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‘Unconcealing’ the stage: from concealment to Extinction Rebellion

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Abstract

The thesis discusses concepts of ‘concealment’ and ‘unconcealment’ to explore how business-as-usual politics offers an inadequate stage for environmental group Extinction Rebellion’s urgent demands. Jürgen Habermas’ theory of the public sphere is taken as an instance of such inadequacy. Jacques Rancière’s critique of Habermas illustrates potential concealments within the politics of consensus. I seek to establish connections, not ordinarily made, between Martin Heidegger, Jacques Rancière, and Bertolt Brecht. I argue that each theorist offers a potential ‘unconcealment’ for Extinction Rebellion. The objective of this thesis is to evaluate these unconcealments as a means for understanding and assessing the action of Extinction Rebellion in responding to the climate emergency. The motif of the stage acts as a common thread throughout.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

GAVIN BAILLIE

Introduction

“This is an emergency and for emergency situations we need emergency action”.

(Ban Ki-Moon, Former UN Secretary General)¹

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is an environmental movement established in 2018 in the United Kingdom, using non-violent direct action to persuade governments to act in response to ecological emergency. In their vision they state: ‘our world is in crisis. Life itself is under threat. Yet every crisis contains the possibility of transformation’.² They seek to rally worldwide support around a sense of urgency. ‘Calling the conscience of humanity to act with the fierce urgency of now’, to tackle ‘climate breakdown’, respond to ‘an unprecedented global emergency’, and the threat of ‘mass extinction...of our own making’.³ The calls of ‘crisis’ and demand for urgent action are in response to scientific evidence. Global warming is on track to go over 1.5°C heating by around 2030 and to hit 2°C heating by around 2050.⁴ Human action has caused wildlife populations to decline by an estimated 60% since the 1970s.⁵ We risk food shortage as 30% of the world’s arable land has become unproductive since the mid-twentieth century.⁶ Trends such as these resulted in scientists, collectively known as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, warning that if global warming reaches 1.5°C or higher, we increase the risk of long-lasting or irreversible changes to our planet – such as the total loss of some ecosystems.⁷ Activist Zion Lights, asserts ‘the science is clear’ that unless urgent action and radical change is taken to cut carbon emissions by 40% in the next twelve years there will be ‘terrifying effects’, with the scale of action requiring us ‘to mobilize all-out, like in war time, to halt the crisis’.⁸ According to Extinction Rebellion, twenty years of climate activism following traditional means of protest, petition, lobbying, concerts, and public relation campaigns have failed to bring about the change necessary to revert climate

¹ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/>.

² <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/about-us/>.

³ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/>.

⁴ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/the-emergency/>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Farhana, Yamin, 2019, ‘Die, Survive or Thrive?’, *This is Not a Drill: an Extinction Rebellion Handbook*, Penguin, London, p.26.

⁷ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/the-emergency/>.

⁸ Zion Lights, 2019, ‘Hot Earth Rebels’, *New Left Review*, [Online], Vol. 120, Nov/Dec 2019, pp.107-116. Available from: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii120/articles/hot-earth-rebels>.

change. Consequently, ‘we need a new approach to save ourselves and the planet. We need to spark a Rebellion’.⁹ Roger Hallam, co-founder of Extinction Rebellion, explains that a human failing to disbelieve what it does not like means that societies will not change with the necessary speed. Therefore, rebellion is needed to bring about new social, economic, and political systems. He speaks of a ‘common sense’, of the requirement for change derived from all the scientific evidence, which is contrary to the presented ‘common sense’ that maintains the status quo.

Extinction Rebellion demand to be heard, and for solutions to be reached to ‘change our present cataclysmic course’; to act on behalf of life rather than the continued destruction of the planet.¹⁰ To do this they aim to break down the old ways of thinking about our relationship with the world that have led to the current course towards extinction, and to ‘rewild’ our perceptions and imagination:

‘We must learn to dream again, and we have to learn that together’ to move beyond our thinking of what is possible and not possible.¹¹

Their approach has been to foster radical collective action by orchestrating a series of events of mass civil disobedience to ‘open up spaces for the impossible’.¹² To show ‘how inaction is failing so many’ they create ‘beautiful, emotionally disruptive moments that shift the conversation...and invite the public to imagine a better, more collaborative vision of tomorrow’.¹³ The main questions that this dissertation seeks to answer are: whether the urgency of their claims is intentionally or unintentionally missed, elided, or dissipated by the decision-makers and its formal addressees more generally; when heard, why are responses and understanding according to political ‘common sense’ inadequate, anaemic, or misplaced?

⁹ Hallam, Roger, *Common Sense for the 21st Century: Only Nonviolent Rebellion Can Stop Climate Breakdown and Social Collapse*, Version 3.0, <https://www.rogerhallam.com/common-sense-for-the-21st-century/>, p.4.

¹⁰ Extinction Rebellion, *This is Not a Drill*, p.9.

¹¹ Knights, S. ‘Introduction: The story so far’, *This is Not a Drill*, p.18.

¹² Extinction Rebellion, 2020, ‘XR UK Actions Strategy Update’, December 2020, v1.0, *Extinction Rebellion*, <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/2020/12/10/uk-actions-strategy-update-get-ready-for-2021/>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

To answer these questions, the term ‘concealment’ will be used to describe what is lost, obscured, or mis-categorised in Extinction Rebellion’s radical voice via politics-as-usual. The term ‘unconcealment’ will be used to capture the recovery of alternative modalities of understanding and engagement, that shift the conversation away from communal acceptances. My approach aims to establish unique cross-disciplinary connections between phenomenology, political theory, and theatre theory to determine how concealment occurs on the political stage offered by liberal democracies. Martin Heidegger, Jacques Rancière, and Bertolt Brecht present counter-narratives that help us imagine how Extinction Rebellion might create moments of unconcealment, reclaim the stage, and engage with audiences otherwise than the ways that formal democracy accustoms us to think of as being the political. Heidegger helps us understand that Extinction Rebellion’s potential audience most typically seek the comfort of familiar possibilities rather than the difficult changes that Extinction Rebellion demand, Brecht demonstrates the necessity to jolt the audience into action, and Rancière reveals how aesthetic political acts can engage audiences in reinterpreting their world. Establishing these relationships is what this dissertation is about.

In chapter one, I will review, in turn, each of Extinction Rebellion’s ‘Three Demands’ that call on governments to (i) ‘Tell the Truth’, (ii) ‘Act now’, and (iii) ‘Go beyond politics’. The main question of this chapter is whether the stage offered to Extinction Rebellion fully accommodates their contribution to political dialogue. I begin by using Jürgen Habermas’ theory of rational discourse, as an example of liberal democratic theory, and via a brief exposition consider to what extent the three demands can be met. I then aim to set out, utilising three critiques of consensus politics posited by Rancière, that Habermas’ theory unintentionally misses something in each demand that conceals a possible objection. The second chapter evaluates the notion of ‘unconcealment’ and its opportunities. Rancière, Brecht, and Heidegger each posit, within their respective disciplines, a commonly accepted way of interpretation (concealment): for Rancière the common way of understanding politics is ‘consensus’, for Brecht the common theatre audience interprets the stage dramatically, and for Heidegger human beings typically interpret the world as everyone does. However, there is also an alternative that unconceals what is concealed by the everyday common-sense: Rancière’s account of ‘dissensus’ reconfigures the appearance of politics beyond the consensual, Bertolt Brecht’s alienation effect brings new awakening to theatre audiences, Heidegger’s moment of ‘clearing’ occurs as an ‘emergence from a state

of hiddenness'.¹⁴ In the third chapter, I seek to connect the concepts evaluated in chapter two to the challenge faced by Extinction Rebellion. The third chapter, therefore, contemplates the concealing context in which the stage is set for Extinction Rebellion and how each potential unconcealment can be adopted by them to advance the type of change and action that they demand of government and their audience. I conclude with a brief consideration of whether such moments of unconcealment can establish a relationship of 'reverence' for our world, what Heidegger terms 'care'.¹⁵

¹⁴ 'At the heart of Martin Heidegger's philosophy of being was his notion of the "clearing". The clearing is much more than just a space where something has been cleared away. It is an opening through which entities other than ourselves can emerge out of hiddenness, or are made visible by a bringing into the light. In one sense the clearing is the place or site where such unconcealment occurs, in the presence of the human form of being that Heidegger calls Dasein. In another sense Dasein is the clearing'. Edgeworth, Matt, 2006, 'The Clearing: Heidegger and Excavation', *Studio Michael Shanks – Stanford*, 1st September, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/archaeolog/cgi-bin/archaeolog/2006/09/01/the-clearing-heidegger-and-excavation/#:~:text=At%20the%20heart%20of%20Martin%20Heidegger%E2%80%99s%20philosophy%20of,made%20visible%20by%20a%20bringing%20into%20the%20light>.

¹⁵ Young, Julian, 2002, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

1 Consensus as concealment

1.1 Demand one: 'Tell the truth'

1.1.1 Habermas: truth and consensus

Extinction Rebellion declare the 'truth is simple: there's an emergency, that's just a fact'¹⁶. They set out their first demand that: 'the government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change'.¹⁷ Hallam argues the urgency of the threat, and the extent of radical change needed, is being played down by governments, creating climate scepticism and leaving 'inaction in its wake'.¹⁸ Consequently, Extinction Rebellion claim their role is to 'speak the truth and demand real political change'.¹⁹ 'Today's struggle for truth is that extinction and extermination are not inevitable',²⁰ but it requires actions like planting trillions of trees, or the equivalent an area the size of America, to stay below 1.5C warming.²¹ The movement was set up, therefore, to 'tell the truth and act as if the truth was real'.²² 'Tell the truth', is both a request of governments and a declaration of the truth of the climate emergency. All three of Extinction Rebellion's demands play a dual role as a speech act of making a request and saying something about their own version of politics. As the goal of Extinction Rebellion's speech acts is to mobilise political action, it is instructive therefore, to interpret the demands through Jürgen Habermas' communicative rationality and consensus theory. Habermas adopts speech act theory to assess how claims to truth are integral to communication, and once set within the public sphere operate as the mechanisms through which political discourse can constitute democracy. Thus 'truth', Habermas argues, is an integral part of political action.

Habermas suggests 'communicative rationality' is how human action, including political, is orchestrated. In *Theory of Communicative Action*²³ he argues that 'social cooperation'

¹⁶ Zion Lights, 'Hot Earth Rebels', pp.107-116.

¹⁷ Knights, 'Introduction', p.17.

¹⁸ Hallam, Roger, *Common Sense*, p.4.

¹⁹ Shiva, Vandana, 'Foreword', *This is not a Drill*, p.14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/the-emergency/>.

²² Hallam, *Common Sense*, p.19.

²³ Habermas, J. 1984, *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society*, Heinemann, London.

depends on the way we interact through communication.²⁴ Cooperation is founded on a claim to truth in an utterance that has the potential to be rationally accepted, a shared understanding reached between the speaker and the listener, with the outcome being the potential for action to be co-ordinated from this understanding. In an adaptation of speech act theory, Habermas rejects a positivist theory of language that it is used simply to say something about the world. Instead, a propositional truth claim, that can be accepted as 'true' or 'false', is the cornerstone of how we share beliefs about the world, establish relationships with one another, share information, and co-ordinate future possibilities.²⁵ Integral to speech acts is the idea of truth. 'Tell the truth', understood as a speech act makes three assertions that can be accepted or rejected on their: sincerity, rightness, and truth. To achieve all three equates to Habermas' highest standard of communicative action and formulates his idealised discourse principle: 'consensus'.²⁶ 'Consensus' is idealised because it 'depends on a hearer responding with 'yes'' to each of the three claims within the 'validity claim', 'criticisable utterances that are accessible in principle to argumentative clarification',²⁷ where a more likely reaction is 'no', 'maybe', or 'tell me more'.²⁸ Habermas' claim within the idealised principle, however, is that interlocutors enter discourse with the objective of reaching a shared understanding, rationally agreed. It is such agreement that makes way for conflict-free interaction, by considering the validity of the argument.²⁹ On entering the stage of discourse, within the ideal speech scene, each interlocutor presumes the other to be rational and willing to reach agreement and is prepared to give reasons to back up their validity claims. A claim to validity through reason, therefore, is intertwined in Habermas' theory of consensus; it defines 'the end of a spectrum of communicative possibilities'.³⁰

²⁴ Bohman, James and William Rehg, 2017, 'Jürgen Habermas', *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2017 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/habermas/>>.

²⁵ Cherem, Max, 'Jürgen Habermas', *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/habermas/>.

²⁶ Bohman and Rehg, 'Habermas'.

²⁷ Habermas, J., Rehg, W. 1997, *Between facts and norms: contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, pp.4-5.

²⁸ Cooke, Maeve, 1993, 'Habermas and Consensus', *European journal of philosophy*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp.247-267, p.248.

²⁹ Cherem, 'Habermas'.

³⁰ Bohman and Rehg, 'Jürgen Habermas'.

Habermas takes the goal of reaching rational agreement within communicative exchanges and solidifies consensus as the 'end of the spectrum' by institutionalising consensus in law, where the:

'only regulations and ways of acting that can claim legitimacy are those to which all who are possibly affected could assent to participants in rational discourse...As legal subjects, they must anchor this practice of self-legalisation in the medium of law itself; they must legally institutionalize those communicative presuppositions and procedures of a political opinion-and will-formation in which the discourse principle is applied'³¹.

The 'discourse principle' states that law is necessary for validity claims to be formalised and consensus institutionalised. The idealising principles in Habermas' discourse theory make possible the coordination of action, development of norms through agreement, and the institutionalisation of those norms through legitimised mechanisms of politics and law. Emphasising their discursive nature, laws are formed as they emerge in norms after the discourse process has been complete. Norms then contribute to stabilising society from risks of constant disagreement.

Democracy is realised when 'all the later generations' adopt laws in the actualisation of their rights.³² Consensus, for Habermas, succeeds with active and communicative participation from citizens as they adopt rights. It is in this way that citizens realise the benefits and protections of constitutional democracy. As they adopt rights they are interpreting and re-interpreting the constitution in their own image. Thus, the initial formation of the constitution must always be understood as a 'self-correcting learning process'.³³ Interpretive battles can subsequently form where 'underprivileged classes' enter the debate and reinterpret the assumptions of the constitution. Such groups actualise rights and gain their own voice by 'appropriating the constitution and its history of interpretation'.³⁴ This is the shared process of 'a self-determining community of free and

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.458.

³² Habermas, J. & Rehg, W. 2001, 'Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?', *Political theory*, vol. 29, no. 6, pp.766-781. p.774.

³³ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.774.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.775.

equal citizens', where all citizens can at any time review and critique the constitution with their own backgrounds, cultures, needs, and desires:

'A constitution-making practice requires more than just a discourse principle by which citizens can judge whether the law they enact is legitimate. Rather, the very forms of communication that are supposed to make it possible to form a rational political will through discourse need to be legally institutionalised themselves. In assuming a legal shape, the discourse principle is transformed into a principle of democracy'.³⁵

Even once consensus founds democracy, Habermas encourages ongoing participation from citizens to constantly assess existing laws and re-interpret the constitution. The shift from the discourse principle to a 'principle of democracy' underscores Habermas' argument that the principle is egalitarian. Citizens can, in Habermas' view, engage in the democratic process whilst entering the idealised stage of discourse as equals. Habermas asserts that democratic procedure of 'lawmaking relies on citizens making use of their communicative and participatory rights', and to do so 'with an orientation toward the common good, and attitude that can indeed be politically called for but not legally compelled'.³⁶ Law plays its role in protecting the discourse principle as the legal code is 'completed through communicative and participatory rights that guarantee equal opportunities for the public use of communicative liberties'.³⁷ The discourse principle acquires the 'legal shape' of the democratic principle, as well as confirmation of equal rights to enter political discourse, as citizens 'have an equal right to participate in the collective decision-making process'.³⁸

Extinction Rebellion's first demand can be translated via Habermas' discourse and consensus theory, allowing them to make the initial truth claim via rational discourse that a climate emergency exists. If the validity claim meets the idealising requirements of sincerity, rightness, and truth then the second part of Extinction Rebellion's first demand that governments should communicate the urgency of need for change can be formulated into societal norms and laws. Through their citizenship they can take part in the collective decision-making process by initiating a participatory review to reinterpret prevailing

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.455.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.461.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.458.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.458-460.

consensus, where norms are deemed to result in insufficient legal protection against the climate emergency. Why then, when the rational arguments are compelling enough for governments to begin to declare a climate emergency, have responses inadequately met the demand to tell the truth about the urgent the need for radical change?

1.1.2 Rancière: consensus conceals voice

'In times of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act'.

*(George Orwell)*³⁹

In Rancière's seminal work *Disagreement* he mounts a direct challenge to Habermas' rational discourse. Rancière's challenge is, before commencing the process of assessing validity claims against the measures of truth, sincerity, and rightness that form rational and political discourse, other questions must be asked first:

‘Before any confrontation of interests and values, before any assertions are submitted to demands for validation between established partners, there is the dispute over the object of the dispute, the dispute over the existence of the dispute and the parties confronting each other in it. For the idea that speaking beings are equal because of their common capacity for speech is a reasonable unreasonable idea’.⁴⁰

Rancière asks two questions that seek to disrupt the assumptions on which Habermas' idealised speech scene are based: what is the ‘wrong’ on which the dispute is based? What is ‘the capacity of those who are making an object’ of the wrong; can the voices emerging from the wrong be equally heard?⁴¹ Rancière questions the reality of interlocutors entering the scene with ‘equal communication rights’, through his concept of ‘wrong’. Wrong is the ‘original structure of all politics’ and ‘simply the mode of subjectification in which the assertion of equality takes its political shape’.⁴²

³⁹ Orwell, George cited in Extinction Rebellion, *This is Not a Drill*, p.23.

⁴⁰ Rancière, Jacques, 1999, *Disagreement: politics and philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn; London, p.55.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.xii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.39.

‘wrong institutes a singular universal, a polemical universal, by tying the presentation of equality, as the part of those who have no part, to the conflict between parts of society’.⁴³

Rather than derive politics and democracy from a false assumption of equality on entering the stage of discourse, Rancière uses ‘wrong’ to discuss the concealing nature of the assumption of universal rights. The assumption is falsely applied to all; what should be discussed instead is why and how there are those who have ‘no part’. Key to politics is discussing this reality, not concealing behind a false universal equality. The ‘heart of politics lies in a double wrong, a fundamental conflict, never conducted as such, over the relationship between the capacity of the speaking being who is without qualification and political capacity’.⁴⁴ The demand to ‘tell the truth’, begins by unconcealing that there are those who do not have an equal voice, and therefore unequally enter the discursive political stage.

Habermas argues that disenfranchised voices can bring their validity claims through rational discourse to be debated. They can re-interpret consensual norms from their worldview.⁴⁵ However, Rancière contends that before the disenfranchised enter the stage of political discourse:

‘there is the symbolic distribution of bodies that divides them into two categories: those that one sees and those that one does not see, those who have a logos...and those who have no logos’.⁴⁶

Rather than ask whether Extinction Rebellion’s validity claims can be accepted into, or reinterpret consensus, we must first ask in what way have they been distributed by consensus. This grounds the discussion of political ‘wrong’ in establishing whether the political content of the need for radical and urgent change to the status quo is acknowledged, understood, or heard in their demand to ‘tell the truth’.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁴⁴ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.22.

⁴⁵ Habermas, J. 1994, ‘Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State’, Taylor, C., Gutmann, A. & ProQuest (Firm), 1994, *Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. pp.107-148.

⁴⁶ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.22.

