by what can be designated as *horizontal* analogies, analogies connecting things existing on the same level of being, most notably the material level. So, for instance, whereas humans had earlier been analogically related to their divine creator, they are now also analogically related to other things in the material realm, they become similar to other things in the created world. The 'rounded shape' of the head, for instance, follows 'the example of the firmament and the sphere of the heavens', as Bernardus states (Bernardus Silvestris [ca. 1147] 1973, p. 121), and 'two are the animals [created] to the image and similitude of man, the ape on earth and the owl in the sky', Giordano Bruno maintains ([1584] 1975, p. 52, brackets in original). Before, the body had been proportional to the soul and the spiritual world, now it is also proportional to the material world: 'the soul', Bonaventure argues, 'apprehends through the five

external senses that correspond to the five principal corporeal elements of the world' (Bonaventure [ca. 1257] 2005, p. 87).

With the appearance of such horizontal analogies, analogy emerges as a general rule according to which meaning is established, it becomes the epistemic configuration of discourse. However, before going into more detail about that configuration and its consequences for the conceptualisations of humans, nature, their relation, and political order, a brief look at its prehistory is in order.

The idea that the material world corresponds vertically in some way to an immaterial spiritual world beyond goes back, as noted already, to Classical Antiquity. Crucially, it is a leading theme in Plato's *Timaeus* ([ca. 360 BCE] 1997c), one of very few works by Plato commonly known during the whole of the medieval period and pretty much a constant point of reference in medieval discourse. Plato takes the sensuous world of matter to be an inferior and degenerating image of a purely spiritual world beyond the material one. The material world is a world of change, the spiritual remains permanently the same. Thus, the latter is an eternal world where being is not exposed to temporal transformation, from which it follows that it amounts to the realm of being proper, to ultimate reality. According to Plato, then, the spiritual world is where the real truth of being is located, it is the realm of truth (ibid., in particular pp. 1234–1236).

Plato's speculations about the world and how the material is related to the spiritual is part of a long-standing and widespread Hellenistic fascination with the natural world and what place humans occupy in and in relation to it, a fascination which, starting with the sophists, is often couched in terms of the relation between *physis* and *nomos*, be-

tween on the one side the material world, its composition, origin and development, and on the other human customs, norms and laws.[11] When Christianity makes its appearance in Western thought, much of the Greeks' curiosity about nature is dismissed as misguided and fruitless endeavours, the reason being that such an interest alone can do nothing for redeeming a humankind fallen from grace. Efforts, according to early Christian reasoning, should be directed at gaining knowledge of the creator to restore humankind's relation to God, they should not be directed at gaining knowledge about God's creation for its own sake (Harrison 1998, pp. 12–13; see also Dodds 1970, p. 37). However, the vertical analogy between the material and the spiritual world is still preserved in Christian discourse as Plato's dualism of the eternal and the temporal world is recast into Christian theology.

Early Christian philosophers—the so-called Church Fathers—approach the visible world as a world full of symbols placed there by God and pointing beyond themselves towards the divine invisible realm (Harrison 1998, p. 15).[12] Things in the material world understood in this way are signs of something else, they harbour secret symbolic meanings and to the extent that they can be interpreted, the signs can reveal truths of greater profundity than their mere material existence might imply; the visible world can yield insights about the invisible. There-

fore, knowledge of the symbolic meaning of nature can indeed play an important role for the edification of the human soul. By learning the spiritual meaning of the signs, humans can gain knowledge of their creator and, by that, improve upon their fractured relation to God. For this reason, because of its symbolic dimension and as a means to divine insights, the natural world continues to occupy an important place in early Christian thought (Wallace-Hadrill 1968).

However, knowing God through the creation requires the correct interpretation of nature's symbolic dimension; it requires an appropriate hermeneutic method; an approach allowing for the secrets of the natural world to be unlocked. Such an approach is brought to systematic maturity in the works of Origen (Harrison 1998, p. 15; Lawson 1957, p. 8).

Repeating Plato's conception of the material world as a replica of the spiritual, Origen maintains that *everything* in nature is an image of something in the spiritual world and that all things visible bear the likeness of something invisible and divine (Origen [ca. 240] 1957, pp. 219–220; see also Dawson 2002, pp. 52–53):[13]

> all things in the visible category can be related to the invisible, the corporeal to the incorporeal, and the manifest to those that are hidden; so that the creation of the world itself, fashioned in this wise as it is, can be understood through the divine wisdom, which from actual things

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[11] On the concepts of *physis* and *nomos* in Greek philosophy, see Guthrie (1969, pp. 55–134), Hobbs (1998), Lloyd (1992, pp. 12–14), McKirahan (2010, pp. 405–426), Ostwald (1990), and Taylor (2007). On the concept of *physis*, which by itself—beyond its relation to *nomos*—is a major element in so-called Presocratic philosophy in general, with the problem of how *nomos* relates to *physis* being associated primarily with the sophists, see also Naddaf (2005). Important fragments of the Presocratics are collected in Graham (2010a, 2010b, with the fragments of the sophists appearing in part II).

[12] For an account of the philosophical thought of the Church Fathers, see Wolfson (1976).

[13] It should be noted that there is great uncertainty regarding the original dates for Origen's works. For a brief but detailed account of his life and works, see Heine (2004, pp. 121–127).

and copies teaches us things unseen by means of those that are seen, and carries us over from earthly things to heavenly. (Origen [ca. 240] 1957, p. 223)

In Origen's view, God used things in heaven as patterns for the things he created (ibid., pp. 218–219). The presence of such likenesses in nature implies that 'the soul may be instructed and taught' by the things existing in the visible world 'how to contemplate those other things that are invisible and heavenly' (ibid., p. 220). Thus, by learning these likenesses, what they are and what they signify, and by interpreting the divine signs 'the human mind might mount to spiritual understanding and seek the grounds of things in heaven' (ibid., p. 220).

According to Origen, because the material world signifies the spiritual, the latter as well as the former become intelligible by uncovering and correctly interpreting the divine symbols of the material world. In other words, the natural world is held to have a meaning. It is, in this way, reminiscent of a text; the world is like a book. The crux is still, however, how to read the book. How should God's symbols be interpreted? How should the divine signs be deciphered? Origen finds a solution to these questions in scripture. He, together with the other early Church Fathers, maintain that scripture, just like the creation, contains a hidden significance; scripture too expresses more than what merely meets the eye (ibid., p. 223). In his *On First Principles*, Origen writes:

just as man consists of body, soul and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture, which has been prepared by God to be given for man's salvation. (Origen [ca. 219–230] 1966, p. 276)

Thus, scripture has three levels of composition corresponding to the human body, soul, and spirit. Following from this threefold composition, scripture is believed to have three different levels of meaning which, in turn, means that it can be read in three different ways, each pertaining to a specific level of meaning.

First, scripture has a literal meaning, corresponding to the human body, and is in this sense an account of historical events. Second, it has a moral meaning, which corresponds to the human soul and which provides lessons for how humans ought to live their earthy lives. Third and finally, it has a spiritual meaning corresponding to the human spirit and revealing divine truths (Origen [ca. 219–230] 1966, pp. 275–276; see also Harrison 1998, pp. 18–19). The spiritual meaning is not readily available on the printed pages of scripture, no more than the human soul is visible anywhere in the human body; it is not immediately present in the text and cannot be accessed through a simple literal reading. Instead, one must pay attention to what is not said but what is still meant.[14] Thus, it is possible, according to Origen, to uncover by means of allegorical exegetical practices; allegory—the literary equivalent of analogy—is the key for unlocking the divine meaning of scripture,

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[14] For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that Origen does not systematically employ a distinction between the soul and the spirit, and correspondingly, even though he principally distinguishes between moral and spiritual meaning, he often conflates them in practice in such a way that both moral and spiritual meaning fall within the notion of allegorical meaning (Herren 2017, p. 156).

[15] It should be noted that Origen is not the first to deploy allegory in the reading of biblical texts. It is a common approach in early Christian thought and goes back to Jewish exegetical traditions and most notably to Philo who urges 'those who merely follow the outward and obvious ... not to halt there, but to press on to allegorical interpretations

and, by that, the meaning of nature.[15]

In Origen, then, the Platonist conception of the world becomes the foundation for a method of interpretation; scripture, according to the view Origen systematises, contains multiple meanings as a result of the position it occupies in a world saturated by correspondences between the material and the spiritual (Boyarin 2010, p. 46; Lawson 1957, p. 9). Nevertheless, this position guarantees only the form of the meaning of scripture; it guarantees *that* scripture has a meaning—or meaning*s*, rather—not *what* that meaning is. There is, so far, still nothing that provides the interpretation of scripture with certainty in terms of substance. This is where Christian theology steps in and takes centre stage, for the final piece to Origen's puzzle is provided by the words of scripture themselves, specifically the books of the New Testament. Scripture is the key to its own decipherment, and, in turn, the ultimate key to understanding the meaning of the world.

Origen understands Christ to be the incarnation of God as word, he is the words of God incarnate (Boyarin 2010, p. 47; Lawson 1957, p. 9). Christ, as he is depicted in the New Testament, speaks the words of God:

> Then Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own'. (John 7:16–17, the New Revised Standard Version)

God the Father speaks through the Son:

> Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son. (Hebrews 1:1–2, the New Revised Standard Version)

Christ speaks the divine language, and, in doing so, he provides a channel of communication between spiritual and material reality (Boyarin 2010). When 'the Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14, the New Revised Standard Version) a direct link between the visible and the invisible world was established, and Christ, thus considered, represents the moment in which the spiritual source of the material world becomes fully present in the latter (ibid., pp. 50–51). Through Christ, divine language is spoken directly to humans, and a possibility is provided to comprehend that language (Torjesen 1986, pp. 114–116). This suggests that scripture can, and should, be interpreted based on the words of Christ as these are recorded in scripture; the words of scripture, since they account for the words of Christ, provide the key for uncovering what is meant but not spoken, what is implied but not explicated, what lies hidden beneath that which is visible (ibid., pp. 109–111):

> All who believe and are convinced that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and who know Christ to be the truth (in accordance with his own saying, 'I am the truth'), derive the knowledge which calls men to lead a good and blessed life from no other source but the very words

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and to recognize that the letter is to the oracle but as the shadow to the substance and that the higher values therein revealed are what really and truly exist' (Philo 1932, pp. 113–115). For an example of Philo's interpretive practice, see Philo (1929, pp. 146–299). Note also that the dates of Philo's works are generally not known (Royse 2009, in particular pp. 59–62).

Moreover, allegory is also deployed in early Greek philosophy going back to early interpretations of the works of Homer. Origen's novelty regarding allegory, however, is that he turns it into a systemic element of Christian theology. On these issues, see Herren (2017), Whitman (1987, 2000), and Wolfson (1976, pp. 24–72). For an account emphasising theoretical rather than historical aspects of the approach to allegory associated with Origen, see Dawson (2002).

and teaching of Christ. By the words of Christ we do not mean only those which formed his teaching when he was made man and dwelt in the flesh, since even before that Christ the Word of God was in Moses and the prophets. (Origen [ca. 219–230] 1966, p. 1)

Because the language of Christ is divine, the writings of scripture 'themselves are divine, that is, are inspired by the Spirit of God'; they are 'not the utterances of man but the language of God' (Origen [ca. 219–230] 1966, pp. 256, 265; see also Origen [ca. 240] 1957, p. 223).[16] They are not narrations of the divine source of human origin, they are copies of God's actual words (Boyarin 2010, pp. 46–47; Torjesen 1986, p. 133). This divine character allows scripture to serve as a starting point for the interpretation of itself and of the divine symbols of nature. It is turned into the cipher required for making the natural world intelligible and meaningful. The natural world and the things in it are meaningful, according to Origen, because of their resemblance to something in the spiritual world, and their meaning is derived from their analogical connections to the divine realm. The role of scripture is to be a guide; it provides the key for unlocking the hidden meaning of nature and the truths about its creator. In this way, it authorises interpretations but is not itself the source of meaning as this is provided by the constitution of the world itself (Harrison 1998, pp. 29–30).

Origen systematises a theology according to which it is possible to reach transcendent insights by laying bare the analogical meanings immanent but hidden in nature. As the

early Christians seek knowledge of the natural world as means for spiritual edification and as a way to confirm their faith, their interest is focused on the divine significance of nature. By that, the study of nature takes place within theology. Clement of Alexandria, for instance, states in the introduction to book 4 of his *Stromateis* that his purpose with the book is to address himself

> to the true gnostic science of nature, receiving initiation into the minor mysteries before the greater; so that nothing may be in the way of the truly divine declaration of sacred things…. The science of nature, then, or rather observation, as contained in the gnostic tradition according to the rule of the truth, depends on the discussion concerning cosmogony, ascending thence to the department of theology. (Clement of Alexandria [ca. 198–203] 1979, p. 409)

The early medieval conceptualisation of nature is one according to which everything in nature carries a deeper meaning, and one according to which anything can reveal something of great importance. The changing of the seasons or the movement of the celestial bodies, for instance, can be viewed as being analogical to scripture's teachings of resurrection in the afterlife and can provide insights about what happens after death (Wallace-Hadrill 1968, p. 85; see also Origen [ca. 240] 1957, pp. 221–222). The creatures who creep up on the shores from the depth of the seas are, as Origen maintains, like the 'impulses … of our carnal and earthly man' that creep up every now and then (Origen [ca. 238–244] 1982, p. 60, see also pp. 59–61), and the roe deer, who 'has received its name from its keen power of sight' (Origen [ca.

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[16] Just to clarify, Origen maintains that the writings in the Old Testament are also divine by virtue of prophesying the advent of Christ, which 'proclaimed the truth and divine inspiration of what had been spoken' (Origen [ca. 219–230] 1966, pp. 264–265).

240] 1957, p. 226), is illustrative of Christ's ability to see God and to help others see him:

> It is a ... part of the roe's nature that it not only sees and perceives most acutely itself, but also bestows the power of sight on others. For those who are skilled in medicine assert that there is a certain fluid in the viscera of this animal which dispels dimness from the eyes and stimulates defective vision. Deservedly, therefore, is Christ compared to a roe or a fallow deer, since He not only sees the Father Himself, but also causes Him to be seen by those whose power of vision He Himself has healed. (ibid., p. 227)

Further examples might include the notion, as it is expounded by Saint Ambrose, that humans should take care not to be cruel like beasts, for beasts get killed for being cruel and humans similarly put themselves at risk if they behave in such ways (Ambrose [387?] 1961, pp. 233–234). Similarly, the donkey teaches humans about the importance of physical and mental agility guided by faith:

> The donkey is a slothful and stupid animal, an easy prey to all mischance. What is the lesson that this animal conveys? Is it not that we should become more alert and not grow dull from physical and mental inactivity? Why not, rather, take refuge in a faith which tends to lighten our heavy burdens? (ibid., p. 234)

Or, for yet another example, one of the many fables in the collection known as the *Physiologus* tells the story about the lion and how it covers up its tracks by sweeping its tail on the ground so as to not reveal for the hunter where it has its den (*Physiologus* 2009, pp. 3–4).[17] This, according to the *Physiologus*, teaches of how God, when he became flesh through Christ, in the very act of becoming corporeal hid his divine nature for the unbelievers.

This kind of reasoning about nature is indicative of how the early Christians conceptualised the natural world as a resemblance of the divine world. As a result of that conceptualisation, because nature is believed to play a role in the edification of the human soul, there is a noticeable and continuous interest in nature among early Christian theologians. Most of this changes, however, with Saint Augustine and the profound influence of his work on the subsequent development of Christian thought.

Augustine continues, by and large, the hermeneutic approach of Origen. He too maintains that scripture contains both literal and symbolic meanings (Augustine [397–400] 1991, p. 40, [397–426] 1995, pp. 61–63, 71–73, 83–85, 133–195, [416] 2002, p. 168; see also Williams 2001). In fact, by claiming that 'anything in the divine discourse that cannot be related either to good morals or to the true faith should be taken as figurative' (Augustine [397–426] 1995, p. 147), Augustine 'maximises' (Teske 1995, p. 110) the symbolic meaning of scripture at the expense of the literal since most things dealt with in scripture falls under the category of symbolic meaning thusly defined. Moreover, nature is still conceived of by Augustine in Platonist terms as a symbolic realm of meaning (Augustine [397–426] 1995, pp. 57–61).[18] Humans do not learn the meaning of things from words but from looking at them; it is by seeing the reality of a thing, using our in-

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[17] The *Physiologus* is usually dated to the 2nd century, the author of the work not being known (Curley 2009, pp. ix–xxi).

[18] On Augustine's Platonism and his conversion to Christianity, see Armstrong (1972), Colish (1968, pp. 36–43), Dobell (2009), O'Donnell (2001, pp. 21–23), O'Meara (1982b), and Van Fleteren (1995), and Augustine's own account in the *Confessions* ([397–400] 1991, pp. 111–154).

tellectual vision, 'that we learn its sign' (Augustine [389] 1968b, p. 47; see also Cary 2008, pp. 91–97).

However, in one significant respect, Augustine turns Origen on his head: he inverses the relation between reality and scripture as this relation is expounded by Origen (Harrison 1998, pp. 29–30). The meaning of things in the material world is not, as Augustine sees it, a result of their correspondence to things in the spiritual realm. Instead, meaning stems directly from God as his words are spoken by Christ and taught in scripture (Augustine [389] 1968b, p. 51, [397–426] 1995, p. 61; see also Harrison 1998, pp. 25–30; Markus 1972, p. 71). The emergence of meaning starts, for Augustine, in the words of scripture, not in the particular constitution of reality. Thus, scripture does not merely authorise interpretations, it is also the source of the meaning uncovered by those interpretations. In fact, this does not only invert the relation between scripture and the meaning of the material world, it also leads to an increased importance of scriptural knowledge; it elevates the position of scripture vis-à-vis the created world on matters of truth (Augustine [ca. 413–426] 1968a, p. 433, [397–426] 1995, pp. 67–71).[19] For scripture, in Augustine's view, tells hu-

mans where to look to find knowledge of God (Cary 2008, p. 43).

A tenet of Christian faith is that the world is God's creation, from which follows the idea that God does not reside *in* nature. The material world, according to this view, is of divine origin which means that there is a direct connection between the material world and its divine origin. However, it is not in itself divine; the material world does not possess the equivalent of a human soul. This is a cause of friction in the early meeting of Christianity and Platonism—or Neoplatonism, rather—since the idea of a divine world soul—that there is divinity inherent to the world itself—is of crucial importance in the latter. 'The god' who crafted the universe, as Plato writes in the *Timaeus*, 'put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, and so he constructed the universe. He wanted to produce a piece of work that would be as excellent and supreme as its nature would allow. This, then, ... is how we must say divine providence brought our world into being as a truly living thing, endowed with soul and intelligence' ([ca. 360 BCE] 1997c, p. 1236). The reconciliation of such an approach to the material world with the Christian notion that the world is merely divinely created is of course not without its difficulties.[20]

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[19] This is not to say that literal knowledge of nature is altogether useless. In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis,* Augustine notes that 'there is knowledge to be had, after all, about the earth, about the sky, about the other elements of the world, about the movements and revolutions or even the magnitude and distances of the constellations, about the predictable eclipses of moon and sun, about the cycles of years and seasons, about the nature of animals, fruits, stones and everything else of this kind', and that it would be 'disgraceful and disastrous' if non-Christians would hear Christians talk 'nonsense' on such matters ([416] 2002, p. 186). However, such situations arise not because scripture is untrue but because it is wrongly interpreted.

[20] However, even though Christian theology leaves little room for a world soul (Helmig 2020, pp. 10–11), such a reconciliation is not impossible but rather a worthy subject matter for intellectual efforts. For early Christians, Platonism is a matter of discussion and there is, in principle, no stopping matters of Christian faith being thought of in terms of Platonist philosophy (Vogel 1985, pp. 28–29). Platonism, as Gilson notes, amounts to 'a wholesome challenge for Christian speculation to seek a philosophical formulation of its own truth' (1955, p. 94). The world soul could, for instance, be interpreted as a reference to the Holy Spirit and, therefore, also to a part of the Trinity operating directly on the created world (Gilson 1955, pp. 93–94; Kauntze 2014, pp. 100–102, which also contains historical examples).

I will come back to the notion of a world soul, which indeed appears frequently in Medieval thought, later on in this chapter. The idea that the world is merely God's creation is important for the current discussion, however, since it is strongly emphasised in Augustinian thought and the full consequences of it are drawn there. For Augustine, God is not to be found in nature or by knowledge of things existing outside the human mind. God is to be found within; the place where to find God in the created world is the human heart (Augustine [397–400] 1991, pp. 3–4). Emphasising the importance of love—the love of ones neighbour and the love of God—Augustine maintains that humans can restore their relation to the creator through love, through the power of the heart; the search for God requires an inward journey towards the soul, to the human mind and the human heart, not a journey outwards looking for God in the world of things; it is through their minds and their faith, not their senses, that humans will learn of God (Augustine [389] 1968b, pp. 59–61, [397–400] 1991, pp. 180, 181–183, 185–186, [397–426] 1995, p. 133; see also Harrison 1998, pp. 31–32; Cary 2008, in particular pp. 3–151).[21]

In the aftermath of Augustine's emphasis on the importance of such inward searches, Christian thought comes to pay the natural world less interest. Christ, Augustine main-tains, is the teacher 'within',[22] and by adhering to his teachings by way of studying the divine words of scripture, humans can gain insights about the world and its divine symbols. As divine insights are sought through introspection and scriptural studies, with the words of scripture providing guidance for human understanding and directing human intellectual efforts inwards (Cary 2008, pp. 102–105), and as knowledge of nature based on sensuous experience comes to be viewed as being of secondary importance at best—and at worst associated with idolatrous appreciation of earthly pleasures (Augustine [397–400] 1991, pp. 210–213; Harrison 1998, p. 31)—the status of nature is significantly downplayed in Christian thought after Augustine. That being said, nature does not vanish from view altogether. It is still believed to contain hidden truths that can be uncovered through allegorical interpretation. In other words, the *symbolic* appreciation of nature continues to thrive in post-Augustinian Christian thought. Over time, however, as the Augustinian conceptualisation of the meaning of nature evolves, the literal meanings of nature and the things within it become ever more obscured by the transcendent truths they symbolise (Harrison 1998, p. 31). Thus, the very materiality of the material world becomes ignored in favour of its spiritual meaning. For quite a few centuries and in the aftermath of Au-

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[21] For Augustine, faith is thus the foundation of knowledge in general, but he nevertheless maintains that reason plays a vital role in its formation (Rist 2001). This is, of course, tied to Augustine's aforementioned emphasis on the need not to misconstrue the words of scripture when making sense of the material world.

[22] In *The Teacher*, he writes: 'for all those things which we "understand," it is not the outward sound of the speaker's voice that we consult, but the truth which presides over the mind itself from within, though we may have been led to consult it because of the words. Now He who is consulted and who is said to "dwell in the inner man," He it is who teaches us, namely, Christ' (Augustine [389] 1968b, p. 51). The phrase 'dwell in the inner man' is a reference to scripture (Ephesians 3:17). See also Augustine's *Answer to the Letter of Mani Known as* The Foundation: 'The one true teacher, the incorruptible truth, the sole interior teacher, does the teaching. He also became exterior in order to call us back from exterior things to interior ones' ([395–396?] 2006, p. 263). On Augustine's notion of Christ as the inner teacher, see also Cary (2008, pp. 97–102) and Colish (1968, pp. 55–58).

gustine, the natural world of the Christians generally amounts to no more than a heap of signs that by themselves are meaningless (Harrison 1998, pp. 32–33).

In early Christian discourse, then, there emerges something that can be described as an incomplete '"semiotics" of nature' based upon which

> the idea of the analogic structure of nature furnished the Christian world with a ready set of divinely provided symbols to bridge the otherwise impassable intellectual gulf between the *visibilia* of this world and the *invisibilia* of the other. (Curley 2009, pp. xiv–xv)

The natural world of the early Christians is indeed a place of meaning, it is full of signs that humans—provided they are equipped with the right tools—can unveil and interpret. Things in this nature are like words. Nevertheless, the natural world does not add up to a coherent text; the words in it do not form into sentences, for nature lacks, so to speak, its own syntactic rules (Harrison 1998, pp. 32–33). Those rules are provided to it by a source beyond itself, most notably by God and the divinely inspired cipher of scripture; the words of nature become meaningful by means of their connections to transcendent referents.

This changes, however, as the vertical analogy between heaven and earth, in a move enabled by and affirming the priority of identity over difference, is supplemented, from the 12th century onwards, by horizontal analogies between things in the visible world (Harrison 1998, pp. 42–44; Gaukroger 2006, pp. 135–137). From there on until the end of the Italian Renaissance, things in this world are related by analogy to their divine origin *and* to each other. Aquinas describes the doubling of analogical relations in the following manner in *Summa Theologiæ*:

> It is to be held that God is the first exemplar cause of all things.
>
> To make this clear reflect that for a thing to be produced an exemplar is required so that it may achieve a determinate form: thus an artist gives a definite shape to his material because of an exemplar before him. . . .
>
> Now manifestly the things made by nature reach after determinate forms. Their configuration has to be traced back to its original source in divine wisdom which contrived the world-order consisting in the distinctiveness of things. Hence we should say that divine wisdom holds the originals of all things . . ., the exemplar forms existing in the divine mind. And though they are many and various in the relationship of things to them, nevertheless they are not really other than the divine essence proportionately to the manifold sharing of its likeness by diverse things. . . .
>
> Yet even among created things some may be called exemplars of others which are made to their likeness either in their specific nature or by analogy of some resemblance. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1967b, p. 17)

In another passage, he maintains that 'we can mark a double order in things: one, ordering of all creatures to God, and two, their being ordered among themselves' (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1967a, p. 75).

Bonaventure is even more explicit about the existence of vertical and horizontal analogies. He distinguishes between such a likeness that refers to a quality which is 'present in different beings' and a likeness that refers on the one hand to a creature's 'likeness of the Creator' and on the other to the likeness of the 'exemplary Idea in the Creator' to the creature ([1254] 1992, p. 90). According to this view, the eternal ideas of

God are likenesses of created things and vice versa—things resemble God, and God resembles things, so to speak (ibid., pp. 89–95). However, things are *also* the likenesses of other things on the basis of which the like things 'participate in a third reality' consisting of the analogical connection (ibid., p. 90). By affirming such likenesses Bonaventure means to provide a valid description of how things in the created world are analogically related to each other—a stark contrast to earlier times when the idea of such horizontal analogies had been discarded as a source of error, with Augustine noting in his *Soliloquies* that 'the likeness of things, a likeness which is connected with the eyes, is the mother of deception' (Augustine [386–387] 1990, p. 85; see also Cary 2008, pp. 62–63).

As will be shown in greater detail below, the introduction of analogies between created things has far-reaching consequences for discourse as it means that not only the tangible things of nature but everything that takes part in the created world, including the words and concepts used to signify things, the thoughts thinking of them, and human acting upon things, becomes related through analogy; everything starts to participate, so to speak, in the reality of analogical connections. The emergence of proportional correspondences between things and the very possibility to make the world intelligible based on such correspondences is indicative of a generalisation of the applicability of analogy, it signifies that analogy becomes a fundamental rule of thought.

The basic operation of analogy as the epistemic configuration of thought is quite straightforward: a thing or a concept—and as will be shown shortly, medieval discourse makes no rigid distinction between things and thought—receives meaning based on its similarities to other things. One thing resembles another thing which, in turn, resembles yet another thing *ad infinitum*. When they are generally applicable in this way, analogies never come to a halt (Foucault 2002b, pp. 33–34); anything and everything resembles something else, and the world becomes ordered as a 'great chain of being' (Lovejoy 1964, pp. 67–98) in which the links are connected through analogy.

However, the image of the chain does not capture all the intricate workings of analogy. Whereas the image of the chain suggests that analogies appear on the basis of spatial and temporal proximity, analogy as epistemic configuration establishes connections between things irrespective of such limiting factors as space and time (Foucault 2002b, pp. 19–28), the final result of which is the constitution of a unified whole:

> The reigning order in things established by God's creation manifests the unity of the cosmos. This is because of the single plan ordering some things to others. For all things coming from God have a relation to one another and to him. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1967b, p. 103)

Analogy, then, paves the way for the emergence of an all-encompassing structure, a structure which has, moreover, endless powers of assimilation. Since analogy is generally applicable, between seemingly disparate things there can always be established relations based on corresponding proportions; in principle, the fundamental identity of any and all things can always be revealed. Thus, analogy gathers the world together into a unity of which nothing is left outside; the world is, so to speak, 'turned into one', it be-

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[23]The etymological root of the word *universe* is the Latin words *unus* and *versus*, meaning 'one' and 'to turn'.

comes a *uni-versum*.[23] One of the most important ideas that starts to flourish during the 12th century is indeed that the world is a universe, a single ordered structure (Chenu 1968a, pp. 5–9; Hicks 2017, pp. 32–33).

The medieval universe consists of two major parts, one spiritual and one material; the universe is 'the intricate contrivance of heaven and earth' (*Liber de stabilitate animæ* quoted in Chenu 1968a, footnote on p. 7; see also Ordinis S. Benedicti [ca. 1130] 1855, col. 917). Thus, analogy draws together spiritual and material reality. The two parts of the universe might indeed be utterly different from each other, but they still share an identity and participate in the same reality. Analogy effectively blurs the boundary between the spiritual and material to such an extent that the two become inseparable. When, according to Honorius of Autun, 'the supreme artisan made the universe … he divided his work in two—into two parts antithetical to each other' and the two parts, which consist of the spiritual and the material, even though 'antithetical in nature' are 'yet consonant in existence' (Honorius of Autun quoted in Chenu 1968a, p. 8; see also Honorius Augustodunensis 1854, col. 1179).[24] As parts of the universe, spirit and matter 'resemble a choir of men and boys blending their bass and treble voices' (Honorius of Autun quoted in Chenu 1968a, p. 8; see also Honorius Augustodunensis 1854, col. 1179).

The universe, as it is conceptualised in medieval thought, coincides with nature and is basically synonymous to the same, which implies that nature also consists of both ma-terial and spiritual elements. Hugh of Saint Victor, for instance, writes about nature in the following way:

> that type of thing in which the very being (*esse*) and 'that which is' (*id quod est*) are separate, that is, which has come into being from a principle distinct from it, and which, in order that it might begin to be, flowed into actuality out of a preceding cause—this type of being, I say, is nature, which includes the whole world, and it is divided into two parts: it is that certain being which, in acquiring existence from its primordial causes, came forth into actuality not as moved thereto by anything itself in motion, but solely by the decision of the divine will, and, once in existence, stood immutable, free from all destruction or change (of this type are the substances of things, called by the Greek *ousiai*) and it is all the bodies of the superlunary world, which, from their knowing no change, have also been called divine. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1127] 1961, p. 53, parentheses in original)

The medieval natural world, then, is not a realm of matter only. It also contains spiritual and divine elements as well; it includes what one might think of, with a contemporary vocabulary, as supernatural being (Oakley 1973, p. 44).[25] As such, the material and the spiritual make up one single great structure, universal and natural. Nothing is left outside this structure as analogies are established with anything that might appear external to it, 'there is nothing outside' the universe (Bruno [1584] 1998a, p. 87), and inside the universe nothing is left in isolation. As Hugh writes in *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*:

> The order and disposition of all things

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[24] I have not been able to assign an original year of publication or the like for this text by Honorius of Autun, and such a year is to my knowledge not known. Honorius was born towards the end of the 11th century and died sometime around the middle of the 12th century.

[25] On the medieval notion of the supernatural, see Bartlett (2008).

from the highest even to the lowest in the structure of this universe so follows in sequence with certain causes and generated reasons that of all things that exist none is found unconnected or separable and external by nature. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1134] 1951, p. 29)

And a handful of centuries later, Fracastoro argues that 'substances and bodies are sustained chiefly and most effectively by their interconnection' (Fracastoro quoted in Pearce 1996, p. 115; see also Fracastorii [1546] 1555a, p. 79v), and indicating thusly that the proportional correspondences between things are of vital importance for their very being; for things to be, they need to be analogically related.

One of the most common ways to illustrate the medieval universe is as a series of concentric circles with Earth in the centre and the divine at the outer limit, sometimes with the human being emphasised as a central component. The arrangement of the celestial bodies is often depicted in this way.

Medieval cosmological discourse is particularly influenced by ancient Greek thought, especially by Aristotle and Ptolemy.[26] According to the Aristotelean view, the cosmos consists of a series of concentric spheres with the so-called sublunary sphere in the middle surrounded by the celestial spheres in which the celestial bodies are located. The sublunary sphere is where Earth is located and it consists of the well-known four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, whereas the celestial spheres and bodies consist of a wholly different fifth element, aether—or simply quintessence. Crucially, according to this view, the celestial bodies and all things in the sublunary sphere are located where they are because of their nature, and they move— and, by that, change—based on their nature as well.[27] Right above Earth lies the moon, followed by the spheres of the planets and the sun. Then come the fixed stars, beyond which resides the so-called *prime mover*. The prime mover is the absolute origin of all movement and change in the cosmos; that which engenders movement but does not itself move, the unmoved mover; that which brings about change but does not itself change, the cause of all causes—which in the Middle Ages comes to be associated with the divine creator.[28]

A key element of Aristotelian cosmology is the connectivity of the heavenly spheres to each other. Through those connections, the

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[26] For an extensive treatment of medieval cosmology, see Grant (1994, and in particular pp. 19–23 for a discussion on medieval cosmology as 'Aristotelean'), and for briefer summaries, see Kragh (2007, pp. 32–46) and Koterski (2009, pp. 141–154). For a richly illustrated introduction, see Edson and Savage-Smith (2004). Aristotle elaborates his view of the cosmos primarily in *On the Heavens* (1939), and Ptolemy's most influential cosmological treatise is the *Almagest* ([ca. 150?] 1984). On the dating of the *Almagest*, see Toomer (1984, p. 1). For an example of an illustration of the cosmos emphasising the place of the human being within it, see the plate accompanying the second vision of Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber divinorum operum* (Hildegardis Bingensis [ca. 1174] 1996, plate 7 on unnumbered page, corresponding to pp. 59–113). Hildegard describes the world as a wheel and writes that 'in the midst of this wheel there appears the figure of a human being. The crown of the head extends upward, while the feet extend downward against the … circle of the sheer white clear air. The fingertips of the right hand are extended to the right while those of the left hand are directed to the left … as if the figure had stretched out its arms' (Hildegard of Bingen [ca. 1174] 1987, p. 35; see also commentaries on the vision and the plate in Derolez and Dronke 1996, pp. XL–XLVI; Saxl 1957a, plate 36 a, 1957b, pp. 62–63).

[27] For Aristotle's notion of natural place and motion, see Aristotle (1957a, pp. 277–281, 323–327, 1939, pp. 345–351). See also Machamer (1978) and Matthen and Hankinson (1993).

[28] For an overview of the medieval concept of the prime mover and its place in cosmolegical thought, see Grant (1994, pp. 514–523). For the concept in Aristotle, see Aristotle (1934a, pp. 319–353, 1935, pp. 139–163).

spheres have effects on each other. Specifically, an outer sphere is said to influence an adjacent inner sphere (Kragh 2007, p. 21; see also Aristotle 1935, p. 159). Thus, movement and change in any one sphere is influenced by the sphere positioned outside of it (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, pp. 83–93). From this, it follows that not only is the cosmos arranged in concentric circles but also that those circles are hierarchically ordered; that which is outer is ranked above that which is inner. As Aquinas writes:

> We see that everything moved is moved by something else: lower things by higher things (e.g., elements by heavenly bodies); weaker elements by stronger elements; and even lower heavenly bodies by higher heavenly bodies. An infinite series of moved causes of motion is impossible. For everything moved by something is an instrument, as it were, of the first cause of motion…. [T]here needs to be a first cause of motion that is supreme over everything, and we call this first cause of motion God. (Aquinas [ca. 1273?] 2009, p. 19)

The medieval universe, then, is characterised by a spatial and spiritual-material hierarchy, and, ultimately, to make any movement or change intelligible requires that the whole of the universe *as a whole* be taken into consideration (Matthen and Hankinson 1993, p. 430). The structure of nature as a whole is, in other words, hierarchically superior to the bodies within it.

The medieval world, in sum, is round, levelled, and hierarchical, and all things are influenced by the things existing at higher levels of the hierarchy. In his *De Ludo Globi*, which contains a particularly intricate elab-oration of the 'spherical roundness of the world', Cusanus writes:

> The mutation of heaven, the stars, and of the air and time. All these things when they change, change those things which they encompass and contain. (Nicholas de Cusa [1463] 1986, p. 59)

More generally, beyond the discourse of Aristotelean cosmology, the epistemic rule of analogy guarantees that the spheres of the world are connected to each other by resembling each other. Each level contains likenesses to others with the ultimate consequence that the centre comes to mirror the outer limits and everything in between (Bartelson 1995, p. 109). Moreover, the outer levels will, of course, also mirror the centre as well as everything in between. On this last issue, Cusanus notes that God is at the same time the 'circumference and centre' of the world, 'and He is everywhere and nowhere' ([1440] 1954, p. 111). Such resemblances between all levels of the universe imply that the medieval world is characterised by endless repetition. Each entity within the universal structure contains something of all other entities and of its divine origin. Every thing in the universe, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant—even a speck of dust, to use Robert Grosseteste's example—'is an image of the whole universe'.[29]

Thus, even if the basic operation of analogy as a rule of discourse is to establish chains of resemblances, its end result is a network in which each node is connected to all the others (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, p. 205), a perfectly integrated structure. In the medieval world, there is a 'bond

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[29] This is from a text in Grosseteste's collection of dicta, usually referred to as *Dictum 60, Omnis creatura speculum est*, and dates from circa 1237 (McEvoy 1982, p. 500). The text is reprinted and thoroughly commented in Gieben (1964, pp. 153–158). A long translated passage, in which the quote is included and which I have consulted, appears in Southern (1986, pp. 216–217).

of all things', (Nicolas Cusanus [1440] 1954, p. 128); 'all things …in their endless variety' are 'bound together' into a unity (ibid., pp. 128–129, see also pp. 86–89):

> Among the genera that limit the one universe there is this link between higher and lower that they meet in the middle, and among the different species such is the bond, that the highest species of one genus coincides with the lowest species of the genus immediately above, making one universal and perfect continuity. (ibid., p. 129)

The perfect interconnectedness of the world means that the words used to make sense of it are themselves connected to it. In the Middle Ages, the world of words is related by analogy to the world of things (Gutting 1989, p. 149): 'a word is the likeness of that which is spoken', writes Bonaventure ([1254] 1992, p. 86), and in the 16th century, Paracelsus—the leading figure of so-called Renaissance philosophical medicine—similarly maintains in normative terms that 'like should be likened to like by means of the name' ([1530] 2008b, p. 125). From this interconnection of words and things it follows that the world itself is meaningful; according to medieval thought, meaning is part of the world of things in itself. Things are signs; the world is a place of signs and symbols. This, in turn, suggests that the analogies between things are of symbolic character; the medieval world is bound together not by what things manifestly are—their literal sense, so to speak—but based on its symbolic content (Foucault 2002b, p. 29). The things in the world are related as if they were the words in an allegorical poem. Or, put differently, the world lends itself to the same interpretive approaches as scripture (Gaukroger 2006, pp. 133–139).

This inherent meaningfulness of the world is indeed a continuation of earlier ideas about the world being a meaningful place. Now, however, things in the material world come to signify each other; they determine the meaning of each other, and this is new. Even though the spiritual realm keeps functioning as a power that determines meaning, much like it did during the early Middle Ages, such power now also come to reside in things themselves. The meaning of things is established on the basis of their relation to God *and* to other things. Moreover, because the spiritual realm is assimilated into the universal structure which also contains material reality, this means that the created world gains the power to stand on its own feet; it receives, so to speak, the syntax it had lacked earlier, it manages to form words and sentences by itself and, ultimately, collect itself into something resembling a great book. Hugh of Saint Victor, for instance, writes that 'this whole sensible world is a kind of book written by the finger of God' (Hugh of St Victor [ca. 1120?] 2010, p. 63; see also Chenu 1968c, p. 117). Everything in nature can be read:

> Every thing in the created universe is like a book for us, a picture, a mirror, a truthful sign of our life, our destiny, our condition, our death. (Alan of Lille 2013a, p. 545)[30]

Even human reason:

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[30] I have not been able to assign an original year of publication or the like for this text by Alain de Lille, and such a year is to my knowledge not known. Alain was born in the 1120s and died in 1202 or 1203 (Wetherbee 2013, p. vii). Moreover, it should be mentioned, even though this is an oft-quoted passage commonly attributed to Alain, the attribution, according to Wetherbee, whose translation this is, is but 'plausible' (ibid., xxxvii, see also translator's note on the text on p. 551). Also, the Latin original is in verse (see Alan of Lille 2013a, p. 544) but Wetherbee's translation appears in prose and does not lend itself to a corresponding lineation.

> Every person carries in his heart a book of knowledge open to those subservient to reason. In this are represented not only all the things visible in nature, but also those invisible things which the Fabricator writes with His own finger. (John of Salisbury [1159] 1990, p. 16)

Hugh, to return to him, remarks similarly that 'wisdom', which is a reference to the divine creator, is a 'book written within' the human mind (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1134] 1951, p. 97). To this inner book, there corresponds an outer one, 'a book written without' which is 'the work of wisdom' (ibid., p. 97).[31]

Medieval nature, then, is like a book, and Paracelsus stresses that to read nature, one must explore it; to understand the book of nature, one must turn its pages:

> This I would prove through nature: He who would explore her, must tread her books with his feet. Scripture is explored through its letters; but nature from land to land. Every land is a leaf. Such is the *Codex Naturae;* thus must her leaves be turned. (Paracelsus [1537–1538] 1996, pp. 28–29)[32]

Hence, to know nature one must search out the meanings residing in its depths. Hugh maintains that

> there is no one who does not find God's works wonderful, but the foolish person admires only their appearance, whereas the wise person, through what he sees externally, explores the deeper intent of the divine wisdom, just as in one and the same writing, one person notices the color or shape of the figures, whereas another praises their meaning and signification. (Hugh of St Victor [ca. 1120?] 2010, p. 64)

Moreover, the meaning of the medieval book of nature is complex; as a book the world can be read in many different ways and the things within it—each word, so to speak—can take on many different meanings depending on the analogical relations it sustains and by which it is sustained (Foucault 2002b, pp. 33–34). The medieval world has a symbolic depth to it (Chenu 1968c, p. 102). This depth is not the product of human cognition, for instance as a consequence of interpretation based on a certain perspective. Its depth stems from God since God is its creator: 'each creature is a kind of figure, not invented by human determination, but established by the divine will' (Hugh of St Victor [ca. 1120?] 2010, p. 63; see also Zinn 1973, pp. 147–148). Also, importantly, it is a depth that resides in nature itself. In the *Didascalicon*, Hugh uses the example of a coin to illustrate the inherent symbolic depth of nature:

> when a coiner imprints a figure upon metal, which itself is one thing, begins to represent a different thing, not just on the outside but from its own power and its natural aptitude to do so. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1127] 1961, p. 47)

Because nature is meaningful in itself it

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[31] To this, Hugh adds that the book written without is rewritten in Christ so 'that wisdom might be seen more manifestly and be recognized more perfectly…. Therefore, there was one book written once within, and twice without; first without through the foundation of visible things, secondly without through the assumption of flesh; first unto enjoyment, secondly unto health; first unto nature, secondly against blame; first that nature might be nourished, secondly that vice might be healed, and nature be blessed' (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1134] 1951, pp. 97–98).

[32] References to nature as a book are very frequent in medieval writings. However, it should be noted that the metaphor appears both before and after the period which is under consideration here (I briefly return to the analogy in the next chapter, see page 276 below). However, its conceptual elaboration and its fundamental place and function in discourse are historically unparalleled. For treatments of the metaphor, see Berkel and Vanderjagt (2006), Curtius (1953, pp. 302–347), and Vanderjagt and Berkel (2005).

resembles a book whether someone reads it or not. The natural world does not resemble a book because humans think of it in that way, it resembles a book because of its inherent symbolic content; nature does not *appear* to be a book according to someone, it is *book-like* in its very being. However, when humans do indeed read the book of nature, their reading—their making sense of nature and knowing it, that is—proceeds by means of analogy as well. 'Similars are comprehended by similars', as Hugh writes (ibid., p. 46). And Aquinas, who not only sees an analogy between the human soul and the human body but between body and intellect as well (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, pp. 334–335),[33] maintains that, when humans make sense of things, the making sense of, so to speak, bears the likeness of the thing made intelligible; all knowledge, according to Aquinas, is 'brought about' by likeness (ibid., p. 246). Knowledge of the world, then, is analogically related to the world of which it is a knowledge. Cusanus, again, makes a similar statement:

> What suits the divine mind as infinite truth suits our minds as proximate images of the divine. If all things are in God's mind as in their exact and proper truth, all are in the human mind as in the image or likeness of their proper truth, that is, conceptually: for knowledge takes place by likeness. All things are in God, but there as exemplars of things; all things are in our mind, but here as likenesses of things. (Nicholas de Cusa [1450] 1979, pp. 49–51)

All of this affirms that not only words, but human thought as well belong to the same world as the things of which the words speak and the thoughts think. In fact, there is no essential distinction between things on the one hand and words and thoughts on the other, for words and things, as they are conceptualised in medieval discourse, *are* things. On this issue, the medievals reproduce Augustine's conceptualisation of signs as things (Markus 1972, pp. 73–74): signs are 'those things which are employed to signify something. So every sign is also a thing, since what is not a thing does not exist' (Augustine [397–426] 1995, p. 15). Consequently, at the level of discourse and concepts, the medieval mode of thought makes no distinction between subject and object. Or, rather, analogy establishes an isomorphic relation between subject and object; what is a subject is also an object, and what is an object is also a subject. It brings subjects and objects together by situating them as being equivalent to each other; medieval subjects and medieval objects are, as discursive elements, *like* each other (Bonaventure [1254] 1992, pp. 87–88, 95).

The belonging to the same world of things and thoughts—specifically thought in the form of knowledge—receives a rich and elaborate treatment by Dante who, in his *Convivio* details the correspondence between knowledge and the heavenly spheres. 'By heaven', writes Dante,

> I mean knowledge and by the heavens the sciences or fields of knowledge, because of three key similarities that the heavens have with the fields of knowledge, and because of the order and number of the heavens and the fields of knowledge, which seem to correspond to each other. (Dante [ca. 1304–1307] 2018, p. 103)

The first similarity between the heavens and

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[33] For the simple reason that the human soul, according to Aquinas, is an intellectual substance (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, p. 308, see also pp. 203–207).

the sciences, according to Dante,

> is the rotational motion of each – a heaven and a field of knowledge – around its own unmoving. For each moving heaven revolves around its own center, which, for all its movement is not moved; and likewise every field of knowledge revolves around its subject, which it does not move, since no field of knowledge demonstrates its own subject but presupposes it. (Dante [ca. 1304–1307] 2018, p. 103)

Second, 'each heaven illuminates visible things just as each field of knowledge illuminates the intelligibles' (ibid., p. 105). Third and finally, the heavens and the sciences both bring about perfection. The heavens bring about the perfection of 'substantial generation', while the sciences make it possible for humans to 'contemplate truth, which is our ultimate perfection' (ibid., p. 105).

Proceeding from Aristotle's view of the cosmos and the spherical structure of the heavens, Dante maintains that 'the first seven heavens for us are those of the planets' (ibid., p. 105, see also pp. 65–69).[34] Then comes the sphere of the Fixed Stars followed by the Crystalline heaven. All of these spheres contain motion, with the Crystalline heaven being associated with the 'Primum Mobile', the prime mover (ibid., p. 65). The tenth and final heaven, the Empyrean, is, however, motionless, being beyond the prime mover. To each of these spheres corresponds one specific science. To the planets correspond 'grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy', to the Fixed Stars correspond

natural science—physics—and metaphysics, to the Crystalline heaven corresponds moral science, and lastly 'to the motionless heaven corresponds divine science, which we call theology' (ibid., p. 105).[35]

Having listed the correspondences between the sciences and the heavens thusly, Dante proceeds to delineate properties shared by each single heaven and its corresponding science. These properties amount to the very basis for the correspondence in question, they are the proportions upon which each heaven is related to a specific science. The heaven of Venus, for instance, corresponds to rhetoric first because of 'the radiance of its aspect, which is the most delightful to see of all the stars', and second because it 'appears in both the morning and the evening' (ibid., p. 107). These two properties are also found in rhetoric,

> for rhetoric is the most delightful of the sciences, and in fact being delightful is its main aim; and it appears in the morning when the rhetorician speaks directly before the listener's face, and appears in the evening – that is, after or behind – when the rhetorician speaks in written form and far from the addressee. (ibid., p. 107)

Continuing with another example, the Sun, according to Dante, is like arithmetic. The Sun 'informs all the other stars with its light', while at the same time 'the eye cannot gaze upon it' (ibid., p. 107). Likewise, arithmetic illuminates all the other sciences 'inasmuch as their subjects are all considered in view of some number, and in considering them we always progress with the use of number'

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[34] For astronomical themes in Dante's work see Orr (1956, pp. 162–230, 289–328).

[35] The reason two sciences correspond to the sphere of the Fixed Stars is that 'this heaven shows us two of its visible aspects, namely its numerous stars and the Galaxy…; and it shows us one of its poles and keeps the other hidden; and shows us one of its movements, from east to west, while it keeps another movement, from west to east, nearly hidden from us' (Dante [ca. 1304–1307] 2018, p. 113).

(ibid., p. 107). As to the issue of the eye not being able to look at the Sun, Dante writes:

> We also see the other property of the Sun in number, which is arithmetic's subject, for the eye of the intellect cannot gaze upon it, since number, considered in itself, is infinite, and this is something we cannot comprehend. (ibid., p. 111)

And to mention yet another example, the correspondence between the Crystalline heaven and moral science is based on the association of the former with the prime mover. The prime mover bestows the world with a proper disposition, and the Crystalline heaven thus 'arranges the daily revolution of all the others' (ibid., p. 117).[36] Moral science, likewise, provides humans with a proper disposition to the other sciences, it 'sets us in order for the other sciences' (ibid., p. 117). Without the prime mover of the Crystalline heaven, some parts of the heaven of the Fixed Stars would be 'unseen from any place on Earth' and some of the planets would be hidden from view for long periods of time (ibid., p. 117). Without it,

> there truly would be no generation down here: neither animal nor plant life, neither night nor day, nor week, nor month, nor year, but all the universe would be disordered and the movement of the other heavens would be in vain. And in exactly the same way, if moral philosophy ceased, the other sciences would be hidden for some time, and there could be no generation or life of happiness, and those sciences would have been written about and discovered long ago in vain. (ibid., p. 119)[37]

For the purpose of the present analysis, the significance of Dante's meticulous elab-

orations of the likenesses between the heavens and the sciences primarily lies in the conceptualisation of knowledge from which they proceed. Specifically, of particular importance is the notion that knowledge and, by that, thought have attributes and that knowledge and thought, based on those attributes and because they are also present in things with a more tangible existence, emerge as things existentially equivalent to other things. The sciences, according to this view, are kinds of things which make other things humanly intelligible.

Dante's account of how the sciences resemble the heavens as a valid description of reality and knowledge is indeed possible only if knowledge, and thought in general, is conceived of as equally real as the things of which it knows and thinks. Thought, in other words, must be seen as being of the same order as things and, once more, the isomorphic relation between subject and object in medieval discourse appears; the subject is objective and the object is subjective. As Paracelsus rhetorically asks,

> what is nature but philosophy? What is philosophy other than the invisible nature? One who recognizes the sun or moon, and [who] knows even with closed eyes what they are like, has the sun and moon within him, just as they stand in the heavens and firmament. That is what philosophy is: [things] are in the human being in the same way that they are outside, intangibly, as if one were looking at oneself in the mirror. (Paracelsus [1530] 2008b, p. 113, brackets in original)

All in all, the epistemic configuration of medieval discourse is characterised by

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[36] For another quote by Dante on the prime mover, see page 210 below.

[37] When listing all the sciences corresponding to the heavenly spheres, Dante uses the term *scienza morale* to denote the science corresponding to the Crystalline heaven (ibid., p. 104). When detailing their corresponding properties, however, he refers to that science as *Morale Filosofia* (ibid., pp. 116–118), hence the differences in translation.

the general applicability of analogy and the priority of identity over difference in the determination of meaning. As an epistemic rule, analogy establishes meaningful relations of proportional correspondence between things; a thing's meaning is determined based on such relations. Moreover, because analogy is generally applicable—meaning that there can be analogical relations between any things whatsoever—medieval analogy draws together *everything* and, in doing so, it constitutes a unified universal whole which includes things as well as words and thoughts. The medieval world is a great synthesis and, as I will show in the subsequent sections, the universal whole does indeed include *all* aspects of human being, including everything humans do, not just their thoughts and their words. All of this indicates that medieval discourse makes no distinction between subjects and objects as conceptual elements of discourse. This not to say, though, that the distinction between subjects and objects does not appear *in* discourse, which it certainly does. Inside discourse, the equivalence of subject and object can rather be identified through the notion that thought and things are of the same order, that they share the same reality.

Since the priority of identity over difference and analogy as epistemic rule break down the conceptual distinction between subjects and objects and paves the way for notions about a shared reality between things and thought, it is important to stress that, according to the medieval mode of thought, it would not be correct to say that meaning is a function of analogical relations between concepts only. Rather, since thought, as it is conceptualised in medieval discourse, belongs to a greater analogical structure—the universe itself—meaning is a

function of the analogical relations of that structure in general. Meaning, according to medieval thought, is determined on the basis of the belonging of thought and things to the same universal structure. At this point, it becomes evident how epistemic configurations operate at a more fundamental level than subjects and objects, as was discussed in the previous chapter. To repeat, epistemic configurations determine the meaning of both subject and object, and how they are related; they are prior to the world and the thinking of the world. It is characteristic of the way in which analogy determines the relation between subject and object that subject and object are established as parts of the same reality; they are of the same order at the level of existence, they belong to the same universal whole (Cassirer 1972, p. 148). Certainly, this has consequences for how humans are made meaningful and what place they are thought to occupy in the world as well as what that world is. These are the topics of the next two sections. Thereafter, I will proceed to delineate how this configuration of discourse structures the meaning and conceptual composition of political order.

3.1 Humans

The belonging of thought to the world of things serves as a first indication of how humans are related to nature in the Middle Ages. Humans, according to the mode of thought brought about by the priority of identity over difference and the epistemic rule of analogy, fully *belong* to the natural world, and this section substantiates that claim.

The presence of both vertical and horizontal analogies results in the medieval world being characterised by a constant play

between parts and wholes. On the one hand, the universe is a unified whole and everything in it is part of that whole. On the other hand, since the parts are related by analogy, they resemble the whole and to that extent they take on the form of being wholes themselves (Gierke 1900, pp. 7–8). In the medieval world, each thing *mirrors* the whole. Because everything is like everything else, the medieval world is like a great hall of mirrors with each mirror reflecting the image in the others.[38] All things are parts of something greater than themselves, but at the same time they are also wholes in their own right. On the one hand, the whole is greater than its parts, on the other it is nothing more than a totality of smaller wholes. According to the latter perspective, the world is basically an aggregate of smaller worlds. The most common way to capture this intricacy is through the concepts of macrocosm and microcosm; through the identification of a large world and a small world reflecting the content of each other (Allers 1944; Conger 1922, in particular pp. 29–64; Saxl 1957a, plates 34-42,b). Cusanus's rendition of how the play between macrocosm and microcosm saturates the universe is particularly elaborate:

> God is in all things in such a way that all things are in him. . .. God is in all things by the medium, as it were, of the universe; so it follows that all is in all, and each in each. As if by nature's order it was that the most perfect—the universe—came into being before all things, so that anything might be in anything. In fact, in every creature the universe is the creature; consequently each creature receives all, so that in any creature all creatures are found in a relative way. Since all crea-

tures are finite, no creature could be all things in act; but all things are contracted in order to form each creature. If, then, all things are in all, it is clear that all is prior to the individual; and all here does not signify plurality, for prior to the individual there is no plurality. For that reason all without plurality has preceded the individual in the order of nature with the consequence that in any actual individual there is not more than one; all without plurality is that one. (Nicolas Cusanus [1440] 1954, p. 83)

Each thing in the world, then, is an image of the world as a whole. Moreover, since the world as a whole, in its unity, is made up of those things, each thing, because it is an image of the whole world, is itself such a whole which, in its unity, is an image not only of the whole but of all other things as well. As Bruno argues:

> the universe is in all things and all things are in the universe, we in it and it in us: thus, everything coincides in perfect unity. (Bruno [1584] 1998a, p. 90)

From this point of view *all* things are microcosms mirroring the macrocosm and all other microcosms. Humans, however, are distinguished by being a more profound reflection of the universe; they are, so to speak, better mirrors than all the other things. As Cusanus notes:

> By all means man is the small world in such a way that he also is part of the large world. For the whole shines forth in all its parts since each part is part of the whole, and so the whole man shines forth in the hand proportionately to the whole. But still the whole perfection of man shines forth in a more perfect manner in the head. The universe shines forth in each of its parts in the same way, for all things maintain their status and pro-

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[38] On the mirror metaphor in medieval writing, see Bradley (1954), Grabes (1982, e.g. pp. 23–30, 236–279), and Shapiro (1975).

portion in relation to the universe. Yet it shines forth more in that part which is called man than in any other. Therefore, because the perfection of the entire universe shines forth more in man, man is the perfect world, although small and a part of the large world. (Nicholas de Cusa [1463] 1986, p. 75)

Humans are the perfect mirrors of the universe as a whole; they perfectly replicate the macrocosm. At the most basic level, the medieval human consists of the union of soul and body (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1970a, pp. 39–87). 'It belongs to the very conception of "man" that he have soul, flesh and bone…. [M]an is … a compound of soul and body', says Aquinas (ibid., p. 19), and similarly Bernardus Silvestris maintains that the creation of man requires 'the composition of a soul…; the composition of a body by the conditioning of matter; and the formative uniting of the two, soul and body, through emulation of the order of the heavens' ([ca. 1147] 1973, p. 114). The universe, as noted already, consists of a union of the spiritual and the material realms. This is why humans are thought to perfectly mirror the universe; they are also such a union. Hence writes Grosseteste that

man is on the same level as the angel in his soul, his sensibility relates him to the animals and he shares his lowest organic level with all growing things, while certain parts of his body bear a likeness to other material things. In his physical aspect, therefore, he resembles the most lowly of things and so is imperfect, but his soul is the equal of the highest crea-

ture and hence most noble. Taken in all of what he is, however, he is the most worthy creature that exists. For I maintain that man resembles the Creator more than does any other thing made, for as all things stand in God as their cause, so too all shine forth in man as their effect, which is why he is called a tiny world. (Grosseteste quoted in McEvoy 1982, p. 408)[39]

Because humans mirror the universe in this way, they consist analogically of all other things in the universe. Cusanus claims that 'those things which the universe has universally, man also has particularly, individually, and separately' (Nicholas de Cusa [1463] 1986, p. 75), whereas Hugh of Saint Victor maintains that 'the soul is put together out of all the parts of nature' ([ca. 1127] 1961, p. 46). Or, in Aquinas's more elaborate account in relation to the saying in scripture that 'God fashioned man from the slime of the earth' (Genesis 2:7),[40] man is said to be

composed out of all things in that he belongs to the order of spiritual substances by having a rational soul; he has a resemblance to the heavenly bodies in so far as his balanced, finely tempered, composition keeps him from contrary extremes; he is actually made out of the elements, though in such a way that the higher elements, namely fire and air, predominate in him in their potent force, because life consists chiefly in heat (fire) and in dampness (air). The lower elements meanwhile (earth and water) are present in him in greater bulk; otherwise there could not be a balanced composition, if the lower elements which are of lesser potency did not exceed the higher in

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[39] This quote is from a treatise by Grosseteste known as *De Confessione II* or *Deus est*. The treatise dates from circa 1215. A text-critical edition appears in Wenzel (1970, pp. 239–293, with the quoted passage on p. 241).

[40] This version of the phrase is based on the Latin Vulgate Bible of the 4th century in which the corresponding sentence reads 'formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terræ', the word *limo* being the Latin equivalent to 'slime' in English. In most English translations of the Bible, however, the word 'dust' is used rather than 'slime'. For instance, in the New Revised Standard Version, the sentence reads 'the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground'.

quantity.

> And so man's body is said to have been fashioned from the slime of the earth, because slime is the name for earth mixed with water. And for this reason man is called a little world or microcosm, because all parts of the created world are to be found in him one way or another. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1964b, p. 19)

Paracelsus argues similarly:

> From the [nature of the] human being there follows the noble name *microcosm*. What the name implies is that all the celestial courses, the terrestrial nature, the aqueous properties, [and the] aerial essences are found within him. In him is found the nature of all fruits of the earth and all ores, [the] nature of the waters, as well as all *constellationes*, and the four winds of the world. What upon the earth is there of which its nature and power are not found within the human being? That is how noble, how subtle, [and] how sensitive the *limbus* was out of which the human being has been fashioned—from which God created the human being after his own image. (Paracelsus [1531] 2008a, p. 845, brackets in original)

However, humans do not merely mirror the universe; they complete it. By virtue of being composed of both spiritual and material elements—a characteristic they share only with the universe as a whole—humans provide the connecting link between the spiritual and material parts of the universe. In so doing, they unite the two parts of the universe and bring completion to the world. For instance, in Bernardus Silvestris's *Cosmographia*, God says:

> To the extent that what I have wrought is less than complete, less than perfect, less than beautiful, it seems vile to me. That this sensible universe, the image of an ideal model, may be able to attain fullness in every part, man must be made, his form closely akin to the divine,

> a reverend and blessed conclusion of my work.... He will derive his understanding from heaven, his body from the elements, so that while his body sojourns on earth his mind may dwell far above. His mind and body, though of diverse natures, will be joined into one, such that a mysterious union will render the work harmonious. (Bernardus Silvestris [ca. 1147] 1973, p. 113)

And similarly, Bonaventure maintains that in the perfect order of the universe, there must be a level of 'purely corporeal nature', a level of 'spiritual nature', and importantly an 'intermediate level ... which is composed of both' (Bonaventure quoted in Schaefer 1960, p. 298, emphasis removed; see also Bonaventurae [ca. 1250–1257] 1885, p. 41). The composite level consists of humans:

> God brought forth all things from nothing.... A certain part of God's creation – material nature – is close to nothingness. Another part – spiritual nature – is close to himself. These two natures God has joined together in the human being into one nature and person, namely, a rational soul and a material body. (Bonaventure [ca. 1257] 2005, p. 292)

By providing a link between the corporeal and the spiritual parts of the universe, the creation of humans establishes a connection between the different parts of God's creation and thus also brings completion to it. For God's creation becomes more perfect once it consists not merely of two different parts but also of their joining into one. In humans, there 'appear and shine forth in the most excellent way the consummation of the divine works' (ibid., p. 90). Thus, in general terms, humans have a specific position in the structure of the universe, and from that position directly follows a specific function (Schaefer 1960, 1961; McEvoy 1973, pp. 323–330; see also McEvoy 1982, pp. 369–441)

From the conceptualisation of humans as microcosms, according to which they perfectly reflect the universe as a whole and everything in it and completes the universe by connecting its parts to each other, there emerges two such possible positions for humans in the world. Either, they are in its very centre, or they are everywhere and nowhere at once.

Among those who advocate the first view are Hugh of Saint Victor. Humans, writes Hugh, have a twofold sense, they grasp invisible things through reason and visible things 'through the flesh' (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1134] 1951, p. 97). Residing in the centre of the universe, this twofold sense allows humans to know both material and spiritual reality:

> Man was placed in a middle position, that he might have sense within and without; within for invisible things, without for visible. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1134] 1951, p. 97; see also Hugh of St Victor [ca. 1120?] 2010, p. 74)

When they are conceptualised in this way and believed to occupy the centre of the world, humans emerge as liminal figures standing at the border between the two major parts of the universe. On this issue, Marsilio Ficino, a preeminent figure of the Neoplatonist strands of Renaissance humanism, writes:

> Of all the forms of body, the rational soul turns out to be the most like God; and to such an extent that no other can become more like, inasmuch as no other form in matter can be further removed from matter, since this one is perched right on the extreme limit of body. (Ficino [1469–1474] 2003, pp. 159–161)

Humans are, as William of Auvergne notes, by virtue of their minds 'located or estab-lished as if on the common horizon of two worlds' (William of Auvergne [ca. 1240] 2000, pp. 391–392, see also p. 445; Harrison 1998, p. 54). And similarly, Aquinas argues that

> the human body . . . is in contact with the lowest of the higher genus, namely, the human soul . . . so that the intellectual soul is said to be on the *horizon* and *confines* of things corporeal and incorporeal. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, p. 205; see also Allers 1944, pp. 355–362; McEvoy 1982, p. 383)

The second view of humanity's place in the universe, according to which humans are everywhere and nowhere, reflects the Promethean conception of humans as having no preordained qualities but through the use of reason can become anything they like.[41] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, another central figure of Renaissance humanism, belongs to those who pursue such a view. From the outset, Pico agrees with the idea that humans are placed by God in the middle of the world: 'Earthly things are subject to man and the heavenly bodies befriend him, since he is the bond and link between heaven and earth' (Pico della Mirandola [1489] 1998a, p. 136). However, when God decided to create man, Pico maintains, the creation was already complete; there was no form from which man could be fashioned; there were no qualities left to bestow upon him. So, God instead decided to give man joint possession of all other creatures' qualities and man was placed in the middle of the world so that he could go anywhere and cultivate any quality whatsoever and, in doing so, become whatever he liked. In Pico's oration *On the Dignity of Man,* God says:

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[41]For an account of ancient and medieval Promethean attitudes towards nature, see Hadot (2006, pp. 101–117).

'We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, have as thine own, possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire. A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by Us. In conformity with thy free judgement, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou art confined by no bounds; and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself. I have placed thee at the center of the world, that from there thou mayest more conveniently look around and see whatsoever is in the world. Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine.' (Pico della Mirandola [1486] 1998b, pp. 4–5)

Thus, in Pico's view, humans are everywhere in the universe because they share something with all other things in it. However, at the same time, humans lack a fixed position since they have no unique qualities to call their own; they have nowhere to call home, and in this respect they are nowhere. Medieval humans, then, when they are not at the centre of the world are both everywhere and nowhere.

These two views of humans, that they are either at the centre of the world or everywhere and nowhere, have one crucial thing in common: they both situate humans *in* the world; humans, as they are conceptualised in medieval discourse, never escape the all-embracing universe. In other words, humans in general, not just their words and their thoughts, are in terms of their very be-

ing of the same order as the natural world. Indeed, considering that they harbour a spiritual component, humans are more than material beings. However, as has been delineated already, nature is also more than a collection of material things since it unites within itself the material and the spiritual. Humans and nature alike are both spiritual and material. Furthermore, since nature is conceptualised in medieval discourse as the large world and humans as small worlds within it, their relation is one according to which humans *belong* to nature. There is no fixed division between medieval humans and medieval nature, if there is a boundary between them, that boundary is but a porous one (Hawkes and Newhauser 2013, p. xxii).

A particularly substantial account of what humans are and of their relation to nature, in which many of the themes discussed so far appear and receive quite a systematic treatment, is provided by Charles de Bovelles.

Indeed, in Bovelles' *Liber de Sapiente*, one finds not only one of the most elaborate examples of the medieval way of conceptualising humans, nature, and their relation but also indications of a burgeoning non-medieval mode of thought (Cassirer 1972, pp. 88–89). This makes Bovelles somewhat of a liminal figure in the present historical narrative, and I will show in the next chapter how Bovelles' work hints at what will become early modern thought (see page 245 below). For now, however, focus will be directed only on its predominately medieval character and it will be treated as exemplary of medieval discourse.

The material world, according to Bovelles, is made up of four kinds of things ordered by rank: in the world, there are the things which merely subsist, there are perceiving

things, there are living things, and there are rational things. Things of the first kind, which Bovelles refers to as mineral things, are simple in character, immobile, shapeless, and hidden beneath the earth (Bovelles 2014, 1.9, 2.2, [1511] 1927, pp. 305, 307).[42] Subsisting things are, so to speak, attached to the earth; they simply are; they are nothing but substance, purely essential.[43]

Living things—plants, for instance—are complex and are able to move but, like minerals, they are permanently attached to the earth. As Bovelles sees it, the head of a plant is its roots and to that extent one characteristic feature of plants is that their heads are turned downwards (Bovelles 2014, 2.3, 3.1, [1511] 1927, pp. 307, 308). Perceiving things are like living things but they are not attached to the earth and as a result they can move on their own, and their heads are turned sideways rather than downwards. Nevertheless, they bend their heads towards the earth (Bovelles 2014, 2.4, 3.1, [1511] 1927, pp. 307, 308). Beasts roaming the earth serve as the illustrative example of the perceiving things. Lastly, there are the rational things, to which humans only belong. Humans move freely and their heads are turned upwards towards the heaven. The human head, writes Bovelles, is 'made to look up and gaze at the utmost points of the world, to the sidereal and celestial bodies' (2014, 2.6, [1511] 1927, p. 308).

The four kinds of material things are analogical to the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, of which everything in the sublunary sphere consists. Mineral things are like earth, undifferentiated and immobile; living things are like water, for both move but they do not do so freely; perceiving things are like air since both roam freely unrestricted by any attachment to place; and rational things are like fire, for fire internalises the other elements and, by doing so, it 'completes the mass of the sublunar sphere and kisses the flanks of heaven' (Bovelles 2014, 5.3, [1511] 1927, p. 314). In like manner, humans, by virtue of being things of reason, complete the material world.

But what is reason, and how does it manage to complete the material world of nature? Bovelles begins his answer by noting that heaven is the father of the elements. First, heaven gave birth to earth, then to water and air, and lastly to fire. Fire was born in a place close to its maker and

> insists that it is the most excellent of the elements, that it is the only one to return to its origin and to take hold of its beginning, and that it is the only one to come forth near and next to the father, and constantly offers him kisses. (Bovelles 2014, 5.4, [1511] 1927, p. 314)

To father heaven's giving birth to the elements stands in an analogical relation mother nature's giving birth to substance,

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[42] To my knowledge, there is no published English translation of *Liber de Sapiente*. There is, however, an unpublished partial translation made by Matthias Riedl (Bovelles 2014), which I have consulted, and all quotes from *Liber de Sapiente* are from this translation. Citations to the work include chapter number and paragraph number—the paragraph number being my own—in the Riedl translation, as well as page number to the edition of the Latin original appearing as an appendix to Ernst Cassirer's *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* and prepared by Raymond Klibansky (Bovelles [1511] 1927). Thus, the citation '(Bovelles 2014, 1.9, 2.2, [1511] 1927, pp. 305, 307)' refers to chapter 1, ninth paragraph *and* chapter 2, second paragraph in the Riedl translation and pages 305 and 307 in the Klibansky edition. In the Klibansky edition, the Latinasation of Bovelles' name, Carolus Bovillus appears as author name. However, to improve the readability of the citations, I refer to it by the vernacular version, Charles de Bovelles. For the same reason, I include original year of publication only for the Klibansky edition.

[43] Bovelles uses both *substantia* and *essentia* to refer to mineral things.

life, perception, and reason. Nature is the mother of things. Substance was born first and farthest away from its mother. After essence came life and perception, each born in a place closer to their mother. Last came reason, born right next to the mother. In fact, Bovelles says of reason to be

> equal to her mother.... [A]mong the daughters of Nature only Reason is perfect. As you see, only she is connected to mother Nature, is on par with and equal to her, and is able to kiss her. Moreover, she is the only one who is with the mother and born to understand and comprehend Nature. (Bovelles 2014, 5.4, [1511] 1927, p. 314)

Reason completes the material world by contemplating and comprehending it; reason is the self-awareness of nature. Or, if one is to remain true to Bovelles' terminology so far, reason is the level of material reality in which that reality knows itself. It can be said, therefore, that reason is nature—since nature is associated with material reality—becoming thought. Moreover, since this means that thought is but nature contemplating itself, reason amounts to nothing other than nature in the mode of thought. As Bovelles writes, 'reason may be duly defined by us as the adult and consummate daughter of Nature and, as it were, a second Nature' (2014, 5.7, [1511] 1927, p. 316).

Moreover, Bovelles maintains that reason completes nature by imitating it (2014, 5.7, [1511] 1927, p. 316); to comprehend nature through reason is to mirror all of its parts, and by mirroring all other things in nature, humans become 'the force that leads mother Nature back into herself' (Bovelles 2014, 5.7, [1511] 1927, p. 316; see also Cassirer 1972,

p. 89). Through the human being, by means of reason as the daughter of nature, 'the whole circle of Nature is consummated and through her Nature is restored to herself' (2014, 5.7, [1511] 1927, p. 316). Again, one encounters the notions that nature is more than matter, that it contains both material and spiritual elements, and that the human being fully belongs to nature.

However, this process is not merely *nature* completing itself through human reason. Humans *also* become complete in the same process for human completion, according to Bovelles, comes with the perfection of the intellect which, in turn, is achieved by mirroring and completing nature (Bovelles 2014, 6.1–6.6, 24.5, [1511] 1927, pp. 316–318, 351). Thus, the completion of nature and the completion of humans coincide, they are two sides of the same process.

Interestingly, this means that what humans encounter through reason is as much nature as it is themselves. Bovelles' conceptualisation of humans is explicitly microcosmic,[44] and he adheres to the notion that

> nothing is peculiar or characteristic of Man; rather he shares in all things that are characteristic of others.... He indeed transfers all nature into himself, observes all things, and imitates the whole of Nature. By absorbing and drinking everything that is in the nature of things he becomes all things.... Man is ... the coming-together of all things. (Bovelles 2014, 24.1–24.2, [1511] 1927, pp. 350–351).

Thus, whatever is characteristic of any thing whatsoever in the world is also potentially characteristic of humans. By means of reason,

> Man is in some way the potentiality of

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[44]He describes that human who has perfected the intellect as a *minor mundus*, a small world (2014, 8.7, [1511] 1927, pp. 321–322).

all things. For his actuality is the actuality of all things, his form is the form of all things. (Bovelles 2014, 26.10, [1511] 1927, p. 355).

Bovelles draws the logic of macrocosm and microcosm to its very end, for if all things are in humans, then humans must also be in all things: 'Something human is hidden in every earthly substance; in every substance was put an atom of Man' (Bovelles 2014, 24.4, [1511] 1927, p. 351). So, what humans encounter in the natural world are the actualities of what exists in themselves potentially. Human knowledge of nature, then, is as much a comprehension of nature as it is a comprehension of the self. Man's

> awareness and recognition is, at the same time, the cognition and science of himself and of all things. Just as there is the same form for Man and for all things—since whatever pertains to Man pertains to all things, and whatever pertains to all things pertains to Man—there is one and the same science, one single meaning, and an equal cognition of both. (Bovelles 2014, 26.10, [1511] 1927, p. 355)

Self-knowledge and knowledge of the world are one and the same according to this understanding of what it means to be human (Cassirer 1972, pp. 90–91); thoughts about nature are not thoughts about external things, for those things humans think of are as much part of themselves as they are of the rest of the universe. As Paracelsus states regarding knowledge of medicine: 'the natural physician understands how it is that in the great world the anatomy can be discerned just as in the small [world]' (Paracelsus [1530] 2008b, p. 123, brackets in original). Or, as one of his contemporaries, Agrippa, writes in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

> Whosoever therefore shall know himself, shall know all things in himself; especially he shall know God, according to whose Image he was made; he shall know the world, the resemblance of which he beareth; he shall know all creatures, with which he Symbolizeth; and what comfort he can have and obtain, from Stones, Plants, Animals, Elements, Heavens, from Spirits, Angels, and every thing, and how all things may be fitted for all things, in their time, place, order, measure, proportion and Harmony. (Agrippa [1533] 1651, p. 460, space added between the words 'order,' and 'measure')

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Thus, in medieval discourse humans are not only part of nature, they are the part that brings the universe together. Moreover, either they are whatever the universe is, or they can become anything that the universe contains.

This belonging of humans to nature is a direct consequence of the priority of identity over difference and of the epistemic configuration of analogy; humans belong to nature based on the operative logic of analogy, and this because of the following.

Analogy, as mentioned already, establishes relations of proportional correspondence between things. These relations allow for truths about what is not known to be derived from what actually is known (Delany 1990b, pp. 20–21). For instance, if humans are small worlds mirroring the large world and the latter consists of four elements, then humans must also consist of the exact same four elements (e.g. Bovelles 2014, 5.1–5.4, [1511] 1927, pp. 313–316).

Notwithstanding such possibilities to extrapolate truths, analogy never produces *new* truths. Indeed, this does not merely hold for truths. It is a general feature of analogy; novelties never appear when everything re-

sembles something else, and as long as the universe is analogically related to its origin it will never display anything that is not already present in that origin. Since difference is circumscribed by identity, all differences that appear can always be related to a more profound identical relation between the differing things.

The impossibility of novelties in the universe is comparable to the allegorical reading of texts. For an allegorical interpretation to be meaningful, the connection between the literal meaning and the symbolic meaning and what the symbolic meaning amounts to must be accepted in advance by writer and reader alike. The meaning, and in extension the truths, allegory sets out to uncover can be arrived at only if they are accepted as premises (Delany 1990b, p. 22; see also Bartelson 1995, p. 94; Fletcher 2012, p. 113). Indeed, this holds for analogy in general. Origen's roe deer, for instance, is symbolic of Christ's ability to see God and to make others see him, only if that symbolism and that ability are accepted in advance of the symbolic relation being explicated. In turn, analogy's presupposition of that to which it proceeds implies that the all-encompassing universe that analogy ends up constituting must already be in place before analogy can get off the ground and do its thing. Therefore, the universe constituted by analogy is also the condition of possibility of analogy. If all of this is put in the terms of human belonging to nature, it suggests that, for thought epistemically ruled by analogy to establish meaningful accounts of human belonging to the natural world, this exact belonging must first be presupposed. In other words, the medieval conceptualisation of humans as mirrors of the world and as belonging to the natural world is not only present

in discourse. It is presupposed by discourse as such; it is fundamental for discourse in general. Thus, for meaning to emerge in medieval discourse, humans must first belong to the natural world; before anything means anything at all, humans must belong to nature.

3.2 Nature

To what is it, then, that humans belong when they are said to belong to nature? How is nature conceptualised in medieval discourse? That is the topic for this section.

Several important characteristics of medieval nature have indeed already been introduced above, and a brief summary might be in order. First of all, medieval nature is held together by analogy and this brings to nature an internal principle of organisation. In turn, this means that nature amounts to an ordered reality which is also, by virtue of its assimilation of its divine origin into itself and the general applicability of analogy, an independent reality (Adams 2013; Chenu 1968a, pp. 4–18; Dales 1978; Gilson 1940, pp. 364–382; Harrison 1998, pp. 39–44).

Furthermore, as a consequence of how analogy operates, medieval nature is constituted as a unified whole characterised by the interconnectedness of its different parts. The natural world of the Middle Ages is like a great network in which everything is connected to everything else.

Medieval nature has thus far also been shown to be more than material. Analogy assimilates; it blurs the boundaries between separated things and, ultimately, integrates everything into an all-encompassing inside, a great synthesis. Nothing is left outside, and this means that effectively the medieval natural world comes to include spiritual ele-

ments as well as material. In Christian theological terms, this amounts to a direct connection between the material world and its divine origin and in Renaissance thought, as Neoplatonism sees a revival and the Aristotelian understanding of the universe falls somewhat out of fashion, the world comes under the influence of the stars; it gets populated by all kinds of spirits, astral forces, and magical elements.[45]

Because it internalises its own origin and principle of organisation, medieval nature is also absolute; it exists independently of anything external to itself; its being is unconditioned.

Lastly, we have seen that medieval nature is inherently meaningful. Meaning is provided by the macrocosm in and by itself. Things, in the Middle Ages, always have a symbolic dimension and they are meaningful by virtue of their divine origin—which itself, then, is part of the natural world—*and* their analogical relations to other things. In this respect, nature is like a book that humans can read and of which they can make sense. Hence, humans do not create the meaning of the world, they discover it by interpreting its symbolic content. To know is to make sense of signs already present in nature, the being of an independently existing world, therefore, being a precondition for human thought in general (Colish 1968, p. 1). Humans gaining knowledge of nature is a practice of recognition, of recognising analogical relations and interpreting signs already present in nature. Nature contains

truthfulness in itself, it is in itself a realm of truths.

It is, however, through another oft-used analogy I would like to capture the medieval concept of nature, that of an *organism*; medieval nature is like a living breathing body; 'God', writes Arnold of Bonneval, 'distributed the things of nature like the members of a great body' (Arnold of Bonneval quoted in Chenu 1968a, p. 9; see also Ernaldus Bonævallis 1854, p. 1515).[46] Descriptions of nature as a body or a living being—and an individual person, even—occurs already during the 12th century (Park 2004; Wetherbee 1982). Bernardus Silvestris, for instance, argues that 'the lesser universe of man' ([ca. 1147] 1973, p. 121) is patterned after the body of the greater universe:

> In the intricate structure of the world's body, the firmament holds the preeminent position. The earth is at the lowest point, the air spread between. From the firmament the godhead rules and disposes all things. The powers who have their homes in the ether and the atmosphere carry out its commands, and the affairs of the earth below are governed by them. No less care is taken in the case of man, that the soul should govern in the head, the vital force established in the breast obey its commands, and the lower parts, the loins and those organs placed below them, submit to rule. (ibid., p. 121)

During the Renaissance, organicist renditions of the natural world become very prominent, not least as part of the revival of Neoplatonism and the profusion of the idea that the world is an actual living being an-

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[45] On Renaissance magic, see Copenhaver (1988a, 2015), Eamon (1994, pp. 194–233), Garin (1983, pp. 29–55), Shumaker (1972), Walker (1958), Yates (1964), and Zambelli (2007). On Renaissance natural philosophy and the consequences the turn away from Aristotle has on the understanding of nature in the Renaissance, see Copenhaver and Schmitt (1992, pp. 285–328), Ingegno (1988), Granada (2007), and Long (1988).

[46] I have not been able to assign an original year of publication or the like for this work by Arnold of Bonneval, and such a year is to my knowledge not known. Arnold died around the middle of the 12th century.

imated by a soul. Giambattista della Porta, for instance, writes in his *Natural Magick*, as part of a discussion about attraction among things in nature, that

> the whole world is knit and bound within it self: for . . . the World is a living creature, everywhere both male and female, and the parts of it do couple together, within and between themselves, by reason of their mutual love; and so they hold and stand together, every member of it being linked to each other by a common bond; which the Spirit of the World . . . hath inclined them unto. (Porta [1589] 1957, p. 14)[47]

Conceptualising nature as a body or an organism hinges on the logic of macrocosm and microcosm and the peculiar functioning of analogy. For, the small world, according to the logic of macrocosm and microcosm, is as much a mirror of the large world as the large world is a mirror of the small world. There is a circularity going on in the conceptual pair of macrocosm and microcosm. Put in more general terms, analogy is fundamentally circular; both things between which an analogy holds receive meaning on the basis of the analogy. Indeed, the soul might reach for heaven just like the head is raised to the skies, but the head is also raised towards the skies just like the soul reaches for heaven. This circularity of meaning allows, in the context of the conceptualisation of nature, for the large world to be seen as a likeness of the small world just as much as the small world is a likeness of the large one. Returning to Bovelles' *Liber de Sapiente*, in which nature is said to give birth to the material realm, this circularity is exposed rather explicitly:

> Two men . . . were created and brought forth by Nature: a greater one, which we

call the world, and a smaller one which, by a more special use of the name, is called Man. (Bovelles 2014, 24.3, [1511] 1927, p. 351)

And in the *Paragranum*, Paracelsus argues that whatever is found in the natural world is found in the human body as well:

> the *philosophus* discerns nothing in the heavens and earth but what he discerns in the human being as well. . . . Nothing separates these two aspects from one another but the figure of their form; and yet the form of either should be understood as one. (Paracelsus [1530] 2008b, p. 137)

The medievals generally think of the living organism in such a way that each part of its body has a specific function and serves a purpose for the whole of the organism. A key component of this conceptualisation of the body is the notion that all parts of the body not only have functions and serve a purpose but also that they contribute to the well-being of the whole creature. This is, also, true for the world creature as well. Again, della Porta writes:

> The parts of this huge world, like the limbs and members of one living creature, do all depend upon one Author, and are knit together by the bond of one Nature: therefore as in us, the brain, the lights, the heart, the liver, and other parts of us do receive and draw mutual benefit from each other, so that when one part suffers, the rest also suffer with it; even so the parts and members of this huge creature the World, I mean all the bodies that are in it, do in good neighbourhood as it were, lend and borrow each others Nature. (Porta [1589] 1957, p. 13, space added between the words 'were,' and 'lend')

Hence, each thing in the natural world has a function in relation to the organism as a whole; each thing serves a purpose for the

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[47] The cited edition of della Porta's *Natural Magick* is a reprint of its first translation into English from 1658.

body. In other words, medieval nature is fundamentally teleological; it is developed, and it develops, towards an end.

In medieval discourse, the teleological character of nature receives its most systematic expression in the adoption of Aristotle's fourfold schematic conceptualisation of causality.[48] According to Aristotle, there are four different kinds of causes explaining 'the "how and why" of things' (Aristotle 1957a, p. 129): material, formal, efficient, and final. The material cause explains out of what something is made; the formal cause explains the shape or typical characteristics something has; the efficient cause is the external agent of something, it is 'that which produces ... that which is produced' (Aristotle 1933, p. 211); and lastly, the final cause

> is the *end* or purpose, for the sake of which the process is initiated, as when a man takes exercise for the sake of his health. (Aristotle 1957a, p. 131)

The inclusion of final cause in the explanation of the 'how and why' of things means that causal explanations always and by definition have a teleological dimension: 'Why does a man walk?', asks Aristotle (1933, p. 211). 'To be healthy', he answers, 'and by saying this we consider that we have supplied the cause' (ibid., p. 211).

Aristotle considers things in nature to be distinguished by their innate principle of movement and change (Aristotle 1957a, pp. 107–111). Thus, regarding natural things, the fourfold schema of causality answers the question why movement and change occurs in nature, and why it occurs the way it does. Because of the presence of final cause, natural change is explained, at least in part, with reference to its end. Aristotle maintains that,

unless final cause is accepted as an inherent aspect of nature, there is no way to account for regularities in the movement and change of natural things (ibid., pp. 169–179); 'that Nature is a cause', he argues, 'and a goal-directed cause, is above dispute' (ibid., p. 179). Moreover, in *Parts of Animals,* he adds to this argument that final cause is not only inherent in nature, it is logically primary in relation to the other kinds of causes. In this work, he bundles together material cause with efficient cause on the one hand, and formal cause with efficient cause on the other (1961, pp. 53–79). Whereas efficient cause has to do with process, final cause refers to the end of that process, or to that in which the process results, and Aristotle maintains that 'the process is for the sake of the actual thing, the thing is not for the sake of the process' (Aristotle 1961, p. 61; see also Aquinas [1265–1274] 1970a, pp. 71–75, [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, pp. 34–38). Also, as Aquinas notes, 'with the exception of what is generated by chance, the form must be the end in view in every kind of generation' ([1265–1274] 1964c, p. 63) of things; 'the form of the thing', then, pre-exists 'the thing to be produced' (ibid., p. 63). Thus, according to this view, things are not the results of processes, it is the processes that are the results of things; the end of a thing determines what kind of process that will occur so that the thing in question comes into being: 'things', as a chapter title in Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* reads, 'are ordered to their ends in various ways' ([ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, p. 83).

Aristotle's concept of causality and the associated primacy of final cause systematises an understanding of nature according to

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[48] Aristotle details his schema on causality primarily in the *Physics* (1957a, pp. 129–139) and the *Metaphysics* (1933, pp. 211–217).

which every thing in nature has a purpose tied to its very being. Moreover, since Aristotle also argues that all movements and changes—all things in nature, then—are, ultimately, attributable to one single cause, the aforementioned prime mover (e.g. Aristotle 1935, pp. 139–163), all things are also ultimately united in a single causal process. This means that not only things but also the universe *as a universe*, is purposive; the medieval world has a single end towards which it strives (Gilson 1940, p. 104): 'nature always tends toward one objective', writes Aquinas ([ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, p. 90; see also [1265–1274] 1975d, pp. 3–13). Or as Fracastoro reasons:

> If at some moment God created this universe, as it is devout and proper to believe, then, by the same power and virtue with which he created everything, he also endowed each natural kind with its own capacity to fulfil the purposes demanded by and congruent with that universe. (Fracastoro quoted in Pearce 1996, pp. 119–120; see also Fracastorii 1555b, p. 191r)

Things, for Aristotle, are *substances*, and substances, in turn, are defined as compounds of form and matter (Aristotle 1957a, pp. 11–97). A substance, from this perspective, refers to essence, it is a definition of what a thing is by itself.[49] Based on such a conceptualisation of things, in which material nature is thought of in terms of substance and which is ubiquitous in medieval discourse (Lagerlund 2012), the purposiveness of nature implies that everything happening in nature—every change—is directly related to substance.

For analytical purposes, Aristotle's concept of substance can be substituted by that of structure, following the delineation in chapter 2 of the concepts of structure and function and my association of structure with essence (see page 148 above). Accordingly, as a systematised expression of a principle of teleology inherent in the organicist conceptualisation of nature, the Aristotelian understanding of cause implies that in the organicist conceptualisation of nature that which happens, that which goes on, comes into existence—or, in Aristotelian terms, which changes occur—is directly and completely arranged under the structure of nature.

Also in the previous chapter, the concept of function was associated with action and that which happens. Proceeding from this association, it can be argued that, in medieval nature, function is completely arranged under structure; function *resolves* into structure (Merchant 1989, p. 100; see also Collingwood 1960, p. 16). By this, it is meant that nothing happens in nature, nothing comes into existence, that is not directly connected to and a consequence of the very being of nature. As Aquinas states, 'the manner of a thing's becoming corresponds to the manner of its being' ([1265–1274] 1964b, p. 7). It also means, vice versa, that the essence of nature is present in everything that happens in it, a view expressed by Peter Abelard in his interpretation of the creation narrative in scripture:

> The will of God alone functioned as the force of nature in those works of the first six days, when even nature itself was being created; that is, a kind of force was being conferred on those things that were then coming into existence, whence afterward they them-

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[49] In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle associates substance with essence (ibid., pp. 315–316, 319–337), and writes that 'the essence of each thing is that which it is said to be *per se*' (Aristotle 1933, p. 321; see also Aristotle 1960, pp. 43–47).

selves would be sufficient for their own multiplication.... [W]e now call nature nothing other than a force and faculty that was then given to those works, whence they would suffice to achieve these things that result from them later. (Abelard [ca. 1130–1140] 2011, p. 60)[50]

This view, that everything is determined by and participates in the essence of nature, is also summarised by Gilson who notes that in the Middle Ages, 'natural being is an active substance, with operations flowing from its essence, and necessarily determined by that essence' (Gilson 1940, p. 365).

Put differently, in the medieval mode of thought it would not make sense to speak about what something does or what happens because of something as being independent of what that thing is; doing and happening is determined by being (Weisheipl 1982, pp. 147–148; see also Weisheipl 1954). Furthermore, this suggests that everything that is comes with a function; in the medieval universe, as Gilson argues, 'nothing ever happens save in the name of a rational order, nothing exists save as depending on it' (1940, p. 369): 'God and nature', writes Dante,

> makes nothing useless, but whatever is brought into being is made to perform some operation. For in the intention of the one creating ... is not the created essence but rather the operation of the essence. Whence it follows that the proper operation does not exist for the sake of the essence, but vice versa. (Dante [1312–1313] 1998a, pp. 13–15)

Moreover, as will be shown later on, the resolving of function into structure, and the determination of what happens by what is, has significant impact on the conceptualisation of political order.

The adoption among the medievals of Aristotle's concept of causality, and the influence of Aristotle in general, has a few more important consequences for the medieval concept of nature.

First, Aristotle importantly associates final cause with the good; it is for the goodness of a thing, he argues, that it is involved in a teleological process, and 'the final cause tends to be the greatest good and *end* of the rest' (Aristotle 1933, p. 215). This suggests that nature, or the universe as a whole, is caught up in a process towards a universal good. As Hugh of Saint Victor notes, 'there is nothing in the universe that does not participate in the Highest Good' (Hugh of Saint Victor quoted in Chenu 1968a, p. 7; see also Hugonis de Sancto Victore [ca. 1125–1141?] 2015, p. 479), and Pico della Mirandola similarly argues that nature always acts 'for the sake of some resulting good' (Pico della Mirandola [1489] 1998a, p. 85). Specifically, the good towards which everything proceeds is associated with God and the reconnection with God; the end of creation is the return to the creator: 'the divine being, in as far as it is first, is most simple. For in as far as it is the first being, all things flow from it; and in as far as they flow from it, they flow back and are reduced to it as to their final end' (Bonaventure [ca. 1253–1257] 1979, p. 164; see also Schaefer 1961, pp. 310–311). The proceeding of everything towards a divine common goal in this way provides to the universe a certain and overarching harmony, and because that harmony is tied to the very being of nature

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[50]On Abelard's concept of nature, see Hicks (2017, pp. 43–52) and Luscombe (1966).

[51]On the medieval notion of harmony in nature and the universe, which is actually mostly prominent in Platonist strands of thought and often directly connected to ancient ideas about the existence of a kind of musical harmony between the celestial spheres, see Hicks (2017), Koenigsberger (1979), Prins (2015), and various contributions in

it is fundamental; medieval nature is fundamentally harmonious.[51]

Second, final cause brings activity and creativity to the natural world (Gilson 1940, pp. 364–369; see also Weisheipl 1982, 1954). When Aristotle's notion of final cause is taken up by Christian theologians it becomes associated with the Christian God; it is God, then, who is the final cause of all things; God is the good towards which nature proceeds. God, says Aquinas,

> intends only to communicate his own completeness, which is his goodness. Each and every creature stretches out to its own completion, which is a resemblance of divine fulness and excellence. Thus, then, divine goodness is the final cause of all things. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1967b, p. 21)

Therefore, nature is circumscribed and enframed by divine agency. The medieval universe has an internal creative dimension of divine origin. In other words, nature, as conceptualised in this way, truly acts; it is active. It can bring about change by itself and it makes things happen on its own by virtue of its divine internalised origin. With the theoretical vocabulary introduced in chapter 2, medieval nature can to this extent be said to be a subject, a subjective element of discourse.

Third and finally, the priority of final cause over other kinds of causes subordinates natural processes to their end which, in turn, introduces a fundamental hierarchy to the medieval universe. That which is related to nature's end is always elevated above that which is related to material, formal, and efficient cause. In more general terms, some things are naturally ranked above other things in the medieval universe, and vice versa, some things are subordinated to other things. In fact, the hierarchical structure is a condition of possibility for nature, the reason being that final cause provides the framework within which other kinds of causes become possible:

> it must be noted that, even though the end is the last thing to come into being in some cases, it is always prior in causality. Hence it is called the cause of causes, because it is the cause of the causality of all causes. For it is the cause of efficient causality ... and the efficient cause is the cause of the causality of both the matter and the form, because by its motion it causes matter to be receptive of form and makes form exist in matter. (Aquinas [1270–1272] 1961, p. 311)

To this structural hierarchy there is added, as has already been mentioned, a spatial and spiritual-material hierarchy grounded in the natural composition of the celestial bodies and the nested spherical structure of the cosmos. Thus, there is a natural hierarchy folded doubly over the medieval world; medieval nature is hierarchically ordered once because of its teleological structure and twice because of its actual spiritual-material composition.

So far, the characteristics of medieval nature have been delineated by referring primarily to medieval Aristotelian discourse. However, if anything, in the Neoplatonist revival of the Renaissance, these characteristics are even more pronounced and distilled even further.

In Neoplatonist discourse, as has been touched upon already, organicism is taken to the level where the world is believed to really have a soul; the world is not just

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Prins and Vanhaelen (2018).

