



Universiteit Utrecht

The contemporary instrumental approach towards time and its influence on our moral motivations to fight climate change

An enquiry into the influence of Scheffler's temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism towards our environmental moral sensitivity

by

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Abstract

The environmental ethical debate regarding the moral motivations to fight climate change has been recently connected with intergenerational issues. In this thesis, starting from analysing Scheffler's argumentation in his book *Why Worry about Future Generations*¹, I will focus on his account of *temporal parochialism* and *geographical cosmopolitanism*. In chapter 2, I will decide to deepen his theoretical framework considering Harvey's theory of *time-space compression*² and Rosa's theorisation of *social acceleration*³. This will help me in inscribing temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism in a broader and more comprehensive sociological framework. In chapter 3, I will firstly point out a critic Heath moved against Rosa, to investigate the methodological limits of social critical theory. Secondly, I will investigate the influence of an instrumental view over what I will define our *environmental moral sensitivity*, to finally rethink entirely temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism renaming them *temporal instrumentalism* and *spatial domination*. In light of this analysis, I will normatively conclude that an intrinsic valorisation and enhancement of nature is more desirable to strengthen our environmental moral sensitivity and make us more motivated to fight climate change, than an instrumental approach towards nature.

¹ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press, 2018.

² Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990.

³ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, translated and introduced by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

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Introduction

Ethical debates around climate change entail, lately, discussions about which accountability and responsibility can be detected in the framework regarding intergenerational issues. Samuel Scheffler's book *Why Worry about Future Generations*⁴ is inscribed in this debate. Essentially, he discussed our implicit moral connection with future generations, described throughout different sets of motivations, claiming that this connection is hidden by what he calls temporal parochialism. In his view, the speculation on the existence of temporal parochialism is enough to justify his focus on intergenerational features.

However, many critical and social theories devote much attention to analysing the sociological and historical frameworks in which temporal parochialism belongs. Postmodern critical social theory, for example, offers a specific and detailed analysis on the postmodern, or late modern, perception of time and its sociological and ethical consequences. These consequences are explicitly linked with our capacity to perceive environmental concerns. In this sense, questions around our moral relationship with nature are essential in any discussion on finding the moral motivation to fight climate change. This is, therefore, a debate still in urgent need of concrete answers. In light of this, I will focus throughout this thesis on different sociological frameworks providing insight into the relationship between humans and time and its influence in our moral motivations to fight climate change.

The point of departure will be the analysis of Scheffler's perspective. From the outset, I will consider his account of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism. In his view, these two phenomena are contrasting, and they exemplify the tradeoff between a better spatial connection at the expenses of a lack in intergenerational connection. Scheffler develops three possible causal explanations of these two concepts, focusing primarily on temporal parochialism. Nevertheless, he himself acknowledges difficulty in discerning between the explanans and explananda of these phenomena. After the admission of not being able to detect their causes, he attempts to investigate their effects on our moral motivations, using the popularity of apocalyptic literature and movies to speculate on a sort of uneasiness produced by temporal parochialism. However, this work will consider Scheffler's theorisation of geographical cosmopolitanism and temporal parochialism too

⁴ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press, 2018.

superficial to justify his focus on future generations. Therefore, I will decide to further investigate these concepts in view of some of the most accredited postmodern critical social theories.

Chapter 2 will start with the definition of *environmental moral sensitivity*, with the aim to narrow my focus on the possible influence of temporal parochialism over this feature. For this purpose, I will expose two interrelated perspectives on the contemporary perception of time, namely Harvey's theory of *time-space compression*⁵ and Rosa's theorisation of *social acceleration*⁶. They are both included in a sociological tradition that identifies an acceleration of the social pace, a study initiated in 1977 thanks to Paul Virilio and his work *Speed and Society*⁷. The first theory will be useful to show that temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism are not contrasting patterns. They can, in fact, be understood as inscribed in a broader sociological tendency. Secondly, Rosa's theory of social acceleration⁸ will clearly point out that both temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism are manifestations of one overarching process: modernisation. This last process, in turn, will be explained as fuelled by technological change and innovation. However, these theories will show a causal explanation of temporal parochialism, without outlining its effects on our moral capacities.

In chapter 3, I will initially expose a critique Heath poses to Rosa's *theory of modernity*⁹. Heath questions if social acceleration can be truly considered the explanans of modernisation, and not just another explanandum. This critique will be linked explicitly with the similar consideration Scheffler pointed out in his explanations of temporal parochialism. From this comparison, I will claim the problematic nature of critical social theory to find any causal or consequential explanation of temporal parochialism in the present work. This is because the theories analysed are not able to give a consequential or deductive account of the cause of modernisation. Nevertheless, I will conclude that the present analysis remains valuable to widen Scheffler's perspective in a more comprehensive framework.

⁵ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990.

⁶ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, 2013.

⁷ Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Society*, MIT press, 2006, transl. by Marc Polizzotti, originally published as *Vitesse et Politique*, Edition Galilée, Paris, 1977.

⁸ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, 2013.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

After that, Hammer's conceptualisation of the modern disenchanted time-consciousness¹⁰ will be useful to investigate the influence Scheffler's concepts have on our present environmental moral sensitivity. From this analysis, it has been possible to see the relation between the general loss of intrinsic meaning in life, related to modernisation and the tendency to watch, instrumentally, time. In light of this analysis, I will rename temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism as temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination, respectively. In this way, the first conveys a more specific pattern of our contemporary relation with time, namely the instrumental feature, instead of the more general accusation of parochialism. The latter, instead, causes an instrumental and dominating attitude over nature and the external world, as a result of the domestication of time implied in the technical progress.

In the end, I will shape a normative conclusion using the ethical perspective outlined in this thesis. In doing so, it will be stressed the importance of enhancing intrinsic environmental values to contrast the tendency to conceive nature instrumentally. I will show Heidegger's categorisation of technologies in enframing and revealing¹¹ to show an alternative approach towards technologies that avoids an instrumental account to nature. This will be essential to point out the feasibility of the paradigm shift from an instrumental to an intrinsic approach towards nature.

My overall aim of this paper is, therefore, to criticise and broaden Scheffler's perspective, inscribing it in the postmodern social critical theory framework. In doing so, I will show the importance of a deeper understanding of the time sphere for the moral debate on fighting climate change. This analysis will allow to normatively consider an instrumental approach towards nature limiting for our environmental moral sensitivity.

¹⁰ Hammer, Espen. *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*, 2011.

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *The question concerning technology*, in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell, 1977, 2nd ed., Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1993.

1. Scheffler and the Motivations to Worry About Future Generations

I will initially discuss the first chapter of Scheffler's book *Why Worry about Future Generations*¹², and in doing so, I will focus mainly on two key concepts, respectively temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism. Scheffler's argument is based on the understanding of these notions, to justify his main focus on why worry about future generations as fundamental to fight properly climate change. His specific comprehension of these patterns will explicitly remark a lack in a broader sociological explanation of the contemporary signification of time. However, in this chapter, I will dwell into describing Scheffler's motivations to focus on intergenerational problems, leaving aside the sets of reasons he develops to show why we actually worry about future generations. In the next chapter, I will then, criticise his outlook, presenting some contemporary sociological and philosophical theories centred on the modern or postmodern signification of time and its influence in our moral motivations. In the last chapter, I will apply the perspective outlined in the second chapter to Scheffler's understanding of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism.

¹² Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press, 2018.

1.1 Temporal Parochialism and Geographical Cosmopolitanism

1.1.1 An Overview on Scheffler's Motivations

In this thesis I am going to consider and criticise Scheffler and his book *Why Worry About Future Generations*¹³. This work is dedicated to shape an alternative approach to future generations: rather than trying to solve issues related to moral responsibility focusing on outlining a principle of beneficence, he explores the so-called “evaluative commitments that may be latent in our existing attitudes”¹⁴. The first approach is recurrent in the beneficence-based literature, and in many utilitarian theories regarding population ethics. Scheffler explains the central role the quest for a suitable principle of beneficence played in the philosophical literature of the last decades. Nonetheless, he seems to consider this quest a witch-hunt, because no plausible principle has yet been identified¹⁵. Therefore, he decides to avoid any reference to a utilitarian conception of beneficence, considering this approach limiting.

Consequently, he focuses on the broader topic of how future generations are related to our implicit evaluative thought and “reveal the complexity that is latent in our temporal attitudes despite their overt parochialism”¹⁶. The Oxford dictionary offers the present definition of the more general word parochialism: “A limited or narrow outlook, especially focused on a local area; narrow mindedness”¹⁷. Scheffler dedicates the first chapter of his book to explain the concept of temporal parochialism and why this particular contemporary outlook motivates him to show our implicit and deep connection with future generations. He states from the beginning that his aim is to characterise patterns of belief that readers are supposed to recognise as constituting familiar (even if not universal) tendencies within the contemporary framework¹⁸. It is, however, not clear from the

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

¹⁵ For these considerations, Scheffler relies mainly on Parfit, Derek, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Thomson, “The Right and the Good,” *Journal of Philosophy* 94(1997): 273–98, and Thomson, *Goodness and Advice*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), Gustaf Arrhenius, “Can the Person-Affecting Restriction Solve the Problems in Population Ethics?,” in Roberts and Wasserman, eds., *Harming Future Persons* (Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 2009), pp. 289–314, and M. A. Roberts, “Population Axiology,” in Hirose and Olson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 399–423.