Rancière argues the reason Habermas starts his analysis of discourse from an incorrect starting point is because he builds in presumed equality: the ‘empty “freedom”’⁴⁷ of ‘equal communication rights for participants’⁴⁸ of free speech. Instead, the equality on which it is assumed interlocutors enter the stage demands ‘infinite’ ‘verification’ to establish whether a claim to truth can even be heard, and if heard whether it is elided or dissipated.⁴⁹

Rancière illustrates his challenge with Pierre-Simon Ballanche’s 1829 reinterpretation of Livy’s tale of the secession of the Roman plebians on the Aventine Hill. Ballanche criticises Livy’s account for only being able to see the event as a revolt or uprising, failing to acknowledge that the dispute was about speech itself. Rancière argues that Ballanche ‘performs a restaging’, retelling the fable to ask the question of whether there ‘exists a common stage where plebeians and patricians can debate anything’.⁵⁰ The patricians and Consul Menenius did not enter discussion with the plebs because they assumed that they were nameless and had no voice. The plebs respond not physically ‘as warriors equal to other warriors’, as Livy’s description of a revolt would assume, but as speaking beings exercising a number of speech acts.⁵¹ By asking Menenius for a treaty, they make a declarative speech act only available to those with the capacity for speech. Rancière admires Ballanche’s reinterpretation because it acknowledges the fundamental ‘wrong’ that the patricians did not consider the plebs to be speaking beings capable of debate. The patricians heard only ‘noise’, thus denying the plebs the capacity to be heard as they intended.⁵² It is only once the plebs act as if they can be heard, by uttering speech acts, that the patricians’ preconceptions are disrupted: they need to reorder what makes sense to them. When the plebs continue to speak like patricians, the patricians realise there is nothing left to do but to speak to the plebs.

Habermas’ idealising principle aims to avoid the situation described on the Aventine Hill. Following rational discourse, the patricians should have accepted the plebs as equal speakers. Habermas would likely criticise UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s dismissal of

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.35.

⁴⁸ Habermas, J, 1999, ‘Between Facts and Norms: An Author’s Reflections’, *Denver University Legal Review*, vol. 76, in Freeman, M.D.A. & Lloyd of Hampstead, Dennis Lloyd, Baron, 2001, *Lloyd’s introduction to jurisprudence*, 7th edn, Sweet & Maxwell, London, pp. 794-798, p. 797.

⁴⁹ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.24.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Extinction Rebellion's political voice by branding them "uncooperative crusties",⁵³ because, like the patricians, this denies them entry to the stage. Habermas would categorise Johnson's rejection of XR's voice as an example of a speech scene that fails to meet the idealising criteria of consensus, as 'strategic discourse'.⁵⁴ Despite acknowledging that those in power can fail to adhere to the idealised principle by carrying out discourse that seeks self-interest rather than agreement reached rationally, the issue with Habermas' theory is that he relies on the idealised formula of rational discourse to legitimise political decision making and will-formation via consensus. That means that political change is limited to situations where both parties in the exchange are committed to the idealised formula of consensus, thus discounting when those in power dismiss, ignore, or trivialise the voice their political interlocutor, or where the dissenting voice enters the stage with no voice at all. Hallam argues against what he calls 'reformism', a shorthand for advocates of achieving political reform by interpreting and re-interpreting prevailing consensus through political discourse, characterising its limitations in:

'The statement 'tell the truth and act as if that truth is real' is an extreme violation of the reformist paradigm. For [in] reformism you only tell the truth to the extent that you think people can cope with it and you only act on it to the extent that you think you can win (in a gradualist way). This is how reformism ends up in a morally and spiritually bad place – lying and holding back actions which are now justified. So, what is the revolutionary alternative?'

This passage points to the value of Rancière's corrective; it allows the political interlocutor to 'act as if' their voice is fully heard. The risk, as Hallam explains, is that the idealising requirement of consensus to legitimise political argument may stymie the ambitions of the interlocutor's demands. The truth they are telling may be too radical for the status quo and existing distribution of role and place. Accepting a validity claim to 'truth' could pose too much disruption to be rationally accepted by those in power.

⁵³ Rawlinson, Kevin, Tuesday 8th October 2019, 'Extinction Rebellion: Johnson calls climate crisis activists 'uncooperative crusties'', *Guardian Online*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/oct/07/uncooperative-crusties-boris-johnson-attacks-extinction-rebellion-activists>.

⁵⁴ 'Strategic action', contrary to consensus, is a mode of discourse where one party seeks its own self-interest rather than rational agreement – bargaining with threats and promises to induce the other to cooperate. Regh, William, 'Translator's Introduction', in Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.xvii.

⁵⁵ Hallam, *Common Sense*, pp.19-20.

1.2 Demand two: 'Act now'

1.2.1 Habermas: action and law

Extinction Rebellion's second demand is that 'the government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero by 2025'.⁵⁶ Their 'Climate and Ecology Bill' details an expectation that the Secretary of State will be responsible for ensuring that the demands are met and within six months of the passing of this Act publish a strategy specifying the measures to achieve the objective of net zero by 2025.⁵⁷ The demand to 'act now' will be satisfied if governments set legally binding targets in legislation, and that same legislation places an obligation on government to take the appropriate action to meet the targets. It is useful, therefore, to briefly set out how laws are formed in Habermas' constitutional democratic theory through discourse and participation from citizens, and how, once created, these laws protect citizens. In *Between Facts and Norms* Habermas' discourse theory is realised as democratic participation in politics by legal discourse that develops modern law and justice.⁵⁸ Consensus goes beyond how we all get along through co-ordinated actions that constitute norms. It is developed as the concept for how we as citizens access our freedoms through legal institutions that legitimise constitutional democracy and realise equality:

'Without basic rights that secure the private autonomy of citizens, there also would not be any medium for legal institutionalization of the conditions under which these citizens could make use of their public autonomy'.⁵⁹

Constitutionalism is, for Habermas, the institutional expression of the public sphere, formalising rational discussion, and creating the grounds for political participation. Once formed, the constitution becomes the guarantor of political communication through the

⁵⁶ Knights, 'Introduction', p.17.

⁵⁷ Extinction Rebellion submitted their 'Three Demands Bill' formally to UK Parliament on 02 September 2020. The motion has been signed by 92 members of parliament. *Climate and Ecology Bill*, Bill 172, 58/1, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0172/200172.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Huttunen, R. & Heikkinen, H.L.T. 1998, 'Between facts and norms: action research in the light of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourse theory of justice', *Curriculum studies*, vol.6, no.3, pp.307-322.

⁵⁹ Habermas, 'An Author's Reflections', p.796.

right of political freedom of speech.⁶⁰ Consequently, the state and law are endorsed as guarantor of the political discursive process; they protect the demand to act now and set the stage of law as the place for the necessary action.

The links between discourse, politics, law, citizenship, and constitutional democracy are woven through the stages of Habermas' discourse theory: pragmatic; ethical-political; moral; completing the process with legal discourse to formalise the agreed upon norm. Law is a coercible set of rules that involve an appeal to reason to underwrite them; rational citizens should find the laws acceptable and through consensus sign up to them. Law is legitimate if it guarantees two things at once. First, it guarantees individual autonomy by demarcating areas where private individuals can exercise their free choice as they desire. Second, it secures public autonomy through legal order because reasonable citizens rationally assent to the constraints law places on the enactment of their individual freedoms and rights.⁶¹ Habermas formulates (i) 'only those outcomes can count as legitimate upon which equally entitled participants in the deliberation can freely agree', in doing so (ii) 'the participants commit themselves to modern law as the medium for regulating the common life', and they do this because (iii) 'no one is truly free until all citizens enjoy equal liberties under laws that they have given themselves after reasonable deliberation'.⁶² Democratic processes are legitimised by legal institutions and the rule of law, and these institutions require to be 'legally constituted in the right way'.⁶³ The 'right way' is when 'legitimation depends...on an appropriate legal institutionalization of those forms of rational discourse and fair bargaining that ground the presumption of the rational acceptability of outcomes...politics is thus wedded to a complex notion of procedural legitimacy'.⁶⁴ Any political outcome has a 'circular self-constitution'⁶⁵ if it is achieved through discourse and follows this process.

⁶⁰ Christodoulidis, E.A. 1998, *Law and reflexive politics*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, London; Dordrecht, pp.19-30.

⁶¹ Rehg, William, 'Translator's Introduction', in Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.xxv

⁶² Habermas and Rehg, 'Constitutional Democracy', p.772.

⁶³ Michelman, Frank, 1998, 'Constitutional Authorship', *Constitutionalism: Philosophical Foundations*, ed. L. Alexander, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.91 in Habermas and Rehg, 'Constitutional Democracy', p.773.

⁶⁴ Habermas, 'An Author's Reflections', p.794.

⁶⁵ Habermas and Rehg, 'Constitutional Democracy', p.774.

Law's 'validity lies ultimately' in its 'capacity to make claims supported by reason in a discourse that aims at, and depends on, agreement between citizens'.⁶⁶ When laws are validated by citizens' agreement, this forms the foundation of Habermas' 'discourse principle' that norms are universally accepted. Legal norms, for Habermas, are 'what is left from a crumbled cement of society',⁶⁷ facilitating social integration and making law central to the organisation of complex western democracies. Social integration occurs as 'modern law is supposed to grant an equal distribution of *subjective rights* for everybody' and these rights are 'liberties' that 'function as a protective belt for each person's pursuit of his or her own preferences and value orientations'.⁶⁸ Law offers citizenry and protects free speech. 'Modern law', formed by system of norms, is 'freedom-guaranteeing' ensuring that the 'norms guarantee the autonomy of all legal persons equally'.⁶⁹ Laws are formed discursively with the agreement of those affected, whilst playing a role of protecting the ability of citizens to engage in the discursive political process of forming them. Habermas' theory allows Extinction Rebellion to rationally argue that climate change exists and sets the framework for how rational discourse can be formalised into law. To meet the second demand to create law that binds the government to meet greenhouse gas emission targets, the proposed law would need to be freely agreed by all citizens. Citizens, the theory goes, commit to the law to coordinate their action, submitting to it as the means of protecting their rights and freedoms. In *This is not a Drill*, contributors argue that the bonds of the 'social contract' have been broken as government is not fulfilling its duty to protect its citizens; government is failing to set the legal obligations, design the strategy, or make the necessary commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Extinction Rebellion's 'Declaration of Rebellion' sets out their rationale that when a government and law:

'fail to provide any assurance of adequate protection of and security for its people's well-being and the nation's future, it becomes the right of citizens to seek redress to restore dutiful democracy and to secure the solutions needed to avert catastrophe and protect the future. It becomes not only our right but our sacred duty to rebel'.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Cotterrell, R cited in Freeman, *Lloyd's introduction*, p.693.

⁶⁷ Habermas, 'An Author's Reflections', p.794.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.795.

⁶⁹ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.447.

⁷⁰ Extinction Rebellion, *This is Not a Drill*, p.9.

If law is ‘freedom-guaranteeing’, protecting the citizens who rationally sign up to it, why have such laws failed to protect us from the climate emergency, with associated action plans failing to materialise? Why has it been necessary to spark a rebellion?

1.2.2 Rancière: Law conceals politics

‘Power conceded nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will’.

(Frederick Douglas)⁷¹

In Habermas’ theory law plays a central role as citizens participate and enact legally protected rights. This discursive participation is, for Habermas, the legitimising link between law and democracy. The main considerations for Rancière in *Disagreement* are the difference between ‘the practices and legitimizations of the consensus system’ in liberal theory, with law as key to the legitimisation, and what should be considered ‘democracy’.⁷² In Steve Corcoran’s opinion Rancière’s achievement is that he has enabled us to see more clearly that the great achievement of consensus is the loss of thought and practice of emancipation.⁷³ The concealing power of liberal democracy is that as a consequence of the presumption of citizen’s participation in the legitimisation of law and state institutions, there is no need for politics as an emancipatory project. Both the ‘left’ and ‘right’, Rancière argues, ‘have come to agree that capitalism and its political form of ‘liberal democracy’ are the ‘ultimate horizon’ as they enshrine the protection of citizens’ individual and public autonomy.⁷⁴ Habermas, as an advocate of liberal democracy, consistently argues that any norm set can, in the future, be challenged when a disenfranchised cultural worldview seeks a different interpretation of those norms. ‘Struggles for recognition’ ensure the rights and freedoms of disenfranchised groups are protected so that they can pursue their individual and public autonomy in their own way.⁷⁵ Yet this practice of ‘renewal’ never transcends the horizon, but simply re-instates the conditions of liberal democracy. Whilst challenge to norms and laws are theoretically welcomed in liberal democracy, criticism is forever harnessed to protecting individual

⁷¹ Douglas, Frederick cited in Extinction Rebellion, *This is Not a Drill*, p.23.

⁷² Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.xiii.

⁷³ Rancière, J. & Corcoran, S. 2010, ‘Ten Theses of Politics’, *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics*, Continuum, London; New York, NY, p.12.

⁷⁴ Rancière, ‘Ten Theses’, pp.12-13.

⁷⁵ Habermas, ‘Struggles for Recognition’, pp.107-148.

rights and freedoms.⁷⁶ Corcoran argues that it is the counter-logic of protection of individual and public autonomy that closes the possibility of a challenge when opposing interests are at stake. This leaves untouched any self-interest that exists, meaning that any challenge that points to the self-interest can be concealed in the language of the legal protection of individual rights.

Habermas sets out a 'self-constitutional' discursive process through which rationality builds up from discussion to legitimisation of the institutions of state. Rancière questions this double-bond of rationality and legitimisation that makes the institutions of constitutional democracy, or the interests on which rights claims are based, difficult to challenge. He shows how liberal democracy has historically set itself up against the utopia of totalitarianism: 'the consensus system celebrated its victory over totalitarianism as the final victory of law over nonlaw and of realism over utopias'.⁷⁷ Liberalism legitimises itself by this contrast, demonstrating that it is the most effective means of maintaining 'political forms of justice and economic forms of production of wealth, as well as setting up interests and optimising gains for all'.⁷⁸ The founding of liberal democracy's self-sustaining character is that it is worth giving up rights and equality for the sake of the protection of the economic gains of all. The argument is that the state is the most efficient means of managing the gains for all and 'shores up legitimization of the so-called democratic regime'.⁷⁹ Once legitimised, liberal democracy's victory is in its acceptance as the 'ultimate horizon'.⁸⁰

Consensus' ultimate concealing achievement, Rancière argues, is by 'closing the boundary' between 'appearance and reality', signifying the distinction between the appearance of equal rights constituted by law, conceals the reality of inequality in accessing them.⁸¹ Rights can appear to exist as 'fact' because they are normatively constituted, however in reality none exist if the political horizon is set as 'each part of the social body would obtain the best share that it can obtain'.⁸² 'Every situation, every

⁷⁶ Rancière, 'Ten Theses', p.13.

⁷⁷ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.124.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.95.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Rancière, 'Ten Theses', pp.12-13

⁸¹ Rancière, J. 2004, 'Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?', *The South Atlantic quarterly*, vol. 103, no. 2-3, pp. 297-310, p.309.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.306.

possible dispute' is broken down to its components which transforms the parties to the dispute to an identity defined by what is protected by law, thus depriving the parties of politics.⁸³ Rancière describes politics as being 'evacuated' when there is 'no interval between law and fact', meaning the appearance that law creates of equality, disables the ability to dispute a 'wrong' of inequality.⁸⁴ There is also no gap between what is real and what is possible because possibilities are closed, and horizons of possibility set by the limitations of the homogenised community. 'Police'⁸⁵ order asserts that the only thing that is possible, in all circumstances, is what it is already doing and determined by economic necessity of world capital. Police logic is the absorption of everything into the only thing possible.

The state and its actions are 'checked by law', indicating that the law offers checks and balances for citizen against the state through rights, that can be taken up if it is deemed that the state has gone beyond its powers.⁸⁶ The state then establishes its authority, through its own weakness, as it has already positioned that there is no choice for the state and that its only choices are determined by the 'world-wide necessity it is dominated by...the constraints and caprices of the world market'.⁸⁷ The weakness and the lack of choice for the state is then shared with the citizen. When a citizen calls on its rights to protect itself against the state, it can do so only within the confines of the prevailing logic: 'the "almost nothing" of a possible on which everyone's prosperity as well as the maintenance of the community bond depends'.⁸⁸ The possibilities offered by citizens' rights are set within the horizons of the necessity of economic expediency. The possible 'is thereby the conceptual exchanger of "reality" and "necessity",' or at least the judgement by consensus logic of what is deemed necessary.⁸⁹

⁸³ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.112

⁸⁴ Rancière, *Disagreement*, pp.107-112.

⁸⁵ Rancière defines his concept of the police as: 'This 'natural' logic, a distribution of the invisible and visible, of speech and noise, pins bodies to 'their' places and allocates the private and the public to distinct 'parts' - this is the order of the police.' Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.102. 'Politics', by contrast, is the activity that breaks with the order of the police by inventing new subjects. Rancière, Jacques, 2010, 'The Paradoxes of Political Art', Rancière, J. & Corcoran, S. *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics*, Continuum, London; New York, NY, p.139.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.113.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.132.

Habermas encourages an increase in discourse for recognition, for challenging norms, as this strengthens the consensus on which the system is based. What the state ‘relinquishes by having itself incessantly checked...it regains in legitimization’;⁹⁰ not only legitimization of itself, but legitimisation of the self-interest it protects:

‘it only ever does the only thing possible, only ever what is required by strict necessity in the context of the growing intricacy of economies within the global market’.⁹¹

The state is ‘dominated’ by the necessity of economic logic, ‘the world-wide necessity’ that it must work within.⁹² The state limits its power by submitting itself to the logic of necessity but following this through means that challenges to the state are also limited by the same logic. Governments claim their legitimacy as being best placed to manage capital for the optimal share of its citizens, locking in its legitimisation maintaining everyone’s prosperity. The increasing link between the individual rights and state legitimisation, serves in ‘making each person the reflection of the soul of the community’ by assessing rights claims based on how well they reflect the identity of the community provided by law, creating the:

‘fanaticism of the tie that binds individuals and groups together in a fabric with no holes, no gap between names and things, rights and facts, individuals and subjects, with no intervals in which forms of community in dispute, nonsecular form of community, may be constructed’.⁹³

It is assumed that nobody is excluded from the ‘rational’ logic that everyone wants to get their share, leaving nothing left to dispute as to do so would be contradictory to this logic. A ‘saturation of consensus’ is achieved because everyone is included in the logic and community of wanting to get one’s share in advance, countable only in the aggregate of the community, so nobody is left to challenge it.⁹⁴ Where there is a challenge it is limited by the logic of necessity. Therefore, where a dissenting voice attempts to bring appearance to a ‘wrong’, this voice is deemed a threat to the community getting their optimal share, as

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.113.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.115.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.116-117.

administered by the state. As there is only one logic that makes sense, there is an ‘evaporation’ of politics.⁹⁵

Consensus’ victory is all subsuming by negating the possibility of any political challenge to its logic. What is lost in a dispute being processed by the law is the political content and the demand to act now. Activist Zoe Blackler summarises:

“rather than wasting its time and money seeking to silence and criminalise those who are drawing its attention to the Climate and Ecological Emergency, we call on the Government to act now on the biggest threat to our planet. Where is its plan?”⁹⁶

Habermas’ theory allows XR to raise the legal challenge, but as Rancière describes equality before the law can be empty when the gap between legal equality and factual inequality is obscured. Rancière argues liberal theory does not allow the gap to be discussed, the political content of the dispute reviewed, where disputes assessed only within the horizons or prevailing logic and interests. Legal processing of a dispute is an existing ‘inscription’ of equality⁹⁷ where all are equal before the law. What Blackler and other activists want to discuss is that when their activism is criminalised, they are not represented within the ‘community’ of citizens whose rights law is in place to protect. Criminalisation of Extinction Rebellion’s activism is an example of the ‘saturation of consensus and exclusion of politics’.⁹⁸ The activists’ call to ‘act now’ with radical changes to society and economy are deemed by consensus as a displacement of citizens’ rights to their optimal share. When the narrative is reduced to the undesirability of the activists’ actions, when they are processed by law, the appearance of political wrong, of how the prevailing economic model is contributing to the climate emergency, is lost, and replaced by the otherness of the criminal. What is concealed or obscured, therefore, is possibilities in the political demand for action, that go beyond what is defined as the identity of the community. Extinction Rebellion are demanding more than a right to appeal legal

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109

⁹⁶ Blackler, Zoe, November 06 2019, ‘Extinction Rebellion wins landmark legal challenge to Met Police ban on peaceful protest’, *Extinction Rebellion*, <https://rebellion.earth/2019/11/06/extinction-rebellion-wins-landmark-legal-challenge-to-met-police-ban-on-peaceful-protest-2/>.

