The wor(l)d of the animal. Adorno on art’s expression of suffering

Camilla Flodin*
Department of Philosophy, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

Abstract
Although Adorno takes modern, autonomous art as the starting point for his aesthetics, this does not mean that his idea of art’s truth content is restricted to the artworks of modernity. In the article, I wish to show that Adorno’s discussion of art’s truth content is intimately connected with its capacity to express the suffering that nature has undergone and still undergoes in the name of enlightenment. I focus on art’s expression of the suffering of non-human nature, and particularly non-human animals. I examine the interpretation Adorno makes in Dialectic of Enlightenment of an episode from The Odyssey, to show that even an artwork before the modern conception of art can be said to have truth content. Few commentators have considered this, and those who have, have not recognized Adorno’s conviction that what is significant in authentic artworks is their ability to give voice not only to repressed human nature but also to repressed non-human nature. Giving voice to suffering nature and animals is something that unites The Odyssey with subsequent artworks, such as Mahler’s Third Symphony.

Keywords: domination of nature; natural beauty; The Odyssey; non-human animals; Mahler

According to Adorno, the progress of civilization is entwined with a detachment from nature. Through the domination of both internal human nature (desires, needs) and external non-human nature, humanity has been able to break free from nature’s immediate grasp. The process of enlightenment is characterized by a growing skepticism against the mimetic relationship that represents an acknowledgment of the kinship between the (human) subject and the (natural) object. This relationship is expelled into the domains of art. The mimetic relationship is increasingly regarded as unscientific and fictitious, and in modern western society, science and art are two separate

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*Correspondence to: Camilla Flodin, Department of Philosophy, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. Email: Camilla.Flodin@estetik.uu.se

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spheres, where the former is regarded as dealing with knowledge (truth) and the latter is regarded as dealing with fiction. In previous magical practice, man imitated nature to master it. Magical practice shares with enlightenment the effort to dominate nature. The important difference is that magical practice is characterized by a mimetic approach that acknowledges the priority of nature (consisting in the fact that humanity is more dependent on nature than nature is dependent on humankind); an acknowledgement of nature on its own terms in that man is trying to imitate it. It is an irrational form of acknowledgment, but nevertheless an acknowledgment. The truth content of this acknowledgement—the kinship between humanity and nature—is disregarded in the subsequent development, where belief in the kinship with and likeness to nature is dismissed as anthropomorphism. As enlightenment proceeds, man rids himself of the thought of kinship with nature to master nature more efficiently. Art, however, preserves this mimetic relationship and the notion of the affinity between subject and object, between humanity and nature. In his lectures on aesthetics from 1958–59 Adorno claims that:

[…] indeed art contains a defining element of imitation [Nachahmung], but with just one reservation, namely that it is not as an imitation of something, but as an imitating impulse, that is as an impulse of mimicry, as the impulse to so to speak make yourself into the thing you stand before, or make the thing you stand before into a self [einem selber].

For Adorno, mimesis has thus not to do with the imitation of an object, of the thing you stand before, but with a behavior toward the thing you stand before, a behavior acknowledging the thing you stand before as a self, as a subject. This impulse has truth content, according to Adorno; the feeling of kinship with nature is not merely anthropomorphism. The inclination to treat the natural object, for example, a non-human animal, standing before you as another self, another you, is something that art preserves in a modified form. In the rest of society, however, the mimetic element is neglected. This neglect has resulted in a society that is just as coercive as nature, itself the object of mastery. Western capitalist society, has according to Adorno, turned into a “second nature” (zweite Natur) exploiting the first. To break out of this petrification of society, we need to acknowledge our own dependence on nature. What is needed is what Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment refers to as a “remembrance of nature within the subject [Eingedenken der Natur im Subjekt].” Such a remembrance would entail the acknowledgment of nature as a subject as well. Thus, I disagree with Lambert Zuidervaart when he claims that Adorno’s idea of the primacy of the object does not have “any indication that the object can also be a subject.” Adorno’s call for an expansion of subject hood to include non-human nature and animals is in fact most emphatically stated in his ideas on the relationship between nature and art. In the following, I wish to explore this relationship further by analyzing how and why Adorno holds that the suffering of nature and animals needs to be expressed by art. I will focus primarily on the suffering of non-human nature and non-human animals, even though it is important to understand that this suffering is intertwined with the suffering of humans and have the same cause, namely the domination of nature (Naturbeherrschung). By examining Adorno’s interpretation of The Odyssey and Gustav Mahler’s Third Symphony, I also wish to elucidate how the expression of suffering emerges both in an early artwork as well as in a later one.

AUTHENTIC ART

Adorno emphatically takes modern artworks as the starting point for his aesthetics. In the “Draft Introduction” to the unfinished and posthumously published Aesthetic Theory, he writes:

The principle of method here is that light should be cast on all art from the vantage point of the most recent artworks, rather than the reverse, following the custom of historicism and philology, which, bourgeois at heart, prefers that nothing ever change.

