CHAPTER 4

ecology and freedom: ecological politics as expansion of the political

"There is no norm of norms which would not itself be a historical creation. And there is no way of eliminating the risks of collective hubris. Nobody can protect humanity from folly or suicide" (Cornelius Castoriadis).

4.1 Introduction

We just examined the thesis of the production of nature in the last chapter. We found that capitalist production historically provides some of the conditions required for an ecological production of nature. This means that a radical response to capitalism's eco-destruction need not necessarily mean taking a 'back to nature' stance for what needed is a creative negation of capital's rein. The biggest problem with capitalist production is, however, that it renders society's metabolism with nature to the reified logic of the self-expansion of value so that nature is denaturalized and internalized in the social process as non-nature, as abstract and homogeneous value. The consequent production of nature is most often extremely unecological.

We have noted that the loss of society's autonomy over its metabolism with nature under capitalism is a consequence of the working out of the independent logic of the self-expansion of value. We further pointed out that this logic does not however function in isolation from or regardless of the prevailing social relations of production. It is instead dependent on the particular socio-economic and property relations prevalent under capitalism as we discussed in the last chapter.

Ecological politics must show that the logic of capital which dictates society's metabolism with nature under capitalism is not supra- or extra-social, but is dependent on the specific social relations between capital and labour. For, after all,

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if this logic of capital is actually above any particular social relation and is an abstract, universal phenomenon, then we have to just accept it and at best go for small reforms here and there. However, as we saw in the last chapter, the logic of value is itself dependent on the separation of the producers from their means and subsistence and production. This logic of value is therefore historically specific and not a universal feature of all human societies.

Capital however functions in a self-sanctifying fashion. Since the market and economy functions according to the exchange of equivalents and the relations between people appears as the relations between commodities, the economy under capitalism veils the underlying historically specific social relations that make the emergence of capital in the first place. The economy, therefore, has a force and independence which is above anything society might choose to decide about or deliberate. This means that society's metabolism with nature is left to the logic and functioning of capital and hence outside the realm of society's powers of deliberation and control.

If it is through political rights that society or the people at large exercise their control or at least choice in liberal democracies over the public realm then we find that the economy is regarded as apolitical, outside the realm of politics, as not open to political contestation. The economy, at its core, is supposed to exist autonomously and independently of politics. The spheres of the economic and the political are treated as though they are separate. Such a dichotomy between the political and the economic is what facilitates the internalization of nature in the process of capitalist production as no more than the repository of abstract value, leading to mostly unecological outcomes.

The apolitical façade of the logic of the self-expansion of value makes the lack of society's rational control over its metabolism with nature appear as just the ideal state of affairs. It is in our understanding only by rejecting this autonomous logic of

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2 Marx writes that "the historical conditions of its(capital's) existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. It can spring into life, only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence meets in the market with free labourer selling his labour-power. Capital therefore announces from its n" ("Capital", Vol. 1, Moscow, 1986,
value that we can talk about society's conscious and rational control over its metabolism with nature. As the economy is the main theatre where the society-nature metabolism takes place the economy therefore can no longer be treated as impervious to society's intervention. Rather, the abandonment of the logic of value would itself ensure the end of the supposedly apolitical character of the economy. The narrow definition of the political has therefore to be expanded to include the question of society's control over its metabolism with nature. This is the main idea to be explored in this chapter.

But the expansion of the political only in the sense of society's democratically agreed upon rational control over its metabolism with nature is however not enough to ensure an ecological production of nature. For this requires that society be not just democratic and free, rationally controlling its metabolism with nature, but this metabolism be in fact ecological. What is it that ensures that society's conscious, rational and democratic control of its metabolism with nature would be ecological as well? Thus, we suggest that the concepts and thinking guiding or rather mediating this metabolism should also be ecological. This is where we see the importance of non-identitarian thinking we discussed in chapter two. The political has therefore to be expanded also in this sense of informing society's democratic and rational control of its metabolism with nature with an ecological consciousness and thinking. This is another, if you like, 'more ecological' sense of the expansion of the political which we shall explore in this chapter.

Ecological politics need not be necessarily about ways and means of preserving nature and the exploration of the specific modes of replacing the present structures of modernity with a back to nature guiding principle which calls for 'radical decentralization' and preservation of 'nature'. It is rather about deciphering the ways in which the world in front of us today is designed and fabricated in utterly unsustainable ways that have less to do with the destruction of a given 'nature' as such than with the production of society-specific natures. The concern is not for saving 'nature' but of producing natures that are sustainable, of seeing to it that our (social) construction of nature takes account of the interconnectedness and wholeness, which mark the world we inhabit. We must look for institutions and practices that take account of the need to develop and produce sustainable natures.
This chapter discusses some of the possible political structures and practices needed for the production of such a sustainable nature.

The problem we confront is what is green politics and whether ecology can lead us to any determinate political position. Such questions are too often posed abstractly within most green political literature and in political theory generally. For when green issues and the destruction of the environment are presented in terms of society versus 'nature' we fail to be able to address the issues from within the Enlightenment tradition of modern politics. Rejecting the Enlightenment as a whole would not in itself be much of a problem however if it derived from a correct understanding of the nature of capitalist society and of the ecological problem facing us today. As we argued in the previous chapter, there is no 'nature' to be saved or destroyed as we are already producing our own nature according to the type of existing society and the flows of value and other human activities.

Thus if there is no nature to be saved and what is there in front of us is what we have ourselves constructed or produced and hence the consequence of our own actions then the problem and its solution have to be sought through an internal, immanent critique of what exists. And this also means that we turn the Enlightenment tradition of politics on its head and try to put it to test and see where it has landed us up instead of trying to completely jettison it as though we have that option with us, as though we can turn back the movement of history, as though the effects of modernity or the Enlightenment on us are not irreversible.

The central thesis of this chapter is that ecology can be seen to be another attempt by humans to attain freedom, to enter the realm of freedom. If earlier the necessity imposed by nature kept us from the realm of freedom, now it is the consequences of our own actions that is hindering our freedom. Our actions emanating from the necessity imposed by the pure logic of the market and of accumulation, of a second nature which looms over us as an independent force, have subjected us to as it were the realm of the necessity of unecological outcomes. My argument is that the way out of this unfreedom of unecological outcomes is to give concrete expression to ecological reason through democracy so that this reason is taken to be the organizing principle of society. This reason is, however, not given
from without but is in fact a reflection of the contradictory character of the capitalist mode of production.\(^3\) Hence its resolution also has to be immanent, based on the possibilities opened up by the actual character and contradiction in society.

Only through democracy can ecological reason come to be adopted by society. And only through a lack or complete absence of it can unecological outcomes be so consistently possible as under capitalism and under certain bureaucratic socialist regimes. Clearly then the Enlightenment tradition need not be jettisoned in order to be able to conceive an ecological society. A critical engagement with this tradition's notions of reason and freedom is needed not only at a theoretical level; even at a practical level, the material conditions of the production of nature that we are living and bound by today make it imperative for us to engage in an immanent critique. This means, of course, that for us here ecology is not about saving some non-existent 'nature', but about politics with an intent at rehabilitating a society based on human(eco)logical reason as the expression of the collective or general will of the people\(^4\). In other words, ecological reason as the sovereign will of the people in a democracy can lead to freedom. But this idea taken from the Enlightenment has to be rehabilitated and cleared of its capitalist distortions and illusions.