⁹⁷ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.100.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.116-117.

decisions, but a ‘plan’ inscribed in law that holds government to account to address the “biggest threat to our planet”.

1.3 Demand three: ‘Beyond politics’

1.3.1 Habermas: politics and public sphere

Extinction Rebellion’s third demand is to ‘go beyond politics’: ‘the government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens’ Assembly on climate and ecological justice’.⁹⁹ They demand change from politics-as-usual that, in their view, has held back progress in resolving the climate emergency, proposing instead a politics of listening and dialogue that drives unity and action. They argue a stage must be set for this dialogue to occur enabling political power and decision-making to be placed in the hands of citizens.¹⁰⁰ Habermas sets out the public sphere as the stage and institutional expression of this critical and rational discourse, with public participation by citizens.¹⁰¹ The public sphere is the realm for revitalising politics with rational argumentation, that mediates between state and society by representing public opinion. Habermas states ‘public opinion represents political potentials that can be used for influencing the voting behavior of citizens or the will-formation in parliamentary bodies, administrative agencies, and courts’.¹⁰² Sitting between state and society, the public sphere both protects society and the lifeworld from encroachment from state influence with its own ideology, and the mechanism through which citizens can influence political-will-formation and law-making. Habermas describes the connecting role that the public sphere plays between state and society, for it draws ‘its impulses from the private handling of social problems that resonate in life histories’, meaning problems in the public sphere come from the private life experiences of the public – who take that to the public sphere to debate.¹⁰³

The public sphere is ‘a sounding board for problems that must be processed by the political system because they cannot be solved elsewhere’.¹⁰⁴ It not only identifies problems in the ‘sounding board’ but will ‘also convincingly and influentially thematize them, furnish

⁹⁹ Knights, ‘Introduction’, p.17.

¹⁰⁰ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/go-beyond-politics/>.

¹⁰¹ Christodoulidis, *Law and reflexive politics*, p.26.

¹⁰² Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.363.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.366.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.359.

them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes'.¹⁰⁵ It is not an institution or organisation but a 'network' of communication channels produced, reproduced through communicative action, and is the 'social space' generated by this action.¹⁰⁶ The shared space of a speech situation where actors co-operate communicatively constitutes the public sphere, where the speakers don't merely observe each other but afford each other the freedom of speech and co-ordinate action from that speech.¹⁰⁷ Thus, it is episodic in nature and can be founded in almost any space. It can have a physical audience with the 'occasional or "arranged" publics of particular presentations and events, such as theater performances, rock concerts, party assemblies, or church congresses',¹⁰⁸ or can be detached from a 'public's physical presence and extend to the virtual presence of scattered readers, listeners, or viewers linked by public media'.¹⁰⁹

Citizens are both 'bearers of the political public sphere and members of society',¹¹⁰ thus the public sphere and civil society are sustained by participation:

'the institutions and legal guarantees of free and open opinion-formation rest on the unsteady ground of the political communication of actors who, in making use of them, at the same time interpret, defend, and radicalize their normative content... actors who support the public sphere are distinguished by the dual orientation of their political engagement: with their programs, they directly influence the political system, but at the same time they are also reflexively concerned with revitalizing and enlarging civil society and the public sphere as well as with confirming their own identities and capacities to act'.¹¹¹

For Habermas, Extinction Rebellion would likely be described as a voice within civil society as an 'emergent association...attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres',¹¹² engaging their audience in the validity claims of their demands and

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.360.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.361.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.374.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.361.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.365.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.369-70.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.366-7.

opening spaces for discourse. They are bringing up and defining ‘approaching problems’, and proposing ‘possible solutions’, through their alternative value interpretations of consensual norms, thus aiming to drive a broad shift and exert ‘specific policies’.¹¹³ They can have their demands turned into ‘communicative power only after it passes through the filters of the institutionalized procedures of democratic opinion- and will-formation and enters through parliamentary debates into legitimate lawmaking.’¹¹⁴ In summary Habermas would allow XR to articulate their grievance, expand interest in the issue to gain a place on the public agenda, create sufficient pressure on decision makers to force the issue onto the formal agenda ‘for their serious consideration’,¹¹⁵ in a process geared to reaching societal-wide consensus. However, does this adequately represent how XR envision their role and their politics?

1.3.2 Rancière: public sphere conceals stage

According to Habermas, in contemporary Western societies ‘politics has lost its orientation and self-confidence before a terrifying background’ of things like ‘ecological limits on economic growth’ and ‘increasing disparities in living conditions’.¹¹⁶ He suspects that unrest comes from a sense that ‘radical democracy’ is needed to maintain the rule of law, where ‘institutions of freedom’ can be pressed by the public for more democracy. In his theory legal subjects ‘enjoy equal individual liberties’ through their ‘political autonomy’; when they ‘achieve clarity’ and understanding on common ‘interests and standards’.¹¹⁷ For Habermas, basic rights such as freedom of assembly provide the social structure that allows for discussion to reach such clarity. An energetic civil society maintains the necessary communication structures by making use of legal guarantees of ‘free and open opinion-formation’ via the ‘unsteady ground of political communications’.¹¹⁸ Social movements within civil society act “offensively” towards the state by bringing up:

‘issues relevant to the entire society, to define ways of approaching problems, to propose possible solutions, to supply new information, to interpret values

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.370.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.371.

¹¹⁵ R. Cobb, J. K. Ross, and M. H. Ross, 1976, ‘Agenda Building as a Comparative Political Process’, *American Political Science Review*, 70: 1, 26-38, p.132 cited in Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.379.

¹¹⁶ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.xlii.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.369.

differently, to mobilize good reasons and criticize bad ones. Such initiatives are intended to produce a broad shift in public opinion, to alter the parameters of organized political will-formation, and to exert pressure on parliaments, courts, and administrations in favor of specific policies'.¹¹⁹

The potential of the public sphere is broad, providing voices like Extinction Rebellion's the space to criticise governments, reinterpret prevailing norms, and try to influence political decision making and will-formation, without taking political power. Extinction Rebellion seek to put the influencing power in the hands of citizens in a Citizens' Assembly, where ordinary people make recommendations for politicians to follow on how to respond to the climate emergency, even when radical change is required to implement them. Going beyond parliamentary politics is necessary, they argue, because 'the challenges we face and the decisions that need to be made are simply too big for our broken parliamentary democracy'.¹²⁰ A Citizens' Assembly would help avoid the limitations of parliamentary politics where politicians are 'are influenced by corporate lobbyists' or 'simply can't see past the next election'.¹²¹ Extinction Rebellion are explicit that they do not want political power for themselves, however they do want the Citizens' Assembly to be legally constituted. Like a jury, its recommendations would have a legally binding force to be adopted by government and laws formed. Whilst Habermas limits actors within the public sphere to acquiring influence rather than political power,¹²² it might be argued that this is still consistent with what Extinction Rebellion aim to set up through the Citizens' Assembly. Laws are legitimised through the discourse principle and the law is freely signed up to by the community.

What, therefore, is concealed if Habermas' theory allows Extinction Rebellion to realise their third demand in full? The answer lies in the possible concealments discussed in demands one and two. Where Habermas entrusts the protection of the public sphere to the 'moments' when it is 'mobilised',¹²³ Rancière counters that attempts to 'revitalise politics by bringing the citizen closer to the state or the state closer to the citizen indeed offers the

¹¹⁹ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.370.

¹²⁰ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/go-beyond-politics/about-beyond-politics/>.

¹²¹ <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/go-beyond-politics/citizens-assembly/>.

¹²² Habermas sets the limit of the public sphere as a space for political influence not political decision making or power: 'political influence based on public opinion can be transformed into political power only through institutionalized procedures', Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.363.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

simplest alternative to politics: the simple police'.¹²⁴ Habermas' protection of the public sphere comes from the institutions of law, the very sites where, for Rancière, politics is evacuated. Setting the stage for political debates as the public sphere, formed through public opinion, places the dispute within rational discourse and its potential concealments. Rancière argues that for the 'wrong' to be fully understood it must be discussed within the context of where it occurs and in what way a political voice is miscounted. Placing the dispute in the public sphere, places it also within common 'interests and standards',¹²⁵ that Habermas posits constitute the public sphere, therefore subsuming the dispute's uniqueness in consensus:

'The utterance thereby completed then finds itself extracted from the speech situation in which it functioned naturally. It is placed in another situation in which it no longer works, in which it is the object of scrutiny, reduced to the status of an utterance in a common language.'¹²⁶

Rather than categorising public opinion in the realm of discourse theory and validity claims, Rancière offers an alternative definition and setting:

'*Political* public opinion (as distinct from police management of state legitimisation processes) is not primarily some network of enlightened minds discussing common problems. Rather, it is an informed opinion of a particular kind: an opinion that evaluates the very manner in which people speak to each other and how much the social order has to speaking and its interpretation'.¹²⁷

The value of Rancière's corrective for Extinction Rebellion's demand to go 'beyond politics', is that it offers the important first step in reinterpreting business-as-usual politics; an evaluation of the founding concealments on which the stage of public sphere and political discussion is set.

¹²⁴ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.31. See footnote n.85.

¹²⁵ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.xlii.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.48.

2 The stage of unconcealment

2.1 Unconcealment

‘Always the unconcealment of that which is goes upon a way of revealing. Always the destining of revealing holds complete sway over man. But that destining is never a fate that compels. For man becomes truly free insofar as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens and hears, and not one who is simply constrained to obey’.

(Martin Heidegger)¹²⁸

Ranci re intriguingly concludes Chapter 2 of *Disagreement* with a very Heideggerian phrase: ‘politics is not made up of power relationships; it is made up of relationships between worlds’.¹²⁹ Worlds reveal themselves when such relationships exist. When politics is actualised through actions of equality there is ‘an opening up of world where argument can be received and have an impact – argument about the very existence of such a world’.¹³⁰ Political actors are ‘world openers’ who open up the ‘common’¹³¹ ‘worlds where the subject who argues is counted as an arguer’, meaning they are not miscounted and can offer alternatives to what is currently considered possible.¹³² Martin Heidegger’s thought can be understood in how beings disclose themselves, entities, and worlds.¹³³ Emphasising unconcealment’s importance to the disclosure of being, Heidegger explains that ‘unconcealment begins’ when the ‘first thinker’ asks ‘what are beings?’¹³⁴ When ‘presencing’ or ‘disclosure is at play’ there can be ‘an enduring coming forth from concealment into unconcealment’.¹³⁵ He connects in the process of disclosure the

¹²⁸ Heidegger, M. 1977, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, *The question concerning technology, and other essays*, Harper Perennial, London; New York, pp.3-35.

¹²⁹ Ranci re, *Disagreement*, p.42.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹³¹ ‘Common’ means shared language, stage and understanding of wrong, not liberal consensus.

¹³² Ranci re, *Disagreement*, p.58

¹³³ Wrathall argues that Heidegger’s ‘thought as a whole can profitably be seen as working out the implications of the original understanding of unconcealment’. Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.2.

¹³⁴ Heidegger, M. & McNeill, W. 1998, ‘On the Essence of Truth’, *Pathmarks*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; New York, p.145.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.33.

concealment (*Verborgenheit*) of everyday *das Man* to its ‘coming forth’¹³⁶ into unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit* or *Alêtheia*),¹³⁷ where the later emerges from the former.¹³⁸ Heidegger therefore offers us a deeper understanding of concealment as an essential part of being, but also that in moments of disclosure, unconcealment is possible.

In Heidegger’s seminal work *Being and Time*, he compares concealment and unconcealment through his study of ‘truth’.¹³⁹ ‘Being-true’ is to ‘let beings be seen in their unconcealment (discoveredness), taking them out of their concealment’.¹⁴⁰ Through discovery or understanding, being ‘steps forward’ out of concealment and into the ‘light’ of the unconcealment of its being;¹⁴¹ ‘when there is a disclosure of being of what and how it is, there is a happening of truth at work’.¹⁴² But ‘for those who do not understand, what they do is remain in concealment’: ‘they forget’.¹⁴³ Whereas, ‘unconcealment consists in bringing things to awareness,...creating the context within which things can be what they are’.¹⁴⁴ For something to be unconcealed it must first be concealed: ‘all revealing belongs with a harbouring concealment’.¹⁴⁵ ‘Every uncoveredness of the world...occurs together with the concealing of entities’¹⁴⁶ and ‘the specific nature of uncoveredness of entities needs to be understood as a privation of the of the fundamental covered-up-ness’ of entities.¹⁴⁷ Heidegger states ‘only where unconcealment already holds sway can something become sayable, visible, showable, capable of being apprehended’.¹⁴⁸ The concealedness

¹³⁶ Heidegger, M. 2002. ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, *Heidegger: Off the beaten track*, Cambridge University Press, pp.1-55.

¹³⁷ Wrathall cites a passage from Heidegger’s *Seminar*: ‘*Alêtheia* means, translated literally: unconcealment. Yet little is gained with literalness... *Alêtheia* does not mean “truth”, if by that one means the validity of assertions in the form of propositions. It is possible that what is to be thought in *alêtheia*, speaking strictly for itself, does not yet have anything to do with “truth” whereas it has everything to do with unconcealment, which is presupposed in every determination of “truth”’. Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.6.

¹³⁸ Wrathall explains that concealment is the ‘positive term’ that needs to be understood first in Heidegger’s thinking, as it is ‘given priority’ to unconcealment. Wrathall, *Unconcealment*.

¹³⁹ Heidegger describes ‘truth’ as ‘the still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings’. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*.

¹⁴⁰ Heidegger, Martin, Stambaugh, Joan & Schmidt, Dennis J. (eds.) (2010). *Being and Time: A Revised Edition of the Stambaugh Translation*. State University of New York Press, p.210:219.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.211:219.

¹⁴² Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.16.

¹⁴³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.211:219.

¹⁴⁴ Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.2.

¹⁴⁵ Heidegger, ‘The Question’, p.25.

¹⁴⁶ Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, pp.1-2 and p.23.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹⁴⁸ Heidegger, ‘Hegel and the Greeks’, *Pathmarks*, p.335.

of things is ‘the source and foundation of all unconcealedness or truth (*alētheia*)’.¹⁴⁹ This chapter, therefore, explores both the concealment ‘that is the very heart of coming into appearance’,¹⁵⁰ and the unconcealment from which it emerges. My aim is to ‘participate in unconcealment, bringing it to our awareness. Heightening our sensitivity and responsiveness to it’¹⁵¹ to create a ‘space of possibilities’.¹⁵² To bring about a Heideggerian unconcealment, requires a movement from ‘forgetting’ to understanding, disclosure, or discoveredness.

2.2 Rancière’s unconcealment

An alternative way to understand Rancière’s critique of consensus, and what it conceals, is as an exposition of his counter-concept ‘dissensus’. This section aims to set out ‘dissensus’ as Rancière’s mode of ‘unconcealment’; a connection between Rancièrian and Heideggerian terminology that is not ordinarily made within literature about the theorists and is consequently this thesis’ major contribution.¹⁵³ ‘Dissensus’, Rancière argues, is an aesthetic disruption to what is commonly accepted and visible within consensus. It is an understanding of ‘politics’ that:

‘breaks with the sensory self-evidence of the ‘natural’ order that destines specific individuals and groups to occupy positions of rule or of being ruled, assigning them

¹⁴⁹ Heidegger, M. 1977, ‘The Turning’, *The question concerning technology, and other essays*, Harper Perennial, London; New York, pp.36-48, p.36 fn2.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.5.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁵³ There is an interesting comparison between Heidegger’s ‘unconcealment’ and Rancière’s ‘dissensus’, however this is not commonly identified in the relevant secondary literature, see Wrathall, *Unconcealment* and Corcoran, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, *Dissensus*. This is perhaps because Rancière himself does not directly engage with Heidegger’s work in his key texts *Dissensus* and *Disagreement*. However, see McFadden, Dan, 2016, ‘The Figure Function in Rancière and Heidegger’, *World Picture*, Journal 11 Summer 2016, http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_11/pdfs/McFadden_WP_11.pdf for connections between Rancière and Heidegger on art. For Heidegger, concealment and unconcealment occur together and one doesn’t replace the other. Equally for Rancière, dissensus does not overcome consensus, rather it exists with it and drives a wedge between and into consensus, disrupting consensus’ distribution of the sensible. I think Heidegger would consider it against our nature to maintain a disposition of unconcealment without the prior concealment, or to seek to eliminate consensus for the unfamiliar possibilities of dissensus. It is from this understanding of Heidegger and Rancière that I consider the politics of Extinction Rebellion to exist in moments of unconcealing dissensus.

to private or public lives, pinning them down to a certain time and space, to specific 'bodies', that is to specific ways of being, seeing and saying'.¹⁵⁴

Dissensus disorders the 'distribution of the sensible'¹⁵⁵ of people and place that occurs within consensus; it disrupts the way consensus visibly presents the assumptions of what is commonly shared within society, and what is deemed universal. With overtones of Heidegger's distinction between concealment and unconcealment, Rancière describes dissensus as 'appearance':

'Appearance, particularly political appearance, does not conceal reality but in fact splinters it, introduces contentious objects into it, objects whose mode of presentation is not homogenous with the ordinary mode of existence of the objects thereby identified'.¹⁵⁶

The unconcealing quality of dissensus exists in the way a 'contentious object' is introduced into, and splintering, consensus' 'homogenous' presentation of the sum of the parts of the community: dissensus brings into appearance that which is not counted. Dissensus is a 'scene that is liable to emergence anywhere at any time', resulting in an 'organisation of the sensible in which there is no hidden appearances, or a unique regime of presentation of the given imposing its self-evidence on everyone'.¹⁵⁷

A political scene, for Rancière, is not one that is focused on influencing prevailing norms or consensual logic but one that brings together two heterogenous logics: an egalitarian logic and the logic of the police:

'Political subjectification is an ability to produce these polemical scenes, these paradoxical scenes, that bring out the contradiction between two logics, by positing

¹⁵⁴ Rancière, 'The Paradoxes', p. 140.

¹⁵⁵ Rancière's concept 'distribution of the sensible' is defined by Rockhill as 'the implicit law governing the sensible order that parcels and forms the partition in a common world by first establishing the modes of perception within which these are inscribed. The distribution of the sensible thus produces a system of self-evident facts of perception based on the set horizons and modalities of what is visible and audible as well as what can be said, thought, made, or done'. Rockhill, Gabriel, 2004, 'Glossary of Technical Terms', Rancière, Jacques, *The Politics of the Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, Pbk. edn, Continuum, London; New York, p.85.

¹⁵⁶ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.104.

