

Spring 2013

# Fractured Ethics: The Relationship Between Humanity and the Nonhuman

Oriel Eisner

*University of Colorado Boulder*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr\\_theses](https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr_theses)

---

## Recommended Citation

Eisner, Oriel, "Fractured Ethics: The Relationship Between Humanity and the Nonhuman" (2013). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. 343.  
[https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr\\_theses/343](https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr_theses/343)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Honors Program at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact [cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu](mailto:cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu).

***Fractured Ethics: The Relationship Between  
Humanity and the Nonhuman***

**Oriel Eisner**

**Humanities Department**

**University of Colorado at Boulder**

**Defended April 8, 2013**

***Thesis Advisor***

**Dr. Anthony Abiragi | Humanities**

***Committee Members***

**Dr. Paul Gordon | Humanities**

**Dr. Ruth Mas | Religious Studies and Humanities**

**Dr. Elias Sacks | Religious Studies**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Disenchantment.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Historical Origins .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Responses Authorized .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Chapter Five: Consequences and Relevance .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chapter Six: Solutions .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>68</b>

## Acknowledgements

Without the continual assistance in, and out, of the classroom from Dr. Anthony Abiragi in pursuing my personal academic interests over the past several years none of this would have been possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Ruth Mas and Dr. Elias Sacks for accommodating and encouraging the integration of my thesis work and their courses, along with their ongoing encouragement and direction in pursuing extraneous material. I would like to thank them all for their continued support.

I would also like to thank Ron Stern for contributing to the editing process; his comments were  
incredibly helpful

## Abstract:

This thesis analyzes the way the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman has been historically defined in Western society with particular attention to the way that this relationship has shifted in modernity. The central claim is that the way this relationship has been understood has led to mass exploitation, subjugation, and domination of the nonhuman by humanity. This claim is heavily reliant on a discussion of disenchantment as elaborated upon by Max Weber, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger will also provide support for this central claim though these figures don't explicitly refer to the term disenchantment.

The first half of the thesis will include critique and analysis of the way the relationship has been traditionally understood in order to assert the relevance and severity of the destructive nature of the relationship in modern Western society. This discussion will mostly include reference to Immanuel Kant as his contributions to modern philosophy and ethics are unrivaled.

Following the critical discussion will be a discussion of potential solutions and responses to the problem of disenchantment as it effects the human/nonhuman relationship. This half will include conversations with Martin Buber, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Michel Foucault. Though these three thinkers do not explicitly address the issue of disenchantment or the destructive nature of the human/nonhuman relationship their discussions will be seen to be both applicable and affirming of a solved ethics.

## Introduction

### I

“Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity. Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world.”<sup>1</sup> This passage comes from the opening of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. In this work the authors grapple with the limits and consequences of enlightenment thinking. The authors do not limit themselves to the Enlightenment, in the sense of a given period in time, but rather they attempt to explore a form of thinking, which they coin 'enlightenment thinking', that is present throughout Western history. Their objective is made clear in the preface: “What we had set out to do was nothing less than to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.”<sup>2</sup> Though the authors were writing in direct response to the atrocities of the Holocaust and World War II their own discussions, and the relevance of their analysis, extend far beyond this traumatic event in Western history. Implied within their discussion is that though the Holocaust was catastrophic, it was not an aberration in Western history. The 'new kind of barbarism' which the Western world has been sinking into, and which allowed for the Holocaust to take place, was facilitated by a process known as disenchantment; a process which is deeply enmeshed in Western history.

This barbarism is most evident in the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman, inhabited world. Throughout history humanity has understood itself in relation to the nonhuman and animal world and has often related to the nonhuman world from a position of authority, domination and exploitation. In light of this, disenchantment and modernity have enacted a widening of the divide between the human and the nonhuman leading to a rapid acceleration of the degradation of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002. pg. 1  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. xiv

nonhuman for the sake of human purposes. This is evidenced by the innumerable alterations of the nonhuman world seen today; alterations which threaten to restructure life as we know it. The modern ethical framing of the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman, as determined by disenchantment, can therefore be seen to be inherently destructive and insufficient, and thus in need of re-examination and restructuring.

In this thesis I will examine the shortcomings associated with the modern, disenchanted framing of the human/nonhuman relationship and attempt to present potential responses that will aim to alleviate the detrimental consequences of disenchantment and modernity on the human relationship with the nonhuman world. I will begin in Chapter Two by providing an overview discussion focusing on the term disenchantment and the central trend associated with the modern response. In Chapter Three I will analyze historical elements which have contributed to the initial phase of disenchantment being considered; the estrangement from nature. Once the various levels of estrangement have been fully explicated I will begin in Chapter Four to examine the ways in which this estrangement has been historically responded to with a unique focus on the 'modern' response as discussed by Martin Heidegger. Once the thematic responses have been discussed specific consequences and implications of these responses will be considered in Chapter Five in order to assert the relevance and severity of the disenchantment of the human/nonhuman relationship. This will be followed in Chapter Six by potential alternative responses and remedies focusing particularly on conversations with Martin Buber, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Michel Foucault in order to provide positive direction as well as critique.

## Disenchantment

### I

Before delving more specifically into the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman world the concept of disenchantment must be elucidated. The term's formulation is rooted in Max Weber's discussions and thus, in order to fully comprehend the implications of the term, it is important to begin with how Weber understands the concept of disenchantment. For Weber disenchantment essentially refers to a loss of mystery in the world which can be attributed to intellectualism and rationalization. As Weber writes in his essay *Science as a Vocation* referring to rationalization:

It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one *could* learn at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted.<sup>3</sup>

The enchanting features of the world have been eradicated by modern intellectual rationality. Once the mysteries of the world have been denounced, or at least claimed to be knowable, then the wonder and enchantment associated with these mysteries disappears.

Intellectualism and rationalization, and thus disenchantment, are especially present within scientific rationality and take on their full manifestation through this field. Scientific rationality attempts to calculate, predict, and model the world numerically and theoretically. As Frankfurt School scholar J.M. Bernstein, who specializes in Adorno, asserts, “Intellectualism is the reflexive belief that the domain of scientific rationality—what can be known through the causal analysis of quantifiable law-like processes subject to experimental manipulation—is in principle universal in scope.”<sup>4</sup>

Intellectualism thus supports the claims of scientific rationality and contends that the mysteries of the world are no longer mysteries and can in fact be calculated. Weber also notes that scientific rationality,

---

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in Bernstein, J.M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001. pg. 7

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 7

and hence intellectualism, have taken full claim over modern rationality and theoretical knowledge and have therefore permeated through all of Western society.

This is troublesome for Weber because he believes that a disenchanted world is a world devoid of value and meaning. The intrinsic worth of the external world that stems from its unknowability and mystery is subsumed within its newfound calculability and it is thus left meaningless. Nietzsche speaks to this critique much more aggressively:

They [the philosophers] think that they are showing *respect* for something when they dehistoricize it, *sub specie aeterni* [from the standpoint of eternity]--when they turn it into a mummy. For thousands of years, philosophers have been using only mummified concepts; nothing real makes it through their hands alive. They kill and stuff the things they worship, these lords of concept idolatry—they become mortal dangers to everything they worship...what is, does not *become*; what becomes, *is* not.<sup>5</sup>

Here Nietzsche refers directly to 'the philosophers', however, he is referring more generally to the pursuit of intellectualism. The mummified concepts he speaks of are essentially the calculated and conceptualized mysteries of reality.

Both Nietzsche and Weber contend that calculating and conceptualizing freezes, mummifies, and thus devalues the world. As Bernstein writes, “We do not esteem what we know—what the natural and human sciences have revealed to us about the world—because there does not appear to be anything in what is known that is or could be worthy of esteem.”<sup>6</sup> The value is stripped from the world at the hands of formula and order. For both Nietzsche and Weber this devaluation coincides with, or even follows, a rejection of meaning. “Conversely, what we *need* to esteem, what would give meaning and significance to our lives, has been shown not to be a valid component of the known or knowable world, and thus becomes an illegitimate or delegitimated object of veneration. As a consequence of the

---

5 Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print pg. 167

6 Bernstein, J.M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 5

practical and rational success of modern science, truth and truthfulness have become our highest values.”<sup>7</sup> Calculable, scientific truth takes the forefront and enchanted, living existence is suppressed in order to conform to the truth-bearing system. Accepted reality becomes limited to what can be scientifically, rationally, or mathematically determined; anything which exists beyond the quantifiable components of a concept or an object becomes irrelevant and ceases to have meaningful value.

## II

Horkheimer and Adorno develop this notion of devaluation and demystification more explicitly in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. They write: “When in mathematics the unknown becomes the unknown quantity in an equation, it is made into something long familiar before any value has been assigned. Nature, before and after quantum theory, is what can be registered mathematically; even what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems.”<sup>8</sup>

Horkheimer and Adorno refer to the system as mathematical in this instance, Weber refers to it as calculability, and Nietzsche refers to it as the concept, but they are all essentially speaking to the same force; the force of rational systematizing.

In speaking of scientific and rational concepts and systems Bernstein states: “they are abstract universals which, in their different ways squander the sensuously particular in its particularity.”<sup>9</sup> Scientific and rational concepts reinvent the sensuously particular as a mere thought-form; subsuming an entity’s tangible existence into a preconceived system. In the case of disenchantment, all of existence is included within this subsuming. The object of inquiry is no longer understood or valued intrinsically but only through its relevance to a conceptual model or system which is held to be unchanging and universal. Horkheimer and Adorno maintain that this process is central to enlightenment and as they write in the opening chapter of their text: “abstraction, the instrument of

---

<sup>7</sup> Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 5

<sup>8</sup> Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. pg. 18

<sup>9</sup> Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 18

enlightenment, stands in the same relationship to its objects as fate, whose concept it eradicates: as liquidation.”<sup>10</sup> Abstraction eradicates the particular entity which it attempts to comprehend by subsuming that which it observes into a system. They continue on: “The subsumption of the actual, whether under mythical prehistory or under mathematical formalism, the symbolic relating of the present to the mythical event in the rite or to the abstract category in science makes the new appear as something predetermined which therefore is really the old.”<sup>11</sup> Nothing is approached in itself. Intellectual rationalization approaches all that it encounters with the aim to abstract in order to understand. This is especially disconcerting in regard to the nonhuman world in that making the nonhuman into the nonidentical eradicates any intrinsic worth of the nonhuman and fosters increased subjugation and exploitation.

### III

Until this point the discussion of disenchantment has related mostly to the loss of value associated with objects and ideas. While this loss is incurred upon the entirety of existence, Adorno takes his concern with disenchantment even further. “Adorno contends that not only does it eliminate previous *objects* of ethical esteem, but more emphatically and importantly it eliminates what I call the *forms of object relations* that previously had been manifest in ethical reasoning: *experience, knowledge, and authority*. Disenchantment thus effects not only beliefs, and a transformation of the objects of knowledge, but even more significantly our *modes* of cognitive interaction with objects.”<sup>12</sup> Disenchantment acts upon the creation and maintaining of conceptualized systems which act to devalue the objects they consider, but included within the creation of conceptualized systems is a reconstruction of how those objects are related to by the observing subject. Intellectually rationalized thought

---

10 Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print pg. 9

11 Ibid. pg. 21

12 Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 32

“dissolves material inferential relations amongst concepts into formally logical relations.”<sup>13</sup> The concepts and objects of the world are abstracted into formal, logical systems; materiality is suppressed in favor of logical systems and concept-structures. These concept-structures take the form of metaphysics, of universality, of unconditionality, all of which subsume the particular into a predetermined system. Horkheimer and Adorno refer to this subsuming as domination in their text and they write: “Not only is domination paid for with the estrangement of human beings from the dominated objects, but the relationships of human beings, including the relationship of individuals to themselves, have themselves been bewitched by the objectification of mind.”<sup>14</sup> Disenchantment impairs the relationship between the human subject and what they encounter and the relationship between the human subject and themselves.

This impairment occurs due to the necessary distance between the observing subject and the observed object. The self is separated from the object it theorizes about and observes, and its relationship to that object is thus dismantled. As Horkheimer and Adorno contend, “The manifold affinities between existing things are supplanted by the single relationship between the subject who confers meaning and the meaningless object, between rational significance and its accidental bearer.”<sup>15</sup> The observing, rational, scientific subject becomes authoritative and autonomous, determining the place, meaning, and value of the observed object within an intellectual system. The interaction of the subject and the object becomes contingent upon the systematizing observation of the rational subject, rather than upon their intrinsic relationship. As Bernstein writes, “The object of theoretical insight is *constituted* as determined independently of the standing of the self with respect to it.”<sup>16</sup> The interactive relationship is thus dispensed with in light of systematizing abstractions which impose external and non-relational value, meaning, and purpose on the previously-interacting particulars.

