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**EXPERIENTIAL EMBODIMENT
AND HUMAN IMMEDIACY: ADORNO'S NEGATIVE AFFINITY**

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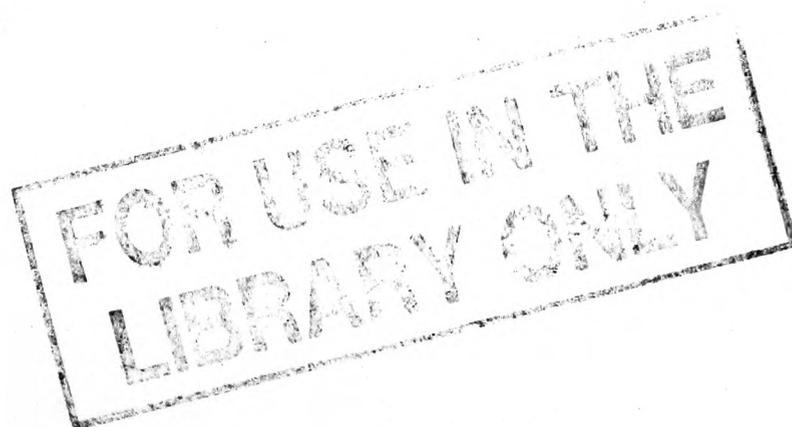


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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for the continuing possibility of Adorno set against the backdrop of a post-modern proliferation of affects. A major theoretical contention is the concept of the subject: a sticking point within philosophy. The thesis takes this up and offers a new pathway without falling into the cliché of a renewal of Adorno's position. Drawing on Adorno's theoretical thoughts on the subject the thesis contends that the subject is that which by turns dissolves all eventualities or more proportionally acts like a placeholder for the newly emerging: structures that cannot be explained by recourse to the laws that govern its parts. These experiential structures present a surface, resistance, or solidarity that upon closer examination dissolve back into the ephemeral. Although such structures are profligate and prolific, the thesis adopts as its major concern artworks and aesthetics. Following Adorno, a claim is made for artworks that present open-ended possibilities. They are able for example to critically challenge the dominant hegemony the profundity that all too easily sides with the oppressors of life. What philosophy a critical tool in furtherance of the good life, a concept restaged here takes from art is not a sense of equivalence, art and philosophy are held apart in a creative and critical tension, but the sense of yearning that animates the nonconceptual side of art which the concept negates. The yearning, being experiential, is always embodied. Its fulfilment negates the immediacies, the mere appearance of life, particularly in its systematically reflexive form. The conclusion concurs with Adorno in the thought that affinity with the object is achieved not as the resultant of identity thinking, but through the act of definite negation of identifying schema.

Contents

Introduction.....	5 - 27
Chapter One: Language, Authenticity, Being.....	28 - 66
Chapter Two: Concept and Constellation.....	67 - 105
Chapter Three: Objectivity.....	106 - 148
Chapter Four: Mimesis and Rationality.....	149 - 192
Chapter Five: Reflexion/Reflection.....	193 - 254
Chapter Six: Art and Aesthetics.....	255 - 276
Summary, Concluding Remarks.....	277-278
Bibliography.....	279 - 295

Introduction

One of the many unintended consequences of an engagement with Adorno's philosophical writings is the re-inscription of a changed metaphysics and a changed aesthetic sensibility, proof if needed of Adorno's claim that theory has as its addendum, embodiment and a changed praxis. What is set up and unfolds argues for the continued feasibility of Adorno's philosophy at this historic stage, by presenting his work in a manner that is, hopefully, both illuminating and insightful. Thus the hegemony of its object gives the dissertation its context: socio-historically speaking no work escapes the market and as Adorno readily acknowledges his work is no exception.¹ However Adorno seeks to reclaim the philosophical integrity through the manner of the works presentation. Adorno's works resist easy consumption suggesting that direct communication is weighted less than the need for powerful expression. In practice this marks the work as difficult for the casual reader and translators alike who tend to begrudge the lack of transparent immediacy of Adorno's thinking. Suffice it to say for Adorno thought is not a painless process.

'For thought there is really no other possibility, no other opportunity, than to do what the miner's adage forbids: to work one's way through the darkness without a lamp, without possessing the positive through the higher concept of the negation of the negation and to immerse

¹ Cf. Theodor Adorno, "Dialectics not a Standpoint," *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B Ashton, (Great Britain: Routledge, 1996), p. 4. 'No theory today escapes the market place. Each one is offered as a possibility among competing opinions; all are put up for choice; all are swallowed. There are no blinders for thought to don against this and the self-righteous conviction that my own theory is spared that fate will surely deteriorate into self-advertizing.'

oneself in the darkness as deeply as one possibly can.’²

Immersing oneself in the darkness could be a description of how this thesis has progressed with the proviso that thereafter it has sought to shine a light into the proverbial darkness, to check, at this historic stage the feasibility of Adorno's concerns. To that end and to begin to clarify the dilemma expressed in the above, at this juncture there is a crucial distinction to be made between Hegelian philosophy and the philosophy of Adorno. For, as will be shown in Chapter One, Hegel makes determinate negation vital but thereafter it passes over into affirmation and ideology; the belief that negation taken far enough in its reflection of itself is one with positivity.