[52] For an account of organicist theories of nature in the Renaissance, see Merchant (1989, pp. 99–126).

like an organism, it *is* a properly animated thing:[52] 'There is nothing', writes Ficino, 'to be found in this whole living world so deformed that Soul does not attend it, that a gift of the Soul is not in it' ([1489] 1989, p. 245). Moreover, 'all things, no matter how small and minuscule', Bruno similarly writes,

> have in them part of that spiritual substance which, if it finds a suitable subject, disposes itself to be plant, or to be animal, and receives the members of such or such a body, commonly qualified as animated, for in all things there is spirit, and there is not the least corpuscle that does not contain within itself some portion that may animate it.…

> [S]pirit is found in all things which, even if they are not living creatures, are animate. If not according to the perceptible presence of life and animation, then according to the principle, and a certain primary act of life and animation. (Bruno [1584] 1998a, p. 44)

> The world soul … is the formal constitutive principle of the universe and all it contains. I say that if life is found in all things, the soul is necessarily the form of all things.… I conceive this form in such a way that there is only one for all things. But according to the diversity of the dispositions of matter and the capacity of the material principles, both active and passive, it happens to produce different configurations and realize different potentialities, bringing forth sometimes non-sensitive life, sometimes sensitive but not intellective life, sometimes seeming to suppress or restrain all outside signs of life. (ibid., p. 45)

Just like the human soul is everywhere in the human body, so too, then, is the world soul in everything in nature:

> the soul of the world is in the whole world, and is everywhere so adapted to matter that, at each place, it produces the proper subject and causes the proper actions. (Bruno [1588–1590] 1998b, p. 111)

And above it all resides God. If God, says Bruno,

> is not Nature herself, he is certainly the nature of Nature, and is the soul of the Soul of the world, if he is not the Soul herself. (Bruno [1584] 1964, p. 240)

In Neoplatonist discourse, living beings are often conceptualised as consisting of soul, body, and spirit. For the organism of nature, the soul amounts to the divine mind containing the eternal forms from which things in the visible world are copied; the body of nature amounts to matter, and the spirit consists of the link connecting soul and body (Merchant 1989, p. 106). This is the understanding of the world purveyed by Ficino in his *Three Books on Life*:

> Always remember … that just as the power of our soul is brought to bear on our members through the spirit, so the force of the World-soul is spread under the World-soul through all things through the quintessence, which is active everywhere, as the spirit inside the World's Body. ([1489] 1989, p. 247)

'The cosmos', writes Ficino, 'is itself an animal more unified than any other animal, the most perfect animal' (ibid., p. 251), and its soul

> possesses by divine power precisely as many seminal reasons of things as there are Ideas in the Divine Mind. By these seminal reasons she fashions the same number of species in matter. That is why every single species corresponds through its own seminal reason to its own Idea. (ibid., p. 243)

The divine mind, according to Ficino, is channelled through the celestial spheres. The stars, he maintains, were created by the world soul and 'in the stars … are contained all the species of things below', from which

it follows that 'on these well-ordered forms the forms of lower things depend; they are ordered by them' (ibid., p. 245).

The world soul, then, permeates all parts of the world, and just like the human soul 'puts forth a general force of life' the world soul 'which is active everywhere, unfolds in every place its power of universal life' (ibid., p. 247). Therefore, each and every part of the natural world is animate, all of nature is alive (ibid., p. 255). However, the soul, whether that of humans or that of the world, cannot operate directly on the body. There needs, as Ficino sees it, to exist a spirit between the two acting as a medium:

> Between the tangible and partly transient body of the world and its very soul, whose nature is very far from its body, there exists everywhere a spirit, just as there is between the soul and body in us.... For such a spirit is necessarily required as a medium by which the divine soul may both be present to the grosser body and bestow life throughout it. (ibid., pp. 255–257)

Ficino's *Three Books on Life* abounds with descriptions of how the celestial spheres and bodies, through the workings of the world spirit, influence what is going on in the material world (ibid., pp. 251–253). By acquiring knowledge of how such cosmic and divine forces operate in the world through the medium of the world spirit and of how they animate all the elements of the sublunary world, Ficino argues that humans can harness divine powers for their own benefits (ibid., p. 255). This is a commonly held position in Neoplatonist discourse. Della

Porta, for instance, distinguishes between two kinds of qualities that all things possess. Any one thing has qualities derived from the four elements and their combinations. However, all things also have qualities directly related to their form,[53] which are usually referred to as occult qualities (Eamon 1994, pp. 211–212; see also Porta [1589] 1957, pp. 6–13). The power of the lodestone—magnets, that is—to attract iron is such a quality, for instance.[54] Importantly then, these qualities come not from the elements but from the world above the elements. In the words of Agrippa:

> It is ... manifest that the occult properties in things are not from the nature of the Elements, but infused from above, hid from our senses, and scarce at last known by our reason, which indeed come from the Life, and the Spirit of the World, through the rayes of the Stars: and can no otherwise but by experience and conjecture be enquired into by us. (Agrippa [1533] 1651, p. 34)

Moreover, since the forms of the things of nature come 'from a most excellent place; even immediately from the highest heavens, they receiving it from the intelligences, and these from God himself' (Porta [1589] 1957, p. 7), when humans make use of the qualities that derive from them for their own ends to manipulate natural things, their practices take on a divine and occult character. Such practices, which gather around knowledge of the link between the most fundamental workings of the universe and how those influence more tangible matters, della Porta, Agrippa and others refer to as natural magic

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[53] Indeed, this reasoning is grounded in a basic Platonist framework and della Porta's work is predominately Neoplatonist in character. However, for the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that it also contains evidently Aristotelian elements, for instance in his treatment of things as compounds of form and matter (e.g. Porta [1589] 1957, pp. 6–7; see also Eamon 1994, pp. 211–213; Shumaker 1972, pp. 112–113).

[54] Della Porta devotes a whole book of his *Natural Magick* to the 'wonders of the Load-stone'. See Porta ([1589] 1957, pp. 190–216, with the quote referring to the title appearing on p. 190).

(e.g. Porta [1589] 1957, pp. 1–2). Thus, natural magic is basically natural philosophy in practice. On this issue, Agrippa writes:

> Natural Magick is taken to be nothing else, but the chief power of all the natural Sciences; which therefore they call the top and perfection of Natural Philosophy, and which is indeed the active part of the same. (Agrippa [1526] 1694, p. 110, small caps removed)

Magic seemingly dislocates function in nature from structure. However, the results of magical practices—what happens, that is, as a product of human manipulation of the occult qualities of natural things—are conditioned by the constitution of the universe, particularly by the intricacy that the forms of natural things are proportionally related to divine forms. Thus, nothing happens as a result of magical practices that is not a direct consequence of nature itself; nature dictates what can be achieved by magic. Early in *Natural Magick*, della Porta argues that the practice of magic simply depends on nature and the understanding of nature he is about to the delineate in the pages to come:

> I think that Magick is nothing else but the survey of the whole course of Nature. For, whilst we consider the Heavens, the Stars, the Elements, how they are moved, and how they are changed, by this means we find out the hidden secrecies of living creatures, of plants, of metals, and of their generation and corruption; so that this whole Science seems meerly to depend upon the view of Nature, as afterward we shall see more at large.... [T]he works of Magick are nothing else but the works of Nature, whose dutiful hand-maid Magick is. (Porta [1589] 1957, p. 2)

Hence, the discourse on magic continues the conceptualisation of nature according to which whatever happens in nature happens as a direct result of nature's constitution. In other words, function is still completely arranged under structure.

It is, furthermore, quite evident that harmony, hierarchy, and activity not only continues to be vital characteristics of nature in Renaissance Neoplatonic discourse, they become even more prominent. Ideas about cosmological harmony and that all spiritual forces in the universe operate in unison, are very salient features of the Neoplatonist strands of Renaissance thought (see references in footnote 51 on page 190 above), and that nature is conceptualised as hierarchical and active in said strands of thought is quite easily discernible from what has already been covered, given that Neoplatonism pretty much subordinates everything that happens in the material world to the animating power of the world soul; according to Neoplatonism, every thing in nature acts but it does so on behalf of and dictated by its divine origin.[55]

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This, then, is how nature is conceptualised in medieval discourse. Medieval nature is at the most basic level organicist; it is like a living creature. Indeed, some would even say that it *is* a living creature. As an organism, or as the likeness of an organism, it is ordered, its parts are fully interconnected, it is teleological, harmonious, hierarchical, and active. It is also immanently meaningful, a world of signs and symbols, and in itself a place of truths. 'Nature is', as Paracelsus notes, 'replete with wisdom' ([1530] 2008b, p. 149). Humans do not create the

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[55]On the Renaissance period's 'tendency …to apprehend the created order as a hierarchical arrangement', see also Patrides (1982, quote appearing on p. xi).

meaning of nature, they discover it, and to the extent they are able to do so they grasp the truths it contains. Knowledge is about the recognition and interpretation of meaning already present in the world.

Furthermore, a distinguishing feature of this conceptualisation of nature is that it resolves function into structure; what happens in nature and what things do in nature is the direct result of the fundamental structure of nature, what nature essentially is. It would, therefore, be nonsensical to speak about what a thing does as something that is separate from what it is; what it does follows from what it is. This resolving of function into structure, moreover, is of major importance for the medieval conceptualisation of political order as well, as will be argued in the next section Since, as has already been established, medieval humans belong to medieval nature, it follows that, because of this belonging, human affairs are also characterised by the resolving of function into structure. Actually, since humans are part of nature, all those conceptual components of nature that has been delineated here also define human being by virtue of the latter belonging to the former, and, by that, they come into play in the conceptualisation of political order as well.

3.3 Politics

Since all aspects of human being belong to nature, it is evidently so that how humans live together is also something that concerns the natural world, and just like nature as a whole, human societies —all human collectives (Gierke 1900, pp. 22–24)—are organi-cist in character.[56] Medieval political order is like a living body, like a *human* body to be exact. Political order follows the 'cosmic pattern' of being a body with different parts (Black 1988b, p. 593).

Politics, according to medieval discourse, takes place within the natural world as an integral part of it. Political order is a natural order and an instance of the order of the larger natural world (Luscombe 1982; Post 1964; Ullmann 1961, pp. 231–279). Taking up Aristotle's understanding of the human being as *zoon politikon*, Aquinas notes in the work known as *De regno* that 'man is a by nature a social and political animal, who lives in a community…. It is … natural for man to live in fellowship with many others' (Aquinas [1267] 2002, pp. 5–6; see also Aquinas [1271–1272] 2007, pp. 16–18; Aristotle 1944, pp. 9–11, 1934b, p. 29).[57] From this human characteristic of being a naturally political animal, it follows that 'all human beings have a natural drive for the association of the political community' (Aquinas [1271–1272] 2007, p. 18).

Furthermore, since humans are replicas of the larger universe of which they are a part, any political order too, insofar as it is a whole within the larger whole of the universe, is entangled in the circularity of macrocosm and microcosm; in the medieval world, political order becomes another instance where the whole and the parts mirror each other. By that, political communities add, in some sense, a new element to the human-nature relation, for not only do humans and nature mirror each other, they also mirror the way in which humans order their lives together

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[56] For an account of medieval organicist conceptualisations of society, see Merchant (1989, pp. 69–98).

[57] On the emergence of the word *politics*, or *politicus*, in medieval discourse, rather than the concept, see Rubinstein (1987).

and the latter evidently also mirrors both humans and nature; humans are not only small worlds, they are kingdoms as well, and not only is nature a great organism, it is likewise also a kingdom. In Alain de Lille's *The Plaint of Nature*, the universe, humans, and political order are put in precisely such a relation to each other so that each makes the others meaningful; the three make sense only in relation to each other:

> The universe discovers its own qualities in humankind.
>
> Observe how, in this universe as in a noble city, a kind of majestic civil order is ensured by well considered governance. For in the heavens, as in the citadel of the human city, the eternal Emperor dwells in imperial state. From him eternally the edict has gone forth that knowledge of all things must be inscribed in the book of his providence. In the air, as in the center of the city, the ranks of the heavenly army of angels in their delegated role watch diligently over mankind. Man, dwelling like a foreigner on the outskirts of the universe, does not refuse to show obedience to the angelic host. In this state, then, God is the ruler, the angels his agents, man his obedient subject. God creates man by his command, the angels carry out the work of creation, man through obedience recreates himself. God by his authority orders creation; the angels by their activity fashion creation; man, a creature, submits himself to the will of these operative powers. God commands in the majesty of his authority; the angels perform an active ministry; man, through the mystery of regeneration, obeys.
>
> But the course of our thinking strays too freely when it dares to raise our discourse to the ineffable mysteries of the divine; our minds sighs wearily as it seeks to understand these things. The image of this

perfectly ordered state, then, is clearly seen in man. For in the citadel of the head resides the empress Wisdom, to whom the other faculties show obedience as if she were a goddess and they were demigoddesses. For ingenuity, and the logical faculty, and the power to record things past, dwelling in different chambers of the head, obey her eagerly. In the heart, as the center of the human city, Magnanimity has established her dwelling; having pledged herself to serve under the command of Providence, she acts in accordance with her commander's decisions. The loins, as it were the outskirts of the city, concede this lowest region of the body to physical desire. Not daring to go against the authority of Magnanimity, they obey her will. In this state, then, Wisdom, occupies the position of ruler, Magnanimity can be compared to a minister, and Desire claims the role of obedient subject. (Alan of Lille [ca. 1160–1170] 2013b, pp. 73–77)[58]

The circular logic of macrocosm and microcosm repeats itself even in how different political communities relate to each other (Gierke 1900, pp. 7–8). In *De Ludo Globi*, Cusanus writes:

> The universe is one great kingdom and so also man is a kingdom, but a small one within a great kingdom as the kingdom of Bohemia is a small kingdom within the great kingdom of the Romans, or the universal empire. (Nicholas de Cusa [1463] 1986, p. 75)

Since political order is part of the natural world while simultaneously mirroring it as well, it follows first that political order is just as organicist as the larger universe; medieval political order has the resemblance of a corporeal being. It is, simply put, like a living body of flesh and bones, and it is conceived

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[58]I consistently omit the left quotation marks that open some paragraphs in this translation of Alain's *The Plaint of Nature*.

of in the same organicist terms as the natural world as a whole.[59]

Second, it follows that political order also displays those qualities delineated in the previous section as central to the medieval concept of nature. Importantly, this means that political order is exactly that, an *ordered* reality, and, given that medieval nature is an inherently meaningful order, it follows that political order also is inherently meaningful. This might seem to be a trivial statement at first, but it yields something of importance. It implies that the meaning of political order does not derive from humans. Since political order is part of a larger universe which is itself meaningful, and which establishes its own meaning, political order cannot itself be about the creation of meaning. Political order has a meaning that goes above and beyond humans. To refer back to the previous chapter and the conceptualisation of political order in contemporary green political theory as the creation of meaning in general, this implies that medieval political order, in this way—and as will be shown throughout this section, in many other ways—is fundamentally different from the political order of contemporary green political theory. Since meaning in the Middle Ages is discovered rather than created by humans, medieval politics is not about creating meaning, neither the meaning of order itself nor anything else. It is, rather, about finding a place for humans in the larger world they belong to, and to discover the meaning of the world, themselves, their place in it, and how to best live a life together with others in it; politics is about aligning the small world to the large one. Therefore, political order, just like nature in general, has a purpose; it is teleological. As Dante argues in his *Monarchia*:

> We should be aware that nature produces the thumb for a definite end, that it makes the whole hand for another end, which is different from this, and the arm for yet another end, which is different from both of the others, and the whole man for still another end, which differs from all of the others. In just the same way, nature directs the individual man to one end, and the household to another, the neighborhood to another, and the city to another, and the kingdom to another. (Dante [1312–1313] 1998a, p. 13)

Dante situates the purpose of political order as part of the teleological unfolding of the whole creation, for 'mankind in its entirety', as he maintains, is a part 'in relation to the whole universe' (ibid., p. 39), and 'every thing is disposed well, and indeed disposed best, that is disposed according to the intention of the first agent, who is God' (ibid., p. 41). And from quite a lengthy argument in the first book of the *Monarchia*, he concludes that 'it is necessary for the best condition of the human race that there be a monarch in the world, and consequently monarchy is necessary for the well-being of the world' (ibid., p. 85).

Aquinas reasons similarly that political order fits into the teleological process of the world and needs, therefore, to be in accordance with the end of that process (Sigmund 1993, pp. 217–219); political rule must take into consideration the divine end for which the world exists in the very act of ruling:

> the king's duty is … to secure the good life for the community in such a way as to

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[59] On organicism in medieval political thought, and the medieval notion of the body politic, see Archambault (1967), Black (1988b), Chroust (1947), Gierke (1900, pp. 22–30), Hale (1971), Harvey (2007, pp. 11–22), Hochner (2012), Kantorowicz (1957), Le Goff (1989), Lewis (1938), Merchant (1989, pp. 69–126), Nederman (2004, 2005), Rollo-Koster (2010), and Shogimen (2007, 2008), and also Tillyard (1959, pp. 88–91, 94–99).

ensure that it is led to the blessedness of heaven. (Aquinas [1267] 2002, p. 43)[60]

In general, the purpose of political order is associated in medieval discourse with well-being and the common good (Kempshall 1999; Brett 2003); the purpose of order is the well-being of the political body as a whole *and* the common good of its parts, the members, that is, of the community; in Aristotelean terms, political order is 'formed not for the sake of life only but rather for the good life' (Aristotle 1944, p. 213). As Ptolemy of Lucca notes, 'to live politically makes life perfect and happy' ([ca. 1300] 1997, p. 273);[61] the good life of the individual is made possible and realised by humans living politically. Or, in line with the understanding of political order as a living body, its purpose can be expressed in organicist terms, as, for instance, Cusanus does when he argues that 'the emperor's concern should be to keep the body well so that the life-giving spirit can dwell in it properly because it is well-proportioned' (Nicholas of Cusa [1434] 1991, p. 320).

Regarding the purpose of order, Aquinas writes that 'individuals . . . are united with respect to their common good' ([1267] 2002, p. 7)—which is, indeed, a good common to all humankind (Aquinas [1271–1272] 1993, p. 10)—that it is 'suitable' for the ruling of 'a community of free men . . . to secure the common good' ([1267] 2002, p. 8), and that 'blessedness is the final perfection and complete good of man' (ibid., p. 26). He specifies, moreover, that 'a society of many men will be perfect to the extent that it is self-sufficient in the necessaries of life' (ibid., p. 9),

when it can provide, that is, that which is required for living a good life, and that, ultimately, the end of political order is nothing else but peace:

> the good and wellbeing of a community united in fellowship lies in the preservation of its unity. This is called peace. (ibid., p. 10)

Importantly, the end of political order is achieved through rule; order is directed and governed by someone towards its goal. Political order is fundamentally about *ruling*, and the reason why has to do with how humans have been created. Because they are made in the image of their creator, humans mirror God's possession of a free will and they have been bestowed by God with the freedom of choice.[62] As Aquinas puts it:

> The rational creature is subject to divine providence in such a way that he is not only governed thereby, but is also able to know the rational plan of providence in some way. Hence, it is appropriate for him to exercise providence and government over other things. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1956, p. 121)

> The rational creature . . . is so subjected to divine providence that he even participates in a certain likeness of divine providence, in so far as he is able to govern himself in his own acts, and also others. (ibid., p. 123)

Therefore, since humans have the ability to act in many different ways, the ultimate end of human being is not achieved automatically. Instead, 'man', as Aquinas puts it, 'needs something to guide him towards his end' ([1267] 2002, p. 5). Humans are presented with many different ways of achieving their end and, in order to choose correctly,

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[60] This is a major theme in Aquinas's *De regno*. See e.g. Aquinas ([1267] 2002, pp. 5–8, 10, 24–36, 42–45).

[61] On happiness in medieval thought, see Goodman (2010) and McEvoy (2003).

[62] On the medieval concept of human freedom and free will, see Adamson (2010), Korolec (1982), Pasnau (2003, pp. 221–227), Pink (2012), and Poppi (1988).

they need guidance; the community must be led towards its end.

Political order, then, is fundamentally about ruling, and specifically, the ruling of a political order should always be steered towards the realisation of the very end of order. Therefore, it is possible to pass normative judgements on how rule is practiced; rule is either right or wrong. The ruling of a community is 'right and just', writes Aquinas, 'when it is led to its proper end' (ibid., p. 8), and consequently it is wrong and unjust when it is led elsewhere.

The ruler, supposed to rule with the common good in sight, has 'responsibility for the good of the community as a whole' (ibid., p. 7), and since peace is the ultimate end of political order, Aquinas specifies that rule is right when it is directed towards peace: 'It is for this end ... that the ruler of a community ought especially to strive: to procure the unity of peace' (ibid., p. 10).

It is for this reason that the ruler has the duty 'to secure the good life for the community in such a way as to ensure that it is led to the blessedness of heaven' (ibid., p. 43, see also page 197 above). In more practical terms, this boils down to the ruler having three major tasks: First, the ruler

> must establish the good life in the community subject to him; second, he must preserve it once it is established; third, having preserved it, he must strive to improve it.... [T]he unity of a community, which is called peace, must be brought about by the industry of the ruler. So,

then: to establish the good life for a community requires three things: first, that the community be established in the unity of peace; second, that the community united by the bond of peace be guided to act well – for just as man cannot act well unless we presuppose the unity of his parts, so a multitude of men who are at odds with one another because they lack peace will be prevented from living well; and, third, it requires that, through the industry of the ruler, there be a plentiful supply of those things necessary to living well. (ibid., pp. 43–44)

At a general level, medieval political rule is performed and structured through law, a feature which becomes more entrenched throughout the temporal unfolding of medieval thought, and medieval political discourse is to a considerable extent a juristic discourse; what a ruler can do as a ruler and what the subjects of rule can expect from such subjection is increasingly determined by means of law (Kelley 1991, pp. 66–80; Pennington 1988; Pennington 1993; Canning 1988b; Canning 1996, pp. 161–173). It is through law order becomes order and ends are realised: '"what pleases the prince has the force of law"' (e.g. *Glanvill* [1187–1189?] 1965, p. 2r).[63] Laws are for political order what nerves or sinews are for the human body. As Fortescue writes:

> The law, indeed, by which a group of men is made into a people, resembles the sinews of the physical body, for, just as the body is held together by the sinews, so this body mystical is bound together and preserved as one by the law, which is

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[63] This saying is originally a principle of Roman law and appears in 12th and 13th century political discourse as part of discussions on the relation between will and reason in law-making (Canning 1996, pp. 117–118; see also *Digest* [533] 1985, p. 14). The author of the cited work, *The treatise on the laws and customs of the realm of England*, is unknown but it is commonly attributed to Ranulf de Glanvill and it is usually referred to simply as *Glanvill* (see Hall 1965, pp. xxx–xxxiii; Turner 1990).

[64] This is a quote from Fortescue's *In Praise of the Laws of England*. In an older translation of the same work, what is translated as 'sinews' in the quoted passage reads 'nerves' (Fortescue [1468–1471?] 1942, p. 31). In the Latin original, the noun is *nervi* (ibid., p. 30).

derived from the word 'binding'. (Fortescue [1468–1471?] 1997, p. 21; see also Harvey 2007, pp. 18–19)[64]

Cusanus, when applying 'what has been said about the structure of the body' to the structure of the empire, writes similarly:

> The body is made up of bones, nerves, and flesh. But the nerves that are in an intermediate position and share the nature of both are all connected to the brain … and they go out to link all the joints of the body in different ways with the one body. And these are like the imperial laws which strike a balance between severity and laxity and bring all the members together in harmony. (Nicholas of Cusa [1434] 1991, p. 319; see also Harvey 2007, pp. 18–19)

Since rule should be directed at the common good, so should laws. Laws need to be directed at the common good, and they should be established with the purpose of realising the end of order. 'Law', writes Aquinas, 'is a kind of direction or measure for human activity through which a person is led to do something or held back…, it is binding on how we should act' ([1265–1274] 1966, p. 7). He also writes that law is 'nothing other than a decree of reason in the presiding authority whereby subjects are governed' (ibid., p. 41), a 'dictate of practical reason issued by a sovereign who governs a complete community' (ibid., p. 19). Or, put somewhat differently, it is 'a certain rational plan and rule of operation' ([ca. 1259–1265] 1956, p. 123). Since, as he also maintains, 'direction and measure come to human acts from reason, from which … they start', it follows 'that law is something that belongs to reason' ([1265–1274] 1966, p. 7). Based on this, Aquinas arrives at the conclusion that law should be directed at the common good:

> To be a principle of human acts … is part of the nature of law, since it is for them a rule and measure. As their beginning lies in the reason, so also one phase of its activity is the start of what follows; this first and foremost is where law comes in. Now the deeds we perform, these being the concern of the practical reason, all originate from our last end…. [T]he last end of human living is happiness or well-being. Consequently law is engaged above all with the plan of things for human happiness….
>
> [S]ince the subordination of part to whole is that of incomplete to rounded-off reality, and since a human individual man is part of the full life of the community, it must needs be that law properly speaking deals with this subordination to a common happiness. (ibid., pp. 9–11)

Elsewhere in *Summa Theologiæ*, also, he writes in more general terms regarding the teleological character of law that 'as actively exerted', law 'implies things as entering into a plan for an end' (ibid., p. 21). Thus, not only *should* law be directed at the common good, it *is* proper law only to the extent that it is so directed:

> When we speak of 'a-most-of-all' in any class of things then it is the principle and centre of reference for them all, as fire, for instance, which is the hottest thing of all, is the cause of heat in bodies mixed with other elements, and they are called hot in so far as they share its nature. And since we speak of law most of all in terms of the common good, it follows that any other precept about more practical business will not have the nature of law except in so far as it enters into this plan for the common good. (ibid., p. 11)

Because political order has a definitive

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[65]Blythe (1992) outlines the idea of ideal government and the ambition to determine its form in medieval political thought broadly as upshots of the influence of Aristotle. The ending of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which paves

end it is possible, then, to determine its arrangement in ideal terms; it is possible to delineate the ideal form of political order.[65] In the medieval world, there is such a thing as a best order, and that order is the one which proceeds towards its end. 'We must say', Ockham writes, 'which things are requisite to the best regime, prelacy, rectorship, or form of government' ([ca. 1340–1341] 1995, p. 311):

> It is required for the best regime ... that it should exist for the sake of the common good of the subjects, not for the ruler's own good. For by this the best regime – both general, in respect of all mortals, and particular, in respect of certain persons – differs ... from all other regimes ... not directed to the common good. (ibid., p. 312)

Since political order is part of and mirrors the natural order, its ideal form and the ideal form of rule and how authority is exercised can be derived from the order of nature. This is the road taken, among others, by Aquinas who argues that 'it is necessary for there to be some means' whereby human communities may be ruled if, indeed, 'it is natural for man to live in fellowship with many others' ([1267] 2002, p. 7, see also page 195 above), and because

> in all cases where things are directed towards some end but it is possible to proceed in more than one way, it is necessary for there to be some guiding principle, so that the due end may be properly achieved. (ibid., p. 5)

Thus, political rule does not only come about as a consequence of the freedom of choice and the need for communities to be guided towards their end. Rather, the very being of political communities as unified wholes requires the presence of a ruling principle. The practice of authority, then, is a necessary part of social life and a prerequisite for attaining the common good and for humans to reach their end (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, pp. 129–133); the exercise of power is a necessary element of order.

Sovereignty, as practice as well as a concept, captures much of medieval ideas about rule, the necessity of authority, and the making of laws. Indeed, the actual term sovereignty might not be of frequent use throughout the Middle Ages. Medieval political order is, however, generally conceptualised in such a way that legitimate authority is authorised; that political order receives its ordering principle from some origin; that political order in the created world depends on something beyond its manifestation. As was noted in chapter 2, sovereign power broadly refers to such a 'something' (see page 150 above). Medieval rule contains something more than its actual existence, something that brings it into existence, something that creates it. In this way sovereignty is present as a concept, if not as a term, in medieval political discourse (Sturges 2011a; Maiolo 2007, p. 285).[66]

The medieval concept of sovereignty

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the way for the *Politics*, reads: 'We will consider what institutions are preservative and what destructive of states in general, and of the different forms of constitution in particular, and what are the reasons which cause some states to be well governed and others the contrary. For after studying these questions we shall perhaps be in a better position to discern what is the best constitution absolutely, and what are the best regulations, laws, and customs for any given form of constitution. Let us then begin our discussion' (Aristotle 1934b, p. 643).

[66] On sovereignty in the Middle Ages, see Bartelson (1995, pp. 88–136), Hinsley (1986, pp. 45–125), Jackson (2007, pp. 24–48), Maiolo (2007), Pennington (1993), and Wilks (1963), as well as various contributions in Burns (1988), Burns and Goldie (1991, part I–II), and Sturges (2011b). On the difficulty of applying the term sovereignty to a medieval context, however, see Maiolo (2007, pp. 19–33).

unites ideas about political order being actualised by and sustained through authoritative practices with the exercise of power, particularly by means and in the form of law-making. It refers explicitly first and foremost to supreme authority, as the concept of sovereignty generally tends to do. He is sovereign 'who does not recognize a superior', and much of the political reality of the Middle Ages is coloured by conflicts—primarily fought by emperors, popes, and kings—over *who* is to be considered as having supreme authority.[67] Such power struggles aside, however, and regardless to whom it pertains, sovereignty refers to something more than mere coercion; it is not only about obedience through force but about the legitimacy of rule and the acceptance of authority on behalf of those over whom it is exercised. Indeed, the medieval sovereign 'coordinates the various parts of a political community' (Manion 2011, p. 70), but sovereignty is also about the *right* of such coordination and the entrenchment of the idea that some have the privilege to decide over others. To that extent, sovereignty comes to occupy a fundamental role in political discourse as the very engendering of political order, as the locus of the power grounding political order (ibid., pp. 70–71); sovereignty brings structure to a political community which would be no more than a disorganised group of people without it, and sovereignty

thus emerges as a necessary element of political reality.

However, it is not sovereignty tout court that amounts to the necessary centre of medieval political order. As delineated already, medieval political order is fundamentally purposive. Thus, insofar as sovereignty grounds order, it grounds an order meant for some determinate end. Therefore, sovereignty is also tangled up in the teleology of the world, and it is vested with the task to achieve whatever end the political community is destined for. It is purposive sovereignty, then, that forms political order, that is necessary for political order to become actual.

Regarding the actualisation of political order and how sovereign power should be arranged so that it can achieve its end, Aquinas is explicit about nature being the exemplar of human affairs. He maintains that the structure of authority in human communities should imitate how nature is ruled because 'those things are best which are most natural, for in every case nature operates for the best' (Aquinas [1267] 2002, p. 11), that 'it would seem best to infer the duties of a king from the forms of government which occur in nature' (ibid., p. 36), and that 'the reason for the foundation of a kingdom can be inferred from the example of the creation of the world' (ibid., p. 38).

Similarly, in his discussion of laws as

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[67] The quote 'who does not recognize a superior' refers to the medieval legal phrase *rex qui superiorem non recognoscit* which is primarily used to demarcate kingly vis-à-vis imperial authority (Ullmann 1979, pp. 187–188; Canning 1988b, pp. 464–466; Manion 2011, pp. 72–73).

   In a simplified manner, the medieval conflicts between emperors, popes, and kings can be said to boil down to competing claims of superior authority relying on irreconcilable principles. The emperor of the Holy Roman Empire can claim to be lord of the world, *dominus mundi*, relying on a legal principle going back to the *Digest of Justinian* of the 6th century (*Digest* [533] 1985, p. 421); kings, on the other hand, evoking a connection between territory and authority can assert that 'the king is an emperor in his own land' (Ullmann 1979, in particular pp. 176–178); and lastly, as the 'Vicar of Christ', so to speak, the pope can claim authority based on his privileged relation to the divine creator as the leader of the universal Christian community.

the nerves of the political organism, Cusanus notes that 'the highest power'—the legislator, that is— must make certain that the nerves of the body politic 'are not too loose or too tight since this could harm the whole body' (Nicholas of Cusa [1434] 1991, p. 320). Cusanus, then, legitimises the scope of law based on an understanding of the living body and of the soundness of that body. Thus, put in more general terms, nature is vested here with the power to bring order to human communities, and this—as will be elaborated throughout this section—is a leading and foundational theme in medieval political discourse.

Moving on, it was shown in the previous section that medieval nature is also inherently hierarchical with regards to its structure. Since political order is part of the order of nature, it, therefore, follows that political order is hierarchically structured as well. Aquinas notes, for instance, that 'the final perfection and complete good of anything depends upon something superior to itself' (Aquinas [1267] 2002, p. 26), and, in relation to human communities, this suggests that political order will always depend on something superior to itself; political order is situated in the hierarchical structure of the universe in which the parts are connected through analogy:

> Since it is the function of divine providence to maintain order in things, and since a suitable order is such that there is a proportional descent from the highest things to the lowest, it must be that divine providence reaches the farthest things by some sort of proportion. Now, the proportion is like this: as the highest creatures are under God and are governed by Him, so the lower creatures are

under the higher ones and are ruled by them. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, pp. 260–261, see also pp. 260–264, 274–277, [1265–1274] 1970b, pp. 37–41, [1265–1274] 1975d, pp. 99–103, 125–129, [ca. 1273?] 2009, pp. 96–97)

In this hierarchy, humans and their societies occupy the highest position among corporeal beings and the lowest among spiritual beings (e.g. Aquinas [1265–1274] 1970a, pp. 73–75; Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1134] 1951, p. 28; see also Allers 1944; Lovejoy 1964, pp. 101–102).[68] Moreover, since the individual human being and political order are microcosmic mirrors of the natural world, the internal organisation of political order will also replicate the very same hierarchy of nature:

> By a certain order of Divine providence all bodies in the material universe are ruled by the primary, that is, the celestial, body, and all bodies by rational creatures. Also, in one man the soul rules the body, and . . . among the members of the body there is one ruling part, either the heart or the head, which moves all the others. It is fitting, therefore, that in every multitude there should be some ruling principle. (Aquinas [1267] 2002, pp. 7–8)

Giles of Rome identifies hierarchical structures of order in both church and empire analogical to that of the divine universe. The angels, Giles maintains, who 'mutually rule themselves for the sake of the government of the universe' (Giles of Rome [ca. 1302] 2004, p. 233), are ordered in three hierarchical levels each containing three orders. In the first hierarchy there are the angels 'who are united with God and who stand in the presence of God, knowing His will and how He wishes the universe to be governed'

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[68] For the concept of hierarchy in Aquinas, see Luscombe (1988). For the concept of hierarchy in medieval political thought more generally, see Luscombe (1979), Luscombe (1998), and Marenbon and Luscombe (2003, pp. 60–69).

(Giles of Rome [ca. 1302] 2004, p. 233). The second hierarchy 'concerns itself with the general government of the universe' (ibid., p. 235), while the third consists of 'they who are charged with the custody of the parts of the universe' (ibid., p. 235). This divine hierarchy is replicated in the government of the church:

> The Supreme Pontiff stands as the Vicar of God, and … around him, a kind of threefold hierarchy is provided or can be discerned…. [T]he first consists of his counsellors and of those who stand always near him…. And the second kind of hierarchy is made up of the prelates who are spread throughout the whole world…. And the third hierarchy includes all the lower clergy. (ibid., p. 241)

It is also replicated in the ordering of matters political:

> Having looked into these matters, let us say that, just as we have distinguished some three hierarchies and some nine orders or nine ranks among the clergy and in the ruling power of the Church, so in some fashion can we discover all of these among the laity and in the ruling power of the empire. Thus, in the first place, there would be the emperor, around whom there would be the kings and princes and dukes who would as it were make up the first hierarchy; and so too there would be others, composing the other hierarchies. (ibid., p. 243)

Otherwise, one particularly important way in which hierarchy makes itself present in medieval political discourse is through the notion that law comes in multiple types and that these types relate to each other hierarchically, of which Aquinas's treatment of law in *Summa Theologiæ* is a prominent example (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, [1265–1274] 1969, [1265–1274] 1972, pp. 3–65; see also Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1956, pp. 122–128; Evans 2010, pp. 569–571).

Aquinas distinguishes between four types of law: eternal, divine, natural, and human. Eternal law is the government of the whole universe by God:

> Granted that the world is ruled by divine Providence … it is evident that the whole community of the universe is governed by God's mind. Therefore the ruling idea of things which exists in God as the effective sovereign of them all has the nature of law. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, p. 19)

Eternal law is the dictate of divine reason as that reason is known by divine reason itself, and as it exists in the mind of God anteriorly to the creation of the world (ibid., pp. 51–55):

> As an exemplar of the things he makes by his art pre-exists in an artist's mind, so an exemplar of the ordered actions to be done by those subject to his sway pre-exists in a governor's mind…. [T]he governor's exemplar for the activity of his subjects takes on the nature of law…. Through his wisdom God is the founder of the universe of things, and we have said that in relation to them he is like an artist with regard to the things he makes. We have also said that he is the governor of all acts and motions to be found in each and every creature. And so, as being the principle through which the universe is created, divine wisdom means art, or exemplar, or idea, and likewise it also means law, as moving all things to their due ends. Accordingly the Eternal Law is nothing other than the exemplar of divine wisdom as directing the motions and acts of everything. (ibid., p. 53)

Divine law is the eternal law as the latter is revealed to humans historically, principally through scripture (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, pp. 29–35; see also Aquinas [1265–1274] 1969, [1265–1274] 1972, pp. 3–65). Divine law, then, is explicitly declared by God. Natural law, on the other hand, is a bundle of self-evident precepts, arrived at through

the use if reason, regarding what is to be considered proper human action (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, pp. 55–57, 75–97). Natural law consists of the inclinations that appear naturally in humans as a result of their specific nature, and since goodness belongs to the end of human being, as Aquinas maintains, natural law dictates to do good:

> This is the first command of law, 'that good is to be sought and done, evil to be avoided'; all other commands of natural law are based on this. Accordingly, then, natural-law commands extend to all doing or avoiding of things recognized by the practical reason of itself as being human goods.
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> Now, since being good has the meaning of being an end, while being an evil has the contrary meaning, it follows that reason of its nature apprehends the things towards which man has a natural tendency as good objectives, and therefore to be actively pursued, whereas it apprehends their contraries as bad, and therefore to be shunned. …
>
> [T]here is in man an appetite for the good of his nature as rational, and this is proper to him, for instance, that he should know truths about God and about living in society. Correspondingly whatever this involves is a matter of natural law, for instance that a man should shun ignorance, not offend others with whom he ought to live in civility, and other such related requirements. (ibid., pp. 81–83)

Natural law is universal; its general principles never change and they apply to all humans whoever they might be and whenever they might live (ibid., pp. 87–97). However, circumstances might require corrections to such general principles. Aquinas mentions, for instance, that as a general principle 'goods held in trust are to be restored to their owners' (ibid., p. 89). To return goods left in your care is thus a precept of natural

law. However, in some cases, for instance if the goods were 'to be required in order to attack one's country' (ibid., p. 89), returning such goods would be harmful, and would, therefore, go against the first precept of natural law, to do good. Therefore, natural law needs to be supplemented with law taking into consideration particular circumstances, and this is what Aquinas calls human law.

Human laws, then—the laws made by humans as political beings and by which political order becomes political order—are natural law as this applies to specific cases and adopted to the circumstances characterising those cases (ibid., pp. 99–155): 'natural law comprises universal commands which are everlasting, whereas human positive law comprises particular commands to meet the various situations that arise' (ibid., p. 145). Human law is, in this sense, derivative of natural law:

> From natural law precepts as from common and indemonstrable principles the human reason comes down to making more specific arrangements. Now these particular arrangements human reason arrives at are called 'human laws'. (ibid., p. 27)

Among these four types of law, eternal law ranks above the other three. Human law has already been shown to be derivative of natural law but, ultimately, divine law, natural law, and human law alike derive from eternal law; 'all laws descend' from eternal law (ibid., p. 59):

> In any series of subordinate agents the energy of those that are secondary flows from the energy of the prime mover, since unless it sets them going they do not act. We see the same with any governed system where power issues from an original principle to secondary principles, thus the execution of State policy descends by the sovereign's ordinance

to subordinate administrators, and thus also in architecture the master-plan of the building descends from the architect to the workmen.

Well then, since the Eternal Law is the governing idea in the sovereign of the universe, from that all the governing ideas in lower rulers derive. Such are all laws apart from the Eternal Law. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, p. 59)

This means that God's government is everywhere present in the created world: 'God impresses on the whole of nature the principles of the proper activities of things. Accordingly God is said to command the whole of nature..., every motion and every act in the whole universe is subject to the Eternal Law' (ibid., p. 67). It also means that humans, by means of adhering to natural law and by aligning their own laws to it, participate in eternal law (ibid., pp. 21–25):

There are two ways of being subject to the Eternal Law, one by being a companion by way of knowledge, the other by way of being acted upon and acting from having received from it an inner principle of motion. In this last way..., nonrational creatures submit to the Eternal Law.

Now because there is something proper to rational beings together with what they possess in common with all creatures, they are subject to the Eternal Law on both counts. First..., in some manner they have a notion of the Eternal Law, and secondly, there is also within each of them a natural bent to what is consonant with the Eternal Law. (ibid., p. 69)

Ultimately, this, the participation of human beings in eternal law, suggests that political order, insofar as it becomes actual through law, is an instance of the divine government of the universe.

Origin & Structure

To home in on the issues regarding the origin and structure of medieval political order, let me first return to the notion of ideal society and the possibility to determine the ideal form of political rule.

It is arguably in the light of that notion Thomas More's well-known *Utopia* should be understood—as an attempt, that is, to delineate the best way to order a political community (Skinner 1987). In his work, More describes the political order on the island of Utopia and how the people on the island have arranged their lives together. The Utopian society is carefully and meticulously planned and displays strongly collectivist features. There is, for instance, no private property, resources are provided to the citizens based on need, work is centrally orchestrated, and the demographic profile of the community is administered so as to maintain a stable population size.[69] In fact, all social practice in Utopia serves a purpose for the community as a whole. 'Among the Utopians ... everything has been well-ordered and the commonwealth properly established' (More [1516] 1989, p. 54); every arrangement fulfils a role for the good of the political order *as order*. In other words, in Utopia—and to generalise, in the ideal form of medieval order overall—particular societal arrangements are legitimised by their contribution to the ultimate end of the political structure of which they are part; the particularities of order are what they are because of their place in the larger whole and because of the purpose they serve for that whole.

More's account of Utopia is exemplary of a crucial aspect of the medieval concept of political order, particularly important for

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[69] Utopia is described primarily in the second part of the book, see More ([1516] 1989, pp. 42–111)

questions regarding the origin and structure of political order and whether medieval political order is self-creative and lacks essence. That aspect is the notion that each part of political order has a precise function for the whole of order and that the well-being of the whole depends on the parts doing what they are supposed to do (Gierke 1900, pp. 24–28). This indicates that political order is functionally differentiated, that there is a proper place for everyone in the political community, and that everyone should be doing their part.[70] However, it also means that everyone is dependent on everyone else. So even though political order is fundamentally hierarchical, it is also characterised by reciprocity and interdependence among its parts (Rigby 2013b, par. 6-26; see also Rigby 2012, 2013a). Thus, on the one hand, political order is a reality ordered by rank:

> there are various ranks in a polity, with respect to the execution of offices as well as to the subjection or obedience of the subjects, so that there is a perfect social congregation when all are properly disposed and operate properly in their own states. Just as a building is stable when its parts are well laid down, so also a polity has firmness and perpetuity when all, whether rectors, officials, or subjects, work properly in their own ranks, as the action of their condition requires. Because there is nothing repugnant there, there will be the greatest pleasantness and perpetual firmness of state, which is characteristic of political felicity. (Ptolemy of Lucca [ca. 1300] 1997, p. 273)

When this side of the intricacy at hand is emphasised, it lends support to ideas according to which those who rule do so because of their fitness for that function and that they should strive to properly dispose of the members of the community, assign a proper function to each and every one, and make sure that everyone keeps doing what they are supposed to be doing and that they are doing it well, and are doing well themselves. On the other hand, however, the ruler is also dependent on the other parts. Therefore, and since the function of the ruler is exactly to rule everyone, the ruler should be 'concerned with the burdens of the entire community', as John of Salisbury writes in his *Policraticus* ([1159] 1990, p. 28). The ruler, John continues, should 'seek out and bring about the utility of each and all, and … arrange the optimal condition of the human republic, so that everyone is a member of the others' and, in doing so, the ruler places himself at the 'service' of 'his people' (ibid., p. 28). Moreover, just like Aquinas maintains that the structure of authority in human communities should imitate nature, so does John argue that the ruler should take heed of nature: in rule, 'nature, that best guide to living, is to be followed, since it is nature which has lodged all of the senses in the head as a microcosm, that is, a little world, of man' (ibid., p. 28).

It is very common that the notion that every part of a community has a specific function for the whole of political order is stated, in medieval discourse, with direct reference to the conceptualisation of order as an organism (Struve 1984, p. 303; Nederman 1987, pp. 211–212). Since the body is understood in such a way that each of its parts has a function and contributes to the well-being of the body as a whole, the parts of political

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[70] It is worth mentioning, however, that it does not necessarily equate to social immobility. The organicist concept of political order does indeed allow for ideas about social mobility to germinate in political discourse, as shown by Hochner (2012).

order are, therefore, thought of in the same way based on their analogical relation to the human body and its parts; the functions of the parts of political order correspond to the functions of the different parts of the human body. In John's account of the political body in the *Policraticus*, for instance, the church is said to be the soul of the republic, the prince its head, the senate its heart, provincial judges and governors its ears, eyes, and mouth, officials and soldiers its hands, treasurers and record keepers its stomach and intestines, and the peasants its feet (e.g. John of Salisbury [1159] 1990, pp. 66–68).[71] All of these parts have vital functions for the political body as a whole; they have distinct roles to play and purposes to fulfil for the republic. Therefore, they need all be catered to, just like all parts of the human body need to be cared for. Take feet, for instance:

> Remove from the fittest body the aid of the feet; it does not proceed under its own power, but either crawls shamefully, uselessly and offensively on its hands or else is moved with the assistance of brute animals. (ibid., p. 67)

For this reason, and since they 'erect, sustain and move forward the mass of the whole body' of the republic, the peasants 'are justly owed shelter and support' by the ruler, just like the head, which rules the body, needs to make sure the feet are not injured as they walk the earth (ibid., p. 67). Christine de Pizan, in whose *The Book of the Body Politic* the conceptualisation of political order as an organism plays a leading role (Christine de Pizan [1404–1407] 1994, p. 4), argues similarly that it is 'necessary to the good prince … that he love the public good' (ibid., p. 25) and that he 'ought to care more for the bene-

fit of his people than his own' (ibid., p. 16). Likewise, if the prince must 'love his subjects and his people', the 'office of nobles' must 'guard and defend' them (ibid., p. 91). On the other hand, it is a 'generalized principle' that 'all the estates owe the prince the same love, reverence, and obedience' (ibid., p. 91), and it is crucial for the vitality of the political organism that every part functions as it should:

> Just as the human body is not whole, but defective and deformed when it lacks any of its members, so the body politic cannot be perfect, whole, nor healthy if all the estates … are not well joined and united together. Thus, they can help and aid each other, each exercising the office which it has to, which diverse offices ought to serve only for the conservation of the whole community, just as the members of a human body aid to guide and nourish the whole body. And in so far as one of them fails, the whole feels it and is deprived by it. (ibid., p. 90)

Importantly, exactly what function a part has for political order is derived, according to the medieval conceptualisation of political order as an organism, from the proportional correspondence of political order to the human body. Therefore, political function, according to medieval discourse, is always directly related to the structure of political order. Put differently, the meaning of whatever is considered to be part of political order is established on the basis of an overarching structure. Thus, political action—whatever humans do as political beings and whatever happens in the political world—becomes meaningful against the backdrop of such a structure. This, however, also locates that very structure beyond the reach of polit-

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[71]The organicist elaboration of political order in the *Policraticus* is extensive and is a leading theme throughout the book. On John's organicism see Struve (1984) and Nederman (1987).

ical actions since the structure is what makes those actions possible in the first place. In turn, this means that the structure of political order does not originate from within that order. The structure of order comes from outside of order; it is transcendent in relation to the order it structures. This leads to the conclusion, regarding the origin of political order and whether political order is self-creative, that it does not, indeed, create itself; it does not originate from within. Since political order originates in something else, its constitutive principle does not reside in itself, it lies elsewhere; political order does not ground itself but relies on something else to do its grounding for it. Political order is not conceptualised in such a way that it harbours the notion of that order creating itself, that it brings meaning to itself. In short, the medieval concept of political order does not contain the component of self-creativity.

Conceptually, the transcendent origin of political order is a consequence of the dynamic between macrocosm and microcosm, of how humans are related to nature, and the workings of analogy at the epistemic level of discourse. According to the logic of macrocosm and microcosm, the same principle of order is replicated in each thing which mirrors the larger world of which it is part. Each and every smaller whole in the medieval world, therefore, displays the same principle of order as all other such wholes and, ultimately, as the larger universe they all mirror. The universe, human beings, and political communities all follow the same principle of order (Allers 1944, p. 403; Cassirer 1972, p. 88; Delany 1990a, p. 47); political order merely repeats the order already present in the human individual and in the universe as a whole (Hale 1971, p. 47). This is the view expressed by Alain de Lille in

the quoted section above from *The Plaint of Nature* (see page 196 above); Alain conveys the image of the universe, the city, and man being governed in the same way. A similar line of argument is found in Aquinas:

> Among natural things there is found both a universal and a particular form of government. The universal form is that according to which all things are contained under the government of God, Who governs all things by His providence. The particular form of government is very similar to the Divine government, and it is found within man, who for this reason may be called a lesser world, because within him is found an example of universal government. For just as all corporeal creatures and spiritual powers are contained under the Divine rule, so also the members of the body and the other powers of the soul are ruled by reason; and so the place of reason in man is, in a certain sense, like a relation of God to the world. But because … man is by nature a social animal who lives in community, this similarity with Divine rule is found in man not only inasmuch as the individual man is ruled by reason, but also inasmuch as a community is ruled by the reason of an individual man; for it is this which belongs exceptionally to the duty of the king…. Let the king understand, therefore, that he has received the duty of being to his kingdom what the soul is to the body and what God is to the world. (Aquinas [1267] 2002, pp. 36–37)

Elsewhere, Aquinas argues that rulers rule by virtue of their superior understanding just like the intellectual power governs the individual human being, and, in doing so, he gives another expression to the notion that the same principle of order repeats itself wherever order appears:

> Now, since man possesses intellect, sense, and bodily power, these are interrelated within him by a mutual order, according to the disposition of di-

vine providence, in a likeness to the order which is found in the universe. In fact, corporeal power is subject to sense and intellectual power, as carrying out their command, and the sensitive power is subject to the intellectual and is included under its command.

On the same basis, there is also found an order among men themselves. Indeed, those who excel in understanding naturally gain control, whereas those who have defective understanding, but a strong body, seem to be naturally fitted for service. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, p. 273)

In general terms, since the medieval universe coincides with the natural world, and since humans fully belong to nature, the repetition of the principle of order is conceptualised in such a way that the ordering principle of nature is seen to repeat itself in humans and in political communities, which is indeed also in line with the notion of nature being fundamentally hierarchical.

Medieval political thought is dominated by arguments in favour of rule by one as the proper form of political rule. Such arguments are often supported by references to nature and derived from how nature is governed by a supreme ruler. 'I should always prefer the rule of a good prince', Baldassare Castiglione writes in his *The Book of the Courtier*,

since this kind of dominion is more in accord with Nature and ... more similar to that of God, who governs the universe by Himself alone.... [I]n all human creations, such as armies, armadas, buildings and so forth, the whole is referred to one man who governs as he wishes; similarly, in our bodies all the members perform and carry out their functions according to the decisions taken by the mind. Moreover, it seems fitting that people should be ruled in this way by one head, as are many of the anim-

als, to whom Nature teaches this obedience as a most salutary thing. Notice how deer, like cranes and many other birds, when they migrate always choose a single leader to follow and obey; and the bees, almost as if they could reason, obey their royal leader as respectfully as the most law-abiding people on earth. (Castiglione [1528] 1980, pp. 296–297)

Another example of this argument is found in Dante's *Monarchia*, in which it is argued that

the entire heaven is regulated in all its parts, motions, and movers by a single motion, namely that of the Primum Mobile, and by a single mover, who is God.... Hence it follows ... that the human race is best disposed when it is regulated in its movers and motions by one ruler as if by a single mover, and by one law as if by a single motion. (Dante [1312–1313] 1998a, p. 45)

A third in John of Paris's *On Royal and Papal Power*:

Kingship properly understood can be defined as rule over a community perfectly ordered to the common good by one person. (John of Paris [1302–1303?] 1974, p. 7)

It is necessary for man to live in a community, and in a kind of community self-sufficient for life. A household or village community is not sufficient for this, while that of the state or kingdom is.... [E]very community is scattered when each individual person seeks his own interests, and it is dispersed into different paths unless directed to the common good by some one person whose task it is to be concerned with the common good, just as a man's body decays unless there is some common power in the body directing it to the common good of all its members. (ibid., p. 8)

A fourth in Aquinas's *De regno*. As outlined already, Aquinas concludes that authority is

a necessary part of social life because the teleological character of political order, which it receives by virtue of being part of nature, requires that the community be led. However, nature does not demand authority in general, it requires the unity of authority and the rule of one. Since nature is a unity and, as Aquinas maintains, 'in nature government is always by one' (Aquinas [1267] 2002, p. 11) it follows, insofar as the ordering principle of nature repeats itself in the smaller unified wholes it contains, that 'wherever things are organised into a unity, something is found that rules all the rest' (ibid., p. 7). Hence, since political order is indeed such a unity with its own end, it necessarily contains one single thing 'that rules the rest'. From this line of reasoning, in his reliance on nature for guidance on matters political, Aquinas draws the conclusion that political communities are best ruled by kings (ibid., pp. 10–21).[72]

However, since humans have been bestowed with free wills and the ability to make free choices, political communities need not be ordered as monarchies because nature as a whole is ruled as a monarchy. For instance, kings can certainly take unrighteous advantage of their position, seek their own individual good instead of the common good, and for such reasons oppress their subjects, and, by that, rule unjustly (ibid., pp. 5–8, 11–15). Only if a king rules for the purpose of the common good does he deserve to be called king: 'it is the nature of kingship that

there should be one who rules, and that he should be a shepherd who seeks the common good and not his own gain' (ibid., p. 9). If the ruler rules otherwise, he is but a tyrant.

This rather simple illustration of how a monarchy can go astray is indicative of the possibility that political order can take on different forms. Medieval political order comes in different kinds.

Delineating the different kinds of order, Aquinas basically repeats Aristotle's categorisation of the forms of government as it appears in the *Politics* and in which government is distinguished according to how many rule and for what end they rule (Aristotle 1944, pp. 173–275, in particular pp. 205–219). And beyond Aquinas, this categorisation becomes ubiquitous in European political discourse and is present therein for centuries, surviving even the rupture between medieval and early modern thought, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Government, writes Aquinas, can be exercised either 'by one man alone', 'by a few', or 'by the many', and additionally it can be exercised either rightly or not rightly; rule is either just or unjust ([1267] 2002, pp. 8–9). Government is just when it is directed towards the proper end of the community—the common good—and it is unjust when it is 'directed not towards the common good but towards the private good of the ruler' (ibid., p. 8). This means that there are six possible ways government can be exercised, six possible kinds of political order, six forms

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[72]Aquinas is, however, noticeably ambiguous when it comes to questions regarding the particularities of the ideal form of government, and in *Summa Theologiæ* he definitely seems to argue in favour of blending elements of the different forms of government ([1265–1274] 1969, pp. 267–273). For references to different interpretations of Aquinas's thoughts on these matters and accounts of the topic of mixed government in Aquinas, see Blythe (1986, 1992, pp. 39–59).

[73]The possibility of mixing forms of government evidently lessens the categorical character of this summation of the forms of government. However, it does not invalidate it since a mixed government, in principle, does not signal the presence of a new kind of order but rather the simultaneous presence of any two or all three kinds of order in which

of supreme authority.[73] Just rule by one is called kingship, just rule by the few is called aristocracy, and just rule by the many is called polity. Their counterparts, when rule is unjust, are called tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (Aquinas [1267] 2002, pp. 8–10). Disregarding minor terminological variations, this is the same categorisation Aristotle presents in the *Politics* (Aristotle 1944, pp. 205–207; see also Aquinas [1271–1272] 2007, pp. 207–211).

Importantly, since the kinds of order are distinguished by virtue of how order is ruled—by virtue, that is, of the form of authority from which order proceeds—sovereignty, as a concept that makes such rule meaningful, emerges as the ultimate determinant of what order is. Medieval political order is always an actualisation of purposive sovereignty.

Given that the medieval political world is part of the medieval natural world, these kinds of order, and consequently kinds of sovereign authority, emerge as natural forms; they appear in nature as part of the teleological progression of the universe. Indeed, Aquinas does not typically use explicitly organicist terminology when conceptualising political order,[74] but in line with the general organicist conceptualisation of political order in the Middle Ages these forms can be thought of as forms of the organic body politic; they are the forms the political animal takes as it develops and is directed towards its end. Moreover, key to this way of conceptualising order and its forms is that the kinds of order, and the kinds of authority corresponding to them are *natural* kinds.

Kingship, aristocracy, polity, and their counterparts of unjust rule have a real existence as parts of the natural world, much as if they were living breathing beings. The existence of any political order is, according to medieval thought, as real as that of any other created being, as any other part of the natural world. Consequently, political order and sovereign power—the direction of the political body, in a sense—occur *in and as part of* nature, and they do so in a limited number of ways. Medieval political order can exist only in any one of its natural forms, it cannot become anything else, and its possible meaning is predefined by these forms. Correspondingly, sovereignty is also limited to these natural kinds; medieval political power appears in a finite number of ways.

All of this implies that medieval political order does indeed have an essence and that its essence consists of purposive sovereignty. Since order proceeds from sovereign authority, which is, therefore, a necessary part of order, sovereign authority emerges as essential for order. Furthermore, since authority is always purposive and its existence restricted to a certain number of natural kinds, these kinds determine the structure of political order. Political order, to the extent that it exists at all, *must* be a kingship, an aristocracy, a democracy, and so on. Or, in more general terms, medieval political order has a naturally occurring structure that can appear in a finite number of ways, the ways being determined by how authority is structured in the natural world. Moreover, since political authority exists towards the end of the political community it orders, sovereignty is

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rule is either by one, by the few, or by the many. In relation to such kinds, mixed government does not introduce anything new. Skinner (1988) provides an accessible account of arguments concerning mixed government, covering the whole medieval period but with an emphasis on the Renaissance.

[74] He does, however, liken its structure to the human body in *De regno* ([1267] 2002, pp. 7–8).

essentially purposive and, a fortiori, purposive sovereignty is essential for political order. In sum, medieval political order has an essence, that essence consists of purposive sovereignty, that sovereignty appears in and as part of nature, and it can exist only in a finite number of ways.

Returning to the relation of political order to the larger universe as a microcosmic mirroring of the latter, the general implication of this intricacy is that it turns politics into something that is modelled after something else, something external to it, or at least something that encompasses more than just the ordering of social relations among humans. According to the medieval mode of thought, then, and as has already been touched upon, political order is endowed with a transcendent origin; the structure of political order comes from somewhere else; the source of political order does not belong to political order itself. In this way, medieval political order might indeed amount to something that really exists on its own, but it does not exist on its own by itself. In its very being, political order, as has also been touched upon already, relies on the natural world, it is dependent on nature for the provision of its ordering principle. Thus, political order must always be coupled with nature as the transcendent point of reference which brings meaning to order; without nature, there would be no political order. Nature is a condition of possibility for political order according to medieval thought; the larger natural world is a requirement for the being of political order and for the being of humans in general. Nature is, as Paracelsus writes, the 'place that gives us the whole man and everything pertinent to him'

([1530] 2008b, p. 151). The world of humans is enclosed by a larger natural world from which it draws its animating spirit and ordering principle:

> The outer is a mother of the inner.... [T]he human being is an image in a mirror projected into it by the four elements; and when the elements vanish, so will the human being. For it is only for as long as the external of the mirror remains standing that the inner abides with it.... And just as the [reflection] in the mirror can give no one an account of its being, [and] can tell no one what it is, except in standing there as a [mute] image: this is how the human being is in himself as well: nothing comes from him except that which comes from the external recognition of the one whose figure he is in the mirror. (ibid., p. 115, brackets in original)

Chronologically, medieval political discourse is characterised by a broad trend in which it gradually moves away from taking the divine universal structure itself as its starting point when making sense of the political world to a departure in human beings. Political discourse makes, so to speak, half a revolution in the circle of macrocosm and microcosm as it substitutes macrocosm for microcosm as the point from which political thought proceeds. Doing so, however, means that the smaller world comes to take the shape of something universal; political discourse does not come to centre around the human individual but around humanity as such and belonging to humanity. By that, universal humanity comes to perform the same function and carry the same weight as the divine universe had done before. The consummation of this development is found in the celebratory approach to human cultural capabilities and achieve-

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[75]For brief accounts of Renaissance humanism, see e.g. Copenhaver and Schmitt (1992, pp. 24–37), Kristeller (1988),

ments in Renaissance humanist thought.[75] Moreover, among the works of the Renaissance, Machiavelli's stand out as perhaps the best example of how, from within medieval discourse, politics can be presented as a distinctly human matter.

Machiavelli is well-known for his human-centred account of political order and has been portrayed as a forebear—a founder, even—of modern political analysis by virtue of his realist approach to political affairs, as someone who breaks with the old and ushers in something new (Cassirer 1946, pp. 116–162; Cerella and Gallo 2016; Forde 1992; Held 1987, pp. 43–47; Mansfield 2000; Mindle 1985; Rahe 2000; Skinner 1978a, pp. 128–138; Strauss 1959, p. 40, 1971, pp. 178–179, 1978, p. 12, 1987, pp. 296–297, 316; Waltz 2001, pp. 211–216; Wight 1992, pp. 16–17, 2005, pp. 3–28; see also Lefort 2012; Pocock 2003). Indeed, Machiavelli does emphasise human factors when describing political events and when advising the prince how best to rule. In Machiavelli's world, political order is shaped by human actions, social circumstances and context, and the personal ability of the rulers to respond to whatever situations they might encounter. 'Since Fortune varies and men remain obstinate in their ways', he writes, 'men prosper when the two are in harmony and fail to prosper when they are not in accord' ([1532] 2005, p. 86). Hence, a ruler, he maintains,

> cannot observe all those things for which men are considered good, because in order to maintain the state he must often act against his faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion.

> And so it is necessary that he should have a mind ready to turn itself according to the way the winds of Fortune and the changing circumstances command him. And ... he should not depart from the good if it is possible to do so, but he should know how to enter into evil when forced by necessity. (ibid., p. 61)

Machiavelli also seemingly takes non-human elements believed among the medievals to influence human life and makes them human. Among such practices his treatment of fortune stands out in particular. Whereas the Renaissance understanding of *Fortuna* is predominately one according to which it is a divine cosmic source of human luck and misery, in Machiavelli it rather refers to the constantly appearing circumstantial threats to political order (Machiavelli [1532] 2005, pp. 84–87, [1531] 1996a, pp. 239–241).[76] Thus, in Machiavelli's writings fortune principally works negatively in the formation of political order (Tarlton 1968, pp. 341–347). Speaking of the great historical leaders of the world, he states that

> in examining their deeds and their lives, one can see that they received nothing from Fortune except opportunity, which gave them the material they could mould into whatever form they liked. Without that opportunity the strength of their spirit would have been exhausted, and without that strength, their opportunity would have come in vain. (Machiavelli [1532] 2005, p. 21)

Nevertheless, as it is conceptualised in Machiavelli, fortune is still a cosmic force; it is the cosmological cause of fortuitous events. Accidental events in the sublunary world of

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Nauert (2006, pp. 8–24), Rabil (1988), and various chapters in Hankins (2003) and Kraye (1996), and for humanism and political theory, e.g. Grafton (1991), Hankins (1996, 2000), Mazzocco (2006), and Skinner (1978a, pp. 35–41, 101–112).

[76] On the concept of fortune in Machiavelli, see also Flanagan (1972), Lukes (1980), Pocock (2003, pp. 168–182), Tarlton (1968), and Strauss (1978, pp. 213–221).

humans and politics originate, in his view, in the celestial force of fortune (Parel 1992, p. 63). He writes of 'the power of heaven over human affairs' ([1531] 1996a, p. 197), and maintains that 'men can second fortune but not oppose it, that they can weave its warp but not break it' (ibid., p. 199). In more general terms, Machiavelli largely reproduces the Renaissance conceptualisation of the world according to which it is a divinely ordered unified cosmos where astrological forces influence what happens on Earth (Grazia 1989; Parel 1992; Nederman 1999). He also reproduces a conceptualisation of living organisms according to which their health and behaviour are formed by and reflect the balance of the so-called humours in their bodies—blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile—and crucially he approaches political order as an organism that corresponds to the human being (Garin 1983, pp. 86–87) and which is constituted of such humours determining its development and well-being (Parel 1992, pp. 101–112; see also Skinner 1981, pp. 65–66; Vujadinovic 2014).[77] Thus, for instance, he approaches social groups as humours, and conflicts among such groups, and their results, as humoral clashes and consequences: 'in every republic', he writes in the *Discourses on Livy*, there 'are two diverse humors, that of the people and that of the great, and … all the laws that are made in favor of freedom arise from their disunion' ([1531] 1996a, p. 16). In *The Prince* he states similarly that 'a private citizen' can become prince 'with the favour of his fellow citizens' and that

one reaches this princedom either with the favour of the common people or with that of the nobility, since these two different humours are found in every body politic. They arise from the fact that the people do not wish to be commanded or oppressed by the nobles, while the nobles do desire to command and to oppress the people. (Machiavelli [1532] 2005, pp. 34–35; see also Parel 1992, p. 105)[78]

Moreover, most importantly, Machiavelli maintains that the ability to respond to changing circumstances and succeed in establishing and sustaining political order in the face of change and accidental events are products of *human* nature; such abilities follow from the natural character of those individuals who find themselves in these situations. Machiavelli believes human nature to be fixed: 'nature has created men' (Machiavelli [1531] 1996a, p. 78) in a certain way which makes human action consistent irrespective of changing circumstances; no man can 'deviate from that to which he is by nature inclined' (Machiavelli [1532] 2005, pp. 85–86), and as humans 'we are unable to oppose that to which nature inclines us' (Machiavelli [1531] 1996a, p. 240; see also Pocock 1973, pp. 172–173; Lukes 1980, pp. 35–40; Nederman 1999, pp. 622–623). And in a letter to Giovan Battista Soderini, known as the *Ghiribizzi*, he writes:

I believe that just as Nature has created men with different faces, so she has created them with different intellects and imaginations. As a result, each man behaves according to his own intellect and imagination. And, on the other hand, because times change and the pattern of

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[77] Humoral theory originates in ancient medical discourse and is a recurrent theme in medieval thought. For its influence on political discourse beyond Machiavelli, see Hochner (2012).

[78] On political order as a body, see also the final chapter of *The Prince* where Machiavelli notes, while arguing that Italy's political problems are due to poor leadership, that in Italy 'there is great virtue in the limbs' but 'lack of it in the heads' ([1532] 2005, p. 89).

events differs, one man's hopes may turn out as he prayed they would. The man who matches his way of doing things with the conditions of the times is successful; the man whose actions are at odds with the times and the pattern of events is unsuccessful. Hence, it can well be that two men can achieve the same goal by acting differently: because each one of them matches his actions to what he encounters and because there are as many patterns of events as there are regions and governments. But because times and affairs often change—both in general and in particular—and because men change neither their imaginations nor their ways of doing things accordingly, it turns out that a man has good fortune at one time and bad fortune at another. (Machiavelli [1506] 1996b, p. 135).

Thus, for all its human-centredness, the conceptualisation of political order that surfaces in the works of Machiavelli is one according to which political order emerges as a result of what humans are as natural beings and their interactions with the rest of the natural world. Therefore, nature and how humans as natural creatures fit into the larger natural world is still very much constitutive of political order; political order, as Machiavelli has it, basically receives form in the same way that the human being is formed by its humoral composition.[79]

When the divine structure of the universe itself, on the other hand, serves as the basis for conceptualising political order and for delineating its constitutive principle, the locus of political authority, the very ruling of the political organism, is believed to reside in the heavens, so to speak. From God above, authority descends through the ranks of the universe and in its descent, it enters human communities from the top down (Ullmann 1961, pp. 19–26, 1966, e.g. pp. 6–9, 1975, e.g. pp. 12–13); authority is infused in society from above and is administered to its different ranks from the top. According to this view, God distributes power through an earthly vicegerent downwards in the hierarchy of being, which establishes God as the ultimate source of all power in the universe, political or otherwise, which, in turn, means that wherever there is authority, that authority is linked to a divine origin. This results in ideas that kings are partly divine beings, that they rule by the grace of God, and that their positions in their kingdoms are analogical to Christ's kingship over the universal Christian community and accordingly that their practice of ruling is an imitation of how Christ rules the community of Christians (Kantorowicz 1957, pp. 46–49). Thus, according to this conceptual emphasis on the divine of the universe, sovereign power is a manifestation in the human world of God's sovereignty over the larger world in which it is encapsulated.

It can also furnish a defence of the church and its leader as a legitimate authority in all human affairs. At the most extreme, this line of reasoning paves the way for so-called hierocratic theories of papal power according to which the pope is the supreme authority in all spiritual and temporal matters alike (Banner 2010; McCready 1973; Sisson 2016; Ullmann 1975, pp. 100–129). Accord-

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[79] Parel highlights that Machiavelli categorises rule based on the composition of the humours of the body politic (1992, pp. 107–109). When Machiavelli writes in *The Prince* that there are two humours in any city, arising from the desire of the people not to be commanded or oppressed and the desire of the nobles to command and oppress them, he notes that 'from these two opposed appetites, there arises in cities one of three effects: a principality, liberty, or licence' ([1532] 2005, p. 35).

ing to this view, the pope is, simply put, the rightful, infallible, supreme and absolute ruler of the entire world (Sisson 2016, p. 122).[80] Such is the understanding of the church, the papacy, and their authority expressed in the papal bull known as *Unam Sanctam* issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1302. In *Unam Sanctam*, temporal power is explicitly declared to be subordinate to spiritual power, and both spiritual and temporal power are said to be:

> in the power of the Church…. But the latter is to be used for the Church, the former by her; the former by the priest, the latter by kings and captains but at the will and by the permission of the priest. (Boniface VIII [1302] 1999, p. 126)

According to Boniface VIII, then, temporal power can rightly be corrected by the Church, but temporal rulers have no right to oppose the church:

> If … the earthly power err, it shall be judged by the spiritual power…. But if the supreme power err, it can only be judged by God, not by man…. For this authority, although given to a man and exercised by a man, is not human, but rather divine, given at God's mouth…. Whoever therefore resists this power thus ordained of God, resists the ordinance of God. (ibid., p. 127)

Since all humans belong to the universal Christian community, it follows, therefore, that everyone is subjected to the authority of the Church and its highest office:

> We declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff. (ibid., p. 127)

The notion that authority descends from the divine origin downwards in the ranks of the universe also provides the foundation for less extreme arguments about the relation between temporal and spiritual rule according to which the church indeed has a say in earthly matters but that this principally means that political rulers are restricted somehow by the authority of the church, and most importantly that the very reason why political rulers have authority over their communities in the first place proceeds from God and the divine origin of the created world; kings rule because God willed it so. This is the view set forth by John of Salisbury.

As was shown earlier, John maintains that the prince is the head of the republic and the church its soul. Being the head, the prince 'is regulated solely by the judgement of his own mind' (John of Salisbury [1159] 1990, p. 69); his actions are not dictated by anyone else for he is the one who directs the political unity much like the head directs the rest of the body. Nevertheless, he is still subordinated to the church, for 'just as the soul has rulership of the whole body so those who are called prefects of religion direct the whole body' of the republic (ibid., p. 67). So, in the end, the prince is actually 'subject … to God and those who act in His place on earth' (ibid., p. 67), which means, finally, that the political body is 'animated by the grant of divine reward' (ibid., p. 66). According to John, then, God provides political order with its constitutive principle and by animating it is constantly present within it. However, the possibility of God's provision of the constitutive principle of order hinges, in this account, first on the understanding of the corporeal body as being ruled by its spiritual element—its soul—and second that there is

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[80] On medieval papal government and the theological doctrine of papal infallibility, see also Ullmann (1962, in particular pp. 413–457 for the period under study here) and Tierny (1972) respectively.

a proportional correspondence between the human body and the body politic. It is quite evident that political order has a transcendent origin here, but that origin is not really located in God as such but rather in God being present in the human body insofar as the human soul is a mirror of God; it is because the human body has a soul which is analogically related to the divine that God can order the political world. Or, in more general terms, it is because the medieval natural world includes spiritual elements that God can be said to provide political communities with their ordering principle. Ultimately, this means that the medieval understanding of nature, humans, and how humans are related to nature dictates the medieval understanding of political order. In the theoretical vocabulary presented in the previous chapter, the former concepts are logically prior to the concept of political order. Thus, the way in which authority and sovereign power are made meaningful in medieval discourse and their further consequences for the ordering of social reality depends on a more fundamental understanding of the universe, humans, and what place humans have in the world.

Returning to the chronological revolution away from the universe as such to universal humanity as the starting point for theorising political order, when humanity rather than the universe is taken as the point of departure in political thought, the locus of political authority, instead of being located in the divinity of the king, is located somewhere among humans themselves. This approach, then, amounts in this sense to an explicit attempt to locate the principle of order within the political community itself, among its members, and this would seemingly allow such theorising of order to escape the notion that order has a transcendent origin. However, as I will argue in the paragraphs to follow, the attempt itself is also engendered by the view that the origin of order lies in nature and thus amounts to a continuation of the conceptualisation of order according to which order originates in something beyond itself.

In the turn towards humanity as the basis for political order, the figure of the king is transformed from the embodiment of Christ and Christ as king to the embodiment of the kingdom as a whole and of its ordering authority (Kantorowicz 1957). However, the humanisation of the origin of order paves the way for the question whether the authority of the king and his rule stems from his own humanity or if it is derived from those who are subject to his rule, the people of the community. The organicist conceptualisation of political order straightforwardly lends support to the former view and there are plenty of examples of how it grounds defences of absolute monarchy. At least just as often, however, medieval political thought emphasises the vital role of the people in temporal rule and for the well-being of the political organism as a whole (Archambault 1967).

One of the most well-known advocates of the view that the people is the locus of power and the foundation of the authority that orders the community is Marsilius of Padua. In his *The Defender of the Peace*, the organicist conceptualisation of political order serves as the basis for a defence of government based on and emanating from the consent of the people.

'The city and its parts', Marsilius maintains, 'are analogous to an animal and its parts perfectly formed in accordance with nature', and the creation of the city, he ar-

gues, is likewise 'analogous to nature's action in perfectly forming an animal' ([1324] 2005, pp. 90–91). Moreover, an animal is said to be generated from a single primordial part from which all other parts stem, and that primordial part is the heart. In the city, the position and function of the heart is occupied and carried out by the prince, and just like the heart forms the rest of the body so does the prince institute all other parts of the organisation of the city (ibid., pp. 91–92). Thus, political order, in Marsilius's view, flows from the prince and his ability and authority to create the different institutions needed to govern the city.

In line with the general consequences of analogy as epistemic rule, the animal heart and the heart of the city are, however, not exactly identical here. They are merely similar to each other and they differ in one important aspect: the prince can err, the animal heart cannot. The animal heart, writes Marsilius,

> always naturally performs its appropriate action and never the contrary. Because of this it regulates and measures ... the other parts of the animal in such a way that it is not itself regulated by them in any way and receives no influence from them either.

> However, because the prince, being human, has an intellect and a desire which can take on different forms ... it is possible for him ... to do things contrary to what is laid down by law. For this reason the prince is, in these actions, rendered subject to measurement by something else that has the authority to measure or regulate him. (ibid., p. 124)

The part with 'the authority to measure or regulate' the prince, according to Marsilius, is the legislator, and the legislator is none other than 'the people or the universal body of the citizens' (ibid., p. 66): 'the authority to pass laws belongs solely to the universal body of the citizens' (ibid., p. 68). For Marsilius, then, the ultimate authority over political order does not really lie with the prince but rather with the very body of the political organism (ibid., p. 69). Thus, in the end, Marsilius's prince is subjected to the laws over which the people have final authority. Indeed, medieval thought often locates sovereignty in the figure of the king but, in Marsilius, sovereignty emerges as an attribute of the people rather than the king; the political organism is ruled by the whole of its body rather than by its head. In this respect Marsilius's account of the body politic is exemplary of the possibility, within medieval political discourse, to conceptualise political sovereignty as popular rather than kingly (Maiolo 2007, pp. 177–216).[81]

Another example of the popular grounding of sovereign authority is found in Fortescue's *In Praise of the Laws of England*, in which, as was outlined earlier, the laws binding political order together are like the sinews of the physical body (see page 199 above). Fortescue also maintains that 'the members and bones' of the body politic,

> which signify the solid basis of truth by which the community is sustained, preserve their rights through the law, as the body natural does through the sinews. And just as the head of the physical body is unable to change its sinews, or to deny its members proper strength and due nourishment of blood, so a king who

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[81]On popular sovereignty in the Middle Ages, see also other parts of Maiolo (2007) and e.g. Black (1988a, pp. 577–582), Blythe (1992, pp. 180–202), Canning (1988a, pp. 364–366), Espinosa (2011), Quillet (1988, pp. 558–561), Skinner (1988), and Ullmann (1961, pp. 280–287, 1975, pp. 200–228). For further examples of explicitly organicist approaches to the grounding of the authority of the king among the people, see Archambault (1967).

is head of the body politic is unable to change the laws of that body, or to deprive that same people of their own substance uninvited or against their wills. (Fortescue [1468–1471?] 1997, p. 21)

Evidently, Marsilius and Fortescue explicitly locate the source of political order among the people. This might seem to indicate that they, based on the sovereignty of the people, manage to conceptualise political order as self-creative. This is not really the case, however. For, in both, and in the medieval attempt, in general, to affirm the people based on the organicist conceptualisation of political order as the locus of authority, the origin of political order is nevertheless still transcendent in relation to what it orders. For even when the people are said to be sovereign and to be the foundation of rule, the power with which they are invested is a product of their resemblance to a corporeal animate body. As Fortescue sets up his argument:

> A people that wills to erect itself into a kingdom or any other body politic must always set up one man for the government of all that body.... Just as in this way the physical body grows out of the embryo, regulated by one head, so the kingdom issues from the people, and exists as a body mystical, governed by one man as head. And just as in the body natural, as the Philosopher said, the heart is the first living thing, having in itself the blood which it sends forth to all the members, whereby they are quickened and live, so in the body politic the intention of the people is the first living thing, having in it the blood, namely, political provision for the interest of the people, which it transmits to the head and all the members of the body, by which the body is nourished and quickened. (ibid., pp. 20–21)[82]

Hence, it is because they replicate something else the people can be said to be the source of political authority; it is *as an animate body* the people orders politics. This argument too, then, presupposes that politics is modelled after natural bodies and continues in this respect to rely on something outside the political world for the provision of the principle constituting political order. Medieval popular sovereignty presupposes the primacy of the analogy between political order and the natural body and, in doing so, its meaning depends on the conceptualisation of the natural world and how humans belong to it. Once again, nature—or, in this case, the natural living body—provides political order with its constitutive principle; since the political world still belongs to the natural world and still replicates nature's order, the natural world still provides political order with a transcendent origin.

Political order, hence, as it is conceptualised in the medieval mode of thought, has a structure derived from, and provided to it, by nature. It is within the context of the natural world and the belonging of humans to that world, that medieval politics becomes meaningful. This structure proceeds from authority in the form of sovereignty and it exists as particular manifestations of purposive sovereign power. Moreover, the structure order receives from nature determines what happens in the world of politics and what is possible to do within and as part of a political community. Indeed, the organicist conceptualisation of order allows authority to be configured in different ways in the form of different natural kinds of political order but there is a conclusion that re-

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[82] Fortescue's mentioning of 'the Philosopher' and his saying that the heart is the first living thing in the natural body is a reference to Aristotle and his *Parts of Animals* (1961, p. 239).

mains intact in all such variations, namely that the structure of political order determines the functions of political order. In medieval political discourse, the functions of the different parts of political order are determined on the basis of a fundamental understanding of nature in general and the living body in particular. For instance, if emphasis is placed on the body being animated by the soul, then the importance of the church—the soul of the body politic—in temporal matters will be emphasised as well; if the body is thought to be governed by the head, the power of the king will be emphasised; and if it is argued that the head is nothing without its body, the importance of the members of the political community in general will be highlighted.

This formation and dispersal of the elements of political discourse is actually a duplicate of how structure and function are related in the medieval concept of nature. As was delineated earlier, function is resolved into structure in the medieval concept of nature, meaning that everything happening in nature and whatever nature does is directly related to the structure of nature. The exact same situation appears in political discourse in the conceptualisation of political order: nothing happens in the political world that is not directly assignable to the structure of that world and to the natural world to which it belongs. This is not to say that some particular acts are absolutely prohibited or impossible to perform in the political world. Instead, what it means is that any such act is attributable to a fundamental structure; it is always possible to refer political actions, normative claims, rules, and regulations, back to the structure of the order

within which they occur; they become possible on the grounds of political order's essential being. Therefore, all functions within political order are directly resolved into the structure of politics; it does not make sense, in medieval discourse, to speak of function as something separate from structure. Function is what it is on behalf of structure, whatever happens happens because of the structure of political order, because of the essence of order.

Medieval politics becomes possible only as a result of the transcendent structure it receives by virtue of being analogically connected to the natural world tout court. Thus, humans become political only insofar as the structure of political order is already in place. Two important things follow from the presupposition by political life of political structure. First, the transcendent structure of politics, and by that the configuration of political authority, makes it possible for humans to act politically and to pursue ends pertaining to their very human being. Since the end of human being is situated within the larger teleological process of the natural world, nature, therefore, becomes a founding and legitimising principle for political action in medieval political discourse.[83] Second, despite enabling political action and the attaining of ends, the structure also limits what is possible to do. The structure itself is untouchable by the hands of the political body; the structure of political order is beyond human grasp and cannot be altered by humans as political beings; the natural forms government comes in are exactly that, *natural*, they are human only because humans are part of nature. Thus, humans participate in political reality, but

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[83] On nature as ethical and moral authority, see Daston and Vidal (2004) and Koterski (2009, pp. 154–158).

they do not constitute the source of the order of that reality; human political action is not itself constitutive of political order; humans are, in a way, but the effects of political authority, not its origin. In fact, this is a general characteristic of the created world, not merely for humans. As Aquinas states:

> whatever type of creature carries out the order of divine providence, it is able to do so because it participates in something of the power of the first providential being… it participates somewhat in the power of the principal agent. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, p. 261)

From this, it follows that the structure of political order does not change as a result of political action since it is rather the requirement of such action. Again, the structure of political order comes out as essential for the political being of humans; political order has an essence without which political reality would never become actual. To the extent the structure of political order changes, it does so because of the constitution of the natural world, and because it is part of the natural world.

By that, I reach a partial conclusion regarding the medieval concept of political order and its components. This far, the analysis has shown, first, that medieval political order has a transcendent origin; the constitutive principle of political order comes from something that lies beyond the political realm; the meaning of political order comes from something else. That something is nature, the macrocosm; macrocosmic nature provides to political order its constitutive principle, it transcendently brings order to the political world. Figuratively speaking, nature gives birth to the political organism. Political order, then, is grounded in nature and by nature. Thus, it does not

create itself. Indeed, medieval political order has an origin; it is conceptualised in such a way that it contains the concept of origin as a component, but its origin is such that it does not render political order self-creative. To put it bluntly, medieval politics is created by medieval nature, not by itself.

Moreover, political reality is ordered by means of authority; political order becomes real by nature through sovereign power and the making of law, which means not only that political order evidently is about authority but also that political authority has to do with nature. Medieval political authority is a result of the way in which medieval nature works and political order being part of nature.

As has also been shown, moreover, medieval political order always exists towards and end and is entangled with the teleological structure of the natural world as a whole. Therefore, the sovereign power that grounds political order is of teleological character as well; political authority exists for the achievement of the end of human being, and for the common good and the well-being of the community, all of which belongs to the end humans have been ordained with by nature and its divine origin, and by virtue of belonging to nature. Thus, nature orders politics not by means of sovereignty tout court but by means of purposive sovereignty. Moreover, since medieval nature is absolute, the constitutive principle it lends to political order is also absolute; purposive sovereignty emerging from and being a part of the natural world provides the absolute origin of political order.

Medieval sovereignty comes in a finite number of natural kinds. These kinds make political life possible; they provide the framework within which political practice be-

comes possible and takes on meaning. Medieval politics is not concerned with bringing meaning to itself, something else does that for it. As part of nature, political order has a meaning beyond political practice. Since humans merely discover the meaning of nature, they also merely discover the meaning of political order insofar as that order is part of the natural world.

As a consequence of order being of a natural kind making political practice possible, all political functions are resolved in an overarching structure which, ultimately, consists of purposive sovereignty. In this way, the structure of political order must be in place before political action becomes possible. Indeed, this is, of course, tied to the notion of a transcendent origin of political order but, importantly, it also means that the structure ordering politics comes out as perennial; purposive sovereignty and the natural kinds it comes in are permanent and necessary elements of political order. The structure of order is essential for political life. Thus, medieval political order has an essence consisting of purposive sovereignty. Finally, this evidently indicates that medieval political order does not lack essence. Hence, the medieval concept of political order contains neither self-creativity nor inessentialism as components.

Agency & Change

Having established that political order is neither self-creative nor lacking essence it is time to move on to the conceptual components of temporal contingency and agentic membership.

The medieval natural world is very much a place governed by necessity. In scholastic thought, nature is believed to be what it is be-

cause of God's intentions; nature is created by God, it is caught up in a process towards an end ordained by God, and everything that happens in it is in some way overseen by God (Jensen 2014, p. 119). Accordingly, the world is under divine providence and as such it is generally speaking ruled by God and divine sovereignty, and it unfolds in agreement with God's will (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, pp. 210–211). Moreover, since the end of all things in nature and the end of nature itself pre-exists creation in the divine mind, whatever happens in nature happens as a result of God's creative powers (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1967a, pp. 87–97).

That nature is ruled by this kind of divine necessity is, however, markedly downplayed in Renaissance thought. On the other hand, in its stead emerges cosmological and astrological necessity as the natural world comes under the influence of the stars (Cassirer 1972, p. 101; Poppi 1988).

Nevertheless, human freedom, that human beings have a free will and the ability to act based on their own free choices, is likewise an idea pretty much unanimously agreed upon in medieval thought. Thus, despite fully belonging to a nature saturated by necessity, humans are simultaneously beings of freedom who should be able to act independently of such necessity. So, where does this intricacy leave medieval order regarding political agency and temporal contingency?

Generally, the relation between natural necessity and human agency is handled by situating freedom and the ability to act in the spiritual component of the natural world (Korolec 1982, pp. 630–631); matter and the corporeal are said to be the way they are by necessity, but spirit is not. Specifically, agency is predominately associated with will and reason (Gilson 1940, pp. 304–310); hu-

mans act on behalf of their reason and by virtue of having a free will. Exactly how, though, reason and will are related and their connection to agency is a matter of debate.

One of those who locate the exact position of agency in the free will, specifically in the ability of the will to make decisions not determined by anything exterior to itself, is Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (Bernard of Clairvaux [ca. 1128] 1920, p. 12). According to him, freedom of the will is marked by the absence of necessity:

> there is a freedom ... proper to the will ... of which we can speak as freedom from necessity, on the ground that what is necessary seemeth to be the contrary of what is free, in the sense that what is done of necessity is not freely done; and the converse. (ibid., p. 15)

Agency, then, is not only about having a free will but also about exercising it in the form of choosing how to act (ibid., p. 10). Only humans have the possibility to make such choices and to act unrestrained by necessity; among God's creatures, only humans have a free will (ibid., p. 10). This makes the human being stand out in the world but in all other aspects of their being, humans are as determined by necessity as all other creatures (ibid., pp. 11–12).

Nevertheless, Bernard still conceives of freedom as part of the natural world. Freedom from necessity, he states, 'is bestowed upon us in the state of nature' (ibid., p. 15); humans have a free will because they have been created with it. According to this view, freedom—and by that, agency, insofar as agency refers to the ability to act by one's own account—is given to humans as part of what they are as natural creatures and it is, moreover, given to them with a purpose, for it is free will that ensures that humans can do good and be righteous and blessed (ibid., p. 10). As such, humans are created with a free will so that they can serve God (ibid., p. 15); humans are meant to use their agentic capacities in a certain way for a certain purpose. Thus, agency is something humans have as part of their nature because it has been given to them by God with the purpose to do good. Medieval freedom, therefore, is not really about choosing between alternatives humans determine on their own. Rather, in exercising one's freedom to act, one is restricted to either follow the divine will or not to follow it (Cadden 2004, p. 207); 'it should not be said that true freedom consists in living as one wishes but rather in living under good laws' (Castiglione [1528] 1980, p. 298). Agency, more than anything else, is about the ability to act in accordance with nature, the divine origin of the world, and the end of human being.

This is a position generally accepted in medieval Christian discourse. In Aquinas, for instance, the naturalness of the will and freedom of choice, and their teleological character, is emphasised strongly:

> nature and the will stand in such an order that the will itself is a nature, because whatever is found in reality is called a nature. There must accordingly be found in the will not only what is proper to the will but also what is proper to nature. It belongs to any created nature, however, to be ordained by God for good, naturally tending to it. Hence even in the will there is a certain natural appetite for the good corresponding to it. And it has, moreover, the tendency to something according to its own determination and not from necessity. This belongs to it inasmuch as it is the will. (Aquinas [1256–1259] 1954, p. 52)

In Aquinas, then, the will is a natural inclination to do good, which means that action

too, as that which follows upon such a will, has a natural inclination towards some end.

In comparison to Bernard, Aquinas puts much more emphasis on reason. According to Bernard, should the will be required to follow reason in its decisions it would effectively be determined by something other than itself and would, therefore, not be free (Bernard of Clairvaux [ca. 1128] 1920, pp. 8–9). However, Aquinas sees the will as an inclination to do good in general, it does not will towards a specific good. This is where reason comes in, for according to Aquinas, exactly what the good is that the will wills is presented to it by reason (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1970a, pp. 227–231). As such, reason has a determining function for the will; the choices humans make derive from reason which also means that action, as that which follows upon such choices are grounded in the work of reason.

That being said, freedom is still viewed as something that is given to humans. Since, as Aquinas maintains, 'everything that is at all real is from God' ([1265–1274] 1967b, p. 7), and since freedom is a quality of human being (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1970a, pp. 237–241), it follows that the human quality of freedom also 'is from God'. Again, this implies that the ability to act is also given to humans; humans act not on behalf of their own powers but on behalf of the powers they have received by their creator.

That freedom is understood as something given to humans by God in medieval Christian discourse might perhaps seem trivial, but its further implications are important. For such a conceptualisation of freedom implies that human freedom is licensed. Even though humans are conceptualised in such a way that they are understood to be free in the sense that they are, in the words of Aquinas, 'endowed with free choice—that is to say, with a free judgement about acting or not acting' ([1256–1259] 1954, p. 139), they are free because someone else has made them that way. The source of freedom, then, is not found in humans as such but in humans as they are created by God and, therefore, in the will of God (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975a, pp. 245–247). Thus, just like the source of political order is located somewhere else than in political order itself, the origin of human agency also lies somewhere else than in humans themselves. It is because God has willed it that humans have a free will and can act in this or that way, and this means that whatever is possible for humans to do, even though their actions are not determined by anyone but themselves, is settled by someone, or something, else. Moreover, since medieval nature assimilates within itself its own divine origin, the source of human action and that which dictates what humans can do is, indeed, nature. Nature, therefore, is the principal of human agency; humans merely perform the actions determined by nature.

Effectively, this invalidates human political agency. This invalidation becomes even more apparent when action is put in relation to the microcosmic understanding of humans.

According to Pico della Mirandola's understanding of humans, which was introduced above (see page 180), humans mirror the universe by having joint possession of all qualities found among the rest of nature, and this makes it possible for humans to become whatever they want based on their own choosing. Humans are responsible for their own lives and what to make of them:

> At man's birth the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every

kind of life. The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him. If he cultivates vegetable seeds, he will become a plant. If the seeds of sensation, he will grow into brute. If rational, he will come out a heavenly animal. If intellectual, he will be an angel, and a son of God. (Pico della Mirandola [1486] 1998b, p. 5)

Pico too, hence, affirms human freedom and the human ability to choose one's own course of action (Pico della Mirandola [1486] 1998b, p. 5; Cassirer 1972, pp. 84–85). This ability to act, however, is a function of the place humans occupy in the natural world; it derives from them being mirrors of the larger universe to which they belong. It is because humans are composed of all other parts in the universe, including its spiritual component, that they can act the way they do. To that extent, belonging to the world, and the specific way in which that belonging is understood, becomes paramount for agency. Again, the source of action is not found in humans as such but in their belonging to the natural world and their place in it. Thus, it follows once again that the source of human action is nature tout court; humans act on behalf and because of nature.

Furthermore, according to the microcosmic conceptualisation of humans and the understanding of action that it engenders, human agency is exercised as a pursuit of qualities already present in nature. Thus, in this respect as well, nature dictates what is possible for humans to do. As Hugh of Saint Victor notes,

it is fitting that nature should provide a plan for those beings which do not know how to care for themselves, but that from nature's example, a better chance for try-

ing things should be provided to man when he comes to devise for himself by his own reasoning those things naturally given to all other animals. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1127] 1961, p. 56)

Indeed, nature can be said to guide rather than dictate human action, according to this view. However, this does not do away with the fact that the course of human action is still limited by what already exists naturally. Humans can, so to speak, become plants, brutes, or divine creatures—if Pico should be held to his words—but they cannot become anything else (Cassirer 1972, pp. 84–87). This means that all possible human actions have a natural precedent, and at the end of the day, nature is dictating rather than merely guiding.

It also means that artifice—the results of creative human acts—simply imitates nature, By doing so, it is no different from what is natural. As John of Salisbury argues in the *Metalogicon:*

nature . . . is the parent of all the arts and grants them reason as their nurse so that they may make progress and reach perfection. Initially she arouses the innate intelligence to take in certain things, and when it has done that it stores them up in what one may call the guardroom and treasury of the memory; reason then with diligent study examines what has been taken in and merits, or has earned, commendation, and in accordance with the nature of each individual thing passes true and unimpaired judgement on it, unless perchance it err in some particular. These three things are sent on ahead by nature to form as it were the foundations and the instruments of all the arts.... [N]ature implanted in the mind a kind of force which either is the primal motion of the soul or arouses the primal motion

[84] The 'three things' John claims in this passage to constitute the foundations of all the arts are natural capacity, memory, and reason, which is better clarified in an older translation of the *Metalogicon*. See John of Salisbury ([1159] 1955,

which the soul employs in the investigation of things. (John of Salisbury [1159] 2013, pp. 146–147)[84]

The view expressed by John in this passage is exemplary of the commonly held view during the Middle Ages that whatever humans do is an imitation of nature (Mittelstrass 1988, pp. 21–22). William of Conches, under whom John studied, has a particularly eloquent way of giving expression to it:

> It must be recognized that every work is the work of the *Creator,* or the work of *nature,* or the work of a human artisan imitating nature. The work of the Creator is the first creation without preexisting material, for example the creation of the elements or of spirits, or it is the things we see happen contrary to the accustomed course of nature, as the virgin birth and the like. The work of nature is to bring forth like things from like through seeds or offshoots, for nature is an energy inherent in things and making like from like. The work of an artisan is a work that man engages in because of a need, as making clothes for protection against cold or a house against bad weather. But in all he does, the artisan imitates nature, for when he makes clothes he fashions them after the natural disposition of the body's members; and when he makes a house he remembers that water that collects on flat surfaces makes wood rot, whereas it flows down off slopes and cleanses them, so he makes his house peaked. (William of Conches quoted in Chenu 1968a, p. 41; see also Guillelmi de Conchis 2006, p. 69)[85]

And quoting Calcidius's claim in his 4th century commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* that

'there are three works—the work of God, the work of nature, and the work of the artificer, who imitates nature',[86] Hugh of Saint Victor argues similarly that 'the work of God is to create that which was not', and 'the work of nature is to bring forth into actuality that which lay hidden', whereas humans have to make do with whatever nature provides: 'the work of the artificer is to put together things disjoined or to disjoin those put together…. For the earth cannot create the heaven, nor can man … bring forth the green herb' (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1127] 1961, p. 55).