The most recent artworks for Adorno—such as the works of Samuel Beckett—are characterized by a radical questioning of their own status as works of art. According to Adorno, modern art has turned against itself, revolting against the affirmative trait that is typical of art, namely the presentation of a world that is posited against the empirical world as if this posited world existed. Through this revolt, art is shaken to its very core, which means that the revolt also has repercussions on earlier art. This is
why Adorno can discover self-reflexivity in an early work (defined by us, now, as an artwork) such as *The Odyssey*. The crisis of modern art—its radical questioning of itself as art—exposes and makes thematic something that has been latent in art throughout history. If the autonomy of art is a result of a certain historical development, as Adorno thinks, we have to be able to see that there is something that connects what we call art, without turning this something into an ahistorical invariant.

What connects an early work such as *The Odyssey* with an autonomous artwork such as Mahler’s Third Symphony is that both works manage to register and reflect on the process of enlightenment outside art by reflecting on their own inner process of enlightenment. What Adorno calls authentic artworks (*authentische Kunstwerke*) are artworks that express what enlightenment otherwise hides: the suffering caused by the domination of nature.\(^8\) Authentic artworks reflect the dark side of enlightenment that Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* describes as the destructive continuity “from the slingshot to the megaton bomb.”\(^9\) This is the history of intensified suffering. “But then what would art be, as the writing of history, if it shook off the memory of accumulated suffering,”\(^10\) Adorno asks rhetorically at the end of *Aesthetic Theory*. Authentic artworks manage to constitute such a writing because they also express themselves as art, that is to say, they express their own artificiality.\(^11\) The expression of artificiality is an element of dissonance, of rupture. To express the suffering of nature, an artwork cannot pretend to be an organic unity; it has to show its own artificiality. In other words, authentic artworks are artworks that do not pretend to be authentic and harmonious wholes but in fact admit their inauthenticity. By contrast, harmonious works are truly inauthentic, precisely by not acknowledging their artificiality.

That authentic artworks express the suffering that nature has undergone does not mean that art cannot be a source of a positive experience. In his lectures on aesthetics Adorno states:

> Every dissonance is in a way a remembrance of suffering [*Eingedenken des Leidens*], to which the domination of nature, the dominating society, ultimately subjects nature; and only in the shape of this suffering, only in the shape of longing—and dissonance is always essentially longing and suffering—only therein does repressed nature find its voice at all, and this is why dissonance is not only attached to this element of negativity, of suffering, but is at the same time always attached to happiness, the happiness of giving voice to nature [ . . .].\(^12\)

“[D]issonance is always essentially longing and suffering”: the longing for suffering to end. In contrast, harmony “presents what is not reconciled as reconciled” and in this way betrays reconciliation according to Adorno.\(^13\) The longing for reconciliation, for suffering to end, is the utopian element of art, its preservation of the potential for change, that is expressed when an artwork exposes itself as art and calls attention to its own artificiality. Such an exposure is present already in *The Odyssey*.

### THE SELF-REFLECTION OF THE ODYSSEY

Adorno’s treatment of *The Odyssey* as an artwork is not just a subjective judgment, rather it is dependent on something in the work itself, something that can only be properly described in modernity. History will decide what is to be regarded as art: “[ . . .] much that was not art—cultic works, for instance—has over the course of history metamorphosed into art; and much that was once art is that no longer.”\(^14\) But it is important to keep in mind that the history, which Adorno is referring to, is the history of the domination of nature, and it is the artworks that are able to express the suffering that nature has undergone during this history that have truth content.

*The Odyssey* is the archetype for the authentic work of art reflecting over nature-dominating enlightenment’s repression of the manifold of sensuous nature. In Book XII, we have the famous meeting with the sirens. The actions that Odysseus and his men take when facing the sirens are interpreted by Adorno as “a prescient allegory of the dialectic of enlightenment.”\(^15\) As such, the episode is also an allegory of the birth of art. In this episode, we see how the emergence of art is connected to the domination of nature, both of external nature, represented by the song of the sirens, and of internal nature, represented by the desire the song awakens in the sailors (the two “natures” also being detached from each another),
and the accompanying separation of reason and sensibility, rationality and mimesis. The story also anticipates the separation of art from societal practice and manual labor: only Odysseus may listen to the sirens, his men have to row (to prevent them from hearing the enchanting song, Odysseus has plugged their ears with wax), and as he is tied to the mast, he is safe. Odysseus’s listening is not a partaking; the lure of the sirens “is neutralized as a mere object of contemplation, as art.”

Robert Hullot-Kentor has noted that the inner development of The Odyssey literally is the development of reason: “Odysseus’s struggle against mythical powers in the achievement of self-identity becomes the order of the epic’s self-identity, its organization of the mythical legends into a whole.” Hullot-Kentor emphasizes that the excursus on Odysseus in Dialectic of Enlightenment has three levels of significance: the first level has to do with the birth of reason that, on the second level, becomes the construction of the Homeric epic. The third level concerns “the recuperation of reason through the relation of reason and aesthetics.” The Odyssey is from our point of view, informed by the path history has taken, an artwork reflecting on the status of art in nature-dominating society: the self-reflection of enlightenment, in other words, the memory of repressed nature.