Adorno refuses to follow Hegel in this move. For Adorno if the negation of the negation is the positive then the idea already contains within itself the thesis of the philosophy of identity, it assumes the unity of subject and object a priori. The temptation is to think that by negating the negation one has already obtained the positive. In the move away from Hegel Adorno treats certain autonomous works of art as privileged opponents of reification and positive ideologies. The model of thought in each case is unconscious historiography and historical crystallization: processes and results that reflect the tensions and contradictions of advanced consciousness.³

² Theodor Adorno, "Lecture Eighteen," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2000), p. 144.

³ To catch a glimpse beyond the prison of the 'I' requires not distraction but the utmost tension. For Adorno the tensions and their possible resolution that transpire in the relation between the individual and the universal preserves the 'shudder', an involuntary aesthetic comportment and protosubjectivity that although it isn't immediately mimesis is the process mimesis sets in motion and in which, modified, mimesis is preserved. From the blind anxiety of the shudder subjectivity stirs in the act of being touch by the other. Viewed through the lens of human immediacy, aesthetic comportment assimilates itself to the other rather than subordinating it. Such a constitutive relation of the subject to objectivity in aesthetic comportment joins eros and knowledge. The possibility and agency of just such a set of dynamic and dialectical relations is the main concern of this thesis. Cf. Theodor Adorno, "Theories on the Origins of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor,

The material consciousness that Adorno urges upon us, one that exhibits the contradictions and distortions of social consciousness, of the way we live, envelops the negative or dissonant as the new or the discarded: neither are consistent with a sense of adequacy. What is divisive lends itself to what is decisive. Mimetic power which is effectively the power of qualitative distinction joins with the *ratio* in order to produce itself anew.⁴

As we shall see in the argument leading up to and including Chapter Four, *Mimesis and Rationality*, the movement the negative moment in consciousness is anti-foundational. Adorno is attempting the critical rescue of experience not the positing of psychologism or anti-psychologism as first philosophy. The genesis of the logical is not psychological motivation. Neither is logic a pure entity the ideal being of the propositional in itself. Logic for Adorno is a sort of social behaviour or social process eminently historical and tied to material relations 'The adaptation of the *ratio* to its contrary, a state of consciousness that has not developed any fixed identity [...] is fully realized, however through the artifice of the name.'⁵ Adorno

(United States of America: The Athlone Press, 1997), p. 331.

⁴ An excellent account of Adorno's use of mimesis is to be found in Martin Jay's essay "Mimesis and Mimetology: Adorno and Lacoue-Labarthe," in, *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervart, (United States of America: The MIT Press, 1997), pp. 31-33. 'A first approximation of Adorno's use of mimesis [...], would necessarily stress its relational character, its way of bridging but not collapsing differences [...] Rather than producing hierarchical subsumption under subjectively generated category, it preserves the rough equality of the object and subject involved. More precisely, it assimilates the latter to the former in such a way that the unposited, unintended object implicitly predominates, thwarting the imperialist gesture of subjective control and constitution that is the hallmark of philosophical idealism. [...] Instead [of the word imitation] Adorno prefers the verb *anschniegen* (to snuggle up or mould to) to stress the relationship of contiguity. [...] In more passively assimilating itself to the other, the subject of mimesis also preserves the sensuous, somatic element that the abstractions of idealist reason factor out of cognition or sublimate into a higher rationality. [...] [M]imesis necessarily entails a crucial role for the body in the interaction between self and world. Equally important, it is the body as both the source of pleasure and the locus of pain'

⁵ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (Great Britain: Verso, 1997), p. 67.

makes the claim that mimesis and the *ratio* have become somewhat disengaged in part as a result of the contemporary re-inscription of the aesthetic sensibility. On the subjective side the repression of mimesis takes the place of its metamorphosis. The declension of experience means that the world, in terms of its objectivity, is losing its openness. The world it seems has no need for a spirit defined by its openness.⁶

Driven by the preponderance of its object, the theoretical seeks to articulate objectively the idea of aesthetic sensibility as an arena of possible reconciliation⁷ and as such comes to inhabit a space between the experiential and cognitive, propositional logic, moving in order to speak the unspeakable and to give expression to suffering.⁸

In a timely manner it will be argued that in-order for subjective mechanisms to lengthen the objective and with the introduction of a changed aesthetic sensibility, the intentional commands less attention than the unintentional; the new or spontaneous could hardly be something that was intended, its prior determination disqualifies it as such.⁹ The new, a topic

⁶ Cf. "Theories on the Origin of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 331.

