

THINKING THE ANTIPODES

Australian Essays

PETER BEILHARZ



MONASH University
Publishing

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Philosophy

Les Thomas

Original image: Ian North, *Seasons. Australia. Kongouro*. 1987
Printed on Type C photographs, four panels, each c. 38.5 x 48.5 cm
Available from the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

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Chapter 20

George Seddon and Karl Marx – Nature and Second Nature (2003)

Why should we read Seddon and Marx together? For a start, they are both polymaths, however differently placed; cosmopolitans and locals in different times and places, wondering, both, about our worlds. I align them here with some reflections gathered under the title Nature and Second Nature. To anticipate, let me emphasise that my purpose is not to dichotomise, that is to say that my purpose is not to read Seddon for Nature, and Marx for Second Nature, but rather to align the two in this setting, where we seek *inter alia* to bring together Seddon's work and the project of Thesis Eleven. I take my purpose therefore to be, to wonder about how we think those terms, nature and second nature, and to begin to move beyond the single-minded split between nature and second nature, or nature and culture. For the problem in much recent argument regarding nature and culture is that the split values one term over the other, not least in the Antipodes, where the nature/culture split is especially appealing, given the contrast between the concrete urban edge, and desert or landscape. So I start from a sense of the need for a better way to think this, which might, for example, invoke a third term, especially in the postmarxist culture we inhabit in Thesis Eleven, where categories like Theory and Practice threaten to work much as culture/nature splits do – one swallows the other up, or else the two remain unconnected.

What might such a third term be? Practically, culture and nature are bridged by *experience*. Geographically, culture and nature are bridged by *suburbia*. What connects nature and philosophy in a different optic, might be *architecture*. Ought we then return to the Greeks? *Techné* might also be a possible third term; but all this only makes critical sense after the fact, as in Arendt in *The Human Condition*. The problem with *techné*, for us, is a

modern problem. The relationship between theory, praxis and techne only becomes apparent after the Industrial Revolution. We can never really know the Greeks qua Greeks, only via their interlocutors, and within our own cultural horizons.

To express the problem in different terms: in terms of Western Intellectual History, the cultural turn into the second half of the twentieth century transforms nature into image or representation. Nature becomes a floating signifier, and Theory becomes its surrogate. We encounter the clever discoverers of the idea that there is no such thing as nature, even though we live in it, just as we still inhabit a world of things. The ecological turn, in turn, romanticises nature often as image or metaphor, where Nature is Divinity, Providence, Harmony. But 'nature' is not just an image of the urban other, it is a collective noun for species, ecosystems, contexts. Nature has a referent, but not an essence. The sense of place that draws us together here has to do with experience, not essence. Meantime, culture is not only genetically linked but ontologically continuous with nature, most evidently as cultivation, or agriculture. None of which is to say anything new, but merely to wonder about how we name and classify our worlds. To align Seddon and Marx is to open any number of possible perspectives, but one of them, plainly, is geography. As Braudel put it twenty years ago 'ecology' is among other things a contemporary code-word for 'geography'.

So, as ever, we face problems of how to think about being in the world – this world, here now, in Fremantle or in Melbourne – and how to do this without creating conceptual prisons that obscure the nature of these worlds for us.

So much by way of prefatory remarks. Let me proceed to my subject. I first met George Seddon (on paper) rather recently; my loss. I got the knowledge from Trevor Hogan, the cultural messenger from Western Australia. I think my own discovery was gratuitous, coincidental. In 1996 I read Seddon's essay on the Australian backyard. The same year my family and I spent a week in Perth, looking. We visited the Gallery, among other places. It was a peculiar encounter. There was a memoir for the painter Ian Burn on show, including a spooky seventies video with a young Terry Smith in New York City: I didn't feel comfortable. It's not impossible I was hungover. In the Gallery shop I lingered over a book called *Swan Song* but, feeling contrary, I left the book, only to make a special trip back later. Like most intellectuals I guess, it is my habit to study a place before I go there. What *Swan Song* afforded was something more like a song line.