What I argue here is that some of the most important ideals of the Enlightenment, particularly, democracy and freedom and the use of reason, were castrated of their real emancipatory potential even as they were born and becoming the common sense of the public and civil society at large. At the level of politics the lie at the heart of the present capitalist system consisted of, as we shall see, subverting the notion of democracy into promoting liberal democracy and

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\(^3\) Criticizing Adorno for denying "that there is an immanent logic to the actual that is emancipatory", Hayward writes that "if society can no longer be shown to be a contradictory totality, then the utopian concept of reason can no longer be anchored in the present" (Tim Hayward, "Ecological Thought", Cambridge, 1994, p. 44).

\(^4\) The point is not really whether ecological politics can address the question of nature and its protection and preservation. The point rather is, as Bruno Latour has suggested, to be able to do away with the politics of 'nature'. This, of course, needs challenging the present dominant epistemology of science and the world of political philosophy which fails to take account of the non-human world. For Latour, the regime of ecology will be marked by "a collective experimentation on the possible associations between things and people without any of these entities being used, from now on, as a simple means by the others" ( Bruno Latour, "To Modernise or Ecologise? That is the Question", in Bruce Braun and Noel Castree, eds., "Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium", London and New York, 1998, p. 234).
effectively emptying it of any substantive content. But subversion and manipulation did not lead to the death of the idea of democracy at least for the reason that the idea preceded capitalism and the Enlightenment, as it had strong precedents in ancient Greece. Secondly, capitalist production system itself created the conditions for its subversion by a form of democracy where sovereignty would not only be derived from but would reside in the people.

For Rousseau, democracy was justified since it led to freedom: freedom justified democracy. Can ecology also justify democracy? In other words, can democracy which transcends the stultifying confines of liberal democracy lead to an ecological society? In fact we can quite fruitfully view an ecological society as leading to freedom or rather an expansion of it. For what is freedom in the Enlightenment tradition? It is acting according to reason based on free will. And if democracy promotes this freedom by persuading us to freely act according to a collectively agreed general will as members in a society, then surely the only way we can together decide to act ecologically, according to ecological reason, is by ensuring democracy. For one cannot be free if made to act on the basis of a rationality which has not been democratically decided upon. Thus if reason can be the basis of our freedom, the point is how to ensure that this reason is not arbitrary but one derived from the people, one brought into being through the thorough exercise of democracy whereby sovereignty resides in the people.

The question then boils down to looking for ways and means to see to it that ecological rationality becomes the collectively agreed upon rationality upon which society is organized. Organizing society on an ecological basis is not however a problem to be addressed only at the level of techniques or even institutional structures and mechanisms for ensuring democratic deliberation and discussion. More importantly, the question has to be asked as to what are the different elements and factors in society that are subject to democratic deliberation and decision-making and what are given by the objective logic of the market and economy. Here again we are confronted with the production of nature under capitalism according to the logic of value expansion so that a democratically decided ecological rationality can be realised only as an anti-capitalist possibility, in a post-capitalist society.
In that case, however, democracy itself needs empowerment so that it can challenge even the logic of capital itself. And to be able to achieve that we must be able to visualize a replacement of the system of production based on the logic of capital. And herein we need to understand that since the logic of capitalist production is not a pure logic unrelated to the specific class, property and power relations, as argued in the previous chapter, challenging this logic through the exercise of a vigorous democracy entails challenging the overall social relations of production. Thus the notion of democracy itself has to be retrieved, almost restated or radicalized. This way we take democracy not only beyond the confines of constitutionalism and proceduralism, but also beyond 'direct democracy' and grassroots democracy.  

The underlying idea here proposed is to reverse the trend of thinking democracy, even when it goes beyond constitutionalism, only in terms of the protection of private space and civil society against encroachment by the state. Such an approach, it is implicitly assumed here, derives from a deeper malaise within capitalist democracy which has always sighed away from real democracy, so that parliamentary representative democracy is not a means to facilitate democracy for large number of people but historically came about as the best way to foreclose the democratic upsurge of the multitude. This alienation of the people from the capitalist state could not therefore be checked by the introduction of universal adult franchise. This was because the extension of political rights to the people under capitalist democracy took place side by side the dilution of the reach and depth of these rights, of the very significance of the political.

More specifically, the economy with its own logic of the invisible hand or the logic of self-expanding value was treated as outside of the purview of the political something which underlies the much touted state-policy of non-interference or

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5 Grassroots democracy however should not be counterposed as alien to the Marxist tradition if one is not to ignore the tremendous attempts to set up genuine workers' democracy in Russia during the October Revolution. Slavoj Zizek, in his discussion of Lenin's revolutionary micropolitics, refers to the "the incredible explosion of grassroots democracy, of local communities sprouting up all around Russia's big cities and, while ignoring the authority of the 'legitimate' government, taking things into their hands. This is the untold story of the October Revolution" (Zizek, "A Cyberspace Lenin: Why Not", International Socialism, no. 95, Summer 2002, p. 89).
laissez faire. In other words, we can see here that the process of the production of nature remained outside of the ambit of the political. This amounts to nothing less than giving a free rein to capital and posit it, both theoretically and in practice, outside the purview of any democratic accountability leading to many unecological outcomes.

Thus what is needed is the expansion of the political and of the idea of democracy to provide a more positive conception of freedom. For, addressing the ecological problem through mere reformism may not involve more than interfering in the sanctum sanctorum of capitalism, the market, something which has not been without precedent in the 20th century. But if it is the question of setting up an ecological society then it would demand more: discarding the market mechanism, replacing it with an ecological rationality which cannot, if it is to lead to freedom, but be based on the will of the people, and hence the establishment of the political. This means people will seek greater control over their lives, something which cannot but be achieved if anything, and not least the production process itself, is left to its own 'pure' logic outside of democratic deliberation and decision making.

This heralding of a positive notion of democracy does not lead us to reject the Enlightenment notion of freedom as we saw above. But we do harp onto a more political notion of democracy going back to ancient Greece. However, understanding the Enlightenment as self criticality and as humanity coming out of its self-imposed immaturity through the public use of reason, means that we can continue this very tradition itself even as we negate it. In particular, the conditions brought about by capitalist production relations meant that individual freedom was not only ensured but the development of liberal individuality was possible under the given circumstances. Thus the Enlightenment tradition leaves space for critical reflection, of the determinate negation of the given. Ecology can incorporate this feature of the enlightenment if we define it to be more than a 'politics of nature' since the latter holds on to a 'back to nature' position which then overlooks the emancipatory potential opened up by the capitalist production of nature and the

\[6\] Hayward, referring to Seyla Benhabib, argues that "once the concept of the political is expanded, the meaning of political participation is also transformed" and this will make the search for a radical ecological democracy possible (Hayward, "Ecological Thought", p. 204).
Enlightenment tradition. The first part of this chapter therefore argues that ecological politics need to go beyond the enlightenment project without however abandoning it altogether.