⁷ Cf. "The Sublime and Play," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 197. 'The ascendancy of the sublime is one with arts compulsion that fundamental contradictions not be covered up but fought through in themselves; reconciliation for them is not the result of the conflict but exclusively that the conflict becomes eloquent.' Cf. "Expression as Eloquence," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 112. For the concept of being eloquent; Cf. "Notes - Semblance and Expression," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 371. '[“Sprachcharacter”]: There is no adequate translation for this concept as Adorno uses it. Its meaning, however, is partly elucidated by a group of related ideas in which Adorno conceives the artwork as something that is, or becomes “beredt” (fluent, expressive), where something comes to or finds “Sprache.” This is a speech where language itself is not necessarily the medium. “Eloquence” has, as a potential, just this implication, and it has therefore been used, reluctantly, for all of the above concepts in one way or another. The problem is of course, that the English concept tends to emphasize the unconflicted sort of fluency and expression. Adorno, however, is not at all concerned with persuasion but rather with expression as gesture, cipher, countenance, script and speech as it arises out of brokenness, fragmentariness or fissuredness.[...]'

⁸ Cf. "The Speculative Moment," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 18. '[S]uffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience, its expression, is objectively conveyed.'

⁹ In a move that owes a lot Kant, the unintentional can be shadowed by the wildest

taken up in Chapter Four, *Mimesis and Rationality*, concerns itself with what has not yet been socially approved, the tabooed as such. Against the backdrop of topical and cultural preferences captured as the true, the truly beautiful and good, the sublime ugliness of the new, something that is not to be taken literally, is a challenge to the power of spiritualization. The appropriation of what has been ostracized, stigmatized, reveals that nature whose suppression is what is truly evil.¹⁰ Dialectics does not begin by taking a standpoint; it is driven to do so the guilt of what it thinks.

The theoretical text explores the claim that society discloses itself in a more telling way from within the more marginalized cultural spheres, that's to say from patterns and trends read out of the contemporary experience of art, philosophy and individual experiences, rather than from the dominant economic mode of production and exchange and its concomitant social relations.¹¹ This thesis will argue that what Hegel called "objective spirit"

intention. Cf. Immanuel Kant, "*The Liking that Determines a Judgment of Taste is Devoid of all Interest*," Critique of Judgment, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (United States of America: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p. 46. "A Judgment we make about an object of our liking may be wholly *disinterested* but still very *interesting*, i.e., it is not based on any interest but it gives rise to an interest; all pure moral judgments are of this sort. But judgments of taste, of themselves, do not even give rise to any interest. Only in society does it become *interesting* to have taste [...]."

¹⁰ "Dialectic of Spiritualization," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 93.

¹¹ Cf. Theodor Adorno, "Genesis and Psychology," *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*, trans. Willis Domingo, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) p. 76. '[L]ogical propositions contain a deposit of social experiences such as the order of generation and property relations which claim priority over the being and consciousness of the individual, these relations constantly confront the psychological subject as something valid and compelling in itself and yet as arbitrary also. This is also the case with Husserl's 'propositions in themselves' though much against his will.' The bonds tied in resistance have to be transcended if freedom is to prevail. Historically, modernist and avant-garde antipsychologism was socialized and made serviceable to the status quo. Protracted by subjective mechanisms, the protest against a social order heteronomously imposed upon its subjects became a turn towards the category of inwardness. According to Adorno, this move served to cultivate an anthropological type of dutiful servant, ready to quasi-voluntarily perform, or labour in the manner required by the new mode of production necessitated by the relations of production. Inwardness is marked by an indifference and readiness to leave things as they are. Adorno proposes simply to crash through such facades in order to rescue the postulate of depth from ideology. This is inconceivable if the mimetic element is repressed or the autonomous self weakened. 'Empirically it has been confirmed that inhibited, conventional and aggressive-

the laws, customs, practices, and institutions that embody and express the collective identity and orientation of a people, has been rationalized in accordance with the needs and autonomous mechanisms of capitalist reproduction. Hence life has become estranged through the determinations of objective powers that determine individual life through and through. This thesis will develop the claim that life has passed into an ideology where means and end are inverted: no longer production as the means to life, but life as the means to production.

The above hegemonic conception takes it as a given that the horizon open to the future is determined by expectations in the present that guide our access to the past. Past experiences orientated towards the future are said to preserve an authentic present as the locus of innovation and tradition. As this radical and modern time consciousness accelerates, as more is drawn into its orbit, the distance that opens between past experience and the horizon of expectation lends itself a utopian quality, even as it closes off the future as a source of disruption.

In practice what can be characterized as effective or critical history grounds itself and circles around assumptions about certain kinds of cultural goods. The hegemonic conception of radical and modern time consciousness place culture towards the centre of its analysis, culture as lived or

reactionary individuals tend to reject “intraception”—self-awareness—in any form, and along with it expression as such as being all too human. They are the ones who, in a context of general estrangement from art, declare themselves with particular resentment against modernism. Psychologically they obey defence mechanisms with which a weakly developed ego repudiates whatever disturbs its restricted functional capacity and may, above all, damage its narcissism. This psychological posture is an “*intolerance to ambiguity*,” an impatience with what is ambivalent and not strictly definable; ultimately, it is the refusal of what is open, of what has not been predetermined by any jurisdiction, ultimately of experience itself.’ Cf. “Dialectic of Inwardness; Aporias of Expression,” *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 115-116.

professionally produced tends to elicit a certain kind of response: naturalism or immediacy in regards to the appropriation of psychic configurations and discourse.¹² The lived experience of such comportment leads up to and includes Chapter Five, *Reflection/Reflexion*.