According to Adorno, this self-reflection is made possible by the caesura in Book XXII of The Odyssey. Here, we are told of Telemachus’s punishment of the 12 maids who during Odysseus’s absence have been together with Penelope’s suitors. For this transgression, Odysseus wants to behead the women, but his son, Telemachus, to whom Odysseus gives the task of executing the death sentence, does not want to give the maids “a decent death,” but instead decides that they will be hanged. After a cold account of the execution, we are told that their feet kicked “but not for very long.” With this attempt of reassurance, Adorno claims that “the inner flow of the narrative comes to rest.”

“The telling gesture of the narrator points to the fact that all suffering lasts too long and with this pause in the story, a caesura is created that “allows the events narrated to be transformed into something long past, and causes to flash up a semblance of freedom that civilization has been unable wholly to extinguish ever since.” This freedom would be the end of socially conditioned suffering. Through the memory of what has happened, a wish that such a suffering will never happen again is also manifested. In Negative Dialectics Adorno claims that “[t]he physical moment tells our knowledge that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different. ‘Woe speaks: Go.’”

The caesura is, as Britta Scholze claims, “the element that shows that the continuum of text does not depict a logical necessity, but only constructs it.” Scholze also notes that Adorno makes a historico-philosophical interpretation of the caesura in that it illustrates “the interplay between freedom and necessity in history” and thus he also connects freedom with “the breaking through of a course of events that appears with alleged necessity.” The caesura produces the self-reflection of the narrative that exposes the narrative as a construction, that is, as second nature. The course of events that the narrative represents is not necessary, but constructed. A pause, a dissonance is created in the apparent harmonious unity of the epic. The suffering that the execution implies is not seamlessly joined with the story as any other element. Instead, the caesura gives voice to suffering, through the disclosure of the order of the epic as constructed, rather than natural.

Karla L. Schultz approaches the episode with the hanging of the maids in terms of form and mimesis: “Shifting from presentation to self-reflection, from eloquent continuum to silent break, the form draws attention to itself, to the limits of what can be told [. . .].” Schultz is correct in pointing out that art’s consciousness of itself as art can be described as the self-reflection of form. According to Schultz, mimesis is the prolonging of form to reach its content and the silence is here a conscious gesture of negation: “In a moment of silence the painful contradiction between suffering and the telling of suffering is remembered. By creating a space not filled by language negation becomes emphatic speech. The caesura in the
narrative transforms wordless torment into remembered agony [...]”

What also needs to be noticed, but has been neglected by Schultz, as well as by Scholze and Hullot-Kentor, is that Adorno here emphasizes that the death struggle of the maids “is described and expressionlessly compared to the death of birds in a trap.” This cold and expressionless comparison precedes the declaration that the death struggle did not last for long, which creates the pause in the narration. The pause is what enables also the otherwise neglected suffering of non-human nature to be heard. The passage from _The Odyssey_ reads:

And then, like doves or long-winged thrushes caught in a net across the thicket where they come to roost, and meeting death where they had only looked for sleep, the women held their heads out in a row, and a noose was cast round each one’s neck to despatch them in the most miserable way. For a little while their feet kicked out, but not for very long.  

Adorno claims that the distanced and precise description of the execution before the caesura “already exhibits the coldness of anatomy and vivisection.” But through the break that is created with the words “not for very long,” suffering is given voice and at the same time it is revealed that things ought to be different. The narration’s self-reflection, its unmasking of itself as precisely a fiction and not a necessary turn of events, also reveals that the suffering and death of neither the maids, the doves nor the thrushes, are necessary, rather they are a result of a specific society, a society that is described in _The Odyssey_ as based on the domination of nature. Odysseus, who during his adventurous journey over the ocean has learned how to control his internal nature, returns to his faithful wife and shows his authority over the sexuality of the maids that has to be regulated. Typically enough, he gives his son, his matrimonial progeny, the task to execute the maids, who have been engaging in non-matrimonial relations. The connection between the domination of human nature and non-human nature is also clear: the same technique that is used to kill birds can be used to kill humans. But the nature-dominating order that is being exposed is, just like the artwork, constructed.

Through exposing itself as second nature, that is as socially constructed, the artwork exposes society as second nature: what is regarded as “natural” is in fact artificial and can be altered. In this way, _The Odyssey_ manages to point toward a different society than the one that merely continues and intensifies the domination of nature. When society is exposed as second nature, the possibility for a radical change is simultaneously laid bare. Freedom is not realized in the artwork, it is only the semblance of freedom that “flash[es] up.” But, this semblance contains the potential for change. In _Aesthetic Theory_, Adorno claims that “in the semblance of what is other, its possibility also unfolds.” Even the false semblance of society contains the potential for change when it is exposed as precisely false through the artwork’s semblance.