The point then is how do we understand the material condition in front of us today, how do we understand the transformation which nature has undergone today and which provides the basis to the present pattern and mode of production and consumption. If we understand our relationship with nature as one of exteriority, with society interacting with nature existing outside of and external to itself, then this has implications on the type of politics we would prescribe for ourselves. In fact, deep ecology positions amount to the rejection of the political itself and the reversion to variant of traditional community life, reminiscent of isolated communities with no forward movement and without any strong reason as to why they cannot be unecological. In fact I here argue that if the question of ecology is not just something which needs to be addressed at the local level but also, perhaps more importantly today, at much wider geographical or ecosystemic levels, for example, global warming, then it is imperative to retain the idea of the political understood as, among other things, the basis on which society can be conscious of its own ecological sustainability.

But then it is not just the question of ecological sustainability which is at stake in the idea of the political. The opposition between society and nature drawn up by deep ecology, in fact, effectively forecloses the development of the human personality and human mind, by constraining the individual within local community structures that can be extremely oppressive and intolerant towards other cultures and peoples and thereby to its own members.7

Under a truly democratic society the principles along which society is organized are derived from the people who are the repository of sovereign powers. The point is that even though such a democratic set up is hardly prevalent under liberal democracies, they provide us the conditions for realising it. It can, however, in no way be realizable in a society which refuses to carry forward the possibilities opened

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7 Timothy Luke critiques deep ecologists' evocation of the ethical codes of the traditional community: See footnote 27 below.
up by the capitalist production relations and instead harps back on the old restrictive natural relations that constricted human initiative and self-development and hence does away with the possibility of any democracy, for you cannot have democracy unless people can freely decide and exercise their reason.

In fact the continuous challenge to the functioning of the market under the ideology of economic liberalism has been made possible by precisely those conditions brought about by the rise of economic liberalism. The break-up of traditional communities based on natural relations and the rise of a society based on human relations founded on a specific social logic, meant that one could talk of individual freedom in the liberal sense. One's place in society was no longer preordained by any pre-political principle based on kinship or clan.

This society of free individuals would now be bound by the production relations and as a collective, they would organize and struggle for their rights and liberty. The use of reason on the basis of which society could be rationally organized was now possible. This was of course made possible by the new social relations of production which freed people from their traditional rootedness ushering in a society of individuals who could make use of their reason and try to make changes in the way production is organized.

In short modern politics that carries immense emancipatory potential presupposes a society in which humans are no longer organized along nature-given lines and where the, need one say, specifically human ecological rationality can be the organizational basis of society. After all, the expansion of the political that has taken place over the past two centuries carries such a promise as we see the ecological rationality slowly taking root in the political realm given the contradictory nature of the social totality. Thus this is related to the question of a society based on a social logic which exists in and through the activity of the individuals engaged and not according to some abstractly given ascriptive principle about which humans cannot do a thing except accept their fate. Nor can such a society possessing ecological-emancipatory potential be possible in the type of bioregional community advocated by radical ecologists, for this may greatly restrict the
growth of individual freedom and hence the possibility of a freely organized collective based on ecological rationality as the basis of the organization of society.

The question however is whether the Enlightenment political tradition has the potential to see us through the current ecological impasse. My claim is that the Enlightenment tradition conceived within the liberal democratic framework does not suffice to address the ecological predicament facing us today but it can be extended and deepened in order to effectively address the problem. That is why it is argued here that the political itself needs redefinition and the idea of democracy needs to be retrieved in its most robust form.

In trying to emphasize the political as the most fruitful way on the basis of which an ecological society can be conceived, we are, of course, consciously displacing the concern for or protection of 'nature' as the yardstick for evaluating the ecological commitment of any theory or thought. After all, there is no one who is not or proclaims not to be ecological or environment-friendly today given that ecology is coming to be just yet another movement which is in the process of innocuously entering the public realm as the common sense of our times, and loosing its radical-transformative content altogether in the process. For if ecology is not itself to be transformed into some out of the world crazy idea then we need to define and rehabilitate it through an immanent and unescapist critique of present society.

The call for the revival of the political which involves radicalizing democracy can then help us identify reform environmentalists who try to interpret the ecological issues as minor (but serious) aberrations of an otherwise just and efficient system. The point is to be able to argue that just as liberal democracy involving sending representatives to parliament or deliberating under conditions already biased from before is more a strategy to contain democracy than promoting it, similarly reform environmentalism is more about containing ecological thought and action understood in political terms than protecting 'nature' or the global ecosystem. Deep ecology positions, or for that matter, an understanding of ecology as 'politics of nature' makes ecology particularly vulnerable to the reformist strategy to repudiate it as anti-human or irresponsible. A defense of ecology then prescribes us the task of
firmly rooting it in and going beyond exactly the type of tradition which the reformists claim to stand for.

An understanding of our relationship with nature in terms of the production of nature has the potential to take us beyond the 'politics of nature' and form the basis for a progressive politics, which addresses some of the prime socio-political and ecological concerns of the present period by putting them in a proper perspective. We are going to attempt some of that here.

The chapter is divided into three sections, starting with an elaboration of how the expansion of the political is an imminent theoretical possibility already reflected in the corresponding changes brought about by the assertion of various social actors for gaining greater control over their lives.

The second section deals with the political implications of deep ecological politics. In particular, it is shown to be lacking any immanent critique of the present system resulting in its inability to grasp the political significance of the ecological moment. While reform environmentalism tries to suppress any specifically political resolution of the ecological problematic, deep ecology fails to realize the emancipatory potential in such a political resolution.

In the third section we are going to argue that the dissolution of 'nature' into the world of networks and hybrids between humans and non-humans rendering any consistent distinction between the natural and human worlds increasingly outdated can prove to be bit too premature inspite of the fact that humans produce their own nature so that nature in front of us is historical nature. The primacy of nature and our ultimate dependence on it cannot be underplayed in any way for it is this fact which allows to say or judge which particular production of nature or hybrid is ecological and which is not. The effort to flatten out humans and nature into mere human-nonhuman heterogeneous networks is too superficial and lacks an ontological understanding of the world we inhabit.

The question we have to here ask is whether environmentalism leads to a determinate political position. For example, the connection between environmental sustainability and social justice is quite tenuous and dependent on what we mean by
the two terms. But what is sure is that any particular conception of environmental sustainability has a definite purchase on social justice. The notion of environmental sustainability we here advance is one which takes account of the actual, embeddedness of society and nature in one whole. Thus the politics we suggest would not be one which tries to reject industrial society as a whole but one which tries to think of ways and means to make it ecological.

4.2 Expansion of the Political

The formulation of the ecological question in terms of the larger context of the unfinished or subverted project of political modernity and of the wider struggle against liberalism's containment and subversion of democracy is what we have been trying to do here. The bracketing away of the economy, of the domain of the production of nature, from the possibility of conscious and collective human intervention, from what we have called the political, as though the economy is not facilitated by prevailing class and property relations, is what needs to be challenged if ecology is to go beyond both reformism and 'back to nature' radicalism.