¹⁶ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Oxford Dictionary, parochialism, 2020, Oxford University Press, <https://www.oed.com>

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.3.

beginning if temporal parochialism stems from these patterns of belief, or contrarily, they are produced by this form of parochialism. It is essential understanding what Scheffler means for temporal parochialism to answer this question.

Given the aforementioned definition of parochialism, it is quite logical to presuppose that the term temporal parochialism describes a limited outlook specifically related to our perception of time. Scheffler confirms this supposition when he claims that contemporary liberal societies lack evaluative resources to effectively consider their relation and connection with past and future generations¹⁹. Whilst I agree with this observation, he does not present any justification to support it. Scheffler uses temporal parochialism to motivate his focus on future generations; this does not mean that temporal parochialism is focused only, or mainly, on future generations. In Scheffler's view our connection with past generations is just not as relevant as that with future generations in our aim to find motivations to fight climate change.

In developing his argument, Scheffler compares temporal parochialism with what he calls geographical cosmopolitanism. This contrast is curious and effectively expresses the difference between temporal and spatial awareness; in his view, the process of globalisation in the contemporary world increases our understanding of the connection between different parts of the world considerably. This process undermines our awareness of the intertwining of past and future generations and devalues the concept of generational continuity²⁰. However, the reasons for this contrast seem to be hardly understandable in his dissertation. Actually, Scheffler admits it is not clear to him if there's causal relation between these two phenomena, or if they are simply included in the broader set of attitudes and evaluative thought he is considering.

Scheffler tries to give explanations of these "divergent attitudes", but he acknowledges he is not able to understand whether what he is describing are the explanans or the explanandum of temporal parochialism. For the sake of clarity, an *explanandum* is a sentence "describing the phenomenon to be explained"²¹. Instead, the *explanans* is the "class of those sentences which are adduced to account for the phenomenon"²². In other words, he considers the given explanations non-

¹⁹ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.3.

²¹ Hempel, C. and P. Oppenheim., *Studies in the Logic of Explanation*, Philosophy of Science, Vol. 15, pp. 135–175, 1948, Reprinted in Hempel, 245–290, 1965. p. 247.

²² *Ibidem*.

exhaustive and open to many different interpretations. Consequently, he claims he is not willing to pursue these questions and that his focus will be solely on attitudes towards future generations. Scheffler does not pretend to understand and explain the reasons that account for the presence of temporal parochialism. Instead, he uses this concept and its limited explanation to introduce the fundamental question of his work, that is: “why worry about future generations?”.

1.1.2 Explanans or Explanandum

Throughout this thesis, I intend to criticise Scheffler’s account of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism, presenting a possible alternative perspective capable of granting meaning to the patterns Scheffler pointed out. However, before doing so, I think it relevant to offer a comprehensive review of his argument to further describe the explanation he presents of these patterns.

As mentioned earlier, Scheffler exposes temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism as two different and divergent attitudes. In doing so, he offers a selection of explanations for this contrast, and diagnoses which are more convincing. He starts by presenting the difference between the *presentist* and the *eternalist* approach to time. These two approaches are elements of what Scheffler calls the “metaphysics of time”. A presentist point of view considers only present objects and time as existent²³. Contrarily, the eternalist point of view conceives past and future objects as existing alongside the present²⁴. He suggests that our patterns of behaviour have shifted from an eternalist to a more presentist approach, relative to time²⁵. The explanation Scheffler provides for this change is that we are no longer connected with the traditional beliefs which have previously bound us to our ancestors and descendants. Regardless of the validity of this explanation, the paradigm shift does provide a superficial explanation for temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism. However, it is concerning that our present conception of time

²³ see Hinchliff, Mark, 1996, “The Puzzle of Change”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 10: 119–136. doi:10.2307/2216239, Crisp, Thomas M., 2004, “On Presentism and Triviality”, & “Reply to Ludlow”, in Zimmerman 2004: 15–20 & 37–46., Markosian, Ned, 2004, “A Defense of Presentism”, in Zimmerman 2004: 47–82.

²⁴ see, e.g., Adams 1986 “Time and Thisness”, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 11: 315–329. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4975.1986.tb00501.x p.321, Hinchliff 1996, “The Puzzle of Change”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 10: 119–136. doi:10.2307/2216239, 123–4; Sider, Theodore, 1999, “Presentism and Ontological Commitment”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 96(7): 325–347. doi:10.2307/2564601, 2001, *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/019924443X.001.0001; Noonan, Harold W., 2013, “Presentism and Eternalism”, *Erkenntnis*, 73(1): 219–227. doi:10.1007/s10670-011-9303-1

²⁵ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* p. 4.

could be either a cause *or* an effect of temporal parochialism. Scheffler himself speculates that our tendency to the presentist approach would more likely explain temporal parochialism, than vice versa.

After this first explanatory attempt, Scheffler presents a second one. This explanation differs significantly from the prior, as it observes the change in the conceptualisation of freedom that has taken place between ancient and modern times. Scheffler exposes a modern age definition of freedom to be “freedom to pursue our present aims and to try to satisfy our present desires”²⁶. He calls it the *present-aim* conception of freedom. According to this hypothesis, this change has made us free from cultural influences, and consequently, distances us from considering our intergenerational issues. Again, Scheffler recognises the partial nature of this explanation: “there is room to wonder which of the factors cited here is really the *explanans* and which is the *explanandum*. Perhaps our growing temporal parochialism explains our attachment to the present-aim conception of freedom, rather than vice versa. Nevertheless, a shift in our understanding of freedom constitutes one possible explanatory factor”²⁷. Thus, also this second explanatory attempt appears unsuccessful to unveil the nature of the two considered phenomena.

The third and final explanation Scheffler presents regards politics and the influence both temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism have in this field. Here, Scheffler presents the argument that geographical cosmopolitanism is not only a moral but also a political and institutional development. Considering geographical cosmopolitanism a dynamic process, he wants to stress the expansion of a “more comprehensive, more inclusive, and institutionally more sophisticated”²⁸ global politics²⁹. The complex and dynamic development of this global politics is, in Scheffler’s view, clearly in contrast with the total absence of temporal politics. There is no doubt we cannot engage in a political debate with non-living generations. Following this reasoning, increasing the political inclusiveness among different parts of the world may decrease, on the other hand, the political inclusiveness with respect to past and future generations. “It is not surprising that an increase in geographical cosmopolitanism should be accompanied by an increase in temporal

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁸ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?*, p. 5.

²⁹ See Joshua Cohen and Charles Sabel, *Extra Rempublicam Nulla Justitia?*, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol. 34, 2006 pp. 147–75.

parochialism”³⁰. This last hypothesis, therefore, strengthens the connection between the two attitudes exposed by Scheffler, expressed by a sort of inverse relationship, in which if either one of the two increases, the other decreases.

However, it is difficult to feel satisfied with Scheffler’s suggestions of such flexible links to be the cause of a significant and repercussive shift in our contingent perception of time. It still remains unclear why these two features are present, and which are their causes. Scheffler was not wrong in his direction of thought, as it is clear the presented explanations highlight important factors intertwined with our perception of time. However, it seems reasonable to analyse these features in a different light, considering other conceptualisations of the same subject matter. Thus, a better understanding of these phenomena should allow us to broaden the outlook on the context in which these phenomena are produced and reiterated.

1.2 The Uneasiness Produced by Temporal Parochialism

1.2.1 The Interest in Genealogy and the Popularity of Apocalyptic Literature

After having reviewed the explanations Scheffler exposed, I want to investigate a point that he considers “of greater direct relevance to the main argument of this book”³¹. The attitudes described until now are well documented in the academic community³², and are generally considered as tendencies present in contemporary society. Nonetheless, they have encountered, and continue to encounter many different types of contrasting patterns. Cosmopolitan attitudes, Scheffler notices, are far from being accepted and consolidated even in the most progressive communities. Take, for example, Brexit and the raise of populisms, two very clear events in the recent history that testify the presence of opposite attitudes which are contrasting what we are

³⁰ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* p. 5.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³² In this regards, Scheffler refers to Brink, David, “Prospects for Temporal Neutrality,” in C. Callender, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 352–81, Rubenfeld, Jed, *Freedom and Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), Larry Temkin, “Rationality with Respect to People, Places, and Times,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 45(2016): 576–608, Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014], pp. 125–6. See also Thomas Schelling, “Intergenerational and International Discounting,” *Risk Analysis* 20(2000): 833–7.

calling geographical cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, he claims there are reasons to think our temporal parochialism is a source of uneasiness³³. What does he mean?

To make this point clear, he presents one example for our attitudes toward the past and one for our attitudes toward the future. The former refers to the widespread interest in genealogy and the history of the ancestors. This attraction expresses a general will to connect, or reconnect, with a history and with a past that has been questioned by temporal parochialism. The latter example mentions the increase in the apocalyptic and dystopic literary and cinematographic products. Scheffler interprets these narratives as an expression of the fear for the end of our specie. In other words, the popularity of narratives which describe the end of humanity is, for Scheffler, a proof of the presence of a worry for future generations and, at the same time, the evidence of the “absence of any confident or untroubled or normatively articulate understanding of our place in time or our relations to people living at other times”³⁴.

In this prospect, the uneasiness generated by temporal parochialism is the product of a desire to reconnect with past and future generations. This connection seems concealed to us in the perspective outlined, and finds expression only in very specific contexts like in the case of post-apocalyptic literature and film. This speculation, although plausible, does not seem supported by any kind of sociological or philosophical theory in Scheffler's expositions. This makes it hard to place real significance in such observations..