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I had just finished my book on Bernard Smith, *Imagining The Antipodes*. I suppose that I was more open than before to receiving Seddon's work. There were symbolic connections, too: Seddon's Swan-visual was the Port Jackson Painter's image; there was a coincidence of naming and recognition. That Swan is Bernard Smith's bookplate image. George and I met in a session on Bernard's work – or on images of Australia? – at the 1997 Melbourne Writers Festival; and then there was *Landprints*. It became clear to me that George's work intrigued because of its focus on place, but not in a romantic sense, more like the idea or third term of *habitat* in the work of Zygmunt Bauman (to which I will return later).

Let us enter through the Australian backyard, as a synoptic image of Seddon at work. Those of you who know the essay will remember it as direct, descriptive in voice, reminiscent without being nostalgic. Its procedure is serial – it opens as follows:

When I was young in the 1930's, and for several decades on either side, the function of the typical Australian backyard in the cities and country towns could be known easily from a list of its contents. (Seddon 1994, 22)

There follows just such a list, and its smells – the chooks, the outdoor lavatory dunny, Velvet soap, Reckitts blue dye, the ubiquitous lemon tree. This is the backyard of my parents, in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne via Stuttgart and Haifa, and it is the backyard of the house we bought in 1984 in Northcote. Seddon traces some of these regional and ethnic variations – it is a beautiful piece of writing as well as a sepia print. There are all the things here that we associate with the Professor of Things in General. There is a linguistic excursus on the history of the word 'yard'; Geoffrey Hamlyn gets a guernsey, there is a fascinating passage on the classic quarter-acre = 100 links or one chain, and a lovely moment that opens as follows: 'In Perth, there was a fine debate in council in 1876 on pigs' (Seddon 1994, 29). The point I want to make is more powerful, and substantive. Seddon's linguistic or material self-consciousness undergirds the whole argument. The argument, hidden in part by choko vines and obscured by the equally ubiquitous fig-tree, is I think as follows: The backyard is 3 things, the field of 3 activities: it is: 1. an economy, 2. 'nature', i.e. predominantly rural and 3. it is a culture, and this in two significant, different respects. It is part of a culture of self-sufficiency, *and* it is a culture of tidiness and order, both understood in the sense of culture as *activity*. So, to repeat, there is under Seddon's list of contents

an unfolding sense of the plural or multiple *functions* of this space we call the backyard, economic, natural and cultural, where culture is a practice rather than a series of empty if evocative representations or names like Victrola lawnmowers and Vacola preserving jars. Seddon's essay therefore is an achievement like the best of anthropology: for its moves make the backyard exotic or distanced as well as familiar, and the result is like the anthropologist's best sticky question: well, what *is* a market – an economy or a culture?

But if the backyard is economy, nature, and culture, it is also history or has a history, as Seddon observes when he introduces the theme of gardening as order, where gardening becomes a struggle against nature or at least for a particular, manicured conception of socialised nature. As Seddon expresses it, the mania for tidiness also represents a discourse with the environment and closer to our own times, gardening becomes a conspicuous element in consumer culture. So that you could imagine a parallel text to Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific* where it was the garden, rather than the painting, through which historic paths into the Antipodes might be tracked.

The sensibilities shown in this essay are evident in various papers gathered in *Swan Song* and *Landprints*. Let me survey some of these before turning to Marx. I think there are five things at least that strike me about reading Seddon's work. *First*, it is cultured; he knows the echoes in other people's discussions and traditions; as soon as you hear a resonance, he names it. Seddon knows how to think comparatively. *Second*, it is visual, whether implicitly or explicitly. Its senses of place are visually evocative. The writing is sensual. *Third*, it shows an ongoing capacity to combine particularity and generality, or to be suggestive and substantive at the same time. *Fourth*, it combines a practical skepticism towards academic bullshit with a deep commitment to intellectual activity. *Fifth*, the voice is inclusive, vernacular, in the best sense, as in the observation that the banished personal pronoun is now creeping back, 'even in doctoral theses, I rather like it'. The voice invites, as well as it educates, and connects.