What humans make, then, are, at best, merely replicas of what already exist as other parts of nature. Ultimately, their actions are creative only because they are part of a natural world which, by virtue of its spiritual element, is inherently active and creative in itself (see page 191 above, and also Mittelstrass (1988, p. 21) and Chenu (1968a, p. 40)): 'From nature proceeds the art', writes Paracelsus regarding the practice of medicine, 'not from the physician' ([1530] 2008b, p. 111), and 'the art of composing recipes is in nature and nature does this itself' (ibid., p. 147). Thus, the distinction between what is artificial and what is natural is effectively blurred in medieval discourse, in the sense that nature has artificial powers and whatever has artificial powers is natural. As Cusanus argues:

> Art is a likeness of nature…. [T]here is not to be believed to be positable anything that is only nature or only art; for

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   p. 34).

[85] I have not been able to assign an original year of publication or the like for William's *Glosae super Platonem*, and such a year is to my knowledge not known. William was born probably around 1090 and died probably around 1155. Ronca (1997, pp. xv, xviii, xix) includes the *Glosae super Platonem* in William's mature works.

[86] 'This is how the quote appears in the English translation of Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon* ([ca. 1127] 1961, p. 55). In a recent translation of Calcidius's commentary it reads 'everything that exists is a work of god, nature, or man acting as an artisan in imitation of nature' (Calcidius 2016, p. 155). The date of Calcidius's commentary is unknown.

everything, in its own way, partakes of them both. For it is easy to conceive that intelligence, insofar as it emanates from Divine Reason, partakes of an art; but insofar as intelligence brings forth from itself an art, we see intelligence to be a nature. For art is a certain imitation of nature. It is evident that some perceptible things are natural, whereas others are products of an art. But it is not possible that perceptible things that are natural be devoid of art; likewise, perceptible things that are products of an art cannot lack a nature. (Nicholas of Cusa [1441–1442] 2000, p. 230)

Thus, artifice is not uniquely human. Indeed, humans are creative but only by means of exercising the creative power they have as natural beings and which they encompass by virtue of mirroring their creator; 'only God can create', writes Aquinas, 'because it is only the first maker who can do anything without anything else presupposed, while the secondary maker always presupposes a subject of his making, received from the first doer' ([1265–1274] 1964b, p. 11; see also [ca. 1273?] 2009, pp. 53–55). Similarly, Cusanus declares

without hesitation that all human crafts are images, as it were, of the infinite and divine craft.… [E]very finite being is derived from the infinite principle.… Therefore every finite art comes from the infinite art. In this way the infinite art must be the paradigm of all the arts, their beginning, middle and end, their rule, measure, truth, exactness and perfection. (Nicholas de Cusa [1450] 1979, p. 45)

Creativity comes not from being human but from being natural. There is, in this regard, nothing unique about being human; in terms of creativity, nothing is found in humans that is not found in nature otherwise.

Based on such an understanding it makes perfect sense, for instance, to argue that proficiency in medicine is something that fully originates in nature, as does Paracelsus:

There is nothing in me except the will to discover the best that medicine can do, the best there is in nature, the best that the nature of the earth truly intends for the sick. Thus I say, nothing comes from me; everything comes from nature of which I too am part. (Paracelsus [1529] 1951, p. 79)[87]

Because human creativity is restricted in this way by what already exists in nature elsewhere, as a matter of general principle nothing new can ever come out of human action (Gilson 1940, p. 90); human actions never generate novelty according to this mode of thought, and nothing changes in the world, therefore, as a result of human practices. Indeed, humans can act and make free choices but, in the end, they do not bring about change; the world stays the same irrespective of what humans do.

In fact, despite medieval nature being inherently creative, its creative power is also similarly limited in terms of novelty and change. Generally, this is a consequence of identity being prior to difference, the epistemic rule of analogy, and the universe being ordered analogically. The medieval universe is, simply put, very resistant to change because what happens in it always mirrors what already exists, implying that nothing new is ever created; when all things share a fundamental identity, every change will participate in that sharing and reproduce the identity of what is.

In more specific terms, this has to do with how cause and effect are related to

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[87] The cited source is a text put together from paragraphs and passages from Paracelsus's works. The original date of publication refers to when Paracelsus wrote the passage in question.

each other in medieval discourse. Predominately, this is by analogy, of which historical examples are plenty.[88] For instance, William of Conches states succinctly in his *Dragmaticon* that 'nature is a certain force implanted in things, producing similar from similar' ([ca. 1144–1149] 1997, p. 18).

Alain de Lille's personified nature in *The Plaint of Nature* says very much the same thing, less succinctly, indeed, but certainly more eloquently:

> When God willed to summon forth from the ideal marriage bed of his inner preconception the structure of the cosmic palace, and to represent in actual existence, as a material idea, the mental idea of the creation of the universe which he had conceived eternally—like an elegant cosmic architect, like a goldsmith creating a work of gold, like the highly gifted artist of an astonishing piece of art, like the skilled producer of an admirable work—he fashioned the wondrous beauty of his universal kingdom not with the assistance of any exterior instrument, nor by making use of preexisting matter, not driven by any shameful sense of need, but wholly at the command of his own will and judgement. Then God distributed throughout the cosmic palace the various orders of creatures, whom, though set at odds by the incompatibility of their differing kinds, he reduced to an acceptance of regular order, imposing laws and binding ordinances. And thus he converted from hostile conflict to peaceful friendship things conflicting by the opposition of their natures, whose very placement had set them in opposed positions, uniting them by a mutual kiss in a coexistence acceptable to both. Thus as all things were brought into concord by the subtle cords of an invisible bond, plurality returned to unity, diversity to identity, dissonance to consonance, dis-
> cord to concord, in peaceful union.
>
> But after the universal creator had clothed all things in the outward forms proper to their natures, and joined all things to one another by performing the marriage of their congruent properties, he willed that by means of a reciprocally balanced cycle of birth and death stability be granted to mortal existence through instability, life without end through an ending of life, the eternal through the temporal; and that the serial life of creatures be ceaselessly maintained through a compensatory series of births. He decreed that like creatures, stamped with the seal of manifest resemblance, should be produced from like through the regular process of generative procreation.
>
> For this purpose he appointed me his agent-goddess, his vice-regent, coiner of the distinctive likenesses of the several kinds of creatures, to stamp out the images of things, each on its own anvil. I was never to allow what was formed to deviate from the form imposed at that forge, but through my diligent efforts the form of the copy would be derived directly from that of its exemplar, and it would be deprived of none of its natural attributes. Thus, obeying the command of the commander in my work, stamping the different coins of creation with likenesses of exemplary reality, modeling the likeness of the model, assimilating similar to similar, I rendered the aspects of individual creatures according to their exemplars. (Alan of Lille [ca. 1160–1170] 2013b, pp. 107–111)

These works by William of Conches and Alain de Lille are from the 12th century. Examples from the following century of cause and effect being related by analogy include the works of Aquinas who writes in *Summa Theologiæ* that 'a copy bears the likeness of the exemplar' ([1265–1274] 1967b, p. 15), and

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[88] On the medieval understanding of cause and effect in terms of analogy, see also Gilson (1940, pp. 84–107) and Rosemann (1996).

that the created things of the world are like their creator in the sense that they mirror the divine exemplars, 'rather as does the house in bricks and mortar the house in the architect's mind' ([1265–1274] 1967b, p. 19). Elsewhere, he states similarly that

> among things arranged in an order the first must be included in the second, and in the second must be found not only what belongs to it by its own nature but also what belongs to it according to the nature of the first. (Aquinas [1256–1259] 1954, pp. 51–52)[89]

A couple of centuries after Aquinas, Paracelsus makes pretty much the identical claim that

> every beginning is the origin of what follows from it; [and indeed] it [constitutes] the property and nature of what follows. For like does not give rise to unlike. (Paracelsus [1531] 2008a, p. 845, brackets in original)

As does Bruno, in maintaining that

> in every production, there must be present a similarity and a form of the same species. Just as a house or a garment results from a model in the maker's mind in the case of artefacts, likewise, in the productions of nature, a species of things is generated and defined by the exemplar, which is distinctive of the matter which generates the form. For example, we see the same types of food, and the same heavens, water and houses reproduced in substance: a dog into a dog, a human into a human, a cat into a cat. And a dog generates the same species of dog, and a human the same species of human. (Bruno [1588–1590] 1998b, p. 112)

In this conceptualisation of causality, the effect resembles the cause. The effect reproduces what is already present in the cause. Or, put differently, what is in the cause makes itself present again in the effect. It re-presents itself in the effect, it reappears. This reappearance is brought to the fore in Ficino's treatment of love in his *Commentary on Plato's* Symposium and how the power of love, exemplified by Lysias's affection for Phaedrus—two characters known from Plato's dialogues—causes the beloved to re-represent itself in the lover as an image and thereby the lover to resemble the beloved:

> let none of you wonder if he has heard that a lover has assumed in his own body some likeness or form of his loved one. Pregnant women often concentrate mentally on wine which they want most avidly. Their thinking moves their inner spirits and shapes in them an image of the thing they are thinking about. Those spirits move the blood likewise, and they imprint on the soft material of the foetus the image of wine.

> [But who is so stupid as not to know that] the lover desires his own beloved more ardently than the pregnant woman her wine. He thinks also more vigorously, and with more determination. What wonder is it then that in the lover's ardent contemplation of the beloved's countenance itself fixed in his own breast, that countenance is impressed upon his own spirit, and by the spirit upon the blood, especially when the soft blood of Phaedrus is already flowing in the veins of Lysias; [then what wonder is it] that the face of Phaedrus should be able most easily to shine in his own blood...? [I]s it any wonder that, if the blood, infected with a certain image, impresses the same image on parts, Lysias should seem at length to have become like Phaedrus in some col-

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[89] See also Gilson (1940, p. 95) who notes that 'few formulæ occur as often in the writings of St. Thomas as the one that expresses' the analogical relation between cause and effect, that 'every cause produces an effect that resembles it : *omne agens agit sibi simile*'. And, for an in-depth study of this understanding of causality in Aquinas, see Rosemann (1996, pp. 221–352).

ors, lines, feelings, or manners? (Ficino [1484] 1944, pp. 226–227, brackets in original)[90]

As a result of the reappearance of the cause in the effect, temporal change amounts to nothing more than reiteration; what is present in the present becomes present again in the process of change. If the effect resembles the cause, then the future will resemble the present which, in turn, resembles the past (Harrison 1998, p. 53). In other words, the world never changes, it constantly re-presents the present and thus remains the same. 'I judge', Machiavelli writes, 'the world always to have been in the same mode' ([1531] 1996a, p. 124). Or, as Bruno notes, 'The universe . . . is one and immobile' ([1584] 1998a, p. 88), and the unity of the universe 'is stable in its oneness and so remains forever' (ibid., p. 90):

> Because it comprises everything, does not take on one being after another, and suffers no change neither by nor in itself, it is, consequently, all that it can be, and in it . . . act does not differ from potency. (ibid., p. 88)

The primacy of identity means that the identity of the world always remains the same, it forever remains identical to itself:

> Every production, of whatever kind, is an alteration, while the substance always remains the same, since there is only one substance, as there is but one divine, immortal being. (ibid., p. 90)

Since the universe circumscribes difference in general within its unified and unifying being, its identity cannot be subject to transformations of any kind. The universe

is not alterable in terms of disposition, since it possesses no outside to which it might be subject and by which it might be affected. Moreover, since it comprehends all contraries in its being in unity and harmony, and since it can have no propensity for another and new being, or even for one manner of being and then for another, it cannot be subject to change according to any quality whatsoever, nor can it admit any contrary or different thing that can alter it, because in it everything is concordant. (ibid., p. 87)

And in another work, Bruno argues similarly that alterations *within* the universe does nothing to the universe *as such*, its fundamental structure:

> Of the eternal corporeal substance (which is . . . rarefiable, condensable, formable, arrangeable, and 'fashionable') the composition is dissolved, the complexion is changed, the figure is modified, the being is altered, the fortune is varied, only the elements remaining what they are in substance, the same principle preserving which was always the one material principle, which is the true substance of things, eternal, ingenerable, and incorruptible. . . .
>
> [O]f the eternal incorporeal substance nothing is changed, is formed or deformed, but there always remains only that thing which cannot be a subject of dissolution. (Bruno [1584] 1964, p. 75)

Paracelsus, although focusing on more tangible matters, argues in a similar fashion:

> What is it that makes dryness wither? What is withering, other than that moisture is driven from one place to another? For example, the sun dries a puddle, but the moisture is not eliminated. Instead, it is subsumed and conducted to another place. What coldness is taken away

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[90] Phaedrus is one of the speakers in Plato's *Symposium* ([ca. 385–370 BCE] 1997b, pp. 463–465). Lysias's relation to Phaedrus is covered in the dialogue known by the name of the latter (Plato [ca. 370 BCE] 1997a). The brackets in the quoted passage mark text sections included only in Ficino's own vernacular version of his commentary, the original being in Latin.

by the heat? All that happens is that it remains, but is outweighed. (Paracelsus [1530] 2008b, p. 155)

He also touches upon the connection between the world necessarily remaining the same and the existence of human beings when writing of the human being as a microcosm. Without nature forever being what it is, humans would not be what they are, according to the logic of macrocosm and microcosm; should nature become otherwise, so would humans, since humans mirror nature. When Paracelsus explains why the human being is called a microcosm, proceeding from the aforementioned principle that 'like does not give rise to unlike', he notes:

Thus it was with the first creation [of] the heavens and the earth: When they were created, it came about not only in form and figures but also in natural forces and properties [of things]. Following the creation of all these things, the human being was fashioned out of them by the hand of God, after [God's own] formation. What does it mean when we say this? Nothing other than that you should understand that the human being is the small world, not in form and physical substance, but rather in all the forces and virtues, like the great world. From the [nature of the] human being there follows the noble name *microcosm*. What the name implies is that all the celestial courses, the terrestrial nature, the aqueous properties, [and the] aerial essences are found within him. (Paracelsus [1531] 2008a, p. 845, brackets in original, see also page 179 above)

In a world such as this, in which change equals reiteration and in which human being in its entirety is part of nature, human history will evidently also be characterised by resemblance and repetition. Social history, the development of social reality over time, becomes in such a world a finite set of occurrences constantly repeating themselves; what will happen is prefigured by what is, and by what has happened. Every historical change is like the changing of the seasons. Indeed, seasons change. Spring comes after winter but wait long enough and winter will return; history repeats itself and whatever the future will hold is bound to the present and the past (Koselleck 2004b, p. 21).

This implies that any political order will forever be identical with itself and repeat its fundamental structure in every change it undergoes. 'The first portrait of an unknown king', writes Cusanus, 'is the model of all the other copies which can be painted from it' (Nicholas de Cusa [1450] 1979, p. 51). Of course, change occurs. After all, rulers die and new ones are crowned, new laws can be made, and a just form of rule can always turn unjust. However, just like winter will return if you wait long enough, so too will the past of any political order eventually repeat itself in the future. This is the view expressed by Machiavelli as he details the cyclical changes of political order in his *Florentine Histories*:

Usually provinces go most of the time, in the changes they make, from order to disorder and then pass again from disorder to order, for worldly things are not allowed by nature to stand still. As soon as they reach their ultimate perfection, having no further to rise, they must descend; and similarly, once they have descended and through their disorders arrived at the ultimate depth, since they cannot descend further, of necessity they must rise. Thus they are always descending from good to bad and rising from bad to good. For virtue gives birth to quiet, quiet to leisure, leisure to disorder, disorder to ruin; and similarly, from ruin, order is born; from order, virtue; and from virtue, glory and good fortune. (Machiavelli [1520–1525] 1988, p. 185, small caps removed)

Similarly, when discussing in the *Discourses on Livy* how republics and kingdoms endure, Machiavelli argues that the ultimate act of political renewal consists in the return to the political body's own origin, to replicate what it was when it first arose (Machiavelli [1531] 1996a, pp. 209–212).

Furthermore, Machiavelli also maintains that, because of the cyclical character of history, it is possible to make a prognosis of what the future has in store for the political community based on what has happened to it in the past:

> Prudent men are accustomed to say, and not by chance or without merit, that whoever wishes to see what has to be considers what has been; for all wordly things in every time have their own counterpart in ancient times. (ibid., p. 302)

The possibility of historical prognoses is also tied to the stability of human being:

> Whoever considers present and ancient things easily knows that in all cities and in all peoples there are the same desires and the same humors, and there always have been. So it is an easy thing for whoever examines past things diligently to foresee future things in every republic.... But because these considerations are neglected or not understood by whoever reads, or, if they are understood, they are not known to whoever governs, it follows that there are always the same scandals in every time. (ibid., pp. 83–84)

Political change in the Middle Ages, then, revolves around a fundamental structure remaining the same regardless of such change. In principle, that structure consists of purposive sovereignty, and what changes, beyond this or that law and other particular elements of order, can, for instance, be the kind of order. A kingship, for instance, can become an aristocracy or an oligarchy, a polity or a democracy, or it can become a tyranny.

Crucially, however, it cannot become anything else, for order comes in a finite number of natural kinds, and furthermore, if it changes it will, if one waits long enough, eventually become a kingship once again.

Thus, political change is of such character that the essence of order remains the same. Moreover, since the structure of order makes political acts as such possible, the permanence of the structure of order is indeed a prerequisite for change. All parts of the body politic must function in ways required for the well-being of the whole body; the organic body sets the limits of what is possible to do politically. To put it a bit bluntly, according to the organicist conceptualisation of political order, the latter is as unalterable as the human body, an argument explicitly put forth by Cusanus in *The Catholic Concordance*. Laws being the nerves of the body politic, Cusanus maintains that the ruler should

> note that as nerves adhere strongly to the bones even when the flesh has decayed, so the legislation and laws of the country ought to be kept uncorrupted and in perpetual force. The country is rightly compared to the bones that have a sweet marrow and long duration. The flesh, however, may be compared to transitory men who often fail in human ways because of weakness, ignorance, or illness. With these the prince should act as a father now sparing, now dispensing, now punishing, as is suitable for the well-being of each one, always keeping the law in force. For if a law is corrupted in any part the whole body is damaged, just as [happens] when a nerve is injured in any part of the body. (Nicholas of Cusa [1434] 1991, p. 320, brackets in original)

Cusanus admits, however, that on some occasions, particular laws might need revision 'so that they do not go against the common law which provides for the public good nor

against the original source of all laws, the natural law of reason' (Nicholas of Cusa [1434] 1991, p. 320). In other words, because humans have the ability to make their own choices and can err in such choices, laws might need correction to better correspond to the common good. Aquinas makes the same argument. There are two causes for the change of human law, he argues. First, human understanding of the common good might improve over time and as that understanding advances in perfection, the law, which is meant to achieve the common good, should be properly revised:

> Those who first attempted to draw up useful regulations for the human community were of themselves unable to take everything into consideration; they set up certain institutions which were lacking in many respects, yet which served for their successors to work on and make alterations, so that they might in fewer respects prove defective for the common benefit. (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1966, p. 145)

Second, the law might need revision if the particular circumstances of order change (ibid., pp. 143–145). However, the fundamental structure of law never changes, for the purpose of law and the end of political order forever remains the same: 'no one ought to deliberate about an end for which he must strive', Aquinas proclaims, 'but only about the means to that end' ([1267] 2002, p. 10). He also states that

> to whomever any power is given by God, the recipient is given the power together with an ordination toward the effect of that power. For in that way all things are arranged for the best, inasmuch as each thing is ordered to all the goods that can naturally come from it. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975c, p. 261)

Political order, then, necessarily follows the development towards its predefined end, which suggests that the structure of that order remains the same whatever humans do.

In general, the medieval conceptualisation of causality, and the understanding of cause and effect as being related through analogy, and what that means for the understanding of historical change, makes the future non-contingent. Since history unfolds in such a way that what becomes resembles what is as well as what has been, the future is bound to the present and the past. The world will always replicate what it will look like tomorrow based on what it looks like today, and what it looks like today replicates what it looked like yesterday. Nothing humans do will change that; the world will not become otherwise because of human action. On this point, there is also a connection to the limitations put on human agency in medieval discourse. The members of medieval political communities do not act by themselves; they act only on behalf of nature, and they are active and creative only because they belong to a nature which is itself active and creative; the source of human action is not itself human. Human action is to that extent part of the non-contingent temporal unfolding of the world towards its end.

Thus, to summarise this last section, the medieval concept of political order contains neither temporal contingency nor agentic membership as conceptual components. However, before moving on to summarise the chapter as a whole, it should be mentioned that even if the future of the medieval world is not contingent, and despite such claims that it is possible for humans to forecast the future of the political orders they belong to, medieval thought in general arrives at the view that the future is not perfectly predictable by humans. This is dir-

ectly tied to its epistemic configuration, and to the conceptualisation, engendered by that configuration, of nature as something active.

As has been shown throughout this chapter, meaning in medieval discourse is established on the basis of analogical relations. The meaning of a thing or of a concept—which are perfectly interchangeable, as has also been shown—is established based on its analogical relations to the whole of which it is part, and to other things which are part of the same whole. Thus, meaning emerges in the intersection of universal and particular referents, in the interactions between the universal whole on the one hand, and on the other local contexts consisting of the parts of that whole, parts which are themselves wholes as they mirror the whole of which they are part. The meaning of a thing, therefore, partially changes as its context changes. If one thing is said to resemble a second thing and then a third thing, the meaning of the first thing changes as the analogical connection is shifted from the second to the third thing. Moreover, the meaning of those second and third things, of course, also varies according to the same logic.

Furthermore, since the parts mirror the whole and since 'what is in the part is also in the whole' (Dante [1312–1313] 1998a, p. 25), when the meanings of the parts change so does the meaning of the whole. Thus, both the particular and the universal referents of meaning change, from which it follows that meaning in general in medieval discourse is not stable. Instead, it multiplies as different analogical relations emerge and are considered. In turn, this means that all knowledge is equally unstable; knowledge is always only partial and temporary.

Medieval knowledge is, to borrow a phrase form Foucault, 'plethoric yet ab-

solutely poverty-stricken' (Foucault 2002b, p. 33; see also Gutting 1989, pp. 142–143). It is plethoric because there are endless analogical relations connecting all things to each other. However, it is also impoverished because 'the whole world must be explored if even the slightest of analogies is to be justified and finally take on the appearance of certainty' (Foucault 2002b, p. 34). The verbal signs humans have at their disposal to make sense of the world might indeed be true but only ever partially (Colish 1968, pp. ix, 344) and provisionally. When everything resembles something else, the only way to fix meaning and, by that, gain certain knowledge is to consider every possible analogical relation between things. As Ashworth notes regarding what he calls 'the emblematic world view', at the core of which is 'the belief that every kind of thing in the cosmos has myriad hidden meanings and that knowledge consists of an attempt to comprehend as many of these as possible' (Ashworth 1990, p. 312):

> To know a peacock…, one must know not only what the peacock looks like but what its name means, in every language; what kind of proverbial associations it has; what it symbolizes to both pagans and Christians; what other animals it has sympathies or affinities with; and any other possible connection it might have with stars, plants, minerals, numbers, coins, or whatever. (ibid., p. 312)

Ultimately, humans are not able to exhaustively enumerate all analogical relations, to account for all associations between things. In principle, there is always the possibility that other, previously hidden, connections might surface. Therefore, human knowledge is necessarily burdened by an ineradicable uncertainty; its validity is both conditioned and restricted by the analogical re-

lations it rests upon, and these relations are always only selective, partial, and transitory.

Limitations in human cognition is indeed a contributing factor to the uncertainty of medieval knowledge. Importantly, however, it is a limiting factor only in relation to the constitution of the world itself. Meaning changes and multiplies as a function of the order of creation. It is because things themselves refer to other things that meaning multiplies and changes (Aquinas [1265–1274] 1964a, pp. 37–41; Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1127] 1961, pp. 121–122) and because of their existence as finite beings, humans cannot fully account for that multiplicity. The world is simply too big and too complex for humans to fully know it:

> Human cognition is subject to change in three ways: through increase, through decrease, through alteration. Through increase, when we learn what we do not know; through decrease, when we forget what we know. Alteration is fourfold: in essence, form, place, and time. Human cognition suffers alteration in essence when we think now of this, and then of that, because we cannot comprehend everything in our consciousness at one time. In form, when we pay attention now to one sort of thing and then to another, because we cannot focus on both at once. In place, when we turn our thoughts now here, now there, because we are not capable of turning our thought everywhere at once. Human cognition alters in time when now we consider things past, now present things, and now future things, because we cannot be aware of all at the same time. Cognition also varies in time when we interrupt what we are thinking, and then resume what we have interrupted, because we are not able to keep at it without interruption. (Hugh of St Victor [ca. 1120?] 2010, pp. 83–84)

Humans can take into consideration only those analogical relations they encounter in space and time; some symbols of the world will always remain hidden from view. On the impossibility to conceive of all spiritual elements of the universe, Dante writes:

> This nature is so far up the scale / Of number, that there was never mortal speech / Or indeed conception which could go as far: /
>
> If you see the revelation set out / By Daniel, you will see that in his thousands / All trace of determinate number is lost. (Dante [ca. 1308–1320] 1998b, p. 481)

And regarding the material parts of the universe, Hugh expresses a similar sentiment:

> As far as we can see, the number of all things is infinite, for it is beyond our comprehension. But where there is no limit, there can be no certitude. . . . [S]ince the worldly things . . . are infinite, the thoughts that we conceive when we remember them cannot be finite. (Hugh of Saint Victor [ca. 1125–1131] 1962, pp. 125–126)

There is, then, an infinite number of possible ways to think about created things, from which it follows that it is impossible for humans to arrive at complete and certain knowledge of the universe. The ability to perfectly know everything in the universe is reserved to God. As Aquinas argues:

> The proper object of intellect is *intelligible being,* which includes all possible differences and species of being, since whatever can be, can be known. Now, since all knowledge is brought about by way of likeness, the intellect cannot know its object wholly unless it has in itself the likeness of all being and of all its differences. But such a likeness of all being, can be nothing other than an infinite nature: a nature not determined to some species or genus of being, but the universal principle of all being and the power productive of all being; and this . . . is the divine nature alone. Indeed, no other

nature can be the universal likeness of all being, since every nature except God is limited to some genus and species of being. It therefore remains that God alone, by His essence, knows all things. (Aquinas [ca. 1259–1265] 1975b, p. 332)

Moreover, not only is it impossible for humans to know all things, it is also impossible to know any single thing with complete certainty. Since everything in the world is connected, certainty of one thing would make it possible to deduce from it certain knowledge of all other things. Thus, Cusanus argues:

God is the exactness of everything whatsoever. So if exact knowledge were possessed about one thing, knowledge of everything would be necessarily possessed. If the exact name of one thing were known, then the names of all things would be known, because exactness does not exist outside God. Therefore, if one were to reach exactness in a single instance, he would attain God, the truth of everything which can be known. (Nicholas de Cusa [1450] 1979, p. 49)

There is, to this extent, always more to things than what is known by humans; the meaning of the world always exceeds what it means for humans; the vocabularies of human languages are limited in ways the language of nature is not:

The infinite form is only one and utterly simple. It is reflected in every single thing which can be subject to form as its perfectly apt paradigm. . . .

No reason can attain this infinite form. It is not grasped by all the words human reason uses but is ineffable. Anything that is named is an image of its proper, fitting, but ineffable model. Therefore there is one ineffable word which is the exact name of everything which is named by human reason. In fact, this name beyond speech is reflected in its own way in every name. It is the infinite 'nameability' of all names, the infinite 'speakab-

ility' of everything expressible in words. So every name is the image of the exact name. (ibid., p. 47)

Hence, even though it can be claimed, as Machiavelli does, that humans can predict the future based on knowledge of the past, knowledge based on analogy can never reach the required level of certainty for such predictions to be more than conjectures. Forecasts will always be accompanied by a series of provisos restricting their validity. Moreover, even though the medieval world tends to stay the same, there is always a slight chance things will change. Indeed, the future will resemble the present but that does not mean it will be *exactly* like the present; there is always a possibility that some analogies have been ignored; that some time there will be some thing that establishes new resemblances between things. Nature is indeed still a creative reality in which novelties can occur, despite its tendency to reproduce what already is.

One concept in medieval discourse that captures such possibility for change is that of miracles—events in which God intervenes directly in the created world (Ward 1987, pp. 3–6). For those for whom miracles are real—and it might need mentioning that the reality of miracles is not unanimously accepted in medieval discourse—miraculous events are distinguished from natural events based on their agent. The agent of a natural event is a creature—a created thing—whereas the agent of a miraculous event is God—the creator. To these two kinds of events there can be added a third, consisting of those events that happen as a result of creatures who have a will. This view is put forth by Anselm of Canterbury:

Careful examination shows that whatever occurs is done either (1) by the will of

God alone or (2) by nature in accordance with the power given to it by God or (3) by the will of a creature (and since things which are done neither by created nature nor by the will of a creature but solely by the will of God are always miracles), there appear to be three orders of events: viz., the miraculous, the natural, and the voluntary. (Anselm of Canterbury [1099] 1976, p. 159)

Miracles change the way things are arranged in the natural world and are, therefore, truly creative events. However, they are, nevertheless, still part of the natural world for, even thought they might seem to go against nature, since nature itself and as a whole is created by God and, therefore, miraculous in its entirety, miraculous events merely add to the miracle of creation (Ward 2011, pp. 149–150). On this intricacy, Anselm writes:

Indeed, the miraculous is not at all subject to the [other orders of events] or to their law but rules freely. Nor does it do violence to them when it is seen to oppose them; for they have nothing except what they have received from it, and it has given them nothing except what is subordinate to it. (Anselm of Canterbury [1099] 1976, p. 159, brackets added)

Miracles, then, are immanent to the natural world because the world originates from them. Thus, miracles are quite similar to the occult forces of natural magic encountered earlier, at least insofar as both are concepts referring to the creativity of a natural world which for the most part tends to stay the same and which never diverges from the path towards its end.

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In the Middle Ages, humans are not political agents, nor will the world be otherwise in the future because of anything they do politically. Thus, political order contains neither agentic membership nor temporal contingency as conceptual components.

Indeed, the human being of medieval discourse has a free will and can make choices on its own, and it can become anything in the world. However, according to medieval thought, humans have been *provided* with a free will by their creator, meaning, ultimately, that the source of human action is found in the natural world humans are part of, specifically in the spiritual element of that world. It is because nature is active and creative that humans are active and creative; it is because of their place in nature that humans can act the way they do. Medieval nature makes human action possible but, in doing so, it also limits what humans can do. Humans can do only what the natural world allows for, and whatever they do, they do by virtue of belonging to an active natural world.

Moreover, the creative power of nature adds up, for the most part, to repetition of what already exists. The medieval world in general never really changes at all since whatever emerges resembles what already is. Indeed, the world might experience alterations but these are, ultimately, cyclical in character; given enough time, changes will always return back to what was before. Thus, despite having a final end towards which it develops, the world never truly becomes other than what it already is; its end is determined by its origin.

Now, if one also considers that medieval political order has a transcendent origin, and is, therefore, not self-creative, and has an essential structure consisting of purposive sovereignty, the general conclusion to be drawn from this section as a whole is that neither of

the four conceptual components of political order presupposed by democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory are present in the medieval concept of political order. Rather, medieval political order is conceptualised in such a way that it is not self-creative, it does not lack an essence, its members do not act on their own behalf, and its future will not be otherwise because of any actions by its members.

This suggests that medieval political discourse does not provide a fertile ground in which such a concept of democracy could germinate. Indeed, democracy is present in the medieval world as a term in political discourse, as is the associated concept of 'polity'. Moreover, ideas associated with democracy, such as the popular grounding of political authority, can appear as meaningful elements in discourse. However, the meaning of democracy in medieval discourse is not, and could not be, the same as its meaning in contemporary green political theory. It is something else. Insofar as it appears in discourse, it appears as a natural kind. It refers to a naturally occurring form order can take on, not to an experience according to which political order and the world in general can be otherwise as a result of what one does politically. Such a conceptualisation of democracy would not be able to appear as something meaningful in medieval discourse because it presupposes a concept of order fundamentally different from how political order is conceptualised therein. It is, in a way, at odds with the medieval mode of thought.

In principle, the impossibility of the meaningful appearance in medieval discourse of democracy as it is conceptualised in green political theory is related to the epistemic configuration of medieval discourse and to the associated conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation. The absence of this conceptualisation of democracy is due to political order being part of the natural world: medieval political order originates in nature, its essence is established based on its place in nature and on nature's teleological character, humans lack political agency because their ability to act is provided to them and restricted by nature, and political order will not be otherwise because of the way in which the natural world it belongs to changes, or rather not changes. Political order, moreover, is part of the natural world because human beings as such fully belong to nature and the human belonging to nature, in turn, is a consequence of the epistemic workings of analogy and the primacy of identity over difference. Succinctly put, self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership—the four conceptual components of political order presupposed by the conceptualisation of democracy as an experience of political order according to which that order and the world in general can change because of political action—are not components of the medieval conceptualisation of political order for the reason that humans and their political orders belong to the natural world.

3.4 Bridge

In my take on environmentalism and green political theory, I emphasised that they seek a relation between humans and nature in which the gap between them is bridged. The bridge, it seems to me, is, moreover, an equally suitable description of the medieval relation between humans and nature.

A bridge crossing a river connects two

banks that become banks by the very crossing of the river by the bridge. The meaning of the banks as banks is one of identity. They share the identical meaning of being banks that are part of the same landscape drawn together by the bridge. The bridge, in this sense, forms a whole in which relations are relations of belonging.

Thus, as a metaphor for human-nature relations, the bridge designates a relation between humans and nature according to which the pair form a unity of identity, the identity being one of belonging to the same whole. This is exactly the relation between humans and nature that has been described in this chapter. Medieval discourse is a mode of thought according to which there is a bridge between the human and the natural, and according to which they are part of the same whole, the same world. Here, humans and nature are fundamentally identical in the sense that they belong to the same world, and they form to this extent a unity of identity.

Medieval discourse proceeds from the logical priority of identity over difference. It is a mode of thought epistemically ruled by analogy, meaning that things and concepts display proportional relations. With the generalisation of analogy that occurs during the 12th century, analogical relations stretch out indefinitely connecting all things and drawing together a single universe without an outside. Indeed, things and concepts can differ from each other but before that they must first share an identity. Hence, things and concepts are not necessarily the same, only similar.

The medieval universe, the medieval world of nature, is both material and spiritual. It is a great synthesis assimilating everything within itself, even its own spir-

itual and divine origin. As parts of this world, humans are its microcosmic mirrors. Humans are like small versions of the larger world to which they belong. What is in nature is in humans and what is in humans is in nature.

According to the medieval mode of thought, words and things are connected analogically and there is no clear-cut distinction between language and of what language is about, from which it follows that the world is inherently meaningful. Medieval nature is a world of signs. It contains signs, symbols, and truths. Here, humans do not create meaning, they discover it, uncover it. They can grasp and mirror the truths of the world but they do not create them. The world is like a book and to know it is to read it.

With analogy stretching out endlessly, the world is also fully interconnected; all things are, ultimately, connected. Analogy also provides a certain order to the world, an order by which nature emerges as something in its own right, as a universe.

Medieval nature is also characterised by an overarching teleological process, by an end towards which it proceeds, enveloping it in a general harmony. Hence, and because of its spiritual content, it is also active and creative. It truly acts, makes things happen.

The order of medieval nature is of hierarchical character. It is hierarchical in the sense that everything in it is subordinated to its end—its final cause—but also in the sense that its spiritual-material composition is levelled.

Ordered, interconnected, meaningful, teleological, active and creative, harmonious, and hierarchical. Such is medieval nature. All in all, this makes it resemble a living creature. This is, I have argued in this chapter,

indeed how nature is generally conceptualised in medieval discourse, as an organism. An important aspect of this conceptualisation is the resolving of function into structure. That function resolves into structure means that all activity in nature, whatever happens, whatever change occurs, is completely and immediately arranged under and determined by nature's structure, or essence. The other way around, nature's essence determines whatever happens.

Humans, for their part, are conceptualised in medieval discourse as unities of body and soul, and, as noted already, as microcosmic replicas of the larger world to which they belong. Everything that pertains to human being, every aspect of human life, is natural. The medieval understanding of humans is in this sense properly naturalist. Indeed, the medieval human is a rather unique creature. Humans alone are both spiritual and material, they alone are made in the image of their creator, and no other creatures contain within themselves the potentiality of all that is actual in nature. Nevertheless, they *are* still part of that nature. Humans share their reality with nature; the two are of the same order. Moreover, since humans belong to nature, whatever it means to be human is determined by how things work in the natural world.

With all aspects of humankind being included in the universal whole of nature, even their words and thoughts—and, it should be added, with nature itself being active and a world of signs—there is no distinction between what is subjective and what is objective in medieval discourse. Indeed, the distinction appears in discourse. Humans and other things can be referred to as subject or object, but nothing is either subject or object only in a world where the world itself is meaningful and active and where thoughts and things share the same reality, where they are of the same order. Subjects and objects intermingle; they are equivalent, isomorphically related. What is subjective is objective and what is objective is subjective. Subject and object are not distinguished as different conceptual elements in medieval discourse.

That all aspects of human being belong to nature means that politics, as something that pertains to human lives, is also part of nature. Political order belongs to nature; it is natural and it occurs naturally. Much like nature in general, it is conceptualised in organicist fashion. A political community, according to medieval thought, is like a living being, an animated body consisting of parts all of which have specific functions for the body as a whole and which are determined in relation to the whole, by their place in the larger structure.

Nature serves as a blueprint for the ordering of human life lived socially. To that extent, political order receives its ordering principle from nature, the latter serving thusly as a transcendent origin of political order. Political order, therefore, is not self-creative, it is created by nature. It originates in nature and in the human belonging to nature. Its constitutive principle resides in the natural world, it is not of human origin. This means that politics is not about creating an order but rather about enacting an order provided to humans from a transcendent natural origin, and political practice amounts to acting within that order.

Medieval political order also comes with a purpose. It is meant to realise an end and that realisation is, in principle, tied to sovereign authority. Sovereignty is the means by which the end of political life is meant to become real. Political order, then, is

always a naturally occurring manifestation of purposive sovereignty, the latter, therefore, providing political order with a perennial structure, an essence. This is the structure nature provides to political order and which determines what is possible to do politically. Hence, not only is that structure out of reach for political practice in that it makes such practice possible, the possibility of any political action is directly related to it. Everything that happens politically, and whatever can be done politically, can be referred back to the structure nature provides to political order. Hence, political function resolves into political structure, meaning that any and all functions are attributable to, made possible by, the structure of politics, the transcendent structure it receives from nature and by belonging to nature.

In general, agency during the Middle Ages is about acting in accordance with how the world works, with nature and its divine origin and with the end of human being. However, humans receive their agentic abilities from their creator, from the way they are created. Whatever is possible to do is, ultimately, determined by God, and nature, given that the natural world assimilates its own divine origin; nature is the principal of human agency in medieval discourse. Effectively, then, human agency, based on humans being members of political community, is cancelled.

Humans are indeed conceptualised as creative beings in medieval discourse. However, their artificial powers come from nature and they are creative only by belonging to a natural world which is itself creative. Moreover, their creative powers are limited to imitate what is already present in the world; nothing new ever emerges from human action. And

generally, whatever happens in nature will mirror what already is and what has been. Temporal change just amounts to reiteration, for effects always resemble their causes, and regardless of what happens the identity of the world remains the same. Here, when political order belongs to such a world, any political order will always remain identical with itself, and forever repeat its own structure in any changes it undergoes. Its history will revolve around its structure, its essence will never change. Alterations might happen but, sooner or later, its past will repeat itself in its future. The future will not be otherwise because of anything humans do as political beings. Hence, political order is not characterised by temporal contingency.

When summarised, these aspects of the conceptualisation of political order in medieval discourse indicate that medieval political order is not self-creative, that it has an essence, that it develops in a temporally non-contingent way, and that it does not consist of members with agency by virtue of being such members. Thus, in comparison to the conceptualisation of political order presupposed by democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory, it contains the direct opposite conceptual components. It was argued in the previous chapter that democracy conceptualised as an experience according to which the world in general can be otherwise as a result of what one does as a member of political order presupposes that political order contains the conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. Since the medieval conceptualisation of political order contains the direct opposites of these components, it can be concluded that it could not contain the four components of self-creativity, ines-

sentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership, and, therefore, that medieval discourse does not provide the discursive setting for such a concept of democracy to emerge as a meaningful part of discourse. Democracy as it is conceptualised in green political theory cannot germinate in the discursive soil of the Middle Ages, there are no conditions for it.

Indeed, democracy, as has been delineated in this chapter, is still present in medieval discourse. As are ideas about popular rule. However, here, democracy does not mean the same thing as it does in green political theory. It is conceptualised as something else. Rather than referring to a certain experience of order, it refers to a naturally occurring kind of order; to a form order can have as part of the natural world and because of how the natural world is constituted. Moreover, the existence of such a natural kind is, in principle, not dependent on humans experiencing it.

It can also be concluded that the medieval conceptualisation of political order hinges on the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation in medieval discourse. Political order in general exists as a consequence of humans belonging to nature, of them being political beings by nature, and of their place in nature as microcosmic mirrors of the whole world. It is because humans belong to nature and are analogically related to it as one of its parts that political order exists in the form that it does and is conceptualised the way it is. Take monarchy, for instance, as a predominately preferred form of order. It is preferred on the basis that nature is ruled by one, and that the human organism is ruled by one. If nature as a whole and the human body would not resemble each other, and if political order itself would not resemble nature as a whole as well as the human body, that line of reasoning would fail. It would not be meaningful. Hence, the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation are fundamental for the conceptualisation of political order. As concepts in discourse, they are logically prior to political order. The meaning of political order depends on the meaning of humans, nature, and their relation. In extension, this suggests that democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory not being able to emerge as a meaningful concept in discourse is conditioned by these very conceptualisations. The belonging of humans to nature and the unity of identity they form in the Middle Ages hinders the germination of such a concept of democracy. The medieval bridge between humans and nature stops the experience of political order according to which that order, oneself, and the world in general can change because of what one does politically from emerging.

Early Modernity:
The Wall between Humans and Nature

> I feel like I don't even belong to any
> world that even fucking matters.
>
> *(McNulty)*

THE MODE OF THOUGHT covered in the previous chapter starts to disappear during the first decades of the 16th century as new rules governing the formation of discourse begin to emerge in Europe. Over the course of roughly a century, the early modern episteme displaces that of the Middle Ages and takes a firm grip on the determination of meaning. By that, discourse is fundamentally rearranged; what thought is thought to be changes, as does the things it thinks about.

The early modern transformation of thought comes to fruition in the 17th century and is typically associated with the emergence of mechanistic philosophical discourse. However, indications of a new way of thinking surface long before figures such as Newton, Descartes, and Hobbes rise to prominence. For instance, even in Charles de Bovelles' conceptualisation of human being—which, as it was presented in the previous chapter, is otherwise exemplary of medieval discourse—there are hints of something new, something at odds with the medieval mode of thought. As was shown in the previous chapter, Bovelles thinks of humans as microcosmic images of the macrocosm and as mirrors reflecting everything in the natural world (see page 183 above). For Bovelles, however, the reflection in the mirror is not of the same order as that which it mirrors; the reflection does not belong to what it reflects. Instead, it stands beside it:

> Of all things Man is nothing. Furthermore, Nature has made and created him outside of all things, so he may see many things and become the expression and natural mirror of all things: disconnected and separated from the order of the universe, positioned remote from and opposite to all things, like the center of everything. For it is the nature of the mirror to be vis-à-vis and opposite to that of which it must bear the image in itself. (Bovelles 2014, 26.1, [1511] 1927, p. 353)

As the narrative in Bovelles' *Liber de Sapiente* progresses, humans become increasingly distanced from the natural world they replicate, and this to such an extent that, ultimately, they no longer seem to belong to that world. Thus, seemingly standing with one foot in medieval discourse and the other in an altogether different mode of thought, Bovelles concludes that humans are 'created in the center of the world' but at the same time

are 'outside of all things' (Bovelles 2014, 26.2, [1511] 1927, p. 353).

Here, Bovelles points towards a separation of humans from nature nonsensical to medieval thought but which, as I will argue in this chapter, becomes a general feature of thought as early modern discourse emerges. Furthermore, I will show that this new conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature—and, it should be added, of what humans and nature are—is a consequence of a transformation of the epistemic configuration of thought distinguishing early modern discourse from its medieval predecessor, and that it has a profound impact on the conceptualisation of political order. In the next two sections, I will delineate the early modern conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation, and after that proceed to the concept of political order, particularly focusing on whether political order contains the four conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. On this last part, the results of the analysis will very much echo those of the previous chapter, for I will argue that early modern political order does not contain these conceptual components and that there is no place for them in early modern discourse as meaningful concepts. Moreover, as is the case with medieval discourse, their absence is related to the conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature. The contents of the chapter are mainly focused on mechanistic philosophy, social contract theory, and natural law.

First, however, the epistemic configuration of early modern thought needs delineation, and for that, it is suitable to start by simply noting that the way in which Bovelles positions humans outside of nature in the passage quoted above presupposes the very possibility of nature having an outside. As per the analysis in the previous chapter, analogy as an epistemic rule draws the world together into a universe which assimilates its own outside. All things are of the same order according to medieval thought and they are, therefore, fundamentally identical in the sense that all differences between them are subsumed under the identity of the universal whole. In the medieval world, differences are played out within a context of identity, and at the most general and abstract level, the epistemic configuration of medieval thought is one in which identity takes priority over difference.

By and large, the epistemic change taking place during the 16th century separating early modern from medieval thought consists of a rearrangement of the balance between identity and difference in the governing of discourse. Having previously been subordinate to identity at the epistemic level, difference is now elevated to the same level of priority as identity. As a result, meaning can no longer be established based on proportional relations but rather on a sorting of identities and differences. According to this historically novel way of thinking, words and things—and as will be argued below, the two are no longer one and the same—are not just similar to other words and things, they can be, and *are*, fundamentally different (Foucault 2002b, pp. 55–60). Analogy is, therefore, no longer sufficient. As Leibniz notes, 'we must accustom ourselves to analogies, namely, given two or more very different things, to find their similarities', but also, 'we must accustom ourselves to making distinctions, namely, given two or more very similar things, to find immediately all their

differences' (Leibniz [1676?] 1951c, p. 81).[1] Things are either identical or different, and so are words. As Leibniz also states, in a consideration of 'the same and the different', 'in a proposition or statement what we are doing is to state that two terms are the same as, or different from, one another' ([1666] 1966a, p. 95).

The elevation of the priority of difference, moreover, allows thought to become profoundly discriminatory (Foucault 2002b, p. 61); it becomes possible to fully separate things, to say that two things are completely different from each other. It also becomes possible to pick individual things apart and identify and differentiate their constitutive components. Hence, the early modern sorting of identities and differences occurs principally at the level of *properties* and, based on that sorting, it proceeds to the arrangement of things as such (Gutting 1989, p. 146). The arrangement of things as such is determined by the arrangement of each thing's properties. Thus Leibniz writes:

> In order to become acquainted with a thing we must consider all of its prerequisites, that is, everything which suffices to distinguish it from any other thing….
>
> After we have found a means of distinguishing it from every other thing, we must apply this same rule to the consideration of each condition or prerequisite entering into this means, and consider all the prerequisites of each prerequisite….
>
> [W]hen we have considered the prerequisites entering into the consideration of the proposed thing, and even the prerequisites of the prerequisites, and finally have come to considering a few natures

understood only by themselves without prerequisites and needing nothing outside themselves to be conceived, then we have arrived at a *perfect knowledge* of the proposed thing. (Leibniz [1676?] 1951c, pp. 78–79)

That the sorting of identities and differences is performed on properties results in meaning being basically a function of the identities and differences of the properties of things and of how these identities and differences relate to other things and their properties.

Discourse functioning according to this kind of logic is fundamentally comparative in character. Indeed, medieval thought also has a comparative character, but its comparative element is significantly restricted since things compare only insofar as they are similar, not different. Early modern thought, however, universalises comparison as all thought is structured as a sorting of identities and differences (Foucault 2002b, pp. 58–59; see also Lachterman 1989, p. 177). Thus, according to John Locke, for whom '*the Mind*, in all its Thoughts and Reasonings, hath no other immediate Object but its own *Ideas*' (Locke [1690] 1975, p. 525), the most basic operations of the human mind is the perception of the '*Identity*, or *Diversity*' (ibid., p. 525) and the '*Relation between*' (ibid., p. 526) the ideas it contains. Concerning the identity and diversity of ideas, Locke writes:

> 'Tis the first Act of the Mind, when it has any Sentiments or *Ideas* at all, to perceive its *Ideas*, and so far as it perceives them, to know each what it is, and thereby also to perceive their difference, and that one

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[1]In the cited edition of this text, translated as *On Wisdom,* it is dated to circa 1693. This is probably incorrect, however, and the date possibly refers to another text by Leibniz, also translated as *On Wisdom* ([1693–1700] 1969j) and written at that time (ibid., translator's footnote on p. 431). It is dated to 1676 in Leibniz ([1676] 1980), which I find to be a more reliable source.

is not another. This is so absolutely necessary, that without it there could be no Knowledge, no Reasoning, no Imagination, no distinct Thoughts at all. By this the Mind clearly and infallibly perceives each *Idea* to agree with it self, and to be what it is; and all distinct *Ideas* to disagree, *i.e.* the one not to be the other: And this it does without any pains, labour, or deduction. (Locke [1690] 1975, pp. 525–526)

And continuing on the relation between ideas, he writes that

since all distinct *Ideas* must eternally be known not to be the same, and to be universally and constantly denied one of another, there could be no room for any positive knowledge at all, if we could not perceive any Relation between our *Ideas*, and find out the Agreement or Disagreement, they have one with another, in several ways the Mind takes of comparing them. (ibid., p. 526)

In these passages, Locke not only spells out the general comparative logic of thought but also establishes that knowledge, as a special kind of thought, follows the same comparative logic. The same understanding of knowledge—truthful knowledge, that is— is expressed by Descartes in the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*: 'in all reasoning it is only by means of comparison that we attain an exact knowledge of the truth' (Descartes [1628] 1985d, p. 57). Furthermore, since the comparative logic of thought principally operates on the level of properties and, therefore, by disaggregating things into their properties, thought is also fundamentally analytical in character; things are broken down and picked apart by thought into their most basic components, their indivisible elements. Once again on truth and how to reach it, Descartes writes:

If we perfectly understand a problem we must abstract it from every superflu-

ous conception, reduce it to its simplest terms, and by means of an enumeration, divide it up into the smallest possible parts. (ibid., p. 51, italics removed)

Similarly, Joseph Glanvill emphasises the vital role of analysis for the knowledge of nature:

As we cannot understand the *frame* of a *Watch,* without taking it into pieces; so neither can Nature be well *known,* without a *resolution* of it into its *beginnings*. (Glanvill [1668] 1958, p. 11)

Descartes suggestion, in the opening of his *The Geometry*, for how problems in geometry can be tackled by decomposing them into mathematics is exemplary of how the analytical character of early modern thought works:

Any problem in geometry can easily be reduced to such terms that a knowledge of the lengths of certain straight lines is sufficient for its construction. (Descartes [1637] 1954, p. 2, small caps removed)

Implicit in Descartes' way of reasoning on this matter is an understanding of geometrical concepts as being composed of mathematical concepts and their meaning being determined by these mathematical concepts. Therefore, the discourse of geometry actually derives its meaning from the mathematical discourse of which it is composed. In fact, as shall be seen on numerous occasions throughout this chapter, in early modern thought mathematics has the position *in general* of being a fundamental discourse, comprising a basic level at which meaning is elementary, self-evident, and from which other discourses can be composed.

The analytical logic of meaning Descartes exposes when reasoning on geometry and mathematics in particular is described in general terms by Hobbes as part of a discussion on definitions in the work commonly

referred to as *De Corpore*. Regarding definitions and their use 'for the raising of an *idea* of some thing in the mind' (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 83), Hobbes writes that

> whensoever that thing has a name, the definition of it can be nothing but the explication of that name by speech; and if that name be given it for some compounded conception, the definition is nothing but a resolution of that name into its most universal parts. As when we define man, saying *man is a body animated, sentient, rational,* those names, *body animated, &c.* are parts of that whole name *man;* so that definitions of this kind always consist of *genus* and *difference;* the former names being all, till the last, *general*; and the last of all, *difference.* (ibid., p. 83)

Regarding discourse and conceptual meaning, this way of reasoning marks a significant difference compared to medieval thought. Whereas, in medieval discourse, things are gathered and assimilated, and drawn together into a unity, in early modern discourse they are divided and separated, lines are drawn between them (Foucault 2002b, p. 61; Gutting 1989, p. 147). The basic operation of medieval discourse is to synthesise, and for early modern discourse it is to analyse. Partition substitutes amalgamation as a basic operation in the determination of meaning in the shift between medieval and early modern thought.

Medieval thought keeps bringing things together until there is nothing left outside the universal structure it ties together and early modern discourse breaks them up until it reaches a level of such profundity that it is indivisible. At this level, things are by definition simple since anything that is complex can be further divided. This is the level of what is self-evident, what is indubitable and readily intuitable. Once thought has

reached this fundamental level it can proceed to synthesise, or deduce, from it that which is next to simple, and from that proceed to the next level of complexity, and so on. Thus, thought proceeds by arranging all components of concepts, and all properties of things, and thereafter all concepts and things themselves in such a way that everything forms an unbroken sequence ranging from the entirely simple to the most complex (Foucault 2002b, pp. 59–60; see also Bartelson 1995, pp. 143–144). It is based on this mode of thought and understanding of how thought operates, Descartes argues that the proper method for gaining knowledge generally involves not only splitting things apart but also reassembling them once they have been divided:

> The whole method consists entirely in the ordering and arranging of the objects on which we must concentrate our mind's eye if we are to discover some truth. We shall be following this method exactly if we first reduce complicated and obscure propositions step by step to simpler ones, and then, starting with the intuition of the simplest ones of all, try to ascend through the same steps to a knowledge of all the rest. (Descartes [1628] 1985d, p. 20, italics removed)

Evidently, then, early modern discourse also operates synthetically. As Leibniz notes:

> Synthesis is achieved when we begin from principles and run through truths in good order, thus discovering certain progressions and setting up tables, or sometimes general formulas, in which the answers to emerging questions can later be discovered. Analysis goes back to the principles in order to solve the given problems only. (Leibniz [1679?] 1969i, p. 232)

Meaning is fully established only when things have been reassembled after they have been taken apart. The relation between analysis and synthesis in early modern thought

is meticulously detailed in Hobbes's *De Corpore*. Here, Hobbes defines philosophy as

> *such knowledge of effects or appearances, as we acquire by true ratiocination from the knowledge we have first of their causes or generation: And again, of such causes or generations as may be from knowing first their effects.* (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 3)

Philosophy, simply put, is knowledge of causes and effects. The term ratiocination, moreover, denotes the thought processes associated with philosophising. Or, put differently, ratiocination refers to the operations of the mind resulting in knowledge (ibid., pp. 3–5). According to Hobbes, these operations take the form of computation:

> By RATIOCINATION, I mean *computation.* Now to compute, is either to collect the sum of many things that are added together, or to know what remains when one thing is taken out of another. *Ratiocination,* therefore, is the same with *addition* and *subtraction;* and if any man add *multiplication* and *division,* I will not be against it, seeing multiplication is nothing but addition of equals one to another, and division nothing but a subtraction of equals one from another, as often as is possible. So that all ratiocination is comprehended in these two operations of the mind, addition and subtraction. (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 3; see also Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 31–32)

Hobbes also refers to the two operations of ratiocination—addition and subtraction—as 'composition' and 'resolution'. Since these two operations are the only forms of thought resulting in knowledge of causes and effects, such knowledge is necessarily based on either 'compositive' or 'resolutive' operations (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 66):

> There is . . . no method, by which we find out the causes of things, but is either *compositive* or *resolutive,* or *partly compositive,* and *partly resolutive.* And the resolutive is commonly called *analytical* method, as the compositive is called *synthetical.* (ibid., p. 66)

Both analytic and synthetic methods are necessary for the acquisition of philosophical knowledge (ibid., p. 79). However, analytic operations are epistemologically prior to synthetic ones. The reason for this is that *general knowledge*, knowledge of the causes of all things—which Hobbes also refers to as 'science' (ibid., p. 86)—requires knowledge of universal, or simple, things (ibid., p. 68). Knowledge of universal things, in turn, can come only from analysis:

> seeing universal things are contained in the nature of singular things, the knowledge of them is to be acquired by reason, that is, by resolution. For example, if there be propounded a conception or *idea* of some singular thing, as of a *square,* this square is to be resolved into a *plain, terminated with a certain number of equal and straight lines and right angles.* For by this resolution we have these things universal or agreeable to all matter, namely *line, plain, . . . terminated, angle, straightness, rectitude,* and *equality . . . .* Again, if any man propound to himself the conception of *gold,* he may, by resolving, come to the ideas of *solid, visible, heavy. . .,* and many other more universal than gold itself; and these he may resolve again, till he come to such things as are most universal. And in this manner, by resolving continually, we may come to know what those things are, whose causes being first known severally, and afterwards compounded, bring is to the knowledge of singular things. I conclude, therefore, that the method of attaining to the universal knowledge of things, is purely *analytical.* (ibid., pp. 68–69)

The cause of universal things, Hobbes argues, is self-evident and consists of motion in general (ibid., pp. 69–70). This is revealed

by analysis. However, knowledge of *specific kinds* of motion, and of singular things, requires ratiocinations of the effects of motion in general on such things. After the analytical operations are done

> It remains, that we enquire what motion begets such and such effects; as what motion makes a straight line, and what a circular; what motion thrusts, what draws, and by what way; what makes a thing which is seen or heard, to be seen or heard sometimes in one manner, sometimes in another. Now the method of this kind of enquiry, is *compositive*. (ibid., p. 71)

Hobbes maintains that it is possible to establish knowledge of increasingly complex forms of motions and interactions of moving bodies in a continuous deductive demonstration starting with motion in general as the self-evident cause of all universal things (ibid., pp. 71–73). Since such a demonstration is an essential part of philosophical knowledge—Hobbes even noting that it is the very end of science (ibid., p. 82)—and since it is entirely synthetic in character (ibid., p. 81), it follows that synthetic operations are also essential for the ratiocinations of the mind. Nevertheless, they are secondary to analytic operations since they depend on what has been analytically established as universal.

Hobbes's account of analytic and synthetic methods exemplifies how early modern discourse functions by first separating things and having done so proceeds to unite them. On this theme, Hobbes writes that a 'definition is the explication of a compounded name by resolution, and the progression is from the parts to the compound' (ibid., p. 85).

The result of the synthetic operations of the mind is a great system in which each unit is distinguished by the identities and differences it displays in comparison to all other units of the system. It is within this system that conceptual meaning emerges. Therefore, the meaning of any concept is determined based on the arrangement of its properties and the identities and differences it displays vis-à-vis other concepts.

The synthetic dimension of thought provides discourse with a general serial character; in principle, discourse governed by the epistemic configuration of early modernity is structured as a series in which each element differs in composition and complexity. Thus, this way of determining meaning is based on the possibility to arrange all things and their properties in an ordinal fashion (Foucault 2002b, p. 59). Therefore, the rule according to which early modern discourse is governed is *order* (ibid., pp. 59–64). The way in which I use it herein to denote the epistemic configuration of early modern thought, order refers to a sorting of concepts based on their identities and differences into an ordinal arrangement. However, since this arrangement concerns composition in terms of constituent parts, the most basic differentiation it contains is that between *the simple* and *the complex*. By that, order as epistemic rule is, at its basic level, concerned with the identity of what is simple and the difference between the simple and the complex. This, in turn, implies that it functions as a purely *qualitative sorting* of identities and differences; the ordinal series early modern discourse is arranged into presupposes nominal classifications, which means that such classifications mark the fundamental content of order as epistemic rule and amount to the basic governing of early modern discourse.

To think, then, is to order, according to early modern discourse. When humans

think about some thing, they order it. There-fore, whatever can be thought can also be ordered and, since being—as a concept in early modern discourse—belongs to what is ruled by order, whatever *is* is also orderable; the being of anything coincides with it being ordered (Bartelson 1995, p. 144; Lachterman 1989, pp. 175–178). As Descartes notes, 'God . . . has arranged all things in number, weight and measure' ([1629–1633] 1985f, p. 97). This means that the natural world, insofar as it *is*, is arranged by the same logic of order as discourse. '*The order and connection of ideas*', writes Spinoza, '*is the same as the order and connection of things*' ([1677] 1985, p. 451). Nature, then, is an ordered system of identities and differences, according to early modern thought, just like discourse. Things in general amount to a general system of identities and differences.

Because order as an epistemic rule operates qualitatively, the differences it establishes between concepts and between things need not be of a specific quantity, nor do they have to be measurable. Hobbes's notion of *conatus* is one example of an idea that captures difference without measure. Hobbes defines *conatus*, or 'endeavour', as motion within a point:

> *Motion made in less space and time than can be given; that is, less than can be determined or assigned by exposition or number; that is, motion made through the length of a point, and in an instant or point in time.* (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 206)

And a point, he clarifies,

> is not to be understood that which has no quantity, or which cannot by any means be divided; for there is no such thing in nature; but that, whose quantity is not at all considered, that is, whereof neither quantity nor any part is computed in demonstration; so that a point is not to be taken for an indivisible, but for an undivided thing. (ibid., p. 206)

Conatus, then, is indeterminable motion, movement so small that it cannot be represented numerically, 'invisible' or 'insensible' motion (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 38). Indeed, a point is not indivisible but as an undivided thing, the motion a point possibly contains can be considered to be the smallest possible motion. *Conatus* is motion represented as minimal motion, the beginning of motion (Hobbes [1640] 1994, pp. 43–44, [1651] 1991, p. 38, [1655] 1962, p. 207).

Motion within a point is furthermore incomparable to the motion of that point itself, insofar as the point in question moves:

> Endeavour is to be conceived as motion; but so as that neither the quantity of the time in which, nor of the line in which it is made, may in demonstration be at all brought into comparison with the quantity of that time, or of that line of which it is a part. (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 206)

Motion in general is defined by Hobbes as '*a continual relinquishing of one place, and the acquiring of another*' (ibid., p. 109). Movement is a change of place. To that extent, two places between which only a point movement is possible—which in a sense suggests they are the same place—are minimally differentiated from each other. Between them, there is but a minimal difference, which implies the possibility of establishing minimal differences. Thus, Hobbes's concept of *conatus* rests on the notion that there is such a thing as a minimal difference, that things can be separated by the smallest possible difference.

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[2]On the connection between Hobbes's concept of *conatus* and Leibniz's infinitesimals, see Goldenbaum (2008), Jesseph (1998), and Jesseph (2008).

Leibniz reasons along similar lines as Hobbes in his treatment of infinitesimals.[2] As part of Leibniz's differential calculus, infinitesimals generally refer to infinitely small magnitudes or differences, differences having no assignable quantities.[3]

Infinitesimals appear, for instance, in a curve as 'momentary increments and decrements' in the ordinates (Leibniz [1701] 1969d, p. 545), that is as 'differences which are on the point of vanishing' (Leibniz [1702] 1969g, p. 543). Other examples of infinitesimals are their appearance in the convergence of different geometric shapes, and as the difference between two seemingly parallel lines or equal things:

> Of course it is really true that things which are absolutely equal have a difference which is absolutely nothing; and that straight lines which are parallel never meet, since the distance between them is everywhere the same exactly; that a parabola is not an ellipse at all, and so on. Yet, a state of transition may be imagined, or one of evanescence, in which indeed there has not yet arisen exact equality . . . or parallelism, but in which it is passing into such a state, that the difference is less than any assignable quantity; also that in this state there will still remain some difference. . ., but in each case one that is infinitely small. (Leibniz [ca. 1701] 1920, pp. 148–149)

The presence of infinitesimal differences in mathematics suggests for Leibniz, hence, that two things the difference between which is infinitely small are indeed equal, even though they are different:

> I think that those things are equal not only whose difference is absolutely nothing, but also whose difference is incomparably small; and although this difference need not be called absolutely nothing, neither is it a quantity comparable with those whose difference it is. (Leibniz quoted in Jesseph 2008, p. 226; see also Leibniz [1695] 1962b, p. 322)[4]

As somewhat of a side note, it is worth mentioning that this notion of mathematical equality is quite interesting in the context of the current study since it can be interpreted as a rather straightforward rendition in mathematical discourse of the early modern epistemic elevation of difference to the same level as that of identity. For, what is indicated here is that two mathematically equal things—which is arguably a specific case of two things being identical—are also at the same time different; in their passing into identity there is a moment in which identity is at level with difference. A circle, for instance, is 'a regular polygon with an infinite number of sides' (Leibniz [1701] 1969d, p. 546); the circle is a different shape than a polygon but it is also equal to a polygon of infinitely many sides. In this situation, there is no internal priority between the identity and difference between two such things, they are identical at the same time as they are different: 'we may consider rest as infinitely small motion (that is, as equivalent to a particular instance of its own contradictory), coincidence as infinitely small distance, equality as the limit of inequality, etc.' (Leibniz [1702] 1969g, p. 544; see also Leib-

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[3]My reading of Leibniz's infinitesimals is largely based on Horváth (1986), Jesseph (1998), Jesseph (2008), Katz and Sherry (2013), and Sherry and Katz (2012). For an accessible overview of Leibniz's calculus overall, see Probst (2018).

[4]See Leibniz (2015) for a, to my knowledge, unpublished translation of this text, with the quoted passage appearing on p. 2.

[5]This is not to say, however, that identity and difference become indistinguishable here. It always remains possible for the early modern mind do distinguish differences between things insofar as they are different, no matter how small those differences are.

niz [1687] 1969e, p. 352).[5]

That being said, what is of more importance for the present study regarding the concept of infinitesimals is that it implies the possibility to *think* of a minimal difference, that it makes sense to think of such a thing as a difference that cannot be any smaller than it is. Infinitesimal difference is, as part of early modern discourse, a conceptualisation of absolutely minimal difference.

Indeed, much like Hobbes makes the case that a point is an undivided rather than an indivisible thing, Leibniz does not identify infinitesimals with any fixed magnitude.[6] 'In our calculations', he maintains, 'there is no need to conceive the infinite in a rigorous way. For instead of the infinite or the infinitely small, one takes quantities as large, or as small, as necessary in order that the error be smaller than the given error' (Leibniz quoted in Horváth 1986, p. 66; see also Leibniz [1701] 1962a, pp. 95–96).[7] He also states that

> incomparable magnitudes themselves … are not at all fixed or determined but can be taken to be as small as we wish in our geometrical reasoning and so have the effect of the infinitely small in the rigorous sense. If any opponent tries to con

tradict this proposition, it follows from our calculus that the error will be less than any possible assignable error, since it is in our power to take that incomparably small magnitude small enough for this purpose, inasmuch as we can always take a magnitude as small as we wish. (Leibniz [1702] 1969g, p. 543; see also Horváth 1986, p. 66)[8]

Moreover, to this possibility of making the infinitesimal 'as small as we wish', it should also be added that Leibniz maintains that in his calculus what holds good for infinitesimal differences also 'hold[s] good for the differences of the differences' ([ca. 1701] 1920, p. 156). Mathematical operations including infinitesimal differences are possible, and these yield other infinitesimal differences; there are differentials of different orders: 'I accept not only infinitely small lines … as true quantities in their own sort, but also their squares or rectangles…. And I accept cubes and other higher powers and products as well'. (Leibniz quoted in Bos 1974, p. 64; see also Leibniz [1695] 1962b, p. 322, 2015, p. 2).[9] It is possible, then, to think of smaller and smaller differences (Ishiguro 1990, p. 87) but, discursively, such differences are still captured by the concept

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[6] It could also be mentioned that Leibniz occasionally adopts the same view as Hobbes, the view that 'there is no point whose part is 0, or whose parts lack distance', and that 'conatus … is the beginning and end of motion' (Leibniz [1671] 1969l, p. 140).

[7] Horváth does not indicate that the quote omits a part of Leibniz's original text in his translation. He does, however, indicate the omission in a transcription of the French original on the same page. It would have been preferable to render the quote as per the following: 'In our calculations there is no need to conceive the infinite in a rigorous way…. [F]or instead of the infinite or the infinitely small, one takes quantities as large, or as small, as necessary in order that the error be smaller than the given error'.

[8] This adds to the comment in the previous footnote regarding the passing into identity of different things and the possibility of distinguishing differences (see footnote 5 on page 253 above), since it provides an example of how infinitesimal differences can be distinguished. To use Leibnizian vocabulary, it is always possible, when calculating, to assign a value to the infinitesimal difference. That value, then, comes to represent the rigorous infinitesimal in the calculation. Two things whose difference is infinitesimally small, and, therefore, equal in Leibniz's view, can be identified as different by assigning a value to the infinitesimal difference in the practice of 'our geometrical reasoning'. Thus, reason itself has the ability to differentiate infinitesimally different things, simply based on the concept of infinitesimals itself.

[9] For a treatment of first- and higher-order differentials in Leibniz see the cited work by Bos.

of infinitesimals. So even if there might not be a limit for how small a difference can be, discourse is equipped with concepts that provide thinking with the means to think in terms of such limits. The infinitesimal difference, the incomparably small, is the end point of the analytical structure of early modern discourse, the limit of the comparative logic of thought. Or, in Leibniz's less generalising words they are 'handy means of reckoning' that, should they result in errors in calculations, only produce errors that are '*absolutely nothing*':

> When we speak of infinitely great (or more strictly unlimited), or of infinitely small quantities (i. e., the very least of those within our knowledge)..., we mean quantities that are indefinitely great or indefinitely small, i. e., as great as you please, or as small as you please, so that the error that any one may assign may be less than a certain assigned quantity. Also, since in general it will appear that, when any small error is assigned, it can be shown that it should be less, it follows that the error is absolutely nothing.... Thus, by infinitely great and infinitely small, we understand something indefinitely great, or something indefinitely small, so that each conducts itself as a sort of class, and not merely as the last thing of a class. If any one wishes to understand these as the ultimate things, or as truly infinite, it can be done...; it will be sufficient simply to make use of them as a tool that has advantages for the purpose of the calculation, just as the algebraists retain imaginary roots with great profit. For they contain a handy means of reckoning. (Leibniz [ca. 1701] 1920, p. 150; see also Leibniz [1702] 1969g, p. 543)

The ability to think of absolutely small differences means, regarding discourse itself, that concepts in discourse can be ordered in such a way that they form a continuum in which all differences between concepts are infinitely small. This, in turn, means that discourse can, in principle, be formed perfectly; formed in such a way that the differences between the meaning of all concepts are as small as they can possibly get. In such a discourse, meaning is total, precise, and fixed; such a discourse contains the meaning of everything as it expands indefinitely and every concept within it means exactly one thing. Moreover, since it is ordered sequentially, each concept within it is stable relative to the minimally different concepts adjacent to it in the series. In other words, the early modern configuration of thought makes possible perfect and unchanging meaning. Whereas meaning in medieval discourse is multiple and transient, in early modern discourse it is, in principle, univocal and fixed (e.g. Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 84). This means that knowledge, including knowledge of nature, according to early modern thought, can be absolutely certain— at least in principle. Regarding such propositions in mathematics that humans can understand, Galileo writes that their knowledge 'equals the Divine in objective certainty', acknowledging however that those propositions are fewer than those known by the divine intellect, 'since it knows all' (Galileo [1632] 1953, p. 103).

Discourse being univocal and fixed also means that knowledge can be gathered into a single coherent discourse, a general and unitary science of order (Foucault 2002b, pp. 62–64). Moreover, not only is such a science possible, it is what knowledge generally and principally pushes towards. Early modern knowledge aspires to be universal (ibid., pp. 79–84). For instance, Descartes' method of 'ordering and arranging' and reducing 'complicated and obscure proposi-

tions step by step to simpler ones' (Descartes [1628] 1985d, p. 20, see also page 249 above) is meant to make it possible to 'attain ... all-embracing knowledge' (ibid., p. 16). Moreover, based on the simplest truths of mathematics, the 'goal ... to attain knowledge of all things' (ibid., p. 16) can become a reality:

> I began my investigation by inquiring what exactly is generally meant by the term 'mathematics'.... When I considered the matter ... closely, I came to see that the exclusive concern of mathematics is with questions of order and measure, and that it is irrelevant whether the measure in question involves numbers, shapes, stars, sounds, or any other object whatever. This made me realize that there must be a general science which explains all the points that can be raised concerning order and measure irrespective of the subject-matter, and that science should be termed *mathesis universalis*. (ibid., p. 19)

Descartes also couples to the possibility of a universal science the possibility of a universal language. In a letter to Mersenne, he suggests how an accessible universal language can be devised:

> I believe ... that it would be possible to devise a further system to enable one to make up the primitive words and their symbols in such a language so that it could be taught very quickly. Order is what is needed: all the thoughts which can come into the human mind must be arranged in an order like the natural order of the numbers. In a single day one can learn to name every one of the infinite series of numbers, and thus to write infinitely many different words in an unknown language. The same could be done for all the other words necessary to express all the other things which fall within the purview of the human mind. If this secret were discovered I am sure that the language would soon spread throughout the world.

> Many people would willingly spend five or six days in learning how to make themselves understood by the whole human race. (Descartes [1629] 1991b, pp. 12–13; see also Mittelstrass 1979)

Hence, thought as such can be gathered in an all-encompassing structure, a general order. Everything can be arranged and enumerated in one go in a totality; all things can be known as part of a single discourse, a universal science.

The idea of a universal science and an accompanying universal language is also a leading theme in Leibniz's writings (Mugnai 2018; Pelletier 2018; Rabouin 2012; Westerhoff 1999), and a considerable portion of his works can be seen as contributions to the development of such a science and language. 'The General Science', he writes,

> is nothing but the science of what is thinkable in general in so far as it is such. This includes not only what has hitherto been regarded as logic, but also the art of discovery, along with method or the means of arrangement, synthesis and analysis, didactics or the science of teaching, the so called Gnostology, Noology, the art of reminiscence or mnemonics, the art of characters or of symbols, the Art of Combinations, the Art of Subtlety (*Ars Argutiarum*), and philosophical grammar.... It does not make much difference how you divide the Sciences, for they are one continuous body, like the ocean. (Leibniz [1683–1685?] 2006b, p. 220, parentheses in original)

Key for the realisation of a universal science, in Leibniz's view, is mathematics, for

> there is nothing which is not subordinate to number. Number is ... a basic metaphysical figure, as it were, and arithmetic is a kind of statics of the universe by which the powers of things are discovered. (Leibniz [ca. 1679] 1969h, p. 221)

Mathematics and mathematical procedure, therefore, serves as a kind of blueprint for how to establish a coherent and certain body of knowledge of things in general.

Leibniz's approach in this matter generally follows the early modern logic of decomposing to what is simple and evident and from there building successively more complex truths, an approach he develops already in the early work *Of the Art of Combination* ([1666] 1966b, [1666] 1969b). There, he argues that 'in order to establish what everything is made of', it is possible to identify analytically the simple parts of any given term ([1666] 1966b, p. 4). Such simple terms can be 'placed in one class and designated by certain signs' (ibid., p. 4). Complex terms can then be represented by combining the signs for the simple parts, such that a complete symbolic language is established (Mugnai 2018, p. 177). This, Leibniz maintains, enables, in principle, a 'universal writing, i.e. one which is intelligible to anyone who reads it' ([1666] 1966b, p. 10):

> Let the first terms, of the combination of which all others consist, be designated by signs; these signs will be a kind of alphabet. It will be convenient for the signs to be as natural as possible—e.g. for one, a point; for numbers, points; for the relations of one entity to another, lines; for the variation of angles or of extremities in lines, kinds of relations. If these are correctly and ingeniously established, this universal writing will be as easy as it is common, and will be capable of being read without any dictionary; at the same time, a fundamental knowledge of all things will be obtained. The whole of such a writing will be made of geometrical figures, as it were, and of a kind of pictures. (ibid., p. 11)

In *Elements of Calculus* he provides an illustrative example of how such a language can be achieved:

> Since man is a rational animal, if the number of animal is *a*, for instance, 2 and the number of rational is *r*, for instance 3, the number of man, or *h*, will be 2 × 3 or 6. (Leibniz [1679] 1969c, p. 235)

This procedure makes it possible to

> include everything in the whole world in our calculus, insofar as we have distinct notions of it, that is, insofar as we know certain of its constituents and can distinguish them from all others after examining them by their parts; in other words, insofar as we can assign a definition to them. For these constituents are nothing but the terms whose concepts compose the concept which we have of the thing. (ibid., p. 236)[10]

During the Middle Ages, since humans amounted to the part of nature in which the latter returns to itself by knowing itself, and since nature itself existed absolutely, human knowledge of nature was absolute. Early modern knowledge is also absolute, including knowledge of nature, but in a completely different way. As I will delineate in further detail in the next section, early modern thought separates knowledge from nature, or more generally, it separates *meaning* from nature. Therefore, as meaningful discourse, human knowledge of nature is not nature knowing itself but, instead, something external to nature knowing it. Furthermore, this *something* is as absolute as the nature it knows. Specifically, in the next section, I will argue that the early modern separation of meaning and nature is indicative of a separation of humans *as such* from the natural world, and that humans, according to

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[10] Leibniz defines simple terms, or 'primary concepts'—which he in this passage refers to as 'constituents'—as terms or concepts which are true by definition (Leibniz [1679?] 1969i, p. 230).

early modern thought, are completely different from nature and exist independently and outside of it.

4.1 Humans

In the medieval world, everything had been immanently meaningful. When, however, difference is raised to the same level as identity in the epistemic configuration of discourse it becomes possible to sharply distinguish meaning from non-meaning, and in early modern discourse this results in a differentiation between thoughts and things in such a way that thought becomes coincidental with what is meaningful and things to what is not meaningful. Or, rather, thought becomes that which brings meaning to the world of things.

Because the medieval world had been meaningful in its own right, the signs it contained were in no way dependent on humans; the world of things was a world of signs. They existed independently of humans and they were meaningful whether or not any humans interpreted or recognised them. This meant that signs could be unknown. This, however, cannot be the case during early modernity. In one of the most influential early modern works on logic, *Logic or the Art of thinking*—commonly known as the *Port-Royal Logic*—signs are said to be either probable or certain:

> First, there are certain signs . . . as breathing is a sign of life in animals. And there are signs that are only probable . . . as pallor is only a probable sign of pregnancy in women. (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1996, p. 35)

Foucault takes this passage to indicate that, since it implies that signs can never be unknown, early modern signs must reside in human knowledge rather than in the world of things (2002b, pp. 64–66). I agree with this interpretation but with a slight adjustment: To me, it seems more appropriate to designate thought in general, not just knowledge, as the residence of signs in early modern discourse, for the simple reason that knowledge for the early moderns is but a special kind of thought. This notion has been encountered already in the quoted passages above by Locke in which he delineates the comparative logic of thought. In his *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke also notes that '*Knowledge* . . . seems to me to be nothing but *the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas*' ([1690] 1975, p. 525). In the same vein, Descartes maintains that 'all knowledge is certain and evident cognition' ([1628] 1985d, p. 10).

However, how is it that, in early modern discourse, thought and not things harbours signs? How can thought bring meaning to things, and why is thought not just another thing? Well, the early moderns conceptualise signs as a special kind of idea. Consider, for instance, the *Port-Royal Logic's* definition of signs as complex ideas:

> When we consider an object in itself and in its own being, without carrying the view of the mind to what it can represent, our idea of it is an idea of a thing. . . . But when we view a certain object merely as representing another, our idea of it is an idea of a sign, and the first object is called a sign. This is how we ordinarily think of maps and paintings. Consequently the sign includes two ideas, one of the thing which represents, the other of the thing represented. Its nature consists in prompting the second by the first. (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1996, p. 35)

A sign, then, is an idea of a thing con-

sidered to represent another thing. Signs are, therefore, structured as a binary of something that represents and something else that is represented: 'every sign', writes the authors of the *Port-Royal Logic,* 'requires a distinction between the thing representing and the thing represented' (ibid., p. 36). This is, indeed, how signs are generally conceptualised in early modern discourse (Foucault 2002b, pp. 64–74). An idea, in turn, is the form with which humans represent things presented to the mind:

> The simple view we have of things that present themselves to the mind is called *conceiving,* as when we represent to ourselves a sun, an earth, a tree, a circle, a square, thought, and being, without forming any explicit judgement about them. The form by which we represent these things is called an *idea.* (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1996, p. 23)[11]

According to the *Port-Royal Logic,* conceiving is the most basic operation of the human mind (ibid., p. 23, see also p. 26), which suggests that the formation of ideas is equally fundamental. This notion is recognised from Locke, according to whom, as was shown above, the only object of the mind is its ideas. Locke also writes that the term *idea* is 'that Term, which I think, serves best to stand for whatsoever is the Object of the Understanding when a Man thinks', and that he uses it 'to express whatever is meant by *Phantasm*, *Notion*, *Species*, or whatever it is, which the Mind can be employ'd about in thinking' ([1690] 1975, p. 47).

This way of conceptualising ideas makes ideas coextensive with thought: to think is to form ideas and to form ideas is to think. Furthermore, since ideas are the form with which humans represent things that are presented to their minds, it follows that thought is fundamentally connected to the representation of things. Thought is the human mind representing things that are presented to it and when humans think of things as representing other things, their thoughts, or ideas, are referred to as signs. These signs are where meaning resides in early modernity. Or, more precisely, meaning resides in the binary structure of the sign; meaning is contained in the relation between the idea of that which represents and the idea of that which is represented. Accordingly, signification emerges as a result of the possibility of the human mind to represent one idea with another, a possibility which, in turn, is conditioned by the mind's ability to represent things that are presented to it.

In fact, the connection between thinking and meaning is a general one. Signs are not just one kind of ideas, one kind of thought. They are the *elementary* form of thought, the reason being that the basic operation of the mind is to represent things that are presented to it. Thus, the binary structure of the early modern sign, the binary of something that represents and something that is represented, is present in all thought; the very moment thought is thought, it also becomes a sign. All thought, therefore, is signifying; thinking in general has a signifying function.

Often, this general connection between thought and signification is couched in terms of thought being structured as a language. In the *Port-Royal Logic,* for instance, ideas are seen to be intimately connected to words, from which it follows that logic,

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[11] The term judgement, as it is used here by the authors of the *Port-Royal Logic* denotes the comparison of ideas to each other (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1996, p. 23).

as the study of thought, must also study thought's connection to words:

> If reflections on our thoughts never concerned anyone but ourselves, it would be enough to examine them in themselves, unclothe in words or other signs. But because we can make our thoughts known to others only by accompanying them with external signs, and since this habit is so strong that even when we think to ourselves, things are presented to the mind only in the words in which we usually clothe them in speaking to others, logic must examine how ideas are joined to words and words to ideas. (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1996, pp. 23–24)

Thoughts, hence, are formed as words according to the authors of the *Port-Royal Logic*. Locke reasons similarly, and also conveys that words are simply the verbal expressions of ideas:

> Man, though he have great variety of Thoughts, and such, from which others, as well as himself, might receive Profit and Delight; yet they are all within his own Breast, invisible, and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made appear. The Comfort, and Advantage for Society, not being to be had without Communication of Thoughts, it was necessary, that Man should find out some external sensible Signs, whereby those invisible *Ideas*, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others. For this purpose, nothing was so fit, either for Plenty or Quickness, as those articulate Sounds, which with so much Ease and Variety, he found himself able to make. Thus we may conceive how *Words*, which were by Nature so well adapted to that purpose, come to be made use of by Men, as *the Signs of* their *Ideas*; not by any natural connection, that there is between particular articulate Sounds and certain *Ideas*, for then there would be but one Lan-

guage amongst all Men; but by a voluntary Imposition, whereby such a Word is made arbitrarily the Mark of such an *Idea*. The use then of Words, is to be sensible Marks of *Ideas*; and the *Ideas* they stand for, are their proper and immediate Signification. (Locke [1690] 1975, pp. 404–405, small caps removed)

Thus, ideas in general have a signifying function; thought *always* attribute meaning to things. To think, then—since to think is to form ideas—is to make things meaningful. Meaning originates in the mind and is solely a function of how the mind operates. Signs are no longer found in the world of things, in the world of nature. They are found only in the human mind and words no longer resemble that of which they speak. On the issue of the non-resemblance between words and things, Descartes writes that

> words, as you well know, bear no resemblance to the things they signify, and yet they make us think of these things, frequently even without our paying attention to the sound of the words or to their syllables. (Descartes [1629–1633] 1985f, p. 81)[12]

Moreover, since ideas as signs are structured according to the binary of that which represents and that which is represented, it follows that there must be a complete differentiation between the mind, as that which represents, and objects, as that which is represented. Thus, the very operations of the mind necessarily push the mind outside the realm of objects. This is why thought in itself cannot be an object in early modernity, for thought is always about the representation of things and that can be achieved only if thought itself is different from the things it represents. Simply because of the way thought is conceptualised, there must

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[12] For some similar statements, see Locke ([1690] 1975, pp. 136–137) and Arnauld and Lancelot ([1660] 1975, pp. 65–66).

be a difference between thought and things in early modern discourse, between subjects and objects.

Thought, then, is not a thing. It is, however, always about things. That which appears before the mind and which is represented in thought, is always objective. Whatever appears before the mind appears as a thing.

Tying together the different strands of the discussion in this section so far, it can be said that to think, according to early modern discourse, is generally to have ideas and to have ideas is to represent (Foucault 2002b, pp. 51–79). Therefore, to think is to represent, and since knowledge consists of ideas and is, therefore, but a kind of thought, truths—which had earlier resided in the world of things—now withdraw into the human mind along with the power of signification. Earlier, thought had mirrored the truths of the world but in early modernity truths emerge only in knowledge. When they are thought, they mirror the world. Early modern truth resides in the human mind, not in the world of things. Nature is no longer a place of truth. Instead, human thought of nature amounts to the place where truth resides. Or, as Hobbes puts it in *De Corpore*:

> When we calculate the magnitude and motions of heaven and earth, we do not ascend into heaven that we may divide it into parts, or measure the motions thereof, but we do it sitting still in our closets or in the dark. (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 92)

Leibniz is more precise as he emphasises that knowledge is true when the order among words and characters—by which humans represent their thoughts–corresponds to the order among things:

> Even though characters are as such arbitrary, there is still in their application and connection something valid which is not arbitrary; namely, a relationship which exists between them and things. … And this relationship, this connection is the foundation of truth. For this explains why no matter which characters we use, the results remains the same, or at least, the results which we find are equivalent and correspond to one another in definite ways. (Leibniz [1677] 1951a, p. 10)

> No matter how arbitrarily we choose characters, the results always agree provided we follow a definite order and rule in using the characters. Although truths necessarily presuppose some characters and even sometimes have characters as objects … truth is not based on what is arbitrary in characters but on what is permanent in them: namely, the relationship which marks among themselves have to things. For it remains true, without our will having the slightest influence on the relations, that through the use of defined characters a definite form of calculation results which through the use of other marks in known relations to the defined ones, varies and yet preserves a constant relationship to them. (ibid., p. 11)

Since knowledge consists of ideas and ideas are representations, it follows that knowledge is also representation and a fortiori has a signifying function. To know, just like thinking in general, is in early modernity to ascribe meaning to things, whereas in the Middle Ages knowledge had been about recognising and interpreting signs already present in nature. This, then, is how thought brings meaning to the world of things. Thought is differentiated and defined as that which establishes meaning, and things as that which receives it. Because of the way signs are conceptualised, it cannot be any other way. With the theoretical

vocabulary I make use of in this study, it can be stated that early modern discourse sharply distinguishes between subjects and objects, which medieval discourse does not; the human mind is subjective, everything it thinks of is objective.

However, where does this leave humans, what does such a distinction between the subjective and the objective do to the understanding of what it means to be human? In many respects, humans are, according to the early moderns, just animals, creatures of corporeal existence. There is, however, something more to them, something that sets them apart from all other creatures. This something, indeed, pertains to their minds.

Locke, for instance, states in the very opening sentence of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* that 'it is the *Understanding* that sets Man above the rest of sensible Beings' ([1690] 1975, p. 43), and in *Two Treatises of Government* he notes that humans who do not make use of their reason are comparable to beasts and can be treated as such ([1689] 1988, pp. 278–279). In a similar fashion, Hobbes states that 'the names *Man* and *Rationall*, are of equall extent, comprehending mutually one another' ([1651] 1991, p. 26). That being said, Hobbes maintains that all animals have some basic form of understanding, 'for a dogge by custome will understand the call, or the rating of his Master; and so will many other Beasts' (ibid., p. 19). However, there is, he claims, a kind of understanding 'which is peculiar to man', and that kind is the understanding of 'his conceptions and thoughts, by the sequell and contexture of the names of things into Affirmations, Negations, and other formes of Speech' (ibid., p. 19). Thus, not only is there a kind of understanding unique to humans, for since that kind of understanding

derives from human thought, it must also be the case that thought is equally uniquely human (ibid., p. 21).

In the last passage, Hobbes also indicates that speech is representative of what is uniquely human; speech is that through which reason—or, the understanding—is signified (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 23, 32; see also Arnauld and Lancelot [1660] 1975, pp. 65–66). A similar argument is encountered in Grotius's *On the Law of War and Peace*. Man, writes Grotius, 'alone among animals possesses a special instrument, speech' ([1625] 2012, p. 3). Furthermore,

> he has also been endowed with the faculty of knowing and of acting in accordance with general principles. Whatever accords with that faculty is not common to all animals, but peculiar to the nature of man. (ibid., p. 3)

Thus, it is not understanding, reason, or knowledge only that are unique to humans. The possibility to act *based* on understanding, reason, or knowledge is also uniquely human. Descartes gives expression to this view as well when he claims that reason 'is the only thing that makes us men and distinguishes us from the beasts' ([1637] 1985b, p. 112) and that human action only is based on understanding (ibid., p. 140). All humans have reason, Descartes maintains, whereas beasts 'have no reason at all' (ibid., p. 140) and 'no intelligence at all' (ibid., p. 141). Furthermore, he also associates human reason with speech:

> It is quite remarkable that there are no men so dull-witted or stupid – and this includes even madmen – that they are incapable of arranging various words together and forming an utterance from them in order to make their thoughts understood; whereas there is no other an-

imal, however perfect and well-endowed it may be, that can do the like. (ibid., p. 140)

These delineations of what is truly human, of what makes human being unique, have one thing in common: all of them concern *thought*. Understanding, reason, and knowledge are all specific forms of thought, and speech is merely its representation. As Descartes writes in a letter to the Marquess of Newcastle:

> The reason why animals do not speak as we do is not that they lack the organs but that they have no thoughts. It cannot be said that they speak to each other but we cannot understand them; for since dogs and some other animals express their passions to us, they would express their thoughts also if they had any. (Descartes [1646] 1991c, p. 303)

Thought, then, is a uniquely human characteristic. It is what defines human being. As one of the axioms in Spinoza's *Ethics* goes: 'Man thinks' ([1677] 1985, p. 448). By that, the analysis arrives at the conclusion that since thought is that which goes on inside the human mind, the differentiation between the mind and things in early modern discourse equates to a differentiation between the uniquely human and the world of things. Because the mind is different from the world of things, so too are humans.

That being said, humans still come out as seemingly split beings. For even though they are distinguished by their ability to think, they are still corporeal creatures; they are not pure thought, not purely subjective. Instead, they seem divided, split between corporeal and ideal being, between body and thought.

Moreover, this split is further complicated by one of the most significant aspects of the early modern conceptualisation of thought. On the one hand, as has been shown already

by means of the quoted passages from the *Port-Royal Logic*, it is perfectly possible for thought to think of thought. As trivial as this might seem, it importantly implies that thought, and therefore that aspect of human being which it alone displays, when it is thought of must appear before the mind *as a thing*. For, as noted already, the mind thinks of what is presented to it as things. According the binary logic of the early modern sign, once the mind brings meaning to the very concept of thought, it must make it meaningful as a thing; if the mind always and only thinks of what it thinks of as things, this must also apply to the thinking of thought itself. Simply put, when humans think of themselves, they think of themselves as objective beings, as things. Therefore, as they appear in discourse, thought and humans as unique beings have objective existence; in discourse, they are things. This objectification of thought by thought itself is not accidental. It is a direct consequence of how the mind and thought are conceptualised in early modernity. As long as thought is representation, and nothing else than representation, and signs are defined as binaries of representing and represented, thought can think of itself only as a thing. Thus, the reason why thought is thought of as a thing is not because of how the world of things is constituted—or that it actually is a thing—but rather because of how thought is conceptualised and how the human mind is thought to operate.

In extension, thought thinking of itself as a thing means that human being in its entirety can appear to be objective and can be treated as a thing. Accordingly, it can be arranged as part of the general system of identities and differences to which things add up. By implication, thought and humans appear

in thought to belong to the world of things. This, as will be shown later on, has far-reaching consequences for the early modern conceptualisation of political order.

Insofar as thought is thought of as something that exists objectively, the split between humans as thought and humans as body might not seem to be overly dramatic. On the other hand, however, since ideas, because of their signifying power, are structured as binaries of that which represents and that which is represented, thought itself, as has also been shown, strictly does not belong to the world of things, to the world of which it thinks. Thought, in *this* respect, is that which is required for things to be meaningful at all. The only way to make thought meaningful as a thing, therefore, is to think of it; you need thought to think what thought is (Foucault 2002b, p. 72). This means that even as human being is objectified as something that is represented in thought, thought externalises itself from its own seemingly objective existence and from the world of things in general. In other words, thought is always exterior to and different from all things. Thus, that which makes humans truly human is, ultimately, separate from the world of things and, as will be discussed in detail in the next section, early modern discourse firmly positions nature as part of that world. Indeed, the world of nature and the world of things correspond perfectly. This means that the relation between humans and nature in early modernity is aptly characterised as a *separation*. In the early modern world, humans relate to nature only by being separate from it, by not belonging to it; for the early moderns, to be human means to be non-nature.

The distinction between thought and what it thinks of, between subject and object, between humans and nature, is fundamental in early modern discourse, for it follows from the binary conceptualisation of signs that thought cannot think unless it is separated from that of which it thinks. In the so-called *Port-Royal Grammar*, a treatise on language to which the aforementioned *Port-Royal Logic* is a companion, it is stated that the most important distinction pertaining to the operations of the human mind is the one between the object of thought and the form of thought, and that, therefore, language must differentiate between such words that signify objects and those that signify thought:

> The greatest distinction to be made about what occurs in our minds is to say that one can consider the object of our thought on the one hand, and the form or manner of our thought … on the other hand…. It follows from this that men, having had need of signs in order to mark everything that occurs in their minds, also found it necessary to draw a most general distinction among words into those that signify the objects of thoughts and those that signify the form and the manner or mode of our thoughts. (Arnauld and Lancelot [1660] 1975, pp. 67–68)

All thought, the very possibility to think, therefore depends on this distinction between thought and of what it thinks. Since the distinction between thoughts and things, ultimately, separates the human mind—and, by that, the uniquely human—from the world of things, the fundamental position this distinction occupies means that the separation between humans and the natural world is *also* and equally fundamental in early modern discourse. In principle, the separation between humans and the natural world applies to all of thought since it is that from which thought in general proceeds; the

separation of humans and nature is a condition of possibility for thought in early modernity.

The separation between thoughts and things also means that thought, in principle, has no relation to the world of things other than to signify it; thought exists independently of things (Descartes [1637] 1985b, p. 141). Of course, this works both ways, furthermore. The world of things is equally independent of thought. In other words, neither thought nor thing depend on the other. Humans are independent of things, of the world of nature, and nature is independent of human beings.