John Dryzek has shown that the distinctive characteristics of the environmental problem derive mainly from its multiplicity of effects and causes, whose redressal cannot be done from, above all, within the framework of the logic of the capitalist market economy.\(^8\) We will try to show here how the expansion of the political and a radicalized democracy can serve as the basis for a social creativity and imaginary needed to tackle the many-sided uncertainties and unintended consequences of our actions on the ecosystem.\(^9\)

The revival of the political and the need for an active and vibrant public space which puts people in charge of their own affairs, of the decisions and plans that affect their and their children's lives in so many ways, are some of the prime concerns of many contemporary social thinkers. Such concerns are of course raised in the face of the feeling that people are getting more and more depoliticized

\(^9\) Guattari emphasizes this open endedness of ecology when he writes: "Ecological praxes strive to scout out the potential vectors of subjectification and singularization at each partial existential locus. They generally seek something that runs counter to the 'normal' order of things, a counter-repetition,
particularly in the advanced capitalist countries. An unmistakable can however be made about the expansion of the political in at least some ways over the last few decades in the advanced capitalist countries. For Norberto Bobbio the fact that the emergence of the Welfare State "is closely bound up with the development of democracy is beyond doubt.\(^{10}\) One "characteristic of democratic regimes" is that "people can come together, associate, and organize so as to make their voice heard, and where they have the right, if not actually to take decisions themselves which concern them, then at least to choose periodically the persons they consider best in a position to look after their interests".\(^{11}\) This was in turn the consequence of a process in which "once political rights were extended to include the destitute and the illiterate it became equally natural that those in power, who besides made themselves out to be (and in a certain sense were) the representatives of the people, should be asked to for work, provisions for those who cannot work, free schooling and, in the course of time (and why not?), cheap housing, medical services etc."\(^{12}\)

However, as most writers concede, this depoliticization is accompanied by and is largely the consequence of the increasing domination and control of people's lives by the forces of the market and the economy. So the depoliticization can be seen in terms of the people's loss of control over their own lives and over matters that affect the earth and our ecosystem. A highly controlled and manipulated society in which there is no debate and deliberation, where people do not get to speak out their minds, a society unconscious of its own history, present and possible future is at the same time quite vulnerable to the emergence of the right and reactionary tendencies.

It is in this light that we can understand the ecological problem better and in a more comprehensive manner for then we are examining not only what society has done to 'nature' but also why 'we' are doing this by referring to the internal differentiation and constitution of society. It is an attempt to render society transparent by looking beneath the surface appearance of things and into their

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\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 112.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 112.
hidden interconnections. This transparency can hopefully expose to view the structurally embedded ruse which helps capitalism mobilize all the human agency which has carried out the extremely uneccological production and internalization of nature in society. An understanding of how human agency, the working classes, or the radical ecologists' 'we', destroyed 'nature' at the behest of capitalism cannot be complete without looking at the manner in which the ideals of democracy and the political have become partners of capitalism.

We will here approach the question of the political in terms of the depoliticization of the economy as a field where the pure logic of the market operates and for which politics and particularly the state is at best presented as a hindrance to its efficient functioning. This depoliticization of the production of nature amounts to nothing less than keeping it out of the purview and control of the majority of the people which itself is possible because of the social and political context in which definite class and property relations with the capitalist state at its head facilitate and reinforce the autonomy of the economy from the political. The search for an ecological society therefore cannot be dissociated from the need to expose this political-economic split and expand the political so that the process of the production of nature is finally a democratically decided rational activity contributing to human freedom.

Contemporary writers have however approached the need for "the return of the political" in different ways and at different levels. We will here see that reform environmentalists often criticize ecologists for adopting a pre-political approach in trying to understand ecological problems. However their own understanding is severely compromised by their liberal democratic framework which as we will see itself thrives on a severe restriction of the political and hence the free reign of the logic of capitalist production.

Mouffe claims that liberal democratic assumptions based on a rationalist, universalist and individualist thinking cannot understand the existence of conflicting identities and their antagonisms in society. Mouffe starts from the assumption that conflicting interests exist in society and they need to be addressed. Also such conflicting interests always would exist in society. They need to be resolved by a
vibrant civil society which means that the political has to be extended and redefined to include "the domain of collective identifications, where what is in question is the creation of a 'we' by the delimitation of a 'them'," so that we are able to draw "our attention to the centrality of the friend/enemy relation in politics". In her own way she is trying to revive the political.

John Barry is of course correct in trying to argue that green politics can do without an environmental ethic which seeks an "a priori protection for the natural world", but he remains very much within the liberal-reformist framework. Barry's environmental ethic is limited to "regulating actual human uses of nature and identifying abuses". So his understanding of the production of unecological natures does not go beyond identifying particular acts that happen to be unecological. There is no effort to locate these acts in the context of capitalist production which makes his analysis behaviouralist and empirical. No wonder that his "anthropological moral reasoning is held to be a precarious and insufficient ethical basis for the protection of nature".

Barry's critique of bioregionalism's environmental ethic is of course well taken when he writes that "a strong critique of bioregionalism would be that social and ecological harmony for it is 'natural', i. e. 'given', making the issue of social and ecological order in some ways 'pre-political'. But Barry's idea of the 'political' does not take us too far either. His conception of the society-nature metabolism is itself pre-political for "in focussing on the primacy of the relational character of human/non-human affairs", he fails to take account of social relations or human-human relations. He fails to see the metabolism between humans and nature under capitalism as a historical form which has itself evolved under conditions determined by changing socio-economic factors, in other words, the social relations of production.

15 Ibid., p. 58.
16 Ibid., p. 58.
17 Ibid., p. 89.
Human-nature metabolism is thus for him the realm of the free functioning market economy with its own 'pure' logic and bereft of any politics. Depoliticizing human-nature metabolism, thereby positioning it beyond the realm of the political, amounts to viewing the capitalist market relations as a universal condition of all societies from time immemorial about which nothing much can be anyways done even if its consequences are unecological. We might then just sit back and watch the panorama of ecological destruction which is the cumulative and historical consequence of our "inherent tendency to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another". But that will be really like allowing the market to have a free run to the extent of delegitimizing it in the eyes of all the world which is witness to the market's depredations.

So reform environmentalists have to show that it is not the same inherent, universal human character which is responsible for both the universality of the market and the ecological destruction. And this is what Barry is unconsciously trying to do when he argues that it is particular human interests that are the cause of ecological destruction. Some human interests are "morally more defensible than others". Here Barry argues about human interests as though they are free acts by humans with full volition. He is, therefore, bound to give a clean chit to the 'pure' logic of the market which actually determines the particular human interests and hence human-nature metabolism.

His notion of the political is therefore restricted to "determining defensible or permissible human uses of the non-human environment, and distinguishing these from impermissible, trivial and unjustified abuses". Barry talks as though it is not the invisible hand but freely willed human political agency or the demos which decides what is or is not in "human interests" in capitalist society, so that we can pick and choose or reject one human interest or need vis-à-vis the other. Nor does he talk about ending the so-called independence of the economy and extending the political to determine how exactly the economy is to function so that the question of

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19 Ibid., p. 59.
human-nature metabolism really becomes a political question determined by the people in a democratic fashion.

Like Barry, Luc Ferry also defends the political and defends the Enlightenment tradition of politics as the basis for a liberal democracy which can address the ecological question too. However his notion of the political is extremely narrow and fails to break out of its staunch liberalism. Ferry displays an ahistorical and flawed understanding of how what is human in us is not just marked by what distinguishes us from the animal world but also how society has shaped us and made us what we are today. Thus if compared to animals, humans are free, Ferry cannot conceive of this freedom as anything but the freedom defined and given by capitalist society, as though we emerged from the animal world with the capitalist ethic in our hearts!