¹⁵⁷ Rancière & Corcoran, 'Translator's Introduction', *Dissensus*, p.7.

existences that are at the same time non-existences – or existences that are at the same time existences’.¹⁵⁸

By bringing together two worlds in a polemical scene, politics brings appearance to the wrong where voices are given no account. When those who ‘have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account’, come together, and set up a ‘community’, they create a ‘confrontation’ and ‘contradiction’ between two worlds: their own world where their voice is of account and a world ‘where there is nothing’.¹⁵⁹

Rancière offers an example of a scene that conceives the existence of a non-existence, whereby reconfiguring the stage, a voice emerges as counting. Jeanne Deroin in 1849 presents herself as a candidate for a legislative election in which she cannot run: ‘she reveals herself and she reveals the subject of “women” as necessarily included in...the equality of all before the law yet being at the same time radically excluded’.¹⁶⁰ The polemical scene shows that whilst Deroin cannot run for office, her action reimagines a reality where she could because she behaves as if nothing is stopping her. For Rancière, this is an exemplar of politics’ achievement, as it:

‘shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes the place’s destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise’.¹⁶¹

It is a scene of contradiction that brings a ‘staging of the very contradiction between police logic and political logic which is at the heart of the republican definition of community’,¹⁶² bringing an appearance to two orders: ‘between the order of inegalitarian distribution of social bodies in a partition of the perceptible and the order of the equal capacity of speaking beings in general’.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.41.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.42.

The formula that dissensus as unconcealment follows is demonstrating that there is not a ‘a single regime of presentation and interpretation of the given imposing its obviousness on all’.¹⁶⁴

‘Politics invents new forms of collective enunciation; it re-frames the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible, new configurations between the visible and the invisible, and between the audible and the inaudible, new distributions of space and time - in short, new bodily capacities.’¹⁶⁵

Scenes that demonstrate alternative possibilities can be taken up by an audience in their own unique situation. In *Disagreement*, Rancière explains how Ballanche’s reinterpretation of the scene on the Aventine was published in 1829 and the July Revolution in Paris broke out, which was then followed by a whole series of social movements. The workers who adopted Ballanche’s reinterpretation, did so in their own way. Unlike the plebs they were not miscounted as speaking beings. The workers’ dispute argued that their political voice should be seen in connection with their role as worker, exposing their employer’s assumption that work and politics could not share the same stage. Despite this difference, Rancière sees the movements as following a “general rule” that the quarrel always ‘bears on the prejudicial question: is there any call for the common world of speaking on this subject to be set up?’.¹⁶⁶ The proletarian movements took up the same form as the scene described by Ballanche, they brought appearance to the wrong and aimed to set up the common stage on which both parties belong:

‘The names of the actors, sets, and props might change, but the rule remains the same. It consists of creating a stage around any specific conflict on which the equality or inequality as speaking beings of the partners in the conflict can be played out’.¹⁶⁷

There is a clear theatrical element to Rancière’s politics; a motif that offers an understanding of how politics stages unconcealment:

¹⁶⁴ Rancière, J., Elliott, G. & ProQuest (Firm), 2011, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Verso, London, p.2.

¹⁶⁵ Rancière, ‘The Paradoxes’, p.139.

¹⁶⁶ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.51.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

‘Subjects whose voices were unheard, whose bodies were not seen, suddenly appear to the other social protagonists. As they burst onto the scene, society must deal with them and their demands’.¹⁶⁸

By emphasising the theatrical sense of the scene of ‘performing or playing’ and ‘setting it up as theatre, inventing the argument’, Rancière shows that the unconcealing nature of politics is to bring appearance to the wrong, by bursting ‘on the scene’, and in doing so create the potential for it to be picked up by others.¹⁶⁹

It is in *The Emancipated Spectator* that Rancière fully develops the role of the audience and the way they adopt their own political action through their spectatorship.¹⁷⁰ Rancière posits that there is a prejudice within theatre theory that considers speech and listening as the opposite to action. He counters this summation by disputing the existence of a distinction between viewing and acting; it is in this revised formula where spectatorship can be considered active participation in which he aims to liberate the spectator:

‘Emancipation begins...when we understand that viewing is also action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts...She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place...She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way –...with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented’.¹⁷¹

Rancière argues that spectatorship can have a politically active quality, denouncing assumptions of the passivity of spectatorship. There is an active and creative quality to the spectator’s interpretation of the ‘performance’, and the reinterpretation through their own ‘story’ can be of present prevailing consensus, wrong experienced, and future potentialities. Evocative of his critique of rational discourse’s binary outcomes of agreement or disagreement, ‘a choice between the enlightenment of rational

¹⁶⁸ Deranty, Jean-Philippe. 2003, 'Rancière and Contemporary Political Ontology', *Theory & Event*, vol. 6/no. 4, pp. 0-0.

¹⁶⁹ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.88.

¹⁷⁰ Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

communication and the murkiness of inherent violence or irreducible difference', he argues 'images of art do not supply weapons for battle', ¹⁷² but they:

'help sketch new configurations of what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought and, consequently, a new landscape of the possible. But they do so on condition that their meaning or effect is not anticipated'.¹⁷³

The emancipatory potential comes from the reinterpretation and 'new configurations' applied by the spectator. The dramaturg cannot assume that any message they intend will be interpreted with a homogenous meaning by the audience. The audience will interpret the play with their own stories and background of understanding.

The 'collective power' of the spectator does not come from their participation in a shared consensual interpretation, but of each translating the work in their own way; it is this that gives each spectator their emancipatory capacity, their capacity to reinterpret from the artistic image the world anew:

'What our performances – be they teaching or playing, speaking or writing, making art or looking at it – verify is not our participation in a power embodied in the community. It is the capacity of anonymous people, the capacity that makes everyone equal to everyone else...It is in this power of associating and dissociating that the emancipation of the spectator consists – that is to say, the emancipation of each of us as spectator'.¹⁷⁴

When the spectator 'appropriates' the story and makes it their own in a 'self-initiated democratic outburst' the potential for dissensus rather than enforced consensus is created. The story creates the potential for a moment of re-interpreting an alternative future. The unconcealing power of the stage production exists in its potential to be re-interpreted, not its power to influence. If the theatrical disruption is successful in reconfiguring 'the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought', as well as to question any

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.17.

presumption of who has capacity for perceiving and reinterpreting and who does not, then the audience may ‘sketch a new topography of the possible’.¹⁷⁵

2.3 Brecht’s unconcealment

*‘Give us some light on the stage, electrician. How can we
Playwrights and actors put forward
Our view of the world in half-darkness. The dim twilight
Induces sleep. But we need the spectator’s
Wakeful-, even watchfulness’.*

*(Bertolt Brecht)*¹⁷⁶

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière questions modern theatre theorists, who argue that the role of theatre is to close the gap between actor and spectator by engaging them in political action. These theorists, Rancière argues, criticise the distance and separation that exists between stage and the audience, ‘between the performance of bodies on the stage and the passivity of the spectators in the theatre’.¹⁷⁷ The critique of the ‘spectacle’¹⁷⁸ runs as follows:

‘according to the accusers, being a spectator is a bad thing for two reasons. First, viewing is the opposite of knowing: the spectator is held before an appearance in a state of ignorance about the process of production of this appearance and about the reality it conceals. Second, it is the opposite of acting: the spectator remains

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁷⁶ Brecht, Bertolt cited in Willett, J. 1977, *The theatre of Bertolt Brecht: a study from eight aspects*, Rev. / [with a revised bibliography]. edn, Methuen Drama, London, p.161.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁷⁸ Rancière illustrates the argument he is countering by citing Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* and the formula that for the spectating man ‘the more he contemplates the less he lives’. Debord, G. 1994, *The society of the spectacle*, Zone Books, New York, N.Y, p.23 cited in Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, p.6.

immobile in her seat, passive. To be a spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act'.¹⁷⁹

For Rancière, we should not assume that watching is the same as being passive, but recognise the active nature of watching by interpretation, constituting the potential for political action. Further, there is nothing inherently wrong with spectating. Spectating has emancipatory potential, and far from being passive, if engaged in re-interpretation of consensus logic, can be considered active participation:

‘We do not have to transform spectators into actors, and ignoramuses into scholars. We have to recognize the knowledge at work in the ignoramus and the activity peculiar to the spectator. Every spectator is already an actor in her story; every actor, every man of action, is the spectator of the same story’.¹⁸⁰

Setting up speech and listening as the opposite of action is an ‘*a priori* distribution of the position and capacities and incapacities attached to these positions’.¹⁸¹ The emancipatory potential of the audience lies in their capability to be ‘narrators and translators’, reinterpreting consensual modes of understanding and unconcealing their own stories.

Rancière identifies Brecht as a prime example of a dramaturg who takes issue with the gap between stage/actor and audience, and addresses ‘the evil’ of a passive spectator by creating a new relationship where ‘drama means action’.¹⁸² Arguably Rancière incorrectly attributes such a claim to Brecht. Augusto Boal aligns more closely to Rancière’s critique, as he explicitly denounces spectator as ‘a bad word’, who ‘is less than a man and it is necessary to humanise him, to restore to him his capacity for action in all its fullness’.¹⁸³ Boal’s ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ is a set of dramatic techniques, the purpose of which is to bring to light systemic exploitation and oppression within common situations, and to allow spectators to become actors in unconcealing solutions to the oppression.¹⁸⁴ The ‘spect-actor’ restores the audience to their capacity for action, demonstrating that the stage

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁸³ Boal, Augusto, 1979, *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, London: Pluto Press, cited in White, G. 2013, *Audience participation in theatre: aesthetics of the invitation*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, p.20.

¹⁸⁴ Coudray, Sophie, 2017, ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’, *Culture Matters*, <https://culturematters.org.uk/index.php/arts/theatre/item/2455-the-theatre-of-the-oppressed>.

can be changed to become the space for unconcealing new possibilities. Bertolt Brecht's critique is that 'Operatic' theatre of the time makes insufficient demands of the audience, allowing its audience to 'just come for fun', to merely be entertained where they 'don't hesitate to keep their hats on in the theatre'.¹⁸⁵

'their eyes are open, but they stare rather than see, just as they listen rather than hear... This detached state, where they seem to be given over to vague but profound sensations, grows deeper the better the work of the actors, and so we do not approve of this situation, should like them be as bad as possible'.¹⁸⁶

Brecht explains that he structures and presents his theatre 'badly' 'so that the audience can think for itself. That's why I need a quick-witted audience that knows how to observe, and gets its enjoyment from setting its reason to work'.¹⁸⁷ His theatre makes an appeal to the audience's reason, meaning he believes they have the capacity to engage in the issues of the day. 'Dramatic' or 'Operatic' theatre¹⁸⁸ 'implicates the spectator in a stage situation' and 'wears down his capacity for action'.¹⁸⁹ By comparison 'Epic Theatre', the mode he advocates, 'turns the spectator into an observer', and 'arouses his capacity for action'.¹⁹⁰ The essential point of Epic Theatre is 'that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason'.¹⁹¹ Epic Theatre does not try to close the gap between audience and spectator, but bring its audience to 'the point of recognition' where the 'the spectator stands outside, studies'.¹⁹² Rancière describes the role that critical art can play in engaging a 'watchful' audience:

'Critical art is an art that aims to produce a new perception of the world, and therefore to create a commitment to its transformation. This schema, very simple in appearance, is actually the conjunction of three processes: first, the production of a sensory form of 'strangeness'; second, the development of an awareness of the

¹⁸⁵ Brecht, Bertolt, 1974, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, Willet, John (ed.) (trans.), second edition, Methuen, London, p.14.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.179-205.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁸⁸ Brecht uses the terms 'Dramatic' and 'Operatic Theatre' interchangeably as the theatre that he seeks to counter with Epic Theatre.

¹⁸⁹ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.37.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Brecht cited in Willett, *Brecht*, p. 168.

¹⁹² Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 37.

reason for that strangeness and third, a mobilization of individuals as a result of that awareness'.¹⁹³

'Epic Theatre' is an example of such 'critical art' as it creates a sensory form of 'strangeness' that develops awareness for its audience, as Brecht explains:

'The production took the subject-matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation: the alienation that is necessary to all understanding. When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up'.¹⁹⁴

To fulfil Rancière's first process in the schema, a relationship of strangeness or alienation is needed so that the audience do not take anything for granted and remain curious. Brecht argues that when something seems 'obvious' to the audience, they have given up trying to understand it. This means that to fulfil Rancière's second and third processes in the schema, the theatre must challenge the audience's interpretations of what is obvious; to ensure both an awareness of the reason for the alienation and the potential to mobilise the audience.

Brecht explains, in the following passages, the difference between what the Dramatic Theatre and Epic Theatre audience say:

'The dramatic theatre's spectator says: ... - It's only natural - It'll never change – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are inescapable – That's great art; it all seems the most obvious thing in the world'.

'The epic theatre's audience says: ... - That's extraordinary, hardly believable – It's got to stop – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are unnecessary – That's great art: nothing obvious in it'.¹⁹⁵

The Dramatic Theatre audience recognises that suffering exists but accepts this as obvious; whilst they sympathise do not feel like they can act. Therefore, the distinction is not a

¹⁹³ Rancière, 'The Paradoxes', p.142.

¹⁹⁴ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.58.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.71.

blindness to suffering but that the Epic Theatre audience recognise the suffering must stop; fulfilling Rancière's schema, they are committed to a 'transformation'. Brecht's commitment in his Epic Theatre is to incite this determination to change the world, and the mode through which he aims to achieve this is his alienation effect. An example is Brecht's famous theoretical 'street scene' staging the audience as witness to an accident. Rather than draw the audience into the experience of the characters causing the accident or witnessing it, the audience should be left to their own role as objective bystander so that they can form an opinion of the accident of their own, becoming in Rancière's words a 'translator' of the scene. The street scene 'forced the spectator to look at the play's situation from such an angle that they necessarily became subject to his criticism'.¹⁹⁶ Brecht, in agreement with Rancière, sees the potential of the audience as spectator to engage in 'free discussion', where the theatre becomes 'organs of mass communication'.¹⁹⁷

To engage in the 'organ of communication', offered by Brecht's Epic Theatre, 'the audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place'.¹⁹⁸ Operatic Theatre creates an illusion that the audience is part of the narrative unfolding, 'which helps conceal the fact that the scenes are so arranged that the audience can view them in the easiest way'.¹⁹⁹ Easy, because the illusion of Operatic Theatre 'can move the feelings of their audience so much more strongly than does the world itself'.²⁰⁰ There is a concealment to be unconcealed. Brecht's mode of unconcealment is his concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, often translated as alienation effect or V-effect; a means by which 'an effect of estrangement could be got' for the audience, 'to show everything in a fresh and unfamiliar light, so that the spectator is brought to look critically even at what he has so far taken for granted'.²⁰¹ Brecht illustrates that:

'To see one's mother as a man's wife one needs a V-Effekt; this is provided, for example, when one acquires a stepfather. If one sees one's form-master hounded by

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.121.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.39,42.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.92.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.92.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.179-205.

²⁰¹ Willett, *Brecht*, p.177.

baillifs a V-Effekt occurs: one is jerked out of a relationship in which the form-master seems big into one where he seems small'.²⁰²

The 'jerk'²⁰³ is created by Brecht's theatrical techniques such as the actors speaking directly to the audience, projections that contradict what is occurring on the stage by showing the production's meaning or lighting that shines on the apparatus of the stage. These techniques illuminate that the stage of the narrative has been constructed for representation to the audience. Brecht describes how his lighting techniques effect the audience:

'There is a point in showing the lighting apparatus openly, as it is one of the means of preventing an unwanted element of illusion; it scarcely disturbs the necessary concentration. If we light the actors and their performance in such a way that the lights themselves are within the spectators' field of vision, we destroy part of their illusion of being present at a spontaneous, transitory, authentic, unrehearsed event. They see that arrangements have been made to show something; something is being repeated here under special conditions, for instance, in a very brilliant light. Displaying the actual lights is meant to be a counter to the old-fashioned theatre's efforts to hide them'.²⁰⁴

By exposing the lighting to the audience, Brecht is revealing that theatre typically creates an illusion that the narrative is spontaneous and unrehearsed, meaning that what is concealed from the audience is the events on stage are being presented to them in a particular way. The illusion is 'unwanted' because Brecht wants the audience to be able to take the position of critical observer. The audience should engage in the conversation themselves, without any inbuilt assumptions, bias, or pre-existing interpretations of the events.

Now that we understand how Brecht's jolt is achieved, how does the audience come 'out of a relationship' where, for example, 'the form-master seems big into one where he seems small'? Alienation, or estrangement from a thing or point of view, demands a

²⁰² Brecht cited in Willett, *Brecht*, p.177.

²⁰³ For my purposes I will swap the word 'jerked' with jolted or jolt as a preferred way of describing the physical transformation towards awareness and awakening resulting from Brecht's alienation effect. This is not intended as a correction of the translation of the German original.

²⁰⁴ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 141.

reinterpretation of it, as it is made to feel unfamiliar and capable of being experienced in a new light:

‘What is involved here is, briefly, a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted, not just natural. The object of this ‘effect’ is to allow the spectator to criticise constructively from a social point of view’.²⁰⁵

As theatre had typically tried to bring the audience into the narrative and the emotional journey of the characters’ arc, it concealed the staging and presentation involved by hiding from sight what creates this illusion such as stage lighting. By exposing these artifices, exposing the process of the ‘showing’, Brecht aims to raise the potential of his theatre ‘above the level of the everyday, the obvious the expected (i.e. the estranged)’.²⁰⁶ Brecht’s objective, by removing what is taken-for-granted, is that the audience can make the ‘reasoned’ leap that illusions of life, the assumptions built into the common sense, are, like the stage, only human creations and changeable:

‘The V-effect consists in turning the object of which we are to be made aware, to which our attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. The obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible, but this is only in order that it may then be made all the easier to comprehend. Before familiarity can turn into awareness, the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness; we must give up assuming that the object in question needs no explanation’.²⁰⁷

The V-effect can be extended beyond making a familiar stage or dramatic narrative feel unfamiliar to the everyday, to also making these everyday frames of understanding feel ‘incomprehensible’. Alienation not only exposes the ‘process of showing’ for the audience

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.125. In chapter three, I argue that the theatrical scenes of disruption adopted by Extinction Rebellion as a political technique, are examples of Brecht’s alienation effect. Further, like Brecht, Extinction Rebellion aim to allow their spectators to criticise the inaction of government and society in the face of the climate emergency as something ‘striking’ that should not be ‘taken for granted’.

²⁰⁶ Brecht cited in Willett, *Brecht*, p.178.

²⁰⁷ Brecht, B., Silberman, M., Giles, S. & Kuhn, T. 2018, *Brecht on theatre*, Third / by Marc Silberman, Steve Giles and Tom Kuhn. edn, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, pp.192-193.

but confronts the audience with a feeling of how the comfortable forms of entertainment or life are inadequate. Brecht illustrates this with a scenario where a business meeting starts with the question: ‘Have you ever considered what happens to the waste from your factory that is pumped into the river day in, day out?’²⁰⁸ The question sheds light on something unobserved or taken for granted. It draws attention to the disposal of the waste into the river, a process facilitated by man-made engineering. Brecht would expect this level of enquiry from an Epic Theatre audience where the alienation effect had successfully awoken them from an everyday frame of recognition. Without a questioning audience the disposal of the waste remains ‘inconspicuous’, with no need of explanation: its everydayness is concealed. The unconcealing power of the V-effect is that it asks the audience to look at things anew, and in doing so show the potential for an alternative interpretation. The V-effect can be used to challenge what is taken for granted by suggesting: ‘You might have thought that ... but you oughtn’t to have thought it’.²⁰⁹ Connoting another thought is possible, the spectator is invited to confront the frames of concealment in the stage production itself, the subject matter the play depicts, and their own world. Like Rancière’s *Emancipated Spectator*, Brecht’s audience is given the space to ‘participate in the performance by refashioning it in her own way –...with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented’.²¹⁰

2.4 Heidegger’s unconcealment

‘Freedom governs the open in the sense of the cleared and lighted up, i.e., of the revealed’.