### NATURAL BEAUTY AND SUFFERING

The semblance of freedom that “flash[es] up” in the artwork is thus connected with the memory of the subject as part of nature and this also includes a remembrance of the suffering that the repression of nature has involved. In line with the logic that lending voice to suffering implies an expression of the wish for things to be different, art’s remembrance of the repression of nature also means that art points toward the possibility of a reconciliation between humans and nature. In “On Subject and Object,” Adorno characterizes reconciliation, or peace, as “the state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated participating in each other.” Reconciliation for Adorno is thus not identity; a reconciliation between humankind and nature does not imply that we humans would be identical with nature. Adorno is not longing for a state where humankind has not differentiated itself from the rest of nature, but for a state where we humans have acknowledged that we participate in nature and that nature is a necessary condition for our existence. For Adorno, the seemingly most humanly determined artifact, the artwork, anticipates nature liberated from domination:

The artwork, through and through θέσει, something human, is the plenipotentiary of φύσει, of what is not merely for the subject, of what, in Kantian terms, would be the thing itself. The identity of the artwork with the subject is as complete as the identity of nature with itself should some day be.
Such a liberated nature does not yet exist, and in order not to betray it, the artwork cannot explicitly present utopia. If the artwork were to do this, it would turn into “an aid for cloaking and legitimating the unreconciled world as one in which—as the claim goes—beauty is indeed possible.” This is Adorno’s attempt to reintroduce natural beauty into aesthetics as a corrective to the belief in the superiority of human reason, which after Kant was reproduced in the idealistic tradition:

Natural beauty vanished from aesthetics as a result of the burgeoning domination of the concept of freedom and human dignity, which was inaugurated by Kant and then rigorously transplanted into aesthetics by Schiller and Hegel; in accord with this concept nothing in the world is worthy of attention except that for which the autonomous subject has itself to thank. The truth of such freedom for the subject, however, is at the same time unfreedom: unfreedom for the other. For this reason the turn against natural beauty, in spite of the immeasurable progress it made possible in the comprehending of art as spiritual, does not lack an element of destructiveness, just as the concept of dignity does not lack it in its turn against nature. [...] If the case of natural beauty were pending, dignity would be found culpable for having raised the human animal above the animal.  

The exclusion of natural beauty from aesthetics after Kant bears, as Simon Jarvis observes, witness to “a historical truth: the intensification of the domination of nature discussed in the Dialectic of Enlightenment.” A notion of human dignity based on a separation of nature and man always entails the condition of the possibility of repression of humans as well as nature. If we wish to eliminate that possibility, we need a different concept of dignity, one that would not be “a demarcation of differences” that “is directed against animals,” as Adorno, in his unfinished book on Beethoven, criticizes Kant’s concept of human dignity of being. True freedom cannot be based on unfreedom for the other, instead the concept of dignity has to include what has been regarded as the other of man: nature and the other animals.  

What is essential in natural beauty for Adorno is the indication of nature’s transcendence: “What is beautiful in nature is what appears to be more than what is literally there. Without receptivity there would be no such objective expression, but it is not reducible to the subject; natural beauty points to the primacy of the object in subjective experience.” Adorno’s connection of natural beauty with the primacy of the object (Vorrang des Objekts) implies that even though the more of nature needs
subjective reception/mediation to become “objective expression,” the more of nature is not merely a subjective construction. We do not have access to nature without mediation, but mediation does not exhaust nature.44 Nature is always more, it can never be completely conceptualized. In nature-dominating society, however, nature’s more is not recognized. It is only when nature “is not perceived as an object of action” or scientific investigations that we may perceive it as more.45 In other words, we need the distance that aesthetic comportment implies to be able to perceive nature as beautiful. Because of the domination of nature, the “objective expression” in natural beauty is one of suffering. Precisely, this, however, is why Adorno finds natural beauty so problematic. As Alison Stone has noted:

The fact that nature expresses its suffering to us in th[e] experience [of natural beauty] gives us the impression that nature can express itself and so (misleadingly) that this expression forms part of a broader pattern of self-realization on nature’s part. This suggests to us that modernity does leave nature scope to realize itself spontaneously, and, therefore, that modern institutions treat nature acceptably.46

The assurance it gives us to think that there is still beauty in the world threatens to make us passive, and thus risks turning beautiful nature into nothing more than “a nature reserve and an alibi” for business as usual, according to Adorno.47 For this reason, he insists that natural beauty must be mediated through art (hence the line from Goethe’s Faust in the passage on sublimity is quoted above):

Nature is beautiful in that it appears [scheint] to say more than it is. To wrest this more from that more’s contingency, to gain control of its semblance [seines Scheins], to determine it as semblance as well as to negate it as unreal: This is the idea of art.48