But as Hegel said of Scholasticism, in order to swim you need to get into the water, and it is in the fine texture of Seddon's writing that you see the point, as when he observes, for example, that what pleases us aesthetically is as often artefactual as 'natural'. Seddon wants to respect nature without demonising culture. Humans despair, but they also improve. The perspective involved in Seddon's work is as gentle as it is radical. 'Australia is not a big country; agricultural Australia is about the

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size of France. It is a rather small country with huge distances' (Seddon 1995, 70). And so on, and so forth! only the author can do better than me at this, so enough, or else read Seddon yourself, read Seddon on Rottneest and hop on the ferry – go.

To summarise: the local markings and flavours of Seddon's work are apparent. What is peculiar to his work, and which in my mind places him uniquely in the same space as Bernard Smith is that (give or take Marx) Seddon thinks the Antipodes (and in this case, the Antipodes of Western Australia) comparatively, in terms of new world experience, and within the conceptual frames of thinking which we have learned to dichotomise as romanticism and enlightenment, frames here combined (Beilharz 1997). He knows that if Australian civilisation is different to European or American, then this has something to do with the Pleistocene, and not just with the laconic tradition of popular culture; with images of the bush greenhide and stringybark. He knows that romanticism is a deeply compromised tradition, for its love of nature is contrived and urban. He knows that the rationalist current of Enlightenment thinking too readily is allowed to overpower experience. And he knows that while humans need to respect trees, we are not trees ourselves; we do not have 'roots' except in a self-constructed, imaginary sense – and these, as it happens, are sensibilities that cross over from *Swan Song* to *Landprints*.

Romantics value specificity over generality, ergo the centrality of sense of place which so many moderns share. Yet it is mobility which sets our species apart, though we seem even in postmodern times reluctant to identify ourselves with movement in our antipodean case, between hemispheres rather than with place, or places, instead recreating places, simulating heritage in our own images of what is authentically Melbourne, Sydney or Fremantle. All the same, these are our landprints. It is a peculiarity of the Antipodes in its abstract sense that it was to serve not only as the imaginary refuse dump of Europe but also as its utopian escape hatch, as Seddon relates in discussion of de Foigny. The Antipodes were just that, the backyard of Europe, a place where the junk nestled with local dreams as well as those of outsiders. Whatever else the Antipodes might be, the idea mainly involves projection, not least that involving the 'pathetic fallacy', where we project human values and emotions onto landscape. We moderns still find it difficult to think outside of animism, or anthropocentrism. The implication of all this is apparent, even if little else is: we humans have difficulty thinking about what it is that is proper to ourselves, and what is specific to nature, let alone what goes in between.

Historically, we mate the natural with the supernatural, nature with the unnatural, with the cultural, or else with the artificial. Seddon connects the third and fourth antonyms, the cultural and the artificial, when in *Landprints* he extends discussion to the order/disorder dichotomy. Here the point is that simple one, often made today conversationally about the production of video-documentaries, that the hand which holds the camera magically retains its invisibility. We work hard, some of us, to make our gardens look relaxed and comfortable. Artifice is abundant and ubiquitous. It is this, incidentally, which makes the western antipodean images of Richard Woldendorp so powerful: you cannot help but see his hand in the photographs, a fact which proves Seddon and Ruskin both at the same time (Winton and Woldendorp 2000).

Seddon's sense is that within or alongside these classificatory frames and the Eurocentric residues of thinking about genus and species, there have also been three persistent Northern European dreams of place, epitomised by images of the Mediterranean, the Pacific, and the wild nature of the jungle. What these tropes have in common with some varieties of contemporary pastoral is precisely their projection, or imagism – here there are simply too many floating signifiers, as in the redemptive melancholy of Charles Reich, where the city must be rebuilt as the country. Seddon does not refer here to Faust, or to Spengler's *Decline of the West*, though the connection may be suggestive. The point is that we need to know nature as contemplation, and not only as instrument, or to put it differently, that we might be able to know nature practically without viewing it merely as a means of transformation. Here we meet the problem of limits, and the intellectual obstacle thus raised is not the Enlightenment, where reason struggles endlessly with experience, but the spirit of Faust, where to know is only ever, to act – to rebuild the world. To connect to Marx, to whose work I shall turn in a moment, this is, to anticipate, via the figure of Trotsky, the way in which Marxism as productivism becomes part of the instrumental culture which the young Marx set out to criticise. The connection to Spengler here is different, for *The Decline of the West* conceptually separates nature from culture only to elevate nature over culture. Parenthetically, this might also indicate the possibility that the idea of civilisation could be a possible third term, or even stand for third nature.