Coded in the extreme and in proportion the thesis title, “Experiential Embodiment and Human Immediacy: Adorno’s Negative Affinity” more generally refers to mediations of the given: the processes, practices, and behaviours, which now and then surround, invest with qualities, the life that becomes the object of philosophical concern. In order to comprehend the object, the philosophical life, or more succinctly the good life, the thesis endeavours to grasp a particular “something” in its development: a fragment assessed in the light of the standards it crystallizes or precipitates. To this end the philosophy of Theodor Adorno is the occasion and not the point of the thesis. A thesis moreover from which, upon reflection and then even more generally, there arises the question of what it means to live in the rich, educationally and technologically advanced twenty first century.

In an engaging restaging it will be argued, by way of a reflection on the philosophy of Adorno, that whereas life in its resistance and opposition has an ephemeral appearance, much as the subject itself, much of what was regarded as the true field of the philosophical teaching, that’s to say the good-life, has since philosophy’s conversion into mere method, lapsed into neglect. Life, rather than being the preponderance of the organic; vital; moral; and ethical, has come to mean the sphere of private existence and

¹² Cf. Jürgen Habermas, “Excursus on Benjamin’s Thesis on the Philosophy of History,” *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, (Great Britain, Polity Press: 2002), pp. 12-13.

consumption, an appendage of the process of material and technical production without autonomy or substance of its own. The achievement of the technological culture industry is standardization and the mass production of a hierarchical range of products. On the definition of substance and quality, activity and suffering, being and existence, technology, which does not work by directing concepts images or fortunate insights, is silent. Technology refers to method, the exploitation of others work, and capital. Its rationale is that of domination, its nature is coercive.

To give expression to suffering and convey the objectivity of experience requires language and the contextual setting of this becomes the concern and content of Chapter One: *Language, Authenticity, Being*. Chapter One, articulates the nature of language in Adorno's thinking on language, its distinctive use and ultimately its materiality. The implication being that in the idealistic and naïve idea that rational drafts might pre-design the structure, abundance, and fullness of Being, what is lost is the preponderance of the object.¹³ The concrete setting is the physical and material, the ethical and universal, the lived human world, a world plagued by barbarism and its rationalized acceptance. Seeking to clarify Adorno's position as against the demands of a bureaucratizing scientific rationality and an obscurantist fundamental ontology, the chapter concludes with the claim that philosophy, rather than inhabiting the poetical, is to be constituted

¹³ For an example of the idealistic turn to the subject in modern philosophy, Cf. "The Actuality of Philosophy," *The Adorno Reader*, Editor. Brian O'Connor, trans. Benjamin Snow, (India: Blackwell, 2000) p. 27. 'With Heidegger, at least in his published writings, the question of objective ideas and objective being has been replaced by the subjective. The challenge of material is reduced to the realm of subjectivity, within the depths of which it searches for what it was not able to locate in the open fullness of reality. It is thus no accident, in the philosophical-historical sense as well, that Heidegger falls back on precisely the latest plan for a subjective ontology produced by Western thinking: The existentialist

out of a nexus of concepts.¹⁴

This claim becomes the interpretive setting and context of Chapter Two: *Concept and Constellation*. According to Adorno, philosophy in order to interpret unintentional reality has to bring its elements into changing constellations or trial combinations until they fall into a figure.

‘The task of philosophy is not to search for concealed and manifest intentions of reality but to interpret unintentional reality, in that, by the power of constructing figures, or images (*Bilder*), out of the isolated elements of reality.’ it negates (*aufhebt*) questions, [...].¹⁵

The images or figures are contributions from subjective experience that are not images *of* something, and according to Adorno they are essentially collective and precisely the way art is mediated to experience.

‘By virtue of this experiential content [Erfarungsgehalt], and not primarily as a result of fixation or forming as they are normally conceived, artworks diverge from empirical reality: empiria through empirical deformation. This is the affinity of the artworks to the dream, however far they are removed from dreams by their law of form.’¹⁶

The affinity between interpretive philosophy, materialism and art becomes the context under which the chapter develops its concerns, in the process negating the question of whether there is such an affinity. Ideas would be at the same time historical images the configuration of which, rather than appearing in history as intention, constitute unintentional truth. The assemblage and its interpretation are resolved dialectically. The change-causing question of the constellation provides the image of the resolution

philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard.’

¹⁴ Cf. “Lecture Nine,” *Metaphysics, Concept and Problems*, p. 68. For Adorno the philosophical concept alone in-itself is worthy of critical rescue: in times of despair concepts provide, if not the ‘consolation of philosophy,’ then at least a ‘consolation for philosophy.’

¹⁵ “The Actuality of Philosophy,” *The Adorno Reader*, p. 32.