Nature is more than our theoretical definitions of it, and it is more than what our exploitative praxis acknowledges. Or rather: nature could be more, it has potentials that are not allowed to flourish because of humanity’s mastery. Because of this, nature’s more is Schein: both an appearance and an illusion. From the perspective of nature-dominating society, nature’s more is unreal, and art—through the objectification of nature’s more (wresting the truth content of this appearance from the contingency of natural beauty) can do the balancing act needed to make us aware of society’s deformation of nature and that real nature does not yet exist:

Every act of making in art is a singular effort to say what the artifact itself is not and what it does not know: precisely this is art’s spirit. This is the locus of the idea of art as the idea of the restoration of nature that has been repressed and drawn into the dynamic of history. Nature, to whose imago art is devoted, does not yet in any way exist; what is true in art is something nonexistent. What does not exist becomes incumbent on art in that other for which identity-positing reason, which reduced it to material, uses the word nature. This other is not concept and unity, but rather a multiplicity.49

However, artworks cannot claim immediate access to nature. In Aesthetic Theory, Adorno writes that “[t]he more strictly artworks abstain from rank natural growth and the replication of nature, the more the successful ones approach nature.”50 In other words, successful artworks do not engage in naturalistic imitation. Neither do they depict the beautiful (sublime) nature. What artworks do imitate is “natural beauty as such,”51 which means that they imitate nature’s more, i.e. art mediates nature’s expression of suffering. To be able to do this, art cannot pretend to be nature, or claim to know what nature freed from domination would be like. We have no way of knowing what nature could be if we ceased to dominate it.

“You cannot bring non-mutilated nature to speak, because this non-mutilated nature, pure nature, that is a nature that has not gone through society’s mediation process, does not exist,” Adorno argues in his lectures on aesthetics from 1958–59.52 Instead, he claims, “it is the task of art to give voice to mutilated nature, that is nature always in the specific historical state in which it is situated through its historical mediation.”53 This is precisely what takes place in the episode about the hanging of the maids in The Odyssey. Through the pause, the epic reveals itself as a human construction, and at the same time the mutilated nature is given voice: the agony of the maids and the birds in their snares receives expression. Thus, when we experience the more of nature mediated through the artwork, we become aware of not only the mutilation of nature, but also, indirectly, of the
possibility of a radically transformed society. In such a society, nature would still be more, in other words it would not be possible to completely conceptualize nature but now in a positive rather than negative and indirect way. In a reconciled society, nature would no longer be hindered from developing of its own accord, and its non-identity with our attempt to conceptually determinate it would instead be acknowledged. In such a society, nature’s more would no longer be a sign of suffering but a true, realized, more. The Odyssey hints at the possibility of such a society through its critique of the nature-dominating one.

MAHLER AND THE LIKENESS TO ANIMALS

Let us return to Adorno’s statement that “[i]f the case of natural beauty were pending, dignity would be found culpable for having raised the human animal above the animal.” A radically different society depends on our acknowledgment of ourselves as nature and of our likeness to animals (Tierähnlichkeit), according to Adorno. And, in art we are reminded of this affinity, at the same time as the possibility of a transformed relationship between humans and animals also is intimated. In The Odyssey, such an intimation is accomplished through the comparison between the suffering of the maids in the snares and the suffering of the thrushes and doves caught in the net. This comparison makes us aware that the domination of humans and the domination of animals are related. But the expression of suffering is also an indirect expression of a longing for things to be different, a longing for suffering to end. The indirect hint is a source of joy: it bears witness to the possibility of a reconciliation between humans and other animals as well as between humans.

All likeness between animals and humans is not anthropomorphism. There is an affinity that has to be acknowledged to achieve reconciliation (which, as previously mentioned, does not amount to identity according to Adorno, but rather an acknowledgement of both affinity and non-identity: recognizing the other as a subject like myself, but also non-identical, that is, both different from myself and not possible to completely conceptualize). Art is a remembrance of this affinity. In Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy, Adorno writes about Mahler’s Third Symphony (completed in 1896, first performed in 1902) and the “animal symbolism” that according to him characterizes the third movement, a Scherzo. Mahler’s original program for the symphony had titles for the different movements. The third movement was called “What the Animals in the Forest Tell Me” (“Was mir die Thiere im Walde erzählen”). Adorno writes that Mahler’s “music comports itself like animals: as if its empathy with their closed world meant to mitigate something of the curse of closedness.”

At the end the animal piece puffs itself up once more in literary style by a kind of panic epiphany of the basic motive in augmentation. Overall, it oscillates between pan-humanism and parody. Its light-beam falls on that perverted human condition that, under the spell of the self-preservation of the species, erodes its essential self and makes ready to annihilate the species by fateful substituting the means for the end it has conjured away. Through animals humanity becomes aware of itself as impeded nature and of its activity as deluded natural history; for this reason Mahler meditates on them. For him, as in Kafka’s fables, the animal realm is the human world as it would appear from the standpoint of redemption, which natural history itself precludes. The fairy-tale tone in Mahler is awakened by the resemblance of animal and man. Desolate and comforting at once, nature grown aware of itself casts off the superstition of the absolute difference between them.