The political issue of this concern in Seddon's work results in a practical, rather than magical ecology. We should not despoil the land, not because it has rights of its own, but because our own rights are merely custodial. This

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is the language of English ethical socialism, of Richard Tawney and after. And if we are shifting in the direction of socialism, perhaps it is time to introduce Karl Marx.

I first met Karl Marx (on paper) thirty years ago, in fifth form, when I tried, not for the last time, to read *Das Kapital*. The encounter was unproductive; I returned to rock and roll instead. Between 1972 and 1975 I educated myself in Marxism, and into the later seventies I was led through the labyrinth by two brilliant teachers, Alastair Davidson and Zawar Hanfi. In 1980 I got as close as I ever will to meeting Marx. I discovered, after the fact, that I had been led by the hidden hand of destiny to his seat in the Old Reading Room of the British Library, G7. If it is true, as we often hear said, that the brains of some are located in their arses, then this was as close as a young Marxist could get to kissing the pope's ring. Perhaps it was this which finally resulted in the birth of *Thesis Eleven* a year later.

So what does Marx have to say about nature, and second nature? The textual basis of our encounter is almost entirely with manuscripts unpublished during Marx's lifetime, across the *Paris Manuscripts*, the *German Ideology* and the *Grundrisse*, with an aftereffect in the first volume of *Capital*. So there is also some work of interpretation here, as with the scattered observations across Seddon's writing. If reading Seddon theoretically is like interpreting landscape for geology, looking for clues as in the Backyard essay, reading Marx on nature is difficult for other reasons. Marx is more theoretically explicit, but his views on nature and second nature are suggestive and ambiguous. Two opening observations and some background before we enter that labyrinth. First, nature is central for Marx, even if as precondition, for his is a naturalism, even if the focus shifts across the nineteenth century to capitalism naturalised, i.e. second nature. Second, the concept of second nature is in principle historical, and ambiguous in application in Marx's work. It is a concept to be used or filled, rather than a concept like, say, commodity, which is rich in conceptual determinations. Second nature is an historical concept which itself has a patchy history. Hegel posits the idea of second nature; Adorno plays with it; Bauman returns to it; Marx thinks with it, without ever working it up.

In the interim, between Marx and us, western Marxism turns away from nature, to embrace culture. Our traditions within critical Marxism turn away from nature, because of the need to shift away from positivism and away from the dogma of Dialectical Materialism, towards history.

Engels formulates the principles of dialectics as universal. Infamously, there are claimed to be three such laws, the transformation of quantity into quality; the interpenetration of opposites, and the negation of the negation. The only principle carried through critical theory is the refusal of identity-thinking. Marxism's difficulty with nature, however, is not only a post Marxian predicament. There are obviously unresolved tensions in Marx's work, between the attraction to natural science and strong truth claims, and the incipient defense of *Geisteswissenschaft*. Marx is caught somewhere between Darwin and Dilthey. After Engels, the Darwinians rule, especially Kautsky. Critical Marxists then turn away from nature in the face of Diamat, Stalinism, Lysenko. Orthodox Marxism, following Trotsky, becomes the mirror or production; Department One of the economy rules. The economic logic of Trotsky and Preobrazhensky and then Stalin is industrialising; agriculture is an embarrassment compared to the high romance of American productive forces shod with Bolshevik nails. More sensitive minds, like Gramsci's, turn away from nature in sympathy with the modesty of Vico, where we as in a footnote in *Capital* can only claim really to know what is human, though it is characteristic of Gramsci's thinking that, as a boy from the periphery, he knows the importance of agriculture and uneven development. Into our own times, you could count on one hand the Marxists who take food seriously as a production item rather than a consumption item. It must surely be a sign of our times that critical theory is interested in food only as dining out or as style, not as work or production. In Gramsci, in any case, history is valued both because we make it and because we do so within limits. Only that degree of modesty in Gramsci, qua Vico, subsequently becomes counterproductive, as culture has swallowed up nature conceptually in critical theory as surely as capital chews up nature in actuality, and all we have left is representations, even as nature suffers under the weight of modernity's obsession with the pursuit of rational mastery.