---

13 Bernstein, J. M. Adorno: *Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 36

14 Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. pg. 21

15 Ibid. pg. 7

16 Ibid. pg. 36

Along with a separation of the subject from the object being observed, intellectual rationalized systems seek objective validity and thus require a dispensing of the subjective influences of the observer who contributes to that system. As J.M. Bernstein writes, “Self-forgetfulness is the apperceptive origin of the claim that true knowing involves the elimination of subjective projection or interference, a removal of the self from the scene represented.”<sup>17</sup> The subject is not physically dispensed with but must be occluded because the sensibilities, emotions, perceptions, and experiences of the subject all threaten to taint the objectivity of their claim.

This need to dispense with the observer's subjective influence in favor of autonomy is directly explicated in Immanuel Kant's theory. Kant will be considered in more detail later as he is taken to be a paradigmatic figure in modern Western ethical thought, however, his contributions to the necessity of autonomy will be included here. In the Critique of Practical Reason he states, “For reason's legislation, however, it is requisite that reason need presuppose merely *itself*, because the rule [it gives] is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without contingent, subjective conditions, which distinguish one rational being from another.”<sup>18</sup> Relative subjectivity, in the face of the need for objective claims, must be ignored in order to maintain even the claim to objectivity.

Though the division of the subject and the object and the occlusion of the subject may appear to be distinctive processes they essentially refer to the same desire present in intellectual rationalization. Intellectual rationalization seeks abstracted and objective theories and concepts. In order for these concepts to take shape, the relative—subjective—influences must be removed. This occurs both through the separation of the subject from the object and through the removal of the subjective influence from the claims made. Hence the subject is separated from the world via their observation and themselves via their claims. Thus, inherent to the intellectual rational pursuit, is a bifurcation of the observer and the observed; i.e. the human and the nonhuman.

---

17 Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 36

18 Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1998. pg. 32

#### IV

Though the process of disenchantment as it has been understood here is essentially one process, it is clear that it comes forward in at least two forms. In one sense, disenchantment refers to the stripping of meaning and value from the world and existence. In the other sense, disenchantment refers to a separation of the material, sensible, experiential realm from the cognitive, conceptual, logical framework of rationalizing thought. In accordance with this distinction it can be seen how disenchantment subjugates the nonhuman world by stripping it of meaning and value, and how disenchantment also ruptures the relationship between the human and the nonhuman world. The forms of disenchantment can be analyzed and discussed separately however their unified nature cannot be overlooked as they are closely intertwined and act through and in relation to each other.

For Weber and Nietzsche, and in many ways also Adorno, the problem with disenchantment is the first form: that it wholly devalues life and living. Disenchantment essentially removes meaning, purpose, and value from existence. For these thinkers this is deeply disturbing because it empties the meaning and value out of everything, leaving humanity with nothing. Ethics, truth, the 'good,' rational pursuit, everything is hollowed out and decimated at the hands of disenchantment. As Bernstein writes, speaking about Nietzsche:

The 'process of dissolution' (Auflosungsprozess) to which Nietzsche refers concerns the way in which the rational and practical inadequacies of the present reinforce one another: not only does our framework of rationality delegitimize all extant moral and ethical goods, but in leaving no space for esteeming generally (because, again, nothing scientifically uncovered is worth esteeming), it equally undermines its own worth as our highest value.<sup>19</sup>

Nothing escapes the vacuum of disenchantment. What is most disconcerting about this, at least viewed through Bernstein's analysis, is that the development and value of ethics is shattered by

---

<sup>19</sup> Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 5

disenchantment. What is left is meaningless, valueless, and directionless existence.

## V

While this concern with devaluation is directly implicated within the rupturing of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, and the ensuing subjugation of the nonhuman, the discussions of Bernstein, Weber, and Nietzsche that have been addressed fall short of fully realizing and dealing with this concern. Adorno's concern with the 'forms of object relations' begins to address the ethical consequences of disenchantment and will be the point from which the ensuing discussion continues in that it is significantly more relevant to the problem of how humanity relates to the nonhuman world.

Because of this, disenchantment as it has been understood thus far will stand as the foundation from which the discussion ensues, however, it will not be accepted in its entirety. Both Weber's and Nietzsche's understandings of disenchantment harbor a sense of a historically previously enchanted world in which a rupturing took place and the world became disenchanted. This framing lends itself to an understanding of history divided by a pre-disenchantment era and a post-disenchantment era. When mapped onto the relationship between the human and the nonhuman Weber's and Nietzsche's conception of disenchantment would assume a time of pure and perfect relationship between the human and the nonhuman followed by a moment of rupture after which the relationship became defined by violence, subjugation and exploitation. Rather than understanding the relationship between the human and the nonhuman historically in this way I will acknowledge fluctuations and accelerations in the manifestation of the relationship, however, I will not argue for a notion of a pre-division, pre-subjugation period of relationship between the human and the nonhuman which is then romantically sought after or appealed to.

## VI

What is most pressing here is the consequences of disenchantment; the ethics it authorizes

especially in regard to the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman. Disenchantment acts as an underlying force throughout Western history which has fostered, and continues to foster, certain understandings and interactions within the world. These understandings and interactions have been associated with violence and subjugation on a grand scale. Countless manifestations of this violence come to mind and are discussed in detail by Weber, Nietzsche, Horkheimer and Adorno; however, speaking to all of these particular manifestations would be nearly impossible. In spite of this, due to the nature of the discussion, speaking about one issue lends itself to a discussion of all of the issues. What is being analyzed is not the trends and modes of thought which lead to a particular calamity, but the trends and modes of thought which create a current of history which then allows for particular calamities to occur.

As mentioned, one such location of violence authorized by disenchantment is the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman world. As Horkheimer and Adorno write, “At the turning points of Western civilization, whenever new peoples and classes have more heavily repressed myth, [enhanced disenchantment]...the control of internal and external nature has been made the absolute purpose of life.”<sup>20</sup> This desire to control is closely linked with the intellectual rationalization process Weber refers to and thus propagates a devaluation of the nonhuman world which authorizes a relationship between humanity and the nonhuman that is defined by domination and exploitation.

The first element of this relationship is defined in accordance with the two forms of disenchantment isolated earlier and is expressed by devaluation and separation. In accordance with the first form of disenchantment the nonhuman world is made entirely devoid of meaning or value. Coupled with this devaluation is a separation of the human from the nonhuman world which is incurred by the separation of the material, sensible, experiential realm from the cognitive, conceptual, logical framework of intellectually rationalized thought and by the separation of the observing subject and the

---

20 Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. pg. 24

observed object. The devaluation and separation of the nonhuman world can thus be seen to be the direct effects of disenchantment. These effects then act to authorize certain responses which have both maintained and propagated the disenchanted understanding of the nonhuman and these responses have also been defined by violence and domination. In consideration then is both the initial violence of devaluation and separation enacted by disenchantment itself, and also the violent tendencies authorized by the initial disenchantment. These tendencies will be addressed in greater detail later on, but as mentioned, refer mostly to the exploitation of the nonhuman for human purposes.

The initial disenchantment can be referred to as an estrangement from the nonhuman and from lived existence. In accordance with the forces of disenchantment humanity has repeatedly alienated itself from the world in which it lives and then responded to this world from a distinctive position. The initial violence can thus be understood as the rupturing of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, between the human and lived existence. Founded on a violent separation the responses have historically been defined by rejection and/or mastery of the estranged-from realm of existence. As Nietzsche writes, “*Anti-natural* morality, on the other hand, which is to say almost every morality that has been taught, revered, or preached so far, explicitly turns its back on the instincts of life—it *condemns* these instincts, sometimes in secret, sometimes in loud and impudent tones.”<sup>21</sup> This estrangement essentially creates a dichotomous relationship between the human, the rational, or the pure and the natural, the animal, or the impure propagating the violent rupture between the human and the nonhuman world and justifying the exploitation and degradation of the nonhuman world.

## VII

With that in mind there have been historical shifts in the way that these violent responses have manifested, culminating in the modern response which has been the most destructive. Martin Heidegger speaks directly to the modern response in his essay “The Question Concerning Technology.”

---

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print. pg. 174

In this essay Heidegger analyzes what he calls the 'Technological Age.' The 'Technological Age' refers to a trajectory of Western history which exhibits particular understandings and approaches to existence that are rooted in a desire to reveal. As Heidegger writes: “Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth.”<sup>22</sup> Technology is thus understood not to be a technological apparatus which relates to the things we produce, but rather a mode of thinking which seeks to reveal answers or 'truths' or concepts that exist within certain elements of existence; this mode of thinking coheres exactly with intellectual rationalization. Inferred within a desire to reveal is a desire to capture, to conceptualize. Heidegger refers to this desire as 'Enframing' which he also holds to be the essence of technology.

Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which set upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological.<sup>23</sup>

To enframe means to gather into concept and this gathering acts to master that which is observed. The entirety of existence is made into standing-reserve, disenchanted, due to the technological desire to eventually order that existence into a conceptualized system. The 'Age of Technology' is therefore a distinguishing element of disenchantment and, more importantly, a central factor in propagating the exploitative nature of the human relationship to the nonhuman. Hence, the exploitative relationship between humanity and the nonhuman is not uniquely modern though it has been exaggerated in modern times.

---

22 Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977. Print. pg. 12

23 Ibid. pg. 20

## Historical Origins

### I

In order to realize the severity of the influence of disenchantment on human/nonhuman relations historical moments must be traced which highlight the rupturing of the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman. These moments then set the stage for exploitative and violent interactions with the nonhuman. As reflected in the writings of Weber and Nietzsche, disenchantment has completely voided the nonhuman world of meaning, value, and purpose external to the intellectually rationalizing systems which seek to understand it. Also, more closely aligned with Adorno and Heidegger's discussions, disenchantment has fractured the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, authorizing a posture of domination and violence on behalf of the human. While the devaluation of the nonhuman world and the fracturing of the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman world may appear to be distinct processes, they are heavily dependent upon each other and propagate each other through their furthering manifestations. Intellectual rationalization devalues the nonhuman and bifurcates the relationship between the systematizing human and the systematized nonhuman. Conversely, bifurcating the relationship facilitates and encourages the devaluation of the nonhuman world. Both consequences—devaluation and bifurcation—can thus be seen to be remotely distinct yet codependent and integrated. Because of this both modes of disenchantment can be referred to as estrangement from the nonhuman. Although the discussion of these modes will speak of them separately; they can be referred to as externalizing estrangement and devaluing estrangement.

### II

Historical moments when the human has been distinguished from the nonhuman are present throughout the entirety of Western history. The distinction is so deeply engrained within language and thought that even within the language in this thesis this separation is clearly present. Phrases such as human/nonhuman, human/animal, human world/natural world, etc., all reflect a duality that has defined

the human relationship to its surroundings for centuries. Giorgio Agamben speaks directly to this point in his discussion of the anthropological machine:

Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside.<sup>24</sup>

Humanity has defined itself as human only in reference and in response to the supposed nonhuman. Estrangement thus founds the definition of humanity.

### III

Though estrangement can be seen to be the foundational element in defining the human, particular historical moments have propagated this estrangement. Oftentimes these particular moments have come about, quite literally, as a stratification of realms of existence. Because of this, these moments can be referred to as externalizing forms of estrangement and specifically involve belief in and/or appeal to transcendent realms of existence. Rather than devaluing and estranging from the world through systematization the world is devalued and estranged in relation to other realms of existence.

Friedrich Nietzsche speaks directly to such an estrangement in his work and refers to it as the fable of the 'True World.' In 'Twilight of the Idols' Nietzsche sketches what he calls "the history of an error." This history traces the creation, maintenance, and then dissipation of the notion of a 'true world' which is in some way other to the empirical, sensuous, world. The history begins with Plato: "the true world attainable for a man who is wise, pious, and virtuous—he lives in it, *he is it.*" It then continues to the Christian framing: "The true world, unattainable for now, but promised to the man who is wise,

---

24 Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. Print. pg. 37

pious, virtuous.” The history then ends with his character Zarathustra: “The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps?...But no! *We got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*”<sup>25</sup> Once the history reaches Zarathustra the notion of a 'true world', or any world other than the one which is experienced, has been completely abolished. Zarathustra is where Nietzsche seeks to take humanity; where he believes history should lead us. The notion of a 'true world', as originally framed in accordance with religious beliefs, is no longer relevant for Zarathustra and its continuation is highly problematic.

Though Nietzsche does not specifically refer to it in his “history of an error” he is essentially speaking to Plato's notion of a 'World of Forms.' Plato speculated the existent world which can be observed is representative of a higher order which aligns the existent world and allows for understanding on behalf of the philosophical mind. The transcendent forms serve as archetypes and the sensuously observed world is reflective of these forms. As Nietzsche writes: “they, [Plato and other philosophers], take what comes at the end (unfortunately! Since it should not come at all!), the 'highest ideas', which means the emptiest, most universal ideas, the last wisps of smoke from the evaporating end of reality—and they put it at the beginning, *as the beginning.*”<sup>26</sup> The transcendent realm of forms is made to determine the immanent world, and thus the immanent world is only understood in light of the transcendent forms. This opens a distinguishing space between the immanent world and the archetypal and transcendent world of forms. Value, meaning, and attention, are then stratified between the two realms shifting humanity's focus away from the world in which they live; particularly the nonhuman world.