For Luc Ferry all that distinguishes humans from animals, that is, all our distinctively human characteristics go to provide the basis for liberal democracy, so that conceiving of any other form and organization of society is tantamount to ignoring what humans really are. Thus deep ecologists' call for giving rights to animals and trees and attaching intrinsic value to nature as they do not understand what it is to be human. On the other hand, for Luc Ferry, the leftists and revolutionaries want to go beyond the immediate and engage in "great messianic master-plans", whereas the task is only to "reformulate the principles of democratic reformism, situating it in the line of the disappearance of theologico-politics".

Ferry justifiably argues against the deep ecologists about human freedom and how it marks us off from the animal world. Humans are not determined from before and have the ability to fashion our life and surroundings according to a plan of our own. However Ferry understands this freedom as just freedom from and not as freedom to (something). That is to say, freedom is understood merely as a break from tradition, a lack of all determination as, therefore, "nothingness" and, here is the catch, if at all according to something then it is to freedom given by liberal democracy.

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After all, Rousseau not only talks about human freedom from nature but he also shows how this capacity for human freedom has been perverted by society into something not worthy of what he considers our essential humanity. Ferry never mentions this side of Rousseau: the reason being that, right from the outset, he constrains what is meant by human freedom to only what is realizable under liberal democracy whereas Rousseau, at least in his concept of the General Will, envisioned human freedom beyond the confines of its liberal democratic interpretation, beyond the negative conception of freedom. The point is that Ferry never identifies what is this freedom, what is its basis and only defines it as "uprootedness", as "the capacity to break away from natural and historical determinations". Thus, for him, man breaks away from nature but does not take anything from or mentally and psychologically evolve in society. Humans are essentially asocial beings: bourgeois individuals express the fundamental character of humans. Ferry thus rescues freedom from the deep ecologists' anti-humanism but restricts it and in fact monopolizes it within the liberal-democratic framework.

In Ferry's world, then, only those who remain within the liberal democratic framework are on the side of human freedom! Those who try to take us back to nature are anti-humanists and try to submerge freedom into the determination of the animal world. Those who dare to break away from the liberal order and think of socialism are enemies of human freedom for they try to disrupt the "infinite space for reflection and action" opened up for the first time "with the adult development of the secular and democratic universe". "Reformism" is the world of the adult who defends all that is human while revolutionary hope belongs to the "world of childhood".

Ferry does not even as much as consider anything other than deep ecology as a political position which can challenge "the secular and democratic universe" he so often sings hymns to. He writes: "on an intellectual and even a philosophical level, only deep ecology can claim to have a global and political vision -- but for that it needs to hoist the flags of neo-leftism or neo-conservative romanticism".

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21 Ibid., p. 15.
23 Ibid., p. 146.
presents the struggle in today's world to be between liberal democratic societies that derive from the very intrinsic nature of what it is to be human, from the basic nature of humans as beings of freedom, and deep ecologists who tend to deny our specifically human attributes and deny us our essential humanity, that is freedom. Hence all those against deep ecology and for human distinctiveness and freedom have to join the ranks of the liberal democrats!

Ferry's otherwise valid arguments against deep ecology therefore serves only to justify and universalize the capitalist man. While Ferry is right in attacking the "ecology or barbarism" slogan he implicitly proposes another: "capitalism or wilderness". We will here argue that the expansion of the political and the end of capitalism can save us from the back to nature call of the deep ecologists while taking us to higher realms of human freedom.

Let us start our formulation of the problem from the perspective of human freedom, rationality (which Ferry ignores, for his formulation of a contentless and prehistoric or rather ahistoric human freedom is precisely like those of the German idealists whom he criticizes) and the political which makes it possible to achieve a society based on our anti-naturalness but since we are rational self-reflective beings we can conceive an ecological society as well.

Thus we are going to see things under three headings:

i. Freedom is manifest through the human capacity for rational thought and action. Ecology as the new rationality of human society promises a higher level of freedom for humans. The attainment of this ecological rationality requires, however, the extension of the political as the only way in which a reinvigorated democracy can usher in an ecological society. This requires exposing the political basis of the so-called independent market economy and reinvesting the political with all the content which it has been emptied of by capitalism. Liberalism will here be taken to stand opposed to the democratic ideal; in any case, liberalism predated liberal democracy, but we will remain within the Republican tradition inaugurated by the French Revolution. 24

24 See Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, "From the Rights of Man to the Republican Idea", Chicago, 1992.
ii. The point is therefore to ensure that humans steer society along an ecological path under conditions in which they (collective ecological rationality) no longer confront reified structures that internalize and produce nature in the most unecological manner. However, the fact that it is the political which will be so important means that social relations will no longer be capitalist but nor will they be based on natural community-level relations. This is to say that human freedom and the mind will not be constricted within the confines of regional or bioregional communities which might dilute the notion of a universal humanity.

iii. Thus the ambiguity and the multifariousness (which includes what is not-given, the not-yet) so characteristic of the ecological consequences of the production of nature can only be captured at a level of abstraction given to us only by the political realm. The solution sought is therefore not scientistic for after all even science would be subject to the political which is responsible for steering society and its production of nature.

iv. Fourth is the question of the structures of modern science and industry. We need to examine whether an ecological society is possible with them or whether they are inherently unecological.

Through a discussion revolving around the four points we have outlined above we are going to argue that the ecological problem can very well be understood as primarily the outcome of a production of nature which is completely reified and independent of the collective rationality of society whose agency and hence freedom has been denied by a definite depoliticization and hegemony of the economy, the main theatre of human-nature metabolism under capitalism. We intend not only to celebrate human rationality and freedom as the reform environmentalists do against the deep ecologists' anti-humanism but also try to show that human rationality can become the basis of our freedom only if, in the present day, society comes to be

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25 The uncertainty and multiplicity of causes and effects that characterize ecology makes it indispensable to take account of complexity as an explicit phenomenon. As Levins and Lewontin argue, and Latour would perhaps agree, "both the theoretical needs of ecology and the social demands that inform our planned interactions with nature require making the understanding of complexity the central problem" (quoted in John Bellamy Foster, "Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature", Kharagpur, 2000, p. 16).
organized along democratically agreed upon ecological principles, thereby substituting for the irrational logic of the market which produces only unfreedom.

As mentioned earlier however the organization of society along ecological principles presupposes a level of abstraction from the day-to-day activities of society apart from or rather on which is based the democratic process itself. For it is conceivable that society based on full democracy can still act in the most unecological manner. In political theory this is the problem of the correspondence between right and fact which "undermines the autonomy of right". What we will try to argue is that rationality which no longer confronts the constraints and perversions of reified structures of capitalism will invariably uphold values that are humanistic within which the right will be embedded. Therefore, there is hardly a possibility that the people will decide to go unecological provided there are no reified structures that veil their direct dependence on the ecosystem.