(Martin Heidegger)²¹¹

Brecht’s V-effect presents the familiar in a new light so that it feels unfamiliar and requires questioning from a critical observer. He critiques ‘Operatic Theatre’ as reinforcing the-taken-for-granted familiar interpretations, by leaving what is presented on stage as ‘unalterable’ and wearing down the audience’s power for action. This account begs the question of how ingrained the ‘immediately accessible’ interpretation is for the audience, and what it will take to jolt the audience to a new awareness? Does the ‘process of

²⁰⁸ Brecht, 2018, *Brecht on theatre*, p.193.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, p.13.

²¹¹ Heidegger, ‘The Question’, p.25.

showing' hinder the audience's ability to take up the opportunity of reinterpretation and participation 'in unconcealment'? How can something previously taken-for-granted be disrupted, now open for new interpretations, be brought to the audience's 'awareness', heightening their 'sensitivity and responsiveness to it'?²¹² To address these questions, we return to the concealment or coveredness of things that, as Heidegger explains, occurs before and with unconcealment. We return to Heidegger to evaluate how concealment is engrained in being but also how moments of unconcealment can emerge from prevailing concealments. Heidegger's philosophical analysis of being helps us understand how Brecht's audience²¹³ most commonly show up as an 'Operatic' rather than an 'Epic' audience. He offers an understanding of how a disruption or breakdown event created by the 'Epic' dramaturg can help shift the audience from being 'worn down' from action to 'aroused' for it. Further, Heidegger adds to the audience the capacity and motivation of 'care' that is missing in Brecht, as Brecht requires the dramaturg to present a political wrong or 'street scene' for the audience to respond to and reinterpret. First, I aim to set out the concealments that occur in his account of everyday being, second his own jolt to everyday mode of understanding through his concept of breakdown, before his concept of authenticity allows for an understanding of things as unsettled, which in turn 'clears'²¹⁴ the space for new frames of interpretation. Heidegger's analysis of concealment in everydayness is characterised by his argument that modernity's technological 'way of revealing' the world means that all possibilities emerge from the understanding of things as mere resource; all other modes of disclosing the world are concealed.²¹⁵ However, breakdown moments can disrupt everyday inauthentic understanding, clearing a space for authentic possibilities where the world is not seen as resource. Navigating the path through Heidegger's assessment of how concealment prevails is necessary to understand how, when there is a breakdown that disrupts the everyday, unconcealment can emerge. Works

²¹² Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.5.

²¹³ We will see why Heidegger's analysis of 'concealment' and 'unconcealment' is so important to Extinction Rebellion's understanding of their audience in chapter three.

²¹⁴ See footnote n.14 for a definition of the term 'clearing'.

²¹⁵ 'Technology', for Heidegger, represents the essence of modernity: as the way that holds sway of revealing, understanding, and disclosing. The technological age places all things, including Dasein, in 'standing-reserve', meaning that Dasein relates to everything as resource. For example, a forester is in standing-reserve for the print industries that rely on trees as paper. The threat of technology is its essence, as it limits the disclosing or revealing potential of humanity to understanding things as anything other than resource. Heidegger, 'The Question'.

of art or ‘festival’²¹⁶ (*Ereignis* events²¹⁷), are revealing happenings in which beings show up as the beings that they are, and we experience the world with ‘wonder’ that we ourselves are ‘in the midst of’,²¹⁸ making possible an epochal shift from technological disclosure to disclosing possibilities of authentic²¹⁹ care²²⁰. This section, therefore, aims to demonstrate how we can, in moments, step out of the concealment of the drab everyday and into the unconcealment of wonder and celebration of the world and life.

Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is a study of our understanding of being, with phenomenology providing the philosophical framework of his inquiries into everyday human life. In it, he made a significant intervention into a philosophical tradition that has understood human experience through a subject-object model laid down by Descartes. The cartesian philosophical tradition identifies humans as thinking beings, subjects engaged in the thinking about the objects and circumstances that confront them, and with which they engage. For Heidegger, inner and outer, subject and object, leads to incorrect conclusions of the descriptions of how we experience things. Unlike Descartes, Heidegger argues our everyday experience comes from being-in-the-world and consequently is one of familiarity; of being with others and engaging with things. Heidegger’s account of Dasein²²¹ is an exploration of beings where their being is of concern, as opposed to beings where their being is of no concern. The key characteristic that makes us human, is that our

²¹⁶ Julian Young explains that Heidegger interchanges ‘the festival’ with ‘the artwork’, with both terms representing ‘the ecstatic state – ecstatic in both the ordinary sense and in the literal sense of ‘standing out from’ the ordinary – in which everyday experience of the world is transformed into something quite different’. Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, p.58.

²¹⁷ ‘*Ereignis*’ is both a concealing and unconcealing event that Heidegger phrases as the ‘clearing-concealing’ of Dasein’s being. As a moment, *Ereignis* is for Dasein both ‘self-disclosing’ and a ‘self-refusal’ ‘since the clearing of what lies within a horizon is always the concealing of what lies beyond’. Young, *Later Philosophy*, p.25. For a study of Heidegger’s varied use of *Ereignis* throughout his work see Polt, Richard, 2005, ‘*Ereignis*’, in Dreyfus, H.L., Wrathall, M.A. & ProQuest (Firm), *A companion to Heidegger*, Blackwell Pub, Malden, MA. pp.375 – 391. For my purposes, I have chosen what Polt calls the most influential meaning that Heidegger gives the term: a moment where ‘the way in which the givenness of given beings – including ourselves – comes into question for us’, p.383.

²¹⁸ Young, J. 2001, *Heidegger’s philosophy of art*, Cambridge University Press., Cambridge, p.107.

²¹⁹ ‘Authenticity’ (*die Eigentlichkeit*) is the ‘condition of existence that...is the counter-possibility to what [Heidegger] calls “being lost in the Anyone”...owning who and how one is’. Blattner, William, 2006, *Heidegger’s Being and Time: A Reader’s Guide*, Bloomsbury, London, p.15.

²²⁰ ‘Care’ (*Sorge*) is a fundamental way of how humans be in the world: they care about things, they make use of things, produce things, or attend to things. All these ways of being have ‘care’ as the essence of their being.

²²¹ ‘Dasein’ is Heidegger’s term for the being of human beings, the structures that determine humans as humans. There are four ontological traits of Dasein: (i) Dasein’s being is in each case mine; (ii) Dasein comports itself towards its being; (iii) Dasein is delivered over to its being; (iv) Being is at issue for Dasein. Blattner, *A Reader’s Guide*, p.33.

existence matters to us, we care for our own being and we care about our relationship to others by being-in-the-world.²²² This is the basic form of self-disclosure: I am what matters to me. The type of person that we are is defined by the possibilities that we take up and the possibilities that we do not, actualizing the ones we pick up and closing off the others. Through actualising these possibilities Dasein's being is disclosed to it. In *Disclosing New Worlds*, Dreyfus and Spinoza study Heideggerian disclosure²²³ and conclude that essential to our being is our relationship to the way that we open-up new possibilities as 'world disclosers':²²⁴

'according to Heidegger our nature is to be world disclosers. That is, by means of our equipment and coordinated practices we human beings open coherent, distinct contexts or worlds in which we perceive, feel, act, and think'.²²⁵

When we co-ordinate with other beings we do so to open-up worlds in which we can act. As we do this, we take up (unconceal) some possibilities, and close off (conceal) others.

Dreyfus and Spinoza focus on our potential to disclose new worlds as history-makers, citing as a seminal example Martin Luther King who disclosed a new world of equality. However, such brilliance is rare and is not Dasein's pre-disposed way of disclosing worlds. Our pre-disposed way of disclosing worlds is familiarity, as we most commonly interpret the world in ways that are familiar to us. This familiarity is constituted by our everyday taking care of things. Our shared history and cultural heritage results in a background of

²²² We are primordially familiar with the world and cannot be disentangled from it, therefore *being-in-the-world* means we are immersed in it. Blattner, *A Reader's Guide*, p.14.

²²³ 'Disclosure' is the meaning of an entity, and the meaning is set within the context that it is encountered. Human beings are disclosed and disclose based on the context of the environment and situation in which they find themselves. We understand entities through our everyday experience of them, in contexts. Disclosure can be of an already pre-defined and interpreted world, but it can also be of new horizons of meaning that were previously concealed as they did not have shared and pre-determined understanding.

²²⁴ 'World' is not an object, but that within which entities appear; it is a horizon of appearance. The background of pre-defined meaning and understanding that humans share is what forms worlds. 'World disclosure' is a form of comprehension through pre-defined meaning or of new horizons, structures, or dimensions of meaning where things become intelligible or meaningful.

²²⁵ Spinoza, Charles, Dreyfus, Hubert L, and Flores, Fernando, 1997, *Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity*, The MIT Press and Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Spinoza, 'Further Reflections on Heidegger, Technology and the Everyday', in Kompridis, Nikolas, 2006, ed. *Philosophical Romanticism*, New York: Routledge, p.265.

obviousness, of shared understanding. Heidegger introduces the term *das Man*,²²⁶ translated as ‘the Anyone’, ‘the One’, or ‘the They’, to represent this shared understanding: ‘the They, which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not the sum, prescribe the kind of being of everydayness’.²²⁷ *Das Man* is everyday Dasein; a shared ‘social horizon’ that occurs in the ‘everyday’, because beings are inextricably in the world with others.²²⁸ Dasein’s actions are shaped and limited by social normativity, meaning Dasein typically takes up possibilities as one takes up possibilities, that are available within the social horizon. There is a limiting factor to possibilities through social norms and what is publicly available within those norms.

The public’s ‘everyday’ understanding and intelligibility is defined by a care-structure oriented towards social norms and formed by ‘being-with-one-another’²²⁹:

‘Distantiality, averageness, and levelling down, as ways of being for the they, constitute what we know as “publicness”. Publicness initially controls every way in which the world and Dasein are interpreted, and it is always right, not because of an eminent and primary relation of beings and “things,” not because it has an explicitly appropriate transparency of Dasein at its disposal, but because it does not get to “the heart of the matter,” because it is insensitive to every difference of level and genuineness. Publicness obscures everything, and then claims that what has been thus covered over is what is familiar and accessible to everyone’.²³⁰

Das Man exists within the limits of everyday understanding and prevailing interpretations, and in turn limits what possibilities show up and can be enacted. The prevailing interpretations ‘control’ Dasein’s interpretations and ‘obscures’ everything. This is achieved by being general and ‘accessible to everyone’, therefore not getting to the “heart of the matter” or being meaningful. The concealing power of ‘the They’ exists in the claim

²²⁶ ‘*Das Man*’ represents inauthentic Dasein, where the possibilities that Dasein acts on are taken up because that is what one does, following social norms.

²²⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.123:127.

²²⁸ Blattner, *A Reader’s Guide*, p.69. Heidegger explains that when Dasein’s mode of disclosure is as *das Man*: ‘we enjoy ourselves and have fun the way *they* enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way *they* see and judge’. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.123:127.

²²⁹ Human beings are always already ontologically with other humans, meaning that as humans go about their business it relates to other humans. For example, as I go about my business as a researcher, I relate to other researchers, my teachers, and so on.

²³⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.123-124:127.

that what it has covered over was always familiar, thus subsuming everything within itself. Through conformity Dasein limits action only to the possible action of the ‘standard situation’; most of what one does is done in the standard way of coping and “average intelligibility” which in turn ‘fosters generality and banality’.²³¹ The concept of *das Man* denotes a limit to and horizons for what can be seen. Thus, essential to *das Man* is the limiting of possibilities and the preference for taking up ‘banal’ possibilities that are publicly available.

Dasein “initially” and “for the most part” discloses itself in averageness, in the ‘being-with-one-another of publicness’, meaning that everydayness is a way of being that Dasein mainly “suffers” ‘dully’ in.²³² Heidegger uses a number of terms to signify how Dasein is “for the most part” being-in-the-world in this average way: Dasein’s ‘thrownness’²³³ is everydayness, Dasein ‘falls prey’ to the they, Dasein is ‘lost’ and ‘entangled’²³⁴ in being-with-others.²³⁵ Each term denotes falling into something (‘the They’) and falling away from something else: ‘Dasein, falling prey, has already fallen *away from itself*’.²³⁶ Heidegger terms ‘falling prey’ to the They as Dasein’s inauthentic mode of being; a way of being ‘which is completely taken in by the world and the Dasein-with of the others in the they’.²³⁷ Whether, ‘fallen’, ‘lost’, or ‘entangled’ in the world there is a concealing quality to the way that Dasein most typically discloses itself. What is concealed is Dasein’s alternative mode of being: authenticity. As already explained, the public way of interpreting predominates and ‘hold[s] fast to Dasein in its falling prey’, which in turn makes claim to ‘having-seen-everything and having-understood-everything’.²³⁸ *Das Man* conceals Dasein’s ‘ownmost potentiality of being’ (an authentic way of being) where it ‘constantly tears understanding away from projecting authentic possibilities, and drags it into the tranquilized supposition of possessing or attaining everything’.²³⁹ The supposition

²³¹ Dreyfus, H.L. 1991, *Being-in-the-world: a commentary on Heidegger's Being and time, division I*, MIT Press, London; Cambridge, Mass, p.328.

²³² *Ibid.*, p.352-353:370-371.

²³³ ‘Thrownness’ illustrates how Dasein finds itself in the world; we are already thrown into the world. Further, it denotes the mood in which Dasein discloses the world and projects its possibilities.

²³⁴ ‘Falling prey’, ‘lost’, and ‘entangled’ are inter-changeable terms Heidegger uses to illustrate Dasein’s ‘thrownness’ to a mood in which possibilities show up within publicly available possibilities; where it finds itself lost in the limits of *das Man*.

²³⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, s.38.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.169:176.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.170-171:177.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.172:178.

that Dasein “understands” everything means it ‘drifts toward an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality for being-in-the-world is concealed. Dasein’s ‘ownmost potentiality of being’ is being authentically: ‘ownmost’ because it is not lost in ‘the They’ or limited to publicly available possibilities:

‘Entangled being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquilizing; it is at the same time *alienating*’.²⁴⁰

By getting ‘tangled up’ in ‘the They’ of *das Man*, the alienation limits Dasein’s possibilities. Like Rancière’s critique of consensus that there is not ‘a single regime of presentation and interpretation of the given imposing its obviousness on all’;²⁴¹ the ‘plunge’ into this tangled up state of ‘everydayness’ ‘remains concealed’, subsequently Dasein, understanding things in a general way, ‘compares itself with everything’.²⁴² Thus, concealing its own concealing process by presenting public possibilities as the only way of ‘getting ahead’ and ‘living concretely’, subsumes any alternative interpretation.²⁴³ Through social normativity and conformism *das Man* covers up any exception to the everyday interpretation.

‘Distantiality’, for Heidegger, is deviance from the social norms of *das Man*. It is typically suppressed in the concealing process of falling prey, to protect the ‘tranquillity’ of everydayness.²⁴⁴ Everyday life is cosy and ‘immersed in the sea and drowned by the world’s suffocating banality’.²⁴⁵ Dasein as *das Man* has as an essential part of its being a dampening down of anything different or exceptional, thus sustaining averageness:

‘This averageness, which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly quashed. Overnight, everything that is original is flattened down as something long since known. Everything won through struggle becomes something

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.171:178.

²⁴¹ Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, p. 2.

²⁴² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.171:178.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ A simple example offered by Blattner is inappropriate dress for an occasion, where societal norms would allow us to point out the deviance and try and suppress it in others and ourselves. Blattner, *A Reader’s Guide*, p.70.

²⁴⁵ Critchley, Simon, (2009), ‘Being and Time, part 5: Anxiety’, Simon Critchley, *Guardian Online*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/06/heidegger-philosophy-being>

manageable...Every mystery loses its power. The care of averageness reveals, in turn, an essential tendency of Dasein, which we call the *levelling down* of all possibilities of being'.²⁴⁶

'The they', 'in providing average intelligibility, opens up a standard world in which all distinctions between the unique and the general, the superior and the average, the important and the trivial have been levelled'.²⁴⁷ When Dasein is entangled in *das Man* and levelled possibilities of the public, there is no need to respond to the uniqueness of the situation, or interpret it in any way other than what makes sense within the public interpretation:

'For the they²⁴⁸, however, situation...is essentially closed off. The they knows only the "general situation" [*"allgemeine Lage"*], loses itself in the closest "*opportunities*," and settles its Dasein by calculating the "accidents" which misjudges as its own achievements and passes off as such'.²⁴⁹

Blattner explains that we 'live to a large extent in a mode that is unowned...we glide through life without having to face the question *whether* to own our lives...Disowned Dasein flees in the face of death and anxiety and tries to return to everyday life'.²⁵⁰ Although Dasein's preferred mode of being is 'unowned', where possibilities are levelled down, an alternative exists in the counter-term. An 'owned' way of being responds to the 'situation' in its uniqueness, not in a generalised way but by taking up possibilities that are typically concealed. Owned possibilities are specific to the demands of the situation and specific to Dasein, thus formulating Dasein's 'ownmost potentiality of being'.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.127:123.

²⁴⁷ Dreyfus, *A Commentary*, p.320.

²⁴⁸ Joan Stambaugh translates *das Man* as 'the they' and 'the they-self' as opposed to 'the one' and 'the one-self'. This is a helpful translation for connoting the sense of *das Man*'s publicness, how Dasein's existence is being-with others, and how inauthentic and levelled Dasein is shaped by public interpretations of the world.

²⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.287:300.

²⁵⁰ Heidegger does not offer the distinction between 'owned' and 'unowned', but Blattner is convincing in his argument that the 'everyday undifferentiated character of Dasein's *averageness*' is neither owned nor disowned, leaving the third term 'unowned' as a sensible English translation to convey the meaning. Blattner, *A Reader's Guide*, p.130.

²⁵¹ There exists the potential of Dasein being authentic in its understanding of 'death' by owning its own death. This means Dasein understands the possibility that existence and its possibilities are always finite.

Heidegger calls this an authentic mode of being, existing with and emerging from everyday banalised *das Man*.

The purpose of the distinction is to highlight two ways of coping with the ‘uncanniness’²⁵² or unsettledness of existence.²⁵³ Inauthentic being ‘flees’ from, or tries to ‘forget’ about, unsettledness. Whereas, authentic being is a way of understanding Dasein’s existence as unsettled, standing up to it and owning it.²⁵⁴ Authenticity is how Dasein can ‘find itself’ from the ‘lostness’ of being ‘entangled’ in ‘the They’. It is an example of an unconcealment emerging from a concealment.²⁵⁵ Heidegger’s term for this is ‘resolute’ Dasein, defined as ‘authentic disclosedness’, ‘letting oneself be summoned out of one’s lostness in the they’.²⁵⁶ Irresoluteness of *das Man* always ‘remains dominant’²⁵⁷, but resolute Dasein is capable of ‘projecting upon definite factual possibilities’ or its ‘ownmost-potentiality-for-being’, meaning taking up possibilities in the situation that face up to the unsettledness. Whilst derived from public possibilities, it is a reinterpretation of *das Man*’s possibilities:

‘Resolute, Dasein has brought itself back out of falling prey in order to be all the more authentically “there” for the disclosed situation in the “Moment”
[“*Augenblick*”]’.²⁵⁸

Being ‘authentically there’ has ‘an overtone of spatial significance’ as Dasein ““makes room” for factual existing’.²⁵⁹ Like Rancière’s dissensus acting as a rupture to visible consensus, Heidegger’s authentic Dasein accepts something ‘contentious’²⁶⁰ (or distasteful) into everyday understanding: unsettledness, which is not counted by *das Man*. Authentic Dasein discloses a space for possibilities that are ‘relevant’ to the ‘character of the

²⁵² ‘Uncanniness’ is a potential mood for Dasein, where Dasein does not feel at home; coming about when possibilities show up as having the potential to be disturbed and no longer possible.