Notions of an after-life, a transcendent divinity, or celestial spheres would be specific examples of the fable of a 'True World' in religion. Though these beliefs may not be present in all Western religious instances the permeation and influence of transcendent doctrines cannot be overlooked.

---

25 Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print. pg. 171

26 Ibid. pg. 168

Speaking to specific examples of this externalization one can consider notions of a 'Kingdom of Heaven,' or a transcendent 'God,' in order to solidify what is being discussed. Once externalized realms are made 'real' to a believer the believer's scope of concern becomes stratified between the immanent world in which they find themselves and the transcendent reality in which they believe. The believer has stakes within the existent universe and thus grants some value to the existent universe however the transcendent realm also beckons for consideration. The believer must then reapportion how and where they assign value between the immanent and the transcendent realm. A chasm is opened between the immanent reality of existence and the transcendent space which contains divinity, an after-life, or celestial spheres, and this distance necessarily entails an estrangement.

#### IV

While Nietzsche's discussion of the myth of the 'true world' does address Enlightenment philosophy what has been addressed thus far refers specifically to pre-modern forms of externalizing estrangement. These forms must be acknowledged because their influence and significance is still felt today, however, they are not entirely inclusive of the problematic and, in fact, are outdone in terms of consequential severity by the modern manifestations of external estrangement.

Immanuel Kant is a key historical figure in the development of Western society and philosophy. His discussions and ideas are highly reflective of the Enlightenment period in which he lived and the period's influences continue to shape contemporary life. Kant's own conclusions about philosophy, reason, and ethics marked a paradigmatic shift in Western approach which continues to this day, and therefore contemporary Western ethics, and philosophy, cannot be discussed without acknowledging or referencing Immanuel Kant's work. Kant's insights about reason and ethics have determined the way reason and ethics have been understood for centuries. And yet, his contributions to ethics and philosophy both endorse and propagate disenchantment and further the rupturing of the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman. Kant can thus be viewed as representing the modern, post-

Enlightenment, shift in the way that humanity has related to the nonhuman world.

Kant's discussion of rationality and reason establishes a similar distinguishing space to the one discussed by Nietzsche. For Kant this transcendent space is central to human thought. Kant speaks often of 'pure' reason or 'pure' rationality; terms which are meant to ground both philosophy and morality and which he explicitly states exist beyond experiential existence. As he writes in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*:

Philosophy placed on a precarious standpoint, is to be firm even though there is nothing either in heaven, or on earth, from which she is suspended, on which she relies. Here she is to prove her purity, as the sovereign legislatrix of her laws, not as the herald of those that an implanted sense, or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to her, which yet can one and all never make principles that reason dictates, and that must have their source, and with it at the same time their commanding repute, altogether completely a priori... Thus everything that is empirical is not only quite unfit to be added to the principle of morality, it is also most disadvantageous to the purity of morals themselves, in which the actual worth of a will absolutely good and elevated above any price consists precisely in this: that the principle of action is free from all influences of contingent grounds, which only experience can furnish.<sup>27</sup>

Philosophy must ground itself a priori—outside of experience—for any influence of experience taints the purity of the philosophy.

This understanding and approach to philosophy also determines morality for Kant. Kant's moral framework proves this assertion. For Kant, pure reason is universally attainable by all rational beings; it is a pure space which is the same for any rational being that inquires within it. Because of this Kant also believes that any precepts drawn from this space—especially moral ones—must hold universally and must therefore be objective. Kant states that the basic law of Pure Practical Reason, i.e. the basic

---

<sup>27</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary J Gregor. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1998. pg. 38

law of morality, is: “So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle of a universal legislation.”<sup>28</sup> The ability to legislate a moral principle universally is the determining factor of whether or not that principle is indeed a moral law.

In order to be determinable for all rational beings the moral law must be absolutely 'pure,' and thus must come from a priori bases. Any other grounding of the moral precept, especially subjective grounding, is entirely insufficient. As Kant writes:

Empirical determining bases are not suitable for any universal external legislation, but just as little also for an internal one; for each person lays at the basis of inclination his [own] subject, but another person another subject; and in each subject himself now this inclination and now another is superior in influence. Discovering a law that under this condition would govern them all—viz., with accordance on all sides—is absolutely impossible.<sup>29</sup>

Because of this Kant asserts that distinguishing between contingent subjectivity and universal objectivity is “the most important distinction of all that can ever be considered in practical investigation.”<sup>30</sup> This leads Kant to the conclusion that morality is entirely dependent on the autonomy of the subject.

Not only is the source of morality, and philosophy, externalized beyond experiential existence, but the functioning and adherence to morality on behalf of the moral agent requires autonomy. Kant's 'Critique of Practical Reason' is the most ethically directed of his three Critiques and thus provides the necessary insight into how morality functions in his framework. The question of morality begins through uncovering the moral law itself, and as discussed above, this takes place through pure inquiry. Once this moral law is uncovered Kant must prove how it is that this a priori, externalized, law can have direct effect on human practical activity.

In order to establish this connection Kant discusses freedom and the will. According to Kant

---

28 Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002. Print. pg. 45

29 Ibid. pg. 42

30 Ibid. pg. 40

human action is determined by the will, but this determination is only moral if it is motivated by a pure will “for the law of the pure will—which is free—places the will in a sphere entirely different from the empirical one.”<sup>31</sup> An empirically bound will would be motivated by subjective conditions and thus would not pass the test of purity required by morality for Kant. Freedom of the will accounts for this because it grants the will independence from its empirical conditions. As Kant states:

Since the mere form of a law can be presented solely by reason and hence is not an object of the senses and thus also does not belong among appearances, the presentation of this form as determining basis of the will is distinct from all determining bases of events [occurring] in nature...such a will must be thought as entirely independent of the natural law governing appearances in reference to one another, viz., the law of causality. Such independence, however, is called *freedom* in the strictest, i.e., the transcendental, meaning. Therefore a will which is such that the mere legislative form of a maxim can alone serve it as a law is a free will.<sup>32</sup>

Morality, which is grounded in the removal of sensuous and external influences, is realized and made effective by freedom which facilitates independence and autonomy on behalf of the will. For Kant, morality hinges on autonomy and therefore estrangement, though this form of estrangement can be seen to be more internal in that it estranges the human subject from their conditioned self and encourages thinking outward toward purity via freedom.

## V

With that being said it is important to note that for Kant although pure reason, freedom, and pure will are all essential for morality they are not necessarily attainable by humanity. It is impossible for the human agent to entirely free himself/herself from his/her empirical conditions and therefore absolute purity and absolute freedom stand more as aspirational virtues than attainable realities. As Kant writes:

---

<sup>31</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002. Print pg. 49

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. pg. 42

This holiness of will is nonetheless a practical idea that must necessarily serve as an archetype, which to approach ad infinitum is alone incumbent upon all finite rational beings; and the pure moral law, which is itself called holy because of this, constantly and rightly holds this idea before their eyes. Being sure of this progression ad infinitum of one's maxims and sure of their immutability in [this] constant advance, i.e., virtue, is the highest [result] that finite practical reason can bring about. Virtue itself, in turn, at least as a naturally acquired power, can never be complete, because the assurance in such a case never becomes apodeictic certainty and, as persuasion, is very dangerous.<sup>33</sup>

Even though complete and absolute purity and freedom are impossible for the human agent, they are not wholly impossible in cognition and still operate as goals or virtues to be reached. In this sense, Kant is not granting humanity full ability to estrange itself from the empirical, experiential world, but he does argue that autonomy should be sought after and he infers that as estrangement and autonomy increase so do moral and philosophical clarity.

## VI

Kant's moral framework is contingent upon an estrangement from the empirical, lived, world toward a 'pure' realm of reason and consciousness through autonomy and freedom. Integration and relationship within the experiential world taints morality, and therefore its antithesis, estrangement, is encouraged and pursued. This creates a clear divide between the rationally-capable human who pursues purity and non-rational existence which taints that purity. Kant's approach to ethics and morality thus encourages a bifurcation of the human and the nonhuman by decidedly arguing for purity and autonomy. Such an approach to morality is therefore inherently destructive and must be overcome if the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman is to be reinterpreted on less violent and exploitative grounds.

---

<sup>33</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002. Print. pg. 48

## VII

The second form of estrangement, devaluation, acts to eradicate any intrinsic purpose the nonhuman may have and by doing so inherently subjugates and exploits the nonhuman. The Enlightenment stands as a moment of acceleration towards abstraction but it is important to remember that disenchantment and estrangement in the form of devaluation and abstraction are true of nearly all human history. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Horkheimer and Adorno state in regard to thought that:

Like the material tool which, as a thing, is held fast as that thing in different situations and thereby separates the world, as something chaotic, multiple, and disparate, from that which is known, single, and identical, so the concept is the idea-tool which fits into things at the very point from which one can take hold of them.<sup>34</sup>

In order to 'take hold' of the world thought relies on the concept and thus disenchantment and estrangement are inherent to thought, though propagated by certain tendencies in Western history. Making sense of the world, taking hold of it, is only possible through the introduction of a concept which also acts to abstract that which is being comprehended. This inevitability places the human within a paradox where the concept is both necessary and destructive.

## VIII

To elaborate further, and to frame a specific area of this type of disenchantment, Hölderlin's discussion of language is relevant. The notion of being both necessary and destructive is central to Hölderlin's approach to language and direct parallels can be drawn between language and 'the concept' for this discussion. Language is the original concept; it names, categorizes, places in a larger system of understanding. The process by which the human mind recognizes that which it encounters is founded upon the creation of symbols which evoke an estrangement from the actual entity. Thought is reliant

---

<sup>34</sup> Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. pg. 31

upon symbols in order to establish any sort of organization in the face of the immensity of existence; symbols are essentially simplifications of that which the mind encounters and these simplifications allow the mind to think about what is encountered. The word is merely a type of symbol by which the universe is made into thought and thus Hölderlin's discussion of language directly maps onto Horkheimer and Adorno's discussion of the concept.

For Hölderlin, language is absolutely essential to human existence. As Dennis Schmidt writes in *On Germans and Other Greeks*:

In the end, it is the human relation to the word alone that lets one see that and what one is, and that is why Hölderlin says elsewhere of language that it is “the most dangerous possession, which is given to man so that creating, destroying, and perishing...he might bear witness to what he has inherited, and that he has learnt from its most divine trait, all embracing love.” It is because we speak that we learn of ourselves.<sup>35</sup>

It is through language that humanity comes to define and understand itself; however, this discovery acts as a self-laceration. “The word, the locus of the destiny of the human being, is thus equally the site of affirmation and anguish.”<sup>36</sup> The self-laceration, the anguish, is due to the abstraction which Horkheimer and Adorno are concerned with.

Through 'the concept' and language the human brings that which is not human into a system of thought which allows understanding to take place; concepts and language are thus necessary for understanding the world and, as shown, central to estranging the world. Hölderlin refers to this moment as the 'double infidelity.' As Schmidt contends, “The overarching conviction driving Hölderlin is that nature needs language, but that the gift of the word which the poet brings to nature comes only when the poet severs himself from the whole of nature. The paradox is that the divinity of nature which the

---

35 Schmidt, Dennis J., *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. pg. 149

36 Ibid. 162

word exposes must deny its ultimate foundation.”<sup>37</sup> The space between humanity and the nonhuman will, and must, always exist. Attempting to reconcile this divide destroys it. Language thus places the human in a difficult paradox where estrangement, and thus disenchantment, is both necessary and destructive.

## IX

Though Hölderlin's discussion reaches to the core of human abstraction in that it discusses the reality of language, historical moments have sparked more explicit, and more intentional, abstractions and devaluations of the existent world. This is especially concerning for Adorno and he attributes this process of devaluing estrangement to identity thinking in rationalization.

Identity thinking as the subsumption of individuality (sensuous particularity) under a coherent, unifying, simplifying, explanatory, universal (myth, god, natural law, unified science).

Rationalization means the comprehension and/or meaning of individuals is increasingly had through their location within conceptual schemes whose fundamental terms are invariant and unchanging...in theoretical reason the relation is one of *subsumption*, individuals are mere tokens of given types.<sup>38</sup>

While Adorno does argue that identity thinking is reflective of a process that has existed throughout history, namely rationalization, he does believe it to be exacerbated by particular modes of thought or thinkers. One such mode is scientific rationalism which he believes to be “a process of systematically negating particularity in favor of universality.”<sup>39</sup> As Adorno writes, in modernity and particularly through science “nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification.”<sup>40</sup>

Classification is the modern, scientific, approach to experiencing and observing the world.

Language and the scientific concept can thus be seen to be examples of the devaluing

---

<sup>37</sup> Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print. pg. 160

<sup>38</sup> Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. pg. 31

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 31

<sup>40</sup> Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. pg. 6

abstraction Adorno is concerned with. Language is not historically bound to a given period, but scientific rationality is a modern endeavor, and because of this abstraction can be understood as timeless yet also propagated by the influences of modernity. The nonhuman, as continually abstracted, is thus continually devalued and subjugated by systematizing abstractions but the devaluation has been accelerated to unseen extremes by the modern, mostly scientific, approach.