In Mahler, there is thus a redeeming tone—as there is a redeeming gesture in Kafka—that awakens man from his false belief of the absolute difference between him and the other animals. This absolute difference must be exposed as a superstition, as myth, as second nature, if we are
going to break out of natural history as the history of nature’s coercion. The history of nature’s coercion is history qua “the unconscious history of nature, of devouring and being devoured.” When Adorno writes about the empathy of music with the closed world of animals, this is not to be understood, however, as if the world of animals once and for all is closed and immutable, that it is only about “devouring and being devoured.” This is the image that dominant society—in itself unconscious, because it does not acknowledge its dependence on nature—produces of nature and the world of the animal: as something static. Adorno writes, as we saw above, about “oxen with linked hoofs,” to elucidate that it is fettered animals we are dealing with. With the entrance of man came the domestication of other animals. But, whether domesticated or “wild,” the other animals are captured by our false image of them. Mahler’s music, in itself second nature, exposes this image of animals as. Imposed nature as a product of nature-dominating society. It is in fact us humans who through denying our likeness to animals have created such a coercive society, a second nature, for ourselves and other species.

David Kaufmann comments on the animal symbolism in Mahler: “Mahler’s animals present to us an indirect vision of an alternative, truer, autonomous life: one that is not given over to the ‘law’ of self-preservation and to its concomitants, domination and exchange.” As long as rationality is not self-reflexive and acknowledges its origin in self-preservation, it cannot transcend this drive. This entails the irrational replacement of the purpose (a real rational life) with the aims (nature-dominating rationality becoming a purpose in itself). Mahler’s music manages to accomplish a self-reflection that exposes society as second nature through its inner, artistic self-reflection. As mentioned above, the melody announcing the entrance of humanity on stage is played on a post horn—an instrument not regarded as belonging to the high musical form of symphony. Furthermore, this melody is, as Richard Leppert notes, “distinctly simple, folk-like, sentimental, and—as has often been suggested by scholars—nearly banal melody.” The contrast between the melody of the post horn and the complexity of the rest of the work, the conscious appropriation of an element of kitsch, as Leppert describes it, is what enables the work’s self-reflection. The contrast, the dissonance, between the high and the low musical forms is not smoothed over, instead the break allows a conscious reflection over the socially conditioned division of music and thereby Mahler’s symphony succeeds in exposing also the current practice outside music as a false construction.

Mahler’s music—on the threshold between late Romanticism and modernism—and Kafka’s modernist fiction, both unmask the absurdity of nature-dominating society. Repressed nature and repressed animal likeness come back to haunt the human subject and the impeded nature is manifested in the animal body. In Kafka’s The Metamorphosis (Die Verwandlung, 1915), the main character Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning and finds that he has “transformed into some kind of monstrous vermin.” No reconciliation takes place in the story; utopia is not given a positive form. Gregor Samsa’s new animal shape makes his family turn against him, which leads to his death. But indirectly, we are given, as in Mahler’s Third Symphony, a glimpse of the possibility of reconciliation, through the self-reflection that takes place: “Through animals humanity becomes aware of itself as impeded nature [...].” Making us aware of the repression of nature and animality by expressing the suffering that such a repression has entailed contains the potential for a changed relationship between humans and other animals, between humans and the rest of nature. In his “Notes on Kafka,” Adorno writes: “Instead of human dignity, the supreme bourgeois concept, there emerges in him [Kafka] the salutary remembrance of man’s likeness to animals [Eingedenken der Tierähnlichkeit], an idea upon which a whole group of his narratives thrives.” This remembrance is one side of the previously mentioned “remembrance of nature within the subject.” But, art cannot offer a positively defined image of the reconciliation between humans and animals. Utopia can only appear indirectly, through a determinate negation of the current unreconciled state. As previously mentioned, the experience of authentic art does, however, not only cause sorrow. We do not only become aware of how false and irrational the world in its current state is but also of the fact that it does not have to be this way. The flash-like vision of the possibility of a changed relationship between humans and animals, of true freedom for everyone, is also a source of the utmost happiness.
“Human beings have not succeeded in so thoroughly repressing their likeness to animals that they are unable in an instant to recapture it and be flooded with joy [ . . . ].”

NOTES

1. Cf. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 4–13. German original: Dialektik der Aufklärung (Philosophische Fragmente (1947, 1969)), in Theodore W. Adorno, Gesammelte Schriften (GS) vol. 3, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 22–34. It is for the sake of simplicity that I in the following refer only to Adorno when discussing Dialectic of Enlightenment. I do not hereby take a stand in the question concerning the respective contributions of Horkheimer and Adorno to the text. For a discussion on this subject, see the editor’s afterword to the English translation, esp. 219–24. Original in Max Horkheimer, Gesammelte Schriften vol. 5, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1987), 425–30. See also Robert Hullot-Kentor, “Back to Adorno”, in Things Beyond Resemblance: Collected Essays on Theodore W. Adorno (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 25–7.