In the next section, to conclude the overview of Scheffler's comprehension of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism, I will analyse his considerations regarding the anxiety he claims is generated by the prospect of human extinction. This will allow me, in the next chapters, to criticise his point of view, integrating it with some of the most accredited critical social theories.

1.2.2 The Anxiety for the End of Humanity

In this section, I will consider the second chapter of Scheffler's book titled *Reasons to Worry: Interest and Love*³⁵. This chapter explores our implicit connection with future generations in many human activities that imply human flourishing and the maintenance of the world as we know it. In

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, cap. 2.

doing so, Scheffler starts by describing the scenario presented in a P. D. James' novel *The Children of Men*³⁶, in which the human race has become infertile in its entirety. The reasons for this situation are unknown, and under these specific conditions, the extinction of the human race would not be instant; on the opposite, it would be slow and inexorable. Scheffler uses this example because he wants to express that the prospect of the end of humanity is depressing and daunting. However, James' novel is also a perfect example of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic literature which, as we have already seen, is a product of the anxiety toward the future derived from temporal parochialism. Thus, Scheffler wants to demonstrate that the actual value of many human activities depends on the survival of humanity more than we can usually recognise. This intuition, then, is confirmed and strengthened during the chapter by showing different human activities that presuppose the continuation of human life.

In this regard, he rightly points out how our society is structured to reach both short term and long term goals. One of the examples Scheffler presents is about medical research to find a cure for cancer. This example clarifies his point because this activity makes sense only if we take for granted the existence of humanity at least for the next decades. Furthermore, it is an example of how many individual activities are inscribed in broader ongoing enterprises; individual cancer research by itself would not be particularly valuable without considering all the previous and ongoing researches on the same field. He is considering this perspective of humanity as a precondition for us to value things and consequently to live a life which can be meaningful thanks to the set of values we decided to embrace. This can be considered correct not only for human activities that we value but for the perspective of life in general: we take for granted that the sun will rise tomorrow so that we will continue our lives without giving attention to that every day. Similarly, we take for granted society will exist in the next hundred years so that the cancer research that is being undertaken will have its usefulness for the next generations. In view of the above, it seems reasonable to consider the prospect of annihilation of the human race a source of anxiety. Nevertheless, it is still unclear why this anxiety stops us from unveiling our temporal parochialism and helping us in fighting climate change.

I agree with Scheffler when he writes: “our capacity to find value in our activities here and now is more dependent than we realise on the implicit assumption that human life will continue

³⁶ James, P.D., *The Children of Men*, London: Faber and Faber, 1992.

long after we have died”³⁷. However, based on this claim, I would ask why is this connection so hidden to us? Why do we implicitly assume the perpetuation of human flourishing without realising it? How does temporal parochialism prevent us from realising our deep connection with the future? On the other hand, Scheffler seems to consider implicitly that showing our connection with future generations will make us capable of safeguarding them and fighting climate change. Therefore, we should need this realisation to become able to value consciously future generations and, consequently, fight climate change. This is quite clear from the following line of his argument, “most of us would find the prospect of humanity’s imminent extinction unbearably depressing”³⁸.

I find this conjecture problematic for several reasons. The first one is that he is discussing an emotional response to a prospect that psychologically has very particular and complex implications. The relation of the subject with his future, his expectations, the image of his future self, are all different factors that influence the response to such a catastrophic perspective. What is the psychological limit to consider a possibility unbearably depressing? For example, I think there are many different issues nowadays that could lead to humanity’s extinction in the next decades or hundreds of years. Climate change, unfortunately, is just one of the possible threats that could lead to the end of civilisation. Other global threats include, but are not limited to, nuclear bombs, the prospect of a third world war and a sweeping pandemic. In other words, the prospect of human extinction in this day and age is much closer than in many other times throughout human history. These possibilities are undoubtedly depressing. On the other hand, it seems difficult to believe this feeling of melancholy and hollowness would be necessarily unbearable and would lead inevitably to despair. Because, if that were the case, we would be already living in a melancholic and depressed society.

Furthermore, Scheffler argued that our temporal parochialism is a source of anxiety, and the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are an effect of this anxiety. Therefore, why people should watch an apocalyptic movie to increase this anxiety? As Scheffler claims, the presence of a possible future is almost indispensable to value our actions. However, the way we value our actions depends on the relative conception of reality, which also include the prospects for the future. If the actual perspective of the future is seen through the lens of a temporal parochialist mentality, it means we changed the way we give meaning to our activities, and, thus, changed also our idea of

³⁷ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 29

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

the world. As previously discussed all of these factors, the way we find values in our activities, the perspective of the future and the perception of the world are deeply intertwined. Scheffler's argumentation is repressively linear and precise when discussing such matters; it seems limited to a superficial account of the aforementioned factors and their interconnection.

The main criticism this work pursue against his approach is not in regard to the conclusions he reaches. I agree with much of his argument; in the end, he persuasively shows that we undertake many activities that show our implicit interest in caring and worrying about future generations. In the perspective shaped in this thesis, all of Scheffler's reasons to worry about future generations maintain their validity, and show us why we should worry more about future generations and our deep interconnection with them. However, the present viewpoint will be on why we are not already worried about future generations. Do we need to explicitly define this connection to fight a present problem such as climate change? Or, more generally, what is the effective influence of temporal parochialism in not worrying about future generations? why is loving what we value not enough to fight climate change? What is the reason for such inaction? To answer these questions, I will have to analyse the phenomenon of temporal parochialism in more depth. I will try to include different, and more comprehensive, interpretations of the patterns of behaviour discussed in this chapter.

The problem is the lack of clarity of the theoretical framework that Scheffler exposes and uses to justify the focus of his work on why worrying about future generations. The way people currently value their own lives, and more specifically, their relation with past and future generations is far distant from the way their ancestors were doing it hundreds of years ago. In other words, the conception of time and "value-laden life" seems to be contingent to the historical period and the specific society or culture considered. Therefore, in the next chapter, to further investigate temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism as described by Scheffler, I will look at some of the most accredited social critical theories that include an understanding of the temporal dimension and its change in the last centuries.

2. A Different Perspective on the Contemporary Relation with Time

In the previous chapter, I presented the perspective outlined by Scheffler in his book *Why Worry about Future Generations*³⁹. In this respect, I decided to focus my attention on his interpretation of some patterns of behaviour that brought him to outline temporal parochialism. This concept is supposed to represent our superficial and narrow-minded approach toward intergenerational considerations. Allegedly, this behavioural pattern is in contrast with what Scheffler calls geographical cosmopolitanism. Therefore, in Scheffler's view, our general attitudes towards the temporal and the geographical dimension are conflicting. In this chapter, I will consider some critical social theories to question his interpretation of these two concepts. This will be worthwhile when, in the third chapter, reconsidering Scheffler's perspective, and stressing the importance of understanding the sociological patterns considered to cope with our moral motivations to fight climate change.

In the first part of this chapter I will narrow my focus, defining environmental moral sensitivity and declaring I focus on the influence of temporal parochialism towards it. Later, it will be presented David Harvey's social critical theory of time-space compression⁴⁰, highlighting the notion where the two concepts presented by Scheffler are not considered contrasting, but instead to be facets of same condition, the condition of post-modernity. In the second part, I will present another perspective, by Harmut Rosa⁴¹, which advances an account of the temporal structure of society, once again from the perspective of critical theory. His conceptualisation of what he calls social acceleration and frenetic standstill will be useful in questioning Scheffler's understanding of the anxiety derived from temporal parochialism.

³⁹ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press, 2018,

⁴⁰ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990.

⁴¹ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, translated and introduced by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

2.1 Harvey's Time-Space Compression and Social Acceleration

2.1.1 Temporal Parochialism and its Influence over our Environmental Moral Sensitivity

Scheffler investigated temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism to justify his focus on future generations and intergenerational justice, advocating the idea we would be more motivated to fight climate change if we realise our connection with future generations. Unfortunately, I do not consider Scheffler's investigation useful to understanding the reasons why we are not fighting climate change. I understand this claim could sound tricky because Scheffler never claimed he wanted to understand our inaction. On the contrary, he wants to show hidden motivations to raise our awareness on the connection among generations. In doing so, he implicitly presupposes temporal parochialism is influencing our inaction in fighting climate change. Although I agree with the reasons that lead him to write his book, I cannot consider his overall argument utterly valid because it starts from a weak understanding of temporal parochialism.

I sincerely respect Scheffler's aim to show the many different ways we are unawarely connected with future generations, and how their existence is a precondition for a lot of human activities. He tries to create an alternative to the standard beneficence-based approach to problems of future generations, shaping different sets of motivations that show the many ways we are connected with future generations, most of which are rooted in our real physical and emotional attachments and relations. However, There may be doubts that making people understand their intergenerational interdependence with future generations will make them more prone to fight climate change. On the other hand, considering sociologically the phenomenon of temporal parochialism and its explanations could help us to ethically evaluate the effective influence temporal parochialism has in our moral motivations.

Dating back to early philosophy, the conceptualisation of time has been one conundrum that has always resisted elucidation. From Aristotle, passing to St Thomas Aquinas, and arriving to Bergson and many others, they all developed different theorisations of what is time and how humans perceive themselves through its flowing. At this point, the aim of this thesis is not to investigate this vast number of theories and discern among them the most convincing. On the other hand, this work will follow Scheffler's intuition on temporal parochialism, and explore its potential influence on our *moral sensitivity*.