### X

Heidegger speaks more directly to the scientific nature of modernity and the implications this scientific, rational, approach have on the nonhuman:

Research has disposal over anything that is when it can either calculate it in its future course in advance or verify a calculation about it as past. Nature, in being calculated in advance, and history, in being historiographically verified as past, become, as it were 'set in place.' Nature and history become the objects of a representing that explains. Such representing counts on nature and takes account of history. Only that which becomes object in this way is—is considered to be in being. We first arrive at science as research when the Being of whatever is, is sought in such objectiveness.<sup>41</sup>

The scientific, research-based approach, calculates and categorizes what it observes into objective systems. Once subsumed into these objective systems the particularity of the observed object is overcome. As Heidegger asserts, “Ongoing activity in research is a specific bodying-forth and ordering of the systematic, in which, at the same time, the latter reciprocally determines the ordering. Where the world becomes picture, the system, and not only in thinking, comes to dominance.”<sup>42</sup> The mode of thinking, scientific rationalism, which understands the world as picture or as system, places emphasis on the system and because of this overlooks the particular. Existence becomes a mere schema, a mere picture, through classification, losing its particular existence and worth. Having no particular worth, or

---

41 Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977. Print. pg. 127

42 Ibid. pg. 141

'being' as Heidegger states, the nonhuman is a mere thing which can be exploited and maltreated for the sake of what does have worth, the human.

## XI

Estrangement, in both of its forms, can thus be seen to be heavily interwoven in Western history and especially the modern age. The fable of the 'true world' as evidenced through religious notions of transcendent realities opens a space between experienced reality and transcendent divinity, heaven, or the cosmos. Plato's 'World of Forms' creates a similar separation through which the empirical world is understood as consisting of imperfect representations of a higher order. Kant's ethics is heavily reliant on metaphysical claims and is contingent upon purity and autonomy and is thus grounded by estrangement from experiential existence. Language and scientific conceptualization both act to subsume particularity into predetermined systems, estranging the observed object from itself and thus devaluing it. The estrangement of the nonhuman runs rampant in modern, Western society and the modern human approach to the nonhuman is thus framed by a rupture that is inclusive of subjugation and devaluation.

## Responses Authorized

### I

Once the world is entirely devalued of meaning, once it is estranged and suppressed at the hands of intellectual rationalization and scientific rationalism, a space of potentiality is opened which is then responded to. This response draws upon the disenchanting processes and ideologies and thus acts in accordance with the consequences of disenchantment. The world is devalued, the human is estranged from the world and their experiential selves, transcendent realms gain prominence, and the entirety of existence is systematized. Where does this then direct the frameworks and ideologies and societies which come to fruition in a world defined by disenchantment? Toward domination and exploitation of the nonhuman world. The initial violence, which is disenchantment in itself, is only further propagated and expounded upon by the ensuing responses to the initial estrangement.

### II

The responses to disenchantment can be loosely grouped into a discussion about a stratification of value. Disenchantment is inherently a devaluing of the world, and this devaluation leads to a complete restructuring and reappropriation of value. Humanity begins to reassess and impose various value structures upon life and existence which act to both esteem and devalue certain elements of conceived existence. As Weber and Nietzsche contend, esteeming and value themselves have been disenchanting at the hands of intellectual rationalization, but even if this is the case a value system is still established, though it may be artificial according to their standards. Thus, rather than evaluating the actual value implicit in the disenchanting value systems what must be observed is how these established value systems function and what effects they have.

There are two basic stratifications which take place in regard to the forms of disenchantment discussed. The first type of stratification can be referred to as the stratification of value between two realms. This type relates specifically to externalizing estrangement which establishes transcendent

realms such as heaven, the 'World of Forms', or 'pure' rationality. The second mode of stratification of value is a devaluing in accordance with a subsuming of the particularity of a given existent entity or object. Once subsumed the intrinsic worth of a given particular is eradicated and it becomes valuable only in relation to an imposed system or conception. This form relates specifically to the second form of estrangement—devaluing estrangement—which is present in metaphysics, scientific rationalism and any conceptual abstraction of particularity. The first stratification acts to make the nonhuman inferior in value and purpose to the human or the externalized realm; the second stratification subjugates the nonhuman to rationalizing systems and eradicates any sense of value external to those systems.

### III

The first type of stratification is discussed most explicitly in Nietzsche's fable of the 'True World.' Appeals to this 'true world', as evidenced through religion and Plato's 'World of Forms,' radically divide the immanent world and the 'true world.' This divide then leads to a stratification of value between the established realms. The transcendent realm is the realm of God, of divinity, and the angels. It is thus pure and righteous and holy; the Kingdom of Heaven. The immanent realm is then made to be unholy, impure, and outright inferior. The goal then becomes transcendence of the impurities in order to reach the purity and holiness of divinity. This process has been referred to by Nietzsche as the 'Ascetic Ideal.'

The idea we are fighting about here is the *valuation* of our life on the part of the ascetic priest: he relates our life (together with that to which it belongs: “nature,” “world,” the entire sphere of becoming and transitoriness) to an entirely different kind of existence, which it opposes and excludes, *unless*, perhaps, it were to turn against itself, *to negate itself*: in this case, the case of an ascetic life, life is held to be a bridge for that other existence.”<sup>43</sup>

Once a hierarchy of value has been established it quickly becomes the case that the lower spheres of

---

43 Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. Maudemarie Clark, and Alan J. Swensen. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1998. Print pg. 83

existence are negated and made inferior. Contingent upon negation, the ascetic ideal both rejects and commits violence against immanent existence; i.e., the nonhuman world. It therefore acts to further the estrangement of the human from the nonhuman, experienced world. In response to the initial separation enacted by disenchantment, the ascetic ideal pushes the estranged world into complete and total negation.

#### IV

Based on this notion humanity has granted itself unique standing in the universe. Inherent to the ascetic ideal is a belief that humanity has the ability to contact the 'true,' or transcendent, realm. This ability to encounter the transcendent establishes special standing. Rather than being purely immanent, purely material, the human divides themselves, and the world, into spirit and body, sacred and profane, holy and unholy. The world is essentially divided “into a 'true' half and an 'illusory' one, whether in the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant (an *underhanded* Christian, at the end of the day),”<sup>44</sup> and the human then divides themselves in accordance with this distinction. This acts to devalue the nonhuman not through systematization but through negative valuation. Humanity grants itself unique authority and dominion over the nonhuman on account of its ability to contact transcendence.

Consider Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”<sup>45</sup> The immanent world is a part of humanity's domain. Such a position can justify innumerable violent activities and ideologies toward the nonhuman world and the trajectory of this divide is present throughout Western history.

This hierarchical structure based on contact with transcendence is further explicated and formalized by Plato's Great Chain of Being. According to the chain, humanity straddles the position between the transcendent and immanent realms; grasping transcendence and thus standing over the rest

---

44 Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print. pg. 170

45 *King James Bible*, Pure Cambridge Edition. Genesis 1:26

of that which is immanently bound. This position grants higher value to humanity and, coinciding with Genesis 1:26, dominion over everything lower in the chain. In Medieval Christendom this cooperation between Genesis 1:26 and Plato's Great Chain of Being takes on full form. As Charles Patterson writes: "Medieval Christendom translated Plato's image into a ladder which had God at the top and European Christians on the highest rung, a position that granted them a divine mandate as God's overseers and stewards to rule over the rest of the ladder below... Thus, European man had virtually unlimited authority to rule the natural world as 'The Vice-regent and Deputy of Almighty God.'"<sup>46</sup> Such a position nearly guarantees exploitation of the nonhuman world.

## V

The ascetic ideal also functions internally and the same stratification seen above takes place within humanity. This leads to the internal estrangement of the human subject from their conditioned self. The internal estrangement has been already attributed to Kant but it is also present within the Christian tradition and coincides with the spirit/body duality mentioned earlier. In accordance with this duality characteristics and traits are attributed to each 'realm.' The spirit is the higher realm and harbors rationality, divinity, and truth. The body is inferior and harbors passions, desires, and lust. This split, in combination with the ascetic ideal, leads to a rejection of the bodily functions. As Nietzsche writes, "The church combats the passions by cutting them off in every sense: its technique, its 'cure', is *castration*...It always laid the weight of its discipline on eradication (of sensuality, of pride, of greed, of the thirst to dominate and exact revenge).--But attacking the root of the passions means attacking the root of life: the practices of the church are *hostile to life*."<sup>47</sup> The ascetic ideal thus functions externally, by stratifying the immanent and transcendent realms of existence, and also internally, by dividing the human and suppressing certain traits according to that divide. These traits become associated with the nonhuman, especially the animal, and the internal suppression begins to move externally and translate

---

<sup>46</sup> Patterson, Charles. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Lantern, 2002. pg. 21

<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print. pg. 172

into a suppression of the nonhuman and the animal.

Once again, though estrangement at the hands of the ascetic ideal has been shown to extend deep into Western history its manifestation takes on new form in the modern response. This rejection of bodily and sensuous existence extends beyond purely religious grounds and is also entirely necessary for the philosopher who seeks to make metaphysical claims. Metaphysical claims require a dispensing of the conditioned self for conditioning impairs the objectivity, universality, or purity of a claim. This is again evidenced explicitly in Immanuel Kant's work. As he states: "Even the slightest admixture of the [pathologically determinable] power's impulses impairs reason's fortitude and superiority, just as the slightest empirical [component] as condition in a mathematical demonstration degrades and annihilates the demonstration's dignity and force."<sup>48</sup> Freedom from conditions, autonomy, is absolutely necessary in making metaphysical, 'purely rational', claims. This leads the critical moralist or philosopher directly into the ascetic ideal. As Nietzsche writes:

The ascetic ideal points out so many bridges to *independence* that a philosopher cannot, without inner jubilation and clapping of hands, hear the story of all those determined ones who one day said 'no' to all unfreedom and went into some sort of *desert*...What, accordingly, does the ascetic ideal mean for a philosopher? My answer is—one will have guessed it long ago: at its sight the philosopher smiles at an optimum of the conditions for highest and boldest spirituality.<sup>49</sup>

Negation of conditions is essential for making metaphysical claims and thus the philosopher is wholly enmeshed in the ascetic endeavor.

## VII

The ascetic ideal comes forward once the world has been stratified into distinctive realms. Once made distinct these realms are assigned certain values which then stand as the imposing value-system which determines the worth of disenchanting and estranged reality. This stratification of value also

---

<sup>48</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002. Print. pg. 37

<sup>49</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. , Maudemarie Clark, and Alan J. Swensen. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 1998. Print. pg.75

entails a stratification of concern. What is valued is highly esteemed and of great importance, while what is negated is no longer of any significant concern external to its negation. Stratifying the scope of concern essentially incurs an exclusion of the estranged and deepens the chasm and the violence incurred.

This is especially true of moral and ethical frameworks. When constructing a moral or ethical theory the scope of moral concern must be considered; who, or what, is included within the moral framework. The theorist must determine what criteria warrant acceptance as a moral agent, and also what criteria grant certain elements of life moral consideration. If the nonhuman world is estranged, the scope of moral concern will not include the estranged reality; it is external. Once devalued, the nonhuman is no longer worthy of esteem and therefore does not hold any worth intrinsic to itself in general, let alone as a moral agent. As such, a classification of estranged reality which rejects its moral relevancy is almost a redundancy.

Immanuel Kant establishes an ethical framework which operates upon these exact exclusionary terms. As discussed Kant's philosophical project focuses purely on reason and more specifically the thinking being who can think and act through reason. This leads Kant into a framework that Derrida refers to in 'The Animal That Therefore I Am' as the "I think." The "I think" being is the rational actor that can act purely through reason and thought. Kant, however, follows in history's footsteps and limits rationality to human faculty thereby limiting the "I" to humanity. As Derrida writes, "This capability, this power to have the "I" takes the high ground; it erects, it raises man infinitely above all the other beings living on earth...The person is an entirely different being, in rank and dignity, from these things which are irrational animals."<sup>50</sup> Being entirely different in rank and dignity the human proceeds to take dominion over that which has been excluded. Derrida continues, "One has power and authority over these irrational animals because they are things. One can use them and lord over them as one

---

50 Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Willis. New York, NY. Fordham UP, 2008. pg. 92-93

pleases.”<sup>51</sup> The human, as rational, exists apart from and above the non-rational animal, and hence also the non-rational nonhuman. The non-rational entity is excluded from moral consideration and moral worth and thus functions as a mere 'thing.'

The exclusion of the animal/nonhuman stems from the grounds which warrant acceptance into the moral community. Rationality, as the qualification required to be accepted into Kant's framework of ethics, leads to the conclusion that “no law or right is currently recognized as pertaining to animality in general, including present-day primates.”<sup>52</sup> Lacking rationality and therefore the “I think” the nonhuman is deprived of any sense of autonomy and cannot be the subject of rights. As Derrida explains, “what the nonrational animal is deprived of, along with subjecthood, is what Kant calls “dignity,” that is to say, an internal and priceless value.”<sup>53</sup> The nonhuman is granted no subjectivity, no sense of rights, and therefore has no intrinsic value in itself, i.e. is entirely vulnerable to the will of the rational actor. Central to Kant's ethical philosophy is the notion that rational beings should be treated as ends in themselves and not means to other purposes. By limiting the scope of moral concern to rational beings, by rejecting the ability of the animal to have rationality, and by stripping the animal of 'dignity', Kant essentially contends that animals, and other nonhuman entities, can be used as means to other, mostly human, purposes.