²⁵³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 186:192. In chapter three I will discuss Heidegger’s connection between unsettledness, anxiety, and death through examples in Extinction Rebellion’s symbolism and activism.

²⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, s.40.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.257:268.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.257:268, p.258:268.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.286:299.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.313:328.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.286:299.

²⁶⁰ Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.104.

circumstances', and 'summons' Dasein's 'potentiality-of-being' for 'concernful taking care'.²⁶¹

Heidegger intricately weaves connections between his concepts of authenticity, resoluteness, and care:

'By the entanglement of Dasein, for as falling prey it *flees*...from itself to the they. The "natural" talk about the I takes place in the they-self. What expresses itself in the "I" is that self which, initially and for the most part, I am *not* authentically. When one is absorbed in the every-day multiplicity and rapid succession of what is taken care of, the self of the self-forgetful "I take care of" shows itself as what is constantly and identically simple, but indefinite and empty. One *is*, after all, *what* one takes care of'.²⁶²

The connection and importance of care (Sorge) for Heidegger is, as Dreyfus summarises, that 'being gets to me'.²⁶³ Authentic care is distinct from inauthentic care because in inauthentic care, one merely keeps busy with what is around and closes possibilities beyond that, Dasein tranquilises the situation's unsettledness.²⁶⁴ Whereas, when one authentically cares about something, Dasein takes a stand on it and owns the moment by confronting the uniqueness and anxiety of the situation:²⁶⁵

'Resolute, Dasein is revealed to itself in its actual factual potentiality-of-being in such a way that it itself *is* this revealing and being revealed'.²⁶⁶

Heidegger defines 'the wholeness of being of Dasein as 'care''²⁶⁷ and it is in resoluteness that 'constitutes the mode of authentic care'.²⁶⁸ By taking care of things in a way that responds to the disclosed situation of 'the Moment', Dasein both unconceals the situation

²⁶¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.287:300.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p.307:322.

²⁶³ Dreyfus, *A Commentary*, pp.238-245.

²⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.188:195.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.329:344-345.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.294:307.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.309:323.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.312:327.

and its possibilities, as well as unconcealing itself and its potential to be authentic. The potential to be authentic, is the potential to be resolute in the face of unsettledness:

‘Resolutely, Dasein takes over authentically in its existence the fact it *is* the null ground of its nullity, we conceived of death existentially as what we characterized as the possibility of the *impossibility* of existence, that is, as the absolute nothingness of Dasein. Death is not tacked onto Dasein as its “end”, but, as care, Dasein is the thrown (that is null) ground of its death’.²⁶⁹

I will return to Heidegger’s concept of death within anxiety when discussing Extinction Rebellion’s symbolism and political activism, for now it is sufficient to say that death is ‘the possibility of the impossibility of existence’. This means that unsettledness comes from the fact that it is possible Dasein can have no possibilities and be existentially dead. When Dasein is resolute, Dasein faces up to the possibility of its death, the inherent unsettledness of existence, which results in the ‘revealing and being revealed’ of unique possibilities from understanding this unsettledness.²⁷⁰ Caring about one’s existence authentically means acknowledging, understanding, and facing up to unsettledness, which for Heidegger is the ‘ownmost potentiality-of-being’.²⁷¹

Heidegger calls the revealing of the unsettledness, ‘anxiety’. He explains that the inauthentic mode of taking care of anxiety is to flee from it:

‘In anxiety one has an “uncanny” feeling. Here, with anxiety, the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself involved in anxiety initially finds expression in the nothing and nowhere, but uncanniness means at the same time not-being-at-home’.²⁷²

The uncanniness ‘constantly pursues Dasein and threatens its everyday lostness’ thus putting at risk the ‘complete security and self-sufficiency of the everyday way of taking

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.293:306.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.294:307.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.297:311.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p.182:188.

care'.²⁷³ To protect the feeling of being-at-home Dasein typically 'forgets' about unsettledness, whereas authentic Dasein stands up to it:

'But anxiety can arise authentically only in a resolute Dasein. One who is resolute knows no fear, but understands the possibility of anxiety as *the* mood that does not hinder and confuse him. Anxiety frees one *from* "nullifying" possibilities and lets one become free *for* the authentic possibilities'.²⁷⁴

Dasein typically flees from anxiety to feel at home. However, anxiety, when faced up to resolutely, importantly offers the possibility of taking up authentic possibilities within unsettledness, that recognise the situation and respond to it.

In accepting unsettledness, Dasein does not need to forget about it. By understanding anxiety as a mood for disclosing possibilities, Dasein can face unsettledness as moments that do not necessarily close all possibility for Dasein, but open-up new ones. A breakdown is when familiar coping runs into trouble through a disturbance. A hammer is 'ready-to-hand' to hammer with, and Dasein engages with the hammer in an everyday way of its availability to hammer with. As it is so familiar and we have a background understanding that a hammer hammers, its readiness-to-hand is concealed and remains inconspicuous. However, when the hammer is broken and its usefulness as a hammer is no longer available, it:

'draws the attention of the user to the system of relations of which it is a part as it is directed toward a specific task. At the instant of breakdown, Dasein catches sight of everything connected to the work; the totality of the "workshop," so to speak is lit up'.²⁷⁵

A breakdown situation shines a light on the entity as it is and not in our everyday understanding of it: 'and the phenomenon of the world announces its presence, disclosing the complex system of reference relations within which Dasein is immersed'.²⁷⁶ In a

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.183:189.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Magrini, James M, 2006, "'Anxiety" in Heidegger's *Being and Time*: The Harbinger of Authenticity', *Philosophy Scholarship*, Paper 15, https://dc.cod.edu/philosophypub/?utm_source=dc.cod.edu/philosophypub/15&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

²⁷⁶ Margini, "Anxiety", p.79.

breakdown from the everyday taken-for-granted settledness of existence, the world shows up not as safe and secure but in the totality of the ‘workshop’ in which it operates with its inter-connected dependencies. The ontological structure of the phenomenon stands out when ‘the ease and transparency of normal transactions slips away’.²⁷⁷ Like Brecht’s alienation effect, where exposing the stage lighting brings appearance to the man-made artifice, or Rancière’s dissensus creating a fissure in the sensible order of consensus, a Heideggerian breakdown calls into question all things that are connected to what was once familiar and taken-for-granted. The situation of the broken hammer requires that we think about it; we can no longer see through it transparently as our everyday familiarity with it has slipped away. The hammer requires deliberate attention as the familiar form of coping, that relies on connected dependencies, is no longer possible once the hammer is broken and the connection to the workshop lost. The breakdown disrupts Dasein’s ability to forget the unsettledness of existence, that occurs in everyday coping, when Dasein is lost or fallen in *das Man*.

Heidegger extends the concept of breakdown beyond examples of equipment, like the hammer, to possibilities in general:

‘Occasionally, however, someone, by living in anxiety and thus facing his or her authentic condition, comes up with a new insight, new way of looking at the world. To discover such a new truth, one must begin with conventional opinion, which presents averageness as if it was the whole story. One must, starting from the conventional account, break out of it’.²⁷⁸

It is from the ‘conventional account’ of *das Man* that it is possible to emerge, to have a ‘new insight’ and way of looking at the world, by taking care of what matters to us and recognising the potential of being lost. The disruption of a breakdown can work to bring about understanding or new thinking, breaking away from the familiar. ‘Living in anxiety’ means that Dasein can face up to his or her authentic condition of unsettledness, so that, when a breakdown situation comes along, Dasein already understands that the comfort of the everyday is not the whole story.

²⁷⁷ Blattner, *A Reader’s Guide*, p.139.

²⁷⁸ Dreyfus, *A Commentary*, p.275.

We are capable, in moments of breakdown, of looking at the inter-connectedness of things, understanding them, thinking about them, to:

‘give us possibilities for different kinds of experience of and actions with entities, for different kinds of goals to be pursued, or forms of life to be lived. These possibilities are the possibilities opened up by the understanding of being and essences’.²⁷⁹

Wrathall asks what is the “space” which allows those possibilities, and argues that Heidegger’s answer is ‘the clearing’:

‘Unconcealment in general involves, then, making a variety [of] things available to us in our dealings in the world (true assertions, entities, human being, understandings of being, worlds, and the clearing itself)’.²⁸⁰

The clearing (*Lichtung*), means literally a clearing in the forest, suggesting an open space in which Dasein can encounter objects, and deal with them in the situation, and where they show up in the light (*licht*) of our understanding; in this light they are unconcealed.²⁸¹ Dasein, as a result of being-in-the-world, discloses itself, its own being, and its potential to take up possibilities in ‘the clearing’, when ‘something like first sight becomes possible’.²⁸² As Dasein discloses its being, things become “illuminated” and ‘unconcealed’, and ‘only for a being thus cleared existentially do objectively present things become accessible in the light or concealed in darkness’.²⁸³ In authentic clearing, Dasein can:

‘uncover the world in its own way...this uncovering of the ‘world’ [is]...always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way. (GA 2: H.129)’.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, pp.13-14.

²⁸⁰ Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.17.

²⁸¹ Dreyfus, *A Commentary*, p.275.

²⁸² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.164:170.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.129:133.

²⁸⁴ Heidegger cited in Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.24.

An authentic clearing is a moment that unconceals the unsettledness of the world and what is extra-ordinary, whilst always remaining within the context of the ordinary and familiar.²⁸⁵ Authentic clearing occurs because as world disclosers Dasein opens-up spaces for possibility, especially for things Dasein cares about, as its ‘full disclosedness is grounded in care’.²⁸⁶

‘The being that bears the name Dasein is “cleared.” ...This clearedness first makes possible any illumination or throwing light, any perceiving, “seeing,” or having of something...taking care...is already the advanced condition of being-in-the-world’.²⁸⁷

Things show up in the ‘light’, available for understanding and with possibilities beyond those publicly available, when they matter to Dasein: ‘what essentially clears this being, that is, makes it “open” as well as “bright” for itself, was defined as care’.²⁸⁸ Heidegger expounds in *The Origin of the Work of Art* that:

‘In the midst of beings as a whole an open place comes to presence. There is a clearing. Thought from out of beings, it is more in being than is the being. This open centre is, therefore, not surrounded by beings. Rather, this illuminating center itself encircles all beings – like the nothing that we scarcely know. The being can only be, as a being, if it stands within, and stands out within, what is illuminated in this clearing. Only this clearing grants us human beings access to those beings that we ourselves are not and admittance to beings that we ourselves are’.²⁸⁹

The clearing illuminates possibilities that are more than what we have available, opening a passage to ‘bring forth’ the ‘beings that we ourselves are not’ and more than we are now.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.31.

²⁸⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.334:351.

²⁸⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.334-335:351

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.334:351

²⁸⁹ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.30.

²⁹⁰ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.37.

Dreyfus explains that Heidegger uses another term, *Augenblick*,²⁹¹ to describe a particular moment of possibilities. The “moment of vision” (literally “the blink of an eye”), designates the qualified authentic temporality, meaning that resoluteness ‘discloses the situation’ and holds up the possibilities within those unique circumstances:²⁹²

‘The present...never acquires another ecstatic horizon of its own accord, unless it is brought back from its lostness by a resolution, so that both the situation and thus the primordial ‘limit-situation’ of being-toward-death are disclosed as the Moment to be held onto’.²⁹³

The ‘Moment’, Hans Ruin argues, ‘has its view to the possible situations of the potentiality-of-being-whole’, discloses the potential ‘of a radical decision’.²⁹⁴ This ‘Moment’, where a radical decision is possible, comes about only when Dasein is resolute in the face of unsettledness. Therefore, a moment where the understanding of the situation results in a decision to deviate from public possibilities that flee from anxiety, and to take instead the possibilities that show up when Dasein acts on what it cares about, are considered ‘radical’ for Heidegger. Unfamiliar moments, such as anxiety or joy, provide the greatest illumination; when something is experienced as unfamiliar, and not as a pre-given interpretation, there is a greater chance of illumination. In his later writings when he replaces the term *Augenblick* with *Ereignis*, Heidegger argues that such moments, should they ever happen, will be an ‘emergency’ or ‘crisis’, that demand ‘decisions’.²⁹⁵ Richard Polt explains that Heidegger gives *Ereignis* several meanings over five decades of writing, but the most influential is that it is a moment where ‘the way in which the givenness of

²⁹¹ *Augenblick* was originally termed in Lukács, G. 1971, *History and class consciousness: studies in Marxist dialectics*, Merlin Press, London. However, Dreyfus explains that Heidegger derives his usage of *Augenblick* from Kierkegaard’s ‘Oieblick’. Dreyfus, *A Commentary*, p.x. ‘The Moment’ (*Augenblick*) is authentic temporality, meaning it has-been in the past, is present, and is held up in the future. Whereas inauthentic or irresolute temporality makes the present, meaning Dasein is lost, forgetting itself, in the business of taking care of what is closest to Dasein in the present. Inauthentic Dasein ‘makes present its today, awaiting the next new thing, it has already forgotten what is old’, where time is a series of ‘nows’ and the present is cut off from the past and the future. Heidegger argues authentic temporality connects the past, present, and future disclosing authentic possibilities. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.372:391.

²⁹² Dreyfus, *A Commentary*, pp.321-322.

²⁹³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.333:349.

²⁹⁴ Ruin, H. 2002, ‘The moment of truth: Augenblick and Ereignis in Heidegger’, in Dreyfus, H. and Wrathall, M. (eds.), 2002, *Heidegger Reexamined*, London: Routledge.

²⁹⁵ Polt, ‘Ereignis’, pp.375 – 391.

given beings – including ourselves – comes into question for us’.²⁹⁶ In his essay, *The Turning*, Heidegger questions how a transformation from the prevailing mode of disclosing is possible, arguing that *Ereignis* is where ‘disclosing coming-to-pass is bringing to sight that brings into its own’, meaning clearing or revealing beings as the beings they are.²⁹⁷ In the *Ereignis* experience, transformation from concealment becomes possible when concealment is resolutely accepted as an essential part of our being, and it is in this acceptance that unconcealment becomes possible. Therefore, in a moment of crisis, what is ‘given’ or assumed about being comes into question. Only in a case of extreme emergency, can being emerge where there is both the potential of disaster for the current way of being and the possibility of revelation. Polt acknowledges that finding an example of *Ereignis* in our own lives may be difficult, but it is possible that:

‘A people might be shocked into something analogous to an artistic breakthrough, a fresh way of dwelling amidst things. This shock might be an overt emergency (something like September 11, 2001), but Heidegger would probably expect it to take a subtler form (such as a work of poetry). The effect would be a renewed “there” and a renewed concern with national heritage and destiny’.²⁹⁸

Through a supreme effort to face the threat of disaster, we might begin to take part in the ‘event of appropriation’. The event appropriates our understanding ‘that there is something rather than nothing, that there are things and we ourselves are in their midst’.²⁹⁹ The event of *Ereignis*, like authentic Dasein responding to the demands of the situation, demands we own the age of our time, ‘an entrance’ or ‘transporting of a people into its appointed task’.³⁰⁰ It is only then it would be possible to make a revolutionary change to the way we be, that could result in ‘a fresh way of dwelling’, or further, an epoch change.

Heidegger argues that the current ‘clearing’ of modernity is a ‘technological’ one, where the world shows up exclusively in terms of ‘being-for-us’ as ‘resource’, concealing our ability to interpret the world of ‘being-in-itself’.³⁰¹ The world in its most ordinary and

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.383.

²⁹⁷ Heidegger, ‘The Turning’, p.45.

²⁹⁸ Polt, ‘Ereignis’, pp. 384.

²⁹⁹ Heidegger, M. 2018, *Hölderlin’s hymn “Remembrance”*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, p.58.

³⁰⁰ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.49.

³⁰¹ Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.51-52.

obvious sense is a resource for Dasein. In the technological age of modernity (*das Gestell*), which is deeply inauthentic, Dasein understands all entities as resource on ‘standing-reserve’ for Dasein’s usefulness.³⁰² Its essential essence is the process of concealment of everything apart from the unconcealment of the world as resource. The ‘extreme danger’ of modernity exists in driving ‘out every other possibility of revealing’ by concealing itself and its process of concealment.³⁰³ Despite *Gestell* being everydayness raised to epoch-defining status for the modern age by marking ‘all revealing’ and blocking the ‘shining forth and holding-sway of truth’;³⁰⁴ a ‘gentle, non-violent’ relation to, and unconcealment of, the world is possible:³⁰⁵

‘*Gestell*, however, drives out our ability even to *see* the whatness, objectness, the in-itselfness of beings. By doing so it deprives us of the *ability* to stand in a gentle, care-ful as opposed to violent, relation to things’.³⁰⁶

Like dissensus emerging from and with consensus, care-ful non-violence, emerges from rather than replaces an interpretation of world as resource. It will become an unconcealed interpretation of the world rather than the concealed one that is kept in the dark.³⁰⁷ In *Being and Time* Heidegger explains that the way beings show up in everyday familiarity is ready-to-hand as resource. It is only in exceptional moments of breakdown that disrupt the smooth functioning of things, illuminating them in a new way, that things can show up authentically as they are.³⁰⁸ Therefore, something extraordinary must happen, or in

³⁰² Heidegger uses the term *Gestell* (translated as ‘Enframing’) to denote the mode of unconcealment that ‘holds sway’ within modern epoch of technology: ‘The essence of Enframing is that setting-upon gathered into itself which entraps the truth of its own coming to presence with oblivion. This entrapping disguises itself, in that it develops the setting in order of everything that presences as standing-reserve’. Heidegger, ‘The Turning’, p.36-37. *Gestell* is the ‘summoning of everything into availability’. Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.54. Technological revealing is not just part of the modern Western way of life, it defines our modern way of living. The essence of modern technology is that the world shows up as ‘standing-reserve’ or ‘nothing but resource’: like a petrol station there is no being other than the being-as-resource. The characteristic of *das Gestell*, that is unique, is its exclusion of all other interpretations of possible relations to the world. Its essential essence is the process of concealment of everything apart from the unconcealment of the world as resource. Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.49-50.

³⁰³ Heidegger, ‘The Question’, pp.26-27.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.28.

³⁰⁵ Young, *Later Philosophy*, p.52.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.53.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.97.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.57.

Rancièrian terms something must ‘burst onto the scene’, for the world not to show up as pure resource.

Despite the seeming omnipresence of the age of technology, Heidegger’s concept of *Ereignis* reminds us that ‘people might be shocked into something analogous to an artistic breakthrough, a fresh way of dwelling amidst things’.³⁰⁹ In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger calls the extraordinary moment ‘the artwork’; then in a reference to Hölderlin’s poetry he terms the moment ‘the festival’, which is an authentic ‘transportation’ from the everyday; a stepping out of the banal to something unusual or better.³¹⁰ The artwork:

‘from out of the poeticizing essence of truth it happens that an open place is thrown open, a place in which everything is other than it was. In virtue of the projection of the unconcealedness of beings which is set into the work and casts itself towards us, everything ordinary and hitherto existing becomes an un-being...The effecting...of the work...lies in a transformation of the unconcealment of beings which happens from out of the work, a transformation, that is to say, of being’.³¹¹

Heidegger affords works of art the potential to be *Ereignis* events, capable of transforming our everyday interpretations and horizons of possibility: ‘that disrupt the technological clearing’.³¹² In *The Origin*, Heidegger replaces anxiety as the agent of authenticity with ‘the artwork’, which attributes the capability of authenticity to collective Dasein, or ‘a people’.³¹³ The members of the people, as revealed by the artwork, share their ‘appointed task’ in a common commitment or project.³¹⁴ Like Rancière’s *Emancipated Spectator*, the audience interprets the artwork authentically when they do so with their own story, continually and creatively reinterpreting it, yet reaching a shared task.