In medical ethics, the concept of moral sensitivity is described as the “moral ability to identify the existing moral problem and understand the moral consequences of the decisions made on the patient’s part”⁴². In environmental ethics, the moral focus is not on the patient’s wellbeing and health, but on environmental concerns and the human interaction with nature. Therefore, in this work I will use this concept in a slightly different fashion: for *environmental moral sensitivity*, I refer to the moral ability to identify the existing moral problems related to climate change and understand the moral consequences of individual or collective actions that affect the ecosystem, in whole or in part.

Scheffler does not refer to any type of moral sensitivity during his argumentation. However, he explicitly writes about the moral ability to identify and understand our present interconnection with future generations, which, according to him, is diminished by temporal parochialism. I will call this type of moral sensitivity *intergenerational moral sensitivity*. This is strictly related to the environmental moral sensitivity, because it aims at moral obligations to future generations to strive for environmental sustainability. Therefore, Scheffler focused mainly on intergenerational moral sensitivity. In this chapter, I will broaden his focus, investigating the influence of temporal parochialism over our environmental moral sensibility, instead of limiting myself to intergenerational sensitivity⁴³.

2.1.2 Postmodern Critical Social Theory

For this purpose, I will get into the domain of sociology. More specifically, the analysis will follow the field of critical social theory. Critical Theory has a broad and a narrow meaning in philosophy and history of the social sciences⁴⁴. The narrow sense derives strictly from the philosophical approach used by philosophers and social theorists known traditionally as Frankfurt School. Instead of separating philosophy from social sciences, Critical Theorists aim to combine them to seek “human emancipation” in conditions of oppression and domination⁴⁵. When critical

⁴² NejadSarvari, Nasrin et al. “Relationship of Moral Sensitivity and Distress Among Physicians.” *Trauma monthly* vol. 20,2 (2015): e26075. doi:10.5812/traumamon.26075.

⁴³ This purpose is justified because if temporal parochialism diminish our intergenerational moral sensitivity, consequently it will diminish also our environmental moral sensitivity.

⁴⁴ Bohman, James. *Critical Theory*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), 2019, URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/critical-theory/>>.

⁴⁵ See Horkheimer, Max. *Critical Theory*, New York: Seabury Press; 1972, reprinted Continuum: New York, 1982, p. 246.

theory is with capital letter, it is referring to this first narrow sense, Instead, the broad meaning includes thinkers that are not exclusively or entirely related to the Frankfurt School, but have similar practical aims. For instance, feminism, critical race theory, and some forms of post-colonial criticism are considered included in the wide set of critical theory. However, in both senses there is the attempt to unveil domination and oppression developing a social inquiry on both the descriptive and normative level⁴⁶.

Recently, critical theory has been applied within the social sciences to criticise the so-called postmodern society and its social construction⁴⁷. In this regards, David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*⁴⁸ is considered one of the most influential works that develop a historical materialist analysis of the historical tendencies of the last quarter of the Twentieth Century driving global processes, able to explain the change of patterns of belief concerning the spatial and temporal sphere⁴⁹. I will briefly explain Harvey's overall argument, to then examine individually his concept of *time-space compression*⁵⁰. This concept will be essential to reconsider the idea of temporal parochialism with which I started this discussion.

As far as I am concerned, I shall confine myself to espouse a general definition of Harvey's conception of the postmodern condition. The book provides a detailed critical analysis of economic and cultural conditions specific to the last quarter of the twentieth century⁵¹. These conditions are consequences of a vast set of paradigms within which we live. Harvey primarily focuses on the scientific, philosophical, artistic, economic and political paradigms that have been developed during the so-called "modern" period; examples of such manifestations could be scientific positivism or industrial capitalism. This "modern" period has been birthed from crisis, be it the increasing inequalities that can be detected during the development of capitalism, or by the social trauma

⁴⁶ Bohman, James. *Critical Theory*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019, p.2.

⁴⁷ Agger, Ben. *North American Critical Theory After Postmodernism*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 128–154, doi: 10.1057/9781137262868_7, ISBN 9781349350391.

⁴⁸ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990.

⁴⁹ K. Woodward and J. P. Jones, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989): David Harvey, SAGE Publication Ltd, London, 2008, p. 5

⁵⁰ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990, part III.

⁵¹ Review by Dear, Michael of *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* by David Harvey, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 81, N. 3, Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1991, pp. 533-539.

caused by the violence and devastation of the two World Wars⁵². To sum up, Harvey examines four main topics: the passage from modernity to postmodernity in cultural life, the political-economic underpinnings that produced the rise of postmodernism, a chronological perspective (from the Renaissance) on human's perception of time and space, and, lastly, Harvey's evaluation of the significance of postmodernism⁵³. Here, I quote the brief abstract that precedes the preface of his book:

There has been a sea-change in cultural as well as in political-economic practices since around 1972. This sea-change is bound up with the emergence of new dominant ways in which we experience space and time. While simultaneity in the shifting dimensions of time and space is no proof of necessary or causal connection, strong a priori grounds can be adduced for the proposition that there is some kind of necessary relation between the rise of post-modern cultural forms, the emergence of more flexible modes of capitalist accumulation, and a new round of 'time-space compression' in the organization of capitalism. But these changes, when set against the basic rules of capitalist accumulation, appear more as shifts in surface appearance rather than as signs of the emergence of some entirely new postcapitalist or even postindustrial society.⁵⁴

The most interesting part of this analysis for this thesis consists in the concept of time-space compression⁵⁵. Harvey writes: "Since capitalism has been a revolutionary mode of production in which the material practices and processes of social reproduction are always changing, it follows that the objective qualities as well as the meanings of space and time also change"⁵⁶. In Harvey's theory modernity is about the experience of progress through technological advancements, which entails the "conquest of space", in the sense of its mastery. In fact, Harvey suggests that the reduction of space to time is "implied in the notion of progress itself"⁵⁷. His argument goes along with many different ways to interpret space and time, and their interconnection, and must be inscribed in the broader aim to signify what is the postmodern and how its condition can be described.

⁵² K. Woodward and J. P. Jones, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1989, p.6.

⁵³ Review by Dear, Michael of *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* by David Harvey, p. 534.

⁵⁴ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990, abstract.

⁵⁵ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990, part III.

⁵⁶ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990, p. 204.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.205.

However, the concept of time-space compression explicitly shows that temporal parochialism is only one part of the deep and multifaceted struggle of the postmodern man, as Harvey describes it. This struggle can have different keys to its interpretation. Nevertheless, They all rely on a sociological conception of capitalism as a system of domination. The quest for dominating space has profound consequences on our perception of time. For example, Harvey references the medieval parochialism to show that their *eternalist* conception of time (to say it in Scheffler's words) was consequent to an "easy and hedonistic psycho-physiological approach to spatial representation"⁵⁸. Without passing through Harvey's genealogy of our conception of time, I will briefly outline its core point to link it with my critique of Scheffler about Scheffler's superficial account of temporal parochialism.

The predominant difference between Scheffler's intuition on temporal parochialism and Harvey's space-time compression theory relays on the capacity of the second to account for and make sense of the explanations Scheffler admitted were non-exhaustive. The progressive technological control we have reached on the spatial reality consists, following Harvey, in the artificial production of space through social and architectural organisation. This control, or mastery, of space is reached with its fragmentation, which is applied also in the fragmentation of time. The former can be exemplified by the complex division of the territories that took place in the last hundred years in the western countries in, states, regions, municipalities, districts, neighbours, etc. The latter can be related to the history and development of an object we use everyday: the clock. In the past hundreds years, the technical ability to calculate and divide the time more and more precisely can be easily related to the cultural attempt to integrate this fragmented perception of time in the way we live our routine. This specific conception of time is called *clock-time*.

However, the fragmentation of space and time does not explain the time-space compression. It is quite intuitive the concept of space compression. Harvey's space compression is very similar to the concept of geographical cosmopolitanism Scheffler develops in his text. The core idea in both consists of an increased ability to connect different parts of the world, thanks to technological development. This connection can be detected on an economical, political, and also cultural level (transportation, contemporary representative democracy, and mass media). However, the compression of time may seem less intuitive. Scheffler's explanation of temporal parochialism is completely unfamiliar to concepts like fragmentation and compression. Nonetheless, the

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

compression of time can be pragmatically detected in many examples: technological advances such as airplanes and cars have revolutionised the ways humans travel, and consequently, they made moving faster and easier. Even social medias and texting changed our ways of communicating, and made the communication faster. Therefore, time-space compression seems expressed in the temporal sphere by an *acceleration* of social life. In other words, the speed of social life has increased so greatly that social space appears to be *compressed*⁵⁹.

From this explanation, I argue temporal parochialism does not have to be understood, as Scheffler claimed, in contrast with geographical cosmopolitanism. The latter, in Harvey's view, is not a controversial tendency. Instead, it is a part of the same process, which is the late capitalistic pursuit of dominance over reality. Thus, the contrast Scheffler detected between temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism fades away if we espouse the time-space compression theory. In this new perspective, space and time are two sides of the same coin, two effects of the same cause: *social acceleration*. To make a parallelism, consider the difference between classical physics and special relativity. Classically, time and space were seen as separate dimensions dependent on different rules and axioms. Instead, special relativity started from the study of acceleration, and using this framework it is possible to detect a literal compression of both space and time as the speed increases. The same seems valid between Scheffler's view and Harvey's perspective.

However, the acceleration of social life is a topic that has been examined and developed by many other authors, and it might be useful to consider other standpoints to enrich the perspective I am shaping. In the second part of this chapter, I will integrate Paul Virilio's understanding of social acceleration⁶⁰ and Harmut Rosa's theorisation of the *frenetic standstill*⁶¹ into the present analysis.

⁵⁹ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, part III, cap. 16-17.