Humans and nature form a duality of worlds in early modernity, and both are absolute, both exist unconditionally. I will save the further discussion on nature and its absolute character for the next section, and for now focus just on the absoluteness of human being. The absolute character of being human comes from the fact that since thought forms a world on its own, consisting of nothing but thought itself, there is nothing that can account for the very being of thought and its signifying power (Foucault 2002b, p. 73). No more than there was a cause for the existence of God in the Middle Ages is there a cause for thought in early modernity, at least not when thought is considered in its separation from the world of things. Early modern thought operates according to its own logic, it is born from nowhere and by no one, and it resides in a place that has no connection to anything exterior to it. Human being is absolute, then, because thought—or put differently, the operations of the human mind—is not conditioned by anything but itself. The human mind simply *is*. To be human in early modernity is, bluntly speaking, to be a mind, and

to be a mind is to signify. Thus, to be human is to be the origin of meaning.

Meaning is not discovered in the early modern world; it is not recognised in a process of exploration of nature. Instead, it is *constructed* by the human mind (Lachterman 1989, pp. 1–7). Thus, being human is associated with a fundamental activity; insofar as signification is construction, thinking must be the action of the mind. For instance, in speech—the verbal expression of the meaning humans construct—humans perform acts of affirmation or assertion, verbs being defined in *Port-Royal Grammar* exactly as words which signify only affirmation or assertion (Arnauld and Lancelot [1660] 1975, pp. 122–128, see also p. 67). All subsequent human action proceeds from this fundamental activity of constructing meaning: 'to *go*, to *speak*, to *move* any of our limbes', writes Hobbes, 'is first fancied in our minds' ([1651] 1991, p. 38).

It is important to note that this conceptualisation of meaning places it as something prior to relations among humans. Since meaning originates solely in the mind, it resides in the mind before humans enter into social relations. Therefore, meaning is logically prior to society. In fact, since human action proceeds from the signifying power of the mind, meaning cannot be a result of interactions between humans. Society does, however, require humans communicating meaning with words (Locke [1690] 1975, pp. 402–408). However, according to early modern discourse, words are simply the verbal representations of the meaning constructed in and by the mind, used to declare thoughts to others (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1996, p. 37; Arnauld and Lancelot [1660] 1975, p. 65; Descartes [1637] 1985b, pp. 139–141; Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 14–17,

[1651] 1991, pp. 24–25, 464; see also Foucault 2002b, p. 74). Language is a perfectly neutral medium, a vocal duplication of the mind's creation of meaning. Verbal signs and their mental progenitors connect without any distortions that which is represented with something to represent it with. Thus, as paradoxical as this might seem, even though meaning is an activity, it is not a function of anything humans actually do. Instead, humans simply have the power to perfectly represent that which is presented before their minds. In this respect, meaning is prior even to what humans do; the mind's construction of meaning is so utterly fundamental for human being that it amounts to that which makes possible human action as such.

Because signification functions only according to the binary logic of representing and represented, and since the mind contains the power of signification, the human mind has the ability to perfectly represent what is presented to it; nothing, in principle, disrupts the relation between thought and what it represents. The mind, as Leibniz notes, 'can by its own operations derive what corresponds perfectly to the nature of things' ([1678] 1969m, p. 208). Knowledge of nature, therefore, can be perfect, absolutely true and certain, and impervious to contextual factors. Ultimately, a universal science, the gathering of all knowledge and meaning in a general system, is made possible because of the binary composition of the sign.

The early modern mind's functioning is stable and fixed, the connection between representing and represented forever remains the same and humans establish meaning always in the same way. At least, it has that potential. Leibniz, for instance, main-

tains that his universal science and language is truly universal in the sense that it is agreeable by everyone and that most importantly anyone would arrive at the same results and conclusions as he himself does in his studies, as long as the same methods are applied. In *On the General Characteristic*, he writes about his wonders as to why no one before him had invented the 'alphabet of human thoughts' ([ca. 1679] 1969h, p. 222) he detailed in *Of the Art of Combination*:

> Why, within the memory of mankind as preserved by records, no mortal has ever essayed so great a thing – this has often been an object of wonder to me. For to anyone who proceeds according to an order in thinking, these considerations should have occurred from the very first, just as they occurred to me as a boy interested in logic, before I had even touched on ethics, mathematics, or physics, solely because I always looked for first principles. (ibid., p. 223)

He even asks why someone like Descartes, 'whose genius is elevated almost above all praise' (ibid., p. 223), had not developed a universal language based on mathematics:

> His failure to apply his mind to this problem can be explained by no other cause than that he did not adequately think through the full reason and force of the thing. For had he seen a method of setting up a reasonable philosophy with the same unanswerable clarity as arithmetic, he would hardly have used any way other than this to establish a sect of followers, a thing which he so earnestly wanted. For by applying this method of philosophizing, a school would from its very beginning, and by the very nature of things, assert its supremacy in the realm of reason in a geometrical manner and could never perish nor be shaken until the sciences themselves die through the rise of a new barbarism among mankind. (ibid., p. 223)

This way of arguing and understanding the formation of knowledge and establishing of meaning presupposes that reason and reasoning have a single correct and perennial form. For Leibniz, 'reason will be right beyond all doubt only when it is everywhere as clear and certain as only arithmetic has been until know' (ibid., p. 224). It also presupposes—for instance to the extent that a realisation of perfect and perennial knowledge will be of general benefit for humankind and provide 'a new kind of instrument which will increase the power of the mind much more than optical lenses strengthen the eyes and which will be as far superior to microscopes or telescopes as reason is superior to sight' (ibid., p. 224)—that anyone at any place and time can appropriate the same knowledge and agree upon its truthfulness. Leibniz certainly thinks this is the case:

> The characters which express all our thoughts will constitute a new language which can be written and spoken; this language will be very difficult to construct, but very easy to learn. It will be quickly accepted by everybody on account of its great utility and its surprising facility. (Leibniz [1677] 1951d, p. 16)

Indeed, reason can still go astray, understanding can falter. In the presence of a universal science, however, whatever does not fit with the order of that science can be said to be an error, and with the method for determining absolute truths readily available, disagreements can be settled by applying the method correctly to the problem at hand. Errors can always be fixed:

> If we could find characters or signs appropriate for expressing all our thoughts as definitely and as exactly as arithmetic expresses numbers or geometric analysis expresses lines, we could in all subjects *in so far as they are amendable to reasoning* accomplish what is done in Arithmetic and Geometry.
>
> For all inquiries which depend on reasoning would be performed by the transposition of characters and by a kind of calculus, which would immediately facilitate the discovery of beautiful results. …
>
> Moreover, we should be able to convince the world what we should have found or concluded, since it would be easy to verify the calculation either by doing it over or by trying tests. … And if someone would doubt my results, I should say to him: 'Let us calculate, Sir,' and thus by taking to pen and ink, we should soon settle the question. (ibid., p. 15)
>
> The only way to rectify our reasonings is to make them as tangible as those of the Mathematicians, so that we can find our error at a glance, and when there are disputes among persons, we can simply say: Let us calculate, without further ado, in order to see who is right. (Leibniz [1685?] 1951e, p. 51; see also Leibniz [1682?] 2006a, pp. 216–217)

Hence, the early modern understanding of knowledge and the determination of meaning presupposes that the mind operates, in principle, in the same way irrespective of time and place, that the mind is forever the same, that it does not change historically. The early modern mind, to generalise from this example, operates, in principle, anywhere and anytime the same. Thus, early modern human being is perennial in some sense; what it means to be human does not change, because the operations of the human mind do not change.

Early modern knowledge of nature—or, rather, thought as knowledge of nature—is, in principle then, a perfect representation of the natural world; the early modern mind is, to borrow a phrase by Rorty, a 'mirror of nature' (Rorty 1979, pp. 17–69). The per-

fect representation in the human mind of what is duplicates being in knowledge. In this sense, it can be said, as Bacon does, that 'the truth of being and truth of knowing are one, differing no more than the direct beam and the beam reflected' ([1605] 1996, p. 142). And this because the mind's representation of being is itself truth: 'the essential form of knowledge ... is nothing but a representation of truth' (ibid., p. 142).

However, as mentioned already, the image in the mirror that is the human mind is no longer part of what it mirrors in early modernity. Image and thing are no longer of the same order; they are split in two. As Hobbes puts it: 'the object is one thing, the image ... is another' ([1651] 1991, p. 14).

As a perfect mirror of nature, the mind thinks of things as they truly are. It does not think of things according to this or that perspective or interpretive schema, but as they are in themselves; thought as the mirror of nature accesses things in themselves. The human mind represents things as they are absolutely. Regarding knowledge of nature, this means that human knowledge of nature is knowledge of absolute nature.

However, that knowledge of nature is knowledge of absolute nature means that, even though signification is an act, it amounts only to a passive rendering of what is presented to it. The mind, even though it constructs meaning, is not creative in the sense that it fabricates something that is not already present in the world of things; what the mind represents does not originate in itself since it merely mirrors an external world. This also suggests that when thought thinks of itself as a thing, its objective character comes out as being as absolute as any other thing. For thought, thinking is not a thing according to a certain way of approaching it; it is a thing, plain and simple.

To summarise this section so far, humans are conceptualised in early modern discourse as split beings. On the one hand, they are bodily creatures no different from other living beings. On the other hand, their minds have the ability to think and thought makes them unique and separates them from corporeal existence. Thought, furthermore, because it consists of the act of signification and signification is structured along the binary of something that is represented by something else that represents it, does strictly not itself belong to the world it signifies, to the world of things. Lastly, because the world of things equals the world of nature, the human mind—the truly human being—is completely separated from nature.

To think, according to early modern discourse, is to represent the world of things and since that world is exterior to thought, to think is to represent an external world. Or, to put it with even more precision, since to represent is to signify, to think is to attribute meaning to the external world of nature. Humans, then, perfectly represent the natural world in the act of thinking. This results in a somewhat paradoxical situation: On the one hand, in their very being as humans, humans are separated from the natural world through the activity of thought. On the other hand, this activity perfectly mirrors the natural world from which thought externalises itself. So, in a sense, nature duplicates itself in human thought. Crucially, however, this is not indicative of a continuation of the medieval conceptualisation of humans as microcosms or knowledge as a resemblance of what it knows. For, in early modernity, nature becomes fully different when it is duplicated in thought—the direct beam becomes the beam reflected, so to

speak—simply because thought is conceptualised in such a way that it must be different compared to that of which it thinks. Again, what goes on inside the human mind does not in any way belong to the natural world, nor does it resemble it. 'It is clearly not necessary', Leibniz's states, 'for that which expresses to be similar to the thing expressed' ([1678] 1969m, p. 207), and indeed, 'the idea of the circle is not similar to the circle' (ibid., p. 208). Or, as put by Descartes:

> Suppose we hear only the sound of some words, without attending to their meaning. Do you think the idea of this sound, as it is formed in our mind, is anything like the object which is its cause...? Suppose we pass a feather gently over the lips of a child who is falling asleep, and he feels himself being tickled. Do you think the idea of tickling which he conceives resembles anything present in this feather? (Descartes [1629–1633] 1985f, p. 82)

In fact, speaking of Descartes, his writings—especially as his notion of substance dualism is developed therein—amount to one of the most significant contributions to the early modern conceptualisation of humans, nature, and their relation. To that extent, they bring together many of the issues discussed so far in this section.

For Descartes, the truth is that which cannot be doubted. In the *Meditations on First Philosophy* he writes that 'whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true' ([1641] 1984c, p. 24) and a clear and distinct perception, in turn, is a perception which is impossible to doubt ([1641] 1984b, p. 104). In his search for such truths—such indubitable perceptions—by casting doubt on everything he possibly can, he arrives at the conclusion that what cannot be doubted in any way at all is his own existence, the existence of the *I*. In his *Meditations*, he hy-

pothesises for heuristic purposes that a 'malicious demon' ([1641] 1984c, p. 15) is trying to deceive him in every way possible, and this obviously forces him to question everything that appears to be certain. Nevertheless, despite the need to universally doubt everything, Descartes finds that his own existence still cannot be doubted, for it is *he* who is being deceived, and it is *he* who is doubting. Therefore, the most basic and simple truth is that the I exists:

> If I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist,* is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. (ibid., p. 17)

This I which necessarily must exist in for doubt to be possible consists of nothing but thought:

> At last I have discovered it – thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason – words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. But for all that I am a thing which is real and which truly exists. But what kind of thing? As I have just said – a thinking thing. (ibid., p. 18)

The I, then, is a mind only. Humans are only their minds; they are defined as human

by their thoughts. Thought is the unique property of human being and nothing else is required for the human I to exist.

Descartes conceptualises the I as a substance, and 'by *substance*', he writes in *Principles of Philosophy*, 'we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence' ([1644] 1985c, p. 210). Substances, then, exist absolutely—substance is absolute being—which means that since the I is a substance, it exists absolutely; it is not conditioned by anything else. Most importantly, it is not dependent on anything material or corporeal. Thus, Descartes writes:

> In rejecting – and even imagining to be false – everything which we can in any way doubt, it is easy for us to suppose that there is no God and no heaven, and that there are no bodies, and even that we ourselves have no hands or feet, or indeed any body at all. But we cannot for all that suppose that we, who are having such thoughts, are nothing. For it is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not, at the very time when it is thinking, exist. Accordingly, this piece of knowledge – *I am thinking, therefore I exist* – is the first and most certain of all to occur to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way. (ibid., pp. 194–195)

And in like manner, in the *Discourse on the Method*, he claims that the human I is independent of any body:

> I resolved to present that all the things that had ever entered my mind were no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately I noticed that while I was trying thus to think everything false, it was necessary that I, who was thinking this, was something. And observing that this truth '*I am thinking, therefore I exist*' was so firm and sure that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were incapable of shaking it, I decided that I could accept

it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.

> Next I examined attentively what I was. I saw that while I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that pretend that I did not exist. I saw on the contrary that from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed.... From this I knew I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which does not require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist. Accordingly, this 'I' ... is entirely distinct from the body. (Descartes [1637] 1985b, p. 127)

Material bodies, Descartes has it, are also substances, referred to as corporeal substance. Whereas the human I is a substance defined by thought, corporeal substance is defined by the property of extension (Descartes [1644] 1985c, p. 224). Thought and extension in time and space are the self-evident essences of the human I and material bodies respectively, their essences. In the *Principles of Philosophy*, he describes thinking substance, corporeal substance, and their relation as follows:

> Each substance has one principle property which constitutes its nature and essence, and to which all its other properties are referred. Thus extension in length, breadth and depth constitutes the nature of corporeal substance; and thought constitutes the nature of thinking substance. Everything else which can be attributed to body presupposes extension, and is merely a mode of an extended thing; and similarly, whatever we find in the mind is simply one of the various modes of thinking. For example, shape is unintelligible except in an extended thing; and motion is unintelligible except as motion in an extended space; while imagination, sensation and will are intelligible only in a

thinking thing. By contrast, it is possible to understand extension without shape or movement, and thought without imagination or sensation, and so on. (ibid., pp. 210–211)

Thus, thinking substance and corporeal substance are completely different and they relate to each other only as being utterly separate forms of existence. From this, it follows that human being exists independently of corporeal things; it lives a life on its own. In *The Passions of the Soul*, where Descartes writes about thought as the only content of the human soul ([1649] 1985e, p. 335), he claims that

the soul is of such a nature that it has no relation to extension, or to the dimensions or other properties of the matter of which the body is composed. (ibid., p. 339)

Independence, however, goes the other way around as well; material things, including the human body, are as independent of humans as humans are independent of material things:

When we try to get to know our nature more distinctly we can see that our soul, in so far as it is a substance which is distinct from the body, is known to us merely through the fact that it thinks, that is to say, understands, wills, imagines, remembers and has sensory perceptions; for all these functions are kinds of thought. The other functions, which some people attribute to the soul, such as moving the heart and the arteries, digesting food in the stomach and so on, do not involve any thought, and are simply bodily movements. (Descartes [1647] 1985a, pp. 314–315)

Because the human body, then, is independent of the human mind, Descartes also maintains that the body would function even in the absence of the mind. Comparing the human body to a machine—which,

as will be delineated in the next section, is the way in which things in nature are understood generally in early modern discourse—Descartes writes:

I might consider the body of a man as a kind of machine equipped with and made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin in such a way that, even if there were no mind in it, it would still perform all the same movements as it now does in those cases where movement is not under the control of the will or, consequently, of the mind. (Descartes [1641] 1984c, p. 58)

In all, as they are conceptualised by Descartes, humans are truly split beings, their two sides being so utterly distinct from each other that human beings come out as completely dual:

The whole nature of the mind consists in the fact that it thinks, while the whole nature of the body consists in its being an extended thing; and there is absolutely nothing in common between thought and extension. I also distinctly showed on many occasions that the mind can operate independently of the brain, for the brain cannot in any way be employed in pure understanding. (Descartes [1641] 1984a, p. 248)

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In this section, it has been shown, in the works of Descartes and other early moderns, how humans are conceptualised in such a way that they come out as completely separated from the natural world. To be human in early modernity is to be a pure mind, to be pure thought. The human being is a thoroughly ideal being with the power to bring meaning to things. It is, furthermore, the only being with this power. Representational thought is a uniquely human characteristic.

By means of the signifying power of the mind, humans attribute meaning to the natural world and such thought, such attribution, always and necessarily differentiates itself from that which it signifies simply because of the way in which signs are conceptualised. The human mind provides a transcendent origin to meaning; it exists above and beyond any particular meaningful experience. Since the sign is contained in the binary relation between representing and represented, thought must always differentiate itself from that of which it thinks. To this extent, the very possibility of thought requires nature to be external to it. To be human is to be non-nature, and to be nature is to be non-human. Therefore, humans and nature amount to two completely different forms of existence, to two separate kinds of being. In early modernity, humans and nature are truly worlds apart, separated as if there was a wall between them. There is no connection between the two, no common ground, no points of contact. One world populated by the human, ideal and subjective, and another by the natural, material and objective, their only relation being that they have no relation at all.

This is why my preferred way of speaking of the conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature during early modernity is as a *separation*.

That being said, the purely subjective being of humans and the clear-cut division between the human and the natural is destabilised and challenged by a parallel rendition of the early modern world. For, not only are humans also bodily creatures comparable to the animals, thought itself is presented to itself as a thing, following from the binary constitution of signs. As a result of how the mind operates, then, thought and human being tend to be reinserted into the world of things once they have been separated from it. Thus, an ineradicable tension emerges in early modern discourse, a tension between the conceptualisation of humans as completely separate from the natural world on the one hand, and humans as natural beings on the other. When I turn to the concept of politics in early modernity below, this tension and its implication will become very evident. Specifically, insofar as humans can be thought of as objects and as parts of the world of things, it is possible to gain perfect and certain knowledge of what they are and what they do, just like it is possible to know everything there is to know about nature, and this has far-reaching consequences.

Notwithstanding the objectification of human existence by thought itself, I still maintain that the relation between humans and nature in early modernity is best described as a separation. My reason for this is that in early modern discourse, humans *think* of themselves and their subjective being in objective terms. Since thought, because of its association with signification and because of the way signs are conceptualised, separates itself from the natural world, the objective and seemingly natural being of humans is conditioned by their subjective and non-natural being. Humans, so to speak, subjectively insert themselves as objects in the world of things by thinking that they are part of that world.

Lastly, before moving on to the concept of nature, it is worth mentioning how different the process of becoming human is in early modernity as compared to the Middle Ages. According to medieval discourse, to become human is to immerse oneself in the natural world to which one already belongs, and

by exploring and duplicating the content of that world humans not only realise themselves as humans but also complete nature and bring it together. In early modern discourse, on the other hand, to become human is to differentiate oneself from nature; to be human is to think and every thought is an affirmation of the distance between oneself and nature. In this vein, Descartes maintains that 'every consideration whatsoever which contributes to my perception of … any … body, cannot but establish even more effectively the nature of my own mind' ([1641] 1984c, p. 22). When humans think, which is, indeed, all they do considering they are pure thought, they separate themselves from nature; to become human is not only to become non-nature, it is to become non-nature by one's own doing. Through the constructive power of the human mind, its every engagement with the natural world confirms, strengthens, and sustains human being as something different and separate from nature; humans become who they are by moving themselves by themselves away from nature. In fact, every encounter with the natural world is made possible by the separateness of human being vis-à-vis nature. Thus, it is human thought itself that is responsible for its separation from the natural world. The separation of humans from nature is of human origin, a consequence of what it means to be human.

4.2 Nature

The nature humans separate themselves from in early modernity is decidedly not the same nature as the nature to which medieval humans had belonged. In the shift from medieval to early modern discourse, the concept of nature undergoes a more or less complete transformation. In the previous chapter, medieval nature was said to be organicist, interconnected, teleological, harmonious, hierarchical, and active. All of these characteristics change with the emergence of early modern thought (Koyré 1957, 1965), as difference is elevated to the same level as identity and order becomes the rule of discourse. In fact, as I will argue in this section, they are inverted in early modern discourse, the only major characteristic of the concept of nature surviving the shift being the notion that nature is an ordered independent reality.

Medieval nature had been ordered as a reality which in itself was meaningful and its order depended on the possibility of nature to provide itself with that meaning. This can no longer be the case in early modernity, since meaning, according to early modern discourse, originates in the human mind. Things in themselves are not meaningful by themselves, neither is the world of those things. Therefore, early modern nature, insofar as it consists of things, must exist as an inherently non-meaningful reality, and whatever the things of which it consists are, they must also consist of something non-meaningful.

However, of what is it that nature might consist? An answer to this question has actually already been provided by the material covered in the previous section, especially by Descartes' notion of corporeal substance. Early modern nature consists of bodies extended in time and space. Thus, nature equates to the material universe. On this, Hobbes writes that

> The World, (I mean not the Earth onely … but the *Universe*, that is, the whole masse of all things that are) is Corporeall, that is to say, Body; and hath the di-

mensions of Magnitude, namely, Length, Bredth, and Depth: also every part of Body, is likewise Body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the Universe, is Body; and that which is not Body, is no part of the Universe: And because the Universe is All, that which is no part of it, is *Nothing*; and consequently *no where*. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 463; see also Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 410–411)

Moreover, just like Descartes conceptualises substance as absolute being and thus maintains that bodies exist independently of thought, Hobbes emphasises the independence of the corporeal universe vis-à-vis human thought and, in doing so, also specifies that natural bodies are things:

Things . . . have no dependence upon our thought. And this is that which, for the extension of it, we commonly call *body;* and because it depends not upon our thought, we say is *a thing subsisting of itself;* as also *existing,* because without us. (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 102)

Hobbes maintains that there are no voids in nature (e.g. ibid., p. 426). It is, however, also possible to maintain in a meaningful way from within early modern discourse that nature consists of matter and a void surrounding matter. One of the advocates of the latter position is Gassendi. He distinguishes spatial and temporal from corporeal being and asserts the independent reality of space and time (Gassendi [1658] 1972, pp. 383–390). Space and time, Gassendi maintains, are not dependent on bodies, for 'even if there were no bodies, there would still remain both an unchanging place and an evolving time' (ibid., p. 384). Nor are they dependent on something incorporeal, like the human mind:

Space and time must be considered real things, or actual entities. . ., they . . . actually exist and do not depend upon the mind like a chimera since space endures steadfastly and time flows on whether the mind thinks of them or not. (ibid., pp. 384–385)

Since space and time are independent of corporeal and incorporeal being, there can be real empty space and time. Voids are a real possibility, a possibility of the real. As an example of the reality of the void, Gassendi makes use of the spatial dimensions of a vessel:

For example, the length, width, and depth of some water contained in a vase would be corporeal; but the length, width, and depth that we would conceive as existing between the walls of the vase if the water and every other body were excluded from it would be spatial. (ibid., p. 385)[13]

The universe then, to draw on this analogy, is like a vessel containing material being.

Thus, early modern nature consists of material bodies—and for some, the void between them—which are the same as things; and it consists of *all* things and *nothing but* things. Furthermore, since it has already been concluded that humans are not part of this world, it follows that humans are actually no things at all; the human mind is strictly speaking nowhere to be found in the universe.

Since nature consists only of matter, it does not encompass a spiritual dimension, as had medieval nature. 'By "nature"', writes Descartes, 'I do not mean some goddess or any other sort of imaginary power. Rather, I am using this word to signify matter itself' ([1629–1633] 1985f, p. 92). Whereas me-

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[13] For more on Gassendi's understanding of space and the void, see Grant (1981, pp. 206–213) and Osler (1994, pp. 182–194).

dieval nature had assimilated within itself its own divine origin, early modern thought makes a much firmer distinction between God and nature, between the spiritual and the material.

I will come back to the issue of God and nature later on, but more things need to be said about material bodies. Importantly, the bodies of which nature consists move. Or, to be more exact, they are moved by other moving bodies; nature is matter in motion. It has already been shown, for instance, that Hobbes argues that motion in general is the cause of all universal things and that singular things are caused by specific kinds of motions. Hobbes also maintains that motion produces only new motion (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 12, [1655] 1962, pp. 70, 124–125), implying that the universe consists solely of bodies that move because they are moved by other bodies (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 461; see also Brandt 1928, in particular pp. 260–288, 339–356).

Furthermore, from order being the rule according to which discourse is governed and its functioning as a qualitative sorting of identities and differences, it follows that early modern nature amounts to a totality of nominally arranged material bodies, a system in which all things are sorted based on their identities and differences. At a very basic level, the early modern epistemic configuration of discourse makes it possible to enumerate and categorise all bodies in nature qualitatively based on their purely qualitative identities and differences. Such endeavours of classification, and the associated creation of immense tables of all things living and dead, are primarily associated with the discourse of natural history and figures such

as Comte de Buffon and Linnaeus (Foucault 2002b, pp. 136–179). But however important that kind of classification of nature and definitions of things was during the early modern period, and have been for the subsequent development of discourses such as biology (see e.g. Farber 2000; Mayr 1982, in particular pp. 147–208), it was not the predominant way in which nature was conceptualised in early modernity. For, in early modern discourse, it is possible to translate qualitative differences into quantitative ones if some kind of common unit of measurement is applied to the things and properties being compared (Foucault 2002b, p. 59). The quantified differences garnered by such efforts pave the way for a conceptualisation of nature in purely quantitative terms. Take, for instance, a triangle and a rectangle. They are straightforwardly qualitatively different shapes and they can be arranged against each other as two different things by means of simple ocular inspection.[14] However, by measuring both shapes using the same unit of measurement other kinds of comparison become available. For instance, should one count their sides, simply by adopting the unit of integers, one would determine that one of them has three sides and the other four. Should one adopt the notion of degrees and that a full rotation around a circle—yet a third shape—amounts to 360 degrees, one would also find that the angles of the shape with three sides amount to 180 degrees and the angles of the other one to 360 degrees, and so forth. Thus, the two shapes can be described and compared according to a variety of quantitative measures and their difference established with reference to those descriptions and comparisons.

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[14]The example of the triangle and the rectangle is freely adopted from Descartes ([1628] 1985d, pp. 64–65).

In extension, this suggests that it is possible to represent all things by means of quantitative expressions (Descartes [1628] 1985d, pp. 64–65) and, from this, it follows that the natural world in its entirety, and the very order of the natural world, can be represented exhaustively in mathematical terms. This is also precisely what happens in the early modern period; nature becomes conceptualised as a material world that is possible to represent through mathematics.[15]

Early modern nature, then, amounts not only to a system of identities and differences but to a *mathematical* system of identities and differences. Even though the notion of nature being like a book no longer makes much ontological sense—since the world itself is not meaningful in itself—the phrase is still used for rhetorical purposes.[16] Most importantly, it is used to represent the mathematical character of the world. Galileo writes:

> Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth. (Galileo [1623] 1957, pp. 237–238)

In this passage, Galileo not only emphasises the mathematical character of nature but also that natural bodies are geometrical bodies, thus indicating the fundamental role played by geometry for the early modern conceptualisation of nature.

Medieval nature had also been populated by bodies. Those bodies, however, were organic, animated as if they had a soul. As organisms, natural bodies, and the world they populated, had a purpose; the whole universe had an end to which it strove. The natural bodies of early modernity, on the other hand, are abstract mathematical entities, empty geometrical shapes far from being alive. 'Whatsoever accidents or qualities our senses make us think there be in the world', writes Hobbes, 'they are not there, but are seemings and apparitions only. The things that really are in the world without us, are those motions by which these seemings are caused' (Hobbes [1640] 1994, p. 26; see also Hadot 2006, p. 126; Merchant 1989, pp. 201–202; Meyer 2001, pp. 58–59). As such, they lack the purposive character associated with animated being. Therefore, and this is also in line with nature no longer being an inherently meaningful world, early modern nature is no longer characterised by an overarching teleological process (Burtt 1932; Koyré 1943, p. 404, 1957, p. 2, 1965, pp. 7–8); indeed, early modern nature moves but it moves without purpose; motion has no end (Spragens 1973, p. 63). Thus, the functioning of nature can no longer be validly explained in terms of final cause. 'Physic doth make inquiry and take consideration', as Bacon asserts, 'only as to the Material and Efficient Causes' of nature 'and not as to the Forms' (Bacon [1605] 1996, pp. 196–197; see also Bacon [1620] 2000, p. 109). Descartes goes further

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[15] For influential seminal accounts of the mathematisation of nature in early modernity, see Burtt (1932), Dijksterhuis (1961), Husserl (1970b, in particular pp. 21–59), and Koyré (1957, 1965, 1978). For more recent work, see Gorham, Hill, and Slowik (2016), various other contributions to the same volume, Mahoney (1998) and Roux (2010).

[16] For some brief examples, see Curtius (1953, pp. 322–326), and Berkel and Vanderjagt (2006) for more in-depth treatments.

and states that 'we shall entirely banish from our philosophy the search for final causes' ([1644] 1985c, p. 202), and according to Spinoza, 'nature has no end set before it…, all final causes are nothing but human fictions' (Spinoza [1677] 1985, p. 442).

Hence, the Aristotelian fourfold schema of causality is no longer of any use for making sense of the world. In explicit opposition to the Aristotelian conceptualisation of cause, Hobbes disqualifies formal and final cause, preserving, however, efficient and material cause. As Hobbes has it, efficient cause consists of the aggregate of all properties, or 'accidents', of a body—the agent—that produces an effect in another body. Material cause, on its end, is the aggregate of all properties in the body in which the effect is produced (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 122). Thus, efficient and material cause go hand in hand, they form a single process Hobbes refers to as the 'entire cause' (ibid., pp. 121–122). The efficient cause is basically that which produces what is produced, and the material cause that which is produced by that which produces, and entire cause thus denotes the whole process in which something is changed by something else. In line with the argument that motion produces only new motion, he specifies that all change in nature refers to motion (ibid., p. 126); all change, in Hobbes's view, is change of place, as was noted earlier (see page 252 above, and also Spragens 1973, p. 63). Moreover, he also maintains that all motion is always caused by an agent, which suggests that all motion in nature is a result of efficient cause (Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 127–131). In other words, the motion characterising nature follows exclusively the logic of efficient cause. Therefore, everything that happens in nature can be accounted for solely by referring to effi-

cient cause; there is, so to speak, '*no change without push*' (Watkins 1973, p. 24; see also Meyer 2001, p. 59).

As to Aristotle's two remaining kinds of causes, Hobbes argues that they are just instances of efficient cause:

> The writers of metaphysics reckon up two other causes besides *efficient* and *material,* namely the ESSENCE, which some call the *formal cause,* and the END, or *final cause;* both which are nevertheless efficient causes. For when it is said the essence of a thing is the cause thereof, *as to be rational is the cause of man,* it is not intelligible; for it is all one, as if it were said, *to be a man is the cause of man;* which is not well said. And yet the knowledge of the *essence* of anything, is the cause of the knowledge of the thing itself; for, if I first know that a thing is *rational,* I know from thence, that the same is *man;* but this is no other than an efficient cause. (Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 131–132)

He also claims that '*final cause* has no place but in such things as have sense and will' (ibid., p. 132). Moreover, Bacon—who thinks there is indeed a place for both final and efficient cause, but in the discourse of 'Metaphysic' rather than in that of 'Physic' (Bacon [1605] 1996, p. 196)—maintains that final cause 'is a long way from being useful; in fact it actually distorts the sciences except in the case of human actions' (Bacon [1620] 2000, p. 102, see also p. 109). For Bacon, final cause has more to do with normative matters of human action—what humans ought to do—than with the Aristotelian notion of teleology in nature. And in *The New Organon* he does indeed state that the most 'sensible and … majestic' human ambition is 'to renew and extend the power and empire of the human race itself over the universe of things' (ibid., p. 100), and that 'man' has

'the right over nature' (Bacon [1620] 2000, p. 101).[17]

In a similar fashion, Leibniz also reserves final cause to something pertaining to humans alone, but rather to their soul:

> Souls act according to the laws of final causes through appetitions, ends, and means. Bodies act according to the laws of efficient causes, or laws of motion. (Leibniz [1714] 2014, p. 30)

In other words, in early modernity, purpose makes sense only as a description of *human* doing, nothing else; only human action is meaningful. This has a rather straightforward reason: since the only source of meaning in the early modern world is the human mind, only that which originates in it can be said to have intrinsic meaning. To all other things and for everything that happens in nature, meaning is attributed, and nature and whatever happens in nature can have purpose only in relation to human beings. So the world loses its final disposition; no longer are things gathered towards a common goal. By that, nature also loses the fundamental harmony it had had in the Middle Ages. This is not to say that the natural world is chaotic or *dis*harmonious. Rather, nature is neither harmonious nor chaotic, it

simply is. Or, as will be argued below, it is ordered in such a way that it is regular and uniform, thus evading both chaos and teleological harmony.

This far, it has been outlined that early modern nature is thought to consist of material bodies in motion, that all motion is a result of efficient cause, and that all of nature can be represented through mathematics, specifically geometry. All of this adds up to nature assuming a fundamental and general mechanical character (Dijksterhuis 1961; Gaukroger 2006, pp. 253–351; Garber and Roux 2013; Westfall 1977); the world is no longer an organism, it is a machine; not a living body, but a clock (Hadot 2006, p. 127; Merchant 1989, pp. 192, 220–227): 'My aim', writes Kepler, 'is to show that the celestial machine is to be likened not to a divine organism but rather to a clockwork' (Kepler quoted in Holton 1956, p. 342; see also Kepler [1605] 1951, p. 146).[18] To the extent that it is a machine, moreover, whatever goes on inside it—every motion and every change—follows mechanical principles. Thus Boyle writes:

> That … which I chiefly aime at, is to make it Probable to you …: That all-most all sorts of Qualities … *may* be pro-

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[17] Inquiries about formal cause, for Bacon, generally should be about investigating the basic material structure of an object. In *The Advancement of Learning*, he writes: 'the Forms of Substances I say … are so perplexed, as they are not to be enquired; no more than it were either possible or to purpose to seek in gross the forms of those sounds which make words, which by composition and transposition of letters are infinite. But on the other side, to enquire the form of those sounds or voices which make simple letters is easily comprehensible, and being known, induceth and manifesteth the forms of all words, which consist and are compounded of them. In the same manner to enquire the Form of a lion, of an oak, of gold, nay of water, of air, is a vain pursuit: but to enquire the Forms of sense, of voluntary motion, of vegetation, of colours, of gravity and levity, of density, of tenuity, of heat, of cold, and all other natures and qualities, which like an alphabet are not many, and of which the essences (upheld by matter) of all creatures do consist; to enquire I say the true forms of these, is that part of Metaphysic which we now define of' ([1605] 1996, p. 196). And in *The New Organon* he further specifies that 'when we speak of forms, we mean simply those laws and limitations of pure act which organise and constitute a simple nature, like heat, light or weight, in every kind of susceptible material and subject. The form of heat therefore or the form of light is the same thing as the law of heat or the law of light' (Bacon [1620] 2000, p. 128; see also Gaukroger 2001, p. 140). With such a meaning, the concept of form approaches that of laws of nature, which will be discussed shortly.

[18] On the importance of the clock metaphor for the conceptualisation of nature, see Blumenberg (2010, pp. 62–76).

duced Mechanically, I mean by such Corporeall Agents, as do not appear, either to Work otherwise, then by vertue of the Motion, Size, Figure, and Contrivance of their own Parts, (which Attributes I call the Mechanicall Affections of Matter, because to Them men willingly Referre the various Operations of Mechanical Engines:) or to Produce the new Qualities exhibited by those Bodies their Action changes, by any other way, then by changing the *Texture*, or *Motion*, or some other *Mechanical Affection* of the Body wrought upon. (Boyle [1666–1667] 1999a, p. 302)

Mechanistic descriptions also hold for things in nature, not just for nature as such. Even living things are built and function as machines. For instance, Descartes, as mentioned already, compares the human body to a machine in the *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Elsewhere, in *Discourse on the Method*, he notes that 'those who know how many kinds of automatons, or moving machines, the skill of man can construct with the use of very few parts, in comparison with the great multitude of bones, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins and all the other parts that are in the body of any animal ... will regard this body as a machine which ... is incomparably better ordered than any machine that can be devised by man' ([1637] 1985b, p. 139). And his *Treatise on Man* begins with Descartes stating simply that the human body is 'nothing but a statue or machine made of earth' ([1629–1633] 1985g, p. 99), and then proceeds with him giving a detailed account of the movements occurring in that machine. A similar account of the human machine, what it consists of and how it operates, is found in his *Description of the Human Body and of all its Functions*:

I want the reader to have a general notion of the entire machine which it is my task to describe. So I will say that the heat in the heart is like the great spring or principle responsible for all the movements occurring in the machine. The veins are pipes which conduct the blood from all the parts of the body towards the heart, where it serves to fuel the heat there. The stomach and the intestines are another much larger pipe perforated with many little holes through which the juices from the food ingested run into the veins.... The arteries are yet another set of pipes through which the blood, which is heated and rarefied in the heart, passes from there into all the other parts of the body, bringing them heat and material to nourish them. Finally, the parts of the blood that are most agitated and lively are carried to the brain by the arteries coming directly from the heart in the straightest line of all; these parts of the blood make up a kind of air or very fine wind which is called the 'animal spirits'. These dilate the brain and make it ready to receive impressions both from external objects and from the soul; and in receiving these impressions both from external objects and from the soul; and in receiving these impressions the brain acts as the organ or seat of the 'common' sense, the imagination and the memory. Next, this same air or these same spirits flow from the brain through the nerves into all the muscles, thus making the nerves ready to function as organs for the external senses; they also inflate the muscles in various ways and thus impart movement to all the parts of the body. (Descartes [1647] 1985a, pp. 315–316)

In the already quoted letter to the Marquess of Newcastle, Descartes also likens animal action to clockworks:

I know that animals do many things better than we do, but this does not surprise me. It can even be used to prove that they act naturally and mechanically, like a clock which tells the time better than our judgement does. Doubtless when the swallows come in spring, they operate

like clocks. The actions of honeybees are of the same nature; so also is the discipline of cranes in flight, and of apes in fighting, if it is true that they keep discipline. (Descartes [1646] 1991c, p. 304)

And, again, Leibniz makes a similar claim regarding the constitution of living bodies when he writes that

each organic body of a living thing is a kind of divine machine, or natural automaton.... [T]he machines of nature, that is, living bodies, are ... machines in their smallest parts, to infinity. (Leibniz [1714] 2014, p. 27)

Because nature and all things in it are viewed as machines, and because all movements and changes follow mechanical principles, it is, I believe, suitable to conceptualise early modern nature as a *mechanism*.

In addition to what has already been delineated, the mechanistic concept of nature comes with a few more important components.

First, mechanistic nature is uniform and regular, it behaves and functions everywhere the same. 'There is in fact no wisdom in nature and no appetite', writes Leibniz, 'yet a beautiful order arises in it because it is the timepiece of God' ([1669] 1969f, p. 101). One particularly succinct way of expressing the uniformity and regularity of nature is found in Hobbes's works and his claims that a cause always produces the same effect and that the effect of a cause is always and instantly produced if the cause is present (Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 122–123). In a world where this is true, no two different things will happen if the cause is the same, and if the cause is present the thing that has happened will always happen. In a general sense, the uniformity and regularity of nature implies that the latter is unchanging since it is everywhere the same.

Since nature is uniform and regular in this way, and since it is possible for the human mind to perfectly represent this uniformity and regularity, it is possible to formulate immutable universal principles or laws explaining why the world is what it is; causal explanations become conceptually tied to concepts of laws of nature (Steinle 1995, p. 337).[19] 'Everything is determined', as Spinoza maintains, 'by the universal laws of nature to exist and produce effects in a fixed and determinate way' ([1670] 2016b, p. 126). It can, for instance, be said, as Newton does, that '*every body preserves in its state of being at rest or of moving uniformly straight forward, except insofar as it is compelled to change its state by forces impressed*', and that '*a change in motion is proportional to the motive force impressed and takes place along the straight line in which that force is impressed*', and that '*to any action there is always an opposite and equal reaction; in other words, the actions of two bodies upon each other are always equal and always opposite in direction*' ([1687] 1999, pp. 416–417).

Generally, such laws of nature are believed to be of *mechanical* character. Descartes, for instance, claims that 'the laws of mechanics ... are identical with the laws of nature' ([1637] 1985b, p. 139), and regarding the '*course of Nature*', Boyle writes that 'the Phænomena of the World ... are Physically produc'd by the Mechanical affections of the parts of Matter' and that 'they operate upon one another according to Mechanical Laws' ([1666–1667] 2000, p. 104).

Boyle maintains, moreover, that such

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[19] For accounts of the early modern concept of law of nature, see Henry (2004), Milton (1998), Steinle (1995), and Zilsel (1942).

mechanical laws of nature provide an 'order amongst things Corporeal' (ibid., p. 104). In other words, the laws of nature provide nature with an order; they turn material reality into an ordered world. Again, early modern nature is not a harmonious world, it is merely regular and uniform. Thusly, it manages to evade both chaos and harmony; it always behaves in the same way but the behaviour never adds up to a common process towards an overarching goal.

The mechanical order of nature implies, then, that nature, even though it is no longer meaningful in itself, continues to be an ordered world. However, its order is mathematical rather than syntactical; it is an abstract system of identities and differences rather than a language, a theorem rather than a book. Early modern nature is indeed a rule-governed place, and it is possible for humans to know its rules through the discourses of mathematics and geometry. In fact, the being of early modern nature can be seen as more distinctly independent than the being of its medieval namesake. During the Middle Ages, nature had assimilated within itself its own divine origin, God had been continuously and forever present within it, breathing life into the organism of nature. Without the presence of God, medieval nature would have fallen apart. The natural organism would have died, so to speak. The relation between God and the early modern mechanistic nature, however, is a different one. It is a relation were God stands much farther away from the mater-

ial world. For the mechanistic universe, God's most important function is to establish the laws governing nature (Hadot 2006, pp. 129–139).[20] Indeed, a machine, most certainly, needs a builder but, once built, it does not necessarily depend on its builder supervising it. In other words, during early modernity, God is most definitely the creator of the world. 'God's relation' to created things, as Leibniz writes, is 'that of an inventor to his machine' ([1714] 2014, p. 31); God is an engineer, a clockmaker (Merchant 1989, pp. 225–226), and nature is God's machine. However, the natural machine does not need constant supervision. Either God needs only to set things in motion—to start up the machine—after which things move by themselves according to the laws God has established, or he just needs to do some occasional maintenance work on it. He does not need to continuously provide the machine with momentum. Hobbes is among the proponents of the first position. According to Hobbes, 'there must be … one First Mover; that is, a First, and an Eternall cause of all things; which is that which men mean by the name of God' (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 77).[21] The second position is advocated by Descartes and Boyle among others (see e.g. Descartes [1641] 1984c, pp. 24–36; Boyle [1686] 1996, p. 40, [1666–1667] 2000, p. 104), and is quite eloquently described by Leibniz in a critical remark on Newton:

> Sir Isaac Newton and his followers have … a very odd opinion concerning the work of God. According to their doctrine, God Almighty wants [i.e., needs] to wind

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[20] For accounts of the relation between God and the material world in early modern mechanical philosophy, see Koyré (1957, pp. 235–276) and Osler (1994).

[21] This concept of a first or prime mover was encountered already in the previous chapter (see page 169 above). Hence, that concept manages to survive the rupture between medieval and early modern discourse insofar as it makes sense on both sides of the divide, which is not to say that it is generally accepted among the early moderns to be a true description of nature.

up his watch from time to time; otherwise it would cease to move. He had not, it seems, sufficient foresight to make it a perpetual motion. Nay, the machine of God's making is so imperfect according to these gentlemen that he is obliged to clean it now and then by an extraordinary concourse, and even mend it as a clockmaker mends his work, who must consequently be so much more unskilful a workman, as he is oftener obliged to mend his work and set it right. According to my opinion, the same force and vigor remains always in the world and only passes from one part of matter to another, agreeably to the laws of nature and the beautiful pre-established order. (Leibniz [1715] 1969k, pp. 675–676)

Even though these two positions might disagree on the exact relation between God and the material world, they share the understanding of the world as something that can function independently of its maker. Thus, they both accept that, once the laws of nature are in place, the natural world can work perfectly fine without God's intervention, which also implies that the world is comprehensible without God as an explanatory factor (Descartes [1629–1633] 1985f, pp. 92–93); to make sense of the world, you need recourse only to the universal laws according to which it functions. This is the understanding of nature conveyed in the apocryphal statement attributed to Pierre-Simon Laplace, regarding the role of God in his *The System of the World*, that he did not need God as a hypothesis in his system (see e.g. Hadot 2006, p. 135).[22]

Second, even though nature is a world filled with matter in motion, and as such is teeming with activity, nature itself is not active. The matter nature consists of is characterised only by geometrical properties, it does not in itself contain a principle of motion; matter does not move by itself. Instead, the only reason a material body moves is because it is moved by another body, and this, in turn, is a result of the mechanical laws governing the universe. Thus, the principles of motion setting matter in action are external forces working upon matter (Merchant 1989, p. 193). Therefore, what happens in nature is a result of the immutable laws that govern it, not of innate principles of motion or animated spirit. The machines of nature are lifeless, moving only if something puts them in motion. In *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, Boyle discusses such sayings as 'Nature does nothing in vain', 'Nature is the curer of diseases', 'Nature abhors a vacuum', and others implying that nature does this or that or acts in this or that way ([1686] 1996, p. 31). However, such sayings, he writes, ascribe to nature a power of agency it does not have. He compares this view of nature with such sayings as 'the law punishes murder with death', that 'it protects the innocent' and that it 'releases a debtor out of prison when he has satisfied his creditors' (ibid., p. 33). And his point with the comparison is that 'it is plain that the law ... cannot in a physical sense be said to perform these things; but they are really performed by judges, officers, executioners and other men acting according to that rule' (ibid., p. 33). Similarly, nature does not do anything, things only happen *according* to nature, meaning that they happen according to the laws *governing* nature:

I consider the frame of the world already made as a great and, if I may so speak, pregnant automaton, that like a woman

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[22] Laplace is supposed to have said this to Napoleon but whether he did so is, to my knowledge, not certain. The quote is oft-repeated, however.

with twins in her womb, or a ship furnished with pumps, ordnance, etc. is such an engine as comprises or consists of several lesser engines. And this compounded machine, in conjunction with the laws of motion freely established and still maintained by God among its parts, I look upon as a complex principle, whence results the settled order or course of things corporeal. And that which happens according to this course may, generally speaking, be said to come to pass 'according to nature' or to be 'done by nature'…. And indeed though men talk of nature as they please, yet whatever is done among things inanimate, which make incomparably the greatest part of the universe, is really done but by particular bodies acting on one another by local motion, modified by the other mechanical affections of the agent, of the patient, and of those other bodies that necessarily concur to the effect or the phenomenon produced. (ibid., p. 40)

The activities of nature, then, are not intrinsic to that of which nature consists. Instead, activity is a result of how nature is constituted. This points to the third additional characteristic of mechanistic nature: since all matter is subjected to those laws according to which nature is ordered, there are no intrinsic differences between natural bodies in terms of how they function and in terms of what place they occupy in the universe. Thus, whereas medieval nature had been hierarchically structured, early modern nature is characterised by the absence of hierarchy; material bodies are equal to each other in terms of constitution and they are equally subjected to the laws of the universe. This is directly related to how things are ordered in early modern discourse. Since the fundamental principle of differentiation in early modern discourse consists of a nominal sorting based on qualitative difference, rank

and quantitative measurements are merely derivative. Thus, things are only different *as such*, they are not necessarily different in such a way that some things are ranked above or below others. Therefore, any hierarchical forms of order are merely the results of the processes of efficient causality shaping the natural world.

Fourth, in any machine, even though the parts produce effects in each other, they are not related in such a way that their very being is a result of those relations. A gear, for instance, is a gear whether or not it is part of a clock, and likewise, any gear that is part of a clock may be substituted by an equivalent item without the clock coming to a stop. In other words, a machine's parts are not constituted by their interconnectedness, nor is any part essentially connected to the machine as a whole. To clarify the implication of this intricacy, take the following passage in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*:

> A clock constructed with wheels and weights observes all the laws of its nature just as closely when it is badly made and tells the wrong time as when it completely fulfils the wishes of the clockmaker. (Descartes [1641] 1984c, p. 58)

The two clocks Descartes alludes to function differently, one telling the time correctly and the other telling it incorrectly. One is well-made, the other is not. Descartes does not, however, mention in what way the clock telling the time incorrectly is poorly made. Perhaps it has the exact same parts as the well-made clock but the parts have been assembled incorrectly. Or, perhaps it has been assembled using other parts that, when put together, simply does not add up to a clock telling the time properly. Either the parts between the two clocks differ, or the relations between the parts differ. How-

ever—and this is the crux of the matter—both machines are still clocks, even though only one of them tells the time as it should. This suggests that the parts of a machine may be exchanged, or the relations between parts may change, without the whole which they are part of—the machine as such—undergoing an essential transformation. The only thing that changes, when considering the machine as a whole, is how it functions. This, in turn, suggests that the parts exist independently of the machine and that the parts are fundamental in comparison to the machine insofar as they must exist before they can become parts of it. The being of the parts is not a result of them being parts of the machine or of the relations they have to other parts within it. Instead, the parts exist prior to the machine and independently of other parts. For the machine of nature, this means that its parts—matter, that is—exist as discrete entities more fundamental than any composite thing. Thus, nature consists of essentially equal elementary particles, atoms or corpuscles that form into bodies of varying kinds as a result of the laws of nature.

Boyle, whose theory of corpuscles is particularly influential,[23] writes that 'there is one Catholick or Universal Matter common to all Bodies, by which I mean a Substance extended, divisible and impenetrable' ([1666–1667] 1999a, p. 305), and proposes:

> *It seems not absurd to conceive that at the first Production of mixt Bodies, the Universal Matter whereof they among other Parts of the Universe consisted, was actually divided into little Particles of several sizes and shapes variously mov'd.* (Boyle [1661] 1999b, p. 229)

Such particles are what he refers to as cor-

puscles. Since all corpuscles are the same, mater cannot by itself account for the emergence of different natural bodies:

> Because this Matter being in its own Nature but one, the diversity we see in Bodies must necessarily arise from somewhat else, then the Matter they consist of. And since we see not, how there could be any change in Matter, if all its (actual or designable) parts were perpetually at rest among themselves, it will follow, that to discriminate the Catholick Matter into variety of Natural Bodies, it must have Motion in some or all its designable Parts: and that Motion must have various tendencies, that which is in that part tending another. (Boyle [1666–1667] 1999a, pp. 305–306)

Another influential atomistic understanding of nature is found in the work of Gassendi. As was noted above, Gassendi views the natural world as consisting of matter and void. The universe is like a vessel, in Gassendi's view, within the void of which matter resides. And that matter has a primary form, atoms:

> atoms are the primary form of matter, which God created finite from the beginning, which he formed into this visible world, which, finally, he ordained and permitted to undergo transformations out of which, in short, all the bodies which exist in the universe are composed. (Gassendi [1658] 1972, p. 399)

Atoms, to this extent, are divinely created, and their qualities provide the ultimate determination of what things are; knowledge of atoms can explain 'for what reason a thing is solid, or corporeal, how it becomes large or small, rarefied or dense, soft or hard, sharp or blunt, and so forth' (ibid., p. 399).

Gassendi does not, however, maintain that all atoms are identical. They come in

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[23]On early modern theories of matter, see Gaukroger (2006, pp. 257–262), Jalobeanu and Anstey (2011), and Lüthy, Murdoch, and Newman (2001).

different shapes and sizes. However, their qualities are only 'size, shape, and weight, or motion' (ibid., p. 424),[24] a view with which it becomes necessary to provide an explanation as to how other material qualities are possible. If atoms only have specific sizes, shapes, and weights, how come bodies have other qualities as well, such as 'color, heat, taste, odor, and innumerable others' (ibid., p. 424)? In *The Syntagma*, Gassendi provides an answer by likening atoms to the letters of the alphabet (ibid., pp. 424–434). Just like letters, atoms constitute a finite set— God created them 'finite from the beginning'. From the finite set of letters it is possible to produce innumerable words and sentences, the key being the different shapes, positions, and arrangements of the letters. The letters A and N have different shapes, and if you put them together you get the word AN. If you change the position of N by doing a quarter turn, you get a Z instead, and the word AZ. If instead you change their arrangement, you get the word NA. Continuing, putting the words together, you can get sequences such as AN NA, NA AN, and so forth. In principle, such changes make it possible to say all kinds of things and write all kinds of books. The same goes for atoms, Gassendi argues:

> As letters are the elements of writing, and as from them are produced first syllables, then words, sentences, orations, and books, so atoms are the elements of things from which first the tiniest concretions, or molecules, are formed, and then larger and larger ones, and miniscule bodies, bigger ones, and finally great big ones…. [J]ust as the different shapes of letters, for instance A and O, present different forms when we look

at them and different sounds when we pronounce them, so the atoms, depending on whether they are sharp, or rounded, or of some other shape, when they strike the organs of our sight, hearing, smell, or the other senses will create different impressions on them, or appear as different qualities, which is the same thing. And just as the same letter put in a different position represents something different to both sight and hearing, for instance N and Z … so the same atom put in a different position will have a different effect on the senses, for example if it is in the shape of a pyramid, sometimes it may penetrate point first, and sometimes land on its base. And as the same two letters or more when they precede or follow each other in different order suggest different words to the eye, the ear, and the mind … so the same atoms in various transpositions display different qualities, or appearances, to the senses. Finally, just as letters with no more shapes than the ones we find in the alphabet can produce an innumerable diversity of words by the mere variation of their arrangement, so great a diversity indeed that they suffice not only for all the books heretofore written, but also for all those yet to be composed, so it is logical that atoms with their innumerable shapes in various compounds may produce a diversity of qualities, or appearances, far more innumerable beyond any proposition, I might even say infinitely more. (ibid., pp. 427–428)

In these arrangements of atoms, in the formation of molecules and bodies, the shape and size of the atoms remain constant. What makes them possible is motion. It is because they move that atoms of different shapes and sizes can produce larger bodies with qualities not present in the atoms themselves. Again, however, matter does not move by

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[24] Gassendi's view of weight is a pre-Newtonian one according to which weight is that which makes matter move, which sheds light on the formulation 'weight, or motion', in this quote.

itself; nature is not active in itself; a material body is moved by another material body in motion. Ultimately, Gassendi maintains, the atomic quality of motion is instilled by God:

> The idea that atoms have impetus, or the power to move themselves inherent in their nature, is to be rejected.... It may then be admitted that atoms are mobile and active (*actuosas*) from the power of moving and acting which God instilled in them at their very creation. (Gassendi [1658] 1972, p. 399, parentheses in original)

Hence, even though nature is a world of passivity and atoms come with a very limited and finite set of qualities, the micro-level composition of the material world determines macro-level phenomena of great variety and complexity. Among his examples of this intricacy, Gassendi mentions how, when green senna leaves are immersed in hot water and 'the oil called tartar'[25] is added to the water, the water turns red:

> What is the cause of this? For there was no such redness in the water, nor in the leaves, nor in the oil. But the water penetrates so deeply, and so separates and extracts the tiniest particles of the leaves' substance by dispersing them, that when the particles of oil become mixed with the particles of water and senna, they change their composition and move their corpuscles so that light falling upon them from the outside, reflected and conveyed to the eyes, exhibits the appearance of that color. (ibid., pp. 428–429)

The understanding of nature as consisting of discrete elementary particles generating various composite bodies as a result of lawbound mechanical motion implies a difference between what nature is and what it becomes and does—with the caveat that early

modern nature does nothing at all, really, given the conceptualisation of matter as being inherently inert. Nature *is* corpuscles or atoms—or just matter, simply—but it *becomes* various mechanical things and it performs various movements. In the previous chapter, I argued that in organicist nature function resolves into structure, and the difference between what nature is and what it becomes and does in early modern discourse can be put in the same terms. Here, however, structure and function are separated and stand on equal footing rather than function being subordinate to structure. In early modernity, function is differentiated from structure, whereas in the Middle Ages all functions had followed directly from structure.

This dualism of structure and function is present at all levels of complexity in early modern nature. All things in nature, since they are constituted as machines, display a difference between what they are and what they become and do. As noted by Collingwood: 'In any machine structure is one thing, function another; for a machine has to be constructed before it can be set in motion' (1960, p. 16). A gear in a clock, for instance, has structural properties—size, shape, weight, and so forth—which are independent of its existence as a part of the clock and of what it does in it (ibid., p. 16).

Since function is distinguished from structure, things can act in ways that are not immediate consequences of their being—again with the caveat that early modern things actually do nothing at all. As an example, take Descartes' aforementioned clocks. These clocks function differently, telling the time as they do in two different

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[25] Potassium bitartrate

ways. Again, however, they *are* both still clocks. Or more generally stated, they are both machines. Indeed, either they consist of different parts or are put together in different ways but since the parts of a machine are not intrinsically related, machines can be constructed in many different ways without being anything else than machines. Thus, Descartes' two clocks *do* different things but *are* both clocks. This suggests that what is happening in nature—here represented by the movements of dials, levers, gears, and other parts of a clock—is not immediately given by what is.

Generally, the separation of function from structure opens up a natural space in which things come into existence in different ways and perform a plethora of actions, a space in which a multitude of constructions become possible. By that, it might seem like early modern nature has the character of a container—its structure—in which things move around unrestrained by their structural foundation. In that case, a considerable leeway would characterise natural existence in relation to the structure of nature, and things would be able to act unconditioned by what they are. This would make that which happens in nature unrelated to how nature is structured at the most fundamental level, to its very essence. In other words, what happens in nature would not be derived from what nature is. However, as it turns out, this is not the case. For, in mechanistic nature, function still *presupposes* structure (ibid., pp. 15–16), nature must still have an essence for something to happen in it at all. In early modern nature, function in general is not possible without nature having a fundamental and immutable structure; a clock can move only if its various parts have the specific properties required for it

to move and if there are mechanical laws determining their movements. Put differently, even though composite things in early modern nature differ from each other and even though different things happen in nature, all of this is still, ultimately, a consequence of the basic properties of matter and the laws governing its motion, like Gassendi's water with senna leaves turning red when tartar is added to it. Or, as Descartes writes about the functions of the human machine, 'these functions follow from the mere arrangement of the machine's organs every bit as naturally as the movements of a clock or other automaton follow from the arrangement of its counter-weights and wheels' ([1629–1633] 1985g, p. 108). What might seem to be free action and contingent existence is a result of nature's structure and perfectly in line with the conceptualisation of nature as completely following the logic of efficient causality. It is the structure of nature that is arranged in such a way that difference in function is possible; it is because of the laws of motion that things can act in different ways. Specifically, the reason why different things happen in nature is because natural circumstances differ. For instance, if Descartes' two clocks are indeed assembled using different parts, the difference in their actions is a result thereof.

The dualism of structure and function, then, is not as dramatic as it might first seem; it does not signal the disappearance of structure, not even the disappearance of the importance of structure. Indeed, function is more clearly distinguished from structure and it makes perfect sense to talk about what things are as one thing and what they do as another but, ultimately, function is dependent on structure. If there is to be action, there must first be a basic primor-

dial structure according to the way in which nature and natural things are conceptualised in early modernity. Thus, the freedom of things in relation to their structure is somewhat of a chimera, it only might seem that things can become what is not dictated by their structure and by the structure of nature in general.

One way in which this conceptualisation of nature makes itself present in early modern discourse is through the notion that natural things have both primary and secondary qualities. According to Locke, things have primary qualities such as solidity, extension, motion, number, and figure which are inseparable from them (Locke [1690] 1975, pp. 134–135). Primary qualities truly are in the objects they qualify. In addition to those qualities, things also have colour, smell, taste, sound, '*and other the like sensible Qualities*' (ibid., p. 137), and these are the secondary qualities. Contrary to primary qualities, secondary qualities are in fact separable from the things they qualify; they 'are in truth nothing in the Objects themselves' (ibid., p. 137). These qualities are ideas about things ascribed to them by the human mind. Thus, primary qualities are real and exist independently of human perception, whereas secondary qualities do not. If there are no humans present to perceive them, secondary qualities do not appear at all (ibid., pp. 137–138).

Secondary qualities can be viewed as that which things do or what their functions are, at least in terms of what they do and what their functions are in relation to humans. For instance, fire produces warmth, but it can also produce pain depending on the distance between the fire and the one sensing and experiencing it (ibid., p. 137). Thus, as an object, fire can quite obviously do differ-

ent things and different things can happen as a result of fire. And if secondary qualities are the functions of a thing, primary qualities amount to its structure, to what a thing really is; any fire has a form, it extends in time and space, and it moves in a certain manner, all independently of any humans.

In Locke's reasoning on primary and secondary qualities, it is in one sense implied that secondary qualities are independent of primary ones. For instance, Locke mentions porphyry and its red and white colour—or, rather, human *ideas* about porphyry being red and white. He writes:

> Hinder light but from striking on it, and its Colours Vanish; it no longer produces any such *Ideas* in us: Upon the return of Light, it produces these appearances on us again. Can any one think any real alterations are made in the *Porphyre*, by the presence or absence of Light; and that those *Ideas* of whiteness and redness, are really in *Porphyre* in the light, when 'tis plain *it has no colour in the dark*? (ibid., p. 139)

In the situation Locke describes, the porphyry itself does not change as its colour changes; its primary qualities remain the same. Put in the vocabulary of structure and function, this means that its structure remains the same while its function—what it does—changes. Moreover, since the function changes without the structure changing, it is implied in this reasoning that function is independent of structure.

However, ultimately, this is not the case. For, how does secondary qualities emerge in the first place? What produces them? Locke's answer is that they stem from the powers of the things themselves and that the things produce ideas in the human mind of specific qualities, both primary and secondary ones (ibid., pp. 134–137). Crucially, sec-

ondary qualities, as he writes, '*depend on . . . primary Qualities*' (ibid., p. 137). Thus, after all, secondary qualities are not independent of primary qualities:

> The *Ideas of secondary Qualities* are . . . *produced*, viz. *by the operation of insensible particles on our Senses. . . .* [T]here are Bodies, and good store of Bodies, each whereof is so small, that we cannot, by any of our Senses, discover either their bulk, figure, or motion, as is evident in the Particles of the Air and Water, and other extremely smaller than those, perhaps, as much smaller than the Particles of Air, or Water, as the Particles of Air or Water, are smaller than Pease or Hailstones. Let us suppose at present, that the different Motions and Figures, Bulk, and Number of such Particles, affecting the several Organs of our Senses, produce in us those different Sensations, which we have from the Colours and Smells of Bodies, *v.g.* that a Violet, by the impulse of such insensible particles of matter of peculiar figures, and bulks, and in different degrees and modifications of their Motions, causes the *Ideas* of the blue Colour, and sweet Scent of that Flower to be produced in our Minds. (ibid., p. 136)

Likewise, regarding the red and white colour of porphyry, Locke maintains that the configuration of particles in porphyry is such that when light shines on it some parts of it produce the idea of red in the human mind, and some others the idea of white. Hence, secondary qualities, even though they are not really *in* the objects, are still produced by the basic structural configuration of those objects; secondary qualities are the effects of the operations of structure, much like sweetness and whiteness are the 'effects of the operations' of Manna, to refer to another of Locke's examples (ibid., p. 138). As such, even though secondary qualities might seem independent of primary ones insofar as they

can change without the primary ones changing, the independence is chimerical since the changes in primary qualities are the results of structural properties.

It is important to note as well that humans have no active role here; the mind does not actively produce secondary qualities, they are not the figments of human imagination, and the changes of primary qualities are not consequences of changing perceptions of the same situation. Earlier, I argued that even though meaning is constructed in the human mind in early modernity, what is going on in the human mind is a kind of passive construction. The mind's creation of meaning is an immediate mirroring of the natural world, and Locke's conceptualisation of primary and secondary qualities is certainly in line with this general understanding of the creation of meaning since it stipulates that humans are merely receptive of natural situations and processes. For instance, the colour of porphyry does not change because humans comprehend it in different ways or have a sudden change of mind. Instead, it changes colour as a result of changing circumstances in the natural world, in this case whether light shines on it or not. Likewise, fire produces either warmth of pain as a result of the distance between the fire and humans. This kind of variations in circumstance is but a result of how nature as a machine is constituted and of how the laws of nature determine what is going on in the material world.

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In this section, I have argued that in early modernity nature is conceptualised as a mechanism. Here, nature is thought to be a machine consisting of inert matter formed

into bodies of varying kinds and complexity moving according to and as a result of universal immutable laws that humans can represent through mathematics and geometry. Moreover, all natural things themselves are also constructed as machines: nature is a machine containing other machines. I have also argued that for the early moderns, the parts of the machine of nature are not intrinsically related or constituted by their connections to other parts. Instead, matter is at the most fundamental level formed as discrete elementary particles displaying a basic equality vis-à-vis each other in terms of their composition; matter is atomistic and everywhere and anytime the same, or for some—Gassendi being the mentioned example—a finite set of different shapes and sizes. In fact, nature in general is structured essentially in a non-hierarchical way, no parts in it are essentially ranked above or below any other.

Early modern nature, moreover, lacks meaning and purpose. It is devoid of signs and symbols. If the only source of meaning is the human mind, it follows that nature itself cannot be meaningful. Furthermore, since the Aristotelian notion of final cause is disqualified from nature and reserved for human actions alone, nor can nature display a teleological process. This also deprives nature of harmony; a world where everything follows the logic of efficient cause cannot be gathered into an orchestrated whole with one final end in sight. Once the laws of nature are operative, they keep on operating regardless of anything else.

Thus, early modern nature is in many important aspects the very opposite of medieval nature as defining characteristics of nature are inverted between the two modes of thought. The only major characteristic surviving the epistemic shift between medi-

eval and early modern discourse is the notion of nature as an independent ordered reality. Even here, however, the similarities are modest since the meaning of that characteristic is noticeably altered. Whereas medieval nature had been ordered organically and as a language with its own syntax, early modern nature is ordered mechanically as a result of being governed by mathematical laws; medieval nature resembles a living creature making its own reality meaningful, early modern nature compares to just an abstract system of identities and differences.

Perhaps the most important difference between medieval and early modern nature, at least when considering how the concept of politics condenses in each discourse—and in the next section I will delve deeper into the early modern concept of politics and how it relates to the early modern concept of nature—concerns the ways in which structure and function are balanced in each of them. In the Middle Ages, function resolves into structure in such a way that everything that happens in nature can be directly referred to the very being of nature, whereas during early modernity function is distinguished from structure in such a way that it makes sense to conceptualise what a thing does as one thing and what it is as another. Furthermore, the early modern dualism of structure and function opens up a natural space in which a multitude of activities and processes are possible. That being said, function still very much depends on structure; for there to be functions at all, there must first be a structure. The world must be constituted in this or that way before this or that can happen.

Lastly, early modern nature strictly consists of objective being; the natural world is made up of things, and things only. Hu-

mans, on the other hand, are purely subjective; humans are thinking minds, and thinking minds alone. Early modern discourse differentiates between subjects and objects as discursive elements in a way medieval discourse does not. Subjects and objects are conceived of as two completely different and separate forms of being; what is subjective has nothing to do with what is objective, and vice versa. The line between subjective and objective being is drawn, moreover, between nature and humans. During the early modern period, then, the natural world becomes synonymous with the non-human, and being human becomes synonymous with the non-natural.

However, because subjectivity is conceptualised in early modern discourse in terms of thought as representation only, when humans think of themselves, they appear before their own minds as things. Hence, when it is thought of, their existence becomes objective. As a result, it makes perfect sense for the early moderns to speak about human being as something with objective existence, as *some thing*. This, in turn, means that humans can be conceptualised as part of the natural world and, therefore, that human existence is natural and is constituted in exactly the same way and follows the same universal laws as everything else in nature. As I will argue in the next section, this has far-reaching consequences for the early modern conceptualisation of politics and effectively makes it impossible for anything like modern democracy to germinate in early modern discourse.

4.3 Politics

The early modern epistemic configuration of discourse with is elevation of difference

makes it possible to distinctly separate the human mind from the human body. The other way around, it also makes possible the isolation of humans as material creatures from the human mind. Material existence is as independent of the ideal operations of the human mind as those operations are of material existence. Thus, it is possible to address human beings as material beings without taking into consideration their uniquely human property of thought. Discursively, this makes it possible to talk about what humans are as material creatures, and, therefore, what they are as natural beings. To that extent, it is also perfectly reasonable to conceptualise a 'Naturall Condition *of Mankind*', as does Hobbes ([1651] 1991, p. 86, small caps removed), or as it is more commonly put, a '*State of Nature*' which 'all Men are naturally in' (Locke [1689] 1988, p. 269).

It does not really matter whether such a purely natural existence is real of merely fictitious. The important thing is, rather, the very *possibility* to conceptualise human being as natural even though humans are also always separated from nature, that statements regarding a human state of nature makes sense at all. As explained by Hume:

> philosophers may, if they please, extend their reasoning to the suppos'd *state of nature*; provided they allow it to be a mere philosophical fiction, which never had, and never cou'd have any reality. (Hume [1739–1740] 1978a, p. 493)

As bodily creatures existing in a state of nature—when the property of thought as something unique and different vis-à-vis nature is not taken into account, that is— humans appear for the early moderns to be animals plain and simple, and they behave like animals when interacting with each

other: 'Man', writes Hobbes, can be 'a wolf to Man' ([1647] 1998, p. 3). In more general terms, since animals are machines, their behaviour is mechanical and, therefore, ultimately follows the mechanical laws of nature. From this, it follows that human behaviour too, when humans are considered as natural beings, is equally mechanical and equally follows the laws of nature. Turning to Hobbes as an example once again, he maintains that human behaviour, and animal behaviour in general, in the state of nature is defined by a set of passions occurring naturally in all creatures (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 44). At the most basic level, there are two such passions defining the natural behaviour of humans: desire and aversion. These differentiate into a fixed set of emotions (Lukac de Stier 2011, p. 78) such as pleasure and displeasure, joy and pain, hope and fair, and kindness and cruelty (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 37–44). As natural beings, humans act directly upon these emotions. For instance, if they want something as a result of their desires, they act in such a way that this want gets satisfied, or at least they try to satisfy it. Such wants—the drivers of human behaviour in the state of nature—are generally concerned with self-preservation (ibid., pp. 91–92). Thus, human natural behaviour is first and foremost about personal survival; before they want anything else, humans want to stay alive.

The passions, as they are conceptualised by Hobbes, describe how the human mind would operate, how it would direct the human body, if it did not contain the uniquely human characteristic of representational thought. The behaviour they give rise to, moreover, describe how humans would act if they were purely natural creatures.

Hobbes maintains, moreover, that as natural creatures humans are fundamentally equal to each other, regarding both body and mind (Hobbes [1647] 1998, pp. 25–26, [1651] 1991, p. 107; see also Saastamoinen 2002). Echoing the general conceptualisation of nature as being ordered in a non-hierarchical way, he writes:

> Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind then another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others. . . .

> And as to the faculties of the mind, (setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon generall, and infallible rules, called Science . . . as being not a native faculty, born with us. . .) I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of strength. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 86–87)

And, Hobbes, continues, from the 'equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends' (ibid., p. 87). Everyone pursues, then, the same end—survival—with equal intensity and by equal means. Also, everyone is equally right in doing so.

Furthermore, life in the state of nature is characterised by the absence of restrictions on human behaviour. There is nothing preventing an unfettered pursuit of the passions by everyone and this results in a state of conflict since humans can and do want the same thing, and if that thing is such that not all of them can have it 'followeth that the stronger must enjoy it alone, and that it be decided by battle who is the stronger' (Hobbes [1640] 1994, p. 78; see also Hobbes

[1651] 1991, pp. 87–88). As long as humans act based solely on their passions, there is a constant existential threat of violent death by the hands of other humans. Thus, human natural existence is permeated by insecurity and fear, and the state of nature has a character of a 'warre . . . of every man, against every man' (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 88; see also Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 90, 91, [1647] 1998, pp. 11–12). The state of nature and the nature of humans as material creatures push humans to adopt behaviours primarily concerned with self-protection, and this predicament makes it impossible for anything associated with society to emerge in the state of nature:

> In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 89)

Thus, the natural existence of humans is not a political existence, it does not encompass a political dimension. Humans are, as it were, merely animals by nature, not *political* animals as it had been thought in the Middle Ages. Political order is accidental in the sense that it is not a necessary part of human life.

> The majority of previous writers on public Affairs either assume or seek to prove or simply assert that Man is an animal born fit for Society, – in the Greek phrase Ζῶον πολιτικὸν [*zoon politikon*]. On this foundation they erect a structure of civil doctrine, as if no more were necessary for the preservation of peace and the

governance of the whole human race than for men to give their consent to certain agreements and conditions which, without further thought, these writers call laws. This Axiom, though very widely accepted, is nevertheless false; the error proceeds from a superficial view of human nature. Closer observation of the causes why men seek each other's company and enjoy associating with each other, will easily reach the conclusion that it does not happen because by nature it could not be otherwise, but by chance. (Hobbes [1647] 1998, pp. 21–22, brackets added)

For Hobbes, then, politics is not part of the natural existence of humans; early modern nature is not a political reality, it has no place for political order. As Koyré notes, early modern thought gives rise to a natural world 'in which, though there is place for everything, there is no place for man' (1965, p. 23). In early modernity, politics, whatever it might be, must, therefore, be something wholly different from nature.

Origin & Structure

An immediate consequence of political order not occurring naturally is that it has to be created if it is to exist at all; wherever there exists a political order, that order must have been constructed by someone. For the early moderns, that someone is human: political order is created by humans; it is completely artificial (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 119–120; see also Brett 2011, pp. 1–3, 115–141). Artifice, moreover, having been a mirror and imitation of the creativity of nature during the Middle Ages, is now completely tied to human being, and specifically to that property which makes humans unique and separates them from nature. Here, the artificial and the natural oppose each other.

The way Hobbes renders it, the natural condition of mankind is arguably quite dreadful. However, the conceptualisation of politics as something which is constructed by humans does not necessarily depend on the state of nature being horrible, nor does it presuppose the downright anti-social character of human natural behaviour implicit in Hobbes's reasoning. It is, indeed, quite possible to conceive of humans as naturally sociable, and of the state of nature as a much less conflict-ridden form of existence, while still maintaining that a social and political existence must be actively constructed if it is to exist at all. For instance, one of the main figures of late scholastic thought, Francisco Suárez, maintains, contrary to Hobbes, that man is indeed a 'social animal' who 'cherishes a natural and right desire to live in a community' (Suárez [1612] 1995, p. 364). Nevertheless, he still does not conceive of politics as occurring in nature: 'man was not created or born subject to the power of a human prince', he writes (ibid., p. 370). Instead, as Suárez sees it, humans are born with a potential to participate in a political community—and, in other words, to exist as political beings—and this community, he argues, does not emerge naturally but requires the constructive 'intervention' of humans (ibid., p. 370).

In a similarly opposing view to Hobbes, now regarding his view that the state of nature is a state of war, Montesquieu argues that humans, when they live in the state of nature, feel weak and behave timidly, and, therefore, try to avoid rather than to seek out conflict (Montesquieu [1748] 1989, pp. 5–6).

According to Montesquieu, the reasons humans initiate contact which each other, despite of their natural risk averting character, have to do rather with common needs and sexual desire. As a result of such rudimentary forms of interaction, full-blown political communities eventually emerge.

Otherwise, the most important conceptualisation of the state of nature in opposition to Hobbes's version is provided by Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government*. Just like Hobbes, Locke emphasises that the state of nature is a place of equality among humans,[26] that it is characterised by the absence of restraints on human behaviour, and that human natural existence is basically concerned with issues of self-preservation (Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 269–271). Locke, however, describes the state of nature in much more positive terms than Hobbes. Especially, he does not think of it as a state of war (ibid., pp. 278–282). Nor does he agree with Hobbes on the issue of rights in the state of nature. Hobbes claims that, because everyone is equality entitled to pursue their own needs, 'the notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have … no place' in the state of nature (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 90). In contrast, Locke argues that humans actually do have a natural sense of right. Crucially, there occurs, according to Locke, naturally in humans a sense that 'no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions' (Locke [1689] 1988, p. 271). Moreover, he argues, since all humans are equal, everyone has the right to make sure that the right not to be harmed is not violated, and lastly, if it

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[26]The idea of a natural equality among humans is a general theme in early modern thought. For other examples, see Descartes ([1637] 1985b, p. 111), Grotius ([1604–1605] 2006, pp. 19–50), Pufendorf ([1673] 1991, pp. 61–62, [1660] 1994a, pp. 81–82, [1672] 1994b, pp. 141–142), and Spinoza ([1670] 2016b, p. 289).

is violated, a right to punish those who infringe on it (ibid., pp. 271–272). However, in the state of nature everyone is left to be 'Judges in their own Cases' (ibid., p. 275), and this is, Locke maintains, no good:

> Self-love will make Men partial to themselves and their Friends. And on the other side … Ill Nature, Passion and Revenge will carry them too far in punishing others. And hence nothing but Confusion and Disorder will follow. (ibid., p. 275)

To avoid the 'confusion and disorder' associated with judging in one's own case, humans must establish a way to judge conflicts and settle disputes in an orderly fashion that does not rely on the personal involvement of the disputing parties. This marks the beginning of what Locke refers to as 'civil society', for from the need of impartial judges arises eventually political forms of social existence. As such, since civil society is so closely tied to the protection of the basic rights to life, health, liberty, and possessions, it is always and fundamentally about the protection of those rights (ibid., pp. 330–331). Thus, as Locke sees it, it is not war but the impossibility to settle conflicts impartially that troubles natural humankind and paves the way for the emergence of political being. Likewise, political order is not necessarily about the reduction of fear and violence but about the protection of individual rights.

Both Hobbes and Locke conceptualise the construction of political order as an agreement between individuals. In the agreement, the included parties give up something they enjoy or can do as natural beings and, by doing so, they are instead able to overcome the problems associated with life in the state of nature. The construction

of political order, then, takes the form of a *contract*.[27] Hobbes argues that this contract consists of an agreement among those entering it to give up on individual self-protection and turn issues of protection and survival into communal issues instead (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 121–129). Doing so, peace among the parties of the contract will ensue. Likewise according to Locke, humans consent in the contract to give up their natural right to judge in their own case and instead hand that right over to the community (Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 278, 323–324).

Importantly, Hobbes and Locke alike also maintain that society *as a whole* follows from this basic agreement; social life in general emerges from the contract (Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 323–325; Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 120–121; see also Meyer 2001, pp. 62–63). By that, the social contract, as a concept in early modern political discourse, represents the idea of a primordial constitution of politics. Thus, this contractarian understanding of political order yields an understanding of politics as something that has an absolute origin and that you can, in principle, point out a moment at which political being is born. Moreover, since early modern nature has no room for politics, that moment also amounts to the passage from natural being to something else, something different.

It should also be emphasised that the contract as it is conceived of by the early moderns is necessarily purposive in character; humans enter the contract and the associated agreement with an end in mind. For Hobbes, the purpose of the contract is to reduce violence and the sense of fear among the parties, to provide for peace, plain and

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[27] For overviews and different accounts of contractarianism in political thought, see Boucher and Kelly (1994) and Riley (1982).

simple (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 120). And for Locke, who translates the natural right of self-preservation into a right of property— reasoning that the right of self-preservation is the right to your own body as a kind of property that you own (Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 287–288)—its purpose is to protect the right to property (ibid., pp. 323–324): 'The great and *chief end*', he writes, 'of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, *is the Preservation of their Property*' (ibid., pp. 350–351).

Therefore, since the contract amounts to the absolute origin of political order, political order in general is imbued with a purpose. In other words, wherever there exists a political order, that order must also have a purpose tied to its very foundation, to its reason for being; the state comes with a 'chief end' (Pufendorf [1672] 1994b, p. 220) Moreover, since political order develops with an end in mind by those who construct it, its being as such is conditioned by its purposive character. Hobbes expresses this view in the following way:

> The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men … in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which wee see them live in Common-wealths,) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contended life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of Warre, which is necessarily consequent … to the naturall Passions of men. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 117)

It was shown earlier how Hobbes refuses to accept final cause as something that pertains to anything but human beings and, here, one encounters an example of how Hobbes thinks of human action as purposive and the validity of final cause when making sense of human being. Political order is possible on the basis of the human capacity for purposive action.

Moreover, the purpose of political order is to turn humans away from their natural being, to make of them something else than what they are naturally, to make them different. Its purpose is to allow for those people who constitute a political community to escape the perils and shortcomings of nature (Locke [1689] 1988, p. 276), to live together and enjoy the fruits of social life, to live well and cultivate reason (Spinoza [1670] 2016b, pp. 284–285, see also pp. 127–128). To refer back to what Hobbes writes about what is wanting in the state of nature, all those things he lists—'Industry', 'Culture of the Earth', 'Navigation', 'use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea', 'commodious Building', 'Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force', 'Knowledge of the face of the Earth', 'account of Time', 'Arts', 'Letters', and 'Society' (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 89, see also page 293 above)—become possible as a result of the contract, of humans transgressing nature.

The overcoming of nature, the way in which humans become something else than nature, is achieved by creating order based on legislative and executive authority, by bestowing the political community or someone in it with the power over others.

For Locke, this primarily boils down to law-making (Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 324–325). Speaking about the natural right to property and to judge conflicts related to property as a natural power, he writes the following about political order as necessarily tied to the making and enforcing of laws:

> Because no *Political Society* can be, nor subsist, without having in it self the Power to preserve the Property, and in order thereunto punish the Offences of

all those of that Society; there, and there only is *Political Society*, where every one of the Members hath quitted this natural Power, resign'd it up into the hands of the Community…. And thus … the Community comes to be Umpire, by settled standing Rules, indifferent, and the same to all Parties; and by Men having Authority from the Community, for the execution of those Rules, decides all the differences that may happen between any Members of that Society, concerning any matter of right; and punishes those Offences, which any Member hath committed against the Society, with such Penalties as the Law has established: Whereby it is easie to discern, who are, and who are not, in *Political Society* together. (ibid., p. 324)

Thus, 'there and there only', where humans make laws and impose them, can there be a '*Political, or Civil Society*' (ibid., p. 325). However, whereas Locke emphasises law-making as the defining mark of political order, Hobbes primarily pinpoints the creation of a common power with the authority over the community in general. The political community emerging from the establishing of a common power, he claims,

is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, *I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner.* This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speake more reverently) of that *Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortall God*, our peace and defence. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 120)

Hobbes continues by noting that 'he that carryeth this Person, is called SOVERAIGNE, and said to have *Soveraigne Power*; and every one besides, his SUBJECT' (ibid., p. 121). Thus, for Hobbes, sovereignty is absolute power, the unconditioned ability to obtain something, to get things done (Hobbes [1647] 1998, pp. 81–84, [1651] 1991, p. 62). In like manner, Grotius writes that 'that power is called sovereign whose actions are not subject to the legal control of another, so that they cannot be rendered void by the operation of another human will' ([1625] 2012, p. 50), and Spinoza that 'whoever, by common agreement, has responsibility for public Affairs—that is, the rights of making, interpreting, and repealing laws, fortifying cities, and making decisions about war and peace, etc.—has this right absolutely' ([ca. 1675–1677] 2016a, p. 514; see also [1670] 2016b, pp. 287–288).

According to early modern thought, then, sovereignty is absolute, meaning that it is not dependent on anything external to it and that it is infinite in scope; authority, writes Hobbes, is 'the Right of doing any Action' ([1651] 1991, p. 112, see also pp. 121–129). The sovereign is neither dependent on anyone else for the exercise of power, nor limited in what can be sought to be achieved:

Just as … supreme sovereignty is found in any state whatsoever … so it is self-evident that it has no one on earth to whom it is accountable, or who can through a legitimate authority reduce it to order. Not in the state itself … nor outside of it…. From this it follows that it is also absolute, that is, that it can at its discretion exercise those acts which it has judged expedient for its own end. (Pufendorf [1660] 1994a, p. 90)

Thus, since it is unconditioned in this way, sovereignty emerges as comparable to the substances of thought and matter. Actually,

as I will argue soon, sovereignty *is* a representation of human thought rather than just comparable to it. Since it is comparable to substance, however, one might wonder if early modern sovereignty also has a defining property, an essence defining its very being? The answer is yes. Since sovereignty is purposive, since it is meant to put an end to the predicament of the natural condition of mankind, this purposive character defines its being as such; the essence of sovereignty is to transgress the state of nature, to make humans something else than what they naturally are (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 126–127). Hence, purposive sovereignty is an essential feature of both medieval and early modern political order but whereas medieval sovereignty is about achieving the end humans have been ordained with by nature and its divine origin, early modern sovereignty is about escaping nature.

With the role of purposive sovereignty for political order in mind, some first remarks can be made on one of the conceptual components of political order, with which this study is concerned, namely inessentialism, or rather the lack thereof. For, the essence of early modern sovereignty is also the essence of early modern political order as such. Early modern political order is essentially tied to sovereignty; to the authority to create and enforce law. Since political order emerges from the establishing of authority, it can exist only as specific manifestations of sovereign power (Brett 2011, p. 141). This way, sovereignty emerges as the self-evident fundamental property of political order; sovereignty is to political order what thought is to the human being who is because it thinks;

and it is what matter is to natural being which is because it extends in space and time. Suárez mentions the self-evident character of sovereignty explicitly when he writes that 'he who is invested with a given office, is invested with all the power necessary for the fitting exercise of that office. This is a self-evident principle of law' ([1612] 1995, p. 367).

Since early modern politics comes with an essence, it comes out as quite incompatible with how democracy is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory, which presupposes that political order is characterised by inessentialism, that order has no essence. Thus, in this respect, that concept of democracy, it seems, would have a hard time germinating in early modern discourse.

Nevertheless, early modern political order has important similarities with contemporary understandings of politics. In general terms, early modern political order refers to a juridical entity consisting of a community of humans, in which the community, or someone representing it, has sovereign power over its own regulation. What surfaces, then, in early modern political discourse, is nothing short of the sovereign state which arguably has bearing also on modern political thought (Brett 2011, p. 3).[28]

Since the sovereign state in its early modern variety is meant to allow for the state of nature to be transgressed and to enable the bounties of social life it emerges as an 'all-or-nothing alternative' to living in the natural world (Meyer 2001, p. 63). Thus, the political and the natural form a dualism:

> Those who are united into one Body, and have a common establish'd Law and Judicature to appeal to, with Authority to decide Controversies between them, and

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[28] For more references on the concept of sovereignty, and sovereignty and statism in modernity, see the literature cited in footnotes 109 and 29 on pages 150 and 382 respectively.

punish Offenders, *are in Civil Society* one with another: but those who have no such common Appeal, I mean on Earth, are still in the state of Nature. (Locke [1689] 1988, p. 324)

Again, it becomes apparent how sovereignty and the sovereign political community in the form of a state approaches the more general notion that the human mind is substantially different from nature. Both mind and political order are conceptualised as completely different and separate from nature, and both are *separated* from nature as a result of human action. Or, rather, human action as thought and politics both add up to a separation, a *separating*, from the natural world.

However, there is one important way in which political action differs from thought as action: political order is a *construct* whereas the human mind *constructs*. In fact, according to the early moderns, the construct of political order *originates in the human mind*. The human mind provides a firm ground for political order, for the contract upon which political order is built presupposes the uniquely human property of thought. Specifically, it requires speech, it requires that the signatories can speak to each other.

According to Hobbes, contracts are, in principle, 'the mutuall transferring of Right' (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 94), and such transferences are necessarily signified through words: 'In Contracts, the right passeth, not onely where the words are of the time Present, or Past; but also where they are of the Future' (ibid., p. 95). This claim suggests that there can be no contracts that do not use words—there can be no transferring

of rights unless the transference is meaningful—and, therefore, that only humans can engage in contractual activities, because only humans speak. Indeed, Hobbes accepts that 'certain living creatures, as Bees, and Ants, live sociably one with another' (ibid., p. 119). Such creatures lack 'the art of words' (ibid., p. 119), which seemingly implies that their social existence is constructed without the use of speech. This is, however, not the case, for those creatures live together because of their nature; their social existence is not an artificial construct but part of their existence as natural creatures, which is completely the opposite of the human condition. Therefore, their social existence is not of contractual origin (ibid., p. 120).

From the requirement of words for constructing contracts it follows that language, according to this line of reasoning, is that which enables humans to form political communities. Without speech, Hobbes maintains, 'there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears, and Wolves' (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 24; see also Pettit 2008).[29] With the view in mind, moreover, that early modern words are nothing but representations of early modern thoughts, this suggests, in turn, that what contracts ultimately presuppose is human thought. Finally, this implies that humans enter contracts not as natural beings but on behalf of that property which separates them from nature. Hobbes claims that there can be no contracts between humans and beasts (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 97; see also Locke [1689] 1988, p. 274), by which it is suggested that contracts are made pos-

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[29] Locke makes the similar claim that language is 'the great Instrument, and common Tye of Society' (Locke [1690] 1975, p. 402).

sible not by the animal existence of humans but instead by their uniquely human, non-natural, existence as beings of pure thought. Or, as Pufendorf puts it:

> It is possible to consider humankind in two ways, either conceiving all men to live by themselves in natural freedom, or understanding them to have united with certain others into civil society, being joined to the rest by no bond but their common humanity. (Pufendorf [1672] 1994b, p. 141)

To this extent, the primordial contract constituting political order, in terms of its position in early modern discourse, amounts to the conceptual distinction between humans and nature. Thus, it represents the limit of the aforementioned possibility to speak of humans as natural creatures; it signifies the moment when humans become uniquely human and something different from nature (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 90). Thus, in early modern discourse, it is a condition of possibility to conceptualise political order in terms of the sovereign state that humans are separate from nature; there can be no political community unless humans are also different from the natural world. Also, since political order is defined as a uniquely human construct, political order must also be equally separate from nature: the '*political*' commonwealth, 'which is *by design*' is not a natural commonwealth (Hobbes [1647] 1998, p. 74). All of this indicates that humans, in early modernity, become political beings based on that aspect of their being which separates them from the natural world, and that political order itself is completely differentiated from the order of nature.

It is important to note that this conclusion is valid not only for explicitly contractarian political thought. Montesquieu, for instance, does not conceptualise the construction of political order as proceeding from a contract but still maintains that what makes humans transgress the state of nature is, ultimately, knowledge (Montesquieu [1748] 1989, p. 6). Common needs and sexual desires, both of which belong to the natural being of humans, are not enough to form political society, he claims, even though they are the reasons humans start to interact with each other. Rather, what is required for the emergence of society is knowledge and this, evidently, is what separates humans from nature.

Thus, since Hobbes and Locke argue that political order emerges from a primordial contract, and Montesquieu that it is grounded in knowledge, they all share the notion that, since the contract itself is made possible by human thought and since knowledge is a particular kind of thought, political order ultimately proceeds from the human mind. Political order, then, is conceptualised in such a way that it is conferred with an origin in the human mind; political order is constituted by the human mind. This is even explicitly stated by Hobbes as he notes that 'the principles of the politics consist in the knowledge of the motions of the mind' (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 74).

Having reached the conclusion that early modern political order proceeds from the human mind, I am approaching the question of how early modern discourse conceptualises the origin of political order and whether political order as a concept contains within itself the component of self-creativity.

Early modern politics is evidently quite different from medieval politics. In medieval discourse, political order is part of nature and authority is a result of its resemb-

lance to a living organism. According to the medieval mode of thought, political authority exists because political order is analogous to a living being. In early modernity, on the other hand, politics is completely separated from the natural world, and authority must, therefore, be of purely human, non-natural origin. However, the two different conceptualisations of political order have one important thing in common: In both, the origin of political order is transcendent in relation to that very same order. Since political order is thought to originate in the human mind in early modern discourse, it follows that political order originates in something else than itself. The mind provides a transcendent origin to order, as it does to meaning. It exists beyond any particular political experience. Order, to that extent, is not constituted by itself. In medieval discourse, the transcendent point of origin of political order is nature; in early modern discourse it is the human mind. By that, it is possible to pinpoint how the origin of political order is conceptualised in early modern discourse, for it too conceptualises origin as something that is transcendent in relation to order; political order originates in something else than itself, it does not create itself. Hence, early modern political order is not self-creative.

There is most certainly, then, a stark contrast between early modern discourse and contemporary green political theory's conceptualisation of democracy and its presupposition of political order as being self-creative. Self-creativity is not a component of the early modern concept of political order. Hence, regarding the conceptual component of self-creativity as well, democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory would have a hard time ger-

minating in early modern discourse. Inessentialism and self-creativity alike are missing as components of the early modern concept of political order. The latter neither lacks essence nor creates itself.

To move on, it can be said that political order, according to the early moderns, exists as a consequence of humans being thinking beings separated from nature, and that it exists, furthermore, as a manifestation of that very form of being; politics is a result and an articulation of the human mind's construction of meaning. As such, as a concept, politics is dependent on how the concepts of humans, nature, and their relation are made meaningful. The former would not be conceptualised the way it is if not the latter were conceptualised the way they are. Thus, the latter are logically prior to the former in early modern discourse; the meaning of political order is dependent on the meaning of humans, nature, and the relation between them. The separation of humans from nature, then, is fundamental in relation to the early modern conceptualisation of politics.

Moreover, since political order originates in and is constituted by the human mind and its construction of meaning, political order itself cannot be about the construction of meaning. Since meaning is constructed by the mind and since the mind also amounts to the origin of political order, meaning must be prior to politics. Early modern political order only ever *has* meaning, it is given meaning by the human mind. Or, more precisely put, political order exists according to the meaning it receives by the human mind, and the construction of meaning itself can never be part of political order. Whatever political order is, then, it can never be about the construction of meaning.

As an example of what political order ac-

tually can mean, what it can be, one can turn to Hobbes and his differentiation of kinds of commonwealths. Hobbes maintains that political order can be made meaningful in three different ways, and in three different ways only. Doing so, he resorts to the same Aristotelean line of thinking as Aquinas did when he reasoned on the forms of order, which was dealt with in the previous chapter (see page 211 above).

There are, as Hobbes sees it, three different kinds of political order, three kinds of commonwealths (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 129). These three kinds are sorted and identified according to the different forms sovereignty takes in each of them. Sovereign power, Hobbes reasons, can be gathered in one person, it can be gathered in a part of the political community, or it can be dispersed to all members of the community. Thus, rule can either be by one, few, or all. Or, put differently, political order is either a monarchy—or 'a kingship', as Aquinas would have it—an aristocracy, or a democracy (ibid., p. 129).[30] In other words, the same forms of political order that was present in medieval discourse are present in early modernity as well.[31] Again, one notes that democracy is part of discourse even though, as has been shown, at least

two of the conceptual components of democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory is not present. Hence, as is the case with medieval democracy, early modern democracy does not have, and could not have, the meaning it has in contemporary green political theory.

However, even though the presence of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy in early modern thought evidently indicates that the idea of these forms of political order and the notion that political order comes in clearly defined forms survive the early modern transformation of thought, the meaning of these forms in early modern thought is quite different from that of their medieval counterparts. In the Middle Ages, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—or kingship, aristocracy, and polity, rather—and their unjust counterparts had been naturally occurring forms, they had been the forms the political organism took in its progression towards its end; they had existed naturally as if they had been living breathing beings. However, as Hobbes maintains in *De Cive*, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are the 'kinds' of political order, and the contract by which sovereignty is constructed is the 'general' form of order (Hobbes [1647] 1998, p. 91; see also Brett 2011, p. 141).

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[30] For similar categorisations, see e.g. Locke ([1689] 1988, pp. 354–355), Montesquieu ([1748] 1989, p. 10), Pufendorf ([1660] 1994a, p. 90, [1672] 1994b, pp. 225–230), and Spinoza ([ca. 1675–1677] 2016a, p. 514).