¹⁶ “Image Content is Collective,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 86.

which material praxis alone has access.¹⁷ As Chapter Two develops interpretation succeeds through a juxtaposition of small and unintentional elements divorced from a role in the great problems from the philosophical tradition. Construction out of small and unintended elements is thus a basic assumption of philosophical interpretation turning away from the traditional and symbolic to the “refuse of the world” (*Abhub der Erscheinungswelt*).¹⁸

In order to derive meaning objectivity tries to admit as many possibilities, as many connections as may arise: an alternative path or possibility is always transmitted objectively. The productive imagination that finds its orientation through objective interests and reflections, feeds on impulses from the historical, which are one kind of association. The intellectual experience affects the conceptual form. Hence another theme of the work becomes Adorno's attitude to objectivity and the suffering objectively conveyed.¹⁹ Chapter Three, *Objectivity*, turns to historically manifested truth in its attempt to critically rescue the embodied subject from its immanent spatiality and ordination. At the present historical stage objectivity finds its substance in the factual, its being in the neutral and impartial. Adorno's methodological constellation critically reframes the concept.

The objectivity of the experiential content as unconscious historiography, overgrows what was subjectively intended and comes to resemble or act as if it were itself the subjective moment. Breaking through the subjective shell, objectivity makes it appear as if the expressed is the

¹⁷ Cf. “The Actuality of Philosophy,” *The Adorno Reader*, p. 32.

¹⁸ Cf. “The Actuality of Philosophy,” *The Adorno Reader*, p. 32.

¹⁹ See above, footnote 8.

experiential content. But that is not the case. The expressive element, what is expressed, is an attempt to articulate experience, intellectual experience: that which wants to come out into the open but cannot except as concepts, which are basically its opposite.²⁰

The overwhelming objectivity of the historical movement in the present consists so far only in the dissolution of the subject, without yet giving rise to a new one. Individual experience necessarily basis itself on the now historically condemned old subject which is still for-itself but no longer in-itself. Hence considerations that start out from the subject remain false to the same extent that life has become appearance. Contemporary consciousness is sustained by the unthinking inertia of the appearance. As false consciousness it does not recognize the contradictions in the subject. It affirms the given situation without recognizing the problematic nature of its criterion: A corollary of false consciousness is reification. Reification means the perception of what is qualitative as quantitative. In the reduction unique qualitative characteristics are missed or glossed-over. Reification is produced by the particular structure of exchange society. The exchange imperative has the power to influence consciousness.

Rather than responding openly to the object reified consciousness judges unreflectively through categories or alternatives established a priori. The belief that subjectivity has the power of mastery over its environment stems from this categorical performance. The nonidentity between the concept and object which would facilitate a new judgement goes unrecognized. Subjectivity for Adorno, describes a contradiction, neither

²⁰ Cf. "Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 138.

sovereign nor autonomous but constituted by society, it defines individuals themselves by the roles that are required for the preservation of that society.²¹

Following Adorno, Chapter Three argues that if objectivity, a concept unavoidably bound up with language and memory, is the self-unconscious schema under which the subject brings its otherness, then objectivity identifies, and if this identity is to pass into its other then it cannot be denied for the greater glory of abstract identity or naked self-preservation, it must be preserved in its resistance and its schema definitively negated.

The reason for this, reflected upon up to and throughout Chapter Three is that the less affinity to things objectivity tolerates, the more ruthlessly will it identify. For Adorno affinity is not a positive ontological definition of the other. Rather it is the determinate negation of objective schemata. Affinity, without which there is no truth, emerges by way of reflection and points to the preponderance of the object. Objectively speaking there is always an excess, a refusal to sanction things as they are, which means a process of questioning the immediate, immanent act of being touched by the object. Being touched, embodied as aesthetic comportment is the shudder in which subjectivity stirs and in light of which mimesis and rationality can be said to complement each other. This claim forms the basis of Chapter Four, *Mimesis and Rationality*.

Developing its theme Chapter Four argues that rationality is synonymous with the justified and well founded. Abolishing reason's sense of unity in favour of a pluralistic rationality, returns reason as *ratio* an

²¹ Cf. "Introduction," *The Adorno Reader*, pp. 12-14.

expanded sphere of rational significance. As rationalised reason and instrumental reason become total the semi-cultivated state cancels the other, cancels mimesis.

The one and only route to recovery is the artwork itself. Art, a refuge for aesthetic comportment, appears as the historical voice of suppressed nature. Art refers the human to areas of experience not available to instrumental rationality and as such it is the purveyor of vital experience. The nature of that experience is looked at in the concluding chapter, *Art and Aesthetics*.

In Chapter Four, the claim is made that in order to do justice to the artwork requires knowledge of it. In mimetic apprehension we entertain the hypothetical or the possible and all the incipient commitments and defences, expectations, which occur in experiential knowledge but are absent from propositional or conceptual knowing. Mimesis successfully conveys the object in a way that deepens our experiential knowledge of it. Conceptual knowledge is increased by addition and elaboration of proposition. Experiential knowledge grows by intensification, a deepening of acquaintance. It does not lend itself to the summary form. To sum up a life or a lover or an event like Auschwitz stirs a concomitant sense of injustice. The experiential is usually expressed, not in propositions, but in simple nouns, images, concrete universals that display as much of the concrete particular or instance as is possible.

