

Towards an Adornian Critical Theory of the Environment

Authors : Dominic Roulx

Abstract : Many scholars have in the past decade emphasized the relevance of Adorno's criticism of the rationalized domination of nature (Naturbeherrschung) for thinking the environmental crisis. Beyond the intersubjective critical models of thinkers such as Habermas and Honneth, Adorno's critical theory has the benefit, according to them, of disclosing the entwinement of social and natural domination in a critically productive way. The author will be arguing in this paper that Adorno's model of critical theory displays a theoretical framework that is both original and relevant for thinking the ins and outs of the current environmental crisis. To do so, he first construes Adorno's understanding of the historical domination of nature and argue that Adorno's method for its criticizing is immanent critique. He puts emphasis on how his understanding of the domination of nature implicitly implies an account of the dialectical relationship between reason and nature. In doing so, he presents a naturalistic understanding of his idea of the primacy of the object. Second, regarding Adorno's concept of nature, he discusses what he sees as the shortcomings of many commentators' understanding of the concept of nature in Adorno. He contends that they tend to fall short of Adorno's concept of nature in failing to make sense of its thoroughly negative signification, thereby falling into an uncritical and fetichized comprehension of "nature. Third, he discusses the prospect for a possible "reconciliation" (Versöhnung) of nature with society. Highlighting how the domination of nature proves to produce the necessary conditions for its own overcoming, he contends that reconciliation with nature relies mainly on the subject's capacity for critical self-reflection.

Keywords : german philosophy, adorno, nature, environmental crisis

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