[31] It was shown in the previous chapter that Aquinas, following Aristotle, identifies six kinds of order: kingship, aristocracy, and polity are the just kinds of order, whereas tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy are the unjust kinds. For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that Hobbes does not see tyranny, oligarchy, and what he refers to as anarchy—which in Aquinas's terminology would be a democracy—as separate kinds of order and counterparts to the just forms of order but instead as monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy lacking approval (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 129–130).

[32] In the first English edition of *De Cive* from 1651, the chapter on the kinds of government begins: 'We have already spoken of a *City by institution* in its Genus; we will now say somewhat of its species' (Hobbes [1651] 1983b, p. 106, small caps removed). On the extent of Hobbes's own involvement in the translation of this edition from the original Latin, see Tuck (1998) and Warrender (1983). The corresponding sentences in the original Latin edition reads: 'Dictum iam est de *ciuitate per institutionem* in genere. Dicendum est de eius specibus' (Hobbes [1642–1647] 1983a, p. 50, small caps removed).

Sovereignty relates to monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy as genus relates to species.[32] Moreover, genus and species, Hobbes maintains, are nothing but '*general*' and '*special*' names; they are words signifying ideas about how humans order their lives together (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 20). They are, then, simply thoughts; in early modernity, the real existence of political orders is substituted by political orders as nominal forms. Political authority is no longer anything that occurs in nature, it is just an idea, a representation of how humans live together.

Nevertheless, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are still the *only* forms of political order: 'There are only three forms of a regular state, resulting from the proper subject of supreme sovereignty', Pufendorf writes ([1672] 1994b, p. 226). There are no other forms of political order, because 'the *Form of Government*', as Locke maintains, depends on the placing of 'the Supreme Power, which is the *Legislative*' ([1689] 1988, p. 354). Since it is 'impossible to conceive that … any but the Supreme make Laws' (ibid., p. 354), and since such power is either in the hands of one, few, or all, political order can take on only a finite number of forms. Thought cannot think politics in any other way because sovereignty as absolute power cannot, for the early moderns at least, be distributed in any other way than to one, few, or all. Thus, political order, much like in the Middle Ages, can be formed only in a finite number of ways and the different forms all have a fixed and predefined meaning.[33]

The mind with its meaning constructing activities amounts to an external point of reference for early modern politics, much as nature had done in the Middle Ages. Without the mind there would be no political order, and since the mind is the place from where meaning stems, this indicates that the creation of meaning rather than being a part of political order is a condition of possibility for it. Meaning, therefore, is out of reach for politics, just like nature had been out of reach for medieval politics; meaning cannot be changed by or through political means. Since meaning must come before politics, as that which is going on in the human mind, it cannot be up for grabs by political order. The determination of meaning is not a political action in early modernity.

This also establishes limits beyond which politics cannot venture. Since the meaning of political order is determined by the mind logically prior to that order, any specific political order cannot become anything else than what the mind determines it to be, its meaning and whatever it becomes are always determined by the antecedent operations of the human mind. As abstract as this might seem, it indicates that, in principle, political order does not change as a result of actions which are themselves part of that political order. The cause of change always comes from somewhere else. Of course, this is also perfectly in line with the conceptualisation of the origin of political order as transcendent to that order; neither the emergence nor the transformation of politics comes from polit-

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[33] It should also be mentioned that some, like Locke (e.g. [1689] 1988, p. 354), admit that there can indeed also be hybrid forms of rule; elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy can be combined, resulting in mixed forms of political order. Such hybrids, however, are merely different combinations of the basic forms of rule, variations on a theme. They are, so to speak, synthetic compounds based on the elementary particles of rule by one, few, or all. Thus, the presence in early modern discourse of mixed forms of government does not take away from the overall conclusion that rule is always a specific manifestation of absolute sovereignty formed finitely as either rule by one, few, or all.

ics itself.

So far, the account herein of early modern politics has centred around the argument that politics is but a construct originating in the human mind and completely separate from the natural world. This paints only half the picture of early modern political discourse, however. For, since politics is a construct of thought, and since humans are perfectly capable of representing thought as such to themselves in thought, politics *too* can be thought of by the human mind. Again, this might seem trivial but because early modern thought represents what comes before it as things, it means that political order and humans as political beings appear for humans themselves as things. To that extent, they gain objective existence despite their profoundly subjective being. As an object, moreover, political order can be arranged in relation to other objects. It can be ordered based on its identity and difference compared to other things, and it can be enumerated as part of the totality of things that appear before the human mind. Therefore, and because all things can, in principle, be known as part of a single universal discourse, knowledge of politics is no different from knowledge of any other thing, it does not differ in kind from, say, knowledge of natural things (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 31–32). Moreover, it means that political order can be positioned vis-à-vis things in nature, and this brings to political order a characteristic of natural existence. As such a naturalised thing, political order is conceptualised according to the same formula as other natural things and as nature as such. For this reason, artificial constructs are not different in kind when compared to natural things, the structure of that which is made by humans, constructed in and by thought, mirrors the structure of things in nature, just like the mind itself is a mirror of nature: 'I do not recognize', writes Descartes,

> any difference between artefacts and natural bodies…. [I]t is no less natural for a clock constructed with this or that set of wheels to tell the time than it is for a tree which grew from this of that seed to produce the appropriate fruit. (Descartes [1644] 1985c, p. 288)

And in like manner, Bacon maintains that

> men ought … to be surely persuaded of this; that the artificial does not differ from the natural in form or essence, but only in the efficient. (Bacon [1623] 1858, p. 294)

This suggests that—to the extent that political order as a thing is no different from things in nature and that those things are of mechanical character–politics is also constructed as a machine; political order is an abstract mathematical entity; a geometrical shape moving along lines dictated by mechanical laws of motion (Albritton 1976; Bartelson 2011, 2014, p. 22; Grant 1990; Valentine 1997). Here, yet another remnant of medieval political thought reappears, one that has already been glimpsed, namely the conceptualisation of political order as a human body. However, whereas the political body in medieval discourse is an animated organism, early modern society is a lifeless machine (Merchant 1989, p. 212, see also pp. 192–193). In a lengthy description of the machine-like character of political order, Hobbes writes the following:

> NATURE (the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World) is by the *Art* of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal. For seeing life is but a motion of Limbs, the begining whereof is in some principall part within; why may we not say, that all *Automata* (Engines that

move themselves by springs and wheeles as doth a watch) have an artificall life? For what is the *Heart*, but a *Spring*; and the *Nerves*, but so many *Strings*; and the *Joynts*, but so many *Wheeles*, giving motion to the whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificer? *Art* goes yet further, imitating that Rationall and most excellent worke of Nature, *Man*. For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE ... which is but an Artificiall Man ... in which, the *Soveraignty* is an Artificall *Soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body; The *Magistrates*, and other *Officers* of Judicature and Execution, artificall *Joynts*; *Reward* and *Punishment* (by which fastned to the seate of the Soveraignty, every joynt and member is moved to perform his duty) are the *Nerves*, that do the same in the Body Naturall; The *Wealth* and *Riches* of all the particular members, are the *Strength*; *Salus Populi* (the *peoples safety*) its *Businesse*; *Counsellors*, by whom all things needfull for it to know, are suggested unto it, are the *Memory*; *Equity* and *Lawes*, an artifiall *Reason* and *Will*; *Concord*, *Health*; *Sedition*, *Sicknesse*; and *Civill war*, *Death*. Lastly, the *Pacts* and *Covenants*, by which the parts of this Body Politique were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that *Fiat*, or the *Let us make man*, pronounced by God in the Creation. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 9–10)

So, then, as an object, political order is represented in thought as identical to natural objects, and as a result of how human thought operates and can order all objects in relation to each other into a single universal discourse, political order becomes inserted, in discourse, into the natural world as if it is a part of that world. As Spragen notes about Hobbes's political thought: 'conceptual patterns and models developed to deal with

natural phenomena became prisms through which he perceived human and political phenomena' (1973, p. 7); theories of society turn into descriptions of natural reality (Sarasohn 1985, p. 363).

With this discursive intricacy, the existence of political order is instilled with a certain naturalness, one result of which is the possibility to conceptualise a natural foundation for political order. Another is the possibility to legitimise political authority and the ordering of political communities with reference to nature and their nature, similar to how political order can be legitimised with reference to nature in medieval discourse.

The most significant way in which nature is appealed to in early modern political thought is through the concept of natural law (Daston 1998), the notion that it is possible to derive from nature and from humans as natural beings a set of rights that can serve as a basis for social organisation, moral action, and political rule.[34]

The concept of natural law has a crucial role in both Hobbes's and Locke's writings. As has been outlined already, Locke not only maintains that humans as natural beings have rights but also that they have a natural sense of those rights. And Hobbes, even though he argues that there are no rights and wrongs in the state of nature, maintains that, as living beings, humans have a basic right to preserve their own lives, and from that fundamental principle he deduces no less than nineteen so-called 'laws of nature' that pertain to the human-made objects of political communities (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 91–111).

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[34] On early modern natural law, see Brett (2011), Daston and Stolleis (2008), Hochstrasser and Schröder (2003), and Hunter and Saunders (2002).

Natural law is also extensively dealt with by Grotius. In *On the Law of War and Peace*, he affirms that any kind of social organisation requires that promises made must be fulfilled (Grotius [1625] 2012, p. 3). Keeping promises belongs, therefore, to the very nature of society, he argues, and the obligation to fulfil them can, therefore, be said to be a law of nature (ibid., p. 5).[35] This means, since political order emerges contractually by means of an agreement—through a promise, that is—that the laws established in a political community, and the political community itself, derive from the law of nature:

> The very nature of man, which, even if we had no lack of anything, would lead us into the mutual relations of society, is the mother of the law of nature. But the mother of municipal law is that obligation which arises from mutual consent; and since this obligation derives its force from the law of nature, nature may be considered, so to say, the great-grand-mother of municipal law. (ibid., p. 5)

According to Grotius, moreover, not only is political order grounded in nature, it is specifically *human* nature, and human reason objectified by thought as something that belongs to the natural world, that serves as the natural foundation of what is right to do morally and politically:

> The law of nature is a dictate of right reason, which points out that an act, according as it is or is not in conformity with rational nature, has in it a quality of

moral baseness or moral necessity. (ibid., pp. 28–29)

Pufendorf expresses the similar view that natural laws, 'which teach one how to conduct oneself to become a useful member of human society' (Pufendorf [1673] 1991, p. 35), derive from human nature:

> What is the character of natural law? What is its necessity? And in what precepts does it consist in the actual condition of mankind? These questions are most clearly answered by a close scrutiny of the nature and character of man. Just as one makes great progress towards an accurate knowledge of civil laws by first achieving a good understanding of the condition of a state and the customs and occupations of its citizens, so if one first takes a view of the common character and condition of mankind, the laws on which man's security rests will easily become clear. (ibid., p. 33)

Concerning the question wherefrom natural law stems, Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui makes an important specification regarding which nature is referred to when speaking about natural law. In *The Principles of Natural Law*, he writes:

> The only way to attain to the knowledge of natural law, is to consider attentively the nature and constitution of man, the relations he has to the beings that surround him, and the states from thence resulting. (Burlamaqui [1747] 1791, p. 131)

The importance of this passage lies in that it explicitly emphasises that humans, as natural beings, are ordered in relation to other

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[35] Another elaborate account by Grotius of the structure and content of natural law can be found in his *Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty* ([1604–1605] 2006, pp. 19–50), where he also states that 'in my opinion, it would be a waste of effort to pass judgement regarding acts whose scope is international rather than domestic … solely on the basis of written laws' (ibid., pp. 15–16), and that 'the true way … has been prepared for us by those jurists of antiquity … who repeatedly refer the art of civil government back to the very fount of nature. This is the course indicated also in the works of Cicero. For he declares that the science of law must be derived … from the inmost heart of philosophy. Accordingly, we must concern ourselves primarily with the establishment of this natural derivation' (ibid., p. 17).

natural beings. Thus, it is as an element of the system of identities and differences all things are gathered into that human nature grounds natural law. It is humankind's place in the natural world, how it compares to other natural things, that determines the best way to order political communities.

An important component of the concept of natural law is that natural law is based on knowledge; natural law is learnt. It is because humans have the ability to perfectly know nature that they can derive laws from it. This is pinpointed by both Grotius and Pufendorf as per the quoted passages above.[36] The same sentiment is expressed by Hobbes when he claims that laws of nature are 'found out by Reason' ([1651] 1991, p. 91), by Locke, according to whom reason 'teaches all Mankind' of the law of nature ([1689] 1988, p. 271), and Spinoza who proclaims that 'by the Right of nature ... I understand the laws of nature themselves, *or the rules according to which all things happen*' ([ca. 1675–1677] 2016a, p. 508).[37] Here, the dualism of humans and nature in early modern thought comes into play once more. For, reason—that by which natural law is revealed—belongs to humans as non-natural beings, as beings of pure thought unrelated to material things. As such, it is by way of their separate status vis-à-vis nature that humans have natural law at their disposal. Thus, humans must first be separate from nature before they can know natural law,

which implies that the concept of natural law and the function of natural law in early modern political discourse presuppose that humans are separate from nature. Again, humans must evidently first be differentiated from the natural world before they can be said to be part of it. Political order as a thing of nature is conditioned by humans first and foremost being separated from all things natural.

Furthermore, since early modern nature in general is uniform and unchanging, *human* nature must also be uniform and unchanging, which, in turn, makes natural law unchanging: 'The Lawes of Nature', writes Hobbes, 'are Immutable and Eternall' ([1651] 1991, p. 110); 'the most common rule of human actions..., which has customarily been designated the right [*ius*] or law [*lex*] of nature, may also be called the universal and everlasting law because it binds the entire race of mortals and ... is not subject to change', writes Pufendorf ([1672] 1994b, p. 148, brackets in original). This means that natural law is applicable anytime and anywhere irrespective of contextual factors and of the form sovereignty has in a particular state; natural law is valid for *all* political communities. As such, it provides the means for a conception of law, and therefore of political order, according to which the content and form of law transcend particular circumstances. This view is expressed, for instance, by Grotius who, when describing his

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[36] See also Pufendorf ([1672] 1994b, p. 150, ellipsis in original): 'The sense in which we maintain that the natural law is a dictate of right reason is this: The human understanding has a faculty that enables it to see clearly from a contemplation of the human condition that it ought necessarily to live according to the norm of this law, and that enables it at the same time to discover the principle from which the law's precepts can be firmly and plainly demonstrated.... The fact that most men have no knowledge or grasp of how the natural law's precepts may be formally demonstrated, and that most of them usually learn and observe the natural law from custom or the course of ordinary life, poses no obstacle to this'.

[37] By 'the Right of nature', here, Spinoza means the power of God (Spinoza [ca. 1675–1677] 2016a, pp. 507–508; see also Spinoza [1670] 2016b, p. 282).

approach in *On the Law of War and Peace*, writes that 'just as mathematicians treat their figures as abstracted from bodies, so in treating law I have withdrawn my mind from every particular fact' (Grotius [1625] 2012, p. 19; see also Bartelson 2014, p. 22).

Political authority, even though it is artificial and based on consent, is thereby imparted with a stability and legitimacy that stretches beyond its particular manifestation and even beyond human being. As Locke points out, the '*Municipal Laws* of Countries … are only so far right, as they are founded on the Law of Nature' ([1689] 1988, p. 275). The political order of humans, then, is right when it follows what is right of nature.

The immutability of natural law also implies that natural law itself cannot be transformed: 'The law of nature … is unchangeable – even in the sense that it cannot be changed by God', Grotius proclaims ([1625] 2012, p. 29). This means that the authority it legitimises is equally stable which brings the analysis back to the issue of essence, this time in the context of political order as a thing. For it indicates that political order as an object as well has a perennial core, a structure without which it could not exist at all. It was argued earlier that all things in early modern nature are marked by a dualism of structure and function, and insofar as political order is thought of as a thing, it too is marked by such a dualism. To the extent that this rendering of things in early modern discourse is correct, political order should also have a structure and a set of functions distinguished from but still ultimately dependent on that structure. As political order is conceptualised in early modern discourse, then, there should be an apparent difference between, on the one hand, what happens as part of political order and what actions are carried out as part of it—its functions—and, on the other, the very being of that order—its structure.

It is also exactly such an understanding of political order Montesquieu voices when he writes about structure as the 'nature' of government and function as its 'principle':

> There is this difference between the nature of the government and its principle: its nature is that which makes it what it is, and its principle, that which makes it act. The one is its particular structure, and the other is the human passions that set it in motion. (Montesquieu [1748] 1989, p. 21)

Following the dualist logic of structure and function characterising early modern nature, political order, since function does not completely resolve into structure, can exist in a variety of ways while its structure remains the same, and it can change within the limits imposed by its structure. Furthermore, since function also denotes what a thing does, the dualism of structure and function also means that many different kinds of actions can be carried out within different political orders while the structure of those orders remains the same.

In less abstract terms, the structure of political order, according to early modern thought, consists of absolute sovereignty; of unconditioned authority. Since sovereignty is meant to solve a problem—to overcome the perils and shortcomings associated with life in the state of nature—and thereby necessarily has a purposive character, this purpose also belongs to its structure and is built into the very core of political order. Thus, purposive absolute sovereignty is what early modern political order truly *is*; its structure or essence consists of purposive absolute sovereignty. Actual political orders, partic-

ular commonwealths— or states, that is— can exist in different forms all of which are still grounded in sovereignty. One way in which these different functions, so to speak, can be enumerated in discourse has already been encountered above, namely Hobbes's argument that commonwealths can be either monarchies, aristocracies, or democracies. This argument can be interpreted as a representation of the dualist arrangement of the concepts of structure and function and the notion that function may vary while structure remains the same, for all of these kinds of commonwealths are grounded in absolute sovereignty. As has also been outlined, however, political order cannot exist as anything else than as a form of sovereignty; whatever it is, political order can exist only as a manifestation of unconditioned authority with a determinate end. Therefore, political order can exist in different ways, which means that a plethora of political actions are made possible within the space opened up by the early modern conceptualisation of sovereignty. However, the space is limited, and the plethora of political actions finite. Again as Hobbes sees it, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are the *only* possible kinds of commonwealth. The existence of political order, the existence of different kinds of commonwealths, is, ultimately, determined by structure—by purposive absolute sovereignty, that is. Not only does this imply that political order does not change freely but also, and most importantly, that sovereignty remains intact in whatever changes order experiences. The stability of the structure of political order is comparable to the stability of matter and the laws of nature; sovereignty is for political order what matter in motion is for the natural world. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon addresses himself to King James and his excellence:

> I cannot but mention, *honoris causa*, your Majesty's excellent book touching the duty of a king: a work richly compounded of divinity, morality, and policy, with great aspersion of all other arts; and being in mine opinion one of the most sound and healthful writings that I have read....

> [Y]our Majesty hath truly described ... a Moses or a David, pastors of their people. Neither can I ever leese out of my remembrance what I heard your Majesty in the same sacred spirit of government deliver in a great cause of judicature, which was, that 'Kings ruled by their laws as God did by the laws of nature'. (Bacon [1605] 1996, pp. 252–253)[38]

Descartes writes, quite similarly, in his correspondence with Mersenne, that 'it is God who has laid down these laws in nature just as a king lays down laws in his kingdom' ([1630] 1991a, p. 23).

However politics changes, the structure of sovereignty remains intact. To use the same vocabulary as Hobbes, the species of political order may vary but its genus does not. Or, as he puts it in *Leviathan*, regarding the difference between monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy:

> The difference between these three kindes of Common-wealth, consisteth not in the difference of Power; but in the difference of Convenience, or Aptitude to produce the Peace, and Security of the people; for which end they were instituted. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 131)

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[38] The editor of the cited edition of *The Advancement of Learning* clarifies that the book Bacon refers to is King James's *Basilicon Doron*, and that the 'cause of judicature' he mentions probably refers to 'the case of Sir Francis Goodwin in 1604' (Bacon [1605] 1996, editor's notes on pp. 654–655).

By that, my analysis of early modern politics has reached the halfway mark. So far, I have argued that in early modern thought political order is conceptualised as a construct originating in the human mind. As such a construct it is completely separated from nature and it comes into being by means of a purely ideal act in which humans separate themselves from the natural world. In this respect, political order is an expression and an affirmation of the non-belonging of humans to the natural world.

Moreover, as a construct of the mind, political order is also secondary in relation to the mind that constructs it; the mind amounts to a transcendent origin of political order; an external source from which order is formed. This implies that politics is dependent on the mind's construction of meaning, the mind thus representing a profound level of human subjectivity. From this dependence it follows that politics cannot be about the construction of meaning which, in turn, implies that political order does not provide meaning to itself; the meaning of political order cannot itself be a part of politics. Instead, for politics to exist as something meaningful at all, it is dependent on the human mind and its ability to construct meaning. Hence, the mind and its construction of meaning is a condition of possibility for political order. This puts the mind and the creation of meaning out of reach for politics; in early modernity, change of meaning is not a political act. This means, ultimately, that political order does not create itself. In other words, as a concept in early modern discourse, political order does not encompass self-creativity as a conceptual component, it does not presuppose that political or-

der creates itself. In fact, as has been shown, the early modern concept of political order presupposes that the mind is conceptualised the way it is, and is, therefore, even incompatible with the notion that political order creates itself. Since the conceptualisation of the mind, in turn, comes with a separation of humans and nature, it follows that the conceptualisation of early modern political order also presupposes a separation between humans and the natural world.

On the other hand, since the early modern mind operates only by representing what comes before it as things, political order—just like thought in general—receives an objective existence as it appears before the mind itself; as it is thought of. As an object, moreover, it can be arranged in relation to all other things, compared, and enumerated in a series containing every possible thing including all things natural. By that, the existence of political order is not only objectified but also naturalised; it becomes a thing of nature. This situates early modern political order as something that is simultaneously an artificial construct fully separated from the natural world and a thing fully belonging to the same natural world.[39]

As a natural thing, political order is conceptualised in the same way as other things. Significantly, it also has the character of a geometrical object, of a machine with moving parts. As such an object, it is invested with the dualism of structure and function according to which function is distinguished from but, ultimately, dependent on structure. This way of conceptualising political order as a thing means that it can exist in many but finite different ways. Principally, these ways are restricted to monarchies,

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[39] On this duality of early modern political order, see also Brett (2011) and Yar (2002).

aristocracies, and democracies. Moreover, many acts can be carried out and performed as part of political order and deemed to be political. However, some acts cannot. Determination of meaning, most importantly, is never a political act but rather a presupposition of politics. All of these ways of existing and all of these political acts, what I refer to as functions, are dependent on the fundamental structure of politics. This structure consists of purposive absolute sovereignty; whatever politics is, it is always a manifestation of absolute sovereignty aimed at moving humans away from the state of nature and turn them into political beings. As such, purposive absolute sovereignty amounts to a necessary property of politics, or, in other words, to its essence. Thus, as a thing, politics has an essence. Indeed, purposive absolute sovereignty is essential also for politics as a construct of the human mind, for in the mind's move away from nature it establishes sovereignty among a group of humans; in early modern political discourse, the mind's separation from nature always takes the form of sovereign rule. Therefore, sovereignty amounts to the essence of political order both as a natural thing and as a construct of the mind. Thus, neither the former nor the latter has room for the notion that political order lacks essence. So to conclude this far, early modern politics is neither created by itself nor does it lack essence. It does not contain self-creativity or inessentialism as conceptual components.

Agency & Change

What about temporal contingency and agentic membership then? Do they appear in early modern political discourse as components of the concept of political order? Start-

ing with agentic membership and the notion that humans truly can make things happen, that they create political order by themselves, and decide for themselves how to live together, it certainly leads a difficult life as a concept in early modern political discourse. The question whether humans have agency or not in early modernity has no straightforward answer.

First of all, considering the previous discussion regarding the human mind as the transcendent origin of political order, indications have already been encountered that according to early modern thought, political order comes from somewhere else than from within, from its members. It is the human mind, not humans as members of the political community that creates political order, at least insofar as the creation of political order as such and as an escape from the state of nature is considered. However, this should indicate that even though humans as members of political communities have no agency as the creation of political order goes, humans as individual pure minds *do* have agentic powers, right? Indeed, as beings of pure thought humans exist absolutely; thought thinks the way it does because of its own constitution only, it is not conditioned by something external to it. The act of thinking, then, is an expression of agency and this means that everything that originates in thought, everything that is constructed by the human mind, is a result of human agency. Therefore, political order, since it is such a construct, is indicative of human agency, and the very existence of political communities affirms that humans create order by themselves.

Adding further weight to this line of reasoning is the common claim among the early moderns that political order is created as

an act of free will and is thereby voluntarily established (Grotius [1625] 2012, p. 32; Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 120–124; Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 278, 350; see also Brett 2011, pp. 120–121; Oakeshott 1991a, pp. 276–278; Riley 1982, e.g. pp. 1–22); humans want, so to speak, to create political order and escape the perils of nature; they want to become political beings. Since the will proceeds from the mind (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 44–45, 184; Spinoza [1677] 1985, p. 485), the order it establishes is again indicative of human agency. Political order would not exist should humans not want it to, implying that political order is a result and manifestation of human agency.

Moreover, early modern sovereignty itself appears to be a concept of human agency. Indeed, political existence adds up to a form of human being that comes with significant restrictions on what individuals can do since as members of a political community they are subjected to sovereign power and obliged to follow the law as it is laid down by the sovereign (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 121–124; Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 350–351). Nevertheless, since sovereignty denotes absolute power, it is itself a kind of agency:

> The greatest power that men can transfer to a man we call ABSOLUTE power. For anyone who has subjected his will to the will of the commonwealth on the terms that it may *do with impunity* whatever it chooses – *make laws, judge disputes, inflict penalties*, and make use of everyone's *strength and wealth* at its own discretion – and may do all this by right, has surely given him the greatest power that he could give. (Hobbes [1647] 1998, p. 82)

Sovereignty can be seen, then, as the form human agency takes when human being becomes political. In general, early modern sovereignty is conceptualised in such a way that sovereignty is understood to be grounded in those who are subjected to it. Since political order is constructed by way of agreement, authority will always proceed from those who entered the agreement (e.g. Locke [1689] 1988, pp. 366–367); sovereign power is meant to represent those who signed the contract (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 114, 120–121), to represent their will to escape the state of nature and their will to become something else than what they are by nature. In this way, sovereignty surfaces as a kind of representational agency. The one who is sovereign, whether it is the one, the few, or all, represents the agency of the individuals who are subjected to its power. As such, even if humans are in some way denied agency as political beings—because order is created by the human mind and not by humans as members of political communities—agency still somehow seems to appear in political communities and be part of human political being.

All of this seems to indicate that humans do have agentic powers according to early modern thought, even though political order does not create itself. However, things get more complicated when not only humans are accounted for but also humans as they appear for themselves in their own minds. Even though humans as part of nature are claimed to move freely, make choices of their own and thus to be vehicles of change, the early modern conceptualisation of nature is such that the natural world hardly allows for any change at all, let alone change authored by humans. Nothing has agentic capacities in early modernity, as I will argue in the next couple of pages.

I showed earlier how Hobbes gathers efficient and material cause under the no-

tion of entire cause while also arguing that everything happening in nature is a result of efficient cause and that material cause is just that which is produced by the efficient cause. I have also already mentioned that Hobbes maintains that a cause always produces the same effect and that the effect is always produced if the cause is present. If the effect does not occur, the cause must have been absent (Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 120–123). This conceptualisation of causality makes the cause both necessary and sufficient for the effect (Zarka 1996, p. 70); whatever happens has a necessary and sufficient explanation in the form of an efficient cause. Therefore, everything that happens in the natural world happens of necessity, and this necessity extends temporally to the future: 'all the effects that have been, or shall be produced, have their necessity in things antecedent' (Hobbes [1655] 1962, p. 123).

Hobbes specifies cause and effect as terms that pertains only to changes of the past, and instead refers to causal relations of the future in terms of 'power' and 'act' (ibid., pp. 127–128). Power and cause are basically the same thing, and so are act and effect, the only difference being that one part of each pair refers to the future, the other to the past. Moreover, just as he gathers efficient and material cause into entire cause, Hobbes claims that power and act go hand in hand in what he refers to as 'entire or *plenary power*' (ibid., p. 128). According to this view, future change happens exactly like past change, which means that there is one and the same causal chain connecting the past, the present, and the future. It also means that every future change has a necessary and sufficient cause:

> As … the effect is produced in the same instant in which the cause is entire, so also every act that may be produced, is produced in the same instant in which the power is plenary. And as there can be no effect but from a sufficient and necessary cause, so also no act can be produced but by sufficient power, or that power by which it could not but be produced. (ibid., p. 128)

This understanding of causality and how it operates in nature results in a view of the world according to which nothing happens unless that which happens has an antecedent necessary and sufficient cause instantly giving rise to that which happens. From this, it follows that if there is no plenary power in which an act or change is happening, that act or change is impossible (ibid., p. 130), which according to Hobbes also means that every act which is possible will at some point in time 'be produced; for if it shall never be produced, then those things shall never concur which are requisite for the production of it; wherefore that act is *impossible*'. (ibid., p. 129)

Hobbes specifies further that a necessary act is such an act the production of which is impossible to hinder, implying that 'every act, that shall be produced, shall necessarily be produced' (ibid., p. 130).

When all of this is put together it results in a view of the world according to which everything that is possible is also necessary; whatever occurs in the world occurs necessarily (Zarka 1996, p. 71). Nothing could have been, or can be, other than what it is or will be, for the world is completely determined by antecedent causes that will always produce the same effects. What will happen in the future is determined by what exists in the present and what exists in the present is determined by past events. Thus, from the moment of its creation, when, as Hobbes has it, God provides the first mo-

tion, the world sets out on a course from which it never reroutes.

This last notion, that everything necessarily exists as a consequence of an absolute point of origin, is elaborated in detail by Leibniz as part of his work on monads and theory of sufficient reason.

In the *Monadology*, Leibniz refers to the natural world as the world of facts; as the world consisting of 'the series of things spread throughout the universe of created things' (Leibniz [1714] 2014, p. 21). Moreover, he argues, similar to what Hobbes has to say about efficient cause, that 'there can be found no fact that is true or existent, or any true assertion, unless there is a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise' (ibid., p. 20). There is, then, one explanation, and one explanation *only*, for every fact in the world.

Leibniz sees the world of facts as infinite in the sense that natural bodies can be combined in infinitely many ways. This means that when the reason for one thing is sought and located in another thing, that other thing must also have a reason, which must be sought in another thing, *ad infinitum*. 'There is', as he puts it, 'an infinity of shapes and motions, both present and past, which enter into the efficient cause of my present writing' (ibid., p. 21). Therefore, the natural world never by itself yields a reason which does not itself have another reason, implying that the sufficient reason for the world itself must be sought somewhere else than in the world of facts, it must be located 'outside the succession or *series*' of the things of the world (ibid., p. 21).

If everything in the world has an efficient cause of sufficient reason, what creates the world as such cannot be part of that world since the concept of efficient cause positions the agent of production as external to what it produces. Thus, there must be an efficient cause for the natural world existing outside of that world, and this cause *must* exist if the natural world is to exist at all. For Leibniz, this means that

> the ultimate reason of things must lie in a necessary substance, in which the intricate detail of changes exist only eminently, in the source as it were, and this is what we call *God.* (ibid., p. 21)

The necessary substance providing the world of nature with a sufficient reason amounts to the beginning of a chain in which every link is dependent on—or, has its reason in—the link prior to it; God creates the world of facts and each fact in that world explains another fact. Therefore, when approached analytically, all facts ultimately have their sufficient reason located in the necessary external substance, and this means that every fact in the world is dependent on that substance (ibid., p. 21). Moreover, when approached synthetically, all facts exist for a reason and exist necessarily, provided that they exist at all. The facts of the world exist because of God, whose essence involves existence and who is, therefore, the reason for his own existence, and, once they exist, they must *necessarily* exist.

Everything in the world exists necessarily, then, and the world itself must, therefore, be and remain what it is once it is created.[40] This is the inevitable conclusion for a situation where everything in the world is believed to have a reason; where everything is thought to be completely determined by ef-

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[40] For a somewhat different but still affirmative argument about the necessity of the world, see Descartes ([1637] 1985b, pp. 131–134; also [1629–1633] 1985f).

ficient cause and where same cause always produces the same effect. For, in principle, unless one accepts an infinite regress of ever more fundamental reasons or causes, this view demands something equivalent to Leibniz's necessary substance or Hobbes's primary mover; something that provides itself with its own reason or cause must always be posited if it is to be a viable position. It should, furthermore, be emphasised that such a substance or an equivalent to it must be *posited*, for it cannot be appended with an explanation on its own since that would imply that it has a reason prior to its own being. In other words, if it is maintained that there is a sufficient reason for everything, there must also exist a necessary substance, or some equivalent, like a necessary entity or thing, providing everything with an ultimate reason and origin. In the end, this line of reasoning therefore ends up in the conclusion that everything that exists does so necessarily (Meillassoux 2008, p. 33), and that the world in its entirety is completely determined.

Because the world is completely determined in this way and because every change is necessary change, the world unfolds temporally along a sequence completely fixed by its origin. '*The present*', writes Leibniz,

> is always pregnant with the future, and no given state is explicable naturally without reference to its immediately preceding state. If this be denied, the world will have hiatuses which would upset the Principle of Sufficient Reason.... I maintain then ... that if ... we could express by a formula of a higher Characteristic some essential property of the universe,

we could read from it all the successive states of every part of the Universe at all assigned times. (Leibniz [1702?] 1951b, p. 185)[41]

That the world has a fixed temporal trajectory suggests that, at least in principle, it is possible to reconstruct what the world looks like, what it has been, and what will become of it, from any thing that exists in it and from the causal relations between this thing and others. In the *Monadology*, Leibniz defines the world as consisting of elementary particles called 'monads' (Leibniz [1714] 2014, p. 14). All such monads, he argues, 'express all the others' (ibid., p. 25) and, therefore, each and every one of them 'represents the whole universe' (Leibniz [1714] 2014, p. 27; see also Leibniz [1686] 1969a, p. 308). Thus, Leibniz's concept of monads conveys this notion that one thing in the universe follows upon another and that it is, in principle, possible to reconstruct the whole of the unfolding of the universe based on any one thing in it. If the medieval microcosms had contained a little bit of everything else in the universe, then the early modern elementary particles contain the same mathematical formulae from which it is possible to derive all the laws of nature. Equipped with the knowledge of those laws, one can map the course of the world. Laplace summarises this line of reasoning accordingly:

> All events, even those which on account of their insignificance do not seem to follow the great laws of nature, are a result of it just as necessarily as the revolutions of the sun. In ignorance of the ties which unite such events to the entire system of the universe, they have been made to de-

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[41] In the cited translation of this text, the year 1702 is provided as the year when it was written. I have not, however, been able to find the corresponding information in the edition cited therein as its source (see Leibniz 1966c), nor anywhere else. Therefore, I have opted to mark this date as uncertain in the citation and bibliography. For a short description of the text in question, see Leibniz (1966d, editor's footnote on pp. 74–75).

pend on final causes or upon hazard….

Present events are connected with preceding ones by a tie based upon the evident principle that a thing cannot occur without a cause which produces it. This axiom, known by the name of *the principle of sufficient reason,* extends even to actions which are considered indifferent….

We ought then to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its anterior state and as the cause of the one which is to follow. Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective situation of the beings who compose it—an intelligence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis—it would embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the lightest atom; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its eyes. (Laplace [1814] 1951, pp. 3–4, small caps removed)

Hence, the early modern conceptualisation of nature grounds an understanding of the world according to which the world never changes. Even though things in the world are constantly in motion and, therefore, constantly changing, that change is blueprinted by conditions in the present, which, in turn, are blueprinted by conditions in the past; future change is contained, in the form of its cause, in the present and the present is contained in the past. As a whole, therefore, the world never changes, the broader picture always remains the same. What is going on in the early modern world can be described, then, as a kind of 'changeless change'; the motion it contains 'changes nothing at all' (Koyré 1965, p. 10). Or, put differently, because everything is gathered in a single order, and since in a world governed by efficient cause 'nothing can change

it selfe' (Hobbes [1651] 1991, p. 15), the order in which everything is gathered never changes. Hence, in early modern discourse, the world always remains the same, just as it had in medieval discourse.

I have already covered the non-teleological character of early modern nature; that it lacks a purpose and that it is not caught up in a process with a defined end. Based on the current discussion on change, early modern nature appears, moreover, to not merely lack a purpose but being utterly *anti*-teleological in character, the reason being that it always remains the same and must remain so because of the conceptualisation of efficient cause and its prominent place in nature. This view is expressed by Spinoza in his *Ethics*. Spinoza's understanding of nature, how change occurs in it, and its relation to God, is basically the same as Hobbes's and Leibniz': He maintains that effects necessarily follow from causes, that God's essence involves existence, that God is absolutely free in his creations and is the ultimate efficient cause of everything in the world, that everything in the world is determined by God, and, therefore, that '*in nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way*' (Spinoza [1677] 1985, p. 433, see also pp. 410, 420, 431, 439). He also proposes that '*each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being*' ([1677] 1985, p. 498; see also [1670] 2016b, pp. 282–283), which follows from the principle—which itself is self-evident according to Spinoza—that '*no thing can be destroyed except through an external cause*' ([1677] 1985, p. 498). In fact, Spinoza even explicitly maintains that 'the power, *or* striving, by which it strives to persevere in its being, is nothing but the

given, *or* actual, essence of the thing itself' (ibid., p. 499). To that extent, things in nature have an essential disposition to stay the same (Collingwood 1960, p. 15); the essence of nature is to remain what it is. Real change can come only from that which has created nature, from God, that is. However, since the natural world is created in such a way that it is ordered by universal laws, any such change would amount to an alteration of the laws providing nature with order and, therefore, result in nothing less than the creation of a completely different world. Thus, should the world change, it would become completely different, something else than what it is in the present, implying that change cannot take place on the interior of the natural world. In other words, the fundamental structure of the world must truly remain the same, otherwise it would become another world. This is, indeed, a prerequisite for the notion that all changes are determined by antecedent causes. Since the future is not contingent, it is necessary for the structure grounding the process that will lead to that future not to change. Should it change, the future would not be necessarily determined, which would disqualify the notion that the world is shaped by efficient causes or sufficient reason. Expressed in slightly different terms, all of this indicates that a lot of things can and do happen in the early modern world but that the structure of that world remains the same, and also that whatever happens is, at the end of the day, dependent on and determined by that structure. This argument has been encountered before, in the previous discussion on the mechanical dualism of structure and function. In fact, that dualism is perfectly in line with the deterministic view of nature dealt with here, for as a machine the world

has a structure that determines what is going on inside of it, which is just another way of saying that everything exists necessarily and changes deterministically.

In what ways do all of this bear on humans, how they live as members of political communities, and their possibility to bring about change and make the future otherwise? Well, first of all, the stability of the structure of the world and the regularity of how it changes is conceived of by the early moderns as a prerequisite for human experience as such. Leibniz, for instance, maintains that human reasoning presupposes the principle of sufficient reason and that the world of facts is ordered according to it (Leibniz [1714] 2014, pp. 20–21). And Hume, in his critical examination of inferences based on experience as the privileged foundation for knowledge, tends to render the stability of the world, in terms of the regularity of cause and effect in nature over time—their 'constant conjunction' (Hume [1739–1740] 1978a, pp. 87–88, quote appearing on p. 88)—and the consequence that the future is necessarily shaped by the past, a presupposition for human experience to be meaningful at all:

> all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past, and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities. If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion. (Hume [1748] 2007, p. 38, see also p. 37)

Of course, Hume argues that an experience of a certain effect from a certain cause in the past does not imply that the same cause will result in the same effect in the future (Hume

[1739–1740] 1978a, pp. 89–92, [1748] 2007, pp. 36–37). Hence, the past uniformity of the world does not guarantee its future uniformity, or that such a uniformity will be the same as the uniformity of the past. However, he also argues that by habit, or custom, humans do this connection of the future to the past (Hume [1739–1740] 1978a, pp. 94–179, [1748] 2007, pp. 41–53), thus assuring in their own minds that the world is uniform across time. That habit he approaches, moreover, as an operation of the human mind as uniform and regular as a law of nature. For instance, he writes of 'the principles of union or cohesion among our simple ideas' as a 'kind of attraction, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural' ([1739–1740] 1978a, pp. 12–13, small caps removed); that 'habit is nothing but one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin' (ibid., p. 179); that 'custom … alone determines the mind, in all instances, to suppose the future conformable to the past' ([1740] 1978b, p. 652); that 'we always presume, when we see like sensible qualities, that they have like secret powers, and expect that effects, similar to those which we have experienced, will follow from them' ([1748] 2007, p. 35); that habit is 'a principle of human nature' (ibid., p. 43) and as a principle 'will preserve its influence as long as human nature remains the same' (ibid., p. 42); that 'wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *custom*' (ibid., p. 43); that 'having found, in many instances, that any two kinds of objects – flame and heat, snow and cold – have always been conjoined together; if flame or snow be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold', and that such 'operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able either to produce or to prevent' (ibid., p. 46); that if it is the case that the mind, by way of the 'principles of connexion or association' among ideas by which it connects one object presented to the senses or memory with another, correlative, object, 'when one of the objects is presented to the senses or memory, the mind is not only carried to the conception of the correlative, but reaches a steadier and stronger conception of it than what otherwise it would have been able to attain', then 'this may be established as a general law' (ibid., p. 49); that there 'is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas' and that 'custom is that principle, by which this correspondence has been effected; so necessary to the subsistence of our species, and the regulation of our conduct, in every circumstance and occurrence of human life' (ibid., pp. 52–53); that the 'operation of the mind, by which we infer like effects from like causes, and *vice versa*, is so essential to the subsistence of all human creatures' that 'it is not probable, that it could be trusted to the fallacious deductions of our reason', but rather that 'it is more conformable to the ordinary wisdom of nature to secure so necessary an act of the mind, by some instinct or mechanical tendency, which may be infallible in its operations…, and may be independent of all the laboured deductions of the understanding' (ibid., p. 53); and, that nature has 'implanted in us an instinct, which carries forward the thought in a correspondent course to that

which she has established among external objects' (ibid., p. 53).

Thus, there would be no meaningful experience at all should the natural world not be, or understood not to be, regular, uniform, and deterministic. Most importantly, however, humans and political order, as they appear before humans themselves, are *also* subjected to this regularity, uniformity, and determinism. The validity of the dictate that whatever exists does so necessarily and that whatever will happen in the future is already determined by the past extends to all objective beings, including human objects. In other words, it includes humans themselves as well as their political communities. In this respect, the previously delineated view of political order as an affirmation of human agency is straightforwardly contradicted. For, now political order comes out simply as an effect of antecedent causes of non-human character. The emergence of political order is as mechanistically rudimentary as the movement of the hands on a clock, and the reason for its appearance can be deduced from conditions existing prior to it. Likewise, whatever humans do as members of political communities—whatever happens politically and whatever acts humans perform together—is determined by something more fundamental than themselves. There are laws everywhere in the early modern world, and humans follow them no differently than other beings. As the very first sentence of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* reads:

> Laws, taken in the broadest meaning, are the necessary relations deriving from the nature of things; and in this sense, all beings have their laws: the divinity has its laws, the material world has its laws, the intelligences superior to man have their laws, the beasts have their laws, man

has his laws. (Montesquieu [1748] 1989, p. 3)

In other words, as beings in the world, humans do not create political order by themselves nor do they change it by themselves. Their actions that bring about political order and transformations of it are not truly their own. Those actions are determined by antecedent causes which themselves are determined by other causes, and so forth. Humans may appear to bring about change but only because something else has made it so. Thus, political order is not truly of their own making, and the future is not up for grabs, it will not be otherwise because of anything humans do; political order is not temporally contingent. Should the future appear to be contingent, that appearance is merely a result of ignorance, of insufficient insights into its causes and into the constitution of the world (Hobbes [1655] 1962, pp. 130–131; Spinoza [1677] 1985, p. 480; see also Spinoza [1670] 2016b, p. 284).

In sum, all of this means that political order, because it appears as a thing before humans themselves, is a part of the deterministic universe and is subjected to the same laws ordering the rest of the natural world. From this point of view, political order emerges because of the universal order of nature and because of universal human nature. I have already covered Hobbes's and Locke's reasoning along these lines, that political order is the result of human nature and predicaments related to human natural being. Another example could be Spinoza, who in his *Theological-Political Treatise* provides an elaborate account of the emergence of political order based on universal human nature ([1670] 2016b, in particular pp. 282–296). There, he argues that

naturally, 'each individual has a supreme right to do everything it can' ([1670] 2016b, p. 282), and that 'each individual has the supreme right … to exist and have effects as it is naturally determined to do' (ibid., p. 283). Therefore, as natural beings, humans have the 'right to live according to the laws of appetite alone' and 'the natural right of each man is determined … by desire and power' (ibid., p. 283). Hence, by the very order of nature, humans are 'bound to live, and to preserve themselves, as far as they can by their own power, i.e., by the prompting of appetite alone' (ibid., p. 283). This leads to a situation akin to Hobbes's state of nature:

> Whatever anyone who is considered to be only under the rule of nature judges to be useful for himself … he is permitted, by supreme natural right, to want and to take—by force, by deception, by entreaties, or by whatever way is, in the end, easiest. Consequently, he is permitted to regard as an enemy anyone who wants to prevent him from doing what he intends to do. (ibid., p. 284)

Thus, there are arguably advantages to lead a politically ordered life:

> A social order is very useful, and even most necessary, not only for living securely from enemies, but also for doing many things more easily. For if men were not willing to give mutual assistance to one another, they would lack both skill and time to sustain and preserve themselves as far as possible. Not all men are equally capable of all things, and no one would be able to provide the things which a man alone needs most. Everyone, I say, would lack both the strength and the time, if he alone had to … do the many … things necessary to support life—not to mention now the arts and sciences which are also supremely necessary for the perfection of human nature. (ibid., p. 143)

And a political order requires law and authority:

> If nature had so constituted men that they desired nothing except what true reason teaches them to desire, then of course a society could exist without laws…. But human nature is not constituted like that at all. It's true that everyone seeks his own advantage—but people want things and judge them useful, not by the dictate of sound reason, but for the most part only from immoderate desire and because they are carried away by affects of mind…. That's why no society can continue in existence without authority and force, and hence, laws which moderate and restrain men's immoderate desires and unchecked impulses. (ibid., p. 144)

And, fortunately for humankind, humans have a universal 'desire to live securely' (ibid., p. 284), and a universal ability to understand the merits of living according to reason: 'no one can doubt how much more advantageous it is to man to live according to the laws and certain dictates of our reason' (ibid., p. 284). Hence, it is a human good to live politically, and 'it's a universal law of human nature that no one neglects to pursue what he judges to be good, unless he hopes for a greater good, or fears a greater harm' (ibid., p. 285).

The final outcome of all of this is a political order ruled sovereignly for the good of humankind and according to reason. Importantly, moreover, this outcome is the result of the natural order of things and it follows necessarily from that order. Hence, the emergence of political order, according to Spinoza's reasoning here, is a result of the deterministic structure and universal order of nature.

So in a way, political order in its natural being is bound by the laws of nature

to emerge, as are the humanly established laws of political order. Indeed, humans do not always follow the laws they establish for themselves, which Montesquieu—to return to him—readily admits ([1748] 1989, pp. 4–5), and human laws can of course change. In the context of the current discussion, this suggests that they are not necessary in the same way as the laws of nature. However, the very structure of law-making always and necessarily stays the same; the essence of political order does not change once political order has been constructed. Political order is caught up in the deterministic unfolding and changeless change of the world, suggesting that not only the emergence of political order but social life in general develops temporally according to the principles or laws governing that unfolding. The history of human society follows a predefined path, and just like nature in general it never reroutes from its course. In the early modern world, where 'regularity is combined with determination ... there is no place for chance' (Steinle 1995, p. 357):

> It is not chance that rules the world. Ask the Romans, who had a continuous sequence of successes when they were guided by a certain plan, and an uninterrupted sequence of reverses when they followed another. There are general causes, moral and physical, which act in every monarchy, elevating it, maintaining it, or hurling it to the ground. All accidents are controlled by these causes. And if the chance of one battle—that is, a particular cause—has brought a state to ruin, some general cause made it necessary for that state to perish from a single battle. In a word, the main trend draws with it all particular accidents. (Montesquieu [1734] 1965, p. 169)

According to Montesquieu, the occurrences of historical change might indeed be contingent but the events themselves, the contents of the changes and their effects, are bound to happen because of how the world works. Based on this understanding of history, he has the following to say about the Swedish king Charles XII and his defeat at the battle of Poltava in 1709:

> It was not Poltava that ruined Charles; if he had not been destroyed at that place, he would have been destroyed at another. Accidents of fortune are easily rectified; one cannot avert events that continuously arise from the nature of things. (Montesquieu [1748] 1989, p. 147; see also Klosko 2013, pp. 223–224)

The understanding of history exposed by Montesquieu contains an implicit notion that history always unfolds in relation to a fixed point of reference, that it constantly pivots around the same hinge; there is always something that remains the same and makes historical change come about; the possibility of change is conditioned by the presence of an immutable structure ordering every historical change.

Another example of this understanding of history, the permanency of the structure of political order, and the changeless change of human being is Locke's view of political upheaval and transformations of government. Since the sovereign power grounding political order is purposive, as Locke has it, should the rulers of a political community stray from that purpose their political authority is no longer legitimate and breaches the primordial agreement from which it proceeds. Speaking of the legitimacy of authority in terms of trust, he writes:

> All *Power given with trust* for the attaining an *end*, being limited by that end, whenever that *end* is manifestly neglected, or opposed, the *trust* must necessarily be *forfeited*, and the Power devolve

into the hands of those that gave it, who may place it anew where they shall think best for their safety and security. (Locke [1689] 1988, p. 367)

In more specific terms, if private property rights, including rights to your own body and to life itself, are not guaranteed, or even threatened, by sovereign power, the people 'have a right … to rid themselves of those who invade this Fundamental, Sacred, and unalterable Law of *Self-Preservation*, for which they enter'd into Society' (ibid., p. 367). Locke maintains that whenever rulers 'invade the Property of the Subject' or 'make themselves … Masters, or Arbitrary Disposers of the Lives, Liberties, or Fortunes of the People', government is effectively dissolved (ibid., p. 412). For, since 'the Reason why Men enter into Society, is the preservation of their Property', which suggests that 'it can never be supposed to be the Will of the Society, that the Legislative should have a Power to destroy that, which every one designs to secure, by entering into Society, and for which the People submitted themselves to the Legislators of their own making' (ibid., p. 412), there really is no political order left when the rulers fail to preserve the property of the people. In this situation, the power bestowed on the rulers by means of the primordial agreement returns to the individual persons of the community. The crux of Locke's reasoning on this issue is that with the return of power to the individuals, political order can be created once again through the construction of a new government (ibid., pp. 412–414). Sovereignty is always re-established after government has been dissolved, unless people are content going back living in the state of nature. Moreover, since sovereignty is always essentially tied to the protection of property, the end

result of such political upheaval that aims to transform political order is always the same: sovereignty being recreated just as it was before. Thus, whenever political order changes in this fundamental way, there is always a return to what was before; the structure of political order itself never changes. As Locke puts it, the power of the people is 'a Power … of providing for their safety a-new' (ibid., p. 415).

Of course, political order can undergo changes because of other reasons than this kind of breaching of trust (ibid., pp. 408–412). The end result of such changes, however, is the same as the one already presented: change always results in the reconstruction of sovereignty (ibid., pp. 411–413). Political order is like a phoenix. It is born, it lives, makes things happen and things happen to it, and eventually it dies bursting into flames. However, once dead, it soon rises again from the ashes of what it was before.

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The analysis above indicates that the early modern concept of political order has room for neither agency nor temporal contingency, that it does not contain temporal contingency or agentic membership as conceptual components. Indeed, at a first glance it might seem like humans, as political beings, have agency, that they truly make things happen and alter the course of the world; of history. Insofar as the mind exists absolutely and political order is a construct of the mind there are no reasons for the existence of political order other than the mind itself. Moreover, since political order is essentially tied to sovereignty, and the latter denotes absolute power, political order itself seems tied to human agency and the power to make the

future otherwise.

However, as objective beings, as they are represented to themselves, humans and their political communities appear as part of a completely determined world in which everything that happens do so necessarily. In this world, every change follows directly from what already is, and what already is has followed from what has been; the future is determined by the present and the present is determined by the past. In such a world, nothing at all has agentic capacity, nothing makes a difference, for the trajectory of the world is set from the very moment of its birth and nothing can make it go off course.

It is also evident that the future is not contingent in the early modern world. Since the future follows from the present and the past, it will not be otherwise because of anything humans do. Whatever humans do is determined by prior causes and their actions are never truly their own as their actions can always be referred back to underlying reasons. Should it appear that humans do alter the course of history that is merely a result of a failure to understand the true reasons for such changes.

Rather than being an open-ended process, history in the early modern world follows a predetermined path marked by a series of causes and effects and beginning in an absolute point of origin determining all future development (Foucault 2002b, pp. 166–167). History is played out inside a fixed structure and the unfolding of time is no more than a series of successive events occurring in the space between fixed things (ibid., pp. 163–164). Things are not really altered by history, for what things are is determined prior to the momentum of history (Gutting 1989, p. 167). Since things are exhaustively determined by their place in the order of the

world they cannot be allowed to change as a result of history; for that kind of thought within which thought equates to representation, history can be no more than a simple straight line that changes nothing at all.

The events of history, according to the early modern mode of thought, hinge on a perennial structure which makes the events and their deterministic succession possible; every changeless change revolves around a fixed point of reference. For the natural world in general that fixed point consists of the laws of nature. For the political world, it consists of absolute purposive sovereignty, and when history is thought of in this fashion, there really is no possibility for humans to interfere in the course of things and to turn the future into something that it would not be otherwise, for the basic structure of political order—how humans live together—will and must always stay the same. Moreover, the changes humans do bring about are rather the results of something other than human action. This last point is explicated by Hobbes when reasoning on the congruity of human freedom and natural necessity:

> *Liberty*, and *Necessity* are consistent; as in the water, that hath not only *liberty*, but a *necessity* of descending by the Channel; so likewise in the Actions which men voluntarily doe: which, because they proceed from their will, proceed from *liberty*; and yet, because every act of mans will, and every desire, and inclination proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continuall chaine, (whose first link is in the hand of God the first of all causes,) they proceed from *necessity*. So that to him that could see the connexion of those causes, the *necessity* of all mens voluntary actions, would appear manifest. And therefore God, that seeth, and disposeth all things, seeth also that the *liberty* of man in do-

ing what he will, is accompanied with the *necessity* of doing that which God will, & no more, nor lesse. For though men may do many things, which God does not command, nor is therefore Author of them; yet they can have no passion, nor appetite to any thing, of which appetite Gods will is not the cause. And did not his will assure the *necessity* of mans will, and consequently of all that on mans will dependeth, the *liberty* of men would be a contradiction, and an impediment to the omnipotence and *liberty* of God. And this shall suffice, (as to the matter in hand) of that naturall *liberty*, which only is properly called *liberty*. (Hobbes [1651] 1991, pp. 146–147)

With all of the above in mind, it should be quite evident that agency and temporal contingency are not components of the early modern concept of political order. At the end of the early modern day, humans neither create nor change political order, they are neither the original authors of political order, nor the ones who revise it. Hence, none of the four conceptual components of political order that democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory are present in early modern political discourse. They would not make sense in this discursive context, suggesting that democracy conceptualised in this way could not germinate in it, no more than in medieval discourse. Speaking of medieval discourse, however, there is a significant difference between the ostensible similarity between medieval and early modern discourse on this issue. In the Middle Ages, the reason why the four conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership could not germinate is because humans and their political communities were thought to belong to nature. The medieval understanding of hu-

mans and political order is properly naturalist in this way. In early modernity, nature might perhaps seem to be the reason once again why the four conceptual components are absent from the concept of political order, given that nature is seen as a place of complete determinism. However, early modern discourse rather *naturalises,* in some sense, humans and political order; humans and political order are turned into natural things when they truly and originally are, as has been shown, utterly separate from nature. The inclusion of humans in the natural world and their subjection to its deterministic laws come second; separation of humans from nature is the fundamental activity of early modern thought; thought itself separates the human from the natural. The reason why humans become included in nature and subjected to determinism is the operations of the human mind itself. It is because human thought equates to representation of an external material world that the four concepts would not make sense as parts of early modern discourse. The early modern mind perfectly represents an external material world and since this world, according to the early moderns, is deterministic, the mind also thinks of itself and its humanness in deterministic fashion. As Spinoza proposes, '*it is of the nature of Reason to regard things as necessary, not as contingent*', and 'it is of the nature of reason to perceive things truly..., viz. ... as they are in themselves, i.e. ... not as contingent but as necessary', from which 'it follows that it depends only on the imagination that we regard things as contingent, both in respect to the past and in respect to the future' ([1677] 1985, p. 480). Leibniz even argues that the quality of understanding the world as a place of necessity belongs to that feature which distinguishes

human being:

> It is the knowledge of necessary and eternal truths which distinguishes us from simple animals, and gives us *reason* and the sciences, by raising us to knowledge of ourselves and God. And this is what is called in us the rational soul or *mind*. (Leibniz [1714] 2014, p. 19)

Thus, early modern discourse manages to disqualify the possibility of democracy, as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory, being present in discourse based on the conceptualisation of humans as fundamentally separate from the natural world. It is not really because humans are part of the natural world that democracy in this form makes a no show in early modernity—as is the case in medieval thought—but because humans are *not* nature; because they are different from it.

Democracy conceptualised in such a way that it presupposes that the concept of political order is composed of the conceptual components of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership cannot be a meaningful part of neither medieval nor early modern discourse. In the case of the former, this is because the relation of humans to nature is one of belonging, and in the latter it is because that relation is one of separation.

4.4 Wall

At the end of the previous chapter, I described the relation between humans and nature in medieval discourse as a bridge crossing a river bringing together a landscape where the two sides of the river are basically identical to each other. Now, if the Middle Ages is the time of a bridge between humans and nature, early modernity is the

time where there is instead a wall between them; a wall that completely separates two worlds from each other; a wall that creates a duality of worlds. Here, humans are related to nature only by being different and separated from it.

Generally, what makes this separation possible is a novel epistemic configuration of discourse. Whereas identity had been logically prior to difference in the epistemic configuration of medieval thought, identity and difference becomes logically on par with each other in early modernity. Identity is not prior to difference and nor is difference prior to identity at the epistemic level of early modern discourse.

Based on such a levelling of identity and difference, all things can be sorted and arranged according to their identities and differences, as small as such differences might possibly be. Early modern thought is of a general discriminatory and comparative character, and it is fundamentally analytical; it picks things apart to reach the simple and the self-evident, and then proceeds towards ever greater arrangements of complexities. Order, then, is the epistemic rule of the early modern day. As an epistemic rule, order refers to a qualitative sorting of identities and differences, and when discourse is ruled by order, to think means to order, and whatever is can be ordered; things form a general system of identities and differences and everything can, in principle, be known as part of a single universal discourse. What is known in such a discourse, moreover, is the world as it is in itself; thought is thinking of the world as it absolutely is.

The world early modern thought thinks of is not itself meaningful. Instead, meaning emerges in thought; in the ideas of the mind. Moreover, when thought thinks of

the world, it does so in the form of representation. Thought represents the world and meaning emerges from the power of thought to represent. This power belongs to the human mind, and to the human mind only. To think is the unique feature distinguishing human being. Furthermore, thought does not belong to that which it represents. Hence, what is uniquely human does not belong to the world that comes before the human mind. In thinking, the human mind separates itself from the world of things, from nature. It builds a wall between itself and the natural world, separating the subjective world from the objective, and the two sides are strictly independent of each other. To this extent, they are completely disunited and different. They form, so to speak, a disunity of difference.

However, there is an intricacy going on in the early modern mode of thought: First of all, humans are not just thought. They are also corporeal beings, living creatures. Hence, they are split beings, both pure thought and animals. Furthermore, since thought is always representational, when it thinks of itself it does so in the form of representation. This provides an objective natural existence to human being in general; human being appears in and before thought as objective being, as part of the orderable world of things of which thought thinks.

Early modern nature, the world of which humans think, is conceptualised as a mechanism, as a machine, and so are the things in nature. It is an objective world composed of elementary particles moving according to universal deterministic laws. These particles are not hierarchically ordered and early modern nature is not hierarchically arranged in the way medieval nature had been.

Since meaning resides in the human mind, early modern nature is a meaningless world. Furthermore, it has no purpose, for natural things move not towards an end but because they have been set in motion by other things. What happens in nature is the result of efficient, not final, cause. Moreover, regarding what happens in nature, that is, furthermore, not the result of nature's own activity, for its component parts are inherently passive. Matter does not move by itself. Hence, early modern nature is very much a world of uniformity and regularity but not of harmony or activity. It is also an ordered world, much like medieval nature had been. However, medieval nature was ordered as an organism, early modern nature as a machine, as an abstract system in which the components are not intrinsically related. Nor is the being of those components tied to a fixed position in the machine, they do not become what they are as determinate parts of the machine but are, instead, interchangeable.

In the world of early modern nature structure is one thing, function is another. It is a world characterised by a dualism of structure and function. Hence, what happens in nature cannot immediately be referred back to what nature is, its function does not resolve into its structure. Different things can happen and things can produce different effects while the structure of the world and of things remains the same. For instance, fire can make a human feel warm but also pain, depending on how close they are. In both cases the structure of the fire remains the same, it is essentially the same fire. A natural space is opened up in early modernity, a space where different things can happen. Nevertheless, however, whatever can happen, and whatever things do, is still, in the final instance, determined by structure, by what nature essentially is; the world must

have a structure before things can happen.

Early modern political order does not occur naturally. Instead, it is artificially constructed by humans and a representation of their separation from nature. It emerges from an agreement—predominately conceptualised formally as a contract—between individuals to order their lives together and escape their natural state. Thus, there is a purpose attached to political order: to make it possible for humans to become something else than what they are as natural beings. This is achieved by means of sovereign authority, which means that early modern political order is essentially tied to sovereignty. It has an essence, a perennial structure that provides the foundation for all possible political actions.

The political order of early modern thought also has a transcendent origin in the human mind and in its ability to construct meaning; order comes into being ideally. Not only does this imply that the construction of meaning is prior to political order—as its condition of possibility—and that the construction of meaning, therefore, is not a political act, but also that order does not create itself. Early modern political order is not self-creative, it does not constitute itself.

On the other hand, in its appearance before the mind, political order becomes objectified, naturalised, and in extension conceptualised as any other thing of nature. It becomes a machine and invested with a dualism of structure and function according to which function is distinguished yet made possible by structure. Political order is always a manifestation of absolute purposive sovereignty and that essential feature makes possible a finite set of political actions and ways in which political order can exist.

As a construct of the human mind, polit-

ical order is an affirmation of human agency. However, not of agency stemming from humans being members of political community, since the mind's construction of meaning comes before politics and is not a political action. Moreover, the mind's construction of meaning is not properly creative. It is, rather, a passive construction in the form of a mirroring of what external things are in themselves.

The question of agency is further complicated when taking into account the objective and naturalised existence of political order. In that existence, political order is part of a deterministic world where everything happens of necessity. In this sense, political order can be seen as part of the deterministic unfolding of the material world, and human action in general as the result of prior causes. Hence, human agency is effectively cancelled.

That political order appears as part of a deterministic world also means that its being over time is as determined as anything else in nature. It develops along a fixed path, and everything that happens politically happens necessarily. Thus, the future of political order is, in principle, always already determined by what is going on in the present and what has happened in the past. The history of political order, then, is not contingent.

In sum, all of this indicates that early modern political order is not self-creative, has an essence, develops historically in a non-contingent fashion, and does not consist of members with agency. Hence, as a concept it does not contain the components of self-creativity, inessentialism, historical contingency, and agentic membership. As was argued in chapter 2, democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory presupposes that political order contains

these characteristics as conceptual components. A conclusion to de drawn from the analysis of this chapter, therefore, is that early modern thought does not provide a proper discursive setting for that concept of democracy to flourish; there is no place for it as a meaningful concept in discourse.

Another conclusion to be drawn here is that the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation in early modern discourse are fundamental for the meaning of political order. In discourse, they are logically prior to the concept of political order, the latter thusly provided with a foundation by the former. Conceptually, early modern political order is dependent on the early modern meaning of humans, nature, and their relation, which also suggests that the inability for democracy as it is conceptualised in contemporary green political theory to emerge as a meaningful concept in early modern discourse is conditioned by these conceptualisations; by the separation of humans from nature; by the disunity of difference between the human and the natural; by the wall.

Modernity:
The Door between Humans and Nature

Everything old can be made new
again… like democracy.

(Effie)

THE PERIOD DURING WHICH the epistemic configuration of discourse consists of order is a rather short one. The early modern mode of thought emerges in the 16th century, and by the beginning of the 19th century, it has already been superseded by yet another mode, which I refer to as modern. In fact, signs of modern thought, indications of a new way of ordering discourse and establishing conceptual meaning, appear as early as at the beginning of the 18th century.

Like the shift between medieval and early modern discourse, the transition to modern thought signals a new way of thinking about thought and reality. However, the rupture between early modern and modern discourse is in many respects not as dramatic as its predecessor. As shown in the previous chapters, the latter basically amounts to a complete overthrow in many important areas since early modern thought is so utterly different from medieval thought. Modern discourse, on the other hand, exhibits quite a few similarities and continuities with its early modern counterpart, and in some regards, it destabilises early modern discourse

and makes it more complicated and complex rather than directly opposing it. Crucially, and this will be elaborated later on, modern thought does not altogether disqualify the conceptualisation of thought as representation or the legitimacy of that conceptualisation as a meaningful one. Instead, it repositions representation, restricts its scope and denies its claims to generality. As I will show, this is achieved by adding to representation a temporal dimension, a more profound level from where representation gains its power to access things as they are in themselves.

Nevertheless, the emergence of modern discourse still amounts to a novel mode of thought. Whereas according to early modern thought, things are what they are because of the place they occupy in a sequential order based on identities and differences, in modernity, things break apart from each other. They become disentangled and no longer necessarily form into a single order. To that extent, the source of what they are, of their very being, can no longer be located in such a sequential order. Instead, that source is located in themselves, in the depth of their discrete existence (Foucault

2002b, p. 236; Gutting 1989, p. 181). Indeed, things may still gather into ordered sequences, but such orders are neither perennial nor fundamental, but rather the results of something more basic at work and can, therefore, no longer guarantee fixed meaning. Also, instead of being placed in relation to each other based on identities and differences, things are first and foremost disjunct. Identities and differences between things, and the series of things they establish, emerge in modernity not as the beginning of meaning but as the product of something that goes on inside discrete things (Foucault 2002b, pp. 236–237).

Thus, the modern epistemic configuration of discourse consists of yet another rearrangement of the balance between identity and difference. In medieval thought, identity is logically prior to difference, and in early modern thought, the two are on par. Now, in modern thought, difference takes logical priority over identity; identity comes after difference.

How can this be? As Hegel remarks in *The Science of Logic*, identity 'is different from difference' ([1812–1816] 2010b, p. 361). Discussing the proposition $A = A$, Hegel argues that if you say that this proposition indicates that identity—the identity of A with itself—is *not* difference, in other words, that A is not different from itself, then you also say that identity is different from difference (ibid., p. 358). When you say that A is A, you also say that A is not *non-A*. Thus, in order for something to be identical, difference must be presupposed, and in this way difference is prior to identity. Indeed, identity itself is, according to Hegel, a difference; identity is a separation away from difference (ibid., p. 358). In this sense, identity is included in and subsumed under difference: 'Difference

is … itself and identity' (ibid., p. 361). Identity harbours difference within itself. Modern difference, to quote Honig, 'signals … a difference that troubles identity from with*in* its would-be economy of the same' (Honig 1996, p. 258).

In a similar vein, Heidegger, writing indeed of identity as 'the same', notes that

> sameness implies the relation of 'with,' that is, a mediation, a connection, a synthesis: the unification into a unity. (Heidegger [1957] 2002, p. 25)

Thus, according to Heidegger, it is not possible for thought to represent 'the unity of identity' without taking into account 'the mediation that prevails in unity' (ibid., p. 25), and the presence of a mediation in identity indicates that identity presupposes something other than itself; something other than identity must first be in place before identity can emerge. What is other than identity itself is difference; difference is primordial in relation to identity; when identity is thought of, difference has always and already preceded it. To think identity is also to always already think difference. So, if difference is enclosed by identity during the Middle Ages, in modernity, identity is enclosed by difference.

As a result of the priority of difference over identity at the epistemic level, in the formation of discourse and the establishing of meaning, any determination of a concept affirms not only that explicit determination but also its difference; with the meaning of one thing always also comes its non-meaning. For a single concept, this means that its meaning effectuates that particular non-meaning which it explicitly does not mean, and at a general level—the level of meaning itself—this configuration of discourse indicates that if something is meaningful,

something else must also not be meaningful. Thus, discourse, in its very being as a place of meaning, presupposes something other than itself. Meaning engenders, therefore, its difference; the creation of meaning also involves the creation of something that is not meaningful. In other words, discourse presupposes and engenders something different from and opposite to itself; if there is meaning, there is also necessarily non-meaning.

Moreover, for things specifically, the priority of difference over identity also means that each thing contains within itself difference. Nothing is ever identical with itself. Instead, each thing 'is self-unlike and contradictory in its equality with itself, and … self-identical in its difference' (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, p. 357; see also Hegel [1830] 2010a, pp. 192–193). Therefore, any determination of a thing contains an opposition: 'each determination is itself, within it, the opposite of itself' (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, p. 357). Thus, not only is meaning different from non-meaning, but things are also different from non-things. Moreover, any particular concept or thing involves its own conceptual or objective opposite. When this configuration of identity and difference is brought to the level of the world in its entirety, to the totality of things, it suggests that the world, at a basic level, does not amount to an abstract continuous sequence of self-evident identities and minute differences. Rather, the world is a fragmented place, disrupted by the primacy of difference, scattered by the disjunct character of the things within it into multiple trajectories:

> *Natura non facit saltum*, as the saying goes; and ordinary thinking, when con-fronted by a *coming-to-be* or a *passing-away*, believes that it has comprehended it conceptually by representing it … as a *gradual emerging* or *vanishing.* But we have seen that the alterations of being in general are not only the passing over of a magnitude into another magnitude, but the transition from the qualitative into the quantitative and contrariwise, a becoming-other that interrupts gradualness and stands over against the preceding existence as something qualitatively other. Water, in cooling, does not become hard a bit at a time, as if it became first like a porridge and would then gradually harden to the consistency of ice, but is hard all at once. (ibid., p. 322)[1]

Insofar as things gather into sequences, their determination can be established based on how they compare to other things. However, since things do not necessarily form such sequences because of their discrete character, determination of meaning cannot exclusively rely on such comparisons. Instead, it must venture into the things as they are in isolation; meaning must be sought in things themselves, in their solitude. In early modern discourse, things are decomposed in order to reveal properties displaying identities and differences with the properties of other things. To that extent, there is indeed a depth to early modern things, but the depth has no other function than to aggregate a surface defining the thing as such. Things continue to have depth in modernity (Foucault 2002b, p. 292; Bartelson 1995, p. 187), but modern thought dramatically changes the importance of that depth. For now, in the depths of things there, are elements performing functions that determine what things are. In this respect, a thing is what it is because of the functions performed by its constituent elements. To be, then, is to be a structure

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[1] The Latin phrase *natura non facit saltum* means 'nature makes no leap'.

determined by internal elements (Foucault 2002b, p. 236). Thus, the fundamental level of reality does not consist of simple discrete elementary particles but is located in functions hidden in the deep:

> Since the goal of knowledge is the truth, what being is *in and for itself*, knowledge does not stop at the immediate and its determinations, but penetrates beyond it on the presupposition that *behind* this being there still is something other than being itself, and that this background constitutes the truth of being. (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, p. 337)

That things are determined by the functions of their internal elements implies that things, in their very being, encompass a temporal dimension. Things *become*: 'In the sphere of being, existence only *emerges* out of becoming' (ibid., p. 94). Things are what they are because of how they unfold over time, and when they emerge, their genesis is influenced by contextual factors. Identities and differences are thus substituted in the determination of what things are by forces operating historically (Gutting 1989, p. 181). As an example of how this model for the determination of meaning and things functions, one can have a look at the works of Vico—which are among the earliest expressions of the modern mode of thought— and what they have to say about what makes political institutions what they are. In the *New Science*, Vico writes:

> The nature of institutions is nothing but their coming into being ... at certain times and in certain guises. Whenever the time and guise are thus and so, such and not otherwise are the institutions that come into being. (Vico [1744] 1984, p. 64)

In this passage, Vico manages to capture and disclose the very core of the modern epistemic configuration of discourse. In modernity, the meaning of things is determined by *history;* history is the epistemic rule governing modern thought (Foucault 2002b, pp. 237–240). By this, I mean that meaning in modern discourse is established by means of temporal unfolding: meaning emerges through time. In modernity, to be is to be in time, and discourse itself becomes lodged into historical development. Thus, conceptual meaning emerges as a result of historical forces and processes. Things and the words speaking of things alike are the products of deeply lying functions. To that extent, discourse becomes expressive of something other than itself; it speaks on behalf of something else.

Indeed, both medieval and early modern discourse contain temporal dimensions. The medieval world is caught up in a teleological process, and everything in the early modern world is ruled by efficient causation, which comes with its own implications regarding the chronological succession of cause and effect. As the analysis in the previous chapter has shown, however, medieval time amounts only to a permanent repetition of what already is, and in early modernity, time is merely a linear progression of what has already been determined by the origin of that progression. In neither of these two cases does history in any way determine what things are. Rather, according to both medieval and early modern thought, history unfolds the way it does *because* of what things are. Deleuze refers to such understandings of time as a 'subordination of time to the course of the world' (Deleuze 2021b, par. 5).[2] In modernity, on the other hand,

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[2] This is a lecture given by Deleuze in 1978.

time is something much more complex, and most importantly, something much more fundamental. Here, time breaks free from the world; it 'unrolls itself like a sort of serpent, it shakes off all subordination to … nature, it becomes time in itself for itself, it becomes pure and empty time' (Deleuze 2021a, par. 75).[3] Thus, history ceases to unfold according to rules provided to it by the material or spiritual-material world and instead surfaces as that which determines what things in such worlds are and what they mean. In modernity, as Foucault puts it, history amounts to 'the fundamental mode of being' and 'that from which' a thing 'derives its own being' (2002b, p. 237).

It is important to note that history as epistemic configuration does not denote any particular chronological development or imply that modern thought in its entirety unfolds in a singular orchestrated succession. Rather, history is that which makes any succession of events or chronology possible at all (ibid., p. 237). Therefore, according to modern discourse, that kind of causal development, which in early modernity is the *only* real historical development, is actually dependent on a more fundamental historicity, and crucially it is but one possible mode of temporal development. History *can* be conceptualised as a linear process of causes and effects, but it can also be conceptualised as something else, as adhering to a completely different developmental logic. For instance, history can be seen as a tumultuous dialectical process in which contradictory extremes succeed each other and in which human consciousness and self-consciousness, and individual human consciousnesses and self-consciousnesses, un-

fold and progress—as Hegel does ([1807] 2018)—or in which economic systems prone to crises occur and in which social classes struggle over the material means of production—as Marx does (e.g. Marx [1857–1858] 1973, pp. 745–758; Marx and Engels [1848] 1976a,b; Marx [1859] 2000, [1867] 1976a, pp. 762–802, [1894] 1991, pp. 317–375). Or, history can be the contingent accumulated results of the ability of living creates to adapt to different circumstances in their surroundings, which is the view espoused by Darwin in *The Origin of Species* ([1859] 1996, in particular pp. 51–107).

In more general terms, history in modernity, as an epistemic rule, does not add up to a unified process, and it does not gather everything into a coherent whole governed by a single logic of temporal development. Instead, and this follows from the primacy of difference over identity and from the discreteness of existence, history fragments the world; it disperses things along different and possibly contradictory trajectories. The only unity the world sums up to is a unity of difference. Almost 200 years after Hegel wrote *The Science of Logic*, Nancy describes the modern world and its fragmented character as follows:

> The unity of a world is not one: it is made of a diversity, and even disparity and opposition…. The unity of a world is nothing other than its diversity, and this, in turn, is a diversity of worlds. A world is a multiplicity of worlds; the world is a multiplicity of worlds, and its unity is the mutual sharing and exposition of all its worlds—within this world. (Nancy [1998] 2000, p. 185)

The historicity of modern being suggests that things and the world they occupy are

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[3]This is also a lecture given by Deleuze in 1978.

in constant change; reality is not principally in a state of permanence but instead in constant process. Whitehead, who perhaps more thoroughly than any other pursues process as a philosophical concept, writes that 'the final real things of which the world is made up' are '"actual occasions"' differing 'among themselves' (Whitehead [1929] 1985, p. 18), and these occasions are internally related (e.g. ibid., p. 22). The modern world *becomes* rather than *is*. 'The actual world is a process, and ... the process is the becoming of ... "actual occasions"' (ibid., p. 22).

Thus, reality is marked by continuous change. Here, change amounts to something more profound than in early modernity. For in early modernity, as was argued in the previous chapter, change is actually changeless; the processes of cause and effect that characterise nature introduce no differences at all since they unfold according to a pattern determined by their origin. In modernity, on the other hand, change involves the emergence of something truly new, something that does not follow from what exists in the present. The world, in its becoming, is involved in a 'creative advance into novelty' (ibid., p. 28, see also p. 21). Hegel even explicitly criticises the unchanging change associated with early modernity. Historical change thought to be the result of something that is already present, he says, implies that

> the coming-to-be and the vanishing are presupposed as ready-made beforehand and the alteration is reduced to the mere mutation of an external difference, and in this way the change becomes in fact only a tautology. (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, p. 322)

True change, according to modern thought, involves a transformation of the basic structure of what exists; water losing temperature is still water until it freezes and becomes ice. Change occurs when sequences are broken. However, the reality of such changes and the dispersion of the world along different historical trajectories does not mean that things cannot be arranged in sequential orders possible to analyse based on a sorting of identities and differences. Such orders are still part of the modern world. Referring to water once again, it is arguably quite simple to order water samples of different temperatures in relation to each other. What it does imply, however, is that such orders are not fixed; they are transient states, temporarily stable results of historical processes. Hence, it is still possible to think of things as sequentially ordered, and thought still holds the power of representation. Thus, it is still possible to meaningfully assert that the mind represents the world in thought. Moreover, this means that thought can still compare and sort things, analyse and synthesise. In short, the kind of thought made possible by the early modern episteme can be a meaningful part of modern thought; it still has discursive validity; it still makes sense. Modernity does not disqualify representational thought altogether but rather adds a new layer to it. For representation no longer exhausts what thought is; all thought is no longer representational. Instead, thought as representation, and statements about thought as representation, are the contingent results of historical forces. To that extent, representation becomes conditioned and relative to those forces. Hence, it does not ground itself; it does not provide to itself its own foundation but is rather grounded in something more fundamental, something outside itself (Foucault 2002b, p. 259; Gutting 1989, p. 182).

Since representation is still possible, identities and differences can still establish meaning, but not on their own. Modernity adds another layer to the determination of conceptual meaning. One example of this intricacy, that identities and differences require something else in order to establish meaning, is Saussure's theory of structural linguistics and Derrida's critique thereof. Saussure divides language into language as speech and language as a linguistic system or structure. The linguistic system amounts to an abstract set of principles making possible language as speech (Saussure [1916] 1986, pp. 8–11); there can be no meaningful speech without an underlying set of principles dictating the meaning of speech. The linguistic system thus makes speech meaningful (ibid., p. 19).

The linguistic system, in Saussure's view, consists only of signs, and the signs it consists of are composites of signifiers and signifieds. The signifier is the actual word, and the signified is the meaning of that word (ibid., pp. 11–15, 65–67). The relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary outside the context of the particular linguistic system of which the sign is a unit; the word 'water', for instance, has a specific meaning in the context of English language, but that which is made meaningful by the term water in English can be made meaningful by a host of other words in other linguistic contexts. This is perhaps rather trivial, but of greater importance is Saussure's claim that signs have no connections to anything outside the system of which they are part (ibid., pp. 67–69). The word water has no connection to the thing referred to as water. Since they have no point of reference outside the linguistic system, the meaning of a sign, Saussure argues, is determined by the position it occupies vis-à-vis other signs in the system.

Specifically, Saussure claims that meaning is established by differentiation; the meaning of any sign derives from its difference from other signs (ibid., pp. 112–120). A sign never provides meaning to itself by itself. There are no self-referring signs. Thus, in a system consisting of signs A and B, the meaning of A derives from the difference of A to B, and vice versa, and the totality of meaning in the system is the product of the differential relations among its units. What is conveyed here, then, is actually somewhat comparable to the early modern understanding of how the human mind constructs meaning by sorting identities and differences.

Moreover, the linguistic system, as it is theorised by Saussure, *must* be closed; it must be self-contained. Without closure, the system does not add up to a totality and would thus fail to establish meaning. Should the system be open, meaning would escape, slip out in the cracks exposing the system to the outside. Derrida, however, points out a problem with this notion of necessary closure (Derrida [1967] 1997, pp. 30–73, [1968] 1982a). Derrida argues that the closure necessary for the establishing of meaning also makes meaning *impossible*. To see why, one can return to the exemplary linguistic system consisting of signs A and B. If the meaning of A is derived from the difference of A to B, and the meaning of B from the difference of B to A, then ultimately, the differential chain determining the meaning of A leads back to A itself so that the meaning of A must be determined by A. In this case, meaning is no longer differentially established. Instead, A becomes self-referential, which it cannot be considering the argument that no signs are self-referential. Moreover, it actually implies that the whole system is emptied of meaning (Abizadeh 2005). Since signs

supposedly have no connections outside the system and the system is supposedly closed, everything within it becomes self-referential and empty. The signs within such a closed system, and the system itself, emerge as entirely meaningless.

This critique of Saussure highlights that meaning cannot solely be a product of differential relations within a closed system; there must be something else at work in the establishing of meaning, something different from meaning. Returning to the epistemic configuration of modernity, meaning presupposes and relies on something other than itself, something different from meaning. Difference is prior to meaning generated in linguistic systems; it is not itself part of meaning. Indeed, meaning might still emerge differentially—which Derrida maintains—but differential relations among concepts in a linguistic system are not enough for meaning to emerge.

This critique would actually not have any bearing for early modern thought, for the identities and differences establishing meaning in early modern discourse are provided with an origin in the human mind. In early modern discourse, meaning is guaranteed by the stability of the human mind and the unchanging character of human being. However, one of the most important ideas surfacing in modernity, and one of the most significant consequences of history as epistemic rule, is that there is no such thing as a fixed human being. In modernity, human being, just like everything else, is historical and susceptible to change over time.

This idea sees the light of day already in Vico's writings. In fact, it is one of the major tenets in the *New Science*. There, Vico details three different 'kinds' of human nature based on different ways of reasoning and understanding the world. These kinds succeed each other over time and give rise to three different corresponding kinds of societies (Vico [1744] 1984, pp. 336–362). By inquiring into the 'history of the ideas, the customs, and the deeds of mankind', he maintains that it is possible to 'derive the principles of the history of human nature' (ibid., p. 112). Thus, since human nature changes historically, for Vico, the idea that it is possible to define a perfect and perennial form of political order based on human nature, which is the basic claim engendering much of early modern natural law theory, is utterly mistaken. Vico argues that what the natural law theorists of early modernity saw as the origin of human society—reason, or one of its derivatives—actually emerges *within* and as part of the development of human society (ibid., pp. 92–95). According to Vico's historicist understanding, reason is not a fixed foundation of human being but is instead acquired along a historical trajectory.

A decade after the final version of Vico's *New Science* appeared, Rousseau wrote *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, usually just referred to as the *Second Discourse*. In it, he develops a similar critique against the natural law theorists. According to Rousseau, what the natural law theorists had identified as the traits making it possible for humans to move away from the state of nature and construct political societies actually require knowledge and ways of reasoning that humans can only acquire when they are already living socially (Rousseau [1755] 1993a, pp. 45–50). Those theorists, he says, 'have all felt the necessity of going back to a state of nature; but not one of them has got there' (ibid., p. 50). Rather, they have only just 'transferred to the state of nature ideas which were acquired in society; so that, in speak-

ing of the savage, they describe the social man' (ibid., p. 50). Hence, Rousseau maintains that the natural law theorists failed to realise that they made a lot of incorrect assumptions about what it is to be human. In opposition to their view, he argues, just like Vico, that human nature, rather than being fixed, changes as a result of interactions between humans and their surroundings over time, and of different ways of living socially. Men are, he says, 'different in different ages', and the

> savage and the civilised man differ so much in the bottom of their hearts and in their inclinations, that what constitutes the supreme happiness of one would reduce the other to despair. (ibid., p. 115)

In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau emphasises that humans becoming political is a particularly significant change in human being (Rousseau [1762] 1993b, p. 195), and furthermore, that the particularities of the very ordering of political order change what the human being is:

> He who dares to undertake the making of a people's institutions ought to feel himself capable, so to speak, of changing human nature, of transforming each individual ... into part of a greater whole from which he in a manner receives his life and being; of altering man's constitution for the purpose of strengthening it. (ibid., p. 214)

In modern thought, from Vico and Rousseau onwards, human being changes historically; it transforms as a result of functions occurring in time. What the historical character of human being implies here, for the discussion on the establishing of meaning and the argument that systems of identities and differences cannot guarantee meaning by themselves, is that there is no equivalent to the early modern mind in modern thought that can fixate meaning. Human thought as pure thought cannot by itself provide meaning to words; the mind cannot be the sole origin of conceptual meaning. Instead, discourse is expressive of something else, of a more fundamental source. This source amounts to nothing else than that very historicity of human being outlined above (Foucault 2002b, p. 316; Bartelson 1995, p. 188); meaning does not emerge from the stability of human being, but from its historicity and transmutability, and as I will show in the next section, this historicity of human being consists of a conjunction of action and thing; to be human in modernity is to be a unity of difference, to be a unity of action and thing, thought and world, subject and object. Moreover, I will continue to argue in this chapter that meaning in modernity presupposes the existence of the other of meaning and emphasise that this other ultimately consists of empty materiality. Towards the end of it, it will be shown how this conceptualisation of what it means to be human, and the relation between humans and nature that it contains, effects the modern conceptualisation of political order and the possibility of democracy to germinate as a meaningful concept in political discourse. For in modern discourse, this germination becomes a real possibility; modernity provides a discursive setting in which democracy presupposing that political order creates itself, lacks essence, is temporally contingent, and consists of members with agency can emerge as a meaningful concept. The historical material dealt with in the chapter is fairly wide-ranging and hard to summarise briefly. Therefore, I refrain from providing such a summary in this case and instead just delve right into it.

5.1 Humans

The early modern notion that to be human involves thinking continues in modern discourse, as does the understanding of thought as something active, that to think is to perform an act. Crucially, however, modern discourse transforms what such an act entails. In early modernity, thought as act is merely a passive act insofar as the human mind merely mirrors in thought what the world is in itself. I have referred to this as the mind being constructive. In early modernity, however, being constructive does not equal being *creative*. In modernity, on the other hand, thought becomes properly creative (Bartelson 1995, p. 188), meaning that it engenders something that does not exist in the world it thinks of or corresponds to something in that world. To clarify this difference, it can be said that, in early modernity, thought itself originates in the mind, but what the mind represents, what it thinks of, does not really originate in the mind since it mirrors the world as it is in itself. In modernity, however, both thought and what it thinks of, as well as the form thought takes when it thinks, originates in human being. There is an element of spontaneity associated with thought as creation which is absent in thought as construction. What modern thought creates in its acts of thinking does not correspond to or mirror the world as it is in itself, but what early modern thought constructs does, in fact, correspond to or mirror the world.

Vico, for instance, maintains that 'man … composes and makes' his own truths (Vico [1710] 2010, p. 19). The mind, he argues, 'gathers together the elements of a truth which it contemplates', and 'this can only be the result of the mind making the

truths which it knows' (ibid., p. 25). According to this view, truths are properly made; they are actively and spontaneously created by humans. They are not revelations of what the world is in itself (Berlin 1976, pp. 99–114). In line with this conceptualisation of truth, Vico claims that the most basic form of human thought is creative imagination, or 'poetic wisdom', as he refers to it (Vico [1744] 1984, pp. 110, 116; see also Mooney 1985, pp. 206–232; Verene 1981, pp. 65–95, 2009, pp. 92–96). Speaking in explicitly historicist terms about the origin of humanity as a historical event, Vico states that 'in the world's childhood men were by nature sublime poets' ([1744] 1984, p. 71) who 'created things according to their own ideas' (ibid., p. 117). However, the creation he speaks of is not a creation of things but a creation of mental images. As an example of such creation—and, according to his theory of the history of human societies, a very important one—Vico discusses thunder and lightning, and how the first humans 'pictured the sky to themselves as a great animated body', as a god who meant to communicate something to them through the roaring thunder (ibid., 117–119, quote appearing on p. 118). In other words, Vico's poetic wisdom consists of the free creation of meaning, of giving things a meaning they did not have before dictated by nothing at all. This—to create meaning—is for Vico a properly human power, and through that power 'from our own idea we give being to things that lack it' (Vico [1725] 2002, p. 151). As it is conceptualised here, thought is arguably something very different from representation. When Vico's first humans think of the god in the sky, they do not represent a god who is already there but create it; they bring it into being through their very thoughts. Poetic wisdom is 'en-

tirely imaginary, like the work of a painter of ideas, and not representational, like that of a painter of portraits' (ibid., p. 152). At the most basic level of thought, humans do not represent the world as it is, then. Rather, 'man … feigns for himself' a world of his own (Vico [1710] 2010, p. 25), a world only corresponding to his own creative power of thought, for, Vico argues moreover, every aspect of human life evolves from poetic wisdom: poetic wisdom grounds language, it grounds all the different sciences, and it grounds all parts of social life. From poetic wisdom, he writes,

> as from a trunk, there branch out from one limb logic, morals, economics, and politics, all poetic; and from another, physics, the mother of cosmography and astronomy, the latter of which gives their certainty to its two daughters, chronology and geography—all likewise poetic. We shall show clearly and distinctly how the founders of gentile humanity by means of their natural theology (or metaphysics) imagined the gods; how by means of their logic they invented languages; by morals, created heroes; by economics, founded families, and by politics, cities; by their physics, established the beginnings of things as all divine; by the particular physics of man, in a certain sense created themselves; by their cosmography, fashioned for themselves a universe entirely of gods; by astronomy, carried the planets and constellations from earth to heavens; by chronology, gave beginning to times; and how by geography the Greeks, for example, described the world within their own Greece. (Vico [1744] 1984, p. 112; see also Vico [1731] 2009, pp. 167–169)[4]

Vico's account of the creativity of thought is

an important early contribution to modern discourse.[5] However, the most famous, and certainly most important in terms of influence, rendering of the modern creativity of thought is found in the work of Kant.

Kant acknowledges that empirical knowledge—knowledge based on experience, that is—is representational, or rather that such knowledge is a representation based on the agreement between thought and what it represents (Kant [1781] 1998, pp. 136–137, 155; see also Deleuze [1963] 2008, p. 3). However, such representations, he maintains, are not fundamental, and they do not amount to thought as such (Foucault 2002b, pp. 262–264). Instead, they are accompanied by something more fundamental, by principles according to which humans understand things (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 157). This is what Kant refers to as transcendental apperception, or consciousness (ibid., pp. 225, 230–234), and, in the wake of Kant, what is commonly called the transcendental subject. According to the notion of the transcendental subject, everything that appears to humans appears to their transcendental subjectivity; all experience is framed by this fundamental level of subjectivity.

Kant maintains that the transcendental subject consists of two different elements. The first element is space and time, which Kant refers to as the *subjective forms* of all experience (ibid., pp. 157–165). Everything that appears to human consciousness has a spatial and temporal form: 'One can never represent that there is no space, although one can very well think that there are no objects to be encountered in it', he writes (ibid.,

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[4]The exposition of how language, science, and society develop based on poetic wisdom is one of the major topics of the *New Science*, and most of the work is dedicated to that exposition. See Vico ([1744] 1984, pp. 109–297).

[5]For treatments of various aspects of Vico's philosophy, its place in intellectual history, and its impact on subsequent thought, see the contributions in Tagliacozzo and White (1969) and Tagliacozzo and Verene (1976).

p. 158), and likewise 'one cannot remove time, though one can very well take the appearances away from time' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 162). Thus, everything humans experience they experience according to the forms of space and time.

The second element of the transcendental subject is what Kant calls the *pure concepts* of the understanding (ibid., pp. 204–218), often also called the categories of the understanding. These categories denote specific qualities that everything humans experience display; they predicate everything. Since they are predicable of all things, it follows that they are universal and necessary (Deleuze [1963] 2008, p. 10; see also Deleuze 2021a). Thus, if one refers to that which humans experience as objects, all objects necessarily display the qualities covered by the categories of the understanding. To be precise, Kant delineates 12 such categories, one being causality, just to mention one. Hence, insofar as causality is a category of the understanding, all objects humans experience must appear to be caused by something.

Importantly, according to Kant, time, space, and the categories of the understanding are not themselves experienced or discovered empirically. Instead, they are what he refers to as *a priori*. A priori means that they are independent of experience, as opposed to *a posteriori*, given *in* experience. In fact, he argues that without this level of a priori subjectivity, human experience would be nothing but a series of sensuous perceptions unrelated to each other. The senses only provide humans with a 'manifold' of intuitions, and in that manifold, appearances are unordered (Kant [1781] 1998, pp. 155–156). For that manifold to be understood as something ordered, as something more than an endless series of unrelated sensory data,

the senses require something that ties all of those appearances together (ibid., pp. 155, 156, 305–307). This is achieved by the understanding. The understanding is that in which things are thought according to the forms of space and time and the universal and necessary predicates covered by the categories. Thus, humans can be said to think only in the understanding (ibid., pp. 155–156, 193). Thought brings form to sensations, and since thought appears only as understanding, the form according to which it thinks is determined a priori; it is determined by the categories of understanding and space and time. Thus, the transcendental subject brings experience together; it unities it (e.g. ibid., p. 230). The transcendental subject makes experience meaningful as a totality, and it permeates thought as such (Kant [1781] 1998, pp. 232–234; Deleuze 2021a). Subjectivity, in this sense, amounts to a unified experience; the transcendental subject provides a 'unity of apperception' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 232, see also pp. 231, 233–234, 247–248).

Furthermore, since the contents of the transcendental subject are not experienced themselves, they cannot be said to exist by themselves; space, time and the categories of the understanding have no existence on their own; strictly speaking, they are nothing. Instead, they only ever *apply* to what is experienced as existing (Deleuze 2021a). Thus, they 'are nothing other than logical requisites and criteria of all cognition of things in general' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 217). They are, then, that which makes human experience possible. Experience takes on meaning only against the backdrop of the a priori. Thus, the transcendental subject is the condition of possibility of human experience (ibid., pp. 226–228). To that extent, the

transcendental subject might appear to occupy the same position in modern discourse as the human mind had in early modern discourse. However, there is an important difference between the early modern mind and the modern transcendental subject in terms of their status as conditions of possibility of experience. The level of subjectivity delineated in modernity as a condition of possibility of experience is *transcendental*, whereas the mind in early modernity—and macrocosmic nature in medieval thought, it could be added—are *transcendent*. The latter indicates independent existence; the former does not. The early modern mind existed independent of any particular thought—as a substance, as Descartes would have it. This is not the case with Kant's transcendental subject, for the transcendental subject exists only as a logical prerequisite. It does not amount to a thing that thinks or something equivalent to it, but only to that which must be assumed for human experience to be logically coherent. The modern foundation of human experience and thought does not exist above and beyond particular experience, but can be said instead to exist only through its functions, through that which it makes possible, namely experience and thought (Karatani 2003, pp. 29–35). Thus, thought no longer has a substantial ground, no essential origin from which it flows.