The problem that "the right could be grounded in a de facto agreement", does not really exist if production and consumption itself is rationally organized for then society would know itself and the ecological conditions of its existence and flowering.26 The problem of ecology today emanates from the notion of abstract right, based on an equally abstract humanism, which in effect means giving a license to the logic of capitalist production to do what it pleases. Capitalism therefore resents the Aristotelian conception of natural rights which is given and defined by the order of nature but at the same time shies away from giving a definite content to the notion of individual rights.27 What we are trying to argue here is that the Aristotelian notion of natural rights never emptied the notion of rights of its given context and social positioning. But this was done within a framework which constrained the freedom of the individual.

We here try to retain the attempt to provide a substantive content to the notion of rights but recognize that, unlike Aristotelianism, this content is not some pre-

26 Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, "From the Rights of Man to the Republican Idea", p. 40.
27 See Ferry and Renaut, op.cit. for the Aristotelian notion of natural rights which, however, differs from the character of rights as found in the Athenian city-state democracy where free labour enjoyed real political freedom. On the relationship between free labour and democracy in Ancient Greece, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Capitalism Against Democracy: Renewing Historical Materialism", Cambridge, 1995.
given natural order which pigeon-holes rights and individual roles. Rather, rights have to be instituted on the basis of society's consciousness of itself whose first condition is, in order for an ecological society however, that individuals collectively decide and control society's metabolism with nature. This means that, unlike in capitalist society, the political participation of individuals as free labour collectively ensures their active involvement in and control over production, consumption needs and resource use.

But since the human metabolism with nature is mediated by the structures of modern science and industry, thus removing the basis for the hold of primordial relations among humans, and also because society is organized on a much larger basis than that given by unmediated natural relations, individual freedom and a fair and requisite level of abstraction both in the notion of rights and human self-realization as well as at the level of the ability to evaluate the ecological consequences of production as a whole, including the global level, can be ensured by *doing away with the dichotomy between the political and the economic perpetrated by capitalist production and simultaneously expanding and redefining the political to include ecological rationality*.

Thus we see that the conditions for the production of nature under capitalism have, historically speaking, opened the way for an ecological society where, firstly, 'nature' is protected without sacrificing individual rights by re-establishing back to nature relations, and secondly, *the rights and the principles of organizing our production of nature are not merely grounded on a de facto direct democracy-type agreement between individuals but are at the same time guided by principles that transcend and give a vision to the given de facto agreement without falling into the ahistorical trap of abstract bourgeois humanism.*

28 Habermas also seems to be in search of unconditional principles to guard against "the inevitable banalization of everyday life in political communication" which, in turn, "poses a danger for the semantic potentials on which such communication must draw". For this, however, "the transcending-validity claims of everyday communication is not sufficient. Another kind of transcendence is disclosed in the undefused force which is disclosed by the critical appropriation of identity-forming religious traditions, and yet another in the negativity of art. The trivial must be allowed to shatter against the sheerly alien, abyssal, uncanny which resists assimilation to what is already understood,
itself which need not shy away from but address and go beyond the antinomies of Rousseau's thought which was torn between the attempts to repose sovereign power in the people and the means to bring this about, given the society-state and polity-economy dichotomies at the heart of the capitalist system. The doing away of these dichotomies can ensure the conditions for an ecological society, as will be seen below.

Thus, in point of fact, the divergence between right and values does not really exist under capitalism, for values underlying political rights are constantly being generated by the economy or market. What is true is that the value underlying the abstract notion of right is not decided democratically as in Rousseau's General Will. Nor does it make sense to talk about the values underlying rights and the manner (democratic or undemocratic) of deciding it unless production itself is rationally organized. We start with Ellen Meiksins Wood's presentation of liberal democracy and the unfreedom it churns out. The metaphysics of subjectivity is not a prerequisite for human rights.

4.3 Ecological theories and their political dead-ends

From the above discussion we see that the question of an ecological society is critically a political question. The attempts to define it either only in terms of the return to or preservation of an original 'nature'(pre-political approach), or in terms of only people's preferences and behaviour, treating people as consumers and hence the need to restrain their consumption levels(anti-political approach) is as we saw above reflective of the liberal humanist ideology. Deep ecologists who oppose the latter do so on the basis of ecological, Aristotelian or 'organismic' perspective, which we found problematic owing to its pre-political character. Timothy Luke, critiquing deep ecologists Devall and Sessions's evocation of the traditional community's ethical codes, writes that "such ethical codes, if adhered to exactly, are ill suited to purposive revival of ecological consciousness to revolutionise advanced industrialism. They are credos of world rejection and individual effacement (as although no privilege can now install behind it" (quoted in Peter Dews, "The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays on Contemporary European Philosophy", London, 1995, p. 11).
might the spiritual needs of overburdened agricultural producers under oriental despotism) rather than a continuation of the individuation, personalism, nominalism, and existentialism Devall and Sessions endorse in primal cultures".\textsuperscript{30}

The deep ecological, pre-political approach denies the irreversibility of the process of modernity and, in positioning itself outside of it, fails to take account of the emancipatory possibilities latent in modernity. The reformist, anti-political approach denies the inherently political character of modernity and tries to present the ecological problem as emanating from the clash of human interests, of our humanism, with 'nature'. We are going to argue that treating modernity as a political phenomenon will help us take account of its problems as well as its advantages in addressing the ecological problem.

An exploration of some of the writings on green political theory shows that the debate revolves around the best possible way of defending the environment. First there is the debate on what we mean by 'nature' or the environment, so that we know for sure what is it we want to protect. Only then can we think of the institutions and practices needed for an ecological society. We covered some of the debates at the level of broad philosophical levels and how it goes to distinguish the radical ecological school from the reform environmentalists, in Chapter One. Now we see their political implications.

\textbf{Means and Ends: the Right and the Good}

From the perspective of our position that the ecological problematic should not only go beyond the 'politics of nature' but should also formulate itself explicitly in terms of the expansion of the political, we find that most of the writings of ecologists tend to abstractly prescribe an ecological programme for society without taking cognizance of both the autonomous logic of the economic under capitalism and the accompanying lack of real content in citizens' participation in the political process. The question has often been posed about whether the goal of an ecological

\textsuperscript{29} See Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, "From the Rights of Man to the Republican Idea", where they argue that, "faced with the real divisions of society, the general will, far from being consigned to the museum of archaisms, becomes the regulative idea of modern political philosophy" (p. 59).

society in itself prescribes the means of attaining it. The question is rather whether the goal of an ecological society can be detached from the question of the manner in which it can be attained.

What distinguishes the different positions here is the way in which the ecological problem is understood vis-à-vis the other values of democracy and political participation. Strong ecocentrists who often take a consequentialist position are supposed to privilege ecological outcomes over any processual values of democracy and human rights while reform environmentalists often emphasize on the processual or deontological issues as fundamentally uncompromisable. Ecocentrists often claim that democracy and participation will be naturally facilitated once society is organized along ecocentric principles while reform environmentalists argue that ecological outcomes can be ensured through no more than an ecological fine-tuning of the processes of liberal democratic institutions.