## VIII

Throughout history, and even to this day, rationality has been held as the distinguishing factor which sets humanity apart from the nonhuman world. From a religious perspective rationality has often been seen as the divine within the human, or at least the unique element of humanity which allows for connection and resemblance with the divine. In non-explicitly religious terms rationality has also stood as a distinctively human faculty and has been grounds for distinguishing humanity from the rest of

---

51 Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2008. Print. pg. 93

52 Ibid. pg. 99

53 Ibid. pg. 100

existence. St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Plato, Aristotle, and Francis Bacon, among many other foundational Western thinkers, all held the belief that humanity is uniquely rational, that the nonhuman and especially the animal is nonrational, and that the human is superior to the nonhuman on these grounds. Descartes claims that “animals [are] machines or automata, like clocks, capable of complex behavior, but wholly incapable of speech, reasoning, or, on some interpretations, even sensation.”<sup>54</sup> Francis Bacon states that “man, if we look to final causes, may be regarded as the center of the world.”<sup>55</sup> In speaking about religious law “Augustine wrote that the sixth commandment ('Thou Shalt Not Kill') applied only to humans, not to 'irrational living things...because they are not associated in a community with us by *reason*.”<sup>56</sup> Reason and rationality are utilized as justifications for the moral exclusion of the nonhuman world. This moral exclusion furthers the estrangement of the nonhuman world and also propagates notions of nonhuman inferiority and utility.

This exclusion is then often coupled with a drive for progression (the ascetic ideal) which only acts to further degrade the nonhuman. Human progress, however that may be defined, is granted higher significance and is sought after at all costs. As Kant contends, violence and subjugation are justifiable if they accord with human progress. Kant states this quite explicitly in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*: “Civil or foreign war in our species, as great an evil as it may be, is yet at the same time the incentive to pass from the crude state of nature to the civil state.”<sup>57</sup> The momentum Kant encourages is essentially identical to the ascetic ideal; progression accords with movement away from the 'crude state of nature.' The nonrational (nonhuman) represents an impurity and must be overcome and eradicated to allow room for the purely rational “I think” (human) to further itself toward a more civil state. Not only does this encourage a transcendence of the nonhuman, but, coupled with its disenchantment, the nonhuman becomes entirely subject to the will of the progressing human. The

---

54 Patterson, Charles. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Lantern, 2002. Print. pg. 23

55 Ibid. pg. 23

56 Ibid. pg. 20

57 As quoted in Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2008. Print. pg. 97

nonhuman, being devoid of moral worth, is thus at the service of humanity's progression. As Derrida asserts, “the animal cannot be taken to be an end in itself, but only a means. It belongs to the purely sensible order of existence that must always be sacrificed.”<sup>58</sup>

This notion is heavily supported by other key figures in Western history. As Augustine states, in continuation of his discussion of the sixth commandment: “hence it is very just ordinance of the Creator that [nonhuman] life and death is subordinated to our use.”<sup>59</sup> Thomas Aquinas agrees wholeheartedly declaring “that it is all right to kill animals because the life of animals...is preserved not for themselves, but for man.”<sup>60</sup> Aristotle believed it was as permissible to enslave people who did not possess “reason” as it was to enslave animals. “Slaves and animals do little for the common good, and for the most part live at random.”<sup>61</sup> Bacon writes that “apes and parrots were made 'for man's mirth,' while singing birds were created 'on purpose to entertain and delight mankind.”<sup>62</sup> Wholly estranged the nonhuman has no value, and, excluded from moral concern, the nonhuman has no hope of being esteemed in any regard and is considered utility for human purposes.

## IX

While the conception of the nonhuman as a means for human ends is present throughout history, this conception takes on new form and significance in modernity. As Martin Heidegger discusses, making-into-utility is something which is entirely redefined by modernity and is precluded within the modern conception and approach to the world. This process of making the estranged into utility is referred to by Heidegger as Instrumentalization. Instrumentalization refers to processes and ideologies which treat the nonhuman as a means to human ends, but in Heidegger's discussions instrumentalization also relates more specifically to the notion of an abstraction of particularity discussed earlier.

---

58 Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2008. Print. pg. 100

59 Patterson, Charles. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Lantern, 2002. Print. pg. 20

60 Ibid. pg. 20

61 Ibid. pg. 19

62 Ibid. pg. 23

Such an abstraction nullifies any sort of intrinsic standing which the particular may hold. Once intrinsic value on behalf of the particular has been removed humanity no longer understands the particular on its own terms, but rather “he knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them...Their 'in-itself become 'for him.’”<sup>63</sup> This process is discussed in great depth in Heidegger's essays “The Question Concerning Technology” and “The Age of the World Picture.” For Heidegger the abstraction moves toward what he refers to as the standing-reserve, or the world-picture. That which exists in the world is ordered into a system of understanding which then stands over and against that which has been understood. Speaking of the standing-reserve Heidegger states:

Everywhere, everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve. The word expresses here something more, and something more essential, than mere 'stock.' The name 'standing-reserve' assumes the rank of an inclusive rubric. It designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing. Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object.<sup>64</sup>

And when speaking of the world-picture Heidegger states:

Hence world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture...Wherever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety. The Being of whatever is, is sought and found in the representedness of the latter.<sup>65</sup>

The link between these two terms is fairly straightforward and though Heidegger doesn't use the terms together it would seem that conceiving of the world as picture is the process which leads to the creation

---

63 Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. pg. 6

64 Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977. Print. pg. 17

65 Ibid. pg. 129-130

of the space for the standing-reserve.

But this instrumentalization does not only occur at the level of instrumentalizing a particular object, though this process is still relevant. For Heidegger there is a system of orientation which exists which inherently makes the world, in its entirety, into standing-reserve. As he writes:

What belongs properly to the essence of the picture is standing-together, system. By this is not meant that the artificial and external simplifying and putting together of what is given, but the unity of structure in that which is represented as such, a unity that develops out of the projection of the objectivity of whatever is.”<sup>66</sup>

Viewing the world as picture establishes a system of perception and cognition which subsumes the world into that system. In the age of the world picture whatever exists, is only understood as existing in relation to its place in the system of the world picture. Therefore there exists both an active subsuming of given particularities, and an underlying and inherent subsuming of the entirety of existence in general.

## X

For Heidegger this orientation of understanding, based on ordering and systematizing, is what distinguishes the technological, and hence modern, age. He states this explicitly in “The Question Concerning Technology”:

Man in the technological age is, in a particularly striking way, challenged forth into revealing. That revealing concerns nature, above all, as the chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve. Accordingly, man's ordering attitude and behavior display themselves first in the rise of modern physics as an exact science. Modern science's way of representing pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces.<sup>67</sup>

The cognitive task of the modern age rests on revealing; revealing meaning, purpose, truth, through

---

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977. Print. pg. 141

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. pg. 21

inquiry both rational and scientific. Understanding the world as a field of scientific and rational inquiry is understanding the world as picture. Rather than the world existing in itself the world exists in relation to its potentiality to be understood; the world is no longer the world in itself but instead the standing-reserve, awaiting the cognition of the inquiring human mind.

What defines the modern age is essentially this scientific inquiry. Though the inquiry may occur in other fields, mathematics, anthropology, philosophy, etc., the inquiry itself is essentially a scientific one. Heidegger refers specifically to physics to elaborate what this entails. Physics seeks to analyze and calculate the motion of mass. The 'motion of mass' is understood as the ground plan on which physics operates. This ground plan stipulates what *is* within the framework of inquiry through physics; it enframes the space that determines what exists. As Heidegger states, “that stipulating has to do with nothing less than the plan or projection of that which must henceforth, for the knowing of nature that is sought after, *be* nature: the self-contained system of motion of units of mass related spatiotemporally.”<sup>68</sup> Physics establishes a system of understanding which in turn determines what *is* or *is not* a part of this system and therefore what *does* or *does not* exist according to these standards.

In this way whatever is inquired upon only exists in light of the system which inquires upon it; it is only understood within the framework of that system. Understanding a particular only in terms of a system is the direct consequence of an abstraction of the particular. In the technological and modern age this field of inquiry experiences no limits and therefore the world in its entirety is made into an instrument within a system of thought, i.e. a world-picture or standing-reserve.

## XI

Disenchantment and estrangement entirely devalue the nonhuman and, by doing so, reconstitute how the nonhuman is understood and approached. This reconstitution opens a space which humanity must respond to, establishing new systems of thought and morality and inquiry. Being entirely

---

68 Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977. Print. pg. 119

devalued, the nonhuman is not included within these newly conceived systems because it exists as estranged from human consideration and esteem. The nonhuman's devaluation is then propagated and increased by the new systems furthering the violence and exploitation committed against the nonhuman world. Disenchantment essentially paves the way for violent and destructive responses to become integrated into Western humanity's societies and ideologies. These societal and ideological responses have nearly transhistorical sources; however, they take on new force and severity through Immanuel Kant and scientific rationalism and, as such, are hugely modern problems.

## Consequences and Relevance

### I

Humanity, especially in the modern age, has altered and shaped the surrounding world irreversibly. No matter the specific consequences discussed the human footprint cannot be ignored. This footprint has reconstituted the composition of the air, reformed the landscape, redirected and removed the water, and scarred the flora and fauna permanently. Tangible examples of this human-directed reshaping are innumerable, but one thing is clear: these consequences and effects, though not always explicitly, have been driven by the influence of disenchantment.

Disenchantment functions as a historical process which creates currents of thought and understanding about existence and reality. These conceptions of life guide, frame, and create societies and ideologies. The continuing process of disenchantment is essentially the underlying grounding upon which, and from where, everything that comes about in Western society is founded. This is not to say that all creations consciously adhere to disenchantment. Rather, that its presence underlies and directs all action and thought in Western society. We live in a disenchanted world and continue to create and define our world under the influence of disenchantment's presence.

In this way the influence of disenchantment is omnipresent and has direct and violent consequences. The entirety of existence, especially the nonhuman, is wholly devalued of meaning. Humanity is estranged from this external world and their internally conditioned selves. That which has been estranged and devalued is then reappropriated into new conceptions of value and reality; the nonhuman is either entirely negated, or understood only in relation to its instrumental value. But this instrumental value is established upon the disenchanted framework and it is thus inherently negating. Ethics then enter the discussion, but, being determined in cooperation with the influence of disenchantment, it acts to propagate and maintain disenchantment's influence. Disenchanted ethics are thus framed in accordance with the devaluation, negation, instrumentation, and subjugation of the

nonhuman. The modern, Western, human relationship to the nonhuman world is framed by disenchantment and its effects and is therefore wholly negating and exploitative.

Within this reality violence committed against the nonhuman is not understood as violence; domination is accepted as truth and normalcy. Stripped of value and esteem the nonhuman is excluded from any consideration on its own terms, and is especially excluded from any moral consideration or granted any moral worth. This means that violence against the nonhuman is not violence; death of the nonhuman is not death. These terms are understood according to a moral framework, and being wholly excluded from that moral framework the fate of the nonhuman is not defined by those terms. The nonhuman's purpose is defined by human standards and its degradation cannot be defined morally because of this. Exploitation is entirely justifiable according to these standards and human endeavors are pursued at the expense of the nonhuman *ad infinitum*.

## Solutions

### I

This thesis is essentially concerned with ethics, but included within these ethics there must be redefinitions and reappropriations which act to counter the sweeping effects of disenchantment. As mentioned in the introduction, disenchantment effects object relations and the objects themselves by redetermining their value and purpose. For this reason, the responses elucidated must account for both ethics and the way the nonhuman world is valued. The responses will therefore be focused more toward reimagining the ethical landscape in such a way as to repair a fragmented relationship and reassess the current value structures. Because of the breadth and penetration of this fragmentation I will approach potential solutions one at a time without the intention of being conclusive about any of them as the all-inclusive solution.

### Martin Buber

I will begin by discussing Martin Buber's 'I and Thou.' The text itself speaks mostly to the nature of relationship, but, for Buber, central to this discussion is a conception of God, or the eternal Thou. Though for my purposes I am not seeking to reconceive or put forward an understanding of God, the relevance of such an understanding cannot be overlooked. Religion determinately shapes societies and their approaches to the world through its various cosmologies and moralities. At the base of both of these is a conception of God (no god can be one of these conceptions as well). The way a religion understands God determines the way cosmology and morality are understood in that religion. What can be extrapolated from this is that the foundational principle which determines cosmology and morality is central to how a particular group relates to their world. We must therefore ask, what is the founding principle for Buber? What is his cosmology, so to speak, and how does it shape relations and ethics?