2. Theodor W. Adorno, Ästhetik (1958/59), in Nachgelassene Schriften vol. IV:3, ed. Eberhard Ortland (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 70: “[. . .] in der Tat die Kunst ein Moment der Nachahmung entscheidend in sich enthält, aber nur mit einer Einschränkung, nämlich nicht als Nachahmung von etwas, sondern als nachahmender Impuls, also als Impuls der Mimikry, als der Impuls gleichsam, sich selber zu der Sache zu machen oder die Sache zu einem selber zu machen, die einem gegenüber steht.”

3. Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 32. Dialektik der Aufklärung, 58.

4. Lambert Zuidervaart, Social Philosophy after Adorno (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 119.

5. The last decades have witnessed a small but increasing interest in the role of animals in Adorno’s philosophy. Fredric Jameson briefly considers Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s sketch “Man and Beast” from Dialectic of Enlightenment, see Fredric Jameson, Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic (London: Verso, 1990), 96. At the end of his speech when he was presented the Adorno award in Frankfurt am Main in 2001, Jacques Derrida emphasized the importance of animals in Adorno’s thinking, see Jacques Derrida, Fichus: Discours de Francefort (Paris: Galilée, 2002), 54–5. In the essay volume Das steinerne Herz der Unendlichkeit erweichen: Beiträge zu einer kritischen Theorie für die Befreiung der Tiere, ed. Susann Witt-Stahl (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2007), all contributions examine the relationship between humanity and animals in critical theory, and some specifically discuss Adorno’s ideas on this relationship. The role of art in the liberation of animals is, however, only briefly touched upon in a few of the articles in the volume, see e.g. Arnd Hoffmann, “‘Ein Königstiger als Vegetarier. Zur Kritik an der Utopi- sichtigkeit von Antispeziesismus und Veganismus,” in Das steinerne Herz der Unendlichkeit erweichen, 191, and Esther Leslie and Ben Watson, “Tiere, Geschichte und Kunststrife”, in ibid., 217–18.

Christina Gerhardt discusses Adorno’s ideas on the relationship between animals and humans in “The Ethics of Animals in Adorno and Kafka”, New German Critique 97 (2006) and in “Thinking With: Animals in Schopenhauer, Horkheimer, and Adorno”, in Critical Theory and Animal Liberation, ed. John Sanbonmatsu (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 137–46. Critical Theory and Animal Liberation contains another essay on Adorno and animals that briefly discusses his ideas on the relationship between art and animals, see Eduardo Mendieta, “Animal Is to Kantianism as Jew Is to Fascism: Adorno’s Bestiary”, in Critical Theory and Animal Liberation, esp. 153–54.

6. Theodor W. Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 359. German original: Ästhetische Theorie, in GS vol. 7, 533.

7. Ibid., 1–2. Ästhetische Theorie, 10.

8. Cf. ibid., 63. Ästhetische Theorie, 100. See also Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 13. Dialektik der Aufklärung, 34.

9. Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), 320. German original: Negative Dialektik (1966, 1967), in GS vol. 6, 314.

10. Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, 261. Ästhetische Theorie, 387.

11. Karla L. Schultz conveys a similar understanding of Adorno’s notion of authenticity in Mimesis on the Move: Theodor W. Adorno’s Concept of Imitation (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990), 165.

12. Adorno, Ästhetik (1958/59), 66: “Jede Dissonanz ist gewissermaßen ein Stück Eingedenken des Leidens, dem die Naturbeherrschung, dem überhaupt schließlich eine herrschaftliche Gesellschaft die Natur aussetzt, und nur in Gestalt dieses Leidens, nur in Gestalt der Sehnsucht—und Dissonanz ist ja immer wesentlich Sehnsucht und Leiden—, nur darin findet die unterdrückte Natur überhaupt ihre Stimme. Und deshalb haftet an der Dissonanz nicht nur dieses Moment des Ausdrucks der Negativität, dieses Leidens, sondern immer zugleich auch das Glück, der Natur ihre Stimme zu geben [. . .].”
13. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 110. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 168. Cf. ibid., 33 (*Ästhetische Theorie*, 55): “Through the irreconcilable renunciation of the semblance of reconciliation, art holds fast to the promise of reconciliation in the midst of the unreconciled [ . . . ].”

14. Ibid., 3. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 12.

15. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 27. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 52.

16. Ibid. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 51.

17. Hullot-Kentor, “Back to Adorno”, 35.

18. Ibid., 36.

19. Hullot-Kentor also discusses this caesura and the self-reflection it renders possible, however, he does not take non-human nature into account. Cf. ibid., 43–4.

20. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 339.

21. Ibid., 340. Cf. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 61. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 98.

22. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 62. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 99.