The prehistory of this present is Marx's own work. I think there are four obvious texts, the *Paris Manuscripts*, 1844; the *German Ideology*, 1845, the *Grundrisse*, 1857/8, and *Capital* volume one, 1867. Nature is the ground of much of this thinking, and second nature emerges slowly out of it. In the *Paris Manuscripts* nature and history become coextensive. Marx writes, for example that

The nature which develops in human history – the genesis of human society – is man's real nature; hence nature as it develops through

industry, even though in an estranged form, is true anthropological nature (Marx 1844, 303).

Or with a slightly different emphasis:

History itself is a real part of natural history, of nature developing into man. Natural science will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be one science (Marx 1844, 303).

In these early writings, then, the first object of human culture is nature. The senses open us up into the world. Creativity and richness in needs become the *differentia specifica* of human animals.

Much of the *Paris Manuscripts*, of course, consists in the philosophical critique of political economy. Capitalism involves the analytical shift away from landed to moveable property. Private property is the result of the alienation of labour, not the other way around. Private property or capital is therefore an alienation of natural property. Alienation famously involves alienation from species-being (*Gattungswesen*), whereby Marx introduces the notion of inorganic nature. Marx plays with the idea that nature is the inorganic body of humans, inorganic in the sense that it is the direct extension or precondition of human existence. We live in nature, which means that nature is in some sense our body, as differently later in Freud, where culture is prosthetic. Humans do not secrete culture, they create it; we create, we generate abundance, and at the same time inequality. 'Man is directly a natural being', Marx writes, endowed with vital powers, therefore active, creative, yet at the same time natural, corporeal, sensuous and therefore suffering, like other animals and plants. 'To be sensuous is to suffer', he says, 'but man is not merely a natural being: he is a human natural being, that is to say, he is a being for himself' (Marx 1844, 276, 336).

Humanity is therefore both natural and historical. Humans are distinguished by language, production, more powerfully, by consciousness, creativity, culture, which cuts both ways; for this is also the text where Marx spits at the 'pestilential breath of civilization'. Architects raise utopia and dystopia in their imaginations, where bees merely labour.

The *German Ideology*, a year on, contains some more hints in this direction, though we can only wonder what Marx might really have achieved if he had not wasted so much time tilting at windmills. The *German Ideology* opens with a naturalistic parable, the story of the German

philosopher whose life mission was to destroy the idea of gravity, as if it were the illusion of gravity that made us drown. In the space of a year, now in collaboration with Engels, we can detect here a slight anthropological shift. Nature is slowly being pushed away, both by the path of capitalist development and by its critic. Here Marx confidently announces, after the earlier combination of history and nature, that it is history which rules. 'We know only a single science, the science of history' (Marx 1845, 28). The sentiment could be Vico, or it could be Montesquieu. The shift of emphasis toward anthropology is also anthropocentric. History is civilisation, the process of shifting away from nature. History is the history of the production of needs. Nature becomes a capitalist artefact. Yet for Marx at this stage, context remains fundamental, for the *German Ideology* is also the text where, in effect, he defines essence as nature. The essence of the fish, he tells us, is its being, water, the condition of which in turn depends on the development of industrialisation. Essence is existence is history, is nature.