Buber's project, though he does discuss God, is directed towards a discussion of relationships. Buber seeks to uncover what types of relationships exist and how we talk about and interact with and

within these relationships. For Buber, these relationships are not limited to human-human interactions but can include any relation between living entities. In the text Buber elaborates upon relationships with cats and relationships with trees; his scope of concern is not limited to humanity. This first point is an important distinction that sets Buber's cosmology apart from previously discussed disenchanting approaches to the world.

The focal point in Buber's text is the distinction between the relationship I-Thou and the relationship I-It. According to Buber these are the sole two manifestations of relationship present in the world and these are caused by a twofold nature in humanity itself. Buber opens the text as follows:

To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination I-Thou. The other primary word is the combination I-It.<sup>69</sup>

Relationship is thus the foundation of human existence and orientation in the world, it is Buber's 'founding principle' and his notion of God is implicated within this.

Buber refers to this 'founding principle' sometimes as God and sometimes as the eternal Thou. The two terms are interchangeable in his text and this interchangeability gives insight into what God is for Buber, but before discussing these implications we must first attempt to understand the eternal Thou. As Buber writes:

The extended lines of relations meet in the eternal Thou. Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou...the inborn Thou is realized in each relation and consummated in none. It is consummated only in the direct relation with the Thou that by its nature cannot become It.<sup>70</sup>

In every interaction there is a potential for an encounter with a Thou; this is the 'inborn Thou.' The

---

69 Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons Pub., 1958. Print. pg. 3

70 Ibid. pg. 75

eternal Thou is somehow similar to every Thou as “every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou.”<sup>71</sup> And the eternal Thou is somehow the culmination of all relations: “the extended lines of relations meet in the eternal Thou.”<sup>72</sup> The eternal Thou is reflective of, and composed of, every I-Thou relation.

The eternal Thou can thus be understood as the fullness of all particular I-Thou relations. “He who loves a woman, and brings her to life to present realization in his, is able to look in the Thou of her eyes into a beam of the eternal Thou.”<sup>73</sup> Each particular Thou offers a beam of the eternal Thou, each Thou is a segment of the fullness that is the eternal Thou. The eternal Thou is the culmination of all Thou segment relations. The emphasis here is on *all*. The force of all the interactions of I and Thou, the potential of all the interactions, the space of all the interactions, the power of all the interactions, is God. Everything that exists has the potential to relate and as such this potential in itself is God for this space of potential accommodates the force, the power, the presence; potential is the encompassing variable which accounts for God as a fullness of relation. All encounters of Thou are thus glimpses of God because all encounters of Thou are encounters of true potential, but not full potential. The conglomeration of all potentials of relating becoming the full potential is God. “Only in one, all-embracing relation is potential still actual being. Only one Thou never ceases by its nature to be Thou for us.”<sup>74</sup> God is therefore not an entity related to but a fullness of potentiality of particular relations.

This redefines God as immanently bound within the scope of relation which acts to resolve the stratifying, transcendent, religious appeals discussed earlier. This is supported in the text:

He who approaches the Face [God] has indeed surpassed duty and obligation—but not because he is now remote from the world; rather because he has truly drawn closer to it.<sup>75</sup>

If you explore the life of things and of conditioned being you come to the unfathomable, if you

---

71 Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons Pub., 1958. Print. pg. 75

72 Ibid. pg. 75

73 Ibid. pg. 106

74 Ibid. pg 99

75 Ibid. pg. 108

deny the life of things and of conditioned being you stand before nothingness, if you hallow this life you meet the living God.<sup>76</sup>

Only he who believes in the world is given power to enter into dealings with it, and if he gives himself to this he cannot remain godless...I know nothing of a "world" and a "life in the world" that might separate a man from God...He who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to God.<sup>77</sup>

God is wholly present in this world; in the experiential world as defined by relations.

Buber's 'founding principle', his conception of God, founds an entirely different system of ethics and relations. His conception of the eternal Thou supports his 'cosmology' which is framed by the primary relations I-Thou and I-It. The I-Thou relationship is difficult to express and thus its explication represents a core of Buber's project. The I-It is in many ways much simpler. (Buber also mentions on the first page of his text that the It in I-It can be replaced by either He or She). To put it quite simply, the I-It relationship is a relationship of category, of quality, of system or of order, of purpose or of means. The 'other' in the I-It relationship is not viewed for itself or as itself but rather viewed in the context of other categories or purposes. (Though Buber never explicitly discusses disenchantment or instrumentalization it is clear that the I-It relationship is closely linked with these terms.) The I-Thou relationship is much more difficult to directly express. In many ways it can simply be said that the I-Thou relationship is the antithesis of the I-It relationship. It does not place category, or quality, or system, or purpose onto the 'other,' it approaches the 'other' with complete and total openness. This means the 'other' is approached with a vulnerability to whatever it may be that the 'other' offers, does, or even receives. There are no preconceived conceptions or purposes brought into the relationship; the 'other' exists as it is and the I is open to whatever may happen. The I-Thou is a passive encounter, an acknowledgment of vulnerability in the face of an 'other.' "The [I-Thou] relation means

---

76 Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons Pub., 1958. Print. pg. 79

77 Ibid. pg. 94-95

being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one; just as any action of the whole being which means the suspension of all partial actions, and consequently of all sensations of actions grounded only in their particular limitations, is bound to resemble suffering.”<sup>78</sup> By suffering Buber does not mean pain, but rather suffering the world; being open and vulnerable to the world, to the 'other.' The eternal Thou, as the culmination of all I-Thou potentiality, is thus the culmination of vulnerability and openness to, and within, I-Thou relations.

God, cosmology, and existence are founded and implicated upon relation; particularly the I-Thou relation. The implications of this re-understanding can especially be seen in terms of subjectivity, how the subject-object relation is understood. Rather than being understood through instrumentalization and intellectual rationalization (the I-It), relationship is understood in accordance with the I-Thou. If all existence stems from the eternal Thou, i.e. relationality, then all existence is built upon its internal, passive, and vulnerable relating. If the eternal Thou as the fullness of all I-Thous stands at the foundation of existence then our existence is contingent upon relationship; a subjectivity of relationality. Independent autonomy is thus eliminated and subjectivity is understood in light of interdependence. As Buber writes, “We live our lives inscrutably included within the streaming mutual life of the universe.”<sup>79</sup> The existent world is thus no longer understood as consisting of independent subjects interacting with one another, or subjects interacting with objects, but instead as a web of interaction which subjectivity comes out of. To state it in Buber’s words: the I-It relation, the subject-object or autonomous subject relation, is secondary to the initial I-Thou interaction which is founded upon passivity, vulnerability, and openness.

Understanding existence and ourselves in such a way leads to a very different ethical landscape. If subjects are understood as autonomous, or if the subject-object relation (I-It) is central, then ethics becomes a system of actions which attempts to promote the “best” treatment of the other autonomies

---

78 Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons Pub., 1958. Print. pg. 76

79 Ibid. pg. 16

and objects that may be encountered. The ethical landscape envisions a field of independent points which must then be instructed on how to act with each other. When this instruction is framed by disenchantment and its effects, its ethics are inherently exclusionary, exploitative, and violent. If, on the other hand, subjects are only understood in light of their interdependence ethics is not a system instructing how “subject A” should treat “subject B,” but is instead a foundation from which treatment occurs. Approaching the entirety of existence as vulnerable, including oneself, constructs and esteems relationships very differently and greatly broadens the scope of moral concern. All that one encounters is viable and valuable on account of its potential to be a Thou and is thus treated accordingly. This does not prescribe specific actions or prevent others, but instead encourages and discourages certain action. Violence is not abolished by such a reframing, but it holds significantly more weight, especially in relation to the nonhuman.

Throughout the text Buber notes that the I-It relation cannot be eradicated; it is an integral part of human existence. What thus occurs by framing the I-Thou relation is not that it overcomes the I-It but that it makes the I-It secondary; the I-Thou is primary. In relation to disenchantment more generally, the I-It can be understood essentially as Buber's coining of a nearly identical process. The I-It abstracts, devalues, and estranges that which it names. An ethical landscape understood as contingent upon I-Thou interaction, on the other hand, encourages relations between humanity and the nonhuman which are founded on passivity and account for the vulnerability of all of existence.

### Hölderlin

Aside from rationality, language has stood as the prevailing distinguishing factor between the human and the nonhuman; it sets the human apart from the rest of the world. By doing so it directly contributes to a bifurcation of the human/nonhuman relationship. Not only does language mark a divide, but it also acts as a force of disenchantment by operating as an abstracting system which is imposed upon the world. In this sense, language represents precisely what I am responding to. In spite

of this, language is inescapable; just as certain other elements of disenchantment are inescapable. So how is this reconciled? If I am seeking to respond to disenchantment and repair the relationship between the human and the nonhuman then how can I come to terms with the necessity of certain elements of disenchantment?

Friedrich Hölderlin felt the pressure of these same questions. He felt the distance and the estrangement of the nonhuman world and he sought desperately to reconcile it, but he also acknowledged the limits of this reconciliation; especially those limits created by language. This did not, however, lead Hölderlin to disdain language; it instead, put language at the center of his focus and philosophical writings. As Dennis Schmidt writes in his text *On Germans and Other Greeks*: “The destiny of the poet (and it must be remembered that to be a poet is, for Hölderlin, the destiny of a human being, of one who speaks) is to suffer the fate of a self-laceration at the hand of that which defines one as a poet, and it is equally to celebrate the manner in which language unites as one what is otherwise infinitely differentiated.”<sup>80</sup> Language both fragments and limits humanity and is its destiny and celebration.

Hölderlin's philosophy is based on absence, on a void that needs filling. We are creatures unfulfilled; in a constant, and never ending, search to complete ourselves. We are both fragmentary and yearning. Searching for, and more importantly reconciling, this lacking space is the essential purpose of human existence. The gap humanity seeks to relinquish is that between the divine and the human, or nature and the human. (Hölderlin does not distinguish between nature and divinity and much of his work and thought uses the two terms relatively interchangeably.)

Language bridges this gap by making the nonhuman world intelligible; it is what brings that which exists outside of the human realm into the human realm. This attempt at transposition is prevalent in all of Hölderlin's work. His concern for translation can be seen as a direct example of this.

---

80 Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print. pg. 162

Translation attempts to bring that which is foreign into that which is known and understood. This attempt therefore bridges a divide. But this attempt is also futile and translation inherently separates from the original. Hence the complex position translation holds. The same is true of the way language interacts with the world. “Through the word nature is able to appear as a living totality. Yet precisely in this moment when the origin of the life of nature appears in its infinity, precisely then the antagonism with the poet appears.”<sup>81</sup> Language instantaneously unites and ruptures the relationship between the human and nature. This uniting while dividing is absolutely essential to the relationship between humanity and nature and is referred to by Hölderlin as the 'double infidelity.'

The space between humanity and nature will, and must, always exist. Attempting to reconcile this divide destroys it. But this is precisely the point at which the relationship between nature and humanity is sustained. For Hölderlin, a connection with divinity is not necessarily a bridging of the gap but rather a maintaining of the gap. This is what language inevitably does. As he writes, “Men and gods, at once distinct and interdependent, come into being through each other, for in the space defined by their reciprocal difference lies the poetic act of *naming* that grounds or inaugurates their relation.”<sup>82</sup> The space between humanity and divinity is what we attempt to reconcile with language but by doing so we further assert the separation between humanity and divinity. However, in doing so we sustain the relationship and therefore guarantee it will always exist.

The relationship between humanity and nature is essentially one of two fragments. As fragments, each relies on the notion that a totality exists of which they are pieces. As Schmidt contends, “In the concept of separation, there lies already the concept of the reciprocity of object and subject and the necessary presupposition of a whole of which object and subject form the parts.”<sup>83</sup> Because of this, maintaining the duality of human and divine is absolutely essential, and attempting to fully reconcile

---

81 Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print. pg. 160

82 Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Hymns and Fragments*. Trans. , and Richard Sieburth. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984. Print. pg. 20

83 Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. Thomas Pfau. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988. pg. 37

this difference is to undermine the conception of the totality as a whole. By using language we attempt to bring nature closer to humanity but in doing so separate ourselves as human. But language is what allows humanity to hold on to the connection because we define ourselves, and the nonhuman world, through language. As Schmidt explicitly states, “The word is the site of the self-sacrifice of the poetic subject—his separation is unbearable, and there are no words which can overcome this condition brought on by the word—but it is a sacrifice on behalf of nature, which needs such words for its life to appear.”<sup>84</sup>

Language does not only create a double infidelity through human categorization, but also through rhythmic structure. Rhythm serves as another reminder of the distance between humanity and nature/divinity. Rhythm, similar to humanity, is bound to time; it flows in accordance with passing time and rhythmic structure eventually reaches an end. Rhythm is therefore finite, mortal. The human is also finite and mortal and is therefore set apart from the divine/nature. For Hölderlin, all language is rhythmic and, as rhythmic, is a reminder of finitude and mortality. Language “leads us to the point at which we learn that we are nothing but time, and at this point we learn as well the nature of our destiny which ends in death.”<sup>85</sup> A realization of our own mortality furthers the understanding of the human relationship to the divine. It reinforces the distinction between that which is human and that which is divine, at the line of mortality, but in doing so also maintains and guarantees the relationship itself.