The argument that artworks, being non-conceptual are best able to express objectively something of the experiential whilst at the same time stimulating the faculty of apprehension and engagement is a claim

developed through out up to and including Chapter Four, *Mimesis and Rationality*.²² Artworks recuperate what was once literally and directly experienced, but was expelled by spirit. Autonomous artworks, even the most sublime, take up a determined attitude to empirical reality by stepping outside its constraining spell not once and for all but for ever and again. The productivity and explosive power of this basic aesthetic experience is that of a subjectivity liberated from the imperative of purposive activity.

Curiosity draws its strength from experience of the multitudinous, from digression and salvation. The self loses itself in order to find itself anew. The estrangement from nature is also abandonment to nature. As with art, as new dimensions emerge they refuse older ones, the over elaborated and highly developed forms of reaction and false richness. Adorno settles his charges with a challenge, to glimpse a changed production and changed preponderance of relations, a change more worthy of the human. Removing the self from its supposed logical course are dangerous temptations, the allurements of new experience.

'I would just point out that perhaps one of the clearest manifestations of what I am concerned with here is the way in which certain names can vouch for that [metaphysical] experience. [...] [O]ne has the feeling: if only one were there, at that place that would be it. This 'it'-what the 'it' is – is extraordinarily difficult to say; one will probably be able to say, [...] that it is happiness. When one later reaches such places, it is not there either, one does not find 'it'. [...] But the curious thing is that, even if the 'it' is not there, if one does not find [...] any of that fulfilment which is stored up in its name, nevertheless, one is not disappointed. The reason, if I am interpreting it correctly, is that [...] one is, as it were too close, one is inside the phenomenon, and being completely inside it, one cannot actually catch sight of it. Once, many years ago, in *Minima Moralia* I wrote about thanking and gratitude, which have their dignity, [...] because the giving of thanks is the only relationship that consciousness can have

²² Cf. A. D. Nuttal, "The Dissolution of Mimesis," *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality*, (Great Britain: Methuen, 1983) pp. 75-78.

to happiness, whereas the person who *is* happy is too close to it to have any standpoint towards it within consciousness.[...] I would say, therefore, that happiness – and there is an extremely deep constellation between metaphysical experience and happiness – is something within objects and, at the same time, remote from.²³

Philosophy, thinking that goes beyond, into the open, into openness its openness to, that, precisely, according to Adorno, is metaphysics, itself a curious characteristic of philosophy. With some sense of precision Adorno describes metaphysics as the unity of a critical and rescuing intention.

Metaphysics, he says,

[...] 'is always present where enlightened rationalism both criticizes traditional notions and ideas, ideas existing in themselves, as mythological, and at the same time – and not out of an apologetic need, but out of concern for truth – wants to save or restore these concepts, which reason has demolished, precisely through the application of reason, or even to produce them anew from within its own rational resources.'²⁴

Where mimesis, the nonconceptual affinity for the other, is touched by reason the impulse is true. Rationality on the other hand defines, determines and masters its object: for rationality the object is control, domination and power.

'Black shrouds cover the horizon of a state of freedom that would no longer require repression or morality, because drives would no longer

²³ "Lecture Eighteen," *Metaphysics, Concept and Problems*, p. 140. Cf. "Happiness and Idle Waiting," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 373. 'What is a metaphysical experience? If we disdain projecting it upon allegedly primal religious experiences, we are most likely to visualize it as Proust did, in the happiness, for instance, that is promised by village names like Applebachville, Wind Gap, or Lords Valley. One thinks that going there would bring the fulfilment, as if there were such a thing. Being really there makes the promise recede like a rainbow. And yet one is not disappointed: the feeling now is one of being too close, rather, and not seeing it for that reason. [...] To the child it is self-evident that what delights him in his favourite village is found only there, there alone and nowhere else. He is mistaken; but his mistake creates the model of experience, of a concept that will end up as the concept of the thing itself, not as a poor projection from things.' For Adorno the feeling of *Déjà vu* would be another stratum of these experiences. It is noteworthy that negative dialectics too, does not begin by taking a standpoint. 'Dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity. It does not begin by taking a standpoint. My thought is driven to it by its own inevitable insufficiency, by my guilt of what I am thinking.'

²⁴ "Lecture Eight," *Metaphysics, Concept and Problems*, p. 51

have to be expressed in destruction. It is not in their nauseating parody, sexual repression, that moral questions are succinctly posed; it is in lines such as: No man should be tortured; there should be no concentration camps—while all of this continues in Asia and Africa and is repressed merely because, as ever, the humanity of civilization is inhumane toward to the people it shamelessly brands as uncivilized. But if a moral philosopher were to seize upon these lines and to exult at having caught the critics of morality, at last—caught them quoting the same values that are happily proclaimed by the philosophy of morals—his cogent conclusion would be false. The lines are true as an impulse, as a reaction to the news that torture is going on somewhere. They must not be rationalized; as an abstract principle they would fall promptly into the bad infinities of derivation and validity.²⁵

That such experience is in danger of being trivialized or sacrificed to a rationality enthralled by the distortions of socio-economic power and domination is the starting point for Chapter Five, *Reflection/Reflexion*.