By the time we reach the *Grundrisse*, the frame of reference has moved on, though there is a sense in which the text combines the concerns of the *Paris Manuscripts* and the *German Ideology*, the philosophical critique of political economy and the science of history. The matters that concern us now have to do with the forms which precede capitalist production. Marx's premise here is that the reign of capital depends on a severance from nature. The wage-labour/capital relation depends on releasing the worker from the soil as his *natural workshop*. Precapitalist or for that matter premodern property forms depend on community relations that are naturally grown, *Naturwüchsig* (Marx 1857/8, 471). Subsistence nature is the inorganic nature of humans, whereas wage labour is the product of *history*. So here Marx addresses two basic facts of modernity, geographical and social mobility, migration and movement, but with the twist that these are seen not only as the history of progress towards a human being rich in needs, but also as an ontological separation from nature. For precapitalist property means belonging to a community, and by means of the relationship to this community, belonging to the land and soil, to the earth as the individual's organic property. The emergence of capital as moveable property therefore rests upon the transcendence of another form of property. Second nature, here, is capital as *private* property, where property becomes the other (Marx 1857/8, 492).

The ambiguity in Marx's thinking is apparent. Of course there are residual aspects of romanticism at work here. Yet on balance, Marx's

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own sympathy is with the process he is describing, where capitalism is prehistory, and industrialism is the precondition of socialism understood as the pursuit of the richness in needs. Second nature is not inferior to nature, for Marx, except inasmuch as it retains its capitalist markings. By the more openly romantic norms and values of the *Paris Manuscripts* industrialisation is plainly an abomination, and this is part of Marx that never leaves us; even in *Capital* he still fulminates against the idea of the division of labour. Yet the procession of his work, culminating in the only text considered here actually published under Marx's authority, is clearly toward the goal of rational mastery of a socialist kind. The concerns of the section of the *Grundrisse* on Precapitalist Economic Formations returns in *Capital* One as the problem of the So-Called Primitive Accumulation. The primitive accumulation of capital is primarily the primitive accumulation of capitalist relations. These are achieved through violence against peasants and nature in the process that we now know as the compulsory making of the working class. Second nature is formed here as capitalist nature, via the profusion of commodity relations and the phenomenon of commodity fetishism. The greatest achievement of capitalist culture is the naturalisation or universalisation of capitalist relations. And so Marx concludes, in a far more powerful insight than the dialectical hocus-pocus that prefigures socialist revolution in Chapter 32, that

The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature (Marx 1867, 726).

So what does this add up to, this incipient concept of second nature in Marx? The idea of second nature itself has become naturalised in vernacular usage; doubtless it has other histories which I am unaware of. There is to my knowledge very little commentary on the idea in the Marx reception literature. Alfred Schmidt, in his *Concept of Nature in Marx*, offers a skeletal summary, characterising Hegel's as a position where nature is blind and second nature manifests reason or objective spirit. As Schmidt observes, Marx's twist on this is to insist that second nature also becomes unconscious, or blind (Schmidt 1972). The 'second' nature is still the first, though in a different sense we might add that second nature is potentially transitional. Marx, in any case, seeks to subject capitalism to the same logical critique as Hegel applies to first nature, for it is beyond planning, control or human power. As Horkheimer and Adorno put it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'Civilization is the victory of society over

nature which changes everything into pure nature' (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944, 186).

Schmidt assembles this argument in the same moment that Habermas is puzzling, relatedly, over what it would mean to begin to move towards a rational society. The particular admixture of what we call romanticism and rationalism is striking, and never without its redemptive motivation. Those were the sixties. Karl Korsch reflected on the issues in a less happy time, thirty years earlier. In his 1936 study *Karl Marx*, which remains one of the best books on Marx, Korsch addresses the way in which Marx's work often seems to be framed by the coordinates of *Naturwüchsigkeit* and the 'social laws of nature'. Korsch observes that for Marx *Naturwüchsigkeit* was primarily a negative value, though Korsch would not in his moment have had access to the *Grundrisse*, where Marx's ambivalence is more apparent. Korsch refers mainly to the *German Ideology* and to *Capital*, connecting the idea of the naturally grown to 'natural' divisions of labour, species being, the state, law, language and race as apparently immutable. Naturally-grown relations represent the challenge, for Marx, for they are open to change. Similarly with 'social law of nature', which refer to the wisdoms of political economy turned into eternal truths, when they themselves are historical products. As Korsch puts it, Marx, to the contrary of romanticism and political economy 'applies both terms for the purpose of extending the realm of history and society, ie. of a conscious social action against the so-called eternal necessities of an altogether inaccessible "realm of nature"' (Korsch 1936, 193). From this, it would follow logically or serially that Marx's project is the idea of socialism understood as third nature, though here Marx would fall into the same pattern he himself claimed to discern in Hegel; if second nature is perpetually reshaped, there may be nothing beyond second nature. Marx's sense of historical movement cannot escape from its own telos. Simone Weil wrote in the thirties in *Oppression and Liberty* that it was only during the last century that it came to be realised that society itself is a force of nature, as kind as the others, as dangerous for us if we fail to succeed in mastering it (Weil 1958, 20). The German philosopher who believed that we needed only to eliminate the idea of gravity in order to prevent drowning was indeed a fool, a man with a lost cause. Weil's argument, like Marx's, indicates that the case is indeed different when it comes to belief in the immutability of second nature.