⁶⁰ Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Society*, MIT press, 2006, transl. by Marc Polizzotti, originally published as *Vitesse et Politique*, Edition Galilée, Paris, 1977.

⁶¹ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, translated and introduced by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

2.2 Virilio and Rosa

2.2.1 Virilio and the First Theorisation of Social Acceleration

Harvey wrote *The Condition of Modernity*⁶² in the 1990. However, he was not the first academic who theorised an acceleration of the pace in society. Around 13 years before, in 1977 Paul Virilio wrote his influential work *Speed and Society*⁶³. Here, he coined a new term: *dromology*. It is defined as the “science (or logic) of speed”⁶⁴. His analysis is mainly focused on societal structure in relation to warfare and modern media. The word *logistics* is repeated countless times during the text. He detected an acceleration in the speed of logistics, which can be exemplified in what we might see if we pay attention to a common supermarket. There, it is easily detectable an extensive network of supply-chain, demand-chain and customer-relationship management softwares, which considering its huge complexity, are remarkably robust and efficient. In his explanation, Virilio connects the acceleration of social velocity with relations of wealth and power; the conclusion outlines the idea of spatial acceleration which destroys space, and consequently, compresses time in our perception.

Although Virilio’s proposal is fascinating, and pioneered the study of social acceleration, his explanation is very technical, and regards mainly war logistics and urbanism. Consequently, it uses a terminology which is not cross-transferable when attempting to explain the behaviour considered at the beginning of this thesis. Furthermore, his work has been criticised for misusing physics concepts and abusing scientific terminology⁶⁵. For example, Virilio has been accused of confusing two very basic physics concepts of velocity and acceleration throughout the text⁶⁶. These two factors should be enough to avoid using his text for the present analysis. However, it is hard to deny the huge contribution to the fields of sociology and critical theory that this work has made in itself.

In this regard, *Speed and Society*⁶⁷ has been useful to show that concepts like social

⁶² Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990.

⁶³ Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Society*, MIT press, 2006, transl. by Marc Polizzotti, originally published as *Vitesse et Politique*, Edition Galilée, Paris, 1977.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁶⁵ Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*, 1998, and Steve Redhead (2004) *Paul Virilio: Theorist for an Accelerated Culture*, Edinburgh University Press ISBN 0-7486-1927-5

⁶⁶ Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*, 1998, p. 175.

⁶⁷ Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Society*, MIT press, 2006.

acceleration and compression of time have not been theorised by Harvey first, but that social and cultural studies detected these factors almost 50 years ago. Furthermore, Virilio first postulated what Rosa coined 35 years later as *frenetic standstill*⁶⁸ (in French *inertie polaire*) in which social acceleration produces in the subjects this feeling that “while everything seems to change faster and faster, real or structural social change is no longer possible”⁶⁹. However, It is important to explore Rosa’s understanding of social acceleration to understand the frenetic standstill.

2.2.2 Rosa’s New Theory of Modernity

The explanation of both concepts is present in Rosa’s work *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*⁷⁰. His argument is structured on the sociological idea of a subjective feeling of “contraction of the present” that produces a “sense of directionless, frantic motion that is in fact a form of inertia”⁷¹. Rosa primarily considers institutional inertia, however inertia, as Rosa defines, produces a contraction of the present. Both Rosa and Harvey’s theories develop a sociological approach to grasp the change of paradigm between different conceptions of time during history. Furthermore, in both of these explanations the late capitalistic society and its relation with technology influence deeply our relation with time, an influence resulting ultimately in compression and a resulting impasse.

Rosa begins his discussion by taking aim at the conventional theory of modernisation. This theory divides modernisation in the process of rationalisation towards culture, differentiation towards the social structure, individualisation considering the personality, and domestication towards nature. Rosa interprets all these processes as consequent to social acceleration⁷². In doing so, he distinguishes three different forms of it: technical acceleration, acceleration of social change, and acceleration of the pace of life. Technical acceleration is explicitly referred not only to the acceleration of technological change, but more generally to the acceleration of all the processes connected with capitalistic consumption: transportation, communication, production and more. This

⁶⁸ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, translated and introduced by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

⁶⁹ B. Zantvoort, *Political Inertia and Social Acceleration*, SAGE Publication Ltd, 2016, p.9.

⁷⁰ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, Columbia University Press, 2013.

⁷¹ Harmut Rosa & William Scheuerman, *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008, p. 101.

⁷² Heath, Joseph. Book Review of *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, by Hartmut Rosa, *Political Theory* Vol 44(I), pp. 150-153, DOI: 10.1177/0090591715619337.

first form of acceleration, in Rosa's view, produces the others. The acceleration of the pace of life, in turn, reproduces individuals that press for technological innovation, creating a self-perpetuating cycle as such.

Without explaining in depth his critical analysis, it is important to stress out the systematic nature of Rosa's theory of social acceleration. Technological innovation was already implicit in Scheffler's view. As previously discussed, geographical cosmopolitanism is a clear effect of technological innovation and its consequential acceleration of communication. However, thus far we have not been able explain temporal parochialism in such clear terms. Rosa's theory of social acceleration is able to explain clearly both temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism as manifestations of the overarching process of modernisation. This last process, in turn, is explained as fuelled by technological change and innovation, which accelerated massively throughout the industrial revolutions during the rise of the capitalistic society.

It is worth mentioning that, in contrast with Harvey, Rosa never wrote explicitly about postmodernism, limiting himself to describe what he calls *late modernity*. The debate on these two concepts and their differentiation is rich and various. However, it poses little relevancy to enter into this debate during this dissertation. Therefore, I will leave this argument outstanding, considering both the terms as valid in reference to the sociological and historical context in which the patterns of behaviour Scheffler considered are perpetrated. For now, I will focus on his understanding of social acceleration and its connection with societal rigidity, or frenetic standstill.

Rosa describes the modern feeling of our epoch that time is out of joint, that "the ongoing time of crisis is the result of a crisis of time"⁷³. Rosa effectively incorporates many different experiences of acceleration already present in the sociological academic discussions around the diagnosis of the perception of time:

In 2000 Gundolf S. Freyermuth, here representative of legions of essayists, op-ed writers, politicians, and economists, and with full awareness of the historical career of diagnoses of acceleration, summarizes this discourse as follows: "We are contemporaries of a phase of acceleration that is unique in the history of humankind—and makes industrialization look cozy in hindsight."⁷⁴ From the ivory tower, philosophers like Stefan Breuer ("Speed is doubtless the

⁷³ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, Columbia University Press, 2013. p. 13.

⁷⁴ Freyermuth, Gundolf S.. *Digitales Tempo. Computer und Internet revolutionieren das Zeitempfinden*. c't, magazin für computer technik 2000 Vol. 14, pp. 74–81.

god of our era”)⁷⁵ and sociologists like Frederic Jameson (“Time is today a function of speed, and evidently perceptible only in terms of its rate or velocity as such”)⁷⁶ confirm this culturally predominant perception.⁷⁷

Scheffler did not consider social acceleration and its different manifestations to explain temporal parochialism. However, from Rosa’s work, these two phenomena have been shown to be deeply intertwined. Our perception of time, reflected in temporal parochialism, is strictly dependent on the acceleration of the pace of life. Rosa describes the discontinuity of this acceleration (he calls it desynchronisation), in the many forms it is reflected, as a source of anxiety both on an individual and societal level. Rosa uses Simmel’s observations⁷⁸, and Peter Anlheit’s analysis on the three actor-guiding horizons of time⁷⁹, to support the claim that the institutional and structural tempo can be too fast for subjects to keep the pace. Rosa notes that such a concept of tempo can have an excessive amount of rigidity and inertia⁸⁰. In his argument, the acceleration trespassed a critical threshold “beyond which the demand for societal synchronisation and social integration can no longer be met”⁸¹. The impossibility of this re-synchronisation, in his view, provokes anxiety and a loss of faith in the future. This anxiety can be compared to the anxiety Scheffler considered consequent to temporal parochialism. Post-apocalyptic narratives and cinematographic products can be easily explained as consequent to Rosa’s feeling of de-synchronisation and consequent loss of hope for the future.

After this explanation, it should be already clear to the reader that my primary criticism of Scheffler’s argument focuses on his premises and from the theoretical framework he uses to shape the concepts of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism. He uses these concepts to justify the focus on our connection with future generations. In contrast to this, I claim that temporal parochialism shows something very different: it shows a broader change of mentality in

⁷⁵ Breuer, Stefan.. *Der Nihilismus der Geschwindigkeit. Zum Werk Paul Virilios*. Leviathan Vol. 16 pp. 309–30, 1988.

⁷⁶ Jameson, Fredric.. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1994.

⁷⁷ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, Columbia University Press, 2013, p.14.

⁷⁸ Simmel, Georg.. Rodin. In *Philosophische Kultur*, Leipzig: Kröner, 1919, see also Lauer, Robert.. *Temporal Man: The Meaning and Uses of Social Time*. New York: Praeger, 1981.

⁷⁹ Ahlheit, Peter.. *Alltagszeit und Lebenszeit*. In Zoll, pp. 371-86, 1988.

⁸⁰ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, Columbia University Press, 2013, p. 15.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

our society. This change appears to have come about due to social and cultural reactions to technological advancements under the capitalistic system.

At the end of the first chapter I asked what is the effective influence of temporal parochialism in not worrying about future generations. The reasons of such inaction are still far from being clear. I presented social acceleration and time-space compression to explain the sociological causes of temporal parochialism. Nonetheless, I still need to explore the influence of temporal parochialism in our moral motivations and environmental moral sensitivity to fight climate change.