One of the most important components of Kant's philosophy is the positioning of neither space and time nor the predicates covered by the categories of the understanding as belonging to things as they are in themselves. Instead, they are said to be specific to human consciousness: 'Our representation of things as they are given to us does not conform to these things as they are in themselves', Kant argues, rather 'these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 112). Hence, the a priori conditions of possible experience are not found in things themselves, but are spontaneously created by the power of human consciousness, by the power of thought itself. In other words, things in themselves do not have spatial and temporal form, nor do they have a cause in themselves. They have only spatial and temporal forms as they appear *for humans*, and they are only predicated by cause, for instance, as they appear *for humans*. Thus, the transcendental subject does not represent the world as it is in itself, but only as it appears for humans. Modern thought does not think of the world but the world as it appears for human thought itself.[6]

The level of subjectivity uncovered by Kant's notion of the transcendental subject denotes the most basic form of human being as it is that which makes experience as such possible. This level of subjectivity, which is only transcendental and not transcendent, even though not necessarily couched in such Kantian terms, is a general characteristic of modern thought (Karatani 2003); it is a defining mark of modern discourse and of the modern conceptualisation of human being. To that extent, to be human in modernity is to be nothing at all, to be just a logical prerequisite of meaningful thought (Foucault

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[6] Kant's rendering of space and time as belonging to the world of appearances provides a very clear example of the difference between modern and early modern thought. In early modernity, space and time had belonged to the world itself, a notion that is explicitly mentioned by Gassendi in the quote appearing on page 274 in chapter 4 above and in which it is stated that 'space and time must be considered real things' and that 'space endures steadfastly and time flows on whether the mind thinks of them or not' (see also Gassendi [1658] 1972, pp. 384–385).

2002b, pp. 340–351). According to this view, human experience does not originate in a mind, as it did in early modernity, nor is it a microcosmic duplication of nature as macrocosm, as it had been during the Middle Ages. It originates only in itself, in its own logical prerequisites. Since every thought is grounded in this transcendental level, all thought is grounded only in human experience itself. In this respect, human being denotes a pure form of subjectivity, an abstract form of subjectivity in general.

However, this tells only half the story of the modern human. Since the transcendental level has no existence on its own, its validity as a description of human being hinges on the actuality of what the transcendental subject conditions. And what does it condition? Human thought. And what is human thought about? Objects. According to Kant, experience becomes possible because humans ascribe universal and necessary predicates *to objects*. For the transcendental level to do what it does—to think, that is—the existence of objects must be presupposed since it operates on objects. As Kant notes, 'thinking is the action of relating given intuitions to an object' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 345). If human thought is to make specific objects meaningful, then there must first and foremost be objects. Again, this is not all too different from the state of things in early modernity. On this issue, however, slight differences make all the difference. The early modern world was populated by particular things with determinate characteristics, a notion captured, for instance, by Locke's distinction of primary and secondary qualities. However, this is not the case in modernity, as will be delineated in the following paragraphs. For what is presupposed by the validity of the transcendental subject is not particular objects, but objectivity in general:

> All our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding, and, since appearances are nothing but representations, the understanding thus relates them to a something, as the object of sensible intuition: but this something is to that extent only the transcendental object. This signifies, however a something = *X*, of which we know nothing at all or can know anything in general . . . but is rather something that can serve only as a correlate of the unity of apperception for the unity of the manifold in sensible intuition. (ibid., pp. 347–348)

The transcendental subject presupposes objectivity as a general form of being, not any particular objects. This is what Kant refers to as the transcendental object in the above passage. If there were no objective existence, human experience and human thought would not be possible. Objectivity is, then, as Kant notes, the 'correlate' to human consciousness, without which the latter would not be possible at all (Deleuze [1963] 2008, p. 14). This implies that the most basic level of human being presupposes the existence of objective reality, that there are things in general. Since the transcendental subject is not the condition of possibility of anything else than experience (Kant [1781] 1998, pp. 344–346), and that it, therefore, *only* directs itself to that which is objective, human experience as such can be said to presuppose the real existence of things in general. Things provide 'the material for thinking', and they are 'the condition of the application, or use, of the pure intellectual faculty' (ibid., p. 453). Objectivity as a form of being can, therefore, be said to be a condition of possibility for transcendental subjectivity. Moreover, since the transcendental subject does not exist independently of what it conditions, objectiv-

ity does not exist as something exterior to the transcendental subject. Rather, objectivity is internalised in subjectivity as the other of subjectivity. Here, one encounters the modern logical priority of difference at play, how in modernity identity presupposes difference and that contradiction is internalised in conceptual meaning. For not only does subjectivity presuppose objectivity, the latter is also internalised as a contradictory element in the former.

The presupposition of objectivity by subjectivity means that the very appearance of something before human consciousness is not of human origin; the fact that something appears to human consciousness is not a result of human thinking but rather a prerequisite for that thinking. However, since the forms according to which objects appear as part of experience actually belong to human being, humans are constitutive of the conditions of objective appearances (Deleuze 2021a). Humans do not bring things into being by way of thinking them. Again, that things in general *are* is presupposed by thought. However, what humans do in thought is to determine what those things are. Recollect Vico's claim that the first humans heard in the roaring skies not thunder but the voice of a god. Those humans did not create thunder as such, but they did create the god whose voice it is. More generally stated, humans create particular objects from objectivity in general by determining the meaning of those objects and what they are based on their own form of determination. Things do not exist in a determinate manner beyond human thought, for beyond human thought, there is only objectivity in general, empty objectivity that takes the form of a condition of possibility of thought. To that extent, subjectivity is

also a condition of possibility of objectivity. The two condition each other; they always come in a pair as a unity of difference.

The objectivity correlating to human consciousness also applies to human being itself. Again reminiscent of early modern discourse, when humans think of themselves in modernity, they think of themselves as objects. Thus, humans appear to themselves as objective beings. Therefore, there is always an empirical subject corresponding to the transcendental subject, a living breathing companion to the abstraction that is the transcendental subject (Kant [1781] 1998, pp. 451–455). Thus, this provides another element of human being; to be human is not only to be the condition of possibility of experience but also to be that experience, to be an actual thing, a concrete person. Humans are, then, both living beings who think, *and* the condition of possibility of such thinking; they are both empirical *and* transcendental, objective *and* subjective (Foucault 2002b, pp. 330–374). Thus, in human being, subjectivity and objectivity come together; the human being provides the interface between the subjective and the objective. In the human, these different forms of being come together in a unity—the human being itself—but a unity of differences since it is a unity of two different forms of being, the subjective—thought—and the objective—of what thought thinks. To be human in modernity, then, is to be a *conjunction*, an *and* which brings together two contradictory elements to form a unity of difference.

But what kind of objectivity is it that is united with the subjective in the human being, and what kind of subjectivity are we talking about here? It has already been delineated that the transcendental subject exists of nothing at all, that it is only visible

through its functions. Thus, it is strictly speaking empty; it is subjectivity as such. Subjectivity only denotes the activity of determination of meaning; it is a pure act. A similar thing can be said of the objective side of human being. Since thought is conceptualised as creative, since meaning is spontaneously determined by human subjectivity, things cannot be said to have any qualities beyond their determination in human thought. Such theories, for instance, as Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, would be nonsensical in modern discourse. For *all* qualities derive from the creativity of human thought, there are no primary qualities, only secondary ones. As Schopenhauer writes in his commentary on Kant:

> Kant ... showed that what *Locke* had considered to be primary qualities, i.e. qualities of things themselves, belong only to the way in which things appear in our faculty of apprehension; and this is the case precisely because we have *a priori* cognition of its conditions, space, time and causality. (Schopenhauer [1818] 2010, p. 444)[7]

This critique of the notion of qualities existing in things in themselves is indeed articulated already in the writings of Berkeley:

> Some there are who make a distinction betwixt *primary* and *secondary* qualities. By the former they mean extension, figure, motion, rest, solidity, impenetrability, and number; by the latter they denote all other sensible qualities, as colours, sounds, tastes, and so forth. The ideas we have of these last they acknowledge not to be the resemblances of anything existing without the mind, or unperceived, but they will have our ideas of the primary qualities to be patterns or images of things which exist without the

> mind, in an unthinking substance with they call Matter.—By Matter, therefore, we are to understand *an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure and motion do actually subsist.* But it is evident ... that extension, figure, and motion are only ideas existing in the mind. (Berkeley [1710] 1981, pp. 68–69)

Since representations are created by humans, any determinate objective existence, and any particular meaning a thing might have, is dependent on human being; for an object to be something determinate, and for it to have any meaning at all, a human must think of it in such and such a way. The objectivity presupposed here, then, is indeterminate. Just as subjectivity is subjectivity as such, so is objectivity objectivity as such. It is not any particular object that is united with the subjective in human being; it is not a particular meaning of the world of things that is the other within thought. The objectivity united with subjectivity is as empty as the latter; it is a pure and abstract thingly existence, thingliness without determination, without properties. Thus, the modern human being is a conjunction of pure action and pure thing.

Despite disqualifying the notion of secondary qualities, Kant still maintains that even though the things humans experience are determinate things only insofar as they appear to humans. There are still things in themselves. Kant refers to such things as *noumena*, as opposed to *phaenomena*, the latter being things as they appear for humans (Kant [1781] 1998, pp. 338–353). However, since humans cannot think of things in themselves without imposing on them their own thoughts, and by that their own forms

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[7]For a brief discussion by Kant on Locke and the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, see Kant ([1783] 1997, pp. 40–41).

of determination, there is nothing that can be said of *noumena.* Whatever would be said about them would reflect the human origin of their meaning, and instead of speaking of things in themselves, one would be speaking of things as they appear for humans. The concept of *noumena,* therefore, is a 'boundary concept' marking the limit of human thought (ibid., p. 350). To reiterate, objectivity beyond human determinations is a void. Or, as Kant himself puts it, the 'domain outside of the sphere of appearances is empty (for us)' (ibid., p. 350). Should one attempt to fill it, should one state that it has this or that quality or is in this or that way, one has, according to Kant, resorted and succumbed to dogmatism. And dogmatism, says Kant, is a procedure of thought belonging to the past and rightfully doing so. The early moderns had been dogmatic, and in their dogmatism, they had failed to properly grasp the creative powers of human thought. Dogmatism, says Kant, is

> the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts according to principles, which reason has been using for a long time without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has obtained them. Dogmatism is therefore the dogmatic procedure of pure reason, without an antecedent critique of its own capacity. (ibid., p. 119)

Thus, for Kant, and for modern thought in general, it is in principle impossible to defend statements of what things are in themselves—what they are beyond human experience—as statements of truth. Such statements are rather beliefs. Likewise, it is in principle nonsensical not to relate meaning, explanations, truth, and so on to their origin in human experience. Therefore, postulations regarding the world in itself are, if not illegitimate from the very get-go, always problematic for the moderns, at least in principle. Indeed, as I will show later on, rather than belonging to the register of truth, they mainly serve a political function in the form of ideology.

Returning to the topic of *noumena* and the status of things in themselves, Kant's view on this matter is not that representative of modern thought in general. Instead, soon after Kant, the notion of things in themselves as independent of thought and as something separate from things as they appear for humans is pretty much discarded. The idea is done away with already by Hegel. He highlights that the very distinction between things in themselves and things as they appear to human consciousness is itself created by thought, simply because it is itself a thought (Hegel [1807] 2018, pp. 79–101); the thing in itself is a result of 'an arbitrary act of the understanding', he argues ([1830] 2010a, p. 192). From this, it follows that things in themselves are actually part of the world of appearances. The world of things in themselves, says Hegel, 'has *developed.* It *comes* forth from out of appearance…. *[A]ppearance is its essence*' (Hegel [1807] 2018, p. 88). Thus, the world as it is in itself, as it is beyond human thought, is itself part of the world of appearance. As Carlson notes in his work on Hegel, 'for Hegel, what a thing is in itself is also what it is "for other"' (2007, p. 75). This does not imply, however, that the world and things in themselves are merely thought of, that they are simple figments of human imagination. Rather, it implies that they are *thought of as not being thought of*; they are abstractions created by humans:

> Things are called 'in-themselves' in so far as abstraction is made from all being-

for-other, which really means, in so far as they are thought without all determination, as nothing. . .. What there is *in* these things-in-themselves is . . . very well known; they are as such nothing but empty abstractions void of truth. (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, pp. 93–94; see also Carlson 2007, p. 75)

As such abstractions, things in themselves are perceived as not being perceived; they are determined as something that is not determined (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, pp. 92–95, [1807] 2018, pp. 87–88). That being said, things in themselves are first and foremost things as appearances (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, p. 94).

From Hegel onward, modern discourse arranges the world as it is in itself as part of the world of appearances. This means that, beyond the abstract objectivity presupposed by and united with an equally abstract subjectivity in the human being, there is no longer any world beyond human thought, for any such world would be yet another world thought of by humans; the very notion of a world beyond thought is exactly that, *a notion*. To that extent, the absolute world of medieval and early modern times no longer makes any sense; such ideas cannot truly be part of modern discourse as meaningful concepts. Instead, statements about the world as it is in itself must be appended with a clause relating it to a subject and a historical context. Or, at least, any such statement can be met with the following critique: you might claim to speak about the world as it is in itself, but since your own thinking conditions that speech, the world of which you speak is not the world as it is in itself but the world as it appears *for you* (Meillassoux 2008, pp. 13–14). Or, as Meillassoux describes the modern mindset:

no theory about X without a positing of

X. If you speak about something, you speak about something that is . . . posited by you. . .. [W]hen you claim to think any X, you must posit this X, which cannot then be separated from this special act of positing, of conception. That is why it is impossible to conceive an absolute X, *i.e.,* an X which would be essentially separate from a subject. (Brassier et al. [2007] 2012, p. 409; see also Meillassoux 2014, p. 10)

The absolute spiritual and material world that humans had been a part of in the Middle Ages and the absolute world the early moderns had mirrored in thought were not truly absolute in the eyes of the moderns. All along, the world has been only a world as it appears for humans. Likewise, any present statements about the world as it is in itself are mistaken. Such statements are not statements of truths but dogmatic postulates or ideological convictions, as I will delineate later.

However, none of this implies that objectivity as such disappears. For humans, as they are conceptualised in modern thought, still think in terms of objects. In thinking, humans need objects to think of, and to that extent, abstract objectivity is always the necessary companion to thought, the other of thought *in* thought, the difference within. Or, as Kant puts it:

all the determining grounds of my existence that can be encountered in me are representations, and as such they themselves need something persisting distinct from them, in relation to which . . . [they] can be determined. (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 121)

To this extent, since thought thinks in the form of objects and objects are that which is referred to in thought, there is still something resembling an external world of things, a world of objects as opposed to the sub-

jective. Moreover, it suggests that subjects and objects are still distinct from each other; that they denote two different forms of being. Neither form, however, is independent of the other, and neither has any determinate meaning outside the relation to the other. Beyond pure and abstract objectivity, the objective world is created and determined by the subjective element of human being. Thus, the world of objects is actually a world *objectified* in and by thought; humans *externalise* the internal objective element into a world of which they think (Hegel [1812–1816] 2010b, pp. 126–127). Thought, then, generates its other in the very act of thinking. Again, insofar as there seems to be an external world of objects existing independently of human thought, this is merely a result of thought itself. The only real form of objectivity is pure and empty objectivity, just like the only real form of subjectivity is pure and empty subjectivity. Whatever positive content either might have is determined by humans themselves in their historical being.

I would like to add one more thing to the concept of pure and empty objectivity, and in so doing, also say a few more words on pure and empty subjectivity. I would like to add that ultimately, the pure and empty objectivity accompanying pure and empty subjectivity consists of *empty materiality*, a material world susceptible to being rendered as a world of things existing in space and time. To do so, I would like to move away from Kant and Hegel and jump forward in the chronology of modern thought to Derrida and to his aforementioned critique of Saussure's theory of linguistic systems and the de-

termination of meaning therein.

As was outlined earlier, Saussure argues that no concepts are self-referential, that meaning instead emerges differentially in a closed system of signs, and that this system must be closed for meaning to appear in it. But this, Derrida objects, cannot really be the case, for the closure necessary for meaning also makes meaning impossible. Indeed, he accepts that meaning emerges differentially, but systems of meaning cannot be closed since that would make the system in its totality self-referential and drained of meaning. Since closed systems, according to this view, yield no meaning at all—and, it should perhaps be mentioned since meaning is still arguably possible—systems of meaning must instead be open. A discourse, then, is actually never closed; it never closes in upon itself. Instead, it is open and must remain open for meaning to be generated within it; something must come to discourse from the outside. Since that outside is outside of meaning, it must be something other than meaning.

Writing about the articulation of discourse in and as language, Derrida notes that

> the system of writing in general is not exterior to the system of language in general, unless it is granted that the division between exterior and interior passes through the interior of the interior or the exterior of the exterior, to the point where the immanence of language is essentially exposed to the intervention of forces that are apparently alien to its system. (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 43)

The outside, according to this view, intervenes in discourse; it carves out a path on its inside, and by doing so, it leaves a trace of itself within discourse.[8] This indicates

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[8]For Derrida's use of the notion of trace, see Derrida ([1967] 1973, pp. 67–68, 85–86, [1967] 1997, pp. 44–73, [1967] 2001b, [1968] 1982a) and Spivak ([1976] 1997).

that the outside—non-meaning—is never truly absent from the realm of meaning; the outside of meaning is constantly present as something *different* from discourse *within* discourse: 'Nothing … is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only everywhere, differences and traces of traces' (Derrida [1968] 1982d, p. 26; see also Derrida [1967] 1997, pp. 44–65). The trace of the outside inside discourse is but a difference (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 62).

One immediate consequence of the presence of the outside as an element of difference in discourse and of the openness of discourse is that meaning is never only itself; that meaning is never total and fixed. Meaning, instead, always slips away; it escapes every attempted capture. Trying to determine final meaning—meaning fixed and settled once and for all—in such a way that was possible in early modernity is like trying to catch the horizon: you can approach it any way you like and in any way imaginable, but it will always recede further away, to another place; 'with every sign already, every mark or every trait, there is distancing' (Derrida [1980] 1987, p. 29). Thus, meaning always 'deconstructs' or dismantles itself. And this, the deconstruction of meaning, goes on inside discourse itself (Derrida [1987] 1991, pp. 273–274; Norris 1987, p. 19; Payne 1993, pp. 120–121; Spivak [1976] 1997, p. lxxviii), and it does so because of the presence of the outside on the inside. 'Everything is messed up in advance' (Derrida [1980] 1987, p. 29). While the deconstruction of meaning forecloses any attempt to arrive at final meaning, it also guarantees that meaning can always be and become otherwise; new meanings can always emerge since the determination of meaning must be an interminable process according to this view (Derrida [1967] 1997,

p. 50; Spivak [1976] 1997, p. lxxvi).

The presence of the outside inside discourse, then, destabilises and displaces meaning. As a disturbance, however, it also has a positive function for the establishing of meaning. It somehow manages to contribute to, constitute even, meaning (Derrida [1968] 1982a, pp. 5–6). To the extent that discourse is a system of differentiation, the most basic discursive difference is that between discourse itself and everything else, the difference between system and its other, meaning and non-meaning, inside and outside. This is the difference which is both presupposed by discourse and its immediate and basic result:

> Without a trace retaining the other as other in the same, no difference would do its work and no meaning would appear. It is not the question of a constituted difference here, but rather, before all determination of the content of the *pure* movement which produces difference. (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 62)

Since the difference between discourse and its outside is prior to meaning, the difference itself cannot be meaningful and is to that extent empty of content; it is a pure difference (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 62; see also Derrida [1968] 1982a). And continuing, since meaning as differentially determined in a system can proceed only on the basis of such a difference, the latter is that which makes all other differentiations possible, and, a fortiori, meaning as such possible (Derrida [1968] 1982a, pp. 5–12). 'The trace', as Derrida notes, 'must be thought before the entity' (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 47). Here, then, one re-encounters the epistemic primacy of difference in modernity, the logical priority of difference over identity, the fundamental role played by difference in the establishing of meaning. It is on the basis

of this pure difference that other differences can be established, that meaning can be determined; both subjects and objects are determined in relation to it, both are absent before it (Derrida [1967] 1997, pp. 62–69, [1968] 1982d, p. 28). Difference is 'the formation of form' (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 63), both subjective and objective (ibid., p. 47). The pure difference between inside and outside is what makes it possible to establish differences between concepts at all and to arrive, through a process of differentiation, at meaningful being. Or, to put it in terms of deconstruction, the basic operative level of deconstruction is at the difference between inside and outside; deconstruction begins when and where meaning begins. Since this concerns meaning in general, the beginning of deconstruction is the beginning of meaningful existence as such. Deconstruction, then, 'takes place, it is an event' (Derrida [1987] 1991, p. 274), it 'is (what-/who-)ever arrives' (Derrida [1998] 2002, p. 367).

It is important to note that the primacy of difference does not indicate the primacy of a dual world akin to that of early modernity. Meaning in modernity does not emerge as a result of a pure subject reaching out to a pure object and by doing so representing it or constructing meaning based on it. For, indeed, both subject and object emerge *after* difference here; they emerge *in* meaning. The difference of which Derrida speaks is not a dualism, as paradoxical as this might seem, but a unity, a unity that is somehow fractured in that it consists of a difference. It is a singular multiplicity, 'an originary synthesis not preceded by any absolute simplicity' (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 62). The modern primacy of difference also signals the primacy of synthesis, the primacy of an *and*, an original unity of difference. Since that unity of dif-

ference is associated with subjectivity, it also coincides with being human, which implies that being human, since the unity is also associated with objectivity, is not only about being a subject but encompasses objective being as well. Lastly, since the unity is associated with objectivity as such, there is no objectivity that does not resonate with subjective determinations. The subjective and objective are united as the differences of each other (Derrida [1968] 1982a, p. 17).

Derrida emphasises that the trace encompasses a temporal dimension (Derrida [1967] 2001b). To that extent, difference—the difference between inside and outside—takes place. Differentiation is 'the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of referral in general, is constituted "historically" as a weave of differences' (Derrida [1968] 1982a, p. 12). Hence, the difference between inside and outside, the unity of difference itself, amounts to the fractured starting point from which history gains momentum; it is the beginning of historical being as such. But difference, much like deconstruction—exactly like deconstruction, actually—also takes place; it happens (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 68, [1968] 1982a, p. 18). Thus, difference is an activity; it is always *differentiation.* This is a repetition of the previously mentioned quality of modern thought to conceptualise thought as action, suggesting that it is possible to associate the active element of the establishing of meaning, as Derrida sees it, with subjectivity. Or, as will be elaborated more fully below, the active element gains form in discourse as a determinate subject.

To the extent that the activity of the determination of meaning is subjective, the determination of meaning is itself the active principle of its own formation. This,

in turn, suggests that the other of meaning, that other which is present on the inside as outside, must be passive. The active determination of meaning is active on the basis of a differential passive element. The passive element, however, still somehow manages to be constitutive of meaning, as noted already. The outside is constitutive while remaining passive. The unity of difference, then, also amounts to the point at which activity and passivity encounter each other and are united (Derrida [1967] 1982b, p. 8, [1968] 1982a, pp. 16–17, [1968] 1982d, p. 27). This is where meaning emerges, at the point where activity and passivity come face to face; this is what it means to be human in modernity, to be the encounter of activity and passivity, the difference between inside and outside, subject and object.

As previously mentioned, the active and passive sides of the determination of meaning are both empty of content since they are the conditions of meaning. Still, since it is possible to associate the active element with thought—with the act of thought—one might wonder if a corresponding noun can be associated with the passive side; if the passive side can be said to be something more? Yes, it can. I have already outlined that the outside is associated with objectivity. The passive element has to do with the other of meaning; the other inside meaning. And to the extent that meaning is subjective, the passive element must be non-subjective as well. Thus, it must be objective insofar as objects are different from subjects. Moreover, the outside can even be referred to in terms of *matter*, the reason being as follows.

The act of the determination of meaning, the activity of differentiation, is, to repeat what has already been delineated quite a few times by now, prior to determinate

being. It is, therefore, prior to existence in space and time. In Kant's terminology, space and time are the subjective forms humans ascribe to things as they appear before them as things. Similarly, Derrida, writing about the determination of meaning in terms of a practice of writing, notes the following:

> Origin of the experience of space and time, this writing of difference, this fabric of the trace, permits the difference between space and time to be articulated, to appear as such, in the unity of an experience (of a 'same' lived out of a 'same' body proper). (Derrida [1967] 1997, pp. 65–66)

To the extent that space and time are articulated in the determination of meaning, that they belong to the activity in which meaning is created, meaning itself does not come with a temporal and spatial form. Again in Kant's terms, the transcendental subject does not exist. Meaning, hence, is neither spatial nor temporal. Thus, meaning is incorporeal; concepts are not bodies (Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994, p. 21), insofar as bodies exist in time and space.

Now, since conceptual meaning emerges in a process of differentiation, the meaning of a concept can only emerge in relation to other concepts through specific differentiations vis-à-vis those concepts. This is exactly how conceptual meaning was theorised in chapter 2 as part of the theoretical framework for this study. This suggests that, in a discursive context such as that of modernity in which the activity of the determination of meaning is associated with incorporeality, the other of that activity, the other which constitutes meaning precisely by being different from it, can be referred to as that which is other to what is incorporeal, and the other of incorporeality is, of course,

corporeality. Thus, according to modern discourse itself, and inside modern discourse, it makes sense to speak of the other of meaning as corporeal, as *material*. In modernity, the other of meaning consists of matter (Derrida [1971] 1982c, pp. 64–67; see also Cheah 2010), insofar as matter denotes what is different from the activity of meaning or any other concept associated with subjectivity. It is possible, then, to refer to the passive element of the unity of difference—of the human being—as matter, at least as long as one is remaining and navigating inside a modern discursive setting in which such differentiations as humans and nature, society and nature, and culture and nature are active and establish meaningful concepts. In modern discourse, then, the pure difference of activity and passivity is conceptualised—is determined in discourse—as a differentiation and opposition between such concepts as thought, action, humans and culture on the one side, and nature, objects, things and physical reality on the other (Derrida [1967] 1982b, p. 9, [1967] 1997, pp. 47–48, [1967] 2001a, p. 357, [1967] 1982e, pp. 151–152). The unity of difference located at the very core of modern discourse takes the form *in* modern discourse as a determination—and an opposition (Derrida [1971] 1982c, p. 41), it should be added—between thought and matter, act and world.

Strictly speaking, matter as the other of meaning inside meaning is merely matter as such. It is only indeterminate matter that is united to activity in the foundational difference of modernity. Matter, in this way, has no form since it *receives* form in the determination of meaning. Thus, that which is related to the pure and empty act is a similarly pure and empty materiality formed in the process of establishing meaning. Things

are created in the activity of differentiation (Derrida [1967] 1982b, p. 9); they surface from the point where act and matter are brought together in a unity of difference. That being said, as a kind of short-hand, it is possible to refer to the passive element in the establishing of meaning, to the outside of meaning, as *thing*, with the proviso that matter only becomes thing as a function of meaning. Correspondingly, it makes equal sense to refer to the active element as thought itself. Or, since thinking is an act, according to modern thought, it makes sense to refer to it as thought as act, and, as I will discuss more in-depth below, the act which is united with things is not limited to thought. It is action in general that is united with things in the human being and, as I will show, this ultimately draws the unity into the world of politics.

All of this, this delineation of what it means to be human in modernity, is arguably quite intricate and perhaps not particularly easy to digest. However, it actually boils down to quite a concise conclusion: According to modern thought, in order for an object to be anything at all a subject must be thinking it and in order for there to be a subject, there must be an object to think about. Subjectivity and objectivity presuppose each other. Moreover, neither subjectivity nor objectivity refers to anything determinate here, to substantial existence. Subjectivity is fundamentally only the prerequisite of meaningful thought, and objectivity is that which thought applies itself to when it thinks, the form of the other of thought. Any external world of determinate objects is merely externalised in and by thought (Derrida [1967] 1997, pp. 70–71). This means that subject and object are necessarily tied to each other, and they are inseparably joined

to each other in the human being (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 121). Thus, to be human is to be a conjunction of subject and object, action and thing; to be a unity of difference.

Moreover, this bringing together of subjectivity and objectivity is closely related to the epistemic priority of difference over identity. In its creative act of thinking, thought presupposes something different from itself, something that is not thought. This difference is not external but internal to thought, for the objective world is not external to thought but rather internal to it as that which it applies to. Thought, then, comes with its own opposition. It is never only itself. So despite me having numerous times referred to modern subjectivity as pure subjectivity, it is not pure, for insofar as purity denotes self-identity and simplicity, nothing in modernity is pure. In terms of subjectivity, this means that its purity is always contaminated by objectivity. Thus, insofar as there is thought, there is also, according to modern discourse, objects or things—or, to be precise, objectivity or thingly existence in general. Likewise, if there are things, there must also be thought. For just like pure subjectivity is contaminated by objectivity, so is pure objectivity contaminated by subjectivity. In modernity, if there is thought, there are things, and if there are things, there is thought. The two cannot be separated, even though they are utterly different. Instead, they always come as a pair, as a unity of difference, and they come together in the form of human being. Indeed, subjectivity and objectivity amount to different forms of being in modern discourse, just like in early modern thought. However, whereas early modern thought kept those forms of being neatly separated and independent of each other, modern thought places them in a re-

lation of interdependence.

By defining space and time as subjective forms of understanding, and by positioning them as an element of the transcendental subject, Kant effectively subordinates the determination of meaning to the finite existence of humans:

> All our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; . . . the things that we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them to be, nor are their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us; . . . if we remove our own subject or even only the subjective constitution of the senses in general, then all the constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What may be the case with objects in themselves . . . remains entirely unknown to us. We are acquainted with nothing except our way of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us. (ibid., p. 168)

To this extent, determinate being becomes tied to the lived experience of human beings and to humans designating things as having spatial and temporal forms. This is a clearcut example of history as epistemic rule. Furthermore, it demonstrates that, through the conjunction of thought and things in the human being, it is not so much history as such that governs modern discourse, but the historicity of the conjunction itself in the human being. There is not one history of the world of things and a separate history of subjectivity, but only a joint historical being of the two.

One of the most profound explorations of the connection between the historicity of the world of things and subjectivity is found in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. In the original German, Heidegger uses the term *Da-*

sein to describe human being (e.g. Heidegger [1927] 1996, pp. 9–10, 39–48), which is sometimes translated literally into English as 'being-there'. For my concerns, Heidegger's notion of *Da-sein* encompasses three significant ideas regarding human being. First, for Heiedegger, being as such is always related to *human* being, or rather the *question* of being and what being is is related to humans:

> To work out the question of being means to make a being—he who questions—transparent in its being. Asking this question, as a mode of *being* of a being, is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it—being. This being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein. (ibid., p. 6)

As *Da-sein*, it belongs to human being to ask questions about being and being in general is tied to humans because being proceeds from the question of being. The reason for this is rather straightforward: the question of being cannot surface unless there is someone asking it. Echoing the Kantian, and generally modern, notion that concepts are spontaneously created by human thought, Heidegger's position on this issue is that since being is a concept—the question of being, in other words, is a thought—it cannot exist independently of those humans who conceptualise it. From this, it follows, that being as such is tied to the existence of human beings.

Second, Heiedegger approaches human being primarily in terms of its finite existence. The human being he is concerned with is made of flesh and bones and lives in a particular place and time, rather than being something more abstract. 'Da-sein is ... to be always in this or that way' (ibid., p. 40). To be human, for Heidegger, is to exist (ibid., pp. 39–40), and most importantly, to exist in time (ibid., pp. 216–217). Any and all human beings have a past, they are in the present, and ahead of them lies a future. Human being, then, is delineated by the stretch of time between birth and death. In turn, this means that being in general, and the conceptualisation of being in general, is encapsulated by historicity: 'The project of a meaning of being in general can be accomplished in the horizon of time' (ibid., p. 217).

Lastly, since the human being is a *being-there*, it never exists in isolation; there is always something 'there' that exists with humans. It belongs to the fundamental constitution of human beings to be in the world (ibid., pp. 49–58) As Heidegger sees it, humans are always part of a world larger than themselves; humans are 'thrown' into the world:

> Da-sein ... is thrown in such a way that it is the there as being-in-the-world. ... Beings of the character of Da-sein are their there in such a way that they find themselves in their thrownness, whether explicitly or not. (ibid., p. 127)

Humans, then, are always-already in the world and since they *are* 'in-the-world', the world is part of their being. Thus, the world beyond human beings is actually included in what it means to be human. On this issue, Critchley notes that

> if the human being is really being-in-the-world, then this entails that the world itself is part of the fundamental constitution of what it means to be human. That is to say, I am not a free-floating self or ego facing a world of objects that stands over against me. Rather, for Heidegger, I am my world. The world is part and parcel of my being, of the fabric of my existence. We might capture the sense of Heidegger's thought here by thinking of Dasein not as a subject distinct from a world of objects, but as an experience of openedness where my being and that

of the world are not distinguished for the most part. I am completely fascinated and absorbed by my world, not cut off from it in some sort of 'mind'. (Critchley 2009)

The world is not separated from human being but is instead a part of it. Again, one sees how, in modern thought, subjectivity and objectivity are united in the human being and that the human being consists of the 'and' of thought and world, and again one sees that that uniting is a uniting of two very different elements. Heidegger's *Da-sein* consists of both that thought which thinks about the world and the world it thinks of. Here, also, it should be noted that just as the human being Heidegger discusses is a tangible one, so is the world he discusses. It is a world of objects, hammers being the most famous example (Heidegger [1927] 1996, pp. 64–78)

Taken together, these three ideas contained in Heidegger's concept of *Da sein* suggest that the being of the world of things is intimately connected to the existence of human being, and vice versa, that the world of things is a fundamental aspect of human being. Since human being is historical, its historical existence comes to saturate being in general. In Heiedegger's view, there is no world of things beyond the inclusion of that world as the other of thought in human being. The world of things does not follow a temporal succession of its own but is entangled with the historical experience of humans.

The conjunction of thought and things I am describing as characteristic of the modern conceptualisation of human being is closely related to what has been conceptualised by Meillassoux as 'correlationism'. By correlationism, as has already been men-

tioned, Meillassoux means 'any current of thought' building on the idea that 'we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (Meillassoux 2008, p. 5). Thus, according to correlationist thought, there is no subject that is not 'always-already … related to an object' and vice versa, and it is never 'possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another' (ibid., p. 5). In other words, correlationism, as Meillassoux defines it, is closely related and actually exactly corresponds to, how I depict modern discourse.

Meillassoux, however, sees correlationism as originating in Kant's philosophy, and he limits the scope of correlationism to those philosophies which have followed in Kant's footsteps—for instance phenomenology and analytic philosophy of language in the vein of Wittgenstein (ibid., pp. 6, 28–49). I fully agree with this description of post-Kantian philosophy, and I think that Meillassoux's concept of correlationism manages to capture a significant portion of modern thought, but not all of it. Neither do I believe that this mode of thought originates in Kant, nor that it is restricted to Kant's aftermath. Instead, it is a more general mode of thought of which Kant and the correlation of thought and world is but a mere example, albeit a very important one. Specifically, in my view, and as I have already begun to delineate, it is not thought as such that is correlated to the world of things in Kantian philosophy but rather thought *as an act*. In modernity, there are other ways, beyond Kantianism, to theorise a fundamental correlation between action and the world of things than merely as a correlation of thought and world. Insofar as such cor-

relations derive from the epistemic primacy of difference—which is what I am arguing here—they are characteristic of modernity as such. Ultimately, I believe that it is action in general that is brought together with things—things being that which is different from action—in the human being, and to emphasise this divergence from Meillassoux's argument, I prefer to speak of *conjunctions* rather than correlations between actions and thing.

To show that the conjunction distinguishing modern thought is actually a bringing together of action and things rather than thought and things, I would like to mention briefly three important examples of modern thought, in which this becomes apparent: Rousseau's, Marx's, and Foucault's. This will also allow me to start highlighting a very important aspect of modern thought, namely that there is no clear-cut distinction in modernity between political life on the one hand and determinate being and the establishing of meaning on the other.

I have already outlined Rousseau's rejection of the idea that there is such a thing as a fixed human nature, and his argument that human being instead changes historically. The only thing characterising human being, according to this view, is the negative property of having the possibility to change, to become something else. Thus, humans are defined by nothing at all, except acts of self-transformation; in humans 'nothing is to be found but acts', Rousseau writes ([1755] 1993a, p. 60). Humans are nothing in terms of essence, but they always have the possibility to act.

Furthermore, he specifies that any such change of human being proceeds from reason, or the forming of general ideas and general ideas, he argues, require language:

Every general idea is purely intellectual; if the imagination meddles with it ever so little, the idea immediately becomes particular. If you endeavour to trace in your mind the image of a tree in general, you never attain to your end. … Purely abstract beings … are only conceivable by the help of language. The definition of a triangle alone gives you a true idea of it: the moment you imagine a triangle in your mind, it is some particular triangle and not another. … We must then make use of propositions and of language in order to form general ideas. (ibid., p. 68)

From the requirement by ideas of language, it follows that change of human being *also* requires language. On this issue, Rousseau points out an albeit rudimentary but nevertheless important observation: language exists only in tandem with society. Since language denotes communication among humans, its very existence signals that there must also be social interactions (Rousseau [1755] 1993a, pp. 64–70, [1781] 1986, pp. 5–13, 31–46). Thus, ultimately, human being, its emergence and transformation, is a product of social relations; humans become human only in society and only as a result of how they interact with and act in relation to each other (Strauss 1971, pp. 268–274). The way humans are to each other determines their very being; what they do defines what they are.

On the other hand, society, as Rousseau sees it, also presupposes language (Rousseau [1755] 1993a, pp. 64–70); humans cannot live socially without speaking to each other. This leads him to a difficult chicken or the egg problem: which came first, language or society? In answering this question in the *Second Discourse*, and devoting a considerable part of the text to his answer, he narrates the historical development of both language and society, situating both as acci-

dental products of encounters between humans and the material world. As Rousseau sees them, reason and the formation of ideas emerge in the process of humans trying to satisfy very basic wants associated with their material existence. Those wants are satisfied in different ways under different material conditions. Thus, circumstances in the natural world 'mold men's thinking', as Strauss writes in his discussion on Rousseau (Strauss 1971, p. 273); society, language, and thought emerge from human action vis-à-vis the material world.

Rousseau writes in a language similar to that of the early moderns, for instance making use of such concepts as the state of nature and social contract. However, important differences separate Rousseau from the likes of Hobbes and Locke. Crucially, the early moderns conceived of the emergence of society as a necessary result of natural conditions, determined by the mechanical unfolding of the material universe. Rousseau, on the other hand, emphasises the haphazard and accidental character of the process giving rise to society, language, and human being. There is no reason, as he sees it, as to why reason is the way it is, no deterministic law governing the constitution of political order. Rather, human being and society are contingent results of humans acting in a world of matter. Thus, insofar as the world of matter is a world of things whose meanings are themselves determined by humans as part of what it means to be human, the historical emergence of society is grounded in acts *and* things. Since society grounds human being, the latter is, at the bottom, constituted by action and thing.

Marx makes claims similar to Rousseau's about the dependence of thought on human action and about the primacy of action

with regards to the determination of meaning, albeit without Rousseau's recourse to ideas about the state of nature and related concepts. In *The German Ideology*, he and Engels argue:

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men—the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men at this stage still appear as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 36)

In the *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx notes, pejoratively, that 'the dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question' (Marx [1845] 1976c, p. 3). In this text, he also criticises 'all previous materialism' on the grounds that

> things, reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object, or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. (ibid., p. 3)

Thus, as Marx has it, there is a close connection between thought—including the meaning of what things are, the determination of the thing—and the material conditions of human life:

> Those who produce social relations in conformity with their material productivity also produce the *ideas, categories,* i.e. the ideal abstract expressions of those same social relations. (Marx [1846] 1982, p. 102)

This indicates that, according to Marx, determinate objective existence is always mediated by and grounded in social relations, which in turn are grounded in the 'material production of life itself' (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 53). Objects and objectivity, then, are integral to how humans provide

for their own lives; they are an inherent aspect of human labour-power. Thus, practical engagement of humans with the material world, concrete labour, amounts to the ground upon which meaning and determinate existence are built.[9]

Moreover, Marx emphasises that the ways in which humans provide for their own lives change historically. Determinate being is dependent on and coevolutionary with those changes and the social relations they encompass: 'ideas ... are as little eternal as the relations they express. They are *historical and transitory products*' (Marx [1847] 1976b, p. 166; see also Marx [1846] 1982, p. 102). In the end, this implies that objective being always bears the mark of the historical development of social relations:

> The sensuous world ... is not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed, in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, and modifying its social system according to the changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest 'sensuous certainty' are only given ... through social development, industry and commercial intercourse. (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 39)

But for Marx, the process in which both society and the world of things is formed, in which they gain determinate being, is not a simple linear development proceeding from prerequisites, boundaries, and limits determined by the natural world and its constitution. Instead, Marx insists that 'circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances' (ibid., p. 54); humans act in, and in relation to, a material world, but such actions also determine what that world is in terms of its meaning, as well as transform it tangibly. There is, then, a profound way in which 'a historically created relation to nature and of individuals to one another' (ibid., p. 54) provides the basis for human being, including the objective element of that being. Thus, there really are not 'two separate "things"' called man and nature (ibid., p. 39), only the interconnectedness of the two joined and related in human being as action and thing. Lastly, this suggests that whatever human beings become in the historical formation of society, that becoming is formed on the basis of that relation which encompasses relations among humans as well as relations between humans and the material world.

A further important aspect of Marx's understanding of society and theorisation of social development is his insistence on the importance of power and resistance for that development. Social relations change, according to his view, as a result of struggles among different social classes; 'the history of all hitherto existing society', he and Engels famously state, 'is the history of class struggles' (Marx and Engels [1848] 1976a, p. 482), and in an oft-quoted passage in *The German Ideology*, they write:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental pro-

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[9] For Marx's concept of concrete labour and the objectivity of the product of labour in the form of 'the commodity', see Marx ([1867] 1976a, pp. 126–177).

duction are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for domination and where, therefore, domination is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an 'eternal law'. (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 59)

According to this way of reasoning, dominant ideas in society echo the social relations they are produced by and how power is configured in those relations. In the work usually referred to as *Grundrisse*, Marx notes that relations of dependence among groups, relations where one group has power over another and effectively rules over that group, can arguably only be expressed through ideas, or abstractions (Marx [1857–1858] 1973, p. 164). However, such ideas, since they are 'nothing more than the theoretical expression of those material relations which are their lord and master' (ibid., p. 164), obscure the actual relations they express. To that extent, individuals may perceive subordination and relations of power as a 'reign of ideas' (ibid., p. 164) when it actually is a reign of social relations. Ideas,

then, and how humans understand themselves, other humans, their lives together, and the world of things resonate of social relations of power. Thus, Marx's rendition of the conjunction of action and thing—and by now, it should be evident that it is the act itself, not the act as thought, that is related to the world of things in a unity of difference—hints at a very important aspect of modern thought: in modernity, there is, at the end of the day, no clear-cut separation of the establishing of meaning on the one hand and politics on the other, no way to safeguard the determination of what things are from the greedy mittens of politics. This aspect will be fully explored in the subsequent section on politics, but I would still like to say a few more words on it here by turning to the works of Foucault.

Foucault, just like Marx, closely associates the determination of meaning with social practices. Indeed, Foucault's notion of epistemic configurations of discourse, which I have adopted as a theoretical underpinning in this study, is an explication of how humans actively determine meaning. The way Foucault theorises it, the episteme is, moreover, quite comparable to the a priori in Kant's philosophy and its role in the determination of meaning, with two important discrepancies. For Kant, first, the a priori is permanent, it does not change over time nor between individuals, and second, it is tied to individuals; it is associated with each and every empirical subject. Foucault's episteme corresponds to Kant's a priori insofar as it denotes the condition of possibility of meaning. However, instead of being permanent, the scope of the episteme is delimited in space and time (Han 2002). As Foucault notes himself, the episteme is a *historical* a priori. Moreover, the episteme is not

something that belongs to the individual empirical subject but to discourse itself, to the system of meaning shared by subjects whose meanings are determined in that system.

In works following *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where the concept of the episteme is introduced,[10] Foucault increasingly emphasises that the historical transformations of the conditions of what it is possible to think in meaningful ways are part of broader changes of social organisation and practice encompassing not only the formation of discourse. In an interview published as 'The Confession of the Flesh', Foucault repositions the episteme as a special case of what he calls an *apparatus* (Foucault [1977] 1980a, pp. 196–197). Specifically, he claims that the episteme is a discursive apparatus, whereas 'the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive' (ibid., p. 197, see also p. 198), thus explicitly mentioning the reality of something beyond meaning and the bringing together of the meaningful and the non-meaningful in a common structure.

But what is an apparatus? In general, it is, according to Foucault, a 'system of relations' between elements such as

> discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. (ibid., p. 194)

Considering that Foucault explicitly mentions architectural forms, the apparatus evidently consists of both material and non-material elements of social interaction. It includes both meaning and how things become meaningful. It includes determinate forms of being and the relations of such things to other things and to their own determinations.[11] Thus, as parts of the structure of the apparatus, meaning and things are caught up in social organisation, in the affairs of humankind. Social practices encapsulate and unite discourse and its other, meaning and non-meaning (Han 2002, pp. 75–76); Foucault's apparatuses are social apparatuses (Deleuze 1992).

Moreover, Foucault maintains that the apparatus is in a fundamental way functional, in the sense that it 'at a given historical moment' is 'responding to an *urgent need*.' (Foucault [1977] 1980a, p. 195), indicating that it is deployed for strategic purposes; the apparatus is meant to serve a purpose. 'This', then, 'is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge' (ibid., p. 196). Highlighted here is not only the heterogeneous character of the apparatus but also that at its basis there lies a circulatory system of power and knowledge (Foucault [1977] 1980b, p. 133; see also Foucault [1975] 1991, pp. 26–28; Han 2002, p. 119). Foucault's view emphasises that

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[10] Foucault's earlier work, *The Birth of the Clinic* ([1963] 1994), should also be mentioned alongside *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in this regard since it deals with similar theoretical questions and conveys the same understanding of discourse and epistemic change, even though Foucault does not explicitly use the concept of the episteme therein.

[11] See also Agamben ([2006] 2009b, p. 14) who, drawing on Foucault, calls an apparatus 'literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth…, but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and—why not—language itself'. Also, since Agamben mentions 'the panopticon', it should be noted that I discuss it below on page 361.

power and knowledge engender and condition each other:

> We should admit … that power produces knowledge…; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault [1975] 1991, p. 27)

Power and knowledge exist together, then, in a relation of mutuality (Han 2002, p. 74). 'Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power', writes Foucault, 'there is no exteriority' ([1976] 1990b, p. 98). Hence, the determination of meaning and the exercise of power are never disjunct. They are bundled together and exist in a nexus (Foucault 1996, p. 394). In a lecture held in 1976, he says:

> There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (Foucault [1976] 1980c, p. 93)

Foucault approaches power not as an entity susceptible to a specific definition but as a concept of relationality. Power, according to his view, refers to forms of social interaction (Foucault [1982] 1983, pp. 216–217). Specifically, power denotes interactions containing 'actions upon other actions' (ibid., p. 220):

> What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future. (ibid., p. 220)

Thus, a relation of power is a relation in which subjective actions in some way 'structure the possible field of action of others' (ibid., p. 221). Power, thusly,

> is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. (ibid., p. 220)

According to this view, power strictly does not exist (ibid., p. 219) since, as a concept, it refers only to relations among subjects that act or are capable of action. Power has no substance in itself, for it 'exists only when it is put into action' (ibid., p. 219). Therefore, neither can power be circumscribed by determining its positive content; power itself cannot be approached directly. Instead, it is possible only to identify power through its results by way of its effects on social interactions. Power, in this sense, is always only functional (Foucault [1976] 1990b, pp. 92–93); its existence is exhausted by its functions. Since social interactions change appearance historically, so does power. Power is always contextual; its mode is specific to the apparatus of which it is part (Foucault [1982] 1983, pp. 222–224; see also Foucault [1976] 1990b, p. 93).

This conceptualisation of power indicates, moreover, that the power relation is bipolar; power is exercised by someone acting upon the actions of someone else:

> A power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts. (Foucault [1982] 1983, p. 220)

Importantly, however, the two poles, the two 'someones', are not logically or historically prior to the relation of power they are in. Power does not proceed, as Foucault has it, from one subject acting upon the actions of another subject, but is actually 'nonsubjective' (Foucault [1976] 1990b, pp. 94–95). The subjects are constituted in and through the power relation they are part of by assuming the roles contained in that relation (Revel 2014, p. 377; see also Dyrberg 1997, e.g. pp. 85–115; Foucault [1977] 1980b, pp. 118–119, [1976] 1980c, in particular pp. 93–98, [1982] 1983, p. 212, [1976] 1990b, p. 60). In this way, power is constitutive not only of the subjects of power (Foucault [1976] 1990b, p. 99) but also of the social relations it encapsulates. Since action upon the actions of others can be introduced as part of any social relation, power is potentially omnipresent where there are human beings (ibid., pp. 94–95). Power, then, is 'immanent in social relations' (Dyrberg 1997, p. 15); it saturates society in its very core:

> Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted 'above' society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of. In any case, to live in society is to live in such a way that action upon other actions is possible—and in fact ongoing. A society without power relations can only be an abstraction. (Foucault [1982] 1983, pp. 222–223)

It is in these relations that knowledge—and, I would add, the determination of meaning in general—appears as an integral part together with the exercise of power itself. Power is exercised through strategic discursive practice (Foucault [1975] 1991, p. 29; see also Han 2002, p. 115). For instance, take Foucault's studies of the historical emergence of sexuality as an objective property of human beings, how it becomes a way to structure social relations, and how it comes to form human subjectivity (Foucault [1976] 1990b). A person, Foucault argues, can be subjectively associated with a determinate form of sexuality, and the possible actions of that person, if it is indeed associated with a determinate form of sexuality, can be structured by the actions of someone else only on the basis of a discourse in which sexuality, and forms of sexuality, are present as concepts:

> If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investigating it. (ibid., p. 98).

This quote also highlights that power is always exercised by some means (see also Foucault [1982] 1983, pp. 217–219). Action structuring the possible actions of others is always carried out in such and such a way by making use of this or that strategy or technique. These means are not limited to discursive elements but include, just like the apparatus, the non-discursive as well. One particularly famous example thereof is Foucault's elaboration of Bentham's suggestion for a type of prison called *Panopticon* (Foucault [1975] 1991, pp. 200–210; see also Bentham [1787] 1995a,b).

The Panopticon is a prison in which a centrally placed guard can observe all inmates and keep them under surveillance while not being seen by the inmates themselves. The guard is hidden from view, and thus can be absent without the imprisoned knowing it. The inmates, then, never knowing when and if they are observed, are forced

to act as if they are *always* observed, even though they might not be. Effectively, this arrangement results in a situation in which the inmates discipline their own behaviour.

The 'architectural figure' (Foucault [1975] 1991, p. 200) of the Panopticon explicitly foregrounds a historically specific mode of power in which those whose actions are structured by a relation of power actually structure their possible actions by themselves; they discipline themselves without the active and immediate involvement of the counterpart (ibid., pp. 195–228). However, the concept of the Panopticon also provides a striking example of how power not only constitutes subjects but also objects, that relations of power include objective elements. Relations of power form objects and provide those objects with meaning. Moreover, those objects can be material. The Panopticon is, after all, a building; it is a material structure gaining determinate meaning—it emerges as a prison and not something else—as a function of power, and it does so in relation to the formation of subjects. Subjects and objects emerge simultaneously through relations of power. Subjects and objects, then, do not exist independently of relations of power but emerge in parallel in such relations. Subjects and objects are the results of processes of subjection and objectification (Foucault [1975] 1991, e.g. pp. 28, 30, 128–129, 101–102, 137–138, 186, 224, 294–296; see also Han 2002, pp. 115–122).

Now, this conceptualisation of power and the inclusion of the determination of subjects and objects in relations of power needs to be situated in relation to the theoretical framework I have adopted in this study and which was sketched in chapter 2. There, drawing explicitly on Foucault, I argued that discourses are basically groups of concepts that are epistemically configured in historically specific ways and that subjects and objects emerge in these discourses. Now, with the current discussion on power in mind, it is evident that epistemic configurations, the rules determining what humans and things are, are part and parcel of social interactions and profoundly associated with power. Or, put differently, relations of power are exercised, according to modern thought, as the establishing of meaning and the determination of what humans and things are. Discourse, in modernity, is an instrument caught up in historically specific relations of power (Foucault [1972] 1981), and epistemic configurations resonate with the acts in which they are produced. To hint at what will be explored in the subsequent section on political order, in modernity, politics is profoundly associated with determination in this fashion.

This close association of the modern conceptualisation of power and its relation to meaning, on the one hand, and the theoretical framework of this study, on the other hand, can also be turned somewhat around. For, insofar as this association is valid, it must be accepted that the conceptualisation of conceptual meaning contained in the theoretical framework ought to be a demonstrable result of modern discourse. Otherwise, the validity of the theoretical framework would be put into question. It is, indeed, possible to demonstrate. For the very possibility to act upon the action of others presupposes differentiation. The two 'someones' must be differentiated from each other, and most importantly, they must be differentiated from that which they are not. Before anyone can act in such a way that it structures the possible actions of others, those who engage in such a relation must

be distinguished from everything else, and the two must be distinguished from each other. Power presupposes such differentiations that allow for its historically specific modes to surface (Foucault [1982] 1983, p. 223; Revel 2014, p. 378). Those differentiations are not only the condition of possibility of power but also its immediate results (Foucault [1982] 1983, p. 223). Thus, power functions by establishing differences, by isolating the subjects of power from what they are not and from each other, and feeds, therefore, of the very possibility of such differentiations. Hence, this conceptualisation of power presupposes the primacy of difference. Without difference and the primacy of differentiation, power would not surface at all, according to this way of conceptualising it. What one encounters here, then, in this conceptualisation, is a repetition of the modern epistemic elevation of difference and a repetition of the previously mentioned differential operations occurring in systems of meaning. As was shown above in the discussion on Derrida, any system of meaning first differentiates itself from its outside and then differentiates its systemic elements from each other. Power operates in the same way. It differentiates those involved in relations of power from everything else and from each other. Put differently, the exercise of power *is* a differentiation of meaning, and the differentiation of meaning *is* an exercise of power.

As an example of modern discourse itself, what is conveyed by Foucault's exposition of power and discourse is the profoundly modern notion that what it means to be human and the determination of what things are cannot be isolated from each other or from the historical unfolding of social relations. Instead, they are all bundled together in a continuous process of emergence and transformation. Most importantly, since that process is grounded in relations of power, it is a profoundly political process, insofar as politics still has something to do with power. Indeed, the determination of the meaning of things and of humans, providing the emptiness of objectivity and subjectivity with content, *is* politics in modernity. In modernity, there are no humans beyond historical relations of power, nor are there things beyond those relations. Subjects and objects alike are always marked by a certain historical and social context; they are tainted by contextual factors and temporal idiosyncrasies. So, in a sense, relativism is a defining mark of modernity, if by relativism one means that any determination or conceptualisation is associated with and dependent on a particular context which includes both subjective and objective elements.

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To be human in modernity is to be a conjunction of action and thing. It is to be a unity of the difference between thought and world, subject and object.

A first thing to note about this conceptualisation is its implications for how subjects and objects emerge and appear in discourse. Since it indicates that subjects and objects are united in a difference, it follows that such a conceptualisation implies that modern discourse distinguishes subjects and objects as different discursive elements while also closely relating them to each other. In modernity, subjects and objects always come together as a pair; they presuppose each other and give rise to each other. It was shown in the previous chapters that medieval discourse does not distinguish between

subjects and objects at all, whereas, in early modernity, they are rigidly separated and completely isolated from each other. During the Middle Ages, everything was always simultaneously subject and object, and during early modernity, everything was always *either* subject or object. In this regard, modernity appears as some kind of strange mixture between its two predecessors, between those two extremes. Modern discourse distinguishes subjects and objects, but modern subjects and objects are also involved in a relation of mutual presupposition. According to this view, and to borrow a phrase from the vocabulary of dialectics, in the historical chronology leading from the Middle Ages to early modernity, and from early modernity to modernity, there seems to unfold something like a dialectical process: early modernity turns into the opposite of what had been during the medieval period, and early modernity thereafter turns into a new opposite, an opposite that incorporates elements of both preceding instances and in doing so manages to represent something novel that still resonates with its past. Modernity, in this sense, is somewhat of a synthesis in which old elements are reconfigured in such a way that something completely new emerges.

Continuing on the conceptualisation of human being as a conjunction, it should be stressed that the conjunction encompasses both transcendental and determinate dimensions. To be human in modernity is to be a determinate being, an empirical being, which provides its own being with a determinate, meaningful existence; the modern human being is a being who defines its own existence as well as the existence of everything else.

To be human in the transcendental sense is to be a prerequisite; to be nothing whatsoever but that which must be assumed in order for meaningful experience to exist at all. The transcendental human is an anonymous function that can be approached only indirectly through the results it generates. This level of human being consists, according to modern thought, of a unity of difference between empty subjectivity and empty objectivity, between pure action and pure matter contaminating each other at the very point where they are united. From this point of view, the human being is an abstract action acting upon an equally abstract and formless material world. Here, action and thing are equally void, empty of form and meaning.

To be a human in the empirical sense, however, is to be a subject who acts in a determinate way on a determinate object. This is the human being as a person, as a living, breathing being who thinks and acts in a thingly world larger than itself. Crucially, the upshot of modern discourse is that whatever that empirical human being and the world of things are, is determined by humans themselves through their transcendental functionality. Thus, humans are the logical prerequisites of themselves and the world of things insofar as these are determinate, meaningful beings. Again, one encounters the coming together of subjects and objects in modernity, and how they go together; there are no determinate objects beyond their subjective determination, beyond the presence of a subject determining them, and there are no subjects beyond the activity of determination, beyond the action upon things. There is, in other words, no world beyond human consciousness and no consciousness that is not a consciousness of a determinate world. Beyond the determinate

conjunction of subjects and objects, there is only the indeterminate empty difference of action and thing.

Lastly, it must be emphasised that the conjunction itself is historical. It contains the original difference between inside and outside, meaning and non-meaning. It encompasses, to this extent, the primordial act of differentiation that serves as the fractured origin of historicity as such. Indicated hereby is that humans and world, in their very being, are historical, that they become what they are over and in time. History, then, circumscribes being and the latter gain form in a temporal unfolding. Moreover, humans and world are part of one and the same temporal unfolding. The world is entangled in the historicity of humanity and vice versa.

The historicity of being indicates that determinate being not only becomes what it is in time but also that whatever it is can change over time. Humans and the world, as they are determined by the acts of thought, are nothing more than their appearances in the present and the historical trajectory leading up to that present. Moreover, the historicity of the conjunction also highlights that the conjunction does not designate a relation between the human *individual* and the world. Indeed, this is how Kant envisions the transcendental subject; as an individual subject freed and secluded from the annoyance of others in the attribution of forms and universal qualities to things. However, modernity, as has been shown in this section—particularly through the examples of Marx and Foucault—opens up a discursive space in which determination itself becomes social. It becomes part of humankind as collective rather than the human as individual. As determination it-

self becomes historical, when the a priori of meaningful existence becomes contingent and susceptible to change over time, it becomes caught up in human affairs and in how humans act in relation to each other and to the world. By that, the determination of meaning dissipates from the conformity and certainty of the individual to the vagaries of a history that follows no fixed path. For now, meaning—what things are—can change as a consequence of social interactions. Determination, from the point of view of modern discourse and when the logic of the epistemic configuration of discourse is followed through to its very end, always echoes with social relations. What things are, and what humans themselves are thought to be, is always marked by the historically specific social relations providing the context in with those determinations are settled. Importantly, determination always resonates with historically specific modes of relations of power as power is exercised in the relations between those humans who are both acts and things. This, finally, suggests that the determination of being, the establishing of meaning, actually designates a political activity in modernity, that it belongs to what can be described as politics. This will be explored at length in a subsequent section, in an analysis of how sovereignty in modernity is conceptualised as a variety of the conjunction capturing what it means to be a modern human being. First, however, a few words need to be said about modern nature and its place in modern discourse.

5.2 Nature

The concept of nature leads somewhat of a troubled existence in modernity, and its po-

sition in discourse is quite enigmatic. Crucially, its importance varies tremendously depending on *which* modern discourse one assesses. Below, the most important aspects of this conceptual intricacy will be highlighted in order to show that nature, in modernity, is generally conceptualised as an *environment*, as the other surrounding human action. As environment, nature has only one characteristic feature: its structure resolves into its function.

In abstract terms, because of the modern primacy of difference at the epistemic level, there is not *one* nature in modernity; there does not coalesce a unified conceptualisation of nature in modern discourse. Because discourse is and becomes fragmented in and through history, nature can be and is conceptualised in a variety of ways depending on the social circumstances from which those conceptualisations emanate. On this issue, such discourses in which the creativity of modern subjectivity and the activity of thought are explicitly conceptualised and their various consequences pursued are of particular importance. In these discourses, the concept of nature as a determinate thing independent of human subjectivity can be explicitly disqualified. According to this line of reasoning, nature as a thing in itself—as something more than the empty materiality constantly accompanying modern subjectivity—does not exist since nature as a determinate being gains its form only in relation to a human subject. Thus, there is no nature in itself, only nature as it appears for humans. From this point of view, natural things residing in the natural world are ac-

tually products of the creativity of human thought; nature is what humans make of it.

In the early days of modern discourse, Voltaire gives voice to such an understanding of nature with a fair amount of literary elegance. In a dialogue between 'the Philosopher' and 'Nature', he writes:

PHILOSOPHER.

What are you, Nature? I live in you? but I have been searching for you for fifty years, and have never yet been able to find you….

I have been able to measure some of your globes, to ascertain their courses, and to point out the laws of motion; but I have never been able to ascertain what you are yourself.

Are you always active? Are you always passive? Do your elements arrange themselves, as water places itself over sand, oil over water, and air over oil? Have you a mind which directs all your operations…? Explain to me, I entreat, the enigma in which you are enveloped….

NATURE.

My poor child, shall I tell you the real truth? I have had bestowed upon me a name that does not at all suit me; I am called nature, while I am all art. (Voltaire 1901, part II, pp. 48–50, small caps removed)[12]

The nature described by Voltaire in this text is quite different from the nature of early modernity. In early modernity, the artificial and the natural opposed each other. With artifice being tied to humans and their separation from nature, artificial constructs where distinguished from natural things, even though they mirrored in their structure natural things as the mind mirrored nature

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[12] This text is part of Voltaire's *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, but is sometimes wrongfully included in English translations of his *Dictionnaire philosophique*. The cited translation is from such a publication, but I have also consulted the French original (Voltaire 1772, pp. 113–115). For an account of the inclusion of additional material in English translations of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, see Gay (1962).

(see pages 293 and 304 in chapter 4 above). Voltaire's modern nature, on the other hand, *is* artifice. This nature provides no answers to the human who wants to acquire knowledge of it. When Voltaire's philosopher asks Nature why anything exists rather than nothing, Nature replies: 'I will answer you in the language in which I always have answered ... those who have interrogated me on the subject of first principles: "I know nothing at all about the matter."' (ibid., p. 51). This nature instead returns the question to the inquirer. Voltaire's Nature agrees with the Philosopher noting that 'everything in and about me is arranged agreeably to mathematical laws' but also states that 'I am no mathematician' (ibid., p. 49). But who are mathematicians? Humans, or at least some of them are. Humans, then, provide answers to their own questions about nature, and the answers depend on how they put their questions. Truths about nature's being derive from human knowledge; humans provide nature with a determinate meaning in their own ways of understanding the world. The being of this nature is dependent on human creativity; it is, in the end, human artifice.[13]

Another instance in which this dependence is articulated is found in the works of Husserl. Outlining the phenomenological operations of human consciousness, Husserl argues that nature emerges only in relation to consciousness:

> The existence of a Nature *cannot* be the condition for the existence of consciousness, since Nature itself turns out to be a correlate of consciousness: Nature *is* only as being constituted in regular concaten-

ations of consciousness. (Husserl [1913] 1982, p. 116)

Husserl emphasises that all natural things, insofar as they are determinate, share the characteristic of being *given* to human consciousness (ibid., pp. 105–107). In like manner, Heidegger notes that '"being-at-hand"' is a name 'for the way of being of natural things in the broadest sense' (Heidegger [1975] 1988, p. 28). '*Objective presence*'— or *Vorhandenheit* (Heidegger [1927] 1996, p. 39), meaning 'being-present-at-hand'—is a general characteristic of the being about which *Da-sein* asks questions. This means that every thing becomes a thing in the presence of human beings, as a consequence of the human 'being-in-the-world'. Without a connection to humans, things would be no things at all.

There are, then, no things in nature that are not given to consciousness, things that would be unrelated to humans. According to Husserl, for any individual human, nature might and generally does appear—in what he refers to as the natural attitude— to be an external world of things existing on their own (Husserl [1913] 1982, pp. 5–6, 55–57, [1933–1934] 1995, pp. 165, 166–167). However, this is simply a way to make things intelligible that does not take into account the fact that such an appearance is still *an appearance*; the independence of nature is still just posited by human consciousness, in its natural attitude (Husserl [1913] 1982, pp. 55–57). Again, natural things are externalised rather than external in modernity. As Fink puts it in his contributions to Husserlian philosophy, in the natural attitude, 'we find

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[13] This, of course, also differs from nature and artifice in the Middle Ages, when humans had artificial powers because they were part of nature and because nature had such powers (see pages 191 and 226 in chapter 3 above). Medieval nature was indeed not a *human* artifice. On the contrary, medieval humans were creative because nature was creative, whereas, in modernity, nature is artifice because humans are creative.

ourselves "existent" within a world of that which is "existent"', and in it 'I am, as "subject," already a unity constituted in *end*-constitution, man in the world, and in principle I experience only *end*-constituted objectiveness' (Fink [1988] 1995, p. 74).[14, 15]

This is not to say, however, that natural things do not exist (Husserl [1913] 1982, pp. 128–130). Consciousness is, as Husserl sees it, *intentional* in the sense that it is directed towards something; consciousness is about something. That which consciousness is about is referred to by Husserl as the *intentional object*, and the mental event determining the contents of the intentional object as the *intentional act* (Husserl [1900–1901] 1970a, pp. 535–659, in particular pp. 562–569). Hence, this conceptualisation of consciousness presupposes the reality of objectivity. Importantly, the objectivity to which consciousness is directed is not itself consciousness or a product of consciousness; objectivity is something other than consciousness, the other within. As Sartre notes, following Husserl:

> All consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness of something. This means that there is no consciousness which is not a *positing* of a transcendent object. (Sartre [1943] 1969, p. xxvii)

> Consciousness is consciousness of something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself. (ibid., p. xxxvii)

Thus, emphasising the dependence of nature on human consciousness does not amount to a rejection of the natural world altogether; what is rejected is merely that the natural world has a determinate form beyond its subjective appearance (Husserl [1913] 1982, pp. 106–107). Beyond subjective determination, being simply *is*; it 'is what it is', as Sartre writes ([1943] 1969, p. xlii).

While on the subject of the existence of the natural world, it might be worth saying a few words on social constructivism. For, given the importance of subjective determination for nature and for what nature is, one wonders perhaps if modern thought, as I have depicted it, is simply a general form of the social constructivism delineated in chapter 2. If so, it would also be susceptible to the same critical remarks I have levelled at constructivism in green political theory. To this, I would answer no; Modernity tout court is not social constructivism, nor is it as a whole susceptible to those critical remarks. Instead, social constructivism is a particular modern discourse that seemingly has forgotten or fails to recognise—or simply ignores—its epistemic belonging and its presuppositions.

The central claim made by social constructivists regarding nature is that, because all statements made by humans are of social origin, there is no such thing as a world of nature beyond how that world is created by humans interacting with each other. Doing so, I argued in chapter 2 that social constructivists also implicitly say that the non-existence of a world beyond those worlds

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[14] I include the original year of publication of Fink ([1988] 1995), even tough it is not very informative in this particular case since the work was actually written in 1932. For a detailed account of the relation between Fink and Husserl, and their philosophical works, see Bruzina (1995).

[15] In the next section, continuing the discussion introduced above on the role of power in discourse, I will argue that such externalisation is an important aspect of political order in modernity. From that perspective, Husserl's natural attitude is actually a political matter.

which are created by humans is itself not socially constructed. Thus, its inexistence is absolute, and constructivists seem to presuppose the independent existence of an empty world beyond those worlds humans create. Now, the existence of a world beyond humans, beyond the creative activities of the human subject, is exactly what is accepted in modern discourse otherwise. However, that world is an empty world, a void material world. To use a Kantian vocabulary, there is always a transcendental object correlating to the transcendental subject. Or, to use a Derridean, the outside is always present on the inside as the other of that inside. Or, lastly, to use a Husserlian, the intentional act is always directed towards an intentional object. The material world never disappears in or from modern discourse. It is actually a condition of possibility for such discourse, and it is, to use a Derridean vocabulary once more, the constant remainder always reappearing in the deconstruction of meaning. The material world, as the pure material other of meaning, can never be deconstructed, for as the constitutive outside of meaning, it is actually presupposed by deconstruction as something that goes on inside meaning. Thus—and this is admittedly quite polemic—when Derrida claims that '*there is nothing outside of the text*' (Derrida [1967] 1997, p. 158), he does not deny the existence of a reality beyond the meaningful reality of humans but rather describes that reality as empty. There is *nothing* outside of the text; whatever is outside the text is a nothing; it is not a something.

Since deconstruction itself presupposes the empty material world, any attempt to explicate that deconstruction must also, implicitly or explicitly, accept the existence of an empty world beyond subjective determina-

tion of meaning. Again, the creativity of the modern subject is conditioned by the existence of a world that is exactly non-subjective.

This, then, shines new light on my critique of social constructivism in green political theory, and implicitly of my critique of ecologism and new materialism as well. The empty world presupposed by social constructivism is the same world presupposed by modern discourse in general. Thus, social constructivism simply presupposes that which modern discourse presupposes, and in some instances, explicitly highlights, like the ones mentioned above. In this way, social constructivism comes across as being a modern discourse—in the sense that it views subjectivity as creative and presupposes a conjunction between the act of thinking and the world—that fails to recognise its own discursive context or ignores the conditions under which itself makes sense as a discourse. Or, it has simply forgotten whence it came.

Moving on, it is important to mention again that representational thought does not disappear in modernity, despite the disappearance of a determinate natural world existing externally to human experience. In modernity, it is still possible to claim in a meaningful way that thought represents the world as it is in itself and that such representations are true. Wittgenstein, for instance, writes in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* about human thoughts and their determination of meaning as pictures representing the world of things (Wittgenstein [1921] 1961, pp. 15–17). Such pictures, Wittgenstein maintains, can be true or false depending on whether they depict what they represent correctly or incorrectly (ibid., pp. 15–17). According to Wittgenstein, humans depict the world of things—provide them with

meaning—through language, just like, say, a musical score depicts a symphony by way of written notes (Wittgenstein [1921] 1961, p. 39). If the notes are written correctly, the symphony can be reproduced by any skilled musicians. However, for that to be possible, there must be rules according to which the symphony has been depicted as notes. Meaningful language requires rules. In his later work, especially the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein approaches language as a game instead of as a picture while still maintaining that language requires rules to be meaningful. However, he also acknowledges that the rules of any game can change, even for the game of language (Wittgenstein [1953] 2009, pp. 43–45). Crucially, he notes that, sometimes, 'we play, and make up the rules as we go along' (ibid., p. 44). Thus, the rules according to which meaning is established and humans can speak to each other can change, which suggests that even though representations of the world are possible, the rules according to which those representations are deemed to represent the world, and thus amount to representations at all, are settled by humans as they 'go along' in history.

That being said, the very possibility of thought to represent the world is crucial for many particular instances of modern thought. Empirical science, in general, can, indeed, be said to presuppose the bracketing of the creativity of human subjectivity in order to isolate the world as a world of objects independent of human thought (Foucault 2002b, pp. 375–422). As Husserl notes, the natural attitude provides a 'collective horizon of possible investigations', which can be called 'the *world*' ([1913] 1982, p. 5). That world amounts to the object empirical sciences seek to investigate:

> The world is the sum-total of objects of possible experience and experiential cognition, of objects that, on the basis of actual experiences, are cognizable in correct theoretical thinking…. Sciences of the world, thus sciences in the natural attitude, the sciences of *material* nature, but also those of animate beings with their *psychophysical nature*, consequently also physiology, psychology, and so forth, are all so-called *natural sciences* in the narrower and broader sense. Likewise all the so-called *Geisteswissenschaften* belong here: the science of history, the sciences of culture, sociological disciplines of every sort. (ibid., p. 6).

Not only does this highlight the continuation of representation in modernity, but also that human affairs can also still be treated as things, just like they could in early modernity. Thus, the tendency to objectify human being is present also in modern discourse. By that, because subjectivity in modernity denotes spontaneous creativity, aspects of subjective creativity are externalised and turned to their other, an intricacy I will dig deeper into in the next section.

Returning to the importance of representation for the natural sciences—and I might mention that I prefer to reserve that term for those sciences that, as per the quote by Husserl above, occupy themselves with material nature—it should be noted that the possibility of representation allows for a whole host of conceptualisations of nature, both new ones and ones making use of old metaphors.

For instance, nature can be approached as a huge collection of different elementary particles—such as fermions and bosons—interacting based on fundamental forces—

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[16] For fairly accessible introductions to modern particle physics, see Oerter (2006) and Schumm (2004).

such as gravity and electromagnetism—as does modern particle physicists.[16] Or, it is possible to think of planet Earth as one giant system where living and non-living elements are so tightly integrated that they form a whole, practically a single living organism.[17] Or, the planet humans live on can be seen as a system of systems interacting in highly complex ways and in so doing support organic life.[18]

Conceptualisations such as these can contain or be coupled with far-reaching attempts to position human beings as part of the natural world, for instance, through the aforementioned notion of 'social-ecological systems',[19] or by attempting to refer human perception, all emotions, and every behaviour back to their biological constitution, perhaps most notably to genetic composition and to the neural operations of the human brain.[20] However, all such conceptualisations of nature and all such attempts to naturalise human being, no matter how intricate or detailed they are or how much experimental or observational evidence corroborate their claims, are vulnerable to a particularly modern critical intervention, one which also highlights the fundamental level at which the modern conjunction of action and thing is situated.

Anyone who explicitly accepts the conjunction between action and thing, or between thought and world, and who strategically makes use of its implications, can always append to any description purporting to represent the natural world as it is in itself a 'for humans' or a 'for some humans' or simply 'for you' (Meillassoux 2008, pp. 13–14). According to this way of reasoning, it is not nature tout court that is a collection of elementary particles; it is not planet Earth *as such* that is a complex system of systems, but rather nature as it appears *for humans*, or the planet as it is according to some humans working within the confines of this or that scientific discourse. Indeed, such representations make sense in some discursive contexts, and the natural attitude—to refer back to Husserl—is in many ways sufficient in order for humans to make the natural world intelligible, to navigate it, and to make a living in it. However, as humans, we 'cannot represent the "in itself" without it becoming "for us"' (ibid., p. 4). In other words, humans cannot know anything of the world beyond their own relations to that world (ibid., p. 4), and since the rules according to which things are made meaningful change historically and since meaning is subjectively and spontaneously created, acceptance of what is deemed true in modernity is actually, when push comes to a shove, generally based on intersubjective agreements rather than how well representations mirror what they represent (ibid., pp. 4–5). The criteria for what amounts to a true statement are settled by humans interacting with each other. This holds for all statements of truth, those belonging to the discourses of the natural sciences as well; what amounts to a scientific

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[17] For examples of such ideas, see Vernadsky ([1926] 1998) and Humboldt ([1845] 1997), and the literature on Gaia cited on page 47 in chapter 2 above.

[18] This conceptualisation of nature is associated with contemporary Earth system science, which was discussed in chapter 2 (see page 21 above).

[19] Again, see chapter 2 (page 21 above).

[20] For some critical looks at contemporary biology and neuroscience, and their relation to politics and social science, see Altermark (2014), Pitts-Taylor (2010), and Rose (2013).

truth is primarily settled by those who participate in the activities of the scientific discourse in question. Since one is now dealing with social relations, rather than a mind existing absolutely and accurately representing an equally absolute external world, one is also dealing with the modes of power contained in these relations and how the exercise of power shapes their discursive outcomes. Again, modernity pushes questions of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, into the realm of politics.

The modern conjunction between action and thing, then, makes it possible to question every positive description of nature, every determination of what nature is, and to make such descriptions relative in the sense that it is always possible to point out that such descriptions always emerge in a social setting and, therefore, in some way reflect that setting. This—and this might perhaps sound surprising—actually limits the importance of natural science and how nature is conceived of in natural science for grasping the conceptualisation of nature in modern discourse. This is not to say that the concept of nature or the sciences of nature are of limited importance in modern discourse itself. Of course, there are many ways in which perceptions of what nature is in positive terms influence social practice. However, in more general terms, no single positive description of nature can serve as a modern equivalent to the medieval organicist understanding of nature or the early modern mechanistic understanding. No singular description can serve as a dominant conceptualisation of nature by following directly from the epistemic configuration of discourse, for the modern conjunction between

action and thing, which is situated at a more profound conceptual level than any determinate understanding of nature, makes that impossible. To put it bluntly, the natural sciences, or any other discourse, can describe nature in any way they want; the empty material world related to subjective activity in a unity of difference remains unaltered and active beneath all such descriptions and serves as their very condition of possibility. Thus, no empirical definition of nature can serve as a basis for understanding the conceptualisation of nature in modern discourse.

That being said, there are still ways in which the epistemic configuration of modernity surfaces and becomes visible in discourses of natural science or their close relatives, and I would like to briefly mention two such ways, one in mathematics and one in evolutionary biology.

In 1931, a paper was published in the journal *Monatshefte für Mathematik und Physik*, in which the author, Kurt Gödel, formulated what has become known as the two incompleteness theorems describing certain characteristics of formal systems, or theories (Gödel [1931] 1986). The first theorem states that in any consistent formal axiomatic system—or theory—that makes it possible to do arithmetic, there is at least one statement expressed in the language of the theory which can neither be proved nor disproved by the theory itself. The second theorem states that no consistent formal axiomatic theory can prove its own consistency using only the axioms of the theory itself.[21]

For my purposes and the current discussion about modernity, these theorems have two important implications. First, since the theorems cover all theories that make

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[21] For an accessible treatment of Gödel's incompleteness theorems, see Franzén (2005).

it possible to perform arithmetic and therefore have a bearing on basically all of mathematics, they imply that mathematical theories are generally not self-sufficient. Instead, such theories always rely on something else, other theories beyond themselves; any formal system of axioms requires another system of axioms in order to be complete. Thus, completeness is never provided by a theory itself but from another theory and the association between the two theories at hand. Since the theory completing the first theory is also incomplete, it too requires yet another theory to be complete, and so on (Gödel [1931] 1995a, p. 35). Also, this sequence of the constant deferral of completeness never ends in one unified theory containing all other theories. For instance, if one attempts to make set theory axiomatic,

> instead of ending up with a finite number of axioms ... one is faced with an infinite series of axioms, which can be extended further and further, without any end being visible and, apparently, without any possibility of comprising all these axioms in a finite rule producing them. (Gödel [1951] 1995b, p. 306)

Thus, just like meaning in discourse, statements in formal theories always presuppose something more than themselves, something other that lies beyond them but to which they maintain close bonds.[22] From this, it follows that whenever there is a consistent formal theory of mathematics, there is also always already something different from that theory, which, finally, implies that mathematical theories presuppose and proceed from a fundamental difference.

The second implication of Gödel's incompleteness theorems that I would like to emphasise is that they—principally the second one—indicate that mathematics as such cannot be exhausted (see also ibid., p. 305). As Gödel notes himself, it is

> *impossible that someone should set up a certain well-defined system of axioms and rules and consistently make the following assertion about it: All of these axioms and rules I perceive (with mathematical certitude) to be correct, and moreover I believe that they contain all of mathematics.* If someone makes such a statement he contradicts himself. For if he perceives the axioms under consideration to be correct, he also perceives (with the same certainty) that they are consistent. Hence he has a mathematical insight not derivable from his axioms. (ibid., p. 309)

This indicates that mathematics has no end; it cannot be exhaustively pinned down; there is always something more that can and needs to be said about formal theories and about the current state of mathematics. In other words, there can always emerge new mathematics (Franzén 2004, pp. 1–3). Thus, there appears again a similarity between mathematics and what has been said above about modern discourse in general. It follows from the general modern understanding of the creation of meaning that new meaning can always emerge, and just as there can always appear new meaning in discourse, there can appear new math. Moreover, the incompleteness of mathematics introduces to mathematics a temporal element; incompleteness indicates that mathematics as such is inexhaustible (ibid.). Hence, its discursive structure is temporal. Mathematics has a current state, it was in a different state in the past, and it

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[22] This, of course, does not mean that all discourses are formal theories in the sense that the term formal theory is used in the mathematical discourse to which Gödel's writings belong.

might become something else in the future. In other words, mathematics is historical (Karatani 1995, pp. 55–56), which, evidently, echoes with the epistemic historicity of modern discourse; it is the historical unfolding of mathematics that defines what mathematics is.

Modern mathematics, then, is inexhaustible, which leads to another important idea in modern mathematics: transfinite numbers and the associated notion that quantity cannot be totalised. This idea stems from Cantor's work on set theory. Cantor's work shows that there are sets that are uncountable. If you take all elements of a set and group them in all ways possible, the number of groupings will always be bigger than the number of elements in the set, and this holds even for a set with an infinite number of elements, principally the set of all natural numbers.[23] Hence, if you group in such a manner all elements of a set with an infinite number of elements, you will end up with an infinite number of groupings bigger than the infinite number of elements in the set. Since the number of groupings of the elements of that set can also be treated as a set in which the groupings themselves are elements, that set will have an infinite number of elements bigger than the infinite number of elements in the first infinite set. Therefore, you will have two infinite sets, and one will be bigger than the other. And of course, the elements of the bigger set can also be grouped according to the same procedure resulting in yet another bigger infinite set, and so on. Hence, there

is no one size of infinity but infinitely many such sizes. This series of ever greater infinities is what is referred to as the transfinite sequence of cardinal numbers.

Now, since there are infinitely many infinite sets, all of different sizes, it is impossible to gather everything that is quantifiable, and thus mathematisable, in a totality; you cannot circumscribe quantity as such. Or, put differently, it is impossible to think of quantity in terms of a totality. To the extent that mathematics is deployed in order to describe the natural world in abstract and formal terms, mathematised descriptions of the natural world cannot, therefore, describe that world as a quantifiable totality in any consistent manner. This means that, in principle, it is possible to describe nature in quantitative terms, based on mathematics, in ever new and *different* ways. Once again, one encounters the notion that things can be different from what they are in the present insofar as it is possible in principle to make concepts meaningful in constantly novel ways.

By that, I would like to move on to the example of evolutionary biology. The tenet of evolutionary theory following Darwin's theory of natural selection and other similar theories that arose early on in modernity is an understanding of life according to which forms of organic life change over time.[24] According to this view, different species emerge, transform, and quite often disappear due to contextual factors and how well they manage to adapt to their surroundings and changing circumstances. To

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[23] For some of Cantor's most important original work, see Cantor ([1895] 1955a,b, [1883] 1996a,b,c). My interpretation of Cantor's work, and its further implications, is largely based on Badiou ([1988] 2006, pp. 265–280) and Meillassoux (2008, pp. 103–105, 2012, pp. 64–81). I have also found Dauben (1979) to be valuable for understanding Cantor.

[24] For historical treatments of biology and the theory of evolution, see Foucault (2002b, pp. 245–252, 287–304), Smocovitis (1996), Zimmer (2006), and some of the contributions in Fasolo (2012).

that extent, forms of life are products of historical processes, and these processes are neither teleological nor mechanical as the historical processes of medieval and early modern nature were, but random and characterised by a great deal of chance (Johnson 2015; Gould and Lewontin 1979; Reiss 2009).[25] Since living creatures interact with their surroundings in such a way that those surroundings become altered, this understanding of life suggests that living beings and the world they inhabit are not only constantly changing and doing so because of contingent factors and chance encounters, but also—and this is the crux of the matter—that nature, since it is constantly changing, has no essence.[26] The very being of nature is exhausted by how it exists in its present and by the haphazard historical trajectory that has lead it there.

This lack of essence suggests that the natural world where life is contained has no permanent structure around which changes take place. It has no fixed ground upon which different edifices can be built. Whatever happens in the natural world, according to this view, happens, therefore, without relying on a fundamental structure. Now, this is a vocabulary I have used before, in the previous chapters, when discussing medieval and early modern nature. In the Middle Ages, all functions—whatever happened in the spiritual and material world of nature—were resolved into the structure of nature. In early modernity, structure and function formed a dualism in which function enjoyed a relative independence but was ultimately determined by structure. Now,

in modernity, a new situation appears, a new balance between structure and function emerges. Now, structure resolves into function. As specified by Collingwood, according to an evolutionary view of nature, 'nature will be understood as consisting of processes, and the existence of any special kind of thing in nature will be understood as meaning that processes of a special kind are going on there' (Collingwood 1960, p. 17).

Again, however, the modern conjunction can always serve as the grounds for a critical intervention, something along the lines of the following: Evolutionary biology purports to describe nature in a determinate manner as that which nature is in itself, but in doing so, evolutionary biology neglects that the description itself is made by someone. Thus, the nature of evolutionary biology also is only nature *for someone.* That being said, the nature of the modern conjunction between action and thing and the nature of evolutionary biology do have something in common. They share the concept of nature as something that only appears; that has no essence; that has functions but no structure.

How might this be? Well, according to the explicitly modern understanding of a fundamental unity of action and thing, or subject and object, underlying being as such, nature as the other of subjectivity—as a material world without form—is, as has been shown, the constant companion to subjective action. It is possible to look at this unity of difference in such a way that objectivity emerges as the surroundings of subjectivity; objectivity, in this sense, *environs* subjectiv-

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[25] For a discussion on evolutionary biology and teleology, see also Mayr (1992).

[26] On essentialism in biology, see Dupré (1993a, pp. 17–59, 2006, pp. 19–55, 175–195), Sober (1980), and Wilkins (2010). And for just one example of a historically important contribution to biological anti-essentialism, see the work by Mayr ([1959] 1976, 1963).

ity. Empty materiality constitutes *the envir-onment* of the activity of empty subjectivity. As a concept, the sole quality that character-ises the environment is that it is purely func-tional, something that I would like to elabor-ate by turning to systems theory, especially how it has been developed by Luhmann.

In systems theory, the concept of environ-ment generally denotes everything that does not belong to a system (Gallopín 1981). Al-ternatively, put in the system's perspective, the environment is everything that is not the system. Thus, environment as a concept only takes on meaning in relation to a sys-tem. To the extent that a system is a set of elements related in a way that makes it possible for them to perform some arbitrary operation, the environment is the comple-ment to that set. Or, as Luhmann writes, 'the environment is simply "everything else"' ([1984] 1995, p. 181). And if environment is conceptually attached to system, system must, of course, also be attached to environ-ment. To this extent, any system is what it is only in relation to its environment (ibid., p. 177). Specifically, the system emerges by means of a differentiation between itself and its environment, from everything which it is not (ibid., pp. 176–177). Systems 'con-stitute and maintain themselves by creating and maintaining a difference from their en-vironment' (ibid., p. 17), and 'relationship to the environment is *constitutive* in system formation' (ibid., p. 176), which means that 'the environment is … a presupposition' for the system (ibid., p. 177)

In treating society as a system, Luhmann approaches society as an autopoietic system of communication (ibid., pp. 12–58). As a system of communication, society is a sys-tem of meaning; it is where meaning resides in the sense that it is where communica-tion takes place (e.g. Luhmann [1984] 1995, pp. 59–102, 137–175, 2002). That the system is *autopoietic* means that it is self-creative; that it creates its own elements by means of its own elements and that it reproduces itself (e.g. Luhmann [1984] 1995, pp. 34–37). In the case of society, this means that society is a system of communicative elements that generate other communicative elements. So-ciety is a system of communication produ-cing new communication; or put differently, it is a world of self-created meaning. It gen-erates meaning by itself from meaning.

This way of reasoning is recognisable from previous discussions, especially regard-ing how meaning emerges in linguistic sys-tems. The presence of a fundamental and primordial difference and of a fundamental differentiation grounds both lines of reason-ing. Since Luhmann defines society as a sys-tem of communication, it *is* a l,inguistic sys-tem. Thus, this understanding of society is a conceptualisation of linguistic system that takes into account the social character of meaning, that meaning is a process of com-munication. From this correspondence be-tween society as a system and language as a system, it follows, on the basis that the other of the linguistic system, the other of meaning, consists of empty materiality, that that which is not part of the system of soci-ety consists of empty materiality. Thus, the environment of society is empty materiality, the same empty materiality I described as be-ing united to subjective action as the other of such action. All of this suggests, then, that the differentiation between society and environment dealt with here is a variety of the concept of a conjunction between action and thing, subjectivity and objectivity.

It was also shown earlier that the differ-entiation between linguistic system and its

outside is the most fundamental operation of that system since all other differential relations in the establishing of meaning proceed on the basis of that differentiation. This is also the case for society as a system; it primordially differentiates itself from whatever it is not and thereby simultaneously constitutes itself and its environment, the latter being that which the system is not (Luhmann [1986] 1989, p. 6), and drawing such a boundary around itself, the communicative system of society can proceed to generate new communication through further processes of differentiation. Differentiations internal to the social system are made possible by the underlying differentiation between internal and external differentiation (Luhmann [1984] 1995, pp. 188–189). However, it should also be noted that the environment, because the system defines itself differentially from its environment, serves a constitutive function in this process, just like the outside is constitutive of the inside of meaning.

Continuing the comparison between society as a system and linguistic systems, it has also been shown that the fundamental differentiation between inside and outside cannot itself be meaningful since it is the differentiation that allows for meaning to emerge. Similarly, neither is the difference between society and environment at this fundamental level meaningful, from which it follows that society is but empty communication at this basic level, and the environment is empty non-communication, or empty non-meaning.

For the environment to *be* meaningful, it must be *made* meaningful from within the social system since the social system is where meaning is generated. The environment must be observed in order to be meaningful, and it can be attributed with meaning only by means of observations taking their cue from the differentiation between system and environment (la Cour 2006, pp. 44–45). The distinction between system and environment must be part of the communicative structure of society before the environment of the system can be distinguished from within the system. From this, and given the conceptual attachment of system and environment, two important implications follow. First, for the environment to take on meaning, the system itself must also be made meaningful as a system. Thus, insofar as society can be conceptualised as a system, it can only make itself meaningful as a society by simultaneously making its environment meaningful as its own environment (Luhmann [1986] 1989, pp. 22–23), which incidentally also implies that 'difference is not only a means of separating but also, *and above all,* a means of reflecting the system by distinguishing it' (ibid., p. 7, emphasis added). This self-observation necessarily entails an understanding of the system's own communicative operations, which indicates that the meaning of the system's environment will be grounded in the meaning the system attributes to itself and its ways of establishing meaning. Thus, the system itself provides the ordering according to which the environment is made meaningful. This then, and here comes the second implication, makes the meaning of the environment as environment relative to how society makes itself meaningful, to the differentiations of its communicative operations, and to how society makes its difference from the environment meaningful (la Cour 2006, p. 45). Since how society structures its own communicative operations changes in time and between different subsystems of soci-

ety, the meaning of its environment will also change in like manner.[27]

All in all, then, the environment emerges vis-à-vis society in two major ways. First, at a basic level, society constitutes itself by differentiating itself from what it is not, and the 'what it is not' amounts to its environment. At this level, the environment is pure non-meaning. By implication from the equivalence between society as a system of communication and language as a linguistic system it is also the empty material other of the activity of establishing meaning. Alternatively, put differently, the environment is the other of the subject, which is exactly the notion with which I started this excursion into systems theory. Second, the environment becomes meaningful as environment, as something determinate, as that which is not society, and this as part of a process that also involves society determining its own meaning and the meaning of its difference from the environment.

It should be fairly evident that in neither of these two ways does the environment have an essence, that it does not have a perennial structure. Regarding the first moreover, it is equally evident that the environment has a functional character. It plays a significant role in the differentiation and constitution of society. As such, and to the extent that the differentiation between society and environment denotes the conjunction between action and thing, the environment—the 'thing-part' of this conjunction—is functional, its function being to constitute society, or communication, or meaning, by being its other.

The environment's functionality in its second emergence vis-à-vis society is some-what different. First of all, since the meaning of the environment is relative to the communicative ordering of society and its subsystems, there is no fixed core of meaning attached to it forever. In this sense, whatever the environment is, or whatever happens in it, does so without reliance on a permanent structure. However, once the environment is introduced on the inside of the system as one side of the system-environment differentiation, which itself represents the occasion when the environment emerges as a meaningful environment for society, society will have a determinate relation to its environment, in the form of an element of communication. Once such a relation exists, the environment can have effects on society, as part of its communication, in ways that are generally settled by how communication is ordered in society, how society makes that order meaningful, and how it makes its difference from its environment meaningful. Luhmann refers to this ability of the environment to effect society, to introduce changes within it, as the creation of resonance within the system on behalf of the environment (Luhmann [1986] 1989, pp. 15–21). Importantly, since the possibility and the extent of those changes are settled on the basis of the communicative ordering of society, resonance happens by virtue of circumstances that are internal to the system. What is perhaps of even greater importance, however, is that resonance *happens*; the environment, according to this view, is something that happens, it happens in relation to society, and it happens without being anything else than that which happens. Thus, at its determinate level, where the environment means something, it is exhaustively

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[27] Luhmann deals with this issue extensively in *Ecological Communication* ([1986] 1989, in particular pp. 51–105).

functional in its being. It has no fixed structure beyond its appearance in relation to society; it is nothing but what it does.

Thus, in both of these ways that the environment emerges in relation to society, it is purely functional. Insofar as the environment has a structure, that structure, once scrutinised, can always be resolved into function. If the environment is said to have a structure, that structure is exactly *said* to exist; essences, too, are part of the human creation of meaning. Here, it is useful to return to Hegel according to whom

> essence must *appear*…. The essence is thus not *behind* or *beyond* the appearance; instead, by virtue of the fact that it is the essence that exists concretely, concrete existence is appearance. (Hegel [1830] 2010a, p. 197)

And since being in general is caught up with the historical being of humanity, to this one should add that being is historical appearance; essence always echoes of the past. On this, Sartre writes:

> Essence is what as been. Essence is everything in the human being which we can indicate by the words—that *is*. Due to this fact it is the totality of characteristics which *explain* the act. But the act is always beyond that essence; it is a human act only in so far as it surpasses every explanation which we can give of it, precisely because the very application of the formula 'that is' to man causes all that is designated, to *have-been*…. Essence is all that human reality apprehends in itself as *having been*. (Sartre [1943] 1969, p. 35)

Now, to return to evolutionary biology, it can be concluded that the understanding of nature it conveys is in perfect alignment with the modern conjunction of action and thing. Here, nature is purely functional; it is nothing beyond its appearance in the presence and the history leading up to that appearance. However, there is one important aspect of the modern conjunction that does not explicitly surface in evolutionary biology but which is more clearly elaborated in Luhmannian systems theory. That is the notion that functional nature appears *in relation to and according to* humans; in modernity in general, nature is what it does in relation to humans.

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I began this section by stating that nature leads a somewhat troubled existence in modernity. By now, my reasons for doing so should be clear, for the section has shown that, on the one hand, nature can be many things; on the other, it is nothing at all.

Since it is still possible to represent nature in modern discourse as something that is independent of the meaning attributed to it, nature can appear as a purely objective world untainted by contingent historical factors. In this respect, nature can also appear as an external world, as something completely separated from social existence, something that can be isolated and studied as a thing in itself. This is the nature that appears in the modern natural sciences, for instance. This nature, when it is represented as something in itself, has positive attributes.

However, since representation is not grounded in itself in modernity but is instead a contingent result of the historical forces from which all determinations follow, any representation of nature, even those purporting to represent nature as it is in itself, can be said to be relative to a certain, and historically contingent, way of determining what things are. According to this perspective, what is claimed to be positive attrib-

utes of nature itself is just an intersubject-ive agreement within discourse of what is accepted as positive attributes of nature it-self; external nature is not external at all; it is externalised; nature only appears to have positive attributes. From the perspective of the modern conjunction, any determinate nature, even the nature of natural science, is only nature *for someone*. Accordingly, nature is nothing but its particular appearance in discourse; it is how it appears in a certain place and in a certain time according to a transient way of establishing meaning. Thus, nature can be anything at all that is accep-ted by means of intersubjective agreement. However, this also robs it of any perennial positive content, of any qualities indifferent to context. Thus, nature is at the same time nothing at all.