Though the rhythmic nature of language is yet another reminder of the eternal separation of humanity from the divine, rhythm presents an opportunity for both language and humanity. The seizing of this opportunity is what Hölderlin refers to as the caesura. The caesura is a counter-rhythmic moment in language, mainly poetry and tragedy, where time is destroyed and redefined. Time, in its usual manifestation, exists through the law of succession but at the moment of the caesura this succession is broken. As Holderlin states, “In the rhythmic succession of representations, in which the

---

84 Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print. pg 160

85 *Ibid.* pg. 149

transport presents itself, it becomes necessary to have what in prosody is called caesura, the pure word, the counter-rhythmic interruption, in order to meet the rushing alternation of representations at its peak, in such a way that it is then no longer the alternation of representations that appears, but representation itself.”<sup>86</sup> In a progression without caesura the rhythm is that of alternating and various representations that exist and are understood based on their succession of each other. At the moment of interruption the chain of events is broken, leaving pure representation. There is not a progression of representations to be considered in a specific order, each event is able to be “seen in itself and its relations.”<sup>87</sup>

This is the possibility of language for Hölderlin. In the moment of the caesura “man forgets both himself and the god...man forgets himself because he exists completely in the moment; the god, because he is nothing but time”<sup>88</sup> and both therefore also forget their own separation. Having forgotten both man and god the only thing that remains is the condition of space and time. Here man has forgotten himself but also begins to understand the nature of time and existence, namely its finitude. This becomes what Dennis Schmidt refers to as the “monstrous.” The monstrous is the relationship between man and the divine, “how the god and man pair themselves, and the power of nature and what is innermost in man become one in wrath.”<sup>89</sup> This final moment of wrath, is where Hölderlin’s conception of the double infidelity returns. The wrath of the relationship is the “limitless becoming one through the limitless division that purifies.”<sup>90</sup>

The moment of the caesura allows humanity to exist counter-rhythmically and this conceives of a new time. Hölderlin defines successive time as “categorical time” and the caesura provoked time as “the time of destiny.” The time created by the caesura is the time of destiny because it is the moment in which Holderlin states, “man must hold fast to himself most of all, and that is why he is open in his

---

86 As quoted in Allen, William S. *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007. pg. 137

87 Ibid. pg. 137

88 Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print. pg. 147

89 Ibid. pg. 145

90 Ibid. pg. 145

character then most of all.”<sup>91</sup> An openness in character and true realization of oneself is what allows man to reach nearest to the divine. At the moment of the caesura there is the greatest intimacy between humanity and the divine but the two must also split apart at this moment. This moment marks the realization of connection, but this connection is founded in the identification of the self, therefore both separating and connecting.

The interruption and separation of parts of a rhythm, leaving only the moment, is not simply a restructuring of the plot, it is an allusion to the singularity of existence. By examining each part, each moment, on its own we realize that each part has a singular, and therefore finite, existence. Humanity’s realization of its finitude is its turning away from the gods and in this realization man forgets himself and the god, existing only as a finite, temporal being. The caesura opens up this potentiality by grounding humanity in its finite existence. But this potentiality is never complete because the caesura, is itself finite and therefore only opens up the thoughtful separate unity, it does not sustain it. Here, once again, the double infidelity becomes essential. Unity is only possible in separation because language forces humanity to realize the finitude of its own existence and therefore humanity must always remain separate from the divine. This separation also allows for a relation with the divine; distancing humanity inevitably but simultaneously granting it the ability to exist as a fragment in a whole; the whole being the divine human relational existence, or all existence. As two fragments that come together to create a whole humanity is both separate and unified. The caesura is what opens up this realization by forcing humanity’s own finitude upon itself.

Yet, as mentioned, the separation is necessary and inevitable. Humanity and divinity are separate entities, with some shared qualities, but always distinctly separate. Through the double infidelity of existence humanity and divinity can maintain a connection. Language separates and differentiates humanity from the divine, but it also leaves space for the caesura which can be the

---

91 As quoted in Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print. pg. 147

moment of closest unity. Because the relationship between humanity and the divine is based upon the double infidelity, language is both the savior and the vice. It brings humanity and the divine together by maintaining their distance, in an ongoing struggle that doesn't truly have a reconciling point.

Hölderlin acknowledges the presence and inevitability of disenchantment but chooses not to necessarily accept estrangement. He does accept the distinction between humanity and the nonhuman but this separation acts to maintain the relation rather than bifurcate the two realms of existence. As enmeshed in a relation, humanity and the nonhuman are wholly dependent upon each other as interrelated fragments. This interdependency creates an entirely different approach and orientation to the nonhuman. Rather than humanity seeking to distinguish in order to transcend and instrumentalize the nonhuman, Hölderlin's humanity seeks to distinguish in order to connect and maintain relationship. The double infidelity encourages integration with an acknowledgment toward separation; estrangement encourages separation with a rejection of integration. According to the double infidelity the human and the nonhuman are interdependent and interrelated and therefore must act towards each other appropriately. The ethical landscape opened by Hölderlin encourages dependent relationship and dependency discourages violence.

### Foucault

The past two sections have spoken directly to defining and understanding relations, and from this re-understanding, framing a new ethical landscape. In fact, the discussion of relations has essentially been the focus of everything preceding; the human/nonhuman relationship is fractured and destructive and in need of repair. This next thinker also approaches the questions of relations and relationship, though not explicitly with any focus to the nonhuman world.

Michel Foucault, throughout his work, deals with the question of power and how it shapes and effects societies and subjectivities. As a part of this discussion Foucault completely reinterprets power and posits a new understanding which makes power much more complex and fluid than the

traditionally held top-down theories of power. Monarchies and states still exhibit power, but Foucault delimits the typically understood notion of power which only includes its particular manifestations in order to re-understand power as “the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable;”<sup>92</sup> This understanding takes power to resemble more of a process than a structure (although it may manifest in structures) and because of this power imparts strategies and processes which enable, or maintain, its movement and presence. Rather than understanding power as a dichotomy between those in power and those without power, understanding power as a multiplicity of force relations enables an analysis of the complexities of various relationships and how these power relationships manifest themselves and are subverted.

Linked in with Foucault’s discussion of power in itself is a discussion of the various processes and mechanisms through which power operates and understanding these mechanisms is essential to understanding how power functions. The two processes discussed by Foucault in “The History of Sexuality” that coalesce with power are discourse, and, in connection with discourse, silence. Before delving into the implications of the understanding of power that Foucault posits in regards to humanity’s relationship with the nonhuman world, it is important to more fully understand precisely what is meant by discourse, by silence, by power, and how the three interact to support and undermine each other. Such a discussion will set the stage for mapping these definitions and understandings onto the human/nonhuman relationship.

In order to appreciate the relevance and implications of discourse and silence for Foucault it is important to begin with the base, with power itself, and then to discuss the processes associated with it. Foucault’s analysis is deeply concerned with responding to the traditionally understood Western notion of power as juridico-discursive. Juridico-discursive power acts by “manifesting the triple distinction of

---

92 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 93

forming a unitary regime, of identifying its will with the law, and of acting through mechanisms of interdiction and sanction.”<sup>93</sup> Or, put differently, power is the legislative and unitary body which enforces prohibitions and limits through the implementation of various rules and laws which always “can ‘do’ nothing but say no.”<sup>94</sup> This form of power is associated explicitly with monarchical rule and as Foucault mentions throughout the text, “we still have not cut off the head of the king.”<sup>95</sup>

Put briefly, at the time Foucault is writing, power is only understood as legislative in accordance with how power manifested within the monarchy, and this understanding is limited because power is not a particular form but a force of relationship. Juridico-discursive power is a particular form or manifestation of power; it is a legislative form of power and this understanding of power is inherently limited. In reality power is to be understood as productive and prohibitive, of multivarious origin, and not limited by its legislative ability. As Foucault explicitly states:

It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.<sup>96</sup>

Power must be understood as a force of relations and as the dynamics of interactivity, not as its particular forms or merely as that which emanates from an entity which can be referred to as Power.

This emanation is certainly a part of the complex system of power, but it represents a moment and not

---

93 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 87

94 Ibid. pg. 83

95 Ibid. pg. 89

96 Ibid. pg. 93

power itself. Power is thus the force present in all relationships and in all strategic directions. “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”<sup>97</sup>

If power is the force of relationship and it is dynamic and fluid then it can be seen that power is not attributable to a specific source or strategy. Specific sources and strategies put forward emanations of power, but they are not the Power in themselves; they are only one element within the entirety of the field of power. Because of this these sources and strategies must employ certain techniques in order to propagate their ideologies, moralities, systems of order, etc. These techniques can be legislative, they can be suppressive, but these are simply manifestations of a larger force that Foucault has in mind. This larger force of emanation is discourse.

Discourse is what Foucault refers to as the technique of power. Legislation and prohibition and truth-claims are all elements of this technique, but discourse is the encompassing force of what these manifestations are. As Foucault writes:

We must conceive [of] discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.<sup>98</sup>

Discourse is the conversations surrounding and responding to the power relations. To understand more clearly it is helpful to take an example: A ruling body has certain ideologies, conceptions of truth, and modes of understanding society and the world. The activity of putting forward these ideas, the putting forward itself, happens in terms of discourse. The ruling body establishes laws, philosophies, and frameworks which are all a part of its own discourse. This discourse radiates into society creating responses and rejections and tweaks to the original discourse, not to mention the interactions it has with

---

<sup>97</sup> Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 93

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. pg. 100

the preexisting discourses already present in the society. This entire interplay can be understood as power, and discourse can be understood as that which comes forth from the various entities active in the power landscape.

According to these understandings silence also takes on a very different form. Silence is usually understood as being a force of repression; the antithesis of discourse. For Foucault, silence is linked in as a part of discourse; it is discursive in its own right. But it is also a strategy of discourse. Silence is “the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers.”<sup>99</sup> The usual understanding of silence is limited in that it only understands silence as a negative to discourse. While the negative aspect is a part of silence, it is not wholly conclusive of silence. “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.”<sup>100</sup> Discourses are everywhere, facing all strategic directions, and silence is included as a strategy, response, and prohibition of these various discourses. A figure or idea can have silence imposed upon it, but it can also choose to be silent, and both of these manifestations of silence have discursive implications, making silence a form of discourse that is both productive in its own right, and in the responses it provokes.

Foucault’s analysis de-structuralizes the traditional understanding of power, discourse, and silence granting a much fuller image of what these three ideas signify. Power is extended beyond its juridico-discursive framing to include the dynamism of power relationships. Power is not simply a prohibitive force that imposes its rule, but it is something which includes, and also possesses, productive elements. Discourse is understood to be the consequence of power as it manifests itself. Silence is not simply the antithesis to discourse but it is absolutely essential in its production. Having this more complex and delimited understanding of power, discourse, and silence, various power relationships can begin to be analyzed in light of Foucault’s conclusions. In regards to the relationship

---

99 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 27  
100 Ibid. pg. 27

between humanity and nonhuman existence, while Foucault's discussion is still relevant, it seems as though it may be limited in other regards.

Foucault contends that "power imposes secrecy on those whom it dominates."<sup>101</sup> In other words, domination includes and requires silence on the part of the group dominated. What if the way that discourse and silence, as the mechanisms of power, have been understood is in itself silencing? Would this not be the fullest form of domination? What if the silence of the dominated group wasn't imposed silence in the form of discourse, but silence in the form of being inherently unable to participate in discourse? While this is not absolutely explicitly the case, it certainly seems to be the way it has manifested itself throughout history, and even in Foucault, in the relationship between humanity and nonhuman life as especially seen in the devaluation associated with disenchantment.

For Foucault, there are essentially two manifestations of silence. In both, silence acts alongside discourse and creates discourse in its own regard but there is a fundamental split in the motivating force of the silence. There is silence in not choosing to speak, and there is silence in being told not to speak. One is an act on a subject's own accord, and the other is an externally imposed act. There is "silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name."<sup>102</sup> And there is the second form of silence which is of a prohibitive nature; it is "imposed silence. Censorship."<sup>103</sup> This second form of silence is a tool of suppression placed upon a group by those who wield power. The latter form of silence is overtly present in the human relationship with the nonhuman world. The nonhuman world is completely censored, but not in the traditional sense. The nonhuman world is not censored from speaking directly as it cannot speak at all, at least not in the way that speaking is understood within the human context. Language, as humans understand it, does not exist outside of the human species. Because of this humanity does not censor the natural world in the sense that it "subjugates it at the level

---

101 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 86

102 Ibid. pg. 27

103 Ibid. pg. 17

of language, [or] controls its free circulation in speech;”<sup>104</sup> this subjugation and separation already exist. Due to this, the discourse of humanity doesn’t have the need to censor nature in order to suppress it. Nature’s potential to be discursive is censored from the outset and maintained by the devaluation of the nonhuman by disenchantment.