23. Ibid. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 99.

24. Ibid., 61. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 98.

25. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 203. *Negative Dialektik*, 203. When Adorno quotes Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—“Woe speaks: Go”—it is consequently an attempt to extract the truth content in Nietzsche’s observation of the importance of the somatic impulses that Adorno connects to the need for a radically transformed society. Giving voice to suffering is a condition for truth according to Adorno, see ibid., 17–8 (*Negative Dialektik*, 29). Raymond Geuss points out that even if “[t]he members of the Frankfurt School were not in any sense orthodox Marxists,” their Critical Theory is part of the same tradition of movements critical of society as Marxism “in that the main object of their theoretical interest was the continued existence of superfluous suffering in a world in which it could actually be abolished.” See Raymond Geuss, “Suffering and Knowledge in Adorno”, *Constellations* 12 (2005): 4. Geuss, however, only discusses human suffering in his essay.

26. Britta Scholze, *Kunst als Kritik: Adornos Weg aus der Dialektik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 85: “das Moment, das zeigt, daß das Textkontinuum keine logische Notwendigkeit abbildet, sondern diese nur konstruiert.”

27. Ibid.: “das Zusammenspiel von Freiheit und Notwendigkeit in der Geschichte”; “das Durchbrechen [. . .] vorgelicher Notwendigkeit autretenden Ablaufes.”

28. Schultz, *Mimesis on the Move*, 77.

29. Ibid., 78–9.

30. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 61. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 98.

31. Homer, *The Odyssey*, 340.

32. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 61. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 98.

33. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 18. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 34.

34. Theodor W. Adorno, “On Subject and Object”, in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 247. German original: “Zu Subjekt und Objekt”, in *Stichworte* (1969), in *GS* vol. 10.2, 743. Cf. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 150 (*Negative Dialektik*, 153): “Utopia would be above identity and above contradiction; it would be a togetherness in diversity.”

35. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 63. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 99.

36. Ibid., 69. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 108.

37. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 143–45.

38. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 276. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 410.

39. Cf. note 3 above.

40. Ibid., 62. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 98–9.

41. Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 99.

42. Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 80. German original: *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik*, in *Nachgelassene Schriften* vol. I: 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 123.

43. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 70–1 (my emphasis). *Ästhetische Theorie*, 111.

44. Cf. *Negative Dialectics*, 172. *Negative Dialektik*, 174.

45. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 65. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 103.

46. Alison Stone, “Adorno and the Disenchantment of Nature”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 32 (2006), 246.

47. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 68. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 107.

48. Ibid., 78. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 122.

49. Ibid., 131. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 198.

50. Ibid., 77. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 120.

51. Ibid., 72. *Ästhetische Theorie*, 113.

52. Adorno, *Ästhetik* (1958/59), 125: “Die unverstümmelte Natur kann man nicht zum Sprechen bringen, denn diese unverstümmelte Natur, eine reine Natur, also eine Natur, die nicht durch die Vermittlungssprozesse der Gesellschaft hindurchgegangen wäre, gibt es nicht.”

53. Ibid., 125–26: “die Aufgabe der Kunst ist, die verstümmelte Natur, also die Natur jeweils in der Gestalt, in der sie auf einem bestimmten Stand der Geschichte durch ihre historischen Vermittlungen hindurch sich befindet, zum Sprechen zu bringen.”

54. Cf. note 40 above.

55. Cf. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 119; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 181–82.

56. Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon Wicker (Aldershot: Scolar Press: 1994), 83–4.
57. Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8. German original: *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* in GS vol. 13, 156.

58. Ibid., 8–9. *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, 157.

59. Ibid., 9. *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, 157.

60. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 355. *Negative Dialektik*, 348–49.

61. David Kaufmann, “Correlations, Constellations and the Truth: Adorno’s Ontology of Redemption”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 26 (2000): 75. Kaufmann does not, however, analyze Adorno’s interpretation of Mahler’s Third Symphony in any detail.

62. Richard Leppert, “Nature and Exile: Adorno, Mahler and the Appropriation of Kitsch”, in Frispel: *Festschrift till Olle Edström*, eds. Alf Björnberg et al. (Göteborg: Skrifter från Institutionen för musikvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet, 2005), 459.

63. Cf. ibid., 461. Leppert’s analysis of Adorno’s interpretation of the third movement in Mahler’s Third Symphony is, however, quite different from mine, and does not discuss Adorno’s ideas on man’s likeness to animals.

64. Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, in *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29.

65. Cf. note 59 above.

66. Theodor W. Adorno, “Notes on Kafka”, in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1981), 270 (trans. modified). German original: “Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka” (1953), in *Prismen* (1955, 1969), GS vol. 10.1, 285. In the preceding sentence, Adorno compares Kafka and Mahler, saying that they both ally themselves “with the deserters” of the bourgeois society, see ibid. On the subject of Mahler’s music sympathizing with deserters, see also Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, 166; *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, 309.

67. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 119; *Ästhetische Theorie*, 182.