When approached from the point of view of the modern conjunction of action and thing, nature comes across as being a determ-ination of the indeterminate objective being that constantly accompanies subjective ac-tion. Nature, in this sense, is empty ma-teriality filled, formless matter taking form. However, since such a determinate nature only emerges in association with determin-ate human being, modern nature will always be something with a relation to something else, to subjective action.

Of course, humans are also always related to nature. Modern nature is that which sur-rounds the subjective being of modern hu-mans. As a surrounding, nature is an envir-onment, and insofar as one is approaching human being as it is as such nature is not only *an* environment but *the* environment. Is that which is not society, in Luhmann's terms, but which always emerges with soci-ety as something different and differentiated from it. Furthermore, it gains determinate

meaning inside society only as society itself gains meaning *as society*. Thus, society and environment gain meaning in a shared pro-cess of becoming. Like the subject and the object, and the act and the thing, they come together in a pair, a pair of differences. They form a unity of difference, a unity in which the related parties presuppose and constitute each other. And to continue to refer to Luh-mann, he actually quite explicitly describes society as system and the environment as such a unity. While arguing that system and environment together make up the world, he writes:

> Only when meaning-constituted bound-aries make available a difference be-tween system and environment can there be a *world*. Systems that constitute and use meaning presuppose a world.... Un-derstood in this way, the world is the correlate of meaning's identity; it is co-implied in every meaning element as a whole....
>
> We employ the concept of a world as a concept for the *unity of the difference be-tween system and environment* and use it as an ultimate concept, one free of fur-ther differences. The world does not des-ignate a (total, all-encompassing) sum of facts, an *universitas rerum* that could be conceived only as free from difference. Originally and phenomenologically, the world is given as an ungraspable unity. It can be determined as the unity of a dif-ference only by and in relation to system formation. In both regards the concept of a world designates a unity that becomes actual only for meaning systems that can distinguish themselves from their envir-onments and thereby reflect the unity of this difference as a unity that trails off in two endless directions, within and without. In this sense, the world is con-stituted by the differentiation of mean-ing systems, by the difference between system and environment. To this extent it is ... not something original ... but a

unity of closure subsequent to a difference. (Luhmann [1984] 1995, pp. 207–208)[28]

And the historical unfolding of society is always the historical unfolding of society in relation to the environment:

> With this concept of the world we can ... propose research that can connect the semantics of 'the world' to the sociostructural development of societal systems. Whatever it may otherwise be and however it may otherwise be determined and explained, this evolution is the unfolding of the system/environment difference on the emergent level of social systems. (ibid., p. 208)

When discussing the concept of nature in the two previous chapters, I listed various characteristics of medieval and early modern nature, respectively. Nature as organism is ordered, interconnected, teleological, harmonious, hierarchical, and active. It is a place of meaning and it contains both subjective and objective elements. Nature as mechanism is also ordered, although in a different way in that it follows universal immutable laws. Early modern nature is a material world, the parts of which are discrete and non-hierarchical, and it lacks harmony as well as activity. It is a completely objective world without inherent meaning. Also, I have emphasised, importantly, that function resolves into structure in organicist nature, whereas in mechanistic nature they form a dualism in which function enjoys relative independence but is still ultimately determined by structure. For the modern concept of nature as the environment, such a list can consist only of one entry: structure resolves into function. This is the only quality of the modern concept of nature that is not susceptible to historical change since it follows

directly from historicity itself. For insofar as nature comes into being as part of the historical becoming of humankind, its being is exhausted by what happens in its relation to human affairs. All other characteristics, the very content of the environment which happens in relation to society, are transient and can appear, or not, in different discursive settings depending on the contextual factors associated with those discourses.

Thus, modern nature can be many things, but at the same time it is nothing at all. As history unfolds, the appearance of nature changes with changing discourse. As long as there is an intersubjective agreement, nature can be anything at all, and this turns it into nothing at all. Beyond being that which surrounds humans, and beyond its happening and what it does inside discourse, it is empty.

This last issue, that the meaning of nature is relative to discourse and that nature has effects inside discourse once it is made meaningful in a determinate way, rearranges the question of nature. In modernity, if you seek to pinpoint what nature is and how it is conceptualised, you have to consider how nature becomes what it is in discourse. Given the central role played by relations of power in discourse and for the determination of meaning, this drags the question into political territory. This will be covered in the next section, where the determination of nature will be delineated as a fundamental political act in modernity.

5.3 Politics

In this section, I will show that political order is a manifestation of the conjunction be-

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[28]The Latin phrase *universitas rerum* means 'a collection of things treated as a whole'.

tween action and thing in modern political discourse. Substantially, the section will focus on the concept of sovereignty. Modern political discourse certainly continues the early modern preoccupation with sovereign authority and the grounding of political order in sovereignty; modern political authority is very much authorised by means of the concept of sovereignty. The concept of sovereignty is 'still with us, to the point of obsession for all brands of political philosophy' (Kalmo and Skinner 2010a, p. 2).[29] Specifically, I will argue that it is the concept of sovereignty that is a manifestation of the conjunction between action and thing. Moreover, I will emphasise that politics in modernity is of such broad conceptual scope that it encompasses all of human being, implying that the conceptualisation of the conjunction as sovereignty is of the broadest possible scope. To that extent, the concept of sovereignty can subsume other conceptualisations of the conjunction of lesser scope, especially those locating the conjunction in the individual human being rather than in social relations. On this basis, the section also seeks to tie together all of the strands introduced in the chapter so far. Crucially, it highlights that all of what has been said so far can be gathered under the umbrella of politics.

Moreover, the discussion will indeed be focused on the possibility of democracy to germinate in modern political discourse. On this matter, I will argue that modern political order *is* composed of all four components investigated herein as presupposed by democracy, as democracy is understood in contemporary green political the-

ory. Modern political order contains the concepts of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency and agentic membership, thus providing ample breading ground for democracy. I will also show that democracy does indeed germinate in this discourse, and that modern democracy in general presupposes these components and is conceptualised in exactly the same way as democracy in green political theory, which implies that the latter is a case of the former. Hence, green political theory recycles and reproduces modern democracy. Since that concept of democracy is built on the conjunction of action and thing, so too will the concept of democracy in green political theory. Furthermore, since the conjunction is indicative of a certain relation between humans and nature, in which they form a unity of difference, that relation too will be recycled in green political theory.

When outlining the modern concept of democracy, I will suggest that modern political order as such is inherently democratic, that the two are indissociable. However, digging a little deeper into the conceptual logic of democracy, I will also highlight that modern democracy has a built-in tendency to revert to its opposite, to become something other than democracy. Thus, it too tends to disqualify itself, just as democracy in green political theory tends to do, and in the final, concluding chapter, I will argue that this tendency is exacerbated in green political theory.

To get all of this going, I would like to begin by pinpointing the conceptual dependence of modern politics on the epistemic primacy of difference in modern discourse.

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[29] On the importance of the concept of sovereignty and statism in modernity, see e.g. Bartelson (1995, 2001, 2014), Hinsley (1986), Jackson (2007), Kalmo and Skinner (2010b), and Walker (1993, 2010).

In a particularly influential conceptualisation of politics, Schmitt distinguishes 'the political' from politics, the former being a distinction between friend and enemy:

> The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy. This provides a definition in the sense of a criterion and not as an exhaustive definition or one indicative of substantial content. (Schmitt [1932] 2007a, p. 26)[30]

Schmitt's definition of the political explicitly avoids attributing any content to the political. The political, in this sense, has no determinate form, no essence. Instead, it is the generative principle of determinate political orders. Politics, then, is the concrete outcome of the friend-enemy distinction. In general terms, the political results in determinate political order (Prozorov 2009a, pp. 218–219). Or, put differently, the political is the ground upon which political communities are formed; whenever there are friends and enemies, there are political communities (Schmitt [1932] 2007a, pp. 20, 28), also indicating that friends and enemies are always collective entities. The political always concerns social reality (ibid., pp. 28–29). Emphasising the importance of the state as the principal determinate form of modern political order, Schmitt exclusively associates determinate political order with the state.[31] Concerning the primacy to the political vis-à-vis politics, he notes that 'the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political' (ibid., p. 19). However, beyond being grounded in the political, the state can be anything; it does not have a discursively fixed form as it had in medieval and early modern discourse:

> It may be left open what the state is in its essence—a machine or an organism, a person or an institution, a society or a community, an enterprise or a beehive, or perhaps even a basic procedural order. These definitions and images anticipate too much meaning, interpretation, illustration, and construction. (ibid., p. 19)

But what does it mean, one might ask, to be a friend or an enemy in this context? If the political is a distinction between friends and enemies, and a relation between friends and enemies following from that distinction, who are the related parties, and how are they related? To delineate the meaning of the friend-enemy relation, Schmitt contrasts it to moral relations between good and evil, aesthetic relations between beautiful and ugly, and economic relations between profitable and unprofitable, and writes the following regarding the distinguishing feature of friends and enemies:

> The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specifically intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. (ibid., pp. 26–27)

Specifying this a bit further still, the enemy

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[30] On the influence of Schmitt as a political and legal theorist, see Scheuerman (1999), Mouffe (1999), and Odysseos and Petito (2007).

[31] On the importance of the state in modern political discourse, see Bartelson (2001).

is someone with whom violent conflict to the death can irrupt; enemies might kill each other, friends will not (Schmitt [1932] 2007a, p. 33). Thus, friend is to be associated here with the self and others with whom the self shares an identity of some sort and enemy, therefore, is associated with all others. Those others, as Schmitt reasons, always pose a potential existential threat. Hence, the political emerges in a meeting between self and other in which the other is deemed to be so fundamentally different than the self that killing is a real possibility; 'the enemy … calls the self into question' (Ojakangas 2006, pp. 206–207; see also Derrida [1994] 2005b, pp. 112–137).[32] To that extent, the form of the enemy puts existence itself in question. This suggests, given that being in general is tied to human existence in modernity, that the question of the enemy is the question of being tout court.

Importantly, the very possibility of the enemy and encountering the other as fundamentally other presupposes difference, that human being—and by that being in general—can be different. Thus, the very meaning of the political presupposes that being is first and foremost difference, that difference is primordial to being. To that extent, the following chain of presuppositions is present here: political order presupposes the political, and the political presupposes difference, and a fortiori, political order presupposes difference (Prozorov 2009a, pp. 218–223). A world without the friend-enemy distinction, a world without the primacy of difference, would be 'a world without politics' (Schmitt [1932] 2007a, p. 35, see also pp. 53–54), according to modern thought.

Since the political circumscribes human existence as such, the primacy of difference it presupposes is general to human being in its entirety. Any relation can become political:

> Because the political has no substance of its own, the point of the political can be reached from any terrain, and any social group, church, union, combine, nation, becomes political, and thereby of the state, as it approaches the point of highest intensity. (Schmitt [1930] 1999, p. 203)

Also, since the political is the question of being as such, the political grouping of human beings—the determinate result of the political—always becomes the most important one in relation to other groupings:

> The real friend-enemy grouping is existentially so strong and decisive that the nonpolitical antithesis, at precisely the moment at which it becomes political, pushes aside and subordinates its

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[32] In *Ex Captivitate Salus*, a collection of texts Schmitt wrote while being imprisoned following the German defeat in the Second World War, being designated as a '"potential defendant"' in the Nuremberg trials because of his position in Nazi Germany (Kalyvas and Finchelstein 2017, quote appearing on p. 3), Schmitt also writes: 'Who is my enemy, then? Is my enemy the person who feeds me here, in the cell? He even clothes and shelters me…. I ask myself, then: Who can my enemy be? To be sure, I do it in such a way as to be able to acknowledge him as enemy, and in fact it must be acknowledged that he acknowledges me as enemy. In this mutual acknowledgement of acknowledgement lies the greatness of the concept…. Whom in the world can I acknowledge as my enemy? Clearly only him who can call me into question. By recognizing him as enemy I acknowledge that he can call me into question. And who can really call me into question? Only I myself. Or my brother. The other proves to be my brother, and the brother proves to be my enemy. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Thus begins the history of humankind. This is what the father of all things looks like. This is the dialectical tension that keeps world history moving, and world history as not yet ended. Take care, then, and do not speak lightly of the enemy. One categorizes oneself through one's enemy' (Schmitt [1950] 2017, pp. 70–71; see also Schmitt 1991, p. 217, [1963] 2007b, translator's footnote on p. 85).

hitherto purely religious, purely economic, purely cultural criteria and motives to the conditions and conclusions of the political situation at hand. In any event, that grouping is always political which orients itself toward this most extreme possibility. This grouping is therefore always the decisive human grouping, the political entity. (Schmitt [1932] 2007a, p. 38)

The political, hence, since the political entity cannot pass into a higher form of association, denotes the ultimate horizon of human being; there is nothing above or beyond political existence once it has become a reality.

In a world where difference is primary, any encounter between humans, any social interaction at all, takes place under the guise of difference and is potentially an encounter between friend and enemy. However, since the political does not proceed from any substantial difference, but only from difference itself, who is friend and who is enemy, and upon what basis they are deemed friends or enemies, does not follow a predetermined format. Neither friends nor enemies are essentially so; the world is not populated by one group of friends and one group of enemies encountering each other. Instead, the distinction is always settled in the encounter itself and only by the parties of the encounter (ibid., p. 27). Thus, insofar as the state denotes the political entity, 'in its entirety the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction' (ibid., pp. 29–30). Importantly, the identities of both the collective self and the collective other, and their difference, are formed in the very encounter between those collectives.[33] Both are constituted as friend

and enemy in the encounter; the political is the constitutive principle of the identity of political communities, the determination of what political orders consist. The enemy is also a definition of self:

> An enemy is not someone who, for some reason or other, must be eliminated and destroyed because he has no value. The enemy is on the same level as am I. For this reason, I must fight him to the same extent and within the same bounds as he fights me, in order to be consistent with the definition of the real enemy by which he defines me. (Schmitt [1963] 2007b, p. 85)

Thus, the political delineates a form of self-constitution, a self-creation which, in creating the self, also involves the creation of something other through which the self gains determinate being. The self creates itself by means of the other. By now, this is quite a familiar pattern of conceptualisation, of conceptualising the determination of being and the establishing of meaning according to which something outside is constitutive of something inside.

Returning to the passage in which Schmitt notes that the friend-enemy distinction is settled by the state itself, it is important to note that the distinction is settled by means of a *decision*. The primacy of difference means that any encounter, any social relation, calls for a decision, that self and other are formed on the basis of a decision, a decision whether the other is enemy or not, different or same, whether the possibility of violent conflict and killing lies ahead or not. Thus, at the very core of modern political order lies a decision, a decision upon which self and other are determined. Schmitt conceptualises this decision as a decision on the

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[33]This argument is loosely based on Ojakangas (2006, pp. 203–208).

exception, the exception pertaining to the situation in which the 'most extreme possibility' becomes an actuality. The one who can make such a decision is *sovereign:* 'Sovereign is he who decides on the exception' (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p. 5).

The notion of the sovereign decision on the exception is often couched in legal terms in modern political discourse, reflecting the character of the state as a legal entity, as a framework or order built of laws. To that extent—insofar as *political* order in the form of the state is a *legal* order—the exception refers, in principle, to a situation in which law is excepted, a situation in which law is suspended for some reason (ibid., p. 7). Crucially, since the sovereign decision concerns when law does not apply, it also concerns when it actually *does* apply. Thus, the sovereign decision has both a negative and a positive function. It functions negatively in the sense of suspending the legal order and thereby negating it. However, the sovereign suspension of order also always returns order to order; the sovereign decision is also the source of law as such (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p. 12; see also Derrida [2003] 2005a, p. 13; Žižek 1999, p. 18). In this way, the sovereign decision does not so much abolish order as constitute it:

> Everyone agrees that whenever antagonisms appear within a state, every party wants the general good—therein resides after all the *bellum omnium contra omnes.* But sovereignty (and thus the state itself) resides in deciding this controversy, that is, in determining definitively what constitutes public order and security, in determining when they are disturbed, and so on. (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p. 9)[34]

Speaking of order in terms of rule, Schmitt describes the fundamental and constitutive role of the exception accordingly:

> The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: It confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception. (ibid., p. 15)

Order, accordingly, exists upon the ground of the exception and is engendered by it. This indicates that the sovereign decision delineates what order is and what it is not. Or, put in more functional terms appropriate for the notion that the state does not have a substance, the sovereign decision defines what the legal order can and cannot do; it defines which actions can and cannot be carried out within a legal framework and be deemed legal.

Schmitt often contrasts the sovereign decision on the exception with the norm. The norm is 'an ordinary legal prescription' corresponding to 'a normal, everyday frame of life to which it can be factually applied' (ibid., pp. 6, 13). Notwithstanding Schmitt's legalistic preoccupation, the norm, as the concept is used here, basically refers to what I refer to as determinate political order—or, for instance, what, in line with Foucault, could be called an apparatus.

Norm and exception have quite a paradoxical relation in discourse. On the one hand, the norm denotes an everyday situation that does not call for any exceptional measures and in this sense the sovereign decision to suspend the legal prescriptions ordering that situation is exactly that which is not the norm. To that extent, what amounts to an exception cannot be settled on the

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[34] The Latin phrase *bellum omnium contra omnes*, the 'war of all against all', is a reference to Hobbes's description of the human condition in the state of nature, which was discussed above (see page 292 in chapter 4).

basis of the normal situation: a norm 'can never encompass a total exception' and 'the decision that a real exception exists cannot therefore be entirely derived from this norm' (ibid., p. 6). The exception 'is not codified in the existing legal order' and it 'cannot be circumscribed factually and made to conform to a preformed law' (ibid., p. 6). Thus, the exception, in this sense, does not emerge from determinate political order, it does not reside inside order. Since sovereignty denotes the making of law as such, it consists of 'unlimited authority' (ibid., p. 12). It is a power, and because the exception does not come from inside law itself, 'authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law' (ibid., p. 13). In other words, the making of law is not itself law; the determination of order is not itself determinate order. Or, to play on words, the constitution of the constitution is not a constitution.

On the other hand, since order emanates from the exception, it is only fully intelligible when the exception is also considered; the exception is 'a general concept in the theory of the state' (ibid., p. 5). Thusly considered, the sovereign decision on the exception is part of order as its constitutive principle:

> Every legal order is based on a decision, and also the concept of the legal order, which is applied as something self-evident, contains within it the contrast of the two distinct elements of the juristic— norm and decision. Like every other order, the legal order rests on a decision and not on a norm. (ibid., p. 10)

Thus, the exception is also somehow inside order. This situates the sovereign in an equally paradoxical situation in relation to the norm. For, on the one hand, the very possibility to suspend law requires that the sovereign operates inside a legal order; otherwise, there simply would not be anything to suspend. On the other hand, by suspending it, the sovereign also proves to be able to move outside the law, and again, the making of law is not itself a legal action. Therefore, the sovereign is both inside and outside order simultaneously: The sovereign

> decides whether there is an extreme emergency as well as what must be done to eliminate it. Although he stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety. (ibid., p. 7)

In other words, since the exception as the constitutive principle of determinate order is outside that order, order is 'outside itself' (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 15); order draws from the outside in creating itself.

It is impossible to subsume or circumscribe the exception under the normal situation since the exception is exactly what is not encompassed by that situation (Schmitt [1922] 1985, pp. 6, 13). In principle, then, it is impossible for political order to make its constitutive principle interior to itself. According to this conceptualisation of sovereign power, 'the sovereign moves uneasily inside and outside the constitution, escaping, sometimes resisting, its total absorption by the instituted reality' (Kalyvas 2005, p. 227).

Moving on, being the constitutive principle of determinate political order, the sovereign decision, moreover, does not itself denote anything determinate; the exception has no predefined form; the sovereign de-

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[35] In *Constitutional Theory*, Schmitt writes that 'constitution power' is 'an inexhaustible source of all forms without taking a form itself, forever producing new forms out of itself, building all forms, yet doing so without form itself'

cision is a 'borderline concept between form and formlessness, which constitutes form *by escaping from it*' (Ojakangas 2001, p. 40).[35] Or, to put it in terms of the friend-enemy distinction: the distinction, again, is prior to determination and is, therefore, not itself determined. To the extent that the sovereign decision operates inside determinate order as something alien to order, it does not have a determinate existence on its own. Instead, it exists only by means of its function—to create and suspend order, that is. Put differently, the sovereign decision is not a transcendent thing or origin of order existing above and beyond order, but merely the transcendental prerequisite for order to be what it is (Prozorov 2005, pp. 83–93, 101).

Here, one encounters a similarity between the modern conceptualisation of political order and Kant's transcendental subject. As was outlined earlier, Kant's transcendental subject—space and time as the subjective forms of experience and the categories of the understanding—applies as the logical prerequisite to what is experienced as existing, and in doing so, it unites experience and makes it meaningful. The sovereign decision occupies the exact same role vis-à-vis determinate order. It is the a priori condition of order, the logical prerequisite for order to appear as order. Specifically, it is the condition of possibility of order insofar as order creates itself.[36] This is a crucial aspect of the modern understanding of political order: political order creates itself; it is a spontaneous activity, just like the subject (Derrida [2008] 2009, p. 66). As Agamben notes: 'Law is made of nothing but what it manages to

capture inside itself' (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 27). Before law gains the possibility to order social relations, it must constitute itself:

> The law has a regulative character and is a 'rule' not because it commands and proscribes, but because it must first of all create the sphere of its own reference in real life and *make that reference regular*. (ibid., p. 26)

This act of self-creation is carried out by means of the outside of order, by means of the exception. Thus, order presupposes something other than itself in the moment of its self-creation. This conceptualisation is certainly reminiscent of how Kant's transcendental subject presupposes an object to which it can apply itself, a pure objectivity correlating to pure subjectivity, the result of which is meaningful experience. On the basis of this conceptual correspondence between the transcendental subject and sovereign decision, the latter can be conceived of as a pure act of self-constitution; it is a spontaneous creation of order (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p. 66).

Furthermore, I have also specified the pure objectivity presupposed by human subjectivity as consisting of empty materiality. One might wonder, then, if there is a similar correlative pole to the sovereign decision. Does sovereignty presuppose the existence of an empty material world? For the moderns, the answer to that question is yes.

In *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, Schmitt uses the term *nomos* to refer to order in general and to the expression of order in the concrete organisation of human communities (Ojakangas 2006, pp. 151–154). *Nomos,* in this sense, is 'the form of political, social,

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([1928] 2008, p. 128). And 'constitution-making power', he defines as '*the political will, whose power or authority is capable of making the concrete, comprehensive decision over the type and form of its own political existence*' (ibid., p. 125).

[36] For a slightly different take on the relation between Kantian subjectivity and the sovereign decision, see Padui (2010).

and religious order' (Schmitt [1950] 2003, p. 70). Importantly, he attaches to the expression of order a spatial dimension; it is the 'form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible' (ibid., p. 70). This suggests that political order happens in space, it orders itself by inscribing itself on the material surface of the earth, wherefore any order is also an *orientation*:

> Soil that is cleared and worked by human hands manifests firm lines, whereby definite divisions become apparent. Through the demarcation of fields, pastures, and forests, these lines are engraved and embedded. Through crop rotation and fallowing, they are even planted and nurtured…. [T]he solid ground of the earth is delineated by fences, enclosures, boundaries, walls, houses, and other constructs. Then, the orders and orientations of human social life become apparent. Then, obviously, families, clans, tribes, estates, forms of ownership and human proximity, also forms of power and dominion, become visible. (ibid., p. 42, see also pp. 43–49)

The sovereign decision, the primordial act in which order is created, does not occur in a vacuum. It is 'bound to the earth and related to the earth'; the material world provides that upon which order 'manifests' itself and that by which order 'sustains' itself (ibid., p. 42). Or, as Rousseau described it almost 200 years before Schmitt, 'the men make the State, and the territory sustains the men' ([1762] 1993b, p. 222). Before it is anything at all, therefore, before it gains determinate being, political order maintains a relation to the material world. Again, one encounters the constitutive role of the material world, a world that somehow manages to constitute while remaining passive. It is not matter that carries out the act of the sovereign decision; the sovereign decision acts *upon* matter. Matter, then, is different from order, and order presupposes that difference in its spontaneous act of creation.

Thus, the modern concept of political order presupposes a fundamental relation between the act of the sovereign decision and the material world, which is logically prior to the existence of any determinate order. That material world, as will be delineated shortly, is necessarily empty. Political order, hence, is conditioned by a conjunction between act and materiality, between action and thing, and the two are united, brought together in a pair, while remaining different from each other. The sovereign decision is not the material world, and the material world is not the sovereign decision. Therefore, modern political order is at this fundamental level not so much a concept relying on the fundamental conjunction between action and thing in the human being as much as it *is* a conceptualisation of the same conjunction. Political order is a manifestation of the conjunction between action and thing in political discourse, which also implies that it is a way to conceptualise the determination of meaning as a political act; the sovereign decision is a determination of meaning. And as, it has no meaning itself; it has no sense, but it makes sense:

> To confer sense or meaning on sovereignty, to justify it, to find a reason for it, is already to compromise its deciding exceptionality, to subject it to rules, to a code of law, to some general law, to concepts…. It is to take into account the part played by sovereignty. (Derrida [2003] 2005a, p. 101)

It has previously been shown that the two sides of the modern conjunction are fundamentally empty and filled with content only when being determined in discourse. The

same goes for the sovereign decision and its other; the sovereign decision proceeds towards a determination of political order as well as what is not political order.

As noted already, the distinction between friend and enemy is a form of self-creation in which a political community defines itself by differentiating itself from others. This might seem to imply that the other of order is always another order, another community of people. This is not the case, however. For insofar as both self and other are determined as orders, both presuppose a prior distinction between what order as such is and what it is not. This is similar to what was said in the previous discussion about the system-environment distinction and the need for the system to draw a line between itself and its environment in order to define itself. It is also similar, for that matter, to the argument that the primordial differentiation associated with linguistic systems equates to a differentiation between meaning and non-meaning. Indeed, the sovereign decision draws lines between people and sets up limits between communities. However, it does not limit itself to drawing only such limits. As mentioned already, the sovereign decision denotes 'unlimited authority'; it is power unlimited (Schmitt [1922] 1985, pp. 7, 12). The sovereign decision is the unlimited drawing of limits:

> The question of the sovereign is the question of the limit. If sovereignty decides upon its own limits, its decision cannot be bound by those limits…. The sovereign is the unlimited power that makes limits. (Norris 2000, par. 13)

As an activity of drawing limits—of differentiating—the primordial limit the sovereign decision must draw is the one around itself as the unlimited power that makes limits and thereby differentiate between order and non-order.[37] It is by means of that limit order and non-order alike gain meaning:

> The sovereign decision on the exception is the originary juridico-political structure on the basis of which what is included in the juridical order and what is excluded from it acquire their meaning. (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 19)

Order gains meaning through the relation it has with its outside (Agamben [1995] 1998, pp. 25–26; Lefort [1986] 1988d, pp. 218–219, 225, [1986] 1988e, p. 11), and vice versa. Thus, the primordial distinction drawn by the sovereign decision in the process of determining political order—the process of political being bringing meaning to itself—is between political order and everything else, whatever that might be. The pure political act of determining meaning gains meaning as determinate order by distinguishing that order from a determination of that which the pure political act is not. That which the pure act is not, as shown, is empty materiality, which means that the pure political act establishes determinate political order by distinguishing that order from determinate material reality.

Therefore, the fundamental conjunction is duplicated at the level of determinate being, and it takes the form of a conjunction between determinate political order—the totality of actions that can be carried out within and by means of a legal framework—and determinate objective existence. Indeed, anything can be objectively determined in this process, including things pertaining to human existence such as biological life itself or kinds of human behaviour. However, since modern thought associates subjectivity

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[37] For an overview of the notion of drawing lines in political thought, see Marchart (2002).

with humanity, that which is not determined as political is also, in some sense, considered non-human (Agamben [2002] 2004, pp. 33–38). Not only does this indicate that the formation of political order, by all means, can dehumanise aspects of human being, but also that those aspects are situated in the world of things instead. The determinate objective existence placed in relation to determinate political order consists of things in general and is associated with the empty materiality that forms its indeterminate basis; the other of political order consists of the material world as such. As Agamben notes, 'the sovereign decision traces and from time to time renews' the distinction between 'outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion, *nomos* and *physis*' (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 27). Thus, in principle, in its duplicated appearance, the conjunction between pure political act and pure materiality is a conjunction between a determinate political order and a determinate material world. To the extent that material world is referred to as natural, the conjunction consists of a relation between politics and nature. Nature, whatever it is, is always the excluded other of politics by means of which politics determines what it is and what its other is (Smith 2011).

From this follows two important implications. First, the material world in its entirety, according to this way of conceptualising political order, gains meaning as part of the self-creation of political order. This means, again, that, to the extent that the material world is attributed with the name nature, nature receives form as part of the formation of political order. Any under-standing of the natural world, then, originates in the self-creation of political order. Thus, nature is always something other that surrounds politics; again, modern nature is an environment. Furthermore, this indicates that nature has no meaning, no determinate being, no form, before or after, above or below, the political existence of human being, for to exist politically in modernity is to be a being who determines being; to be political is to provide meaning to things 'in the face of pre-ontological meaninglessness' (Torfing 1998, p. 66).

Second, since the concept of the sovereign decision subsumes the determination of meaning under politics, it becomes possible to arrange any other conceptualisation of the determination of meaning, any variety of the conjunction between action and thing—everything that has been covered so far in this chapter—beneath it. To that extent, those conceptualisations are turned into matters of politics; they become political, so to speak. For instance, Kant's conceptualisation of the transcendental subject, according to which the conjunction is located in the human individual, can be said to be an outcome of a certain way of determining the meaning of political order, presumably one that emphasises the atomistic character of human being and the capability of the individual to make rational decisions. The conjunction, as it appears in political discourse, then, situates itself as a kind of master conjunction capable of worming itself into all other conjunctions. By it doing so, political order itself emerges as a kind of master order enclosing human being in its entirety. Since power is everywhere, so is

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[38] For an extensive exploration of the 'immanence of power in social relations, and the concomitant politicization of social relations', see Dyrberg (1997, quote appearing on p. 16).

politics.[38] However, it is not only human being that is enclosed by politics in modernity. Being as such becomes a matter of politics. In modernity, from the vantage point of political discourse, everything can be said to be political, everything can be said to belong to political order because whatever that everything is, its meaning is arrived at politically; and everything can become political by explicating the grounding of meaning in political authority.

Before moving on, one more thing should be said about the distinction between political order and the world of things. Just like the empty material other of meaning is constantly accompanying subjective action in the conjunction of action and thing, so too will modern determinate political order always and necessarily be accompanied by a world of things; there will always be something that is outside of political order, something excluded from rule. Which is, of course, not to say that whatever is excluded will always be the same thing; the determination of what is excluded will always be renegotiated in the process of the self-creation of political order. The reason why something will always be excluded is the logic of sovereign self-creation as such. Since that which is determined as inside of order is determined precisely against that which is outside of order, there can be no inside of order unless there is also an outside of order. Thus, no political order without the world of nature. Therefore, political order always maintains a relation to its other (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 18), and to the extent that the other is a determinate natural world, political order will always maintain a relation to that natural world:

> The most proper characteristic of the exception is that what is excluded in it is not, on account of being excluded, absolutely without relation to the rule. On the contrary, what is excluded in the exception maintains itself in relation to the rule in the form of the rule's suspension. (ibid., pp. 17–18)

That which is excluded from political order is *actively* excluded. It becomes excluded by means of an act of exclusion (ibid., p. 18). The very differentiation of politics and nature is itself political; difference and differentiation are always political in modernity. Furthermore, this implies that what is excluded is by no means secluded from political rule or safeguarded from authority. In modernity, political authority leaves no aspect of human life be. It leaves no part of nature untouched. Instead, by maintaining a relation to the outside as that which is excluded from order, the other can be brought into political order and subjected to rule as that which is not rule. And if the other of rule consists of the natural world, this means that nature, in modernity, is not simply other to politics; it is not completely separated from or without relation to the political world. Political order constantly and necessarily maintains a relation to nature and nourishes itself from it. Political order, then, not only constantly excludes the natural world as something other, it depends on it; nature as the excluded other of politics is vital for political order in sustaining itself.

Moreover, its maintaining of a relation to the natural world means that political order can include nature within itself and rule by means of what is determined to be natural (ibid., pp. 34–38). By that, nature becomes a way to rule, or a means to rule. To refer back to Foucault, nature becomes a part of the apparatus. For instance, nature can be

seen as a resource, or a 'standing reserve' to borrow a phrase by Heidegger, readily available for exploitation and human interests (Evernden 1993, pp. 22–25, 65–69; Heidegger [1954] 2013, e.g. pp. 17–27; Smith 2011, pp. 101–117).

Thus, also nature is somehow both inside and outside legal order, just like the sovereign who decides on the exception. The two appear, from this point of view, as symmetrical (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 84; see also Derrida [2008] 2009), both being inside and outside law at the same time. In a sense, then, 'nature and law, outside and inside, pass through one another' (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 37) in modernity to such a degree that they sometimes become indistinguishable. This is, moreover, a consequence of the conceptualisation of human being as a conjunction, as a unity of action and thing and the difference between the two. For insofar as they encounter each other in the human being, there will always be a point of contact in the human being where what is political is impossible to separate from what is natural and vice versa. Thus, from the perspective of determinate political order, the sovereign decision and the natural world are equally unordered, both are exactly not order, that which is other to it (Prozorov 2009b). The power to make constitutions, as Schmitt notes, 'is "always in the state of nature," when it appears in this capacity, which is inalienable' ([1928] 2008, p. 128). Both nature and sovereign decision

are other to political order; they denote the otherness by which order is constituted.

Origin & Structure

It might already be fairly obvious where my argument about the concepts of self-creation, inessentialism, agency, and temporal contingency in modernity is heading since suggestions of their presence in political discourse have already appeared above.

However, to explicate how and why they are present in discourse, I need to delve a little deeper into the concepts of political order and sovereign decision.

Beginning with the concept of self-creation, since the sovereign decision does not exist as something independent of the political order it constitutes, and because it operates formally as a suspension of order from within order, it is evidently so that the origin of order is not external to order. Modern political order originates in itself; it creates itself; it has no cause beyond itself.[39]

Since no limits binds the sovereign determination of order, order can be ordered in any way whatsoever; whatever can be thought in a meaningful way can also provide the means for order. The being or order, then, is exhausted by the way in which it exists in the present and how it has become what it is in the course of its history. Beyond that, political order has no essence; it has no foundation, no ground (Derrida [1990] 1992, p. 14). Speaking about the

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[39] My analysis of the self-creation of political order emphasises discourses focusing on the concept of sovereignty. There are, however, other ways to conceptualise the self-creation of the social world. One such way has actually already been touched upon above, Luhmann's theory of society as an autopoietic system. For another comprehensive example, see the work of Castoriadis ([1975] 1997b; and various essays in [ca. 1949–1996] 1997a, [ca. 1976–1991] 1991, [1978] 1984, [ca. 1986–1993] 1997c, [1999] 2007). For different reasons, it is difficult to specify original year of publication for much of the work by Castoriadis available in English. I have assigned such years based on my own judgement of what is appropriate for each cited work and on my known knowledge of his work. For further details, I refer to information provided in the cited works as a good starting point.

formation of law and the association of law to justice and responsibility, Derrida notes that in the case of law

> there is no foundational gesture. . . . What appears here is an abyss rather than a ground. The decision and responsibility has to be taken in experiencing the abyss that is infinite, and unpredictable. (Derrida 1999, p. 284)

Or, as Oakeshott's rather poetic description of the modern experience of political being goes:

> In political activity ... men sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbour for shelter nor floor for anchorage, neither starting-place nor appointed destination. The enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel; the sea is both friend and enemy. (Oakeshott [1962] 1991b, p. 60)

Instead of a ground upon which political order is built, there is only a constant *grounding* of political order, a perpetual founding instead of a foundation.[40] Thus, modern politics is not completely bereft of a ground. Rather, the ground becomes temporal and contingent (Bauman 1996; Marchart 2007, pp. 25–31); it becomes a transient and negotiated stable state; a historically specific success of keeping afloat on seas stormy and calm. To that extent, politics is nothing but the constant activity of self-creation; politics is simply the sum of its own history of becoming.

Because it is forever caught up in such a process of grounding itself, order can at any given moment appear to have a fixed determination, to have a discernible form. However, whatever such a situation might contain, its contents are contingent products of an ordering that, on the basis of the sover-

eign decision, 'emanates from nothingness' (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p. 32); it proceeds from a 'moment in which the foundation of law remains suspended in the void or over the abyss, suspended by a pure performative act that would not have to answer to or before anyone' (Derrida [1990] 1992, p. 36). Importantly, because pure authoritative acts produce them, foundations are themselves modes of authority and to that extent they always exclude and foreclose something (Butler 1992, p. 7; Dyrberg 1997, p. 121). Thus, there are no innocent foundations of political order, no grounds that are beyond power and contestation.

The inessential character of political order also follows from order being that which determines meaning. If the establishing of meaning is political and political order is nothing but the establishing of meaning, it follows that politics itself cannot have a meaning that escapes the political act of determining meaning. However, from this, it also follows that the self-creative power of political order cannot truly be located in political order as a property since that would attribute order with an essential quality. To put it in Kantian terms, politics in itself cannot be said to be self-creative, only politics as it appears can be so. For this reason, the constitutive principle of order—the sovereign decision—is, in modern thought, never immanent to order but always only functions inside order as its other (Prozorov 2005, pp. 83–89). As delineated already, the exception, in Schmitt's terminology, is exactly what is not encompassed by the normal situation of order and can never be subsumed under it. To that extent, the constitutive

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[40]For treatments of the notion of foundation in modern political discourse, see Doucet (1999) and Marchart (2007, pp. 1–18).

principle of order can neither be transcendent nor immanent to modern political order. Instead, it is transcendental, the prerequisite of order that makes order meaningful and which exist only by means of what it produces. Therefore, modern political order consists of determinate order and the transcendental condition of that order, the latter being the other of order operating within it. In addition to the works already cited, modern political discourse abounds with examples of how order is conceptualised thusly and which distinguish between determinate order and its transcendental conditions, between *constituted* power and *constitutive* power.

The modern distinction between constituted and constitutive, or constituent, power goes back to the early days of modern discourse. It is, for instance, a leading theme in Sieyès's thought, in which constitutive power is located in 'the nation'—by which Sieyès roughly means 'the people' in the sense of a unified historically articulated entity. In his *What Is the Third Estate?* Sieyès writes:

> The nation is prior to everything. It is the source of everything…. *[C]onstitutional* laws … are of two kinds: some determine the organization and the functions of the *legislative* body; the others determine the organization and the functions of the various *executive* bodies…. Neither aspect of the constitution is the creation of the constituted power, but of the constituent power. No type of delegated power can in any way alter the conditions of its delegation. (Sieyès [1789] 2014b, p. 89)

And in *Reasoned Exposition of the Rights of Man and Citizen* he states:

> The constitution itself embraces …the formation and internal organization of the different public powers…. Such is

the real sense of the word constitution. It refers to all the public powers and to the separation between them. It is not the nation that is constituted, but its political establishment. The nation is the sum total of all the associates governed by, and obedient to, the law that is the work of their will…. [T]hose who govern, by this fact alone, form a political body created by society. But every body needs to be organized, delineated etc., or, in other words, needs to be constituted. Thus, to repeat, the constitution of a people is, and can only be, the constitution of its government and of the power entrusted with giving laws as much to the people as to the government…. Above all, a constitution presupposes a constituent power. The powers that are included in the public establishment are all subject to laws, rules or procedures that they do not have the right to change. Since the constituted powers were unable to constitute themselves, they are unable to change their own constitution…. The constituent power is supreme in this respect. It is not limited in advance to any specific constitution. The nation here exercises the greatest and most important of its powers; it must be free from every constraint, every procedural formality but that which it decides to adopt. (Sieyès [1789] 2014a, pp. 126–127)

At about the same time, Paine argues similarly in his *Rights of Man* that 'a constitution is not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government; and government without a constitution, is power without right' ([1791–1792] 1969, p. 207).

Another early rendition of this conceptualisation of order is found in Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. Rousseau thinks of the constitutive principle of political order as a general will; *the* general will, really. By means of sovereign collective action, humans constitute a political order of laws based on the general will (Rousseau [1762]

1993b, pp. 190–195, 200–204). While the general will is not itself law (Rousseau [1762] 1993b, pp. 203, 227–228, 235), it appears for Rousseau that the general will can only emerge *within* law, inside political order, that is (Rousseau [1755] 1993a, pp. 215–216). It is only as political beings, in other words, that humans can express their will as a general will rather than as an individual will. On the other hand, however, they can only be political beings on the basis of the general will. Thus, it seems for Rousseau that 'men would have to be before law what they should become by means of law' (Rousseau [1762] 1993b, p. 216; see also Connolly 1995, pp. 137–140, 2002, pp. 193–194; Honig 2007, pp. 2–3).[41]

Characteristic of this conceptualisation of order is that it implies that political order always maintains a constitutive relation to its outside, whether that outside is the sovereign decision or the natural world.

That the concept of political order is composed in part of inessentialism means that it does not have a perennial structure. Order does not have any essential qualities defining what it must necessarily be. Indeed, order might appear to have a structure, but as mentioned already, any political ground is temporal and contingent. Anything that order appears to *be*, any structure of social reality, is a temporary, relatively stable ground. In modernity, history and the history of political order are not built on a structure; they

build structures.

This is not to say, it should be emphasised, that social structures are of no importance. Indeed they are. Of course, they impact how humans live their lives together, their behaviour and how they understand reality, natural as well as social. It is rather straightforward to list social norms pertaining to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ableness, and so on, that structures social interactions. Likewise, it makes perfect sense to speak of global society as capitalist or as a system of sovereign states, with capitalism and territorial sovereignty respectively providing a structure to that society. However, it is not structures such as these that in themselves characterise order; it is their historical appearance.

Structures in this sense both constrain and enable social practices (Bhaskar 1986, p. 130, 1989, p. 81; Giddens [1976] 1993, pp. 125–135, 169, 1984, pp. 16–28), but they exist only by being reproduced in and transformed by such practices (Bhaskar [1979] 1998, pp. 31–44, 169–170, 1986, pp. 122–136, 1989, pp. 74–80). Their existence is spatially and temporally finite (Bhaskar [1979] 1998, p. 38, 1986, pp. 130–131, 212–215), and their existence is conditioned by humans acting in a certain way. Take a territorial state, for instance, grounded in a constitution. It is perfectly possible to say that such a state exists and that its constitution exists. However, being a constitutional state does not

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[41] For other examples of the separation between determinate order and its transcendental conditions, descriptive as well as normative, see Arendt ([1963] 2016), Badiou ([1988] 2006), Castoriadis ([1975] 1997b), Dyrberg (1997), Edkins (1999), Habermas ([1981] 1991, [1981] 1987b), Hardt and Negri ([2000] 2001), Honig (1993, 1996, [2009] 2011), Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001), Laclau (2005), Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy ([ca. 1979–1983] 1997), Lefort (1986d, [1986] 1988a), Mouffe (1996, 2000, 2005a,b), Nancy ([1985–1986] 1991), Negri ([1992] 1999), Rawls (1971), Rancière ([1995] 1999), Ricoeur ([1957] 2007), and Wolin (1996a, 2004). For summaries, overviews, and studies, some of which focus on the associated distinction between 'politics' and 'the political', see Honig (2007), Loughlin (2014), Kalyvas (2018), Marchart (2007), Palonen (2003, 2007), Spång (2014), Wiley (2016), and various contributions in Loughlin and Walker (2007) and Tønder and Thomassen (2005).

belong to the essence of the territory over which that state extends. Humans act in a certain way that makes the state appear in time and space. Take away the humans, and the state goes away. If the history of humankind had been different, that state might not have emerged, or it might have emerged differently. Thus, the structure of being a constitutional state refers to a certain way of human action and interaction, and this holds for society in general—take away human action and society does not exist anymore (Bhaskar [1979] 1998, p. 39), '*society itself is a social product*' (Bhaskar 1986, p. 123)—and therefore also of structure in general:

> So-called structures are really complexes of function, kinds of ways in which human beings behave.... [W]hen we say that, for example, the British constitution exists, what we mean is that certain people are behaving in a certain kind of way. (Collingwood 1960, p. 17; see also Collingwood 1928–1929, pp. 157–158)

In *Capital*, to an argument that is actually about the emergence of the value of commodities in human relations rather than in essential qualities of the commodities themselves, Marx adds the following as an illustration in a footnote:

> One man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the other hand, imagine that they are subjects because he is king. (Marx [1867] 1976a, footnote on p. 149)

Hence, it is possible to resolve modern political structure into modern political function, into what is happening in political order, into political action. Such a resolving of structure into function has indeed already appeared in the current analysis, in the discussion of modern nature (see page 375 above). In their determinate existence—

their objective appearance—the structure of natural and political things are equally resolvable into function.

That political structure resolves into political function means that structures are emergent results of human action. Structures are patterned behaviour, regularized social interactions. Thus, structure is a form of action, and any particular structure is a particular form of action; structures can always be referred back to action, to what is happening historically. Social structures, as Bhaskar notes, 'require active "functionaries"' ([1979] 1998, p. 40). Indeed, a state might be said to be a constitutional monarchy, for instance, but the king is king, and his subjects are subjects only to the extent that both king and subjects act in certain ways, that they act as if the king is king and the subjects are subject. This is also to say that kings and subjects are kings and subjects only insofar as they are made meaningful as kings and subjects. In Giddens's terms:

> Social systems ... do not have 'structures' but rather exhibit 'structural properties' and ... structure exists ... only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents. (Giddens 1984, p. 17)

However, this also illustrates, in quite simple terms, that structures actually exist in some sense. They exist by means of their effects; they exist insofar as they are efficacious (Bhaskar [1979] 1998, p. 45, 1989, p. 81; see also Bhaskar [1979] 1998, p. 38, 1986, pp. 107–113). A state is a constitutional monarchy as a result of humans acting as if it was a constitutional monarchy and in accordance with the imaginary of a constitutional monarchy. Moreover, it almost goes without saying that such structures can have

a very firm grip on how humans understand themselves and the world, natural as well as social.

Therefore, political order might certainly appear to have an essence, but such an essence is still an appearance; a determinate outcome of historical processes, of social relations in which power is exercised. There are no structures above or beyond function; political order is nothing beyond what is happening politically. Modern political order is not; it happens.

What happens to structure with the emergence of the modern epistemic configuration of discourse is, to use a Derridean vocabulary, a transformation of the conceptual meaning of its centre. In modernity, it becomes

> necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse. (Derrida [1967] 2001a, pp. 353–354)

Derrida writes in this instance of the deconstruction of discourse and the impossibility of putting absolute limits to meaning as 'play', and maintains that with the centre of structure no longer being a fixed locus 'the play of signification' extends 'infinitely' (ibid., p. 354), which is exemplary of how, in my terminology, structure resolves into function.

Before modernity, the play of structure is 'neutralized or reduced … by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to … a fixed origin' (ibid., p. 352). In my historical analysis, two such centres have appeared, the medieval macrocosm and the early modern mind, both of which have provided a transcendent origin to meaning and political order. With the location of the origin of meaning and order in their own transcendental prerequisites, however, and with the historicisation of being, there are no longer any such points of fixation. In modern thought, it is not really possible to positively determine the centre of structure, the essence of order. The only way to do it is to ignore history as epistemic configuration:

> One can describe what is peculiar to the structural organization only by not taking into account, in the very moment of this description, its past conditions: by omitting to posit the problem of the transition from one structure to another, by putting history between brackets. (ibid., p. 368)

Hence, if it can be meaningfully stated that the centre of structure is this or that, if discursive practices allow such statements to appear true or legitimate, structure can be provided with a centre. Order can be furnished with essence.

Thus, to summarise, political order in modernity does not have an essence, a perennial structure. It might, however, appear to have one. Order can be ordered, and meaning can be determined so that their present structure appears to be necessary, that order appears to be essentially what it is. Now, it is time to move on to the issues of agency and change in modernity, but doing so, I will also have the opportunity to explore this intricacy further.

Agency & Change

Bearing in mind that modern political order is not anything at all really, insofar as it

has no essence, for analytical purposes—and also echoing Schmitt's claim that any juristic order consists of norm and decision—modern political order can be said to consist of two elements: determinate political order and the transcendental sovereign decision constituting that order. Moreover, the process of constituting determinate order involves the establishing of the meaning of both order and its outside (Prozorov 2005, p. 87). The two elements, however, relate to each other in a rather ambiguous way. Since the sovereign decision grounds political order in the context of an abyss creating meaning from complete meaninglessness, and because its result is a determinate order—an order, that is, with a certain meaning and in which things mean this or that—determinate political order negates its own constitutive principle. Determinate order exists by means of effacing the sovereign decision that grounds it (ibid., pp. 93–98). Even though the sovereign decision grounds in the absence of a ground, it still *grounds*; it is very much a foundational procedure. Thus, even though political order tout court lacks essence, its constitutive principle is a principle of essentialisation of a sort. It is a principle of creating substantial content where there is none. To that extent, determinate political order might very well appear to have an absolute being, some property or properties that belong to it only on behalf of itself and not on behalf of its constitutive principle in the form of a sovereign decision.

In principle, any political order functions as a process of determination. Importantly, this process has no definitive end; political order establishes meaning everywhere; it determines whatever comes in its path. Modern political order seals all gaps; it fills all holes; modern order is the creation of a

world by dumping landfill in the abyss. In political order, as Rancière writes, 'there is no place for a void' (Rancière [1997] 2001, par. 21). Associating determinate political order with the state, Rancière continues by claiming that 'at the heart of statist practices' is an 'exclusion of what "there is not"' (ibid., par. 21). Thus, political order contains the movement away from complete indeterminateness to complete determinateness, from indetermination to determination (see also Derrida [1994] 2005b, p. 67).

There is, then, a certain forgetfulness built into the functioning of modern politics (Edkins 1999, p. 126; Torfing 1998, p. 75); in the workings of determinate political order, it tends to be forgotten by the very same workings that meaning is established politically—that politics is nothing but the determination of a meaningful world. Referring to the constitutive principle of determinate order as 'the political', Lefort describes order's forgetfulness of its own constitutive power as a concealment:

> The political is … revealed … in the double movement whereby the mode of institution of society appears and is obscured.… It is obscured in the sense that the locus of politics … becomes defined as particular, while the principle which generates the overall configuration is concealed. (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 11)

The concealment of the constitutive principle of political order suggests that order is constantly and necessarily involved in a cover-up operation and that it effectively attempts to hide its self-creative powers; 'the moment of decision', Edkins notes, is 'erasing its own traces' (1999, p. 126). The sovereign decision compromises itself, and

> this happens as soon as one speaks of it in order to give it or find in it some sense

> or meaning. But since this happens all the time, pure sovereignty does not exist; it is always in the process of positing itself by refuting itself, by denying or disavowing itself. (Derrida [2003] 2005a, p. 101)

Again, one result of this forgetfulness can be that order might appear before the eyes of those who are included in it as its members as being determined from elsewhere, that order is something that is given in advance, that it has meaning before it receives it in its self-constitutive process. In other words, the constitutive principle of political order is constantly disavowed in the very existence of order; in its being, order, to borrow a term elaborated by Honig (1993), 'displaces' its origin in its own transcendental conditions.[42] This displacement happens gradually. It begins as soon as order emergences as something meaningful and it proceeds as the process of determining meaning proceeds; the cover-up operation is a process occurring in history. Indeed, since it involves the determination of order, it actually *is* history in some sense. History is defined by the various extents to which humans have determined their own lives together and their surroundings.

Simply put, some orders are more ordered than others. Of particular significance, however, is that the complete determination of everything to which order proceeds can never be fully achieved. 'Closures are always in process', as Honig notes, but 'they are never faits accomplis' (ibid., p. 210). A total order in which everything is ordered once and for all can never be accomplished. The reason for this has already been outlined: determinate order is constituted by means of the outside. Since the sovereign decision is exceptional, it cannot be fully subsumed by determinate order. Complete determination can, therefore, never be achieved. Because order is constituted by and in relation to an outside there can never be an order without an outside (Ojakangas 2000, p. 68, 2006, pp. 33–38; Prozorov 2005, p. 84); there will always be something more than order, something that cannot be grasped from the current determination of meaning, something elusive, something indeterminate.

And the outside is not simply active in an isolated moment of constitution never to be seen again, or just an eerie internal disturbance of order. Instead, it is constantly operating within order as the other of order constituting order from within (Prozorov 2005, p. 98). No political order, therefore, can be self-immanent; the idea of self-immanence is but an illusion (Lefort [1986] 1988d, pp. 224, 229); political order, even though it might appear to be so, is never absolute, neither in the sense of existing above or beyond those who belong to it nor in the sense

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[42] Honig uses the term displacement in a somewhat different way than I do, and the surrounding terminology she uses is different from mine. She argues that politics tends to become displaced in important contributions to modern political theory, maintaining that 'most political theorists are hostile to the disruptions of politics', and that they, although 'writing from diverse positions … converge in their assumption that success lies in the elimination from a regime of dissonance, resistance, conflict, or struggle. They confine politics … to the juridical, administrative, or regulative tasks of stabilizing moral and political subjects, building consensus, maintaining agreements, or consolidating communities and identities' (1993, p. 2). I believe my argument about displacement is, however, rather similar to Honig's, which I also agree with. However, whereas she mainly emphasises something that goes on in the works of individual political theorists, the displacement of my concern here is associated with the modern concept of political order itself. It is a displacement happening in discourse, owing to its epistemic configuration. That being said, Honig occasionally also discusses politics in this broader sense beyond individual theorists (ibid., see e.g. pp. 205–211).

of being self-sufficient. Even though politics is about providing a ground where there is none, a final ground remains forever an impossibility; the 'ultimate foundation' of law, as Derrida notes, 'is by definition unfounded' (Derrida [1990] 1992, p. 14; see also Marchart 2007, in particular pp. 1–60).

Order, then, can never fully close in on itself, and it can never be completely one with itself. In other words, it is never identical with itself; it always contains an element of difference by which it constitutes itself. Therefore, because of the other of order's constant presence within order, order can always be interrupted and changed; it can always become different. Again, the sovereign decision is bound by no limits. Since the source of change is precisely the constitutive principle in the form of a sovereign decision changing order from within by undermining or suspending it, change comes from within, from the other within. Hence, modern political order not only creates and sustains itself; it also transforms itself (Prozorov 2005, pp. 98–99). Thus, political order can become different in the future compared to what it is in the present for no other reason than its own functioning. In modernity, then, everything is malleable, everything changes, nothing is necessary but contingency (Connolly 2002, pp. 19–35; Meillassoux 2008, pp. 50–81). Emphasising the constitutive role of material production and the relations of production, Marx and Engels describe the self-transformation of society accordingly:

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. … Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. (Marx and Engels [1848] 1976a, p. 487)

In a more sober tone, Luhmann explicates the contingency of all connections in the modern social system as per the following:

> They are *temporally* contingent in that they are no longer determined by the past, by an immutable Nature, by social origins; they are *objectively* contingent in that they could always be different; and they are *socially* contingent in that they no longer depend on consensus (keyword: 'democracy'). (Luhmann 1996, p. 64)

Social relations, then, and the power exercised in them, can always be different, and since the meaning of nature is tied to those relations and that exercise of power, it too can always be different. The natural world, the meaning of things—the outside of order, that is—can also become different as a result of the self-creation of political order. Or, to put it in the terminology of concepts, all concepts can take on different meanings in modernity as a result of how order is ordered. In modernity, no concepts are essential, but all concepts are 'essentially contested' (Gallie 1955–1956).

Thus, what I refer to as temporal contingency seems indeed to be inherent to modern political order, and since temporal contingency results from the relation between order and the constitutive outside, that relation itself opens up the future. Referring to

determinate order as a diagram and of the constitutive principle of order as a force, Deleuze writes:

> The diagram, as the fixed form of a set of relations between forces, never exhausts force, which can enter into other relations and compositions. The diagram stems from the outside but the outside does not merge with any diagram, and continues instead to 'draw' new ones. In this way the outside is always an opening on to a future: nothing ends, since nothing has begun, but everything is transformed. (Deleuze [1986] 2006, p. 74)

Moreover, that which order can become in the future is shrouded in mystery from the point of view of the present. What the future will bring cannot be predicted based on what order is in the present. Why is this, one might ask. Well, again, the exception of order can never be circumscribed, encompassed, or subsumed by order simply because it is exactly the other of order constituting it. This indicates that the outcome of the sovereign decision cannot be known in advance by extending the present order towards it. Couching his argument in the terminology of emergency, Schmitt writes that

> the precise details of an emergency cannot be anticipated, nor can one spell out what may take place in such a case, especially when it is truly a matter of an extreme emergency and of how it is to be eliminated. (Schmitt [1922] 1985, pp. 6–7)

Thus, not only does the outside provide an opening to the future, the future always remains open; what the future will bring will always be an open-ended question. Since subjective creative power is unlimited and new meaning can always emerge, the meaning of the present and the past can, indeed, also become different. 'If all truth has an historical dimension, then the truth about history is itself historical, and we must be prepared to accept that further reflection may judge the past differently from the way we do' (Dupré 1993b, p. 9).

The determination of new meaning, which is effectively the general result of the sovereign decision, cannot proceed from what things already mean in the present. That would indicate that such determinations, and by that the sovereign decision, only operate within the limits of an already established order. However, it is precisely those limits and that order which are up in the air for the sovereign decision. The 'constitutive, specific element of a decision', writes Schmitt, 'is, from the perspective of the content of the underlying norm, new and alien' (Schmitt [1922] 1985, p. 31). Therefore, there is an irreducible element of uncertainty in the sovereign decision; the decision is unpredictable and unexpected (Ojakangas 2001, p. 37), and since even the meaning of subjectivity is put in suspense by the decision, the decision even 'surprise[s] ... the very subjectivity of the subject' (Derrida [1994] 2005b, p. 68). The decision, in short, while being suspended over the abyss, straddles the unknown. Knowledge, being a kind of determinate meaning, cannot provide the means for a decision to be made. A 'decision' worthy of its name, writes Derrida, 'should not be controlled by previous knowledge, it should not be programmed' (Derrida 1999, p. 280). 'A decision always takes place beyond calculation' (Derrida [1992] 1995, p. 95), which means that 'when I make a decision ... to some extent it must be in the night' (Derrida 1999, p. 280).

Because that which is beyond knowledge evidently cannot be grasped by means of how knowledge is configured during the mo-

ment of the decision, the two elements of knowledge and the other of knowledge do not form a whole that would allow for rational consideration of what is not known; the decision can never take the other of knowledge, or of meaning in general, into account beyond simply being open to it. Indeed, knowledge and calculation always come into play when making decisions, but so does their other:

> A decision has to be prepared by reflection and knowledge, but the moment of the decision … supposes a rupture with knowledge, and therefore an opening to the incalculable…. In other words, one cannot rationally distribute the part that is calculable and the part that is incalculable. One has to calculate as far as possible, but the incalculable happens: it is the other, and singularity, and chance, without one's being able to do one's part; the parting between reason and its other, the calculable and the incalculable, the necessary and the aleatory, is without example; it does not obey the logic of distinction, it is not a parting with two parts. (Derrida and Ferraris [1997] 2001, p. 61; see also Derrida 1999, p. 281, [1992] 1995, p. 77)[43]

Because a decision—what to do, why, and how to do it—cannot be settled on the basis of the present order, of what things mean in the present, what knowledge is in the present, it requires something like a leap of faith. 'At the instant of every decision', Derrida notes, 'every one else asks us at every moment to behave like knights of faith' (Derrida [1992] 1995, pp. 78–79; see also Reynolds 2004, pp. 47–49). The decision requires commitment, responsibility, fidelity, and passion by those who make it (Badiou [1988] 2006, pp. 232–254, 391–430, [2006] 2009,

pp. 45–78; Derrida [1992] 1995, pp. 53–81). Since the sovereign decision contains elements of the unknown, its outcome will appear to be the outcome of chance from the point of view of the current order:

> Opening oneself to what comes can be a way of exposing oneself to the future or to the coming of the other, to the coming of what does not depend on me. Consequently, this exposure is under the law of the singularity of the other. It may also be thought under the category … of chance. (Derrida and Ferraris [1997] 2001, p. 60; see also Derrida [1987] 2007)[44]

In early modernity, it had been possible to predict the future based on knowledge of efficient cause, and any change could be anticipated based on the past and the present. In modernity, this is no longer the case. No amount of knowledge, no attempt to predict the future, no statistical procedure, will successfully eradicate the contingency associated with the self-creative force of political order:

> If I know, for example, what the causes and effects of what I'm doing are … then there is no decision; it's a question, at the moment of judgement, of applying a particular causality…. If I know what's to be done … then there is no moment of decision, simply the application of a body of knowledge, of, at the very least, a rule or norm. For there to be a decision, the decision must be heterogeneous to knowledge as such. Even if I spend years letting a decision mature, even if I amass all possible knowledge concerning the scientific, political and historical field in which the decision is to be taken, the *moment* of the decision must be heterogeneous to this field, if the decision is not to be the application of a rule…. Of course I'm not advocating that a de-

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[43] Derrida and Ferraris ([1997] 2001) is a series of dialogues between the two authors. The quote is by Derrida.

[44] Again, Derrida and Ferraris (ibid.) is a series of dialogues, and this quote as well is by Derrida.

cision ends up deciding *anything* at *any* moment. One must know as much as possible, one must deliberate, reflect, let things mature. But, however long this process of maturing lasts … the *instant* of the decision, if there is to be a decision, must be heterogeneous to this accumulation of knowledge…. Even if one knows everything, the decision, if there is one, must advance towards a future which is not known, which cannot be anticipated. If one anticipates the future by predetermining the instant of decision, then one closes it off. (Derrida 1994, pp. 37–38)

What the world, the political as well as the natural, will be in the future, hence, will forever remain an open question for the moderns (Badiou [1988] 2006, pp. 406–409, [2006] 2009, in particular pp. 303–324, 357–396; Meillassoux 2008); no one will ever be able to tell in advance what the world of the future will be like; the future will always be open. History is marked and ruptured by the emergence of novelty and new beginnings; 'we must always start over', writes Derrida (Derrida [1992] 1995, p. 80).

That being said, the functioning of the sovereign decision as a move away from indetermination to determination means that it effectively reduces uncertainty. The historical existence of political order, therefore, is associated with a reduction of uncertainty; in its being, order makes certainty, so to speak.

In this way, the sovereign decision itself always counteracts temporal contingency. Thus, sovereignty both opens up the future and tends towards its closure as the sovereign decision brings about a political order which operates by determining whatever appears to be in need of determination. Writing about the contingency of the constitutive principle of order as a 'perhaps', Derrida describes the intricate relation between sovereign decision

and indetermination on the one hand and determinate order and determination on the other in the following way:

> Without the opening of an absolutely undetermined possible, without the radical abeyance and suspense marking a *perhaps*, there would never be either event or decision. Certainly. But nothing takes place and nothing is ever decided without suspending the *perhaps* while keeping its living possibility in living memory. If no decision (ethical, juridical, political) is possible without interrupting determination by engaging oneself in the *perhaps*, on the other hand, the same decision must interrupt the very thing that is its condition of possibility: the *perhaps* itself. In the order of law, politics or morality, what would rules and laws, contracts and institutions indeed be without steadfast determination, without calculability and without violence done to the *perhaps*, to the possible that makes them possible? (Derrida [1994] 2005b, p. 67)

One might wonder, however, who needs to be committed to the decision. Who needs to make it? Or, put differently, who acts in the constitution of political order, who creates and changes it? Again, the answer should be fairly obvious given my emphasis on the *self*-creative character of modern political order. In modernity, agency comes from within order itself, specifically not from determinate order but from its own transcendental constitutive principle; agency comes from the other within political order. Insofar as the activity of creation can be associated with the concept of subjectivity, the creative power of political order can be referred back to its own subjective elements. To put it bluntly, the subjects of political order are also the agents of political order. However, the creation and transformation of political order and the creation and transformation of subjects are not two separate processes of

becoming. As noted already, modern sovereignty is self-constitution, and the subjects of political order are actually created within or by order. Thus, political order and subjects are created in the same process. Subjects become by determining order; order becomes by determining subjects.

Associating the sovereign decision and agency with the subjective content of order in general implies that modern sovereignty does not coincide with a particular position in the political community, it does not belong any particular ruler. Rather, sovereignty, the capacity to act decisively, is, as Rousseau puts it, 'formed wholly of the individuals who compose it' ([1762] 1993b, p. 194). Thus, modern sovereignty resides among the people of the political community, a people who are formed through the very act of sovereignty and by that through the outside of order (Rancière [1997] 2001, Thesis 5).

Because the sovereign decision denotes self-creation, modern sovereignty cannot be represented. It cannot be shouldered by anyone or anything external to order:

> I hold ... that Sovereignty, being nothing less than the exercise of the general will, can never be alienated, and that the Sovereign, who is no less than a collective being, cannot be represented except by himself. (Rousseau [1762] 1993b, p. 200)

This aspect of the conceptualisation of political order also highlights that political creativity is collective. It is an ability that emerges socially, with humans acting together. It is by means of collective action that political subjects create and transform:

> The political realm rises directly out of acting together.... [A]ction not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it....

> The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together.... [A]ction and speech create a space between the participants.... It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to other as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly....

> To be deprived of it means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. To men, the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all. (Arendt 1958, pp. 198–199)

The constitutive principle of order is, in other words, a principle that has a social character; constitutive power is a collective power. Importantly, this power cannot be represented given the modern conceptualisation of representation. Representation is already a determination; it is a result of an act of determination, and it is exactly to that act constitutive power amounts. As Pitkin notes, political representation has a very simple general meaning, '*re-presentation*, a making present again' (1972, p. 8). This suggests that representation in politics can be nothing but a duplication inside determinate order of the pure act of determination. As Pitkin also notes in a further specification of how the concept of representation tends to be used, 'representation, taken generally, means the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact' (ibid., pp. 8–9). The addition '*in some sense*' is key here, as it makes explicit that representation is always done in a determinate way; it emerges from some-

where; it is done by someone. Political representation is always determined, part of determinate order. Just like knowledge as representation, as was shown above, is a product of something more fundamental, so is politics as representation. As a characteristic of determinate political order, representation is a way for order to determine its own constitutive principle; to make its own origin meaningful. From this, two important implications follow. First, as part of determinate order, political representation is part of politics' cover-up operation in which it obscures its self-creative power. It is, in this respect, not a form of self-creation but a result of it. Second, change will never come from it. Since constitutive power cannot be represented—and since change stems from that power—change cannot stem from political representation. Or, put differently, since political representation is a positive property of determinate political order, and since change comes precisely from what is other to such properties, representation will never amount to a source of change. According to this line of reasoning, political representation is not a way to open up the future, it is a way to close it and to make the world less unpredictable and fortuitous.

To say that constitutive power cannot be represented is simply to restate that the constitutive principle of political order is always a principle of self-constitution. As self-constitution, agency, or the sovereign decision, is first and foremost about creating one's agentic capacity. It is about creating oneself as an agent. Thus, agency is a sort of claiming, a taking part of something and a taking part of social relations (Rancière [1997] 2001, par. 1, 11). Here, it is also worth repeating that the form of the sovereign decision is a suspension of order, which in the context of the current discussion suggests that agency always has the character of an intervention, or disruption; it is a questioning, a critique and contestation of the present order (Lefort [1986] 1988c, pp. 34, 39, [1986] 1988d, p. 228, [1986] 1988e, p. 19). Moreover, as noted a few times by now, self-constitution is always, according to modern thought, achieved by means of the outside. Subjective action always remains tied to the outside of order; change always comes by reaching out to that which is outside of order, to that which can never be grasped but to which it is possible to be committed, to the other, to pure difference (Doucet 1999, p. 307; Lefort [1986] 1988d, p. 222; Rancière [1997] 2001, Thesis 5)

Lastly, political order is evidently an order containing relations of power. In the above discussion about power as it is conceptualised by Foucault, it was delineated that power is exercised in all social relations; in any particular relation among humans, there is power. To that extent, power emerges within determinate order as historically specific *modes* of power, of specific ways of acting upon the action of others. On the other hand, insofar as power is also constitutive of social relations, one also needs to situate power in the constitutive principle of order. After all, the sovereign decision is but the unlimited authority to draw limits. From this point of view, power does, indeed, not come in specific modes but is rather part of the formless force that provides form. Here, power is the transcendental prerequisite for determinate modes of power. In turn, this suggests that power, in this sense, is an intervention in order, a questioning of what order is and a disruption of determinate relations of power. Thus, as strange as it might seem, the constitution of modes of power is

actually a questioning of power. Contestation, then, is logically primary in relation to power. As Deleuze notes:

> The final word on power is that *resistance comes first,* to the extent that power relations operate completely within the diagram, while resistances necessarily operate in a direct relation with the outside from which diagrams emerge. (Deleuze [1986] 2006, p. 74)

∽

Summing up the discussion on political order in modernity, it can be concluded that the modern concept of political order contains the components of self-creation, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. Thus, according to the line of reasoning introduced in chapter 2, the modern concept of political order provides an opportunity for green democracy to take root and become part of modern political discourse. This might perhaps seem to suggest that this is indeed the case, that green democracy has been directly conceptualised on the basis of modern political order. However, this would be an incorrect conclusion. As I will show in these closing paragraphs, green democracy is instead a repetition of a modern concept of democracy, *the* modern concept of democracy even. They are conceptualised in the same way; they mean the same thing, and they are conditioned by the same conceptualisation of political order.

I will focus my analysis of modern democracy on how it is conceptualised by Lefort, and how he theorises its relation to totalitarian rule. As my starting point, I will use what is arguably the most pivotal institutional manifestation of modern democracy, namely popular elections.

What makes elections democratic, bey-ond formal requirements and procedural criteria such as allowing for equal participation and being free and fair? According to Lefort, elections are manifestations of democratic rule because they institutionalise the subjection of the exercise of power 'to the procedures of periodical redistributions' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 17; see also Lefort [1986] 1988c, p. 34, [1986] 1988d, pp. 225–228). The power subjected to this kind of redistribution here is the power associated with legislation; it is the power to make specific laws and to execute actual decisions. Thus, it is power as it belongs to determinate political order, historically specific modes of action upon the action of others. In fact, given the modern emphasis on political order as a legal order, this is the kind of power that makes up the framework of order as such, its structure, so to speak. With elections, this kind of power, and by that, the structure of order as such, is exposed, if not to the actuality, then at least to the potentiality of recurrent change. In other words, elections and multi-party systems are democratic because they make it possible for order to change; they provide the means by which an order that can become different can emerge. Thus, the modern concept of democracy refers to a political order that can and does, on occasion, change. This is, evidently, exactly how democracy is understood in green political theory. Since elections allow for the emergence of this kind of order, they can be said to provide the origin of determinate order; they not only transform order, they create it as such, which also indicates that the constitution of democratic order takes the form of a suspension of order. However, and importantly, elections arguably do not exist independently of the determinate orders they establish. The origin of determinate order

does not transcend the order it creates. However, neither does the origin reside *in* order. As Lefort notes:

> no elements, no elementary structures, no entities (classes or segments of classes), no economic or technical determinations, and no dimensions of social space exist until they have been given a form. Giving them a form implies both giving them meaning … and staging them. (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 11; see also Lefort [1986] 1988d, pp. 217–219)

Before it is anything, before it has a determinate form, order must be *given* meaning; it must first be *formed*. In some way, this activity is associated with elections. Actually, to be specific: elections are a determinate manifestation within order of the creation of order. Since the activity of giving meaning does exactly that—gives meaning—it is not itself meaningful. Thus, elections, as part of determinate order, are merely a meaningful determination of the pure creative act of establishing meaning, a way to stage order as order from within order (Lefort [1986] 1988e, pp. 11–12). Put differently, the forming of democratic order does not itself have a form. Therefore, neither does the origin of democratic order reside on the inside of order. It is neither transcendent nor immanent to order (Lefort [1986] 1988c, p. 39); it is a pure constitutive activity, a power that creates power and which is visible only through the determinate orders it creates (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 17). Hence, there is more to power than simply the making of specific laws or particular decisions. Democratic order has the transcendental power to determine itself and it does so by first and foremost drawing a line between inside and outside and establishing relations between them, which is exactly the operations of the sovereign decision. The transcendental creation of democratic order is the power

> by virtue of which society apprehends itself in its unity and relates to itself in time and space. … [I]t marks a division between the *inside* and the *outside* of the social, [and] institutes relations between those dimensions. (ibid., p. 17)

Thus, the fundamental operation of democratic order is to determine itself and its outside. This principle of self-creation and self-transformation, this constitutive power, is a power belonging to order as its transcendental prerequisite.

Lefort's emphasis that order apprehends itself in time and space is crucial since it highlights that democratic political order necessarily has a historical dimension. Because modern democracy can change itself, it finds itself to be in a constant process of becoming; it is always transforming. Democracy, then, 'proves to be the historical society *par excellence*' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 16; see also Lefort [1979] 1986b, p. 305, [1992] 2000, p. 262). In other words, there is a symmetry between democracy and historicist political order: all democracies are historical orders and all historical orders, defined as they are by their ability to change themselves, are democratic. Thus, democracy is not a particular mode of modern political order. To the extent that it is historicist, which it evidently is, modern political order, in general, is democratic:

> Democracy is not a political regime. … [D]emocracy is *the* regime of politics. …
>
> Democracy is … precisely not a political regime in the sense of a particular constitution that determines different ways of assembling people under a common authority. Democracy is *the* institution of politics – the institution of both its subject and its mode of relating. (Rancière [1997] 2001, Thesis 4–par. 11)

So, in a sense, the political order with which this chapter has been occupied has been democratic all along. In modernity, there is a correspondence between the self-creativity of political order and democracy. 'To speak of constituent power is to speak of democracy', as Negri writes ([1992] 1999, p. 1, small caps removed).

As determinate manifestations of democracy as a self-creative order, elections and party systems also signal that differentiation is constitutive of order. In the discourse of elections, that differentiation is conceptualised as conflicting parties competing for votes and legislative power. Belonging to the creative process harbouring those conflicts, differentiation is, 'in a general way, constitutive of the very unity of society' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 18; see also Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, pp. 149–194). Thus, democracy emerges from the primacy of difference, which indeed resides in the epistemic configuration of modern thought. Moreover, since differentiation in political discourse is associated with conflict, the primacy of difference also results in contestation being primary in the constitution of order. Again, 'resistance comes first' in modernity (Deleuze [1986] 2006, p. 74, see also page 407 above). There is 'a process of questioning … implicit in social practice', a thread of critique sown into the very fabric of modern political being (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 19; see also Lefort [1986] 1988b, p. 55). In modernity, contestation never truly goes away; it can only be suppressed temporarily.

Lefort emphasises that the 'unprecedented feature of democracy' is that '[t]he locus of power becomes *an empty place*' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 17; see also Lefort [1986] 1988d, pp. 225–226, [1979] 1986b, pp. 303–304, [1980] 1986c, p. 279), which is indeed just another way of saying that the constitutive power of political order exists only as the transcendental prerequisite of order, that order has no cause beyond itself. He also emphasises that this renders power, both as constitutive principle and as determinate being, insubstantial; democratic power has no substance, no body, neither mechanical nor organic (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 17). Hence, neither the origin of power nor its determinate form—determinate order, that is—have an essence; power is nothing beyond its appearance, beyond how it is 'bound up with the temporality of its reproduction' (ibid., p. 18). Modern democracy, then, lacks essence; its being is subordinated to its historical becoming.

Furthermore, because democratic order lacks a transcendent origin and can always become different, it is circumscribed by fundamental uncertainty. In a key passage in *The Question of Democracy*, Lefort writes:

> In my view, the important point is that democracy is instituted and sustained by the *dissolution of the markers of certainty*. It inaugurates a history in which people experience a fundamental indeterminacy as to the basis of power, law and knowledge, and as to the basis of relations between *self* and *other,* at every level of social life (at every level where division, and especially the division between those who held power and those who were subject to them, could once be articulated as a result of a belief in the nature of things or in a supernatural principle). (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 19; see also Lefort [1986] 1988d, p. 228)

This passage warrants extensive commentary. First of all, it highlights the absence of ground and what that does to democratic political order. Specifically, from the absence of ground, the meaning of which

is that order creates itself, it follows that 'power, law and knowledge' and social relations, the relations between '*self* and *other*' and how power is exercised in those relations, can change; they can become anything at all. In other words, meaning in general is bound up with the self-creative process of democracy, things become what they are as a result of political conflictual practices. There is no meaning beyond politics, no innocent meaning, no knowledge untouched by the hands of power. Or, put in less dramatic terms, meaning—the meaning of power, law, and knowledge, and the meaning of things in general—is always debatable; its historical emergence is principally dependent on debate (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 18; see also Lefort [1986] 1988c, pp. 34, 39, [1986] 1988d, p. 228, [1992] 2000, p. 246).

Since meaning has no external cause, it can become anything at all; what things are can always, so to speak, surprise the subject determining them. Meaning, then, even though it is subjectively determined, cannot be predicted. Thus, there is an irreducible element of indetermination not only concerning the source of power, law, and knowledge, but also what they will become in the future: 'so long as the democratic adventure continues ... the meaning of what is coming into being remains in suspense' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 16). The future of democratic order, therefore, is hidden in darkness. The future cannot be predicted (Negri [1992] 1999, p. 10); it always remains open. Democratic political order, hence, is an order containing the concept of temporal contingency. No one knows what the world will be in the future, for the very meaning of that world might always change in ways that cannot be known; what the world—political or natural—will hold in the future can never be anticipated.

Second, the passage indicates the incompatibility between democracy, on the one hand, and the medieval and early modern conceptualisations of political order on the other hand. Both the medieval and the early modern concepts of political order contain a component of transcendent origin in the form of nature and the human mind, or in the mind's ability to represent nature perfectly—what Lefort refers to as 'the nature of things' and 'a supernatural principle'. This is an explicit indication that democracy, green or modern, could not have germinated in medieval or early modern discourse. Democracy, then, is, by implication, specific to modern discourse. it implies that democracy is specific to the modern conceptualisation of political order.

Moving on, Lefort also highlights that 'the dissolution of the markers of certainty' does not result in the dissolution of ground altogether. Rather, in democratic order 'power ... is ... involved in a constant search for a basis' (Lefort [1986] 1988c, p. 34). This is a repetition of the previously encountered notion that modern order always grounds itself, that it is constantly occupied with providing a foundation for itself and, by that, reducing uncertainty. No particular—determined—group of people can be said to be responsible for such a provision of ground. Grounding, even though it always comes from within, is not isolated to anyone in particular; grounding does not flow from a determinate subject. Since democratic political order lacks substance, and because power is nothing more than its historically varying appearance, those who act—those who ground order—are not substantial either (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 18). Demo-

cratic order, then, indeed contains agency within itself, but it is not an agency that belongs to a particular group; no people can claim agency for themselves, for a people as a meaningful entity is the result of the agentic capacity that creates order and subjects alike. Of course, since all determinations of the people occur in order and as part of the creation of order, they belong to determinate order and are to that extent products of the exercise of power (ibid., p. 18). Hence, agency is inherent to political order, but since the determination of agency is part of the determination of order, agency is first and foremost about creating oneself as an agent. And that creation occurs in a place of conflict; it occurs on contested terrains. 'Democracy', as noted by Barber, 'is the debate about what democracy is; democratic citizenship entails an argument about who democratic citizenship includes; democratic politics debates and ultimately defines the limits of the democratic polity' (1996, p. 355). In this sense, 'democracy both does and must define its categories (including the category of democracy itself) through democratic struggle' (ibid., p. 357). Or, to refer back to the previous discussion about Schmitt, the creation of agency is a creation of friends and enemies. Thus, agency is, in a sense, always claimed; it is claimed as a power to create order, to determine what things are. The people, then, emerges simultaneously with order, and the people is as contested and contingent as order itself. Constitutive power, in this sense, can never be represented. It belongs only to those who claim the power to determine order, and to determine order requires agency, and any claims to agency can always, in principle, be contested.

In sum, the modern concept of demo-cracy corresponds to the modern concept of political order as such, and as a concept, it contains the four components of self-creation, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership.

However, modern political order being democratic in general does not mean that democracy is essential to modern political order. Indeed, one can say that modern political order as such is democratic, but as the analysis in this chapter has shown, modern democracy, as it is conceptualised, is an experience. Hence, it refers to a subjective experience rather than to a property of political order. Therefore, that modern political order as such is democratic means, rather, that modern political order, in general, makes the democratic experience possible and that it does so directly. The possibility of the democratic experience, the potential for democracy, emerges in principle simultaneously with modern political order.

In all, the modern democratic experience is a subjective experience of order, of what order and the self are, of how order and self are situated in relation to each other and to the world beyond both. Significantly, democracy is the experience that, as a political subject, it is possible to change political order, oneself, and the material world, and that self, order, and the world are involved in a historical unfolding that is never fixed once and for all, a process the meaning of which can always be renegotiated and determined anew (Lefort [1986] 1988d, p. 228, [1986] 1988e, p. 16). Of course, the democratic experience also includes interventions bringing about change and a commitment to such practices and their potential. Here, it is worth returning to the conceptualisation of political creativity as a collective endeavour, for the democratic experience very

much involves humans acting socially. As Dewey argues, 'a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience' ([1916] 1966, p. 87). Democratic constitutive power is a collective power (Kalyvas 2018, p. 105). It 'springs up whenever people get together and act in concert' (Arendt [1969] 1972, p. 151). Democracy, hence, involves the creative and transformative power of collective action, and as Wolin remarks, this action draws from the outside of order:

> democratic action, or the demos as autonomous agent, might be defined as collective action that initially gathers its power from outside the system. It begins with the demos constructing/collecting itself from scattered experiences…. The demos becomes political, not simply when it seeks to make a system of governance more responsive to its needs, but when it attempts to shape the political system in order to enable itself to emerge, to make possible a new actor, collective in nature. (Wolin 1996b, p. 64)

Thus, democracy is an experience according to which the world can change and that one can participate in that change and contribute to it in such a way that the future need not be set in stone.

Arguably, however, non-democratic rule still appears in modernity. Indeed, some of the most despotic regimes ever to emerge in the history of humanity, such as Nazi Germany and communist Russia, appear in the modern period and are also discursively part of modernity. One might ask how well the claim that modern political order as such is democratic fits with the reality of modernity given that this is the case and, coupled to that, what characterises modern non-democratic rule.

Evidently, non-democracy must, as a concept, be opposite to democracy. Conceptually, if democracy is a certain experience of order, and if non-democracy is exactly *not* democracy, then non-democracy is *not such* an experience. It is, in this sense, an other experience of order, a different experience of order. Such an other experience must, given the meaning of democracy already delineated, in principle be an experience of order in which order appears not to be self-creative, to have an essential meaning, to be set on a fixed historical path, and not to be created by its agentic subjects. In a non-democratic order, in short, the members of the political community are denied their capacity to create and change the world.

To delineate the reasons behind the appearance of such an experience and how non-democratic rule is conceptualised in modern thought, I need to return to the aforementioned displacement of the constitutive principle of political order in the very determinate order being constituted. To repeat what was said above, modern political order is an activity of grounding order, of providing a foundation where there is none, an exercise performed as a determination of the world, what the world is and what the things in it are. In this process, the creative power of determination is progressively ousted from order, as is the uncertainty and unpredictability associated with it. Since order equals democratic order, it follows that such a displacement of creative power is also characteristic of how democracy functions. To the extent that the democratic experience is animated by the power to create and transform order from within, displacing that power also means displacing the conditions of the democratic experience. Thus, and since the displacement is a gradual process, there is

an inherent tendency in the becoming of democratic order of actually contradicting democracy; democracy, in its historical unfolding, tends to disqualify itself by displacing its animating spirit, its constitutive principle (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, pp. 186–189; Lefort [1986] 1988d, pp. 232–235, [1986] 1988e, pp. 12–14, 19–20).

The coming into being of democracy, then, is at the same time the coming into being of non-democracy; democracy threatens to disappear as soon as it appears. Democracy and non-democracy, therefore, are not diametrically opposed in modernity; the becoming non-democracy of democracy is always going on inside democracy; non-democracy appears in democracy as something other within.

Being equal to the constitutive principle of order, democratic creativity is associated with uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise.[45] To that extent, it is also associated with something beyond control. Being a leap of faith, in its taking place beyond calculation, as a moment of chance, and as a power without limits, the decision is somewhat of an uncontrollable force: 'the paradigm of constituent power is that of a force that bursts apart, breaks, interrupts, unhinges any preexisting equilibrium and any possible continuity' (Negri [1992] 1999, p. 11). If order becomes order by displacing that creativity, the gradual effacement of the constitutive principle of order—the becoming non-democracy of democracy, that is— is also associated with increased certainty, predictability, and control.

One way to conceptualise the displacement of the constitutive principle of order and how democracy tends towards non-democracy is through the concept of ideology.[46] As a concept, ideology generally refers to a way of thinking; to a way of making sense of the world and how to act in and in relation to it.[47] In the context of the displacement of the constitutive principle of order, as emphasised by Arendt, it refers to a way of thinking that annuls finite existence as a basis for thought (Arendt [1951] 1973, pp. 468–471); ideology attempts to disentangle meaning from its emergence in history and is in that way an attempt to dehistoricise thought:

> ideologies have the tendency to explain not what is, but what becomes, what is born and passes away. They are in all cases concerned solely with the element of motion, that is, with history in the customary sense of the word. (ibid., p. 470)

And the means by which ideologies dehistoricise thought is the provision of a deeper explanation to history itself:

> ideological thinking becomes independent of all experience from which it cannot learn anything new even if it is a question of something that has just come to pass. Hence ideological thinking becomes emancipated from the reality that we perceive with our five senses, and insists on a 'truer' reality concealed behind all perceptible things, dominating them from this place of concealment and requiring a sixth sense that enables us to become aware of it. The sixth sense is provided by precisely the ideology. ... [S]ince the ideologies have no power to transform reality, they achieve

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[45] A notably explicit association of constituent power as a creative power and modern democracy can be found in Kalyvas (2018; see also 2005).

[46] Another example of a concept capturing the same process is hegemony (e.g. Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001; Gramsci [1929–1935] 1971).

[47] For an overview of different definitions of ideology, see Hamilton (1987).

this emancipation of thought from experience through certain methods of demonstration. Ideological thinking orders facts into an absolutely logical procedure which starts from an axiomatically accepted premise, deducing everything else from it; that is, it proceeds with a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality. (Arendt [1951] 1973, pp. 470–471)

This allows ideological thinking, in principle, to offer total explanations as to why things are the way they are; ideologies are ways of thinking 'which to the satisfaction of their adherents can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise' (ibid., p. 468). Thus, functionally and principally, ideologies attempt to circumvent modern historicity, uncertainty, and unpredictability by what arguably appears to be a reversal to former modes of thought, primarily of the early modern kind. Ideological thinking comes in the form of postulations about the world, statements regarding what the world is in itself beyond how it appears for humans. In other words, ideological thinking is what Kant refers to as dogmatism: postulations that do not take into consideration the spontaneous creativity of thought regarding the world as it is in itself, as it is beyond human experience. Ideologies, then, are *beliefs* (Žižek 1989, pp. 33–35). They are beliefs providing comfort and safety in a world of uncertainties by claiming to 'possess either the key to history, or the solution for all the "riddles of the universe", or the intimate knowledge of the hidden universal laws which are supposed to rule nature and man' (Arendt [1951] 1973, p. 159).

As one of the first to elaborate on the notion of ideology, Marx—and, perhaps even more so, Engels—associates ideology with a distorted perception of reality that hides historical structures of dominance and dependence among people (e.g. Marx [1857–1858] 1973, pp. 509, 831–833; Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, pp. 35–37, 420; see also Balibar 1988; Hall 1988, pp. 43–44; Larrain 1979, pp. 35–67; Rehmann 2013, pp. 21–60). In ideology, 'men and their relations appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*' (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 36). Such aforementioned beliefs, according to this view, are basically erroneous; they are illusions—markers of what Engels once refers to as 'false consciousness' (Engels [1893] 1949, p. 451).[48] The believers, so to speak, have been duped.

In Marx's view, ideological perceptions of reality are rooted in the material conditions of human livelihood and productive activity:

If the conscious expression of the real relations of these individuals is illusory, if in their imagination they turn reality upside-down, then this … is the result of their limited material mode of activity and their limited social relations arising from it. (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, first footnote on p. 36)[49]

Ideology is historical and, therefore, it can change if those material conditions and social relations of which it is the result change:

All forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism, by resolution into 'self-consciousness' or transformation into 'apparitions', 'spectres', 'whimsies', etc., but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave rise to this idealistic humbug; that not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history,

[48] In a newer translation of this text, the phrase appears as 'consciousness that is spurious' (Engels [1893] 2004, p. 164). The German original reads 'falschen Bewußtsein' (Engels [1893] 1968, p. 97).

[49] It should be noted that this quote belongs to a passage which is crossed out in the original manuscript.

also of religion, of philosophy and all other kinds of theory. (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 54; see also Larrain 1979, pp. 46–47)

It is possible for ideology, then, to be 'exposed by life' (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976b, p. 293); it is possible to reveal for the believers the falsity of their beliefs, to turn their world around and set it straight. Thus, it is possible to understand how things really are. There is a truth behind the illusion, somewhere behind the drapes of ideology.

However, ideology is not only a *result* of certain social relations and material conditions. It is also the means by which those relations and conditions are reproduced. Again: 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal … also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations…; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance' (ibid., p. 59, see also page 357 above). The relations of production are controlled by a certain class which also controls the ruling ideas. As ideology, those ideas contribute to the reproduction of the control over those relations by that class and, by that, also the relations themselves.

Ideology, therefore, legitimises the existing order. As long as one perceives the world according to its ideological rendition, one contributes, without realising it, to the sustaining of the existing order. For instance, discussing how relations of production are reproduced in relations of exchange through the medium of universal value, Marx writes:

> Men do not … bring the products of their labour into relation with each other as values because they see these objects merely as the material integuments of homogenous human labour. The reverse is true: by equating their different products to each other in exchange as values, they equate their different kinds of labour as human labour. They do this without being aware of it. (Marx [1867] 1976a, pp. 166–167)

After Marx, however, ideology has been conceptualised as being more intricate than this. Importantly, ideology does not necessarily function by deception.[50] For as Arendt highlights, ideological explanations are impervious to that which is based on history. Therefore, ideology cannot be disentangled by knowledge relying on experience, for historical knowledge is exactly the mode of thought that ideology attempts to circumvent. To that extent, the believers of ideology may very well know that what they believe in does not correspond to experienced reality without letting go of the belief in question. For instance, as Žižek notes, one might very well realise that there is no such thing as universal value, but when buying and selling things on a market, one still acts as if such a value is manifest in the things bought and sold (Žižek 1989, p. 32). Thus, Žižek claims that it does not matter if people are 'aware of it' or not, they do it anyway:

> The illusion is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of reality itself, of what the people are doing. What they do not know is that their social reality itself, their activity, is guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion.

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[50] And as per the present analysis, the modern concept of truth ultimately provides a rather shaky ground for the kind of unconditional refutations and revelations that are implicitly required in order to reveal ideology understood in this way.

> What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity. They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. (Žižek 1989, pp. 32–33; see also Sloterdijk [1983] 1987, e.g. pp. 3–8)

Ideology, thusly, is less about a distorted view of the world and distorting the view humans have of the world than it is about distorting the *relation* between humans and the world. Specifically, ideology distorts the locus of creativity; it disrupts understandings of what creates what, and it transforms views of constitutive power. Ideology suppresses

> all the signs which could destroy the sense of certainty concerning the nature of the social: signs of historical creativity, of that which has no name, of what is hidden from the action of power. …
>
> Such is the nature of ideological discourse…; it is a secondary discourse which follows the lines of the instituting discourse. … [I]t is a discourse which develops in the affirmative mode, the mode of determination, of generalization, of the reduction of differences. … It is a discourse which carries the guarantee of an actual or virtual order and which tends to become anonymous in order to attest to a truth imprinted in things. (Lefort [1974] 1986a, p. 203)

Thus, it obscures what is constitutive of order and how order is constituted, and hence it 'serves to impede making the foundations of society the object of thought and reflection' (Habermas [1968] 1987a, pp. 111–112). Effectively, in its distortion of the locus of creativity, ideology reverses the relation between subject and object in terms of what determines what. Instead of affirming the spontaneous creativity and the constitutive power of the subject, it transfers such creativity and power to the object. By that, objects are seen to determine subjects, rather than the other way around.

Take, for instance, Marx's theory of commodity fetishism ([1867] 1976a, pp. 163–177). According to Marx, as was briefly mentioned above, economic value stems from the social relations of labour in which commodities are produced. But the 'social characteristics of labour' (ibid., p. 167) do not appear until commodities are exchanged with one another. Before commodities are put in relations of exchange, they are simply 'objects of utility' produced by people 'who work independently of each other' (ibid., p. 165). The sum of such processes of production amount to the 'aggregate labour of society' (ibid., p. 165). And since

> the producers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their labour, the specific social characteristics of their private labours appear only within this exchange. (ibid., p. 165)

However, when a commodity is exchanged, its value appears in relation to other commodities rather than in relation to production and the social character of labour. By that, the power to create value—the creativity inherent to social relations—is transferred from those very human relations to things in relation to other things, from which it follows that the human origin of value becomes muddled. Instead of being seen as being of human origin, value is seen to stem from the things themselves, and thus appears to be intrinsic to them:

> The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists … simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as

objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves.... Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers.... [T]he commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There, the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (ibid., pp. 164–165)

The fetishism of commodities indicates, as a concept, that social relations are expressed and made meaningful as relations among things. This means that things come to be seen as the determinants of the exchange of commodities. Thus, insofar as one deals with capitalist economic systems, everything grounded in capitalist production, everything that economic systems give

rise to, comes to be seen as the results of things and what things are rather than of social relations. And when things are rendered as active and creative in this way, humans are rendered as passive and non-creative. The social life of humans, then, assumes the modern discursive role of things instead. The roles of humans and world, of subjects and objects, are reversed. This reversal is what Lukács refers to as 'reification' ([1923] 1971, pp. 83–222), and extending Marx's line of reasoning, Lukács argues that in modernity, with 'the advent of modern capitalism', the commodity 'becomes the universal category of society as a whole' (ibid., p. 86), and that objectivity as such is encompassed by the process of reification which also means that reification impacts *subjectivity* as such as well:

> The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of 'ghostly objectivity' cannot ... content itself with the reduction of all objects for the gratification of human needs to commodities. It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man. (ibid., p. 100)[51]

Thus, beyond Marx's economistic preoccupation, the reversal of subjectivity and objectivity signals the effacement, not of the human ability to produce things that can be exchanged, but of the human power of determination in general.[52] Humans are deprived of their power to create meaning. By that, the world appears no longer to be something that actually appears to humans or

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[51] Lukács also maintains that 'the problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects. Only in this case can the structure of commodity-relations be made to yield a model of all the objective forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them' ([1923] 1971, p. 83).