This is, finally, the sense given to the idea of second nature by Zygmunt Bauman. In Bauman's work the idea of second nature could cover not only

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something like consumer consciousness but also loyalty to the Führer; each, different regime, whether here economic or political, works hard at seeking to naturalise itself. Textually speaking, Bauman centres on the idea of second nature in *Towards a Critical Sociology*, published in 1976. There he argues that the arrival of sociology coincides with the realisation of second nature. Nature is the name we give to excess, to that which resists our desire to change the world; therefore 'nature' is the byproduct of culture. Society is second nature. Second nature is therefore enabling and protective as well as conforming and constraining. We can wear it as a light cloak, even though it often seems a casing as hard as steel. Second nature may not permeate the very essence of our being; as Marx says in *Capital*, alongside the claim that capitalism generates a working class which sees capital as second nature, it is really only the dull compulsions of everyday life that see us apparently kneeling at the foot of the fetish, when we are in fact only following the sole repertoire available to us, believe or not. We mouth the words as the fetish speaks; the space remains to change all this, only we do not know how to exercise it. Whatever the case, the point is that second nature is contingent; unlike the blanket-fog dominant ideology thesis enthusiastically dispensed by Marxists in the sixties, it still offers room to move (Bauman 1976; Beilharz 2000).

If I wheel towards Bauman's work as I begin to close, it is not only because these are fields where I have more recently laboured, but also because I suspect that the sympathies there might be more suggestive, finally, than those between Seddon and Marx. Bauman's is not a primarily ecological or geographical (Braudel) project, but it may well be more open to nature and to second nature than much else available to us in Critical Theory. This much is already evident in the way that Bauman suggests habitat as a more useful alternative to 'society'. The other associations are apparent, in thinking about weeds, gardens, limits; it is no accident that Jim Scott uses Bauman as a pivot for his own work on forestry in *Seeing Like A State* (Scott 1998). Once again, we can but wonder how the critical insights of Foucault could be lavished so indulgently on the traditional habits of law and medicine while exemplary modernist activities like agriculture and architecture remain somehow at the edge of scrutiny. More generally, it seems to me that Seddon and Bauman share something of the necessary discomfort with the intellectual position, where we know that we need to know but we also know that the prostheses of understanding too readily get in our way. As intellectuals we know that we too readily substitute explananda for explanandum or in this case, second nature for

nature. Intellectuals arguably have a characteristic gift for the fetishism which they attribute to the others.

To close on a different, though I think continuous note. Twenty years ago we founded Thesis Eleven under Marx's banner, publically wearing our commitment to the thesis on Feuerbach which in English translation reads: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however is to *change* it'. In our heads we have written variations on that theme ever since; the point is better to interpret the world, for it changes, and so on. The Sydney philosopher John Anderson used to refer to the Eleventh Thesis as the last thesis, and yes, amen, there is a sense now in which we inhabit a world not only after manifestoes, but also after theses. But if, hypothetically, we were launching *Thesis Eleven* again today or tomorrow, in the company of George Seddon and in the spirit of his work, perhaps we would call it *Thesis Eight*, and repeat, together with Marx, that

Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice (Marx 1845b, 5).

Seddon's compass points in the same direction, even if his bearings are different. It also thus, points out, across hemispheres and across boundaries. This may be one sense in which our projects coincide, one journey we can share together across these expanses of nature and second nature. There are footprints to follow.

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