Therefore, in the next chapter, I will first expose a critique towards Rosa's perspective. Then, I will espouse Hammer's view of the way patterns I explored in this chapter influence our environmental moral motivations. This last analysis will allow me to revise Scheffler's concepts of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism under the light of a more diverse and comprehensive set of theories. In the last part of the chapter, I will outline the need for a paradigm shift from an instrumental to an intrinsic account of nature.

3. Temporal Instrumentalism's influence in the ethical debate on climate change

I started my analysis considering Scheffler's argument on why we need to understand our connection with future generations to fight climate change. I questioned his perfunctory account of concepts like temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism. In the last chapter, I integrated the concept of temporal parochialism with David Harvey's concept of time-space compression⁸² and Rosa's idea of social acceleration⁸³. The previous analysis has been useful in showing a causal relation among these concepts. However, it is still unclear the effective influence of these patterns of belief in our environmental moral sensitivity. In this chapter, I will point out precisely the problem of giving instrumental value to nature, and I will give a normative conclusion regarding the desirability of an intrinsic valorisation of nature, instead of enhancing an instrumental view. I will show the need to have a better understanding of our moral motivations, and to grasp the reason why all the motivations that have been pointed out over the years by philosophers, ethicists, journalists, and even children like Greta Thunberg, have not been enough to fight climate change properly and effectively until now.

To achieve this, I will start by presenting a critique to Rosa's social acceleration, showing the limits of his perspective. Secondly, I will consider Espen Hammer's *Philosophy and Temporality*⁸⁴ to investigate temporal parochialism's influence in our moral sensitivity. This analysis will show the predominance of an instrumental vision of space and time, which is reflected in an instrumental account on nature. From that, I will conclude the need for a paradigm shift, from an instrumentalist to an intrinsic account of nature.

⁸² Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, part III, cap. 16-17.

⁸³ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, Columbia University Press, 2013.

⁸⁴ Hammer, Espen. *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, ISBN: 978-1-107-00500-6.

3.1 Explanans or Explanandum, a Critique to Rosa

As we know the phenomenon of temporal parochialism can be explained as an acceleration in technological innovation which produces a societal change in areas such as culture, institutions and personality structures. This resulting acceleration produces the effect of fragmentation of space and time, and a consequent feeling of compression in both of them. This compression, in turn, can explain the phenomena of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism.

However, these theories have not explained temporal parochialism's effects and influence on our moral capacities. Joseph Heath pointed out a shortfall in Rosa's approach in his book review of *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*⁸⁵ that is worth considering. His critics can be summed up in this sentence: "There is no doubt conceptual gain in showing that changes in *p*, *q* and *r* are all "driven" by changes in *x*, but one still has to explain why *x* change"⁸⁶. That is to say: although Rosa displays social acceleration (*x*) as the leading cause of many different changes (*p*, *q* and *r*), the preceding cause that produced it remains unknown. Why is there acceleration in the first place? The changes Rosa examined are rationalisation, differentiation, individualisation and domestication, which I already named before. They are considered the *explananda* of modernisation, and for Heath, they "cannot figure in the *explanans* when it comes to understanding acceleration. There may, of course, be feedback loops among these processes - which Rosa does posit - but still, one needs to say what gets the ball rolling in the first place"⁸⁷. Here, we come back to the problem we encountered with Scheffler's explanations before, where there was confusion if the explanations given were the *explanans* or the *explanandum*⁸⁸.

This is the second time in this thesis that I detected a difficulty in discerning between what is the explanans and what is the explanandum of sociological factors. From this, I now pose further questions; Is social acceleration the main cause of modernisation, its explanans, or just another way to explain the phenomenon, an explanandum? Moreover, should the latter be true, what is the explanans of social acceleration?

⁸⁵ Heath, Joseph. Book Review of *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, by Hartmut Rosa, Political Theory Vol 44(1), pp. 150-153, DOI: 10.1177/0090591715619337.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 152.

⁸⁸ For the definition of explanans and explanandum see page 9 of this thesis.

Explanans and explanandum are terms used for a deductive-nomological model of explanation. A deductive-nomological model of explanation “proposes that a phenomenon is explained by deducing it from a law together with other auxiliary statements concerning the phenomenon (explanandum)”⁸⁹. Until now, it seems very difficult and slippery to consider sociologically a consequential or deductive-nomological correlation between such complex and multifaceted collective behaviours, like social acceleration, modernisation, and even temporal parochialism. These behaviours are affected by, but not limited to, the dimensions of the individual and the collective, the political and the economical, and the temporal and the spatial. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish a description or trait of the phenomenon from an *explanans* able to account effectively for causation. In other words, whatever explanation given seems to be included in the description of the phenomenon itself.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that even if none of the explanations proposed in this work is the real explanans of temporal parochialism, we would be better off with more explananda for the same phenomenon, instead of not having explanations of the topic at all. In order to have the greatest chance of finding the effective explanans of the phenomenon, this investigation will have to start from the available explananda. Furthermore, even though social acceleration and time-space compression are not explanantia of temporal parochialism, they have helped inscribe this whole issue in a broader and more systematic sociological framework. This framework is likely to be imperfect and will generate other questions and require further explanations, but the fields of sociology and critical theory are developing and improving this framework year after year.

Thus, Heath’s criticism is important in remarking the methodological limit of social critical theory and sociological analysis in developing deductive and consequential explanations, which can become blurred and merge with the description of the phenomena. It is clearly a better understanding of temporal parochialism does not depend only on finding its explanation, but it is also connected with a broader understanding of the context in which this phenomenon is created and established. Therefore, I will not argue if social acceleration is effectively the explanans of temporal parochialism or modernisation. Having acknowledged Heath’s criticism, I will consider temporal parochialism inscribed in the broader process of modernisation and underline its

⁸⁹ Eidlin, Fred. *The Deductive-Nomological Model of Explanation*, in Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe, *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research*, SAGE Publications, 2010, pp. 284-286.

dependence on social acceleration as Rosa analysed, without assuming that the latter explains thoroughly and deductively the others.

3.2 The Lack of Meaning in the Postmodern Society

3.2.1 Hammer's Disenchanted Time-Consciousness and its Influence

I have already considered the sociological idea, widely present in many contemporary social theories, that our present time is characterised by an acceleration of the pace of life, and this perception is connected with Scheffler's perception of temporal parochialism. However, it is still unclear which effects temporal parochialism has in our environmental moral sensitivity. In this section, I will consider Espen Hammer's proposal in his work *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*⁹⁰.

Hammer's argument follows linearly many intuitions I have already encountered: He starts from claiming that the way we relate to time is, to a large extent, a "function of historically mediated horizons of meaning"⁹¹. In other words, our contingent relation with time is dependent on historical and sociological factors, which are reflected in the identity of the individuals. I speculated about the relationship between the perception of time and sociological and historical dimensions at the end of the first chapter. This speculation led me to investigate and consider methodologically social critical theory. The second intuition he follows is that the specific time of modernity is linked to a specific temporal configuration which implies many ethical-political issues. Harvey and Rosa started from this same intuition in writing their theories.

From these intuitions, he starts to analyse the conception of time in the post-Kantian tradition to detect a "modern, disenchanted time-consciousness". This disenchanted time-consciousness produced many different advantages in Hammer's view: the modern development of scientific knowledge and industrial/post-industrial technology would not have been possible without the "objectivist, clock-based understanding of time"⁹². The other side of the coin consists of

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 3.

what many of the central post-Kantian thinkers⁹³, among which Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Adorno, theorised as the sense of dissatisfaction led by the “disintegration of external, socio-historically sanctioned authority with its pre-modern forms of time-consciousness has brought about”⁹⁴. In a nutshell, what Scheffler described as the shift from an eternalist to a presentist account of time has been detected and explained by different philosophers as the dissolution of the socio-cultural ancient conception of time, and with it, the lack of moral authority and intrinsic value this conception was bringing. For many of these authors, this dissolution is seen as a potential threat towards moral agency and moral motivation.

If time, calculated and commodified, is disenchanted to become a succession of irreversible now-points to be taken up by the instrumental pursuits of a post-conventional agent, then every traditional certainty, whether of faith or sensation, stands in danger of being rendered hollow or invalid. Clock-time, while a homogeneous resource, lending itself to be exploited by rational and calculative behaviour, is empty and uniform, devoid of any intrinsic sense of significance⁹⁵

This key passage connects many topics already encountered in other authors, but for the aim of detecting the influence of these phenomena on the moral agents: fragmentation of time, through the introduction of clock-time, produces a compression of it, with a consequent sensation of an eternal present. The macroscopic effects of this process are a loss of intrinsic significance that Hammer calls *existential meaning* and a changed experience of *transitoriness*. Both of these effects need a separate explanation, although they are both related to the subjective effects of modernisation.

To explain the lack of meaning, Hammer stresses, following great philosophers such as Heidegger and Weber, the state of passivity encouraged from modernity, and established definitely in what is called postmodernity. Even though he distinguishes during the text between the modern and postmodern account of time, he tends to consider the latter a kind of final stage of the former, instead of a contrasting and intrinsically different epoch⁹⁶. In postmodernity, time fragmentation is

⁹³ When I refer to post-Kantian thinkers I do not refer to the class of philosophers called post-Kantians which re-evaluated most of Kantian philosophy. On the other hand, I refer to every philosopher that lived and wrote after Kant, thus after the Enlightenment.