[52] It should also be noted that Marx conceives of the production and exchange of commodities as a process involving creation of meaning. In *Capital*, he writes: 'Value ... does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of their own social product: for the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language' ([1867] 1976a, p. 167).

something that is determined by meaning originating among themselves. Instead, it appears as a world in itself. It appears to be what it is by virtue of its own powers. In principle, then, ideologies purport to speak of the world as it is *beyond* speech, as it truly is in itself. In relation to humans, therefore, from the point of view of ideology, the world appears to be absolute and necessary in the sense that it is independent of the human determination of meaning. A fortiori, what the world is is not a matter of negotiation or debate. The world is what it is. According to the principle operations of ideology, then, humans cannot change the world they live in; whatever humans do, the world necessarily remains the same. This necessity applies just as much to the social world and relations between humans as it does to the natural world and relations between humans and nature. Take, for instance, the aforementioned footnote by Marx in which he states that 'one man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him' ([1867] 1976a, footnote on p. 149, see also page 397 above) and the associated implication that the subjects are subjects only insofar as the king is made meaningful as a king to whom they are subjected. Such a situation, which indeed contains a particular experience of order, can, of course, be an outcome of ideology. Would that be the case, ideology would, it seems, determine the king to be a king irrespective of the subjects determining him being so. By the workings of ideology, the king appears to be king in himself; subjective determination does not appear to be active in the becoming king of the king. As Žižek notes in a comment to Marx's footnote:

> 'Being-a-king' is an effect of the network of social relations between a 'king'
> and his 'subjects'; but … to the participants of this social bond, the relationship appears necessarily in an inverse form: they think they are subjects giving the king royal treatment because the king is already in himself, outside the relationship to his subjects, a king; as if the determination of 'being-a-king' were a 'natural' property of the person of a king. (Žižek 1989, p. 25)

As a consequence of the appearance of the king as a 'king in himself', so to speak, the king becomes untouchable; it becomes impossible to question his being as a king since that is what he is in himself. Generally speaking, then, ideology counteracts the conflictual element in politics; it neutralises contestation. This implies that political conflict, the questioning of what the world is, encompasses the questioning of ideology, which in turn is equal to a questioning of being in general:

> A refusal of dogmatism furnishes the minimal condition for every critique of ideology, insofar as an ideology cannot be identified with just any variety of deceptive representation, but is rather any form of pseudo-rationality whose aim is to establish that what exists as a matter of fact exists necessarily. The critique of ideologies, which ultimately always consists in demonstrating that a social situation which is presented as inevitable is actually contingent, is essentially indissociable from the critique of metaphysics, the latter being understood as the illusory manufacturing of necessary entities. (Meillassoux 2008, pp. 33–34).

This way of staging the conceptualisation of ideology and its discursive function is arguably quite dramatic and might seem a bit exorbitant. Again, however, the displacement of the constitutive principle of political order is a gradual process. A world of complete necessity is ideology's logical point

of destination, not its point of departure, and the staging aims to capture principle, not to represent historical fact.

Also, when discussing the grounding of political order, it was shown that final ground is impossible; complete determination is impossible to achieve because order, despite its ideological cover-up operations, remains constituted in relation to an outside. Moreover, the act itself of constituting order takes the form of a suspension of order; to ground is to unground, and to unground is to ground (Laclau 1996, p. 79). Thus, complete certainty and control—that which ideology strives towards—is a modern impossibility guaranteed by the correspondence between politics and democracy. Political order can merely *appear* to erase all uncertainty and to exercise full control; the world can only ever *appear* to be necessary.

However, for analytical purposes, one can conceptualise a political order that has seemingly successfully displaced its transcendental origin, an order in which ideology has been so effective that order seems to have effaced its constitutive power altogether. Suggestively, such an order can be referred to as *totalitarian*.

Conceptualised in this way as the logical end-point of ideology, and by that as a result of the determination of order, totalitarianism is not completely alien to democracy; it is not completely distinct from democratic order, not diametrically opposed to it. Rather, totalitarianism is an other of democracy within democracy, that which lurks in the shadows of democratic order. Insofar as totalitarianism is a result of the determination of order and that determination is the means by which democracy is realised, totalitarianism emerges from democracy; it is modernity and democracy gone awry (Le-

fort [1979] 1986b, pp. 301–302, [1980] 1986c, p. 286, [1986] 1988e, pp. 13, 19–20; Žižek 2001, p. 5; see also Arendt [1951] 1973; Geenens 2012). As Lefort notes concerning the understanding of totalitarianism and its origins:

> It is ... by exploring the genesis of ideology, by identifying the metamorphoses of a discourse which, by placing itself under the aegis of knowledge of the real, claims to escape the indeterminacy of the social, to master the principle of institution, to rise above division so as to enunciate its terms and conditions ... that we can best arrive at an understanding of totalitarianism. (Lefort [1986] 1988d, p. 234)

Indeed, this delineation of a connection between democracy and totalitarianism does not entail the claim that all democratic orders will eventually turn into totalitarian orders or that a totalitarian order must be preceded by a period of democratic rule. It does not entail any claims about the historical reality of either democracy or totalitarianism or about the temporal unfolding and transformation of political rule in modernity. It is, instead, confined to democracy and totalitarianism as concepts. The delineated connection is a theoretical one tying the concept of totalitarianism to the concept of democracy as an other within the latter.

Among the first to establish a modern connection between democracy and despotic rule is Tocqueville. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville describes how American democracy might degenerate into something else than democracy and that there are specific forms of despotic rule associated with the democratic experience:

> After taking each individual by turns in its powerful hands and kneading him as it likes, the sovereign extends its arms

over society as a whole; it covers its surface with a network of small, complicated, painstaking, uniform rules through which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot clear a way to surpass the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them, and directs them; it rarely forces one to act, but it constantly opposes itself to one's acting; it does not destroy, it prevents things from being born; it does not tyrannize, it hinders, compromises, enervates, extinguishes, dazes, and finally reduces each nation to being nothing more than a herd of timid and industrious animals of which the government is the shepherd.

I have always believed that this sort of regulated, mild, and peaceful servitude, whose picture I have just painted, could be combined better than one imagines with some of the external forms of freedom, and that it would not be impossible for it to be established in the very shadow of the sovereignty of the people. (Tocqueville [1835–1840] 2000, pp. 663–664)

As democracy gone awry, totalitarianism too, just like democracy, is an experience. But an experience of what? In general terms, a totalitarian order is an order that appears to be completely identical with itself, to be one with itself. Having seemingly effaced its transcendental origin altogether, it is an order that closes in on itself and, by that, wards off the outside (Lefort [1986] 1988e, pp. 12–13, 20). Being experienced as self-identical, totalitarianism effectively cancels the modern primacy of difference. Thus, totalitarianism is paradoxically a modern political order that attempts to break free from its modern belonging. Opposing the creative power of democracy, totalitarianism also opposes modernity tout court. There is, to this extent, a notion of return inherent to totalitarianism, a profound nostalgia

built into its very being. For totalitarianism seemingly brings order back to times when difference did not trump identity. Totalitarianism makes a 'spurious claim', writes Arendt, 'to have restored a mysterious irrational wholeness in man' ([1951] 1973, p. 336). And in a similar tone, Lefort notes that totalitarianism advances the 'illusion that unity and identity can be restored' ([1986] 1988d, p. 233).

The unity of a totalitarian order is, in principle, total; a totalitarian society is a society without internal division (Lefort [1980] 1986c, p. 284, [1986] 1988e, p. 13, [1986] 1988d, pp. 233–234, [1992] 2000, pp. 245, 259–260; see also Flynn 2005, p. 221). Such differentiations as public and private are dissolved (Arendt [1951] 1973, p. 336), as are those in modernity's statist discourses between state and society, allowing for the encroachment of the state in potentially all aspects of human life (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 13; see also Lefort [1974] 1986a, p. 215); all parts of life join into one (Lefort [1956] 1986e, p. 79). Moreover, since order has severed its ties to its own transcendental origin and to anything outside itself, the determinate exercise of power needs 'no reference to anything beyond the social' which allows it to operate 'as though nothing existed outside the social, as though it had no limits' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 13). Hence, totalitarian political authority is purportedly absolute. It appears to be and presents itself a, unconditioned and unrestricted.

As a result of its enclosure and as hinted at in the above quote by Lefort on the totalitarian operation of power, totalitarianism also signals a loss of connection to the outside, to the constitutive outside world. Indeed, internal divisions are denied in a totalitarian order and its purported restoration

of unity, but a division from what is external to it is very much at play. The wholeness of totalitarian order is restored by marking a line between itself and everything beyond it, by secluding itself from its outside (Lefort [1979] 1986b, pp. 297–298). That outside, moreover, is merely rendered as a threat, as the actual and determinate enemy in need of defeat. Thus, a totalitarian order—that order and the humans being ordered within it—loses the connection to the world beyond that order. Since modern political order is constituted in relation to its outside—since collective subjective creativity 'gathers its power from outside the system', to refer back to Wolin (1996b, p. 64, see also page 412 above)—the outside is always of fundamental concern for it. And since the outside of order is always just the environment, modern order is always in a sense concerned with its environment. It is concerned with the world beyond itself. As Arendt notes:

> At the center of politics lies concern for the world, not for man—a concern, in fact, for a world, however constituted, without which those who are both concerned and political would not find life worth living. (Arendt [ca. 1955–1960] 2005, p. 106)

But when that modern form of constitution is obscured in the determinate being of order, politics loses its concern for the world. Totalitarianism, to this extent, is in principle unconcerned with the environment of political order; it is profoundly inconsiderate of the rest of the human world as well as the material other of human being.

Instead, order becomes exclusively preoccupied with itself. It becomes, in its self-reference and according to its self-understanding, self-sufficient (Lefort [1980] 1986c, p. 286). By that, it can define itself in exact terms and provide a framework in which the meaning of everything can be settled. Through the means of ideology, it can provide explanations for everything far more profound than ones needing to rely on finite experience; it can make final and complete sense of everything. In turn, this allows totalitarianism to neutralise the contingency of historical change and turn historical development into a controlled and predictable process. Through ideology, totalitarian order can lay bare 'the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, and the uncertainties of the future' (Arendt [1951] 1973, p. 469).[53] In doing so, totalitarianism appears to be opposing not only the modern primacy of difference but also the modern historicity of being; 'totalitarianism . . . designates itself as *a society without history*' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 16).

Totalitarian order, then, appears to be more than what appears; it appears to have a substance shielded off from mere appearance. It has a positive identity with itself; it appears to have an essence beyond its current historical appearance.

Totalitarianism is not only a return in terms of the balance between identity and difference. It is also a return in the sense that, as order, it displays similarities with political order of days past, with how order was conceptualised during the Middle Ages and early modernity. On the one hand, in its unity, a totalitarian society appears as an organic whole in which all members are part of the greater whole, interconnected with

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[53]A well-known and highly influential critique of historical determinist thinking and totalitarian political ideas is, of course, Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Popper [1945] 2003a,b).

clearly defined roles to play. To that extent, totalitarian order is organicist. It is like a living body in which the parts serve a purpose for the greater whole (Lefort [1979] 1986b).

On the other hand, totalitarian societies appear to be perfectly malleable, maintaining the modern notion that human nature can change and combining it with claims of complete certainty and control. They can be shaped from within, constructed from the ground up to produce a new and perfect human nature and to provide humans with the essence they ought to have (Arendt [1951] 1973, p. 458).[54] In this respect, totalitarian society appears to be a human construct, an artificial construct similar to the political order of early modernity. According to this view, order constructs itself in a controlled and predictable manner. Thus, totalitarianism mixes organicist and mechanistic conceptions of political order:

> The distinctly modern feature of totalitarianism is that it combines a radically artificialist ideal with a radically organicist ideal. The image of the body comes to be combined with the image of the machine. Society appears to be a community all of whose members are strictly interdependent; at the same time it is assumed to be constructing itself day by day, to be striving towards a goal – the creation of the new man – and to be living in a state of permanent mobilization. (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 14; see also Lefort [1979] 1986b, pp. 300–301)

However, for all its nostalgia and conceptual recycling, totalitarianism does not amount to a complete reversal to the orders of the past or to a complete abolishing of modern thought. Importantly, it does not amount to a return to the notion that political order

has a transcendent origin, that order has a source of origin above and beyond itself. A totalitarian government does not obey any external master. There is no God, a fixed human mind, or any laws of nature telling it what to do. To possess the keys to history, the solutions to the riddles of the universe, or the knowledge of the laws of nature—to use Arendt's terms—does not signal a need to subject oneself to a transcendent principle of order. Instead, it provides an opportunity and a call to action (Arendt [1951] 1973, pp. 469, 471). As a means of rule, it is a form of empowerment as it provides an opportunity to transform order and the way humans live their lives in a way that cannot be contested by those who are subjected to that rule. Mobilisation led by those who rule is as much a crucial part of totalitarianism as the perceived impossibility to contest that mobilisation (Lefort [1992] 2000, pp. 260–261), its reasons, and its forms. This is a consequence of totalitarianism maintaining a connection to the modern thought it belongs to. Humans continue to be conceived of as properly creative beings in totalitarianism; it is still up to humans to create themselves. However, from the point of view of totalitarianism, what humans ought to make of themselves can be perfectly determined in advance and society can be ordered in such a manner that that goal is pursued in an optimal and efficient way. Thus, order itself becomes its own source of origin; the origin of totalitarian order is neither transcendent nor transcendental; it is immanent to order itself (Lefort [1980] 1986c, p. 286, [1986] 1988e, pp. 13–14; Žižek 2001, pp. 5–7). The modern creativity of human being, hence,

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[54]For an account of totalitarianism and modern political thought covering the idea of creating a 'new man' as part of totalitarian currents of thought, see Shorten (2012).

is maintained but distorted in totalitarianism. Significantly, totalitarianism denies the members of the political community of creative power and instead reformulates human creativity in such a way that some entity becomes representative of it.

Since those who are subjected to totalitarian rule are denied their creative power, and because temporal contingency is neutralised by dogmatic statements concerning the world and its historical development, the members of the political community seem to lack agentic capacity. Thus, insofar as being human is associated with creativity and self-constitution, totalitarian order actually does away with its humanness. In a totalitarian order, humans become superfluous:

> As long as all men have not been made equally superfluous ... the ideal of totalitarian domination has not been achieved. Totalitarian states strive constantly, though never with complete success, to establish the superfluity of man. (Arendt [1951] 1973, p. 457; see also La-Fay 2014, pp. 71–97)

A totalitarian order, to this extent, actually has no need for those who are subjected to it. In relation to order, therefore, the subject of that order appears to be redundant, which in turn indicates that the totalitarian experience tends to be an experience of meaninglessness. By that, it becomes coupled with a lost interest in the well-being of oneself (Arendt [1951] 1973, pp. 315–317). Thus, not only does totalitarian order sever its ties to the environment, it actually severs its ties to humans as well. Both elements responsible for the creation of meaning in modernity, therefore, are discarded by totalitarian order. It is, then, an utterly meaningless form of being. This might sound paradoxical since I have just argued that totalitarianism is the logical end point of the determin-

ation of meaning and presents a completely determined world. However, the situation is homologous to Derrida's aforementioned critique of the necessary closure of linguistic systems. In a closed linguistic system, meaning becomes self-referential, ultimately leading to the system being entirely empty of meaning. A totalitarian order is the political equivalent of such a system. In fact, since the concept of totalitarianism as part of modern discourse belongs to a mode of thought in which there is no clear-cut distinction between language and politics, totalitarianism can even suggestively be said to be such a system, at least according to that mode of thought to which it belongs. In its self-sufficiency, totalitarianism becomes meaningless; it makes no sense.

All in all, the experience of totalitarianism is one in which political order appears to have an essence and an origin immanent to itself. Moreover, it is an experience in which history does not appear to be contingent and that the future, therefore, will not be otherwise as a result of anything humans can do. Lastly, it is an experience in which the members of the political community have no agency on their own.

How is all of this achieved given that totalitarian order preserves the modern notion of human creativity? The answer, as hinted at already, has to do with the particular way in which that notion is distorted.

Modern states approximating the analytical concept of totalitarianism as per the above delineation have been characterised by the presence of a single political party—Nazi Germany and communist Russia being the obvious points of reference—and such a presence has been identified as a general characteristic of the totalitarian state (Aron 1990, p. 193; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956,

pp. 9, 27–39). In totalitarian order, the unity and oneness of the state corresponds to the oneness of the party. Since there are ultimately no divisions within a totalitarian society there is no division between the state and the party. The party, then, becomes the form by which totalitarian power operates, and instead of being an institutionalisation of the periodic redistribution of power and. therefore. of conflict—as it is in a democratic order—the party system becomes a guarantor and symbol for the absence of conflict and the reality of unity.

The function of the party in a totalitarian order is to represent the people *as such*, in its totality. Speaking of socialist totalitarian states, Lefort notes that

> the party does not appear as distinct from the people or from the proletariat, which is the quintessence of it. It does not have a specific reality *within* society. The party *is* the proletariat in the sense that it is identical with it. (Lefort [1979] 1986b, p. 298)

Just like the state and the party, the people are also *one*. In fact, it is a key feature of totalitarian order to conceptualise the people in this way, to conceptualise it as one (Lefort [1979] 1986b, p. 297; Arendt [1951] 1973, p. 467); to make it apparent that the people is identical with itself, that it is a whole. Just like there is no division between state and party—and insofar as the distinction between public and private has been dis-

mantled...neither is there a division between the state and the people: the people is the state (Arendt [1951] 1973, pp. 291–292, 417–418). 'The entire system' of totalitarianism, Lefort notes, 'rests on a logic of identification: there is no conceivable gap between the people, the Party, the Politburo, and the Egocrat; they add up to one' ([1992] 2000, p. 260).

The people of a democracy—the demos—is never identical with itself, since it constitutes itself and order by means of the outside of order, by means of difference.[55] There is always an element of difference grounding the determination of the people in a democratic order, and that determination—what the people is and who belongs to it—can be, and is, contested in the very act of constituting order. This difference is put to fundamental neglect in the totalitarian experience (Geenens 2012, p. 87). This is key for the becoming immanent of totalitarian order. For political order can only be self-immanent and be made immanent by itself if that of which it consists can be perfectly identified; if it can be circumscribed without contradiction or uncertainty. To the extent that political order consists of humans—which for the moderns it indeed does—it can only become self-immanent if the humankind of which it consists can be perfectly defined. Again, totalitarian order does not take commands from God, the nat-

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[55] This is not to say, that the people lacks an identity, that it does not provide itself with a determination as it constitutes itself, the moment when the effacement of its constitutive power also begins. Such an identity lies latent in the constitutive power of subjective creativity. As Lefort notes: 'the notion of the people in democracy ... is bound up with an ambiguity.... The people do indeed constitute a pole of identity which is sufficiently defined to indicate that it has the status of a subject. The people possesses sovereignty; they are assumed to express its will; power is exercised in their name; politicians constantly evoke them. But the identity of the people remains latent. Quite apart from the fact that the notion of the people is dependent upon a discourse which names the people, which is itself multiple and lends the people multiple dimensions, and that the status of a Subject can only be defined in terms of a juridical constitution, the people are ... dissolved into a numerical element at the very moment of the manifestation of their will' (Lefort [1986] 1988d, p. 230; see also Lefort [1979] 1986b, pp. 303–304).

ural world, or a perennial human nature more profound than politics itself. It follows only the commands issued by itself; it respects only its own rules. This makes it necessary for such an order to identify the people as being one with itself. In principle terms, in the move away from democracy towards totalitarianism, 'a logic of identification is set in motion' (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 13; see also Lefort [1979] 1986b, pp. 298–299, [1980] 1986c, pp. 286–289) in which, through the working of ideology, individuals start to identify themselves as members of a collective that is one with itself (Žižek 1989, pp. 87–129). It does not matter if such a collective can be experientially defined or said to have a real historical existence. Because of how ideology functions, that collective—the people—becomes invested with a truth more profound than what can be verified through experience (ibid., pp. 193–199). Once this logic of identification is complete, the individual becomes superfluous since it has, in effect, become one with the people. And since the party represents the people as such, the party can then assume the role of the people. Lastly, because the oneness of the party corresponds to the oneness of the state, the people as represented by the party becomes one with the state as well. Ultimately, therefore, the state can assume the role of the people; the state itself, through the party, amounts to a total representation of the people.

Thus, the party is the medium by which totalitarian order becomes self-immanent (Lefort [1956] 1986e, pp. 80–81). Ideology eliminates uncertainty by being channelled through the party; it is through the party that unity and order can be achieved.

Of utmost importance here is the power of the party to represent the people, and in extension, the individual members of the political community, *as such*. All aspects of human being are represented by the party, including the act of establishing meaning, the power to determine what things are. In a more explicitly political vocabulary, in the experience of totalitarianism, the sovereign decision is transferred from humans themselves to their representation in the party and in the state.

With such a transference, constitutive power is effectively abolished altogether. For in principle, constitutive power cannot be represented since it includes within itself the very power to represent. Political representation, as when the party represents the people, arguably belongs to the realm of determinate being; when the party in a totalitarian state represents the constitutive power of the people, it does so in a determinate way. By that, constitutive power, which is meant to 'constitute form by escaping from it' (see page 388 above), is provided with a form. Thus, the totalitarian representation of the people is not a case of constitutive power at all but, in fact, of constituted power. Hence, since change comes from constitutive power, the totalitarian distortion of constitutive power cannot provide for the means of change; the very condition of possibility for change disappears in the experience of totalitarianism. The totalitarian representation of constitutive power, the totalitarian sovereign decision, brings about no change; the world will forever be the same—it will remain self-same—under totalitarian rule. Totalitarianism abandons the world and leaves it be. The world is left in its essence indefinitely, and the members of the political community appear to be unable to do anything about it. When the world is completely determined, when control is

total and uncertainty left behind in history, there is nothing left to do for humans, nothing more to accomplish.

In sum, totalitarian representation—the representation of the power to represent—is fundamentally incompatible with the concept of democracy even though totalitarianism is engendered by democracy. Fuelled by ideology, the totalitarian distortion of the power of determination is the means by which totalitarian order is reproduced. That being said, representation is also that which links democracy and totalitarianism together. It is the institutional connection between the experience of democracy and the experience of totalitarianism. However, where democratic representation through political parties and general elections is illustrative of the uncertainty inherent in historical experience, foundational role of contestation, and contingency of the exercise of power, representation in a totalitarian state becomes a confirmation of the ostensible unity of political order, the absence of conflict, and the embodiment of power in those who rule (Lefort [1986] 1988e, p. 13). Hence, representation does not have the same function in democratic and totalitarian order.

Moreover, this experience of totalitarianism is, of course, itself a result of power. Modern society can never truly be self-immanent; uncertainty can never truly be eliminated, and power can never fully be usurped by those who rule. Insofar as the totalitarian experience emerges from democracy and consists of the seemingly successful displacement of the transcendental origin of order, there is always the possibility, however minuscule, of a democratic reversal of totalitarian rule, of contestation, uprising, and revolt (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, pp. xiii–xiv).

Given the significance of representation for totalitarian order, representation as a form for the ordering of social life is, perhaps a bit surprisingly, in a sense counteractive and in opposition to democracy, notwithstanding the simultaneous important role it plays for modern democracies. This is not to say, however, that all forms of political representation are necessarily non-democratic. In a party-based representative democracy, political parties can indeed represent the outcome of constitutive power without democracy turning into non-democracy. They can represent the determinate being of the order humans create without totalitarianism suddenly appearing. However, if determinate forms of representation—representation through parties and electoral institutions—are meant to, or claim to, represent the very power to represent, democracy is in danger of becoming non-democratic. This is when things start to go bad. A democratic order can, so to speak, represent the will of the people—to use popular vocabulary—but not the making of that will, not the will of the will.

Since representation provides a link between democracy and totalitarianism, and in doing so can play an important part in the becoming other of democracy, modern democracies, being centred around political representation through the institution of elections, are in constant danger of losing track of their powers and becoming something alien to the experience of democracy. Because it is, at least in principle, rather straightforward for representative forms of popular rule to usurp the power that has brought them about—constitutive power, the power to create meaning, to represent—democracies are in some sense always playing with fire and are continuously exposed

to the dangers of becoming something other to democracy, forever haunted by the ghost of despotic rule. What serves as a guarantor for the democratic experience of order being actualised also offers a means by which the opposite experience of order can emerge instead. And as will be shown in the next chapter, when I return to the question as to why the double short-circuit of green democracy occurs, green democracy's tendency towards disqualification is actually associated with this intricacy of representation. It is exactly this notion of representation, the inclusion in determinate forms of representation of the power to create meaning and by that the very power to represent, green democracy entrenches at the very heart of an order supposed to be democratic.

5.4 Door

Difference is primary in and for modern discourse; it trumps identity; identity is derivative of difference in modern thought. The primacy of difference disperses the world and the things in it into disparate and disjoint historical trajectories only temporarily coming together to form seemingly unified worlds.

The most significant difference of modern thought is the one between thought itself and that which is not thought, and as I have argued in this chapter, that difference coincides with the difference between humans and nature and all the differences associated with it, such as the differences between subject and object, thought and world, language and of what language speaks, action and thing, activity and passivity. To that extent, the difference between humans and nature occupies a fundamental role in modern discourse; it is the difference upon which discourse is built.

However, the modern relation between humans and nature is not a simple separation; it is not a distance marking the border between two worlds isolated from each other. Instead, the relation is a conjunction of two different elements, a bringing together of differences forming a unity. The relation is a door connecting an inside and an outside, neither of which could exist without the other. Both inside and outside—what the inside and the outside are, and what is inside and what is outside—are constituted in and by the relation. They both become meaningful in their relation to each other, for the relation creates meaning. This is its function; it establishes what things are by determining what they mean.

The relations humans have with the natural world are internal to themselves; the conjunction is inherent to human being. Hence, insofar as the natural world is different from human being, humans contain within themselves something other, an alien element, a contradiction to themselves. Furthermore, this indicates that to be human *is* to be a conjunction between oneself and the world surrounding the self; to be human is to be a conjunction of inside and outside, subject and object, thought and world, language and of what language speaks, action and thing, activity and passivity. Inside and outside are brought together in the human being, and they form, in their very relation, a unity of difference.

Before they are anything else—before they are anything at all, really—humans and nature are related and conditioned by each other and whatever they are, in addition to being thusly related, they are by virtue of being determined on the basis of the relation. Since the function of the conjunction

is to create meaning, humans and things are whatever they are as a result of the functioning of the conjunction; humans and things *become* what they are by way of their difference and their coming together in a unity of difference. By creating meaning, the conjunction determines being. It orders reality and defines whether things are this or that, whether they are human or natural, and so on. This becoming is all there is to it. Neither humans nor the world of nature s more than their appearance in their historical unfolding; their being is exhausted by what they appear to be in the lived experience of human beings; the finite experience of humans provides the transcendental condition of humans and nature alike. Beyond the historicity of human being, there is nothing. There are no eternal structures above or beyond historical appearance; neither humans nor nature are determined by a fixed essence. Their essence is their appearance. There are no perennial structures in modern being; there are only functions happening in time. In modernity, things are not; they happen. Things happen in history, and this exhausts and determines their being; things are what they become. Structures are only appearances; they appear for someone.

Humans, then, determine their own being as well as the being of things on the basis of their own transcendental conditions. Things, therefore, are subordinated to the determining powers of human being. As Kant notes, 'we ourselves bring into the appearances that order and regularity in them that we call nature' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 241). However, this power of humanity is itself conditioned by the presence of a more-than-human world of matter which, because of its necessarily indeterminate character, is nothing more than an environment surrounding human being. Moreover, considering the profoundly social character of human being, modern nature is but the material environment of society and the meaning it is ascribed with by society.

Beyond its empty materiality, modern nature is what humans make of it since it is ascribed with meaning by humans. Likewise, politics also is what humans make of it. Modern political order is an order designated as political by human beings and ultimately refers to human being as such. For modern political authority in the form of sovereignty is a concept of the conjunction of humans and nature; sovereignty is a form of the determination of meaning, a form in which the social character of that determination is emphasised. Moreover, political order—the order sovereignty grounds by determining itself and its outside—is an order in which meaning is established. To be political in modernity is to determine what the self is and what things are. There is, then, no fixed boundary between politics and meaning: political order determines, through the sovereign decision, its meaning—what it is as an order—in its very being, and no meaning is safeguarded from political practice and the exercise of power. In general, what things are in modernity is determined on the basis of social relations and the relations humans have with their empty material environment. This implies, among other things, that modern truths are neither part of the natural world itself nor are they guaranteed by the human mind's ability to represent the natural world adequately but are instead settled by intersubjective agreements always involving the exercise of power.

Modern political order has no essence; it does not have a perennial structure upon which its historical becoming is built. Its

origin is located neither in itself as an immanent quality, nor in something transcending it. Instead, it is located political order's own logical prerequisites; the origin of order is transcendental in relation to the order it originates. Furthermore, the historical becoming of order is a process marked by unpredictability and contingency. Political order evolves along a predetermined course no more than life in nature does. Its development contains an irreducible element of uncertainty and surprise; it is impossible to predict with complete certainty what the modern future will bring. Political order, and its environment, can always become otherwise. To that extent, the future, according to modern thought, is always contingent, as is the present and the past. Everything is up for grabs since meaning can always be renegotiated, truths can be agreed upon according to new criteria, everything can be determined anew. The meaning of history—the history that has been, the history that is, and the history to come—is never set in stone.

And lastly, the ability to change modern political order belongs to those who are ordered and who are ordering themselves; it belongs to the members of political community. Humans are themselves, in their social existence, the drivers of change; they are the agents of history.

All in all, then, all four conceptual components that green democracy presupposes that the concept of political order is composed of are present in the modern concept of political order; they are all components of the modern concept of political order. Moreover, as has been argued in this chapter, not only is the modern concept of democracy in general composed of the same conceptual components; modern political order as such is democratic in the sense that it gen-erally makes the democratic experience possible. Only when order becomes distorted from within—only when it distorts itself by means of the process of determination that defines its being—does it become non-democratic. Or, to be precise, the *experience* of order is transformed. When order distorts itself it is experienced as becoming non-democratic. For insofar as order exists as a process of determination—as a continuous establishing of meaning—it amounts to a process in which the world, the political and the natural alike, continually appears to be ever more determined. Thus, the power to determine, which itself is necessarily indeterminate, is gradually displaced in the determinate existence of political order. In its historical becoming, then, political order tends in principle to efface its transcendental origin; order disavows its constitutive principle, its power to create. If that process goes too far—if the displacement is too successful, so to speak—order loses track of its democratic character. It forgets, in a sense, what it is. When that happens, political order and the natural world surrounding it appears to be necessarily what they are; order appears to have an essence, the future seems to be set in stone, and humans themselves appear to lack the power to do anything about anything. And, significantly, in the non-democratic experience of political order, the latter appears to be self-sufficient and identical with itself as it shields itself from the constitutive outside and incorporates its transcendental origin within itself. In principle terms, this is achieved by order representing its transcendental origin—the constitutive principle of order—inside itself as part of its determinate being. Some entity inside order, a political party, for instance, or the state itself, takes on the role of representing the creativity of

human being. Effectively, this actually eliminates that power altogether since it cannot be determined and, therefore, cannot be represented without becoming something other than the indeterminate power to determine.

Thus, representing human creativity, representing the constitutive principle of order, is wholly at odds with the modern concept of democracy.

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Conclusion

– Sulley, what are we doing?
– We have to get Boo's door and
  find a station.
– What a plan. Simple, yet insane!

(Mike Wazowski and Sulley)

THIS STUDY STARTED with the question why something that I refer to as the double short-circuit of green democracy occurs in green political theory. The ambition has been to provide an explanation for that occurrence.

The green democracy I have focused on, and which is susceptible to the critique I have levelled against the concept, is a non-anthropocentric democracy invested with the potential to transform unsustainability into sustainability. Being non-anthropocentric, it supposedly extends democracy to non-human beings, and having the potential to transform unsustainability into sustainability means that it is advanced as a way to serve an environmentalist agenda and change practices that in one way or another are bad for society and the natural world.

Democracy, as it is conceptualised in green political theory and as I have reconstructed it, is an experience according to which the world in general can be otherwise as a result of what one does as a member of political order. It is an experience of the world being able to change because of political action. Politics, moreover, is understood

as the creation of meaning in general. Politics is about providing meaning to the world and, in doing so, determining what things are. Democracy, then, is an experience of being able to determine what order is, what things of the world are, and what the self is; democracy is about determination and a certain experience of determination and creation of meaning.

This conceptualisation of democracy presupposes, in turn, a certain understanding of political order. It presupposes that political order is self-creative, lacks essence, has a contingent future, and consists of members with agency. I have referred to these four qualities as conceptual components that political order must consist of for democracy, conceptualised in this way, to make sense, to surface as a meaningful concept in discourse.

As it appears in green political theory, green democracy is meant to bridge a perceived and unwarranted gap between humans and nature. According to the green take on modernity, the latter is characterised by a basic separation of humans from the natural world. As the story goes, it is as if there is a wall carving up existence,

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thus creating a duality of worlds, one human and one natural. For greens, modern society and modern thought are grounded in the incorrect belief that humans are fundamentally different and distinguished from nature. This great divide is furthermore represented as a root cause of unsustainable social practices. For that reason, extending democracy beyond humans seems to be a normatively desirable way to deal politically with the environmental predicaments of the present. A non-anthropocentric reconceptualisation of democracy seemingly provides a stepping stone for sustainability transformations. By including nature in the world of democratic politics, dualism and the perils of unsustainability supposedly disappear.

Green democracy, as it is advanced and presented here, is a continuation of the emancipatory project associated with modern political order. As it is conceptualised in green political theory, however, it continues modern democracy while scrapping the dualism greens associate with the latter as it extends that emancipatory project to non-human beings. In this way, green democracy is ostensibly a more unbound form of democracy. It also comes out as an improved form of democracy since it seemingly broadens and expands the scope of its modern predecessor. More and better democracy and better ways to deal with unsustainability, those are the promises of green democracy.

I have focused on three different attempts in green political theory to conceptualise such a democracy, each representing a different theoretical tradition: ecologism, social constructivism and new materialism. Despite many differences otherwise, these three strands of green thought share the notion that democracy can be extended to non-human beings and that such an extension can be achieved by humans representing the natural world in the political world. The mechanism of representation is what is meant to bridge the perceived gap between humans and nature. Through human representation, nature is meant to become fully political, meaning that things of nature are now also things of politics. As political things in a democracy, it follows that natural things should also have the ability to change themselves and the world of which they are part; they should also participate in the determination of meaning and what things are.

The double short-circuit of green democracy is a twofold problem. It is also a conceptual problem and a problem of conceptual relations. The problem is about how humans, nature, and their relations are conceptualised, how political order is conceptualised given that democracy presupposes a certain understanding of political order, and finally, how all of these concepts fit together in discourse. It is, specifically, a problem of the conceptualisations of humans, nature, and their relation, and how their relation relates to political order and its conceptualisation.

In its attempts to conceptualise green democracy, be it on ecologist, social constructivist, or new materialist grounds, green political theory fails twice in its aspirations. Green political theory intends to extend democracy beyond humans through the mechanism of representation, and it intends to turn disunity and difference between humans and nature into a unity of identity, to dismantle a wall and build a bridge instead. However, in its attempt to extend democracy, it ends up disqualifying its own concept of democracy, and its building of bridges ends up reproducing a door instead.

The door is the metaphor I have used to describe a relation between humans and nature in which they form a unity of difference. The inside and outside of a door exist only in relation to each other. Take away one, and the other vanishes as well. Moreover, they become what they are by being related to each other; the inside is only the inside in relation to the outside, and vice versa. Without one, the other would not be possible. They are each other's condition of possibility. They form something together, but they do not form something complete, not a whole. They do not belong to the same whole; they do not share the basic identity of belonging to the same whole for they are fundamentally different from each other. The inside is the inside only insofar as it is not the outside, and the outside is the outside only insofar as it is not the inside; there is a qualitative difference between the two.

Humans and nature emerge as fundamentally different yet conditioning each other when they form and are formed by such a relation. Humans are the condition of possibility for nature, and nature the condition of possibility for humans. They always come as a pair, and they are intelligible only in relation to each other. They make sense in tandem, not on their own. They become what they are by being related and at the same time their difference comes into effect. Hence, the relation between humans and nature is a conjunction; there is always a constitutive *and* associating the different parties.

In this relation, the human side amounts to an active side, a side of pure subjective activity, whereas the natural side amounts to a side of pure objective passivity. Humans determine and order; nature is being determined and ordered. This is a nature without

form prior to humans directing themselves towards it. It is a thingly world without things, a void material world. Indeed, humans too lack positive content beyond their own creative powers, beyond their ability to determine and order. Meaning in general emerges from the relation between the pure subjectivity of humans and the pure objectivity of nature. Meaning is established in and on the basis of this specific relation of humans and nature. The world becomes a meaningful, determined, and ordered place through the unity of difference between humans and nature. Both sides are required for the possibility of meaning. Thus, since politics is conceptualised as the creation of meaning, politics always occurs in conjunction with nature; politics always comes with a void natural world upon which it operates and with which it becomes what it is. Correlatively, the natural world of things always comes with a political world. It is always politics *and* nature, nature *and* politics, never either one without the other. The presence of politics suggests the presence of nature and vice versa. Meaning always comes with non-meaning; subjectivity *and* objectivity, activity *and* passivity, determination *and* indetermination. Never will the two unite, but neither will they split ways.

When their relation is like a door, humans and nature form a unity of difference. Two other kinds of relation between humans and nature have figured throughout the study, captured by the metaphors of wall and bridge. The bridge, the relation sought in green theorizing, is one in which humans and nature form a unity of identity, their identity being one of belonging to the same whole. This does not mean that humans and nature are the same in the sense of sharing characteristics. Indeed, they can do that, but

the important thing here is the identity of belonging together. The wall, on the other hand, establishes a disunity of difference between humans and nature. From this perspective, humans and nature are fundamentally separated from each other. The wall constitutes a duality of words, one human, the other natural.

I have situated the discourse of green political theory as part of Western political thought, and I have argued that to make sense of the double short-circuit and why it occurs, one should look at it historically and study how it has come into being. I have proceeded from a theoretical position according to which concepts are the practice of thought and group into discourses where meaning emerges from the relations between concepts. Concepts, as they have been treated herein, display relations to their own components, which are concepts in their own right, as well as to other concepts of the same discourse, and to concepts of the past in historically antecedent discourses. History, therefore, leaves traces inside discourse and the present resonates of the past. To that extent, the past provides explanatory material for the present.

My position has also been that the formation of conceptual meaning follows certain historically specific rules providing the conditions of possibility for discourse. Following Foucault, I have referred to such rules as the epistemic configuration of discourse. A certain epistemic configuration provides the basis for a specific mode of thought, and shifts between such configurations amount to ruptures in thought, qualitative changes in the mode of thought.

Inspired by Foucault, I have delineated two epistemic ruptures in the history of Western thought partitioning it into three

dominant modes since the Middle Ages: medieval, early modern and modern. The specific objectives of my research have been to examine the relations between the concepts of humans, nature, and political order during the Middle Ages, early modernity, and modernity. Indeed, most of the book has been devoted to meeting these objectives, and by now, on the basis of the historical analysis these objectives have yielded, I believe I am in a position to answer the question with which I started.

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Let me begin the answer with a summary of the historical chapters. Chapter 3 began with a delineation of the logical priority of identity over difference in medieval discourse. During the Middle Ages, things can become differentiated only on the basis of a fundamental identity of belonging to the same whole. This arrangement of identity and difference leads to discourse being epistemically configured by analogy.

In the medieval mode of thought, the human being is conceptualised as a unity of soul and body and as a microcosmic mirror of the larger universe to which it belongs. That larger universe is the natural world. Medieval nature contains everything; it is both material and spiritual. It has no outside, for it assimilates everything, even its own spiritual and divine origin.

Medieval nature is organicist. It is conceptualised as a great organism in which all things have a proper place and function according to that place. A defining feature of medieval nature is, therefore, the resolving of function into structure. Function in nature is determined by the structure of nature. As an organism, medieval nature is

ordered; its parts are fully interconnected; it is teleological, harmonious, hierarchical, and active.

Nature in the Middle Ages is also inherently meaningful. It is like a book full of symbols. According to this mode of thought, humans do not construct or create the meaning of things; they discover it by interpreting the symbols of nature.

Since everything belongs to nature and nature is meaningful in itself, there is no clear-cut differentiation between subjects and objects in medieval discourse. Things are both subjective and objective.

In this world, the relation between humans and nature is like a bridge crossing a river drawing together and forming a single landscape where the two sides of the river are fundamentally identical. Here, humans and nature are brought together in a unity of identity.

Medieval politics is also organicist. Political order resembles a living creature made up of parts with functions completely determined by their place in the larger structure, just like the natural world to which it belongs

During the Middle Ages, nature serves as a blueprint for political order. Political practice is about enacting an order, not creating one. Moreover, medieval political order originates in nature and in the human belonging to nature. It has an essence in the form of purposive sovereignty; humans have no agency as political beings, and the future is not contingent. On this basis, it was concluded in chapter 3 that democracy, as it is conceptualised in green political theory, could not have germinated in medieval discourse. The discursive circumstances for democracy to take root were simply not there. Finally, it was argued that the no-show of democracy in medieval discourse is conceptually connected to the medieval relation between humans and nature, implying that the human-nature relation is fundamental in relation to the conceptualisation of political order in medieval discourse and to the possibility of democracy to surface as a meaningful concept.

Moving on, chapter 4 was devoted to early modernity. In early modern thought, identity and difference are on par with each other. Things share identical characteristics but also differences, and everything can be arranged based on such characteristics. Here, order, the sorting of identities and differences, amounts to the rule governing discourse.

To be human in early modernity is to be pure thought. Indeed, humans are also corporeal creatures, but what defines them as unique beings is the thinking mind. That mind has the ability to represent what appears before it perfectly, and all the thinking it does is representational. Humans have the power to think of things as they are in themselves. The world humans represent in their minds is an absolute world; it is the world as it is absolutely in itself.

The world itself, however, is not inherently meaningful. Meaning emerges in thought, and humans construct meaning as they represent the world in thought. Nature, then, is meaningless in itself.

Early modern nature, furthermore, is mechanistic. It is like a machine with interchangeable parts. It is a uniform material world composed of discrete elementary particles not hierarchically ordered, and it lacks both harmony and activity. It also lacks subjective content—being a completely objective world—as well as inherent meaning. It is a world operating accord-

ing to universal laws in a deterministic fashion; a world of uniformity and regularity but without hierarchy, activity, or purpose.

A dualism of structure and function characterises nature in early modernity. The structure of nature is one thing; its function is another. What happens in nature does not directly resolve into nature's structure. That being said, function is still dependent on structure, and nothing happens in nature that is not grounded in the essential being of nature; the world must have a structure before any function is possible.

Early modernity is neatly divided into subjects and objects. Humans are pure subjects, and the natural world consists of pure objects. As pure subjects, as beings of pure thought, humans do not belong to the objective world of nature. Early modernity amounts to a duality of worlds, one human and one natural. Here, humans are separated from nature, and it is as if there is a wall between them separating two worlds independent of each other. In this way, early modern humans and early modern nature form a disunity of difference.

Early modern political order is completely artificial. It is a purely human construct and a representation of human separation from nature. It has a transcendent origin in the human mind, as well as an essential property in the form of purposive absolute sovereignty. Moreover, it might seem that humans do have proper political agency here as the constructors of political order. Ultimately, however, they do not, for political order is a construction stemming from their minds, which are prior to their beings as members of political community. Also, in its objective existence, political order is as determined as all other objects, and much like the nature from which it is separated, its

future is non-contingent. Therefore, it was concluded in chapter 4 that democracy, as it is conceptualised in green political theory, could not have germinated in early modern discourse either. Just like in medieval discourse, the discursive circumstances are lacking in early modern discourse for such a concept of democracy to emerge as something meaningful. The early modern concept of political order does not consist of the components that allow for such a concept of democracy to germinate. There is no place in discourse for it to condense.

Finally, much like in the chapter on the Middle Ages, it was argued in chapter 4 that the inability of such a concept of democracy to appear in early modern discourse is connected to how the relation between humans and nature is conceptualised. Again, the analysis suggests that the conceptualisation of human-nature relations is fundamental for the meaning of political order and the possibility of democracy to surface as something meaningful in thought.

Chapter 5, the last of the historical chapters, covered modern thought. It began with a delineation of the logical primacy of difference over identity at the epistemic level of modern discourse. In modernity, things are different before they are the same. Identity presupposes difference, and things contain difference within themselves. The most significant difference for modern discourse is that between thought and non-thought. As it was argued in chapter 5, that difference coincides with the difference of humans and nature, and with such associated differences as those between subject and object, thought and world, language and what language speaks of, action and thing, and activity and passivity.

Meaning, as it resides in modern dis-

course, presupposes and engenders something different from itself, something nonmeaningful. That other, as it was argued in chapter 5, consists of empty materiality, a thingly world without things.

The modern world is a fractured place, fragmented and disrupted by the primacy of difference. Things are disjunct, and in their being, they break away from one another. The source of what things fundamentally are no longer derives from their place in an order of identities and differences. Instead, it is found within themselves, within their depths. At a fundamental level, things in modernity are the results of deeply lying functions. There is, then, an inherently temporal dimension to being in modernity, and for modern discourse, order is substituted by history as epistemic configuration. Modern discourse is ruled by history; conceptual meaning is a product of historical forces and processes. History determines what things are and what they mean, and it disperses and fragments the world along the lines of multiple historical trajectories.

During the Middle Ages and early modernity alike, history followed a set path, and the future was in principle set in stone. In modernity, on the other hand, true historical novelties can emerge. The future might hold something that does not follow from what exists in the present or has existed in the past.

Everything, including human being, is historically contingent and susceptible to change in modernity. New meanings can always emerge; determination is an infinite historical process. There is, then, no such thing as a fixed human being according to modern thought. There is no transcendent origin, like the early modern mind, that can fixate meaning. Discourse is, instead, expressive of the very historicity of human being. That historicity consists of a conjunction of act and thing. To be human in modernity is to be a unity of difference. Thought and world, subject and object, activity and passivity come together in human being, forming a unity in which the united parties are fundamentally different from each other yet condition and presuppose each other.

Modern humans are creative. They create things in thought that did not previously exist in the world before them. It is still possible to conceptualise thought as representational in modernity, but thought is more than a representation. Modern thought is not about the world itself but the world as an appearance. The foundation of such thought is transcendental rather than transcendent. The foundation of modern thought and experience exists in its own prerequisites and is visible only through its functions. To be human, in this sense, is to be the logical prerequisite of meaningful thought. But human being is also a determinate, empirical form of being. Modern humans, then, are both determinate existing beings and the transcendental prerequisites for that being.

The pure form of transcendental subjectivity presupposes an equally pure form of objectivity. Pure objectivity, empty materiality, is the conditioning other within pure subjectivity. Ultimately, to be human is to be a conjunction of void subjectivity and void objectivity, to be a unity of act and thing, which themselves are completely different from each other. The human being harbours within itself the encounter of the active and the passive, the difference between inside and outside. Humans contain the difference to themselves within them-

selves, a contradictory element on the inside. Humans are both themselves and the outside world.

In modern discourse, there is no absolute world beyond the world as it appears and as it is made meaningful in thought. Basically, in modernity, if there is an object that is anything at all, a subject must be thinking it. If there is a subject thinking anything at all, there must be an object to think of. Subjects and objects always come together in a pair, but they are not the same. Modern discourse, then, neither makes subjects and objects interchangeable—as did medieval discourse—or separates them completely—as did early modern discourse. Instead, it keeps them together in a relation that I refer to as a unity of difference, and that unity finds a location in the human being.

Modern thought is properly active. As it was argued in chapter 5, ultimately, it is not thought but rather action and thought as action, that in the human being is united in difference to the world.

In modernity, moreover, there is no stable clear-cut distinction between action and the determination of meaning. Therefore, the establishing of meaning is part of political life and vice versa. The determination of meaning is a political act, and politics is about the determination of meaning. Hence, the determination of meaning involves the exercise of power. Meaning emerges by means of humans interacting which each other, and what things and humans are thought to be, is marked by historical circumstances and particular social relations.

Nature in modernity is an environment, the other which surrounds human action, and as an environment, its only characteristic is that it only really has functions.

Whatever structure it might seem to have resolves into functions. Nature is whatever it does historically in relation to humans; it has no essence. Thus, to compare with medieval and early modern nature, it can be concluded that function resolves into structure in medieval nature; in early modern nature, there is a dualism of structure and function, and in modern nature, structure resolves into function.

Modern nature has no determinate form beyond its appearance. Indeed, it is still possible to make claims about thought representing nature as it is in itself, but such claims are susceptible to the critique that they are just representations *according to someone.* Truths are settled intersubjectively rather than on the correspondence between thought and what it represents beyond itself. Again, meaning, knowledge, and truth are brought into the world of politics and relations of power. To the extent that there appears to be an external nature, that nature is actually externalised by someone. External nature is a particular discursively created determination of meaning.

The modern relation between humans and nature is like a door; modern humans and modern nature are like the insides and outsides of a door. This is not a relation of separation, but rather a bringing together of two completely different elements. Neither the inside nor the outside could exist without the other, and both are constituted in and by the relation they have with the other. They become meaningful in relation to each other. The function of the relation between humans and nature is to create meaning. There is always humans *and* nature, never either humans *or* nature. Never a separation, always a conjunction, a unity of difference. Before they are any-

thing at all, before determinate meaning, humans and nature are related to each other. Whatever they become—whatever determinate meaning they receive—they are by virtue of being related to each other.

Nature in modernity becomes what it is in discourse, as does politics. The meanings of nature and society go hand in hand; they are part of the same subjective process.

Modern political order is in fact a manifestation of the conjunction of action and thing. Modern sovereignty is a rendition in political discourse of human being as a conjunction in general. Modern politics encompasses human being as such and concerns the determination of meaning in general. Being as such is a political matter in modernity.

Moreover, it was argued in chapter 5 that modern political order is conceptually composed of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership, thus providing the opportunity for democracy, as conceptualised in green political theory, to germinate. Furthermore, it was argued that modern democracy in general is conceptualised in the same way as in green political theory and presupposes the same conceptualisation of political order.

Modern political order consists both of a determinate, historically specific existing order and the constitutive principle of that order. Any order is both constituted and constitutive. The constitutive aspect is the transcendental prerequisite of constituted order and amounts in its principle to a sovereign decision. That sovereign decision is always related to the outside of order, and its basic operation is to determine what order is and what it is not; meaning in general is determined in the sovereign decision. The natural world gains meaning in the self-cre-

ation of political order. There is no nature without politics and no politics without nature. Nature is the necessary excluded other of political order.

There is no ground for modern political order beyond its own process of grounding, beyond its own constitutive principle. However, in its determinate being, order constantly negates that principle. The openness associated with the sovereign decision effectively closes in the determinate being of political life; contingency is reduced in political order's existence as the determination of meaning. The historical being of politics harbours a movement away from the indeterminate to the determinate, even though complete and final determination is never possible. Total order is not achievable, and no order is self-immanent. No order is absolute or identical with itself. Order can always change and be interrupted. It can always become something different and new. Thus, order transforms itself, and social relations—and the exercise of power—can always be different. Since the determinate being of nature is created in the self-creation of political order, it too can become different.

The future, therefore, can never be fully predicted and the sovereign decision always contains an element of uncertainty. No amount of knowledge can erase that. What to do cannot be fully settled based on matters of the present. Decisions about order, about change, require commitment, responsibility, and fidelity.

Modern sovereignty, then, both opens up the future and tends to restrict what it might possibly hold. It creates something new, but that new, once it exists, exists as a particular process of determination.

Political agency comes from within order itself, from those who are subject to it. Polit-

ical order and political subjects are created in the same process. Since the sovereign decision denotes self-creation, the constitutive principle cannot be represented. Hence, the constitutive power of political agents, their creative capacities, can never be represented. Political representation, rather, is a way to determine the constitutive principle of political order. It is a particular way of making the origin of order meaningful, and that origin necessarily escapes meaning. Representation is a result of political self-creativity, not a form of that creativity. It belongs to constituted political order, not constitutive order. Therefore, change, in the modern sense of bringing about something truly new, cannot come from representation. Representation is not a way to open up the future; it is a way to close it down, to make the world more predictable.

Since the constitutive principle of political order amounts to a disruption of existing order, that principle is actually a contestation. Constitutive power is a questioning and conflict fundamental in modern politics. Contestation can never truly go away, and agency is always claimed.

It was also argued in the previous chapter that modern political order as such is democratic in the sense that it generally and directly makes democracy possible. Democracy, it was concluded moreover, is a particular experience of order, of what order and the self are, of how they are situated in relation to each other and to the world at large. In particular, it is an experience according to which it is possible as a political subject to change political order, oneself, and the material world. Democracy, in this sense, is an experience of the world being able to change and that one's actions can contribute to such change.

There is also a rather evident correspondence between the conceptualisation of human-nature relations and the meaning of political order in modern discourse. The relation between humans and nature is conceptually fundamental for the understanding of political order and, therefore, for the actual presence of democracy in discourse.

But even if modern political order is democratic in its very being and in general makes the democratic experience possible, it need not appear to be democratic. In a non-democratic order, the subjects are denied their capacity to create and change the world. That experience is not actually in opposition to democratic order, for it follows from it. As was argued above, there is an inherent tendency within democracy to disqualify itself by displacing its own constitutive principle. Non-democracy evolves from democracy as a consequence of political order operating as the determination of meaning. Non-democracy is democratic political order distorting itself.

Chapter 5 explored ideology as a conceptualisation of the displacement of constitutive power. Ideology, it was argued, circumvents historicity, uncertainty and unpredictability. It distorts the locus of political creativity. Basically, it reverses the relation between subject and object so that objectivity appears to determine subjectivity. Here, humans are deprived of their power to create meaning, and the world seems to have a meaning in itself. Things appear to be what they are regardless of what humans do.

Ideology strives towards complete certainty and control. Even if such an achievement is impossible, chapter 5 also explored the concept of totalitarianism as a way to capture the appearance of a fully determined political order.

Being completely determined, a totalitarian order appears to be identical with itself. Order seems to have a positive being of its own, in itself. So does its material environment. Both appear to be necessarily what they are. In the totalitarian experience of order, order appears to have an essence and an origin immanent to itself. History, both social and natural, appears to unfold along a fixed path and, therefore, appears to be non-contingent, and the members of political community appear to have no agency in the sense of having the ability to contribute to change. Importantly, in a totalitarian order, the sovereign decision is transferred from humans themselves to something else, historically 'the party' or the state itself. This amounts to the constitutive power of humans being represented, which effectively crosses out constitutive power altogether. In a totalitarian order, the very power to create meaning is already created; the power to determine is determined, the ability to represent is represented. This is, as has been argued, incompatible with the modern concept of democracy. The constitutive power of subjectivity cannot be represented if political order is to be experienced as democratic.

It was also argued in the chapter on modernity that representation links democracy and totalitarianism together. Political representation provides an institutional connection between the democratic and the non-democratic experience of order. Indeed, representation functions differently in democratic and totalitarian order. In a democracy, representation—predominately made manifest by means of political parties and through free and fair general elections—is an illustration of uncertainty, contestation, and contingent exercise of power. In a totalitarian order, in contrast, it entrenches the apparent unity and self-immanence of order, the absence of conflict and the embodiment of power in those who rule. The dividing line here is between representation as part of determinate political order—which occurs in a democracy—and representation of the power to create such an order—which occurs in totalitarianism. Totalitarianism encompasses the representation of the transcendental origin of order in its determinate being. Once constitutive subjective power is represented, the scales are tipped in favour of the other of democracy. The self becomes the other; the other becomes the self. Inside and outside trade places. Democracy turns into what is decidedly not-democracy. Representing the creativity of determining meaning is wholly at odds with modern democracy. It is impossible to represent the indeterminate power to determine while maintaining a sense of order as democratic.

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From taking stock of the analysis of modernity in chapter 5, it can be concluded that the conceptualisation of democracy in general in modern political thought is the same as in green political theory. In green political theory and the broader discursive setting of modern political thought alike, democracy is conceptualised as an experience of political order and of oneself as a member of political order according to which one can change oneself and the political order one is part of by virtue of being a member of that order. This also means that, in both instances, the concept of democracy presupposes a certain conceptualisation of political order.

Thus, the understanding of democracy in green political theory is not unique to that

discourse. On the contrary, such a conceptual identity suggests that green political theory adopts its concept of democracy from the broader discursive landscape of modern political thought. Green political theory's concept of democracy *is* a modern concept of democracy. As part of the tradition of Western political thought broadly speaking, green political theory appears to acquire its concept of democracy from the immediate discursive setting within which it operates and from the contemporary state of that tradition. It adopts a concept of democracy and thereby reproduces it, recycles it.

In chapter 2, while outlining my theoretical point of departure, I delineated conceptual meaning as a product of various different kinds of conceptual relations. Concepts, according to the view that has been adopted in this study, are relative to their own components—which are concepts in their own right—to other concepts in the same discourse, to concepts in historically previous discourses, and to the epistemic configuration of the discourse of which they are part. These relations include one concept being dependent on another, where one concept is logically primary and another logically secondary.

A significant part of the analysis of modern thought was devoted to one such relation of conceptual dependence within discourse. In that analysis, it was shown that the modern concept of democracy depends on a certain conceptualisation of political order. That conceptualisation is exactly the same as the one presupposed by the concept of democracy as it appears in green political theory. Specifically, that concept of political order contains as components the concepts of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership;

its meaning emerges where these four concepts condense, where they form into one; self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership are part of the soil where the concept of political order germinates and from where democracy grows.

Thus, this concept of political order contains these four conceptual components and is logically prior to the concept of democracy. Political order composed of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership is fundamental for the democratic experience. It is possible to make sense of modern political order without having to make sense of democracy, but it is not possible to make sense of modern democracy without also making sense of modern political order. Indeed, I have argued that modern political order *is* democratic in its very being; historically speaking, the democratic experience—or at least the potentiality of that experience—emerges simultaneously with modern political order. However, as a concept, modern political order is still fundamental in relation to democracy. Modern political order might not be historically prior to modern democracy, but it is conceptually prior to it.

There is a significant difference between a concept's internal and external relations, between the relations between concepts and relations between a concept and its components, even if such components are concepts in their own right. Modern political order is not a component of modern democracy, but self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership are components of political order. Relations between conceptual components are interior to concepts, whereas a concept's relation to other concepts are exterior. Con-

ceptual components are properties of a concept, external relations between concepts are not. Basically, it is possible to say of modern political order that it *is* self-creative, lacking essence, having a contingent future, and consists of members with agency. But, it is not possible to meaningfully say that modern democracy *is* a political order. Rather, if it *is* anything, it is but a particular experience of order. That experience, of course, contains conceptual components on its own, but that has not been the focus of this study. Instead, when it comes to democracy, I have merely focused on its relation to the concept of political order, and that relation is a relation of dependence.

Phrased differently, modern democracy presupposes modern political order. Modern political order functions as a condition of possibility for modern democracy. This presupposition is exactly the same as the presupposition in green political theory of democracy on political order, the reason being that the concept of democracy in green political theory is a reproduction of the modern concept of democracy. As a presupposition, the concept of political order becomes present in discourse even if it is not explicitly articulated. It becomes present by means of its product as a function.

It was also shown in the analysis of modernity that the modern concept of political order presupposes a certain conceptualisation of humans, nature, and their relation. The meaningfulness of political order depends on a certain relation between humans and nature. So, if political order is logically prior to democracy, then the relation between humans and nature is logically prior to political order. If political order becomes present in discourse once democracy becomes present, that relation between hu-

mans and nature becomes present once political order becomes present. A certain relation between humans and nature makes a certain concept of political order possible, and that concept of political order makes a concept of democracy possible. Conversely, if such a concept of democracy is part of discourse, so is the concept of political order it presupposes, and if that concept of political order is part of discourse, so is the relation between humans and nature it, in turn, presupposes. If one is in place, so are the other two.

What appears here, then, is a sort of relational chain linking human-nature relations to political order and political order to democracy. Through the intermediary link of political order, democracy becomes tied to a certain relation between humans and nature. That certain human-nature relation is activated and brought into discursive being the very instant democracy thusly conceptualised is made meaningful in discourse. There is a considerable amount of conceptual reproduction going on here. Democracy reproduces a certain meaning of political order, and political order reproduces a certain meaning of human-nature relations. Hence, with political order serving as an intermediary, the concept of democracy dealt with here reproduces a certain relation between humans and nature.

That certain relation between humans and nature, which is presupposed and reproduced here, is a unity of difference. According to this way of understanding humans, nature, and their relation, humans and nature are like the inside and outside of a door. Humans and nature belong together, always coming in a pair; neither can be without the other, the door between them constitutes both. However, they are not the

same. What is inside a door is strictly not what is outside it, and vice versa. The modern door between humans and nature separates one active side of pure subjectivity from a passive side of void objectivity or materiality. On one side, there is pure activity, pure actions, and on the other, a thingly world without things.

In modernity, humans and nature form a conjunction of two parties different from each other. The *and* between them never goes away, neither does their difference. For the one makes sense in relation to the other; the one is exactly not the other. Humans are exactly not nature, and nature is exactly not human. As strange as it might seem, this difference is internal to human being itself. Human being internalises the difference of itself within its very being. According to this conceptualisation, humans and nature, never form a totality even if they come together as a pair. They never form a whole world of humans and nature, because their difference always reappears. They never form a whole; they can never belong to the same whole as identical parts.

From the vantage point of green political theory, a great wall is visible between humans and nature. That wall separates the world into two and generally provides the foundation for unsustainable practices. To turn unsustainability into sustainability, green political theory also seeks to build a bridge between humans and nature and do so by extending democracy beyond humans. Democracy is, in principle, meant to bring humans and nature together in a unity of identity, to provide the foundation for a relation according to which humans and nature form a whole, belong to the same whole. As was argued in chapter 2, however, the aspirations to build such a bridge

fail by presupposing and reproducing a conceptualisation of humans and nature according to which they form a unity of difference and are related as the inside and outside of a door. Every time the argument is advanced from within green political theory that sustainability requires building a bridge between humans and nature by means of extending democracy beyond humans and towards nature, the presence of a door is presupposed. Thus, instead of building a bridge, green political theory reproduces a door in its conceptualisations of green democracy. The adventure of bridge-building proceeds from the presence of a door. Instead of building bridges, green political theory, in conceptualising green democracy, is building doors.

Here, I finally arrive at a partial answer to the question as to why the double short circuit appears in green political theory. It is partial, for it only explains why green political theory ends up reproducing doors instead of building bridges. This happens because green political theory adopts a modern concept of democracy, and that concept presupposes the door between humans and nature. The understanding of democracy that is relied upon in the conceptualisation of *green* democracy presupposes that humans and nature form a unity of difference. Therefore, that concept of democracy cannot provide the foundation for a different relation between humans and nature. It cannot serve as a means to bring humans and nature together in a unity of identity. It cannot form a whole of humans and nature; it cannot bring together a world of wholeness. Hence, the first part of the double short-circuit occurs because green political theory adopts a modern concept of democracy and because that concept presupposes a unity of dif-

ference between humans and nature rather than a unity of identity.

However, green democracy short-circuits not once but twice. It is a problem of two parts. Green political theory not only reproduces a door instead of building a bridge, it also tends to disqualify its own concept of democracy. To provide an explanation to this second part of the problem, let me proceed once more from the historical analysis of modern thought. Since democracy in green political theory is a repetition of modern democracy, *all* of what was said of modern democracy in the previous chapter holds true for democracy in green political theory, not just its presupposition of a door between humans and nature.

In chapter 5, a tendency of modern democracy to displace its constitutive principle, and thereby disqualify itself, was identified. The historical becoming of democracy also entails the coming into being of non-democracy.

In general terms, this has to do with the existence of political order as a determination of meaning, its historical unfolding as a creation of an ordered world. Whereas constitutive power to determine meaning and create a meaningful world thrives on uncertainty, unpredictability, indetermination, and contingency, determinate political practices proceed towards the opposite, towards certainty, predictability, and determination. Ordering proceeds towards order. Through ideological processes, the world appears to be increasingly ordered and a place of self-identity. It more and more appears to be what it is out of necessity. A political order from which that order and the world at large appear to be completely ordered, self-identical, and necessary can be conceptualised as a totalitarian order. Key to this process of democracy becoming non-democracy is the representation of constitutive power. Once the power to represent is represented, once the ability to create meaning is transferred away from the subjects of political order, once the locus of political creativity is displaced, political order conceptually no longer appears to be democratic.

So, regarding the historical existence of political order, the beginning of its democratic being can be positioned at the moment of subjective creativity. That is a moment of contingency, contestation, and decision. It is a moment when agency is claimed and subjectivity itself is created. If democratic being begins in and with such a moment, it ends, in principle, with the representation of that subjective creativity in political practice, with the representation of the power to represent. At this moment, something—be it the state itself, 'the party', or some other determinate entity within order—acts as a stand-in for political subjects and their constitutive power. Such an order, as it has been argued, appears not to be self-creative, to have an essence, not to have a contingent future, and its members appear to lack agency. In such an order, the democratic experience—the experience of the world in general and oneself according to which world and self can change because of what one does as a member of political order—has a hard time emerging.

Now, let me return to the analysis and the critique of the democracy-part of green democracy that was carried out in chapter 2.

While summarising the ecologist, social constructivist, and new materialist attempts to extend democracy beyond humans, I showed that they all rely on the mechanism of political representation to achieve that extension. Representation is meant to do the

heavy lifting in the realisation of green democracy. This representation involves the representation of the creative abilities of natural things. Humans should represent nature's subjectivity itself. However, doing so means that the locus of creativity is displaced. Natural political subjects are no longer creative when their creative powers are represented by someone else. This leaves them unable to determine a world on their own; they are not able to determine by themselves what they are or what the world is. Thus, they cannot contribute to change, and from their perspective, the world never changes as a result of what they do themselves. However, this does not concern only nature's creative power; it also leads to humans being denied their creative power since humans are required to always be those to represent nature, and nature will always appear as something that needs representation. Hence, the inability to change applies to both humans and the world at large. In all, this means that political order does not appear to be self-creative, to lack essence, to have a contingent future, and to consist of members with agency. Political order is no longer composed of self-creativity, inessentialism, temporal contingency, and agentic membership. Thus, the democratic experience cannot emerge. Here, it no longer appears that the world or the self can become otherwise because of what is done by political subjects acting by virtue of being such subjects. Therefore, the extension of democracy to the non-human world actually ends up foreclosing democracy instead.

Having concluded that this concept of democracy that appears in the discursive practice of green political theory is modern, and given the tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself, it is possible to see why this happens. This concept of democracy cannot handle the representation of the power to represent. Once constitutive power becomes represented in constituted order, once the transcendent origin of order becomes immanent to the same order, democracy disappears in the sense of the democratic experience being unable to surface.

The inclusion of the power to create meaning in determinate forms of political representation is impossible to add to democracy, modern or green. Conceptually, it makes democracy fall apart. This problem is exacerbated in the greening of modern democracy. Green political theory entrenches this kind of representation in the very heart of political order, in the core of its historical being. In this case, democracy does not merely proceed *towards* the representation of creative power, which characterises the historical becoming of non-democracy from within democracy. It proceeds *from* it, and to the extent that the moment of such representation signals the end of the democratic being of political order, green political theory's attempts to extend democracy beyond humans actually departs from a non-democratic starting point. So, in a way, green democracy was always going to be a failure based on these premises. It could never have been realised because it never was a democracy, to begin with. In its general modern form, democracy has a tendency to fail in its historical being. In the green variety of that form, it is, in principle, a failure from the start. Thus, the tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself is exacerbated in its attempted greening in green political theory.

From this point of view, green democracy does not seem to improve modern democracy. It much more looks like it is deteriorating it. The advocacy of green democracy

does not give the impression of being a voice of liberation and emancipation, a claim of political subjectivity and self-creativity. In fact, it rather seems to serve an ideological function. Indeed, it makes the world appear as something that is of necessity. Instead of affirming the openness of the future, and the ability of political subjects to create a world of their own, it provides an order to the world by determining what roles things are meant to have. It provides structure safeguarded from temporal contingency and neutralises political contestation before it can even emerge. In entrenching the necessity of nature's constitutive power being represented, and the necessity of humans representing that power, it tends to sidestep the notion that statements are about appearances, not things in themselves, which is so crucial for the modern democratic experience. Thus, in a Kantian sense, it is a form of dogmatism in that it is grounded in 'the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts ... without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has obtained them' (Kant [1781] 1998, p. 119, see also page 345 in chapter 5 above). The advancement of green democracy in this way depoliticises what, from a democratic point of view, should form the actual core of political practice, namely subjective constitutive power.

By that, the second part of the double short-circuit has been provided with an explanation. The attempts to conceptualise green democracy in green political theory tend to disqualify their own concept of democracy because that concept of democracy is a modern concept of democracy and modern democracy tends to disqualify itself. This tendency is exacerbated in these attempts because green democracy entrenches the representation of constitutive power at the historical point of departure for democratic being, a point where there can be no such representation because of how modern democracy is conceptualised.

This also means that I have arrived at a full explanation as to why the double short-circuit occurs. Green political theory reproduces a door between humans and nature instead of building a bridge because it adopts a modern concept of democracy and that concept of democracy presupposes such a relation, and it disqualifies its own concept of democracy because it exacerbates a tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself.

Evidently, the two parts of the double short-circuit are closely connected to each other. Both can be tied to the modern concept of democracy, to the conceptual relations within modern discourse, and to the adoption of that modern concept of democracy in green political theory. They are truly two parts of the same problem. That problem does not emerge because of poor theorising or something like that. It emerges because of how modern thought is configured; because of how concepts are related to each other in modern thought; because of how meaning is established in modern thought. It has to do with the mode of modern thought, not with how that mode is carried out in particular instances.

If the argument that the move away from unsustainable to sustainable practices requires more, stronger, and better democracy is correct, then in light of the current study, the attempts from within green political theory to conceptualise green democracy look like failures. Green political theory seems not to achieve what it seeks to accomplish in this regard. To the extent, moreover, that green political theory proceeds from the

concept of green democracy, to the extent that it continues to advocate a rethinking of democracy in non-anthropocentric directions and the human political representation of nature's purported constitutive power, it seems poorly fitted to contribute to political sustainability transformations.

Moreover, my historical narrative highlights yet another failure of green political theory, a failure to understand modern thought and its history properly. In the opening discussion, I noted that the support for and advancement of non-anthropocentric democracy in green political theory largely follows from the predominant take on Western civilisation and modernity in environmentalist circles. Important aspects of that take include the notion that the development of Western civilisation and thought is characterised by an increasingly significant anthropocentric dualism of humans and nature. At some point, the argument goes, European thought started to emphasise the difference of humans from nature, and people started to believe that they lived in one world and nature in another. This process of separation is supposedly a unidirectional process. Indeed, different moments have been identified as decisive, and the split can be seen as gradual or as an abrupt rupture. Once the separation has begun or happened, however, humans of Western civilisation have not been brought closer to nature again. They have not looked back. The onset of modernity is of particular importance in this development. If it does not signal the emergence of human separation from nature, it represents its most profound form and scope. Modernity, according to this view, is characterised and grounded by a wall creating a duality of humans and nature. The wall is depic-

ted as fundamental for modern politics, including its democratic form. According to this view among environmentalists, modern democracy presupposes a wall between the human world and the natural, between the order of nature and political order.

Usually, environmentalists also criticise this self-understanding of modern society on two accounts. First, human-nature dualism is said to be an incorrect belief. It is a myth, a lie humans tell themselves. Second, it is said to be one of the main reasons behind the present ecological predicament of modern society.

My historical narrative does not tell the same story of Western thought. Instead of a single distancing of humans away from nature, I have depicted a relation that has gone back and forth. A belonging of humans to nature during the Middle Ages was followed by separation during early modernity. A bridge between humans and nature was turned into a wall; mechanism followed organism. However, I have also told the story of how history followed mechanism. I have argued that modern humans are not walled off from nature. Instead, there is a door between them. Between early modernity and modernity, the separation of humans and nature was turned into a conjunction of two different things conditioning each other. In modernity, humans and nature amount to a strange mix of two different things belonging together. With the emergence of modern thought, humans and nature come closer together as compared to their relative distance during early modernity. Indeed, they do not belong together in a unity of identity as they do during the Middle Ages, but nevertheless, they come together.

Environmentalists tend to miss this important difference between early modern

and modern thought. They seem not to recognise the modal difference between early modern and modern discourse, and approach significant modern contributions to scientific, philosophical, and political discourses as continuations of a way of thinking that emerged in the 16th century, has remained the same since, and continues to determine how Western humans think of themselves and the world around them, as well as of how they should order their lives together.

This take on the history of Western thought, in my view, is basically incorrect in the sense that it fits rather poorly with the source material, with the important contributions to that history. In my view, there is a modal qualitative difference between—to keep making use of examples—Descartes' thing that thinks and Kant's transcendental subject, just like there is a modal qualitative difference between Descartes' thing that thinks and Cusanus's rendition of the human being as a microcosmic mirror of the larger universe. Likewise, Lefort's historicist understanding of political order is as different from Hobbes's mechanistic understanding of order as Hobbes's understanding is different from the organicism of John of Salisbury. The dominant mode of thought in the present does not proceed from a fundamental separation between humans and nature. It does not wedge an *either-or* between humans and nature but rather splices them with an *and*. The present does not play out in the shadow of Descartes but in the shadow of Kant and under the aegis of the historicist epistemic configuration of discourse. Indeed, the modern relation between humans and nature is not the complete belonging of the Middle Ages, but nor it is a complete separation.

My historical narrative does agree with the environmentalist take on modernity in the sense that modern democracy presupposes a certain conceptualisation of human-nature relations. However, the presupposition, in my view, is not one of a wall but rather a door. As I have argued, modern democracy is tied to a unity of difference between humans and nature through the intermediary link of political order. This is a crucial difference between my historical analysis and the predominant environmentalist critique of modernity and of the shortcomings of modern democracy. To the extent that green political theory aspires to bridge the gap between humans and nature politically by means of democracy, those attempts will be misguided as long as their goal is to turn a wall into a bridge. There is no such wall to tear down. The environmentalist critique of modern democracy and its ability to serve as a foundation for political and normatively desirable responses to unsustainable practices and ecological predicaments is unwarranted. Indeed, modern democracy might be an accomplice in the environmental crimes of modernity—to be dramatic—but not for the reasons environmentalists accuse it. Moreover, regarding the more general question about a link between the conceptualisation of human-nature relations and environmental problems in modernity, if there is such a link—which there might very well be—then it is not a link between rigid dualism and unsustainability. Instead, it must be a link between the unity of difference between humans and nature and unsustainable practices.

Thus, in addition to calling out attempts to conceptualise green democracy within green political theory as failures, the analysis

in this study can serve as a corrective to the environmentalist take on the development of Western civilisation and thought, a take which is very prominent in green political theory and which generally underlies its ambition to conceptualise democracy anew.

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Where does all of this leave democracy in the Anthropocene, this new era of humankind where social and natural reality have supposedly converged? Indeed, in the very first sentence of this book, I stated that it was supposed to be about the future of democracy in the Anthropocene, and then most of it has been spent dealing with the past and the history of Western thought. However, despite the Anthropocene being quite absent from most of the text, I still think quite a lot can be said about it on the basis of the actual content.

A first thing is rather obvious: If democracy should become non-anthropocentric and take the route mapped out by green political theory, then the future of democracy seems rather bleak. For along that route, temporal contingency is lost as political subjects are bereft of their ability to change the world. This pretty much signals the end of democracy, at least as it is conceptualised in modernity. If this understanding of the future, that it is up for grabs by those who act politically, was to be called 'democratic future', then it could be said that this route signals the loss of democratic future. To play on words, it means that democracy loses its future in the Anthropocene. Democracy, then, runs the risk of losing its future if it is heeding the call of non-anthropocentrism, the future that it is partially composed of as a concept, the future that is tied to the meaning of democracy.

But what is of perhaps more interest is that the Anthropocene imaginary, just like green political theory, seems to miss the mark in its grasp of modernity, of modernity's alleged shortcomings, and of its limitations. Green political theory and the Anthropocene imaginary seems to be fuelled by the same ill-fitted understanding of modernity and modern thought. Modernity is usually thought to be pervaded by human-nature dualism in discussions about the Anthropocene as well, and in light of the present entanglement of humans and nature that dualism needs to go, so the story goes.

In order not to repeat myself too much, I would simply like to note that my conclusion on this issue is that the alleged Anthropocene need to rethink various concepts because they are grounded in and by a profound separation of humans from nature seems to proceed from the wrong premises. I fail to find support in the historical material I have analysed as part of this study for the representation of modernity as a fundamentally dual world of humans and nature separated by a wall. Simply put, based on the findings of the current study, I do not find support for the need to rethink democracy on the basis of a non-dualist conceptualisation of human-nature relations. Ideas about the entanglement, enmeshment, or entwining of humans and nature, that the social is found in the natural and the natural is found in the social, which proliferate in the Anthropocene imaginary, appear to be quite similar to what is already present in the modern conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature. I have, for instance, delineated that humans, in the modern mode of thought, contain within themselves their own difference, harbour the

encounter of pure subjectivity and pure objectivity and that the unity of difference between humans and nature actually coincides with human being. In a way, then, subjects and objects intermingle in the modern human. Activity and passivity are entangled in human being, action and thing are entwined. This is where thought and world, language and what language speaks of, are enmeshed. Since this unity of difference pertains to subjectivity and activity as such—since it unites two voids, so to speak—this is a general characteristic of all subjects and all objects in modernity. Again, there is no modern subject that is not related to an object and no object that is not related to a subject; before they are anything at all, modern humans and modern nature are related to each other, as I have argued. This means that they are also, in a way, entangled with each other. Hence, I could also have concluded that before they are anything else, modern humans and modern nature are entangled with each other. So basically, the relation between humans and nature that many seek to accommodate in the light of a new planetary age of humankind seems quite similar to the one that is already present in modern thought and that has played—and continues to play—a fundamental role on the conceptualisation of political discourse, including the concept of democracy. That being said, this conceptual similarity is but a suggestion. I have not compared what is believed to be a proper conceptualisation of humans and nature in Anthropocene discourses with the corresponding modern conceptualisation. Nor do I wish to do so here. However, it should be noted that one probable difference between the two is that the modern conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature positions them as strictly not belonging to the same whole. I think many in the Anthropocene camp would take issue with this notion and would rather see belonging wherein modernity there is separation. To that extent, rather, the Anthropocene imaginary sides with green political theory and easily, it seems, provides a lending hand in attempts to build bridges between humans and nature.

To me, moreover, the search for a new concept of democracy that fits better with the reality of the Anthropocene also seems undesirable. Or at least potentially dangerous, from a democratic point of view. If one seeks to rethink democracy on the basis of, say, a non-dualist understanding of humans and nature, results might differ from expectations. My historical analysis shows that conceptualisations of the relation between humans and nature other than the modern one have not been conducive for democracy at all, at least not anything that resembles democracy as it is understood in modern discourse. Other conceptualisations seem to have effectively hindered it historically.

To recap a bit more from the historical chapters, my analysis of medieval thought indicates that the bringing together of humans and nature in a world to which they both belong makes it impossible for anything like modern democracy to germinate in medieval discourse. Hence, such a non-dualist relation has historically failed to provide the discursive setting for anything like modern democracy to emerge as something meaningful in discourse. Historically, the democratic experience of being able to change the world by means of ones own actions, has not surfaced when humans and nature have been thought to belong to the same world. Human-nature belonging has historically not been a recipe for democratic

success; bridges between humans and nature have not led the way to democracy.

Evidently, this does not mean that *all* conceptualisations of humans and nature according to which the two belong together and form a unity of identity will necessarily foreclose democracy. It indicates, however, that it might be difficult to bring humans and nature closer together while at the same time maintaining the democratic character of political order. It certainly indicates, moreover, that the previous experience of Western thought with the understanding of humans as belonging to nature does not support rethinking human-nature relations along these lines to foster democracy being a good idea.

For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that neither does a further distancing of humans away from nature seem to benefit the prospects of democracy. In chapter 4, I showed that the early modern separation of humans and nature also fails to provide the discursive prerequisites for the democratic experience to emerge. Historically, the conceptualisations of human-nature relations as a complete belonging and as a complete separation alike have made it impossible for democracy of the modern kind to germinate in discourse.

Hence, a merit of my rather extensive historical narrative, in which I have sought the history of the conceptual relations between humans, nature, political order, and democracy in Western thought all the way back to the Middle Ages, is the indication that in Western thought so far, only the conceptualisation of the relation between humans and nature according to which they form a unity of difference has made possible the democratic experience of political order, oneself, and the world in general. Thus, it seems

like the prospects of democracy depend on a very precise understanding of human-nature relations. Democracy emerges from a rather narrow space where humans and nature sit rather close together but still retain some kind of distance. It seems like humans and nature can neither be completely separated from one another nor be brought completely together in order for democracy to flourish. Rather, belonging and separation seem to lead to experiences according to which the world remains the same regardless of political action.

This is why, in light of the current study, I think it is undesirable to rethink democracy so as to better align it with the current purported reality of planet Earth. So in this regard as well, I think there are dangers ahead for democracy in the Anthropocene. It risks being swept away by benevolent but misguided attempts to rethink it. To this it should also be added that the Anthropocene imaginary, much like arguments for green democracy in green political theory, appears to easily serve ideological functions. If there is a need to rethink democracy in the face of a new reality, that reality readily appears as something necessary. If statements about the Anthropocene claim to speak of planet Earth as it is in itself, they seem to ignore or sidestep the creativity of human thought. If so, they affirm the necessity of the world in that its character is independent of the thought that thinks of that character. By that, despite the Anthropocene imaginary calling upon humans to rethink their position in the world and possibly change how to act in relation to it, it actually denies humans of their creative power. This pertains to their power to create meaning on their own as well as their power to decide for themselves what they are and what they should

become. If arguments about the need to rethink democracy are couched in terms of necessity—that humans *must* change their ways because of what the world is in itself—then those actions are not themselves expressions of democracy. So, basically, if this line of reasoning provides a valid representation of the argumentative structure of the Anthropocene imaginary, then the impetus for democracy comes from the affirmation of a non-democratic experience of political order and of oneself. From this point of view, the future no longer seems to be up for grabs by those who act politically. True change is not an option, and self-creativity is denied. By all means, humans might need to change the way they do things because of humankind's powers as a geological force—about that, I have nothing to say—but from the point of view of modern thought, that need becomes apparent not because statements about the Anthropocene represent the Anthropocene in itself. According to modern thought, such statements, like all others, are intersubjectively agreed upon and reflect how the world appears for someone. Indeed, they might be true, but their truthfulness is the outcome of social practices and relations of power. They are part of the political world which political subjects themselves, from a modern and democratic point of view, are meant to create. The Anthropocene belongs to the self-creative process of human subjectivity, and is in this respect not safeguarded from political contestation. The Anthropocene, as a concept that makes the world meaningful in a certain way, is a determinate outcome of the political ordering of the world. If that is forgotten or ignored, then it is ideological in its function and reduces the possibility for democratic experience as it effaces the con-

stitutive principle of political order.

By this, I am not saying that statements about the reality of the Anthropocene are false or that the Anthropocene imaginary is built on a lie. Rather, I simply aim to highlight that democracy, as it is conceptualised in the present, belongs to a mode of thought in which there is no clear-cut distinction between political life, determinate being, and the creation of meaning, and that it presupposes that indistinction. Therefore, any determination of the meaning of humans, nature, and their relation should be recognised as part of political practice. Participating in such determinations and contributing to their transformation is part of the democratic experience of order. Therefore, such things cannot be settled before democratic practice. They do not make politics possible. It is the other way around. Politics makes such determinations possible. Therefore, statements about the Anthropocene are political. If democracy is said to need to be in line with certain determinations of humans and nature, then democracy is actually circumvented. Such ideas restrict democracy and put limits to what can be achieved through democratic action. They effectively foreclose temporal contingency and makes the future a little less open. Again, the future of democracy appears to be in danger in the Anthropocene.

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The above conclusions and arguments present a rather bleak picture of democracy in the Anthropocene. However, I would still not say that hope is lost. Nor would I argue in favour of the status quo to affirm the current operative logic of democracy as the best available option for dealing with the

ecological predicament of modernity. Democracy might still have a future in the Anthropocene, and there might even be room for improvements; it is, I believe, possible to maintain a democratic future, even if humans are living in their own geological epoch; it is possible for the future to remain open for change by political action. I would like to end with a suggestion for an alternative to non-anthropocentric democracy in the Anthropocene.

To do so, I would like to proceed from a couple of assumptions. First, let us say that a profound move away from unsustainable to sustainable practices requires a strengthening of democracy and thereby side with the environmentalist line of reasoning outlined in chapter 2. Second, let us also assume that it is correct to point out human-nature dualism as a main reason behind modernity's ecological predicament, that an understanding of nature as something external to society provides the foundation of unsustainable practices. Third and finally, let us adopt, just as in green political theory, a modern concept of democracy, and thus say that it is *this* democracy that needs improvement.

While I have made the case that the modern concepts of political order and democracy do not presuppose a logically prior dualist conceptualisation of humans and nature, I have not claimed that human-nature dualisms are absent in modernity. Indeed, I have also detailed that nature can still appear to be an external world existing on its own. Natural things can still be treated as objects unrelated to subjects in modernity. Even aspects of human subjectivity can be objectified in this way.

As was detailed in the analysis of modern discourse, representational thought is not completely disqualified in modernity.

Rather than being equal to thought as such, however, representational thought in modern discourse is a result of historical forces. It is an outcome of the creativity of thought, grounded in the constitutive and creative power of human subjectivity. It is still possible for moderns to claim that thought represents the world as it is in itself, independent of thought. Therefore, it is possible to state things, in meaningful ways, about nature as it is in itself. Indeed, it is always possible to object to such statements and say that they are actually about nature as it appears for someone, but they can be meaningful nevertheless. Thus, it is also possible to make sense of nature and to approach it as something that is independent of human being. Nature, then, can be determined as being separate from humans, and human beings, living in their societies, can be walled off from the natural. Thusly are foundations for dualist understandings of humans and nature provided in modernity.

However, here, dualism is a result. In general terms, it is an outcome of historical forces, and in more precise terms, it is a creation of human practice. Modern nature is *externalised* rather than fundamentally *external*. Given that there is no clear-cut distinction between political life and the creation of meaning in modernity, this means that dualism is an outcome of processes that are political and characterised by the exercise of power. At a political level, then, external nature is externalised by means of an act of exclusion.

Importantly, this positions human-nature dualism as being logically secondary to political order and democracy. A separation of humans and nature does not condition modern political order and democracy. It is the other way around. The operations of polit-

ical order condition the separation of humans and nature. It is a contingent result of political order existing as a determination of meaning. I say contingent because it is not a *necessary* result of political practice; nature can be determined as something else than a world completely separated from society.

Of course, I have also gone to great lengths to argue that nature, or the material world, is outside of, or other to, human being, society, or political order. And yes, the epistemic configuration of modern discourse leads to nature being the outside, differentiated from humans. Nature in modernity is, after all, related to humans in a unity of *difference*. Quite a few instances of this conceptualisation were encountered in chapter 5. There, determination of meaning in modernity was said to first and foremost make a distinction between meaning itself and non-meaning; society was said to make a primordial differentiation between itself and its environment, or nature as environment; determinate political order was said to be conditioned by the relation between the constitutive power of the sovereign decision and a material world, and the sovereign decision was said to draw a primordial limit between order and non-order, between itself and the material other. Nature, it was noted, is always the excluded other of politics. Indeed, the two related parties are different, but they are still united, a crucial difference between early modern and modern conceptualisations of human-nature relations. In relation to each other, each is whatever the other is not, but they always emerge together. The determination of meaning, the creation of society, the decided order of politics all presuppose an outside. This is, however, a constitutive outside, an outside that conditions the inside. It is

not an outside independent or completely separated from the inside. Here, nature is a constant companion to human being. The inside draws from the outside in the creation of itself and its other. Political order becomes what it is by means of its excluded other, a process in which nature receives form as well. Political order can never cut off its ties from its other; it is never independent of it.

Moreover, in all of these instances of the conceptualisation of the relation of humans and nature as a unity of difference, both poles of the relation are basically abstract and empty; they are indeterminate voids. These are indeterminate objective and subjective beings. It is only in discourse, in the historical unfolding of political order and social relations, that they receive determinate forms. What one is dealing with when one is talking about modern human-nature dualisms and nature as external and independent of society is determinate nature, nature with positive content, with a specific meaning. Thus, one is dealing with nature as it has become determined historically. That nature can certainly be externalised and made meaningful as something independent and separate from humans. This is, however, made possible by a non-dualist understanding of nature. Humans and nature might be determined as being separated from each other and as two different worlds independent of each other, but they do so together, in a unity; they have a shared process of becoming.

If human-nature dualisms where nature appears to be completely external to society and society appears to be independent of nature occur as the results of practices part of an order that is experienced democratically, then there is a connection between their

emergence and democracy. Since modern political order as such is democratic, even though it need not appear to be so, such dualisms are always connected to democracy. Thus, they can be approached as part of the existence of political order and its operations. Specifically, they can be placed in relation to the tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself.

I have shown that the existence of modern democracy is tied to its process of determining meaning, that order functions as a determination of meaning. In this process, political order moves away from the uncertainty, unpredictability, and indetermination associated with constitutive power and the sovereign decision towards the determination, certainty, and predictability associated with an ordered world. This is in principle an endless process. Political order determines everything that comes in its path, the subjective power to create meaning is without limits. All gaps are sealed, all voids are filled. It is in this process that democracy tends to disqualify itself. It is in this process that political order is in danger of losing track of its own constitutive principle, and it is from this process that the world and the things in it might appear to be necessarily what they are. In tending to disqualify itself—in its move away from itself—democracy obviously impairs itself. It becomes restricted, weakened and of lesser scope.

As a particular determination of nature, dualist nature—to use a simplified term—belongs to this process. It is an outcome of the historical being of political order. From this point of view, it becomes a problem of how democracy functions. Specifically, it becomes a problem associated with the tendency of modern democracy to disqualify itself. It becomes a problem associated with

modern democracy weakening itself, lessening itself, impairing itself.

As a suggestion, then, if more, stronger, and better democracy is key for sustainability, perhaps this tendency of democracy to disqualify itself is what needs to change. Maybe what is needed in the Anthropocene is not a rethinking of democracy along non-anthropocentric lines, but rather a democracy that lessens its tendency to determine everything that comes in its path? Perhaps the key lies not in trying to extend democracy to nature but in hindering the order of the world? Could it be that humans simply need to find ways to live with uncertainty and unpredictability? Does the future of democracy in the Anthropocene hinge on not everything making sense, on meaninglessness? I believe there is something to answering these questions in the affirmative.

In my view, this need to live with uncertainty pertains to actual political practice. The ambitions to strengthen democracy and lessen its tendency to disqualify itself should be directed towards constituted order. Perhaps one might be tempted to emphasise constitutive order instead. Indeed, if the decisionist origin of order amounts to an affirmation and realisation of subjective creativity and a change of what is, then it might seem tempting to seek ways to turn that into a constant experience. However, doing away with constituted order and favouring constitutive power in this way makes little sense since constitutive power only amounts to the logical prerequisites of constituted order (Prozorov 2005, pp. 101–102). Moreover, since the sovereign decision is a moment of indetermination, a moment where there are no limits, no distinctions, where everything is but a void, a 'perpetual decisionism' as Prozorov refers to it, would just be non-being:

It is unclear how a 'perpetual decisionism' . . . is tenable at all in any other form than a hyperbolic and hysterical 'permanent transgression'—a project that appears wholly unintelligible. . . . There may never be a 'transgressive' identity or lifestyle that one could specify in positive terms, since transgression, in Foucault's expression, 'has its entire space in the line that it crosses.' Transgression has identity as its object not as its form. . . .

It is thus entirely meaningless to attempt to identify what a 'transgressive' . . . politics might look like. The final or ultimate transgression may be conceived only as an ecstatic leap into the void of the outside; that is, into a state of nonbeing. (ibid., p. 101)[1]

Rather than trying to affirm constitutive power while scrapping constituted power, it seems more fruitful to infuse determinate order with a little bit of its constitutive principle (ibid., p. 105); to make uncertainty and unpredictability part of political order and not something that needs to go away. Non-order needs to be introduced in order, rule tainted by unrule, contestation part of authority, resistance part of power. What is needed is what Foucault once defined as *critique:* 'the art of not being governed so much', 'the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility' (Foucault 1996, pp. 384, 386; see also Prozorov 2005, pp. 104–105).

In order for democracy to lessen its tendency to disqualify itself, it must not proceed to determine the world or the things of the world in full. Such an order would have to restrain itself, not because of something external acting as a limit, but because of what happens as part of political order. Order must still be experienced as originating in itself, in the actions of those who are members of political order. The subjects of politics need to find ways to encounter the indeterminate *as* indeterminate, as something that does not have a determinate being. The unpredictable needs to remain unpredictable, certainty not forced upon uncertainty. Those who act politically should abandon the '"quest for certainty"' (Saward 1993, p. 77).

In such a world, some things would always remain meaningless. Not all things would have to be this or that, either-or, human or natural. Moreover, in terms of the agentic members of political order, they would not necessarily determine each other as either friends or enemies. The other could indeed be friend or enemy, but it could also simply a stranger, neither friend nor enemy. In other words, the importance of rigid dualist distinctions would be restricted.

All of this points to a profound need to respect otherness, to respect otherness *as otherness*. Otherness as otherness needs to prevail. The need to foster such a respect is sometimes highlighted in green political theory. That is often done in an ethical register, however. Bennett, for instance, already in 1987, set out to 'articulate an ethic of greater tolerance for otherness in nature and in the social order' (1987, p. 149). More recently, Wapner has suggested that 'the more we honor otherness, the more we will seek its cultivation in ourselves and our world' (2010, p. 218). On a similar note, Biro argues that

if the reshaping of nature that will reshape ourselves is to remain grounded in a normative commitment to autonomy, then a democratic respect for otherness ought to provide a bulwark against either authoritarian social engineering or

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[1] The quote by Foucault Prozorov is referring to appears in Foucault ([1963] 1977, p. 34), but the original passage reads 'has its entire space in the line it crosses'.

massive geoengineering, the former failing to respect the autonomy of other humans, the latter failing to respect the … autonomy of other species. (Biro 2015, p. 35)

However, what I am after here, I think, is something more profound than ethics. What is needed is not a proper stance towards some*thing*, say the natural world. Respect for the otherness of nature means that the other has already been determined. It has been determined as 'nature'. The respect for otherness that I am grasping for here, it seems to me, is more of an ontological matter. It is about affirming the otherness in being as such; respect for the other, *whatever it is.*

So, what I am suggesting here is an alternative to non-anthropocentric democracy that, instead of extending a democracy that tends to disqualify itself, proceeds from an ambition to lessen that tendency. It is an attempt to improve democracy from within rather than extending its scope and thereby its shortcomings. It is a suggestion that emphasises the importance of not determining everything in the world, of living with uncertainty and unpredictability, and respecting the otherness of being. Indeed, modern democracy already proceeds from a moment of uncertainty, unpredictability, and indetermination. However, this is a suggestion to always maintain points of contact with uncertainty; to constantly come to terms with the unpredictable; to accept bumping up against things without determinate form, without fixed meaning. Thus, it is a suggestion for democracy to not only proceed *from* but also to proceed *together with* uncertainty, unpredictability, indetermination, and the other; somewhat of an embrace of not telling, or being able to tell, what

everything, and perhaps even some thing, is. '*I can't tell.* I like that expression, because of the sonority, and all the meanings that resonate together in it: to count, to recount, to guess, to say, to discern. For us, for our future, *nobody can tell*' (Derrida [1980] 1987, p. 47).

So, perhaps the important question for democracy in the Anthropocene and for the future of democracy is not to go beyond humans. Perhaps the important question is what a democracy that proceeds from and together with uncertainty, unpredictability, and indetermination might look like. Exactly *what* such a democracy would look like in reality is not a question for me to answer. Throughout this book, I have constantly emphasised the importance of self-creation, political order not being tied to a fixed form, agentic membership, and the openness of the future for the democratic experience. Thus, what the future of democracy in the Anthropocene should be is hardly for me to decide—that door needs to remain open. If anything, it is a matter for democratic order itself, for all members of political community, for all those who act and create the world, in their acting and creating. Perhaps the decision of the future is not to decide; to keep the door open. Perhaps, perhaps. Besides, my ambition with this study has not been to conceptualise an alternative to democracy, green, Anthropocene, modern or otherwise. But perhaps I myself can actually participate in the self-creation of political order as a subject of order? After all, have I not argued that there is no clear-cut distinction between knowledge, the determination of meaning, and politics in modernity? By writing this book, have I acted politically all along? And if so, could a continued participation take the form of

more research? Would an attempt to chisel out the suggested alternative a bit further be a valuable, albeit certainly small, contribution to the self-creation of political order in the Anthropocene? Is there a doorway here; an opening? And, if there is, a need to see what is on the other side; on the outside?

Perhaps there is a need for more research along the lines of the current study. Perhaps. Perhaps not. Probably not. Perhaps that would close doors, not open them? On this matter, I remain uncertain. And that seems fine to me. Better leave that door open.

All doors are dreams.
– Morpheus

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