Although the orientation of philosophies of reflection is towards ideas of knowledge, conscious awareness, self-consciousness, production and exchange relations, identification with philosophies of praxis continue to dominate. It is production and its concomitant relations that constitute an object or content for normative rules. Hegel had anticipated this logic. Hegel's objective idealism because of its identification of existence with spirit has as its object the actual power that existence holds over people. Spirit is to concede to existence in actuality. It is a small step, a minor adjustment that gives us the materialist version of this.

What Hegel calls world spirit is the spirit that asserts itself despite people's wishes: it is the primacy of the flow of events that they find themselves caught up in or impinge on them no less than facts. *Reflection/Reflexion*, develops the notion that prior to judgement and understanding there is in a sense a choice between heteronomous

²⁵ "On the State of Freedom," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 285.

objectifying elements, the intelligibility of the matter which the subjective judgement discovers there and makes manifest. The objective emphasis is a reflexive response, a specification, a will. Critical argument is specifically the exchange of alternative specifications. At its most serious level the argument is an analysis of how the really basic conditions of life, pertaining to physical existence and survival, are perceived, selected, and interpreted.

All philosophies are interwoven with arguments that support a world view: a particular account of experience. Reflexivity is the critical stance required by critical theory. Experience has a structure of reciprocity and transformation in the medium of conceptual reflection. *Reflection, Reflexion*, itself reflects the manner in which Adorno seeks to rescue experience, the experiential whereby a subject is affected and changed by its engagement with an aspect of objective reality, from a range of basic assumptions to be found throughout the spectrum of modern philosophy. 'Understanding has to find a foothold in the gap between experience and concept.'²⁶ Artworks are one of the means that bring to light the distortions of the dominant rationality. Chapter Five reveals how it is possible to question the given and recognize the distortions of experience by the dominant rationality.

Chapter Six, *Art and Aesthetics*, makes the claim that art's immanent historicity as dialectic of nature and domination is of the same essence as the dialectic external to them.²⁷ The subject feels sure of its autonomy but the

²⁶ Theodor Adorno, "Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel," *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 138.

²⁷ Cf. "Dialectic of Integration and the Subjective Point," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 29. 'The power of the aesthetic subject to integrate whatever it takes hold of is at the same time its weakness. It capitulates to a unity that is alienated by virtue of its abstractness and resignedly casts its lot with blind necessity. If the whole of modern art can be understood as the perpetual intervention of the subject, one that is at no point disposed to allow the unreflected governance of the traditional play of forces within the artwork, the permanent

nullity demonstrated to the subject is already overtaking the form of subjectivity itself. Subjective reflection and lamentation over the course of the world have a sentimental and anachronistic feel to them and are to be rejected not for their good faith but because the lamenting subject threatens to become arrested in its condition and so in turn fulfils the law of the world's course.

The subjectivity that Adorno seeks to rescue, and explored in Chapter Six, comes about as a consequence of reflection upon the objective subject matter. Beyond subjective intention formal and technical reflection reveals the human subject through the productive tension between the planned and the spontaneous. 'Fidelity to one's own state of consciousness and experience is forever in temptation of lapsing into infidelity, by denying the insight that transcends the individual and calls his substance by name.'²⁸ The socialization of society enfeebles and undermines the individual who has otherwise garnered much differentiation, vigour and richness which, encountered in the decay, contributes once more to knowledge that had become obscured in the dominant category construed as the self.²⁹

Hegelian dialectical theory which argued against the being-for-itself of subjectivity abhors anything isolated, particular. Individuation and drive are given an inferior status in the construction of the harmonious whole. With that Hegel forgets his own demand to be in the matter and not always beyond it. In an individualistic society social analysis can learn much from

interventions of the ego are matched by a tendency of the ego to abdicate out of weakness. [...] [T]his abdication takes the form of reification of subjective achievements, effectively locating them exterior to the subject and mistaking the abdication of the subject for a guarantee of ironclad objectivity. Technique, the extended arm of the subject, also leads away from the subject.'

individual experiences: the converse of the large historical categories of patriarchal meagreness. Critical thought in its distance from affirmative culture seeks a changed production³⁰ and a change in the relations of production, an experiential move towards something that is more worthy of human beings.³¹

Arts formal autonomy requires criticism in order to release its resistance to conceptual and rational determination. Even this gets turned into coin. All reflections on art are disturbed in this way. The claims of romantic art privilege the idea that it gives access to non-conceptual truth and this is fully exploited by commercial society. The artwork's truth is its critical content. This is the critical thrust of Chapter Six. The claim is made that an artworks success in the aesthetic tradition is indicated by its setting itself against society.³²

The truth content of this claim emerges in negative terms. Through the immanent and primary play of forces the artwork converges with external reality. Where the sensuous pleasing gives access to the alluring

²⁸ "Dedication," *Minima Moralia*, p. 16.