Even still, Foucault contends that silence produces further discourse and it is necessary to consider how this furthering occurs in relation to the nonhuman world. In the realm Foucault mostly is concerned with, that of language, silence operates alongside discourse in a reciprocal way. The two interact and shape each other to form a part of a larger discursive strategy. This occurs in part because of the choice to be silent. Silence in regards to sexuality, which Foucault is concerned with, holds discursive weight because of this choice. The choice to be silent is a productive action in itself. The choice is productive in that discourse emanates from it; inherent or imposed silence is only productive in that it anchors the discourse. In regard to imposed silence, the two act less alongside each other as one being a tool of the other. Imposed silence and discourse do not interact to create further diverse discourses; instead, the discourse exploits the silence in order to further progress its own ends. The nonhuman world, being unable to respond discursively, and therefore inherently silent, is completely taken over, manipulated, and repressed.

Foucault defines repression as “a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know.”<sup>105</sup> Obviously the nonhuman world hasn’t been affirmed to nonexistence, it exists, but it certainly has been affirmed to a slighted existence, a disenchanting existence; an existence where its value is decided in strictly anthropocentric terms and its right to exist is contingent upon those assigned values. In this way, there is an admission that there is nothing to say, nothing to see, and nothing to know about the internal value of the nonhuman world outside of human-

---

104 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 17

105 Ibid. pg. 4

based utility; it is a world understood only in terms of how it can benefit humanity and be instrumentalized. Understanding an injunction to silence as a mode of repression allows for the realization that the nonhuman is the ultimate silenced group and therefore the ultimate repressed group.

If the nonhuman world is completely subjugated in this way then what is to be made of the discourse that does exist? Is discourse not too complex and interactive to be able to be “divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one”?<sup>106</sup> Well yes, within the framework of discourse this is the case, but the nonhuman world exists outside the framework of discourse as Foucault seems to understand it. The nonhuman world is in a non-discursive sphere. There is a sphere where the multiplicity of discourses does exist, yet there is another sphere external to language that is overwhelmed by a dominating discourse on account of the fact that it cannot respond. Theoretically there would be a plethora of multiform and multi-directed discourses about the human/nonhuman relationship, but in the human/nonhuman relationship one of the parties involved does not participate in the discursive field so it quickly gets overwhelmed and shut out.

This is problematic because, as Foucault states, what is essential in order to maintain the reciprocity and interactivity of discourse is an ability to respond and participate in the discursive field; because the nonhuman cannot participate in the discursive field the reciprocity and interactivity of discourse dissipates. In the text Foucault considers the example of homosexuality in order to illustrate the responsive function of silence:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and “psychic hermaphroditism” made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of “perversity”; but it also made possible

---

<sup>106</sup> Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 100

the formation of a “reverse” discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or “naturalness” be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.<sup>107</sup>

In this example homosexuality is initially suppressed, but through this suppression finds a discourse of acceptance coming forth. As Foucault writes, “Homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf...often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.”<sup>108</sup> It is very clear that the nonhuman world does not possess these same capabilities; capabilities that enable a formation of a “reverse” discourse, that enable some sort of response to repression and silence. The nonhuman world is shut out from discourse, made silent by definition, and therefore deeply repressed and easily manipulated.

It can clearly be seen that the nonhuman world has been suppressed to silence and cannot participate in the historically defined discursive way, but what implications does this have in relation to power? As Foucault argues, “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power...this would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance.”<sup>109</sup> But does the nonhuman world resist in the sort of way Foucault posits, and if not, what implications does this have for the relationship?

Resistance for Foucault must be discursive and because of this can include silence; however, in order for silence to be productive it must provoke or incite some form of discourse. The productivity of silence presents itself in two ways. The first form is intentional omission and relates to a party choosing to be silent. In relation to the discussion of sexuality this silence would be the bourgeoisie refusing to speak about sex. The second form of productivity is the response to an imposed silence. The example

---

107 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg.

101

108 Ibid. pg. 101

109 Ibid. pg. 95

of homosexuality comes to mind. In both cases the productivity of silence is contingent upon silence inciting discourse in response to its presence.

The issue when considering the human/nonhuman relationship is that this incitement to discourse does not take place due to the fact that the silence of the nonhuman is outside of the framework of discourse. Silence as imposed or intentionally omitted is discursive in that it occurs within the understanding of discourse. Whichever group is silenced, or whichever group chooses to be silent, does so as an operating entity that exists within the framework of discourse. Because of this silence provokes discourse because a void in the discursive field is created and felt by other entities acting in the discursive framework.

Silence, as imposed upon the nonhuman world, does not occur within the discursive framework and is actually the product of the definition of the discursive framework. In this way, the silence of the nonhuman does not affect the discursive framework because the void opened by discursive silence does not occur. This silence is thus of a different variety and is much more repressive; it is not a silence of discursive propensity and productivity, it is a silence wholly separate from the discursive realm. The only potential opportunity for the nonhuman silence to enter into the discursive field would be if the discursive production were to come on behalf of the nonhuman but from the position of the human. Its only opportunity for participation lies in a participatory party; however, this participatory party is precisely the party which causes the original suppression and therefore would be unlikely to produce such a discourse. This would be analogous to an oppressive government standing up against itself for the sake of its subjects because the subjects do not have the ability to stand up in a proper contextual way; unfortunately this is unrealistic and is a part of why the relationship between the human and the nonhuman has been so repressive.

Upon further consideration it seems the contentions aren't necessarily within Foucault's analysis itself, but rather within the understanding of what discourse is. From this text specifically, and

certainly from history, discourse seems to be limited to language and conversation within a society, and it has been shown why this is problematic. That being said, Foucault is willing to grant discursive ability to the body and it is important to note that in other texts written by Foucault, he does just that.

Discourse of the body is clearly beyond language, but it is less clear if it is beyond society. The horses and the dog in the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*'s recounting of Damien's execution held discursive weight, but this discourse is only comprehended in the service of the human context. In fact, the animal's bodies' discursiveness enforces the subjugation of the animal itself in this story. What this helps illuminate is that although Foucault does seek to grant discursive ability to the body it does not seem to extend beyond the human framework; the animal's body does not provoke discourse on its own accord. This lack of extension of discursive productivity to the animals in the story is not necessarily intentional but is indicative of the deeply rooted distinction set up between humanity and the nonhuman world. It can be seen that as wholly devalued and disenchanting even the bodily influence of the nonhuman has no discursive abilities.

This distinction has only been propagated and strengthened by advances in human society and technology. Consider for example earlier human civilizations and their interactions with nature. Initially the power dynamics and force relationships Foucault discusses were a part of human existence as modes of nature were able to overpower the human; early hunters and gatherers were at real risk of injury and death at the hands of the nonhuman world. In these early times, discourses of human dominion may have existed but these discourses were continually curbed, or at least questioned, by such "defeating" encounters with nature. As technology advanced, separating humanity from this "rugged" world, these "defeating" encounters decreased, the human discourse was allowed to develop itself uninhibited. What we see today is an ability to completely suppress the natural world through technology allowing for an unquestioned discourse of power because the force that is acting in resistance has been nearly entirely overcome. Contemporary industrialized society rarely interacts with

the nonhuman world on any level that is not comfortable and ordered, and the interactions it does have are motivated by the extraction of utility via technology and machinery the nonhuman world cannot, and does not respond to. This framework of interaction, one of complete separation and/or complete subjugation, rejects any sort of discursive response put forth by the nonhuman.

So what does this mean? If Foucault's analysis is not flawed in itself, but rather slips into a destructive framework due to its understanding of discourse where does this leave us? What sorts of implications does this have on the relevance of Foucault's discussion of silence? As it stands the silence of the nonhuman world is quite different than the silence discussed by Foucault. Foucault's sense of silence pertains to a silence that is embedded within the framework of the discourse; as embedded its presence is felt as a void in speech and thus operates as a part of the discourse. The silence of the nonhuman, being entirely excluded from the discursive realm, does not present itself as a void in the discourse and thus has no bearing on the discursive field. But what if the way in which discourse is understood is expanded? What would such an understanding of discourse, expanded to include the nonhuman realm, look like? How does an animal participate in discourse? Or a tree?

According to the understanding of discourse put forward by Foucault discourse is action based and this action is mostly understood in terms of speaking or not speaking. Elements of bodily activity are also present in some of Foucault's discussion outside of "The History of Sexuality" but the body's participation in discourse is still dependent on whether or not the body acts, or how it is acted upon and this action is still only understood within the human context. But what if the notion of discourse is no longer understood in relation to action?

What if discourse were understood in terms of existence or presence? By this I mean the mere existence of an entity being its participation in discourse. This entails a re-understanding of action and in turn a re-understanding of discourse. Rather than deliberate, or imposed, anthropomorphic action being the type of action considered and providing the grounds for discourse, the presence of a living

body would be the grounds for participation in discourse. By simply being a living body something would be participating in the discursive field. What this does is delimit the framework of discourse put forward by Foucault, allowing his insights regarding power and silence to operate in a wider context.

The silence of the nonhuman would thus operate in a similar way to the silence Foucault discusses. The silence of the nonhuman would not take on the form of not speaking though. Instead, being a part of the discursive field, and having a reinterpreted notion of the discursive framework, the silence of the nonhuman world would manifest itself as any rejection of the nonhuman world's intrinsic discursive ability granted by its existence. Put more simply, rather than silence only being understood in terms of not speaking, silence, as a void in discourse, would be understood in terms of not acknowledging a living body. This lack of acknowledgment would create the same type of void in discourse which is associated with the previously understood notion of silence. As such, this silence would be manifested as a void in the discursive field and would therefore be productive in the same discursive way Foucault discusses.

Expanding discourse in such a way to include all living forms would actually lead power to take on a truer form in Foucault's eyes. As he contends, power is omnipresent "not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."<sup>110</sup> Everywhere would include the nonhuman in its entirety, and would not be limited to societal discourse.

The discursive landscape could then be seen as identical to the ethical landscape. Existence would be the grounds for participation in discourse and therefore would be the grounds for holding ethical weight. As discursive, whatever exists maintains an influence over the power field more generally and therefore is able to make a claim for itself; the nonhuman would be able to make a claim

---

110 Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage Books, 1990. pg. 93

against, or over, the human. Such influence would place humanity and the nonhuman in an interactive network of discursive production, balancing the scales between the human and the nonhuman.

### Conclusion

The three thinkers noted above present radically different approaches to the problem of the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman. Aside from Buber, none present their ideas in the ethical way I have framed them and, aside from Hölderlin, the relationship between humanity and the nonhuman is certainly not at the focus of their discussions. For this reason, none of the three thinkers discussed are to be presented as holding the solution to the problem of the disenchantment of the nonhuman world; their contributions are in no way wholly conclusive. Instead, the three thinkers can be seen as potential responses on their own accord which deserve to be more fully explored and developed.

Buber's 'I and Thou' provides a cosmology which founds existence in relationship and includes the nonhuman in the scope of relational concern therefore asserting the centrality of the way humanity relates to the nonhuman world. Approaching the entirety of existence as a potential Thou entails approaching the entirety of existence, including the nonhuman, from a passive state of vulnerability. This would ensure that the nonhuman holds ethical weight and bearing over the human and can no longer be exploited and subjugated as it has been.

Hölderlin provides an awareness of the inevitability of disenchantment and estrangement but through the double-infidelity maintains a relation between the human and the nonhuman. His discussion thus acknowledges the inevitability of disenchantment and estrangement, but encourages an understanding of relationship in accordance with this estrangement. Instead of standing as two independent entities which interact, humanity and the nonhuman/nature/divinity are seen as fragments that exist on account of their interdependence and must therefore acknowledge each other as dependently necessary.

Foucault discusses the influence of discourse to power, and granting discursive ability to the nonhuman world could expand the field of power and thus grant power to the nonhuman world. Rather than being wholly repressed via exclusion from discourse at the hands of disenchantment and devaluation, the nonhuman would hold discursive weight and thus play a role in the power network; i.e., ethical landscape.

Or the three could be combined with Hölderlin providing the reconciliation of estrangement, Buber defining how the reconciled relationship is to be understood, and Foucault discussing the way that such a relationship functions and propagates into the future.

But none of this is meant to be wholly conclusive on its own. Instead, an awareness of the problem, the disenchantment and estrangement of the nonhuman world and how it has been responded to, can open the space for reconciliation and resolution. From this space various direct and explicit solutions can be discussed. Buber, Hölderlin, and Foucault provide strong, and overlooked, potential responses when attempting to reconcile the fractured relationship between humanity and the nonhuman.

## Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. Print
- Allen, William S. *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2007. Print
- Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print
- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons Pub., 1970. Print
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. New York, NY: Fordham UP, 2008. Print
- Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London, U.K.: Vintage, 1990.
- Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977. Print
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Hymns and Fragments*. Trans. Richard Sieburth. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984. Print
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. Thomas Pfau. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1988. Print
- Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. Print
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002. Print
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. , Maudemarie Clark, and Alan J. Swensen. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 1998. Print
- Patterson, Charles. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Lantern, 2002. Print
- Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2001. Print