This distinction in ecological thought between the process and the goal, which derives from political theory's debate on the question of the right and the good, will be addressed here from our perspective of treating the ecological problem as a political problem and seeking its final solution in the expansion of the political. Taking the cue from writers like David Harvey we will argue that, today, given the extent and scale of transformation of nature and its production, it is difficult to even project an ecological goal which is not itself shaped by the practices of existing socio-political institutions.31

Hence our ecological objective itself cannot be conceived apart from the processes of political participation and the economy so that its attainment can come about through the resolution of the contradictions inherent in the existing politico-economic processes and not apart from them. Harvey has therefore argued that every society, its social relations, both reflect and instantiate definite socio-ecological relations that therefore cannot be abandoned without creating major crises in
society. The question of the right and the good in ecological thought will therefore be addressed by taking account of the embeddedness of both ecological goals, the good, and the processes that precipitate the need for such a goal and the means for attaining them, the right, in each other.

Our project of the expansion of the political and the move towards the realm of freedom is not possible without taking cognizance of this embeddedness of the right and the good without however giving up our understanding above that the notion of the right cannot be reduced to a mere empirical fact shorn of any abstraction, of values that go beyond the immediate and the local. On this question of what is it that will guide or provide limiting principles for any democracy so that it does not get into the uncertain quagmire of contingent mass decisions, so that rationality does not become the victim in the course of the democratic process, Castoriadis suggests that it would be wrong to take "the 'Constitution' as a fundamental Charter embodying the norm of norms and defining particularly stringent provisions for its revision".

The debate between writers on ecological thought revolves around the question of whether being ecological also prescribes in itself a particular way of life and organization of human relations or whether an ecological society is possible even when society is organized along other principles like democracy and commitment to, say, individual rights: hence the debate about whether nature or non-human nature itself prescribes a particular way of life whose violation results in unecological outcomes. Robyn Eckersley argues that ecocentrism in itself recommends a democratic process since it believes that human and non-human beings should be allowed to "unfold in their own ways and according to their

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32 Writes Harvey, "created ecosystems tend to both instanciate and reflect, therefore, the social systems that gave rise to them, though they do not do so in non-contradictory (i. e. stable) ways". Further, he argues, "money flows and commodity movements, for example, have to be regarded as fundamental to contemporary ecosystems, not only because of the accompanying geographical transfer of plants and animal species from one environment to another but also because these flows form a coordinating network that keeps contemporary ecosystems reproducing and changing in the particular they do" (David Harvey, "The Nature of Environment: The Dialectics of Social and Environmental Change", The Socialist Register, London, 1993, p. 27 & p. 28).
'species life". This means that "the connection between ecology and democracy is no longer tenuous... authoritarianism is ruled out at the level of green principle (rather than on purely instrumental grounds) in the same way that it is ruled out according to liberal principle: it fundamentally infringes the rights of humans to choose their own destiny." 35

But ecocentrism does not know what social conditions are required for the flowering of an individual's potential capacities and powers. For a human being is essentially a social being who cannot attain overall development apart from society which is constituted collectively by humans by transcending the natural relations given to us in our pre-social condition. Transcendence of human relations dictated directly by the conditions given by nature has been part of the larger project of human emancipation in two senses. One, freeing humankind from the necessities imposed by nature on humans so that we are able to control and make use of the forces of nature to our benefit. Secondly, emancipation from the necessity imposed by reified social and economic structures that dominate and oppress humans. The fight against social structures and the need to replace them with non-alienating institutions cannot, however, be directed towards reviving in any manner the earlier natural relations that imposed themselves on human society.

Thus Dobson notes that "the radical green aspiration to insert the human being in its 'proper place' in the natural order and to generate a sense of humility in the face of it is clearly 'right-wing' in this context". 36 Now one manner in which this natural order and humans' proper place in it are sought to be preserved is by extending rights to natural beings and objects. Empowering the objects of nature with rights is a move which will directly undermine the social transformation and production of nature.

But the point is that such a move is not even necessary for an ecological society if not for an ecocentric society. For it has two clear problems. One, so long as the extension of rights for nature takes place within the larger reality of capitalist

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34 Robyn Eckersley, quoted in Andrew Dobson, "Green Political Thought", London and New York, 1995, p. 27.
35 Eckersley quoted in Dobson, “Green Political Thought”, p. 27.
36 Andrew Dobson, "Green Political Thought", p. 31.
production it will leave the logic of this production largely unchallenged but then that is where the actual use and abuse of nature takes place. Secondly, if the extension of rights to nature were to actually get the better of the logic of the capitalist production system in the sense of opening up an imminent prospect for an ecocentric, back-to-nature society, then, for reasons we have been discussing, even that is not an option either.

Thus while we disagree with the goal of an ecocentric society from the perspective of the manner in which it will destroy the conditions of democracy and individual rights, among other things, we agree with Eckersley that such a goal can entail its own ecocentric process and means. Other writers, however, do not think that a strict association of environmental means and ends is tenable at all. Here the differences are at two levels: at the level of those who agree on an ecocentric society as their goal but disagree on the question of the socio-political arrangements for such a society; secondly, at the level of the appropriate socio-political arrangements for a sustainable society which need not necessarily be an ecocentric society.

4.4 Ecological citizenship: expansion of the rights discourse

Eckersley has presented a case for rights of nature in terms of a wider context in which "the rights discourse has undergone considerable expansion through the process of 'immanent critique' of the traditional rights repertoire". She seems in principle to be arguing for an expansion of the political, a process which, she thinks, has already been underway in most liberal democracies in the shape of welfare rights. Pointing out that welfare rights came as a critique of liberal rights, she writes that "the ecological critique provides an important historical sequel to the social critique, the combined effect of which is a recontextualization of the liberal idea of individual autonomy in ways that acknowledge social interdependence, biophysical embodiment and ecological interdependence".

For Eckersley, the "widening of the rights discourse to include economic, social and cultural rights", that is, the institution of welfare rights, "has been justified, in

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38 Ibid., p. 372.
part, as necessary for the proper exercise of the more traditional rights". 39 Similarly, "there are certain environmental rights or interests which should not be traded off in liberal democracies" for they "provide the long-term preconditions for democracy or simply because such rights fulfil basic welfare requirements which ought not to be compromised". 40

Providing the preconditions for democracy by providing rights to nature already assumes that nature has to be protected from something, just as the individual, in the liberal discourse on rights, has to be protected from the overpowering might of the state and other institutions. Eckersley does not really clarify from what nature has to be protected. This amounts to, in the first place, failing to take account of the logic of the capitalist mode of production which, in being kept autonomous from the political sphere, is the prime and uncontrolled theatre where the use and abuse of nature takes place. This goes hand in hand with the failure to challenge the state-society dichotomy at the heart of liberal democracy.

Secondly, by referring to the rights of nature in terms of its intrinsic value, "the inherent value of all life", an idea derived from the abstract and ahistorical liberal humanist conception of the individual, it extends this ahistoricity to nature as well with consequences that can upset the liberal paradigm itself. 41 While such a move may be effective to some extent to stem the unchecked exploitation and destruction of nature in the hands of liberalism which is what Eckersley rightfully intends, it is blind to the emancipatory potential latent in the break from natural relations and the setting up of social relations inaugurated by liberalism. We discussed this above in this chapter and in the previous chapter.

Eckersley, therefore, tries to check the destruction of nature by extending the worst features of the liberal paradigm. She, of course, agrees that she is operating within the liberal paradigm. As she writes, "just as the classical theory of liberal democracy is based on a theory of justice which recognizes the inherent value and dignity of the individual (without which there could be no commitment to

39 Ibid., pp. 363-364.
40 Ibid., p. 364.
41 Ibid., p. 365.
democracy) so too a theory of 'environmental democracy' would demand a recognition of the inherent value of all life'.