When the ‘clearing’ happens, our current way of projecting possibilities clears itself and lights up, becoming ‘transparent’ so we can see through it, through the darkness of its

³⁰⁹ Polt, ‘Ereignis’, pp. 384.

³¹⁰ Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.57-58; Young, *Philosophy of Art*, p.87.

³¹¹ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.45.

³¹² Wheeler, Michael, 2018, ‘Martin Heidegger’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/heidegger/>

³¹³ Young, *Philosophy of Art*, p.55.

³¹⁴ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.49.

previous concealment.³¹⁵ When one escapes from the ‘illusions’ of the everyday, like Brecht’s Operatic Theatre or Rancière’s consensus,³¹⁶ the world is capable of showing up in its essence, as something to be revered, ‘guarded’³¹⁷, and cared for; it is illuminated in ‘the radiance’ as what it is both beautiful and fragile.³¹⁸ It is only possible to care for things authentically when they show up in their ownness. Whereas, when the world shows up as entangled in being-there-for-us as resource, we care for it in a way that is inauthentically connected with our everyday busyness. As we saw earlier, authentic care is in resolute anticipation of anxiety, meaning capable of taking up possibilities that face up to Dasein’s unsettledness and respond to the uniqueness of the situation. Therefore, Dasein’s audience (collective Dasein) must be capable of a ‘festive state of disclosure’ as well as the ‘everyday state of disclosure’. The audience must be capable of an *Ereignis*-experience of ‘transport and enchantment’ to a common commitment in authentically being-with-one-another.³¹⁹ Is it possible that the Rancièrian aesthetic disruptions, offered by Extinction Rebellion in theatrical stagings, could be such artworks capable of being an *Ereignis* event? Are they capable of formulating an epoch shift in our relationship with world? Can Extinction Rebellion bring about a way of Dasein’s disclosing of the world not as mere resource, but in a shared relationship of care to ‘preserve’ the world?³²⁰

³¹⁵ Young, *Later Philosophy*, p.81.

³¹⁶ Rancière describes dissensus not as an ‘illusion’ but as bringing something to appearance within the field of experience and understanding. Rancière, *Disagreement*, pp.99-100.

³¹⁷ Heidegger argues that critical to our being is that we ‘dwell’ on earth: ‘To be a human means to be on earth as a mortal. It means *to dwell*’. And that the old German word for dwelling, ‘*bauen*’, also means “to preserve” and “to care for”. Therefore, possibilities where we care for the world are possible, as they are essential to the way we be as dwellers. Heidegger, M. 1971, ‘Building, dwelling, thinking’, *Poetry, language, thought*, 154, New York, pp.1-26.

³¹⁸ Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.59-62; Young, *Philosophy of Art*, p.56.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.123.

³²⁰ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’.

3 The politics of Extinction Rebellion

'We will not silently accept our extinction! We will stand up and dance!'

*(Extinction Rebellion)*³²¹

3.1 Unconcealment by 'dissensus'

In 1832, revolutionary Auguste Blanqui was tried, as a member of the *Amis du Peuple* ('Friends of the People') society, for maintaining his republican beliefs during the reign of Louis Phillipe, King of France. Rancière cites Blanqui's defence speech at the 'Trial of the Fifteen' and places importance on an exchange between Blanqui and the magistrate. When Blanqui is asked his profession by the magistrate, he replies: "proletarian". The magistrate advises that "proletarian" is not a profession, and Blanqui retorts: "It is the profession of thirty million Frenchmen who live off their labour and who are deprived of political rights".³²² The judge agrees to note "proletarian" down as Blanqui's profession. The significance of this speech scene for Rancière is that Blanqui successfully brought together the world of politics and the world of work; worlds that are kept distinct and separate in consensus. The first world is represented by the magistrate and is consensual, the second world is represented by Blanqui and is dissensual. The dissensual world creates a disruption of the sensible, which 'inscribes a subject name as being different from any identified part of the community',³²³ making possible the scene's reinterpretation. In this moment Blanqui, from the perspective of the proletariat, unconceals the relationship between politics and work; a connection concealed by the magistrate's consensual interpretation. The consensual world sees profession as a job or trade giving the body meaning through its function as labour, whereas Blanqui gives profession the meaning of 'a faith, a declaration of membership of a collective.'³²⁴ The fact that the judge changes his mind and formally creates a new profession within the procedures of court is not what is important about this scene: the goal is not to convince the judge. The judge's actions are an act of consensus, an attempt to assimilate Blanqui's egalitarian world into the inegalitarian world of the judge, by assimilating the relationship between law and politics into law.

³²¹ <https://rebellion.earth/act-now/resources/perform/>.

³²² Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.37.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.38.

What is important to Rancière is that Blanqui achieves an inscription of the word “proletarian” that remains incongruous. The dissensual world, where work and politics have a relationship, is held up against the judge’s consensual world where there is no relationship, maintaining the incongruity is what brings the two worlds into one. The moment of political dissensus, therefore, is Blanqui’s response where he ‘inscribes the uncounted in a space where they are countable as uncounted’.³²⁵ Despite the Rights of Man and equality before the law, proletarian labours do not bring about rights that can be practically used. This is the declaration of, and exposure of, ‘wrong’ within consensus as it unconceals inequality: ‘the proletariat has no existence as a real part of society’.³²⁶ This is the beginning, not the end of the process of subjectification of wrong. Blanqui’s dissensual moment shakes off the obviousness of the common-sensical interpretation that there is no relationship between work and politics.

Hallam describes his own experience where the judiciary attempted to assimilate his political action within the consensual frame of understanding of the law. He painted messages on the walls of King’s College London, with the goal of dissuading the college from investing in fossil fuels. As summarised by another activist, Hallam “broke the law because the law is broken”.³²⁷ When Hallam was banned from his place of employment, he escalated the protest by threatening to go on hunger strike until they changed their policy. The university was so embarrassed by the support he gained they were forced into divestment in fossil fuels. Although the university did not press charges, over a year after painting the walls, the crown prosecution decided to prosecute for ‘criminal damage without lawful excuse’.³²⁸ Hallam explains that whilst in court he repeatedly started talking about climate change and each time was interrupted by the judge. The judge told him to stop talking about climate change as the case had nothing to do with it. In the judge’s view it was a clear and simple case; he had put paint on the wall, it was against the law, and therefore Hallam was guilty. In a similar case, activists vandalised Shell’s headquarters to symbolise that vandalism to the planet should be considered illegal; the activists’ goal was to bring attention to Shell’s contribution to “ecocide” and thus evidence “who the real

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.38-39.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.39.

³²⁷ Extinction Rebellion, ‘BREAKING’.

³²⁸ Hallam, *Common Sense*, p.46.

criminals are”. During the trial, the judge explained his position to the jury that there was no defence available in law:

“As I have said already, this is a court of law, it is not a court of morals...I have given you clear direction on what the law is and your duty to apply that law to the facts as you find them to be...reach true verdicts according to the evidence...Those are not mere empty words. A true verdict is one that is reached having all due regard to the law. That is how our jury system works and that is what you all pledged to do”.³²⁹

In Hallam’s case, he continued to argue that his acts were not criminal as his actions were intended to prevent ongoing harm created by the university’s financial support of the fossil fuel industry. In his view he ‘had the right of necessity to cause disruption in order to prevent massive disruption’.³³⁰ Hallam ruptures the common-sense logic of the law that his actions were criminal; he brings the consensual world together with his world where the actions of Trinity College, not his, are criminal, as they are destroying the planet. Although the judge was not capable of recognising this alternative world, the jury was. The jury reached their conclusion based on morality, “a deeply felt act of conscience”, not law. They recognised Hallam’s actions were to “prevent harm” and “not cause it”: to care for the world, not add to its destruction.³³¹

Hallam evokes Rancièrian dissensus theory, of bringing two worlds together, when he remarks on the episode, that:

‘This total opposition of world views between the elites and the people is going to explode. Our job is to bring about this ‘correction’ in an ordered, nonviolent way through mass civil disobedience – but one way or another it is coming, racing down the tracks’.³³²

The two worlds of the polemical scene that Hallam brought together were his world where his actions were necessary to stop the more harmful and morally criminal impact of the

³²⁹ Extinction Rebellion, ‘BREAKING’.

³³⁰ Hallam, *Common Sense*, p.46.

³³¹ Extinction Rebellion, ‘BREAKING’.

³³² Hallam, *Common Sense*, p.47.

university's support of fossil fuels, compared to the judge's world of formal legality, where the facts spoke for themselves as objectively illegal. Hallam said throughout the trial it was about climate change, and these declarative speech acts created an inscription that allowed the second world to come in; disrupting the legal interpretation of the events, confronting the jury with something else, the morality of his actions and giving the jury the 'equal capacity of speaking beings', to interpret the event within the new world. His goal was not to embed his protest within the police logic of law, by subsuming his actions through an extension of freedom of speech and protest, instead he sought to go beyond these accommodations. In the Shell case, rebels declared: "it is a significant victory for the truth of these times, when despite the letter of the law, jurors can clearly see that a broken window is a just response to a breaking world".³³³ Like Blanqui's connection between politics and profession, the moment of dissensus for Hallam is his jolt and disruption of the common sense by presenting and making visible an alternative interpretation, outside the institutions of law: his actions were morally defensible and those of Trinity were not.

3.2 Unconcealment by 'jolt'

Brecht's explanation of the difference between the audience of Dramatic Theatre and the audience of Epic Theatre, summarises one of the major challenges faced by Extinction Rebellion; how do they get their audience to move from a recognition of the climate emergency, but a belief that nothing can be done (dramatic audience) or that governments will sort it to out, to a determination to be part of the solution (epic audience)? Roger Hallam describes documentary film *First Reformed*, which is about a priest who considers blowing himself up in the face of the existential crisis of the climate emergency, highlighting the interviewer's casual comment that humans are certain to be extinct by the end of the century. Hallam decries the attitude of both as nihilistic indifference, and believes it is their duty to protect society and step up to their responsibilities. In inciting rebellion, he hopes to encourage the audience to stand up; 'to see a situation as it is rather than how you would like it to be and to respond in a responsible manner'.³³⁴ Hallam understands that Extinction Rebellion's audience has a difficult choice to make to emerge from 'cynicism and apathy' (dramatic audience), to recognise the extent of the challenge faced by humanity, and then their responsibility to do something about it (epic audience).

³³³ Extinction Rebellion, 'BREAKING'.

³³⁴ Hallam, *Common Sense*, p.47.

Ripple and Houtman, Extinction Rebellion climate scientists, maintain that their role is to continue to tell the truth, regardless of political and social pressures that want to maintain the status quo, by presenting the facts of climate change whilst providing evidence-based solutions to address it. They cite a passage from Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* to explain the challenge faced by climate scientists of being the bearers of bad tidings:

‘The road we have long been travelling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at the end lies disaster. The other fork in the road – the one ‘less travelled by’ – offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures preservation of our earth’.³³⁵

Thus, Extinction Rebellion need to engage their audience to think about the obviousness of the climate emergency critically, gain a deeper understanding of it, come off the ‘easy’ path, and take up action and opportunities that will be difficult but necessary. It is in this challenge that Extinction Rebellion share the task of the dramaturg that is advanced by Brecht: to set the stage so that the audience respond to suffering by demanding ‘it’s got to stop’, compelling them to act on that belief.

Brecht explains that as the theatre began to become ‘instructive’ about subjects of theatrical representation such as ‘oil, inflation, war and social struggles’, ‘choruses enlightened the spectator about facts unknown to him’.³³⁶ But he recognises the challenge of such rational instruction, and engaging an audience on political issues at the theatre, where the audience is used to being entertained:

‘Generally there is felt to be a very sharp distinction between learning and amusing oneself. The first may be useful, but only the second is pleasant. So we have to defend the epic theatre against the suspicion that it is highly disagreeable, humourless, indeed strenuous affair’.³³⁷

By ‘defending’ epic theatre against the suspicion that it is ‘humourless’, he is advocating that epic theatre can be both instructive and entertaining: the best way to engage an

³³⁵ Carson, Rachel, *Silent Spring*, cited in Professor William J Ripple and Nicholas R. Houtman, ‘Scientists’ Warning Have Been Ignored’, *This is Not a Drill*, p.30.

³³⁶ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.72.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

audience is to offer both. Extinction Rebellion agree. Their position is best summarised in their call to action from artists and musicians to join the rebellion: ‘we will not silently accept our extinction! We will stand up and dance!’³³⁸ Following Brecht, there is a dual necessity for Extinction Rebellion’s interventions to present to the Epic audience the seriousness of the threat of extinction, whilst also approaching the engagement of the audience in a mood of entertainment.

An illustrative example from Extinction Rebellion of a theatrical intervention, analogous to a Brechtian Epic stage, that meets the dual demand to present both rational thought on a difficult subject and offer entertainment, is the Big Pink Boat. The boat was the primary symbol of the April Rebellion in London, emblazoned with the message ‘Tell the Truth’.³³⁹ The fact that it is painted bright pink and acts as a DJ stage, around which the audience can dance as if they were at a festival, represents the entertaining part of the symbol. Activist J, who bought The Big Pink Boat, visualised the boat standing above a sea of heads from the audience, symbolising the threat to the audience of impending flood from climate meltdown, as well as the role of mankind in its creation.³⁴⁰ Like Brecht’s projections showing ‘contradictory messages’ to what is occurring on stage, the boat stood for two things at once: a lifeboat that could save humanity from the flood, but also how the surroundings and audience at Oxford Circus are contributors to the threat.³⁴¹ The boat, akin to Brecht’s stage effects, acts as an ‘organ of communication’, inviting dialogue on the extent of the challenge, whilst simultaneously asking the audience to consider how the challenge can be faced with a mood of fun, hope, and optimism.

The comparisons to Brecht’s theory can be extended further, when Brecht uses stage techniques to expose the artifice of the stage, he does so to show the audience the effort that goes into a stage production. This creates an illusion for the audience that what is unfolding is a real story, covering up that it is a representation of a story. Unconcealing the concealment of the illusion helps the audience take a more a critical interpretation of the events of the stage production, engaging beyond the character’s narrative journey. That is

³³⁸ The Climate and Ecological Emergency (Declaration, Emissions Target and Citizens’ Assembly) Bill <https://rebellion.earth/act-now/resources/perform/>.

³³⁹ The Big Pink Boat was named after Honduran activist Berta Cáceres, who was murdered for her climate activism.

³⁴⁰ Extinction Rebellion, ‘We are The Boat: The Inside Story of an April Icon’, April 15, 2020, <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/2020/04/15/we-were-the-boat-the-inside-story-of-an-april-icon/>.

³⁴¹ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.71.

what made the placing of the boat in Oxford Circus so important, it is a symbolic location of capitalism. Accordingly, XR created a space for the audience to reinterpret the location of the stage, not as a place of business-as-usual shopping, but as a place that contributes to the climate emergency: situating the ‘future we fear’ in the present. The arrival of the boat brings London’s central shopping district to a stand-still, disrupting its appearance as the ‘move along’ space of consumerism. The disruption of the audience’s standard interpretation of the space, repurposes it, allowing for consideration the challenges of climate change and the fun of imagining alternatives. Brecht exposes the illusion of how dramatic theatre hides the very fact that the stage has been set up to influence or limit the audience’s interpretation of events on the stage. Comparably, Extinction Rebellion’s placing of their stage invites the audience to take the position of critical observer and engage in the conversation themselves.

Another facet of Brecht’s alienation effect is to exhibit the work that goes into creating the stage and dramatic theatre’s illusion of the character’s narrative. The Big Pink Boat is a symbol of a commitment to change, represented to the audience by the work and effort that has gone into getting the boat to such a difficult location. Activists glue themselves to the boat, becoming ‘barnacles’, to protect the new space of interpretation that has been inserted to disrupt the status quo. When the audience sees the police trying to remove the boat and the barnacles attached to it, their desire to protect this symbolic lifeboat is heightened:

‘With time, people feel emotionally attached to these road-block presences. They are defining cultural features of newly emerging micro-communities who will go to extreme lengths to protect them’.³⁴²

The audience is forced to consider the work and commitment made to erect the boat. In Brecht’s stage notes to *Beggar’s Opera*, explain that by bringing the audience attention to the construction of the stage, engages them to realise that this effort has been made ‘ingeniously’ for them, thus encouraging them to think:

‘You shall project the titles of the events

³⁴² James and Ruby, ‘Cultural Roadblocks’, *This is Not a Drill*, p.106.

To come, for the sake of tensions and that
The right thing may be expected. And please make
My curtain half-height, don't cut the stage off.
Leaning back, let the spectator
Notice the busy preparations being so
Ingeniously made for him'.³⁴³

The audience at Oxford Circus might get swept up in the festival, but the symbol of the Big Pink Boat remains a stark reminder that work is still to be done to help stem the tide of climate change:

'The projections are in no way pure mechanical aids in the sense of being extras, they are no *pons asinorum*³⁴⁴; they do not set out to help the spectator but to block him; they prevent his complete empathy, interrupt his being automatically carried away'.³⁴⁵

The dual role of the theatrical disturbance of the Big Pink Boat, as both a stage of entertainment and a space for discourse, does not allow the crowd to get 'carried away' with the entertainment, or 'to submit to an experience uncritically'.³⁴⁶ There are no 'pons asinorum' as what is presented is a different way of making sense; there is no preclusion of the audience due to the difficulty of the political theory, instead it is a disruption to the existing common sense through a moment of entertainment. It is an invitation to the audience to reinterpret the common sense and define their own action in response. It is an invitation to 'stand up and dance'.

³⁴³ Brecht cited in Willett, *Brecht*, p.161.

³⁴⁴ '*Pons asinorum*' is mid-18th century Latin, translated literally as 'bridge of asses', but meaning 'the point at which many learners fail, especially a theory or formula that is difficult to grasp'. Oxford Reference. Retrieved 6 Mar. 2021, from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100336488>.

³⁴⁵ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.58.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.71.

3.3 Unconcealment by ‘clearing’

‘The mortals dwell in so far as they save the earth...To save really means to leave something free in its own nature’.

*(Martin Heidegger)*³⁴⁷

Heidegger’s concept of *das Man* is instructive for Extinction Rebellion in understanding its audience; they are ‘entangled’ in the ‘levelled-down’ and ‘banal’ of the everyday, where ‘distantiality’ is ‘quashed’ to protect the ‘tranquillity’ of being settled. This is also true of Extinction Rebellion; their protest seeks to disrupt business-as-usual like an act of Heideggerian distantiality. Therefore, *das Man*’s care for averageness, is useful in realising why XR’s radical voice is ‘quietly suppressed’; their demands to ‘tell the truth’, and ‘act now’ are limited by Dasein’s prevailing mode of disclosure. Heidegger sets an entrenched stage of concealment, ‘that threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing’,³⁴⁸ from which Extinction Rebellion’s demands and its audience must emerge in moments of unconcealment. The demand to ‘tell the truth’, can only come to pass when there is an ‘uncovering’ of the essence of Dasein and the modern age. Truth can only occur when we have a ‘free’ relationship with the fact that we typically conceal things, and that disclosure in the modern age conceals everything but the world as ‘standing-reserve’.³⁴⁹ In this ‘truth, which is unconcealment’, a ‘safekeeping carries itself out’.³⁵⁰ The task that Extinction Rebellion face is disrupting an inauthentic mode of disclosing the world and unconcealing an authentic one. Extinction Rebellion challenge its audience to consider the reality that they cannot rely on the planet to always be there for them; their existence on earth is unsettled and cannot be taken for granted. That means highlighting, or unconcealing, the true nature of earth as fragile and finite, it will not always be available to us as a resource.