⁹⁴ Hammer, Espen. *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*, 2011, p. 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁹⁶ This position is in line with the general conception of modern and postmodern. The latter is always seen as a consequence of the first, a step away that pulls away from modernity, without detaching completely from it, and without denying its main paradigms. As in Rosa's and Harvey's vision, postmodernism is a product of modernisation as much as modernism.

present in a more personal dimension, producing what is called by Lyotard⁹⁷ the end of *Grand Narratives*. Examples of Grand Narratives are the Enlightenment, all religions, Marxism, Capitalism, patriotism, etcetera. They are described by Hammer as the long-lasting and “intersubjectively validate cultural, spiritual, ethical or aesthetic contexts” that “in an intersubjective binding fashion can generate both individual and collective meaning”⁹⁸. Without explaining comprehensively Lyotard’s perspective of a shift from grand narratives to micro-narratives that characterises postmodernity, I want to stress how this shift involves a considerable loss of meaning, in the sense Hammer is arguing. He compares it to Nietzsche’s idea in *The Birth of Tragedy*⁹⁹ that “secularisation generates a tremendous loss of meaning, a monotonous existential blackness which can be overcome only by returning to myth”¹⁰⁰.

The second significant concern stressed by Hammer is the changing experience of transitoriness. He points out how from Platonism to Christianity, in the western world, there has been a continuous appeal to transcendence. These different religious/metaphysical/moral beliefs were always “able to interpret and make sense of fundamental facts of life such as embodiment, suffering, and death”¹⁰¹. The process of modernisation in philosophy is connected with secularisation and what Hammer calls the “disintegration of metaphysics”. In this perspective, transitoriness gains importance in modernity, and more in postmodernity with the end of the Grand Narratives, because the time postmodern individuals consider is limited and measured every day, conceiving time as something that needs to be conquered and controlled¹⁰².

3.2.2 An Instrumental Account of Time

From Hammer’s explanations of loss of existential meaning and the change of perception of transitoriness, it is possible to see the relation between the general loss of intrinsic meaning in life and the tendency to watch, instrumentally, time. This comes as a consequence of the attempt to control time to overcome human transitoriness. A subject that embeds a materialistic view on

⁹⁷ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, transl. by Bennington, Geoffrey and Massumi, Brian from the original *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir*, Les Editions de Minuit, 1979.

⁹⁸ Hammer, Espen. *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*, p. 5.

⁹⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich W, and Douglas Smith. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Hammer, Espen. *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 142.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 5.

¹⁰² Ibidem.

transcendence and transitoriness would likely see time as an instrument that has to be used in the most efficient way. I think everybody has heard at least once in their life the motto “time is money”. It is the easiest and most compelling example that shows the instrumentalisation of time embedded in the lack of existential meaning and change in the experience of transitoriness.

If time is limited, measurable, clock-time based, and irreversible, then it is reasonable for the subject to relate to it instrumentally. Time, from being an essential medium between human transitoriness and transcendence, it became an instrument to be controlled and used efficiently, for personal aims. Using Rosa’s vocabulary, time passed through the processes of rationalisation and domestication; both included in the broader process of modernisation. Time has been rationalised through its fragmentation and compression, emptying it from its intrinsic transcendence and existential meaning. The result is the human attempt to domesticate and control time, to overcome human transitoriness.

In light of the instrumental account of time aforementioned, I propose to renovate what Scheffler called temporal parochialism with a different term, able to express such an approach: *temporal instrumentalism*. The word parochialism expresses a narrow-minded outlook on the temporal sphere. However, the type and the form of this narrow-mindedness is difficult to grasp. For that reason, I tried to implement this concept twice: at first with Harvey’s and Rosa’s theories, and now with Hammer’s analysis. In response to this implementation, renewing Scheffler’s concept should express the change of perspective the present analysis provides. Temporal instrumentalism, in contrast with temporal parochialism, conveys the idea that our perception of the time is primarily instrumental, and therefore, the historical and cultural intrinsic evaluations of time lose their appeal and attraction. In addition, temporal instrumentalism can be considered a pattern that is in line with both Rosa’s explanation of modernisation and Harvey’s time-space compression theory.

In harmony with this renovation, I suggest updating also Scheffler’s idea of geographical cosmopolitanism. The term *spatial domination* draws clearly on Harvey’s idea about the pursuit of capitalism and technological advance to dominate the space, presented in the previous chapter. It is also strictly connected with Rosa’s domestication of nature: to achieve *x* (spatial domination), humans need to work toward *y* (nature’s domestication), and vice versa, to reach *y*, it is necessary to pursue *x*. Everything Scheffler wrote about geographical cosmopolitanism can be explained and inscribed in the broader quest for spatial domination. Both the two concepts outlined here, temporal

instrumentalism and spatial domination, are inscribed in a more comprehensive sociological framework that was lacking in Scheffler's perspective. Consequently, they can be more useful in understanding their influence on our moral motivations to fight climate change.

Temporal instrumentalism, for instance, could be particularly harmful to nature, in the sense that nature flourishes with its own pace, and humans usually do not respect this natural cycle, or they exploit it instrumentally. Intensive farming or greenhouses are good examples of this tendency. Spatial domination is more explicitly linked to environmental concerns. As outlined above, spatial domination implies nature domestication, and thus an instrumental view of nature. Therefore, these two new concepts outline radically different ethical issues: rather than focusing on intergenerational issues consequent to temporal parochialism, as Scheffler did, temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination point out the harmfulness in instrumentally conceive nature.

In the next section, I will describe the difference between an intrinsic and an instrumental account of nature, to show that what I have called spatial domination is carried out through an instrumental account of nature. This observation will be essential to outline a normative statement regarding the influence of temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination over our environmental moral sensitivity.

3.3 The Importance of an Intrinsic Value Approach Towards Nature

3.3.1 Heidegger and the Distinction Between Revealing and Enframing Technologies

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values has traditionally been considered at the core of ethics. The definition from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is as follows: "The intrinsic value of something is said to be the value that that thing has "in itself," or "for its own sake," or "as such," or "in its own right." Extrinsic value is a value that is not intrinsic"¹⁰³. In short, instrumental value is only one type of extrinsic value, and for some authors, even instrumental values are specific types of intrinsic values. However, it can be said that the difference between intrinsic and instrumental value relies on the distinction between deontological ethics and end-based

¹⁰³ Zimmerman, Michael J. and Bradley, Ben, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/value-intrinsic-extrinsic/>>.

ethics¹⁰⁴. Consequentialism, the most important end-based ethics, is based on valuing the actions for its outcomes morally. Deontology, in contrast, values morally actions intrinsically for the means considered. How can we translate this difference in the moral approach towards nature? Would enhancing instrumental reasoning limit our moral capacity to value nature intrinsically?

To answer these questions, the point of departure will be Heidegger and his classification of technology in his influential work *The Question Concerning Technology*¹⁰⁵. For Heidegger, the two resulting categories of technology are revealing and enframing. "Revealing technology implies humankind discovering the hidden potential that nature has, such as a windmill"¹⁰⁶. The example of the windmill exemplifies how humans can cooperate with nature using its power and at the same time, respecting its integrity. On the other hand, enframing technology is "a type of revealing technology that challenges nature without respect for its ecological integrity"¹⁰⁷. In that case, Heidegger provided the example of the hydroelectric dam to show the way humankind shapes and uses nature disrespectfully only for the increase of human production.

The main difference between these two categories is the way they conceive and use nature. The former considers the human category inscribed in the natural world, so it would be illogical to exploit and spoil the surrounding environment because doing so means to jeopardise human life itself. The latter instead, look at men and nature as a dichotomy, in which men are allowed and encouraged to harness nature because it demonstrates their superiority and domain among it. If we consider the enframing approach toward technology, it evokes the spatial domination, which is to say, the capitalistic tendency to conceive and exploit nature instrumentally. These sociological attitudes convey what Marcuse called the hubris of domination¹⁰⁸: the arrogance of pretending to master and domesticate nature and its components through its exploitation and harnessing. As we have already seen, this is characteristic of the modern and postmodern time.

Returning to Heidegger's classification, it is essential to stress the intrinsic conception of nature embedded in the revealing category and, on the other hand, the instrumental value given to

¹⁰⁴ Elliot, Robert. *Instrumental Value in Nature as a Basis for the Intrinsic Value of Nature as a Whole*, Environmental Ethics, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2005, p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ M. Heidegger, *The question concerning technology*, in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell, 1977, 2nd ed., Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1993.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p.320.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 321.

¹⁰⁸ Marcuse, Herbert. *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Beacon Press, 1972, ISBN: 0-8070-1532-6.

nature as the object of exploitation and domination in the enframing category. The most ancient civilisations of human history show many examples of revealing approaches toward technology. I might speculate that they were still strictly dependent on nature in a more direct way, and for that reason, they were seeing nature intrinsically. The intrinsic value of nature was embedded and integrated into what Lyotard called Grand Narratives¹⁰⁹. Enframing technologies, on the other hand, could be considered more characteristic of the industrial and post-industrial societies, in which the proper contact with the natural world was far less present. In this shift from an intrinsic to an instrumental account of nature, the intrinsic value of nature connected to the Grand Narratives lost its appeal and faded away, allowing the instrumental vision over nature to prevail.

Therefore, the prevalence of an enframing approach can be detected in the late capitalistic world from temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination. Nonetheless, Heidegger reminds us that there is another way to interact with nature, the possibility of using its potential whilst respecting its integrity. This way consists of embedding nature and environmental needs intrinsically in our moral interaction with the natural world. A revealing approach toward technology is focused on the balanced and harmonious coexistence of humans and the surrounding ecosystem. It stems from an understanding of nature and humans as a *unicum*, with the latter inscribed in the former.