What Eckersley fails to realize is that the full implication of giving rights to nature will most possibly result in a society which merely adopts itself to nature and would definitely mean an end to the emancipatory potential opened by the type of society we know by the name of modernity. But then if society were to be organized along bioregional or ecocentric lines so that the "intrinsic value" of all life is preserved, such a set-up would not allow the autonomy of the social as something not completely given or dictated by the natural, as something which would freely but not unecologically chart out its course. It is inconceivable how under an ecocentric dispensation individual liberal rights, which Eckersley seeks to uphold, could be protected as this requires the breakup of the traditional structures and the emergence of the free bourgeois individual.

Eckersley then contradicts herself since the basis for abstract liberal individual rights which she defends was itself laid in the process of the transformation of nature and the setting up of "unnatural", that is, social relations, that in tum would not have been possible if rights were granted to nature as well. Thus the extension of the liberal notion of rights to nature, has the potential of subverting the conditions for the exercise of individual rights. It takes us at least one step closer to an ecocentric society where the community subsumes individual rights.

The extension of the political which we are arguing here, therefore, exposes significant gaps and lacunae in the ecocentric perspective propounded by Eckersley. She clearly intends to strengthen the liberal notion of rights and in some ways also goes beyond its classical conception by referring to the ecological preconditions necessary for its realization. She distances herself from Christopher Stone's position which argues for giving legal rights to nature, but still follows the same "foundational moral arguments" that give rise to such a position. So she demands "a recognition of the inherent value of all life" without, however, conceding legal rights for nature: "while certain forms of legal recognition and protection of non-human life would necessarily follow from this moral case for 'extended environmental

42 Ibid., p. 365.
democracy", it does not follow that this recognition and protection must take the form of *legal rights*.43

It is indeed true that Eckersley's position in favour of "certain forms of *legal recognition and protection of non-human life*", can put a legal restraint to the unchecked exploitation and destruction of nature under capitalism. Particularly her refusal to attribute legal rights to nature makes her position more acceptable to state institutions and opens the way to legislative measures for the protection of the environment. But the point is that if, as Eckersley rightly points out, the destruction of the life-sustaining capacities of the environment leads to an erosion of the preconditions for the exercise of democracy, then, protecting 'nature' and "a recognition of the inherent value of all life" does not necessarily "permit the flourishing and well-being of both human and non-human life".44 The search for a more fulfilling democracy and the all round development of the individual have to be sought in a different direction: in the direction of the expansion of the political, to my mind.

Eckersley has taken Benton's emphasis on the commonalities between humans and animals as the basis for her claim that we need to ensure the preconditions of democracy by according "moral priority to the material conditions(including bodily and ecological conditions) that enable (that) autonomy to be exercised".45 For Benton, both humans and animals need enabling conditions for the confirmation and development of their powers and capacities, something which Marx had pointed in his "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts". Eckersley however tries to suggest from this that these enabling ecological conditions "permit the flourishing and well-being" of humans simply because these conditions exist. She overlooks the fact that humans develop and flourish in the course of their intercourse with nature, so that humans develop and transform themselves in the course of the transformation of nature.

43 Ibid., p. 365.
44 Ibid., p. 365.
Thus while humans and animals as beings of nature and as objective beings, do share some qualities it is only humans that transform themselves and their surroundings through activity, hence there is no primal nature or nature as such just as there is no abstract human as such. In any case, though a position which calls for "a recognition of the inherent value of all life" need not in itself be problematic, yet this carries the danger of assuming a static relationship between humans and nature that denies the dynamic and extremely enriching relationship between humans and nature.

The flourishing of human and non-human life cannot therefore be just a celebration of all life because humans do care for their own survival and hence would like to see to it that forms of life that are harmful to humans, like certain bacteria or germs, are not allowed to flourish if not live at all in the first place. On the other hand, the flourishing of humans not only cannot be treated as separate from their activity, their work on and transformation of nature but has to be looked at as attainable in and through this activity.

4.4 Conclusion

Thus the question to be addressed is really about the production of nature, of, to be precise, ecological nature. Societies transform and produce nature which is specific to them. The point is whether or not they are able to produce an ecological nature. And the question to be asked in ecological politics is: what are conditions needed for an ecological production of nature? How is it possible to produce an ecological nature which also promotes human freedom, human autonomy and the rights of the individual? Can society's metabolism with nature be the fulfillment of the ecological rationality of humans thereby leading to more freedom or will it continue to be guided by the irrational functioning of the so-called economy which is kept outside the realm of the political under capitalism?

It is to the above questions that we have looked for answers in this chapter and our conclusion is that it is the expansion of the political in the sense of enabling society's control over the process of society's metabolism with nature through a democratic process which would promote both human freedom and an ecological production of nature. Our suggestion is therefore that ecology has to go beyond the
'politics of nature' and address the question of an ecological society in terms of a political question of the need to extend society's control over its metabolism with nature. But this has to be done as the democratic realisation of society's own (ecological) rationality, so that the ecological production of nature will be consonant with the enhancement of human freedom.

Form our discussion on the process of the production of nature under capitalism in the last chapter we saw how capitalism destroyed a society based on natural relations and established a society based on the logic of self-expansion of value, the logic of capital. In this chapter we saw how this form of society in turn gave rise to certain conditions for the realisation of individual freedom based on the idea of abstract bourgeois humanism. But the political rights given to the individual proved to fall far short of enabling society to rationally control its intercourse with nature as the inexorable logic of capital completely dictated this process giving rise to ecological destruction.

In this situation, the best way of ensuring the protection of nature is, however, not by trying to extend the abstract and politically hollow rights enjoyed by individuals on the basis of their inviolable natural rights, to nature or natural objects. This would amount to as we saw above treating nature itself abstractly in the manner of liberal theory's treatment of humans as something possessing a given inherent value and hence ahistorical and static. This is the consequence as well as the effect of treating nature and humans in isolation from their active intercourse, dynamic and mutual transformation of each other or, otherwise and as a corollary of this, considering that the only manner in which humans can be ecological is by merely adapting themselves to nature. Since in recognizing the ahistorical and static "inherent value of nature", 'nature' is inviolable and given for all times, similar to the liberal conception of an individual, humans and nature are then understood in isolation from each other.

However, this extension of liberal rights to nature if consistently pursued might subvert liberalism itself. For if nature cannot be freely transformed by humans then they would have to adapt to nature giving rise to a society based on natural relations and therefore the end of the autonomy and freedom of the individual. This is one of
the major pitfalls as we saw above in the ecocentric approach or critique of liberal human rights. Instead what we are here suggesting is that the conditions brought about by liberalism in terms of the doing away of natural relations and the initiation of the process of the social production of nature can, through an expansion of the political beyond the liberal paradigm, open the possibility for a rational and socially controlled metabolism with nature. This can mean the production of an ecological nature and also the enhancement of human freedom both at the individual level as under liberalism as well as at the societal level through the democratic realisation of ecological rationality in society. It is such an ecological politics which would pave the way for an ecological production of nature.