Central to Extinction Rebellion’s iconography is the image of the hourglass, symbolising the sands of time slipping away as we sleepwalk towards our extinction. With a slogan “Business as Usual = Death”, XR activists stopped the DLR in Canary Wharf demanding

³⁴⁷ Heidegger, ‘Building’, p.6.

³⁴⁸ Heidegger, ‘The Question’, p.28.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

³⁵⁰ The ‘safekeeping of the coming to presence of truth’ is letting the essence of beings appear, unconcealed as what they are. *Ibid.*

that the financial industry and the government tells the truth about their roles in funding the climate and ecological crisis by citing ‘the financial sector’s role in our collective suicide’.³⁵¹ The ultimate breakdown and exposure of unsettledness is death. Death for Heidegger is not the end of life or demise (which is the publicly available understanding of death in *das Man*) but Dasein’s ‘ownmost possibility’, with existential death ‘the most extreme possibility’.³⁵²

‘But being toward this possibility, as being-toward-death, should relate itself to *death* so that it reveals itself, in this being [Sein] and for it as *possibility*...The more clearly this possibility is understood, the more purely does understanding penetrate to it as *the possibility of the impossibility of existence*’.³⁵³

Death is the structural annihilation of all possibilities. Blattner describes Heideggerian death as a ‘vulnerability’ because who you are and for-sake-of-which become impossible when Dasein is unable to press into those possibilities.³⁵⁴ To face up to this requires courage or ‘resoluteness’. However, like all things, Dasein’s natural disposition is to interpret death inauthentically; unable to acknowledge it, and ‘fleeing’ from the impossibility of possibilities. XR accept that their task is to jolt the public out of an everyday and levelled down understanding of death. Rather than “we all will die one day”, XR declare they are ‘not prepared to die’.³⁵⁵ Without a jolt that exposes the interconnectedness of human systems, inauthentic Dasein stays within the ‘business as usual = death’ formula. XR create a mood of anxiety disturbing their audience’s ability to forget the unsettledness of existence, a breakdown which has the potential to emancipate the audience from “nullifying” possibilities, thus allowing them to become free for authentic possibilities.³⁵⁶

Authentic Dasein, faces up to and marches towards death. An authentic mode of disclosing the world is to understand Dasein’s fragility no matter how uncomfortable that truth is to

³⁵¹ Extinction Rebellion, ‘UPDATE: Extinction Rebellion activists stop DLR in Canary Wharf – ‘Business as Usual = Death’, April 25, 2019, <https://rebellion.earth/2019/04/25/update-extinction-rebellion-activists-stop-dlr-in-canary-wharf-business-as-usual-death%ef%bb%bf/>.

³⁵² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.293:306.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.251:262.

³⁵⁴ Blattner, *A Reader’s Guide*, p.161.

³⁵⁵ Nasheed, Mohamed, ‘We are not Prepared to Die’, *This is Not a Drill*, p.33.

³⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.183:189.

face. Dasein resolutely being-toward-death, in anticipation, is a form of authentic care,³⁵⁷ ‘opening up from out of its captivity by being into the openness of being’.³⁵⁸ Extinction Rebellion’s disruptive breakdowns are important because they open the space for their audience to ‘emerge from captivity’, by shining a light on the situation that we find ourselves in; the threat of climate collapse demands an authentic response, to open the ‘range and freedom’ of possibilities.³⁵⁹

‘When we confront our extreme condition of anxiety (depression)/death/conscience, however, we are jolted out of this complacency and forced to face the full range of our freedom...we can seize upon our freedom, see for the first time that we are called upon to answer to the situation, and not just the Anyone. Such a steady and steadfast self, true not to who we "really" are, but to *how* we are, is a self we construct through resolutely facing the challenges to our levelled-off complacency’.³⁶⁰

Extinction Rebellion’s symbolism and declaration that ‘what you fear is already here’, places its audience face to face with death and asks the audience to confront it. It is from ‘danger’ or ‘oblivion’ that an alternative can be unconcealed:

‘The danger is the saving power, inasmuch as it brings the saving power out of its – the danger’s – concealed essence that is ever susceptible to turning’.³⁶¹

Heidegger cites the words of Hölderlin, to offer hope within despair – ‘But where danger is, grows the saving power also’.³⁶² He evokes the possibility that ‘when we look into the danger’ and the ‘closer we come’, we ‘see the growth of the saving power’, ‘the more closely...the ways into’ it ‘begin to shine’, which ‘may awaken and found anew our look into that which grants’ our capability for ‘safeguarding’ the earth.³⁶³

³⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.293:306.

³⁵⁸ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.41.

³⁵⁹ Blattner, *A Reader’s Guide*, p.167.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ Heidegger, ‘The Turning’, p.42.

³⁶² Heidegger, ‘The Question’, pp.34-35.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

Heidegger acknowledges that ‘it is not clear’ whether art may be ‘granted’ the ‘highest possibility’ of ‘poetically revealing’ the growth of ‘the saving power’, or the ‘coming-to-pass of truth’, but hopes that we will be ‘astounded’.³⁶⁴ The Red Rebel Brigade is a repeated, staged, and artistic image of living statues draped in red with white face paint, symbolising “the common blood we share with all species, that unifies us and makes us one”.³⁶⁵ It is a symbol that brings together Heidegger’s agents of authenticity, anxiety and the artwork. Doug Francisco, founder of The Invisible Theatre group, describes what has become a global and universal form of political protest and audience engagement:

“It’s the most powerful thing I have ever said without speaking! Art can send a powerful message and when it resonates it connects with us in a much more powerful and profound way than words, in my opinion. Words have [*sic.* their] own magic but eyes are the gateway to the soul they say, so when we see something and it touches us we really feel it, music has a similar but different quality also”.³⁶⁶

Francisco asserts that visual art often engages an audience more deeply than the spoken word; in his view the audience’s emotions are attuned to the visual symbolism. The unconcealment of the interconnectedness we share with nature occurs, like the Heideggerian artwork, because the scene’s ‘beauty’ is the ‘shining that is set into the work’ and ‘is one way in which truth as unconcealment comes to presence’.³⁶⁷ Through the artwork, the demand to ‘tell the truth’ becomes more than a claim to fact, put forward for validation, but an ‘essential and necessary way in which truth happens’.³⁶⁸ As ‘truth is the self-illuminating being of beings’, it says something about the essence of being: what we truly are.³⁶⁹ Truth, achieved by the artwork, is how the ‘clearing determines itself out of the difference’ and unconceals how our being can go beyond the everyday and ‘transform’ into something extraordinary by ‘thrusting’ it up and ‘thrusting down the ordinary’.³⁷⁰ The

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ Drewett, Zoe, 7th October 2019, ‘Who are the Red Brigade who silently appear at Extinction Rebellion protests?’, *Metro Online*, <https://metro.co.uk/2019/10/07/red-brigade-silently-appear-extinction-rebellion-protests-10875730/>.

³⁶⁶ Extinction Rebellion, December 10 2019, ‘Madrid and London: Extinction Rebellion Artists Join Forces to Raise Awareness About the Climate Emergency’, <https://rebellion.earth/2019/12/10/madrid-and-london-extinction-rebellion-artists-join-forces-to-raise-awareness-about-the-climate-emergency/>.

³⁶⁷ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.32.

³⁶⁸ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, pp.51-52.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.47-52.

activists, set an artistic stage (*Ereignis* event), that must constantly re-invent itself, where the brigade silently and uniformly move amongst the crowd, inviting them to interpret the image in their own way; it is a confident and assertive stand for something different: a counter-flow against the tide.

One act of protest illustrates why Extinction Rebellion's recurring action is so important as concealment can subsequently subsume moments of unconcealment: authenticity is never a 'once-and-for-all achievement. 'Falling' remains a constant threat'.³⁷¹ When activists controversially dug up the lawn of Trinity College Cambridge, the intention was to highlight that one of the richest institutions in the United Kingdom, and the third biggest landowner, invests heavily in oil and gas companies. This direct action was hugely controversial and brought significant media and public backlash. Heidegger would posit that the reaction is typical of *das Man* responding to an act of distantiality; the actions both deviated from societal norms of respecting educational institutions and were contradictory to XR's aims, as they had damaged green space. Consequently, the mood created by these actions is one of unsettledness and anxiety. The Daily Telegraph³⁷² condemned the actions as disrespectful, whilst criticising the police for being too lenient on Extinction Rebellion for their criminal damage. To reassert consensual norms, the journalist elides the core message behind the actions, and omits that they aimed to encourage Trinity to disinvest in fossil fuels. This concealment is an act of *das Man*, both fleeing from the anxiety of the unsettledness created by the activists, and dampening down, within the horizon of averageness, what is exceptional and thrust to the fore.

The activists explained that "one of Extinction Rebellions' oppositions is to green space being kept behind walls and only accessible to those in power and privilege".³⁷³ In Heideggerian terms, the manicured lawn is a representation of *Gestell* where everything shows up as resource for Dasein; in this case a space to be admired representing the

³⁷¹ Young, *Philosophy of Art*, p.59.

³⁷² Pearson, Allison, 18th February 2020, 'Criminal damage in Cambridge has unearthed how the police really see Extinction Rebellion', *The Telegraph Online*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/criminal-damage-cambridge-has-unearthed-police-really-see-extinction/>.

³⁷³ Reuters, Monday 17th February 2020, 'Extinction Rebellion protesters dig up Cambridge college lawn', *The Guardian Online*, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/17/extinction-rebellion-protesters-dig-up-cambridge-college-lawn-trinity-fossil-fuel?link_id=32&can_id=8b9051a221a2ce62cfe66d4824b364f9&source=email-more-courage-more-collaboration-more-love&email_referrer=email_728580&email_subject=uk-newsletter-9-more-courage-more-collaboration-more-love.

university's institutional values. Contrary to Trinity's intended visibility of busily preening the lawn, Extinction Rebellion expose this as inauthentic care. They achieve this by disturbing the visibility of the image and reconfiguring its appearance as a 'diversity dead zone', that is contributing to the destruction of the natural world. XR's alternative and authentic mode of caring for the land was to create a flower bed to encourage environmental biodiversity. The image illustrates our dependence on nature and disrupts the logic of *Gestell* that 'pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces' within the frame of resource.³⁷⁴ The disruptive act clears the way for an alternative interpretation; opening a space where possibilities to treat the space as a flower bed show up in the light of the audience's understanding like a moment of 'first sight'. This is the critical point that Heideggerian philosophy offers Extinction Rebellion in their demand to go 'beyond politics'. Extinction Rebellion, and their audience, can go beyond politics when they create a breakdown within everyday understanding that shines a light on the earth's unsettledness. By resolutely standing up to this anxiety they create a clearing, which is 'what we have defined as 'care''.³⁷⁵

The audience, in an authentic moment of clearing, uncovers the possibilities of the space in their own way, 'away' from the 'disguises' of the banal interpretation 'with which Dasein bars its own way':³⁷⁶

'Rum (space) means a place cleared for settlement and lodging...*Spaces* open themselves up, because they are let in to the *dwelling* of humans...The relationship between human and space is none other than *dwelling*'.³⁷⁷

The lawn acts as stage to bring two worlds together: the world of the unquestioning common sense that institutional propriety should not be disrupted, and that economic necessity means that revenues should be generated by any means possible; and the world that unsettles that proposed common sense as no longer making sense. Bringing together the two world reconfigures the consensual view of the space as a flower bed, disrupting that image with the question as to whether that use would meet the demands of the threat to the natural world; challenging that it no longer makes sense to make money by

³⁷⁴ Heidegger, 'The Question', p.21.

³⁷⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.334:351.

³⁷⁶ Heidegger cited in Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p.24.

³⁷⁷ Heidegger, 'Building', pp.9-12.

contributing to the planet's destruction because this is the space in which we 'dwell', where our being exists. Extinction Rebellion 'bring-forth' the essence of the space as one of wonder that we reside in and are 'grateful' for, to be 'preserved' and 'cared for' but not preened, 'like the busting of a blossom into bloom'.³⁷⁸ It is with this appearance that the 'transportation' to a Heideggerian 'festive state' becomes possible, where the world is unconcealed as a place of reverence, that should be cared for and "preserved" as it is a space where we 'dwell' amongst others. Once unconcealed, Extinction Rebellion invite the members of their audience to join them on such a stage, each interpreting the scene with their own story, with the possibility of an authentic community appropriating the task of care.

³⁷⁸ Heidegger, 'The Question', p.10.

Conclusion: Setting the stage

'It is more important nowadays for the set to tell the spectator he's in a theatre than to tell him he's in, say, Aulis. The theatre must acquire qua theatre the same fascinating reality as a sporting arena during a boxing match. The best thing is to show the machinery, the ropes and the flies. If the set represents a town it must look like a town that has been built to last precisely two hours...On the time-scale the set must plainly become intensified; it must have its own climax and special round of applause'.

*(Bertolt Brecht)*³⁷⁹

Habermas purports to set up the public sphere as an 'egalitarian' stage, capable of generating 'subcultural counterpublics and counterinstitutions, to consolidate new collective identities, and win new terrain in the form of expanded rights and reformed institutions'.³⁸⁰ According to Habermas, the public sphere is capable of fostering 'radical democracy' as it is a stage on which to 'mobilise counterknowledge' through rational discourse that unconceals 'its own *translations*' of prevailing norms.³⁸¹ This mobilisation can occur because of its inclusivity, by inviting any actor or debate to the stage. The public sphere is constituted in 'every encounter' where speech-actors attribute to each other 'communicative freedom' and thus a 'space stands open' for any person or debate.³⁸² However, when we consider the constitution of Habermas' stage with Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of *Dasein*, we see that actors engaging in the public sphere will most commonly be doing so as *das Man*. Heidegger's analysis helps us comprehend an inadvertent concealment that Habermas' theory fails to adequately deal with; by setting the stage as 'public' and inviting 'citizens' to present arguments to be processed through the institutions of law and political decision making, Habermas consigns the discussion to the 'banalised' and 'levelled-down' possibilities of public everydayness. Rational discourse in the public sphere about the threat of extinction of planet earth is, from a Heideggerian perspective, is likely to be carried out in an 'irresolute' way, that 'flees' from

³⁷⁹ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 233.

³⁸⁰ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.370.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.372.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p.361.

unsettledness, the potential of existential death, and ‘the possibility of the *impossibility* of existence’.³⁸³

Whereas the risk inherent in Habermas’ staging of the public sphere is that the audience takes up public possibilities that are inadequate to meet the urgent demands of climate emergency; Brecht’s stage setting is designed specifically to illuminate for the audience that the stage itself is finite, set only to last for ‘two hours’. Extinction Rebellion seek to highlight the urgency of the threat and the need for radical action as a response; like the dramaturg, to create moments that present the world in an unfamiliar light. Although they disrupt the everyday flow of traffic and commerce to set up stages of festival, they do so in a way that does not take the edge off the unfamiliarity and unsettledness of the threat of extinction. Habermas acknowledges that the public sphere occurs in moments of political discourse; where once the argument is made rationally the stage is set, actors are invited to join, ‘revitalizing and enlarging...the public sphere as well as with confirming their own identities and capacities to act’³⁸⁴. Extinction Rebellion, by contrast, set up their street stages so that they are, like Brecht’s boxing arena, visible only temporarily until the performance reaches a ‘climax’. This is an important metaphor for what is being unconcealed. The institutions of political decision making have failed to acknowledge the urgency of the emergency and take the appropriate action; they cannot be relied upon to do the job for us: that common sense is to be disrupted.

The ‘transportation’ of the audience from common sense to ‘enchantment’ of ‘festival’³⁸⁵ can occur in the same way that Brecht argues it is the dramaturg’s responsibility to shift their audience from operatic to epic: capable of being ‘alterable and able to alter’ and aroused for transformative action.³⁸⁶ Or the transportation could occur in the way Rancière sets up the ‘Emancipated Spectator’ as being able to ‘sketch a new topography of the possible’.³⁸⁷ Similarly, when Extinction Rebellion take on the responsibility to go ‘beyond politics’, they set a stage where the audience can learn how to enter Heidegger’s ‘festive state’,³⁸⁸ despite an environment where *Gestell* and *das Man* dominate. Extinction Rebellion are exemplars of Heideggerian authentic care because they acknowledge the

³⁸³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.293:306.

³⁸⁴ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.369-70.

³⁸⁵ Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.57-62.

³⁸⁶ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.37.

³⁸⁷ Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, p. 103.

³⁸⁸ Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.57-62.

finitude and unsettledness of the world, responding with an ‘obedience to the preservation of a belonging to what is essential in all beings’.³⁸⁹ They revere the world in its ‘radiance’, interpret it as a ‘place of dwelling’,³⁹⁰ as opposed to ‘resource’, and most importantly recognise as dwellers on earth their ‘primary concern and activity is directed to fostering the dwelling of others’.³⁹¹ Their hard work or artistic imagery may not, yet, have resulted in an Heideggerian epoch shift or a world turning *Ereignis* event. Their audience is yet to, as an everyday way of disclosing, revere the world, where treating it as resource no longer makes sense as a prevailing consensus. They have not yet created an authentic community resolutely standing up to the unique circumstances of the threat of climate change or adopting, in their own way, a shared task of care. However, they do achieve moments of unconcealment: moments of dissensual disturbance of the distribution of role and place; moments of theatre ‘whose mode of presentation is not homogenous with the ordinary mode of existence of the objects thereby identified’;³⁹² moments of ‘artwork’ that beautifully ‘reveal...poetic dwelling’ on earth.³⁹³

Simon Critchley in *Infinitely Demanding* closes with a call to action in response to the infinite ethical demand to do more to begin the dirty work of political change. For Critchley ‘no revolution will be generated out of systemic or structural laws’;³⁹⁴ we have to do it ourselves in action. We need to construct ourselves as political actors in a ‘concrete situation’ where the work is ‘dirty, detailed...and largely unthrilling. It is time we made a start’.³⁹⁵ Extinction Rebellion have started this work, arduously illuminating moments of concealment within business-as-usual politics, unconcealing possibilities beyond its limiting horizons, creatively re-inventing their disturbances in recognition that with every unconcealment exists the constant risk of falling into concealment. They are, each day, creating stages for their audience to take up authentic possibilities, possibilities that are, as Heidegger’s analysis shows, difficult for the audience to adopt as it means facing up to the threat of extinction. They stand as a ‘cell of resistance’³⁹⁶ against the tide of *Gestell*, *das*

³⁸⁹ Heidegger, “Remembrance”, p.59.

³⁹⁰ Heidegger, ‘Building’, pp.1-26.

³⁹¹ Young, *Later Philosophy*, p.124.

³⁹² Rancière, *Disagreement*, p.104.

³⁹³ Heidegger, ‘The Origin’, p.34.

³⁹⁴ A sentiment that evokes the limitation of Habermas’ reliance on institutions for political change. Critchley, Simon, (2013), *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance (Political Thinkers)*, Verso, London, p.132.

³⁹⁵ Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, p.132.

³⁹⁶ Young, *Later Philosophy*, pp.124-127.

Man, consensus, and set up stages for an epic rather than an operatic theatre audience. Stages that unconceal, that despite a dominant mode of world-disclosure, frames of understanding the world and its possibilities are not homogenous: alternatives disclosures of care are possible. Extinction Rebellion, as dwellers on the unconcealed stage, invite others to dwell with them.

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