I want to stress the importance of a paradigm shift from an enframing to a revealing approach toward technology. We need to foster a revealing attitude towards the world if we want to fight climate change effectively, at the expense of exporting our current attitudes towards nature.

3.3.2 The Need for a Paradigm Shift

Scheffler, in the first chapter of his book, pointed out the core challenge climate change poses toward the late capitalistic way of life: “We must decide what costs we are willing to bear, and how far we are willing to alter our lives, in order to arrest or minimise processes that will otherwise create miserable conditions of life for many future inhabitants of this planet and may lead eventually to human extinction [...] To what extent can the problem of climate change be addressed through the existing system of nation-states and international organisations, and to what extent does the need to confront this problem call for the development of new structures of global

¹⁰⁹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

governance?”¹¹⁰. Scheffler decided not to focus on these questions, giving priority to unveiling the intergenerational interdependence between the present and future people.

Notwithstanding, I hope my argument stressed the primary urgency in deciding “how far we are willing to alter our lives” and how deeply our contingent phenomenological¹¹¹ experience of time influences our environmental concerns. Our instrumental view towards nature limits our environmental moral sensitivity. In this thesis, I am not pretending to propose a solution for institutional inertia. Neither I am pretending to shape a normative sociological conclusion on the alienating power of temporal instrumentalism, or the domestication of nature in the technological mastery. We have arrived at the limit Marcuse posed as the fundamental question of critical theory in the conclusion of *One-Dimensional Man*: “how can administered individuals who have made their mutilation into their liberties and satisfactions, and thus reproduce it on an enlarged scale—liberate themselves from themselves as well as from their masters?”¹¹²

I will not attempt to answer this question, which is far from the intention, and the possibilities of this thesis. Nonetheless, I can still offer a normative contribute to the debate in environmental ethics regarding the moral motivations to fight climate change. Until now, I showed that the concepts of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism Scheffler outlined are inscribed in a broader academic debate centred on social acceleration and modernisation. In light of that, I renamed them as temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination. Furthermore, I used the distinction between enframing and revealing technologies to show the influence temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination have in the modern tendency to conceive nature instrumentally. I have outlined this pessimistic outlook in an attempt to give an explanation to the institutional, mediatic (related to mass-media), public and private inertia relating to the urgent problem of climate change.

In this final part of the thesis, I want to stress the importance of enhancing intrinsic environmental values to contrast the tendency to conceive nature instrumentally. I will not be able

¹¹⁰ Scheffler, Samuel. *Why Worry about Future Generations?*, 2018, p.7-8.

¹¹¹ Here, I used the term phenomenological to refer to the focus of my analysis on the time-consciousness and the experience of time as phenomenon. Therefore, I am not referring to the philosophical study of phenomenology, but to the more general sense of phenomenological as related to the study of consciousness and the object of direct experience.

¹¹² Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 255.

to expose an understanding of *whether* this shift is possible in the late modern society, and if yes, then *how*. I have already flagged that I do not want to find an answer to Marcuse's fundamental question nor ask whether humans can (or should?) emancipate themselves from the process of modernisation. However, the present analysis allows me to normatively claim that an intrinsic valorisation and enhancement of nature is more desirable to strengthen our environmental moral sensitivity and make us motivated to fight climate change. Rosa's frenetic standstill is visible also in the environmental context, in which the present system of state-nations and international organisations appears to be inadequate in successfully fighting climate change. The instrumental vision towards nature affects consistently the moral ability of the individuals to identify their behaviours that might affect the ecosystem, in whole or in part. An intrinsic approach towards nature, on the opposite, would make people enhance nature, and all its products, as such, for its own sake. Thus, individuals would increase their moral sensitivity towards environmental concerns, leading them to revalue their actions in light of their potential ecological impact.

The debate in environmental ethics offers some objections to this argument. For instance, Bryan Norton¹¹³ argues this shift is counterproductive and politically controversial because it is possible to gain the same goal by applying "an adequate ecological understanding of human dependence on natural system along with moral concern for the well-being of future generations"¹¹⁴. In defence of this position, he states the following convergence principle: "policies serving the interests of the human species as a whole, and in the long run, will also serve the interests of nature and vice-versa"¹¹⁵.

Nevertheless, many arguments developed in this thesis show precisely the opposite: human conceptions of technology and progress are included in the process of modernisation, which implies domination over nature. Domestication of nature served a direct and objectively fruitful interest in the modern era, without safeguarding nature's interests. An instrumental approach towards nature considers the exploitation of the environment in the interests of the human species. Therefore, this paradigm shift from an instrumental to an intrinsic vision of nature is necessary to protect the environment from the tendency of technological progress to exploit nature for its instrumental aims.

¹¹³ Norton, Boek G. *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

¹¹⁴ Davion, Victoria. *Anthropocentrism, Artificial Intelligence, and Moral Network Theory: An Ecofeminist Perspective*, Environmental Values, Vol. 11, N. 2, 2002.

¹¹⁵ Norton, Boek G. *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 240.

However, I do not mean that technological progress is not desirable or that we should free ourselves from its dependence. On the other hand, I think we should focus on how we can intrinsically value nature to avoid its exploitation and to enhance a more sustainable way of life. In doing that, we would be willing to alter our lives as far as the environmental concerns are enhanced and perceived intrinsically valid and urgent, and not instrumental for other human interests.

Conclusion

This thesis has started considering Scheffler's explanation of the actual parochialist mentality we express towards time. His theoretical framework has been shown drastically limited to a highly speculative analysis, which grasps a radical change of mentality between ancients and moderns, without developing this intuition further. The many different critiques on the late-capitalism and critical theories of the post-modern condition exposed in this thesis show a deep interest in understanding the sociological influence of our conception of time. They pointed out a very different perspective on Scheffler's idea of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism. This new perspective raised radically different environmental ethical issues, making this work focused more on the harmfulness of the modern instrumental approach towards both time and space, instead of dealing with intergenerational issues.

To sum up, I started criticising Scheffler's theoretical framework and, more specifically, his understanding of temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism and their causes. In doing so, I detected Scheffler's difficulty in determining whether the explanations given for these phenomena were their *explanans* or *explananda*. Furthermore, I speculated on the possibility of understanding the framework he was describing in a more comprehensive way, considering some of the most accredited social critical theories.

I started this analysis in the second chapter, explicating my intention to focus on the influence over what I defined as *environmental moral sensitivity*. With this aim in mind, I considered the theory of space-time compression by Harvey¹¹⁶ firstly. This theory has been useful to show that temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism are not contrasting patterns. On the opposite, they can be understood inscribed in a broader sociological tendency. Secondly, Rosa's theory of social acceleration¹¹⁷ has been able to explain clearly both temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism as manifestations of the overarching process of modernisation. This last process, in turn, is explained as fuelled by technological change and innovation, which accelerated massively throughout the industrial revolutions following the raise of the capitalistic society. However, these theories proposed a causal explanation of temporal parochialism, without clarifying its effect on our moral abilities.

¹¹⁶ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990.

¹¹⁷ Rosa, Harmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, 2013.

In the third chapter, I initially exposed Heath's critique of Rosa's *theory of modernity*¹¹⁸. Heath questioned if social acceleration can be genuinely considered the explanans of modernisation, and not just another explanandum. I compared this critique with a similar consideration regarding Scheffler's explanations of temporal parochialism. From this comparison, I pointed out the inability to claim any causal or consequential explanation of temporal parochialism in the present work. This is because the theories I analysed are not able to give a consequential or deductive account of the cause of modernisation. Nevertheless, the previous analysis has been useful to widen Scheffler's perspective in a more comprehensive framework.

After that, I investigated Hammer's conceptualisation of the modern disenchanted time-consciousness¹¹⁹ to investigate the influence Scheffler's concepts have on our present environmental moral sensitivity. From this analysis, it has been possible to see the relation between the general loss of intrinsic meaning in life, related to modernisation and the tendency to watch, instrumentally, time. In light of this analysis, I decided to rename temporal parochialism and geographical cosmopolitanism in temporal instrumentalism and spatial domination. In this way, the first conveys a more specific pattern of our contemporary relation with time, namely the instrumental feature, instead of the more general accusation of parochialism. The latter, instead, cause an instrumental and dominating attitude over nature and the external world, as a result of the domestication of time implied in the technical progress.

In the end, I tried to shape a normative statement that could stem from the ethical perspective I outlined in this thesis. In doing so, I stress the importance of enhancing intrinsic environmental values to contrast the tendency to conceive nature instrumentally. The framework I developed makes this paradigm shift from an instrumental to an intrinsic concept of nature necessary for environmental concerns. Thus, I claimed an instrumental approach towards nature limits our environmental moral sensitivity. I espoused Heidegger's categorisation of technologies in enframing and revealing¹²⁰ to show an alternative approach towards technologies that avoids an instrumental account to nature.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹¹⁹ Hammer, Espen. *Philosophy and Temporality from Kant to Critical Theory*, 2011.

¹²⁰ M. Heidegger, *The question concerning technology*, in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell, 1977, 2nd ed., Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1993.

Unfortunately, I have not explained how this shift can effectively put into place. However, I hope this work has been useful in showing the importance of a deeper understanding of the time sphere for the moral debate on fighting climate change, investigating the interconnection between our contingent conception of time and what I called environmental moral sensitivity. Furthermore, I hope this work will lead to further studies regarding the importance of an intrinsic valuing of nature and the harmfulness of an instrumental approach towards nature.

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