²⁹ Cf. "Dedication," *Minima Moralia*, pp. 16-17

³⁰ Cf. "On the Relation of Art and Society," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 5. 'The aesthetic force of production is the same as that of productive labour and has the same teleology; and what may be called aesthetic relations of production—all that in which the productive force is embedded and in which it is active—are sedimentations or imprintings of social relations of production. Art's double character as both autonomous and *fait social* is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy.'

³¹ Cf. 'Only by virtue of opposition to production, as still not wholly encompassed by this order can men bring about another more worthy of human beings.' "Dedication," *Minima Moralia*, p. 15.

³² Cf. "Exhibitionist," *Minima Moralia*, p. 212. 'Artists do not sublimate. That they neither satisfy nor repress their desires, but transform them into socially desirable achievements, their works, is a psycho-analytical illusion; incidentally, legitimate works of art are socially undesired. Rather, artists display violent instincts, free-floating and yet colliding with reality, marked by neurosis. Even the philistine's dream of the actor or violinist as the synthesis of a bundle of nerves and a tugger of heart-strings, has more truth than the no less philistine economic theory of instincts according to which the favourite children of renunciation get rid of the stuff in symphonies and novels. Their lot is rather a hysterically excessive lack of inhibition over every conceivable fear; narcissism taken to its paranoiac

sensuousness of pain by transfiguring into its antithesis, the immense importance of dissonance is revealed as an archetype of ambivalence. Dissonance elicits from within the work social alienation: congealing into indifferent material a new form of immediacy. Without memory trace of its own development and what it developed out of it becomes anonymous. Without its place in society the aesthetic fragments into, on the one hand, a reified cultural possession and on the other a subjective source of pleasure that has little to do with the object itself.

Chapter Six, *Art and Aesthetics*, develops the notion that the happiness given through art's escapism is accidental and less essential than the happiness in its knowledge.³³ The concept of aesthetic pleasure as constitutive of art is to be superseded.

'If [...] all feeling related to an aesthetic object has an accidental aspect, usually that of psychological projection, then what the work demands from its beholder is knowledge, and indeed, knowledge that does justice to it: The work wants its truth and untruth to be grasped.'³⁴

Through their denial or transcendence of the magical, artworks claim rationality and retain an intentionality, the domination of nature, the aim of all rationality, that without the explication of its means, mimesis, mimetic impulses,³⁵ is not rational.

limit. To anything sublimated they oppose idiosyncrasies.'

³³ See below, p. 217.

³⁴ "Aesthetic Hedonism and the Happiness of Knowledge," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 15.

³⁵ The means art utilizes is mimesis. This term is somewhat divisive among philosophers. To those loosely called poststructuralist it is akin to imitation. The Frankfurt school were generally more sympathetic and found much that was good in their use of the term. Marcuse does give us a good example of the opposing viewpoint. Cf. Herbert Marcuse, "The New Forms of Control," *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, (Great Britain: Ark Paperbacks, 1986), pp. 10-11. 'Mass production and mass distribution claim the *entire* individual, and industrial psychology has long ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions. The result is, not adjustment but *mimesis*: an immediate identification of the individual with *his* society and, through it, with the society as a whole. This

Intentions, without which form would not exist any more than it would without the mimetic impulse, have their locus in the dialectic between the mimetic pole of artworks and their methexis in enlightenment. The line drawn by intent, rational identity:

‘[...] whether in our consciousness, theoretically and in the resulting practice, we maintain that identity is the ultimate, that it is absolute, that we want to reinforce it—or whether we feel that identity is the universal coercive mechanism which we, too, finally need to free ourselves from universal coercion, [...].’³⁶

In art, intention, the immanent form of the principle of identity, has its locus not only in being the subjectively moving and organizing force but also in the objectivity of the artwork itself. The subject's subjective synthesis objectively mediated by the individual bearer of intentions extinguishes itself in the artwork through an inner process of identity which is essentially that between the material and intention.³⁷ As the material is resistant to the artworks otherwise pure identity, no intention is assured of being realized in the work. The surplus of intentions, that which is not extinguished and flickers in the artwork, reveals that the objectivity of artworks cannot be reduced to mimesis. ‘It is by way of concepts that art sets free its mimetic,

immediate, automatic identification [...] reappears in high industrial civilization; its new “immediacy,” however, is the product of a sophisticated, scientific management and organization. In this process, the “inner” dimensions of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root is whittled down. The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking—the critical power of Reason—is at home, is the ideological counterpart to the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the opposition. The impact of progress turns Reason into submission to the facts of life, and to the dynamic capability of producing more and bigger facts of the same sort of life. The efficiency of the system blunts the individuals’ recognition that it contains no facts which do not communicate the repressive power of the whole.’ In the same context Adorno tends to use words like “mimic,” “super-ego” or more commonly just plain “immediacy.”

³⁶ Cf. “On the Dialectics of Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 147.

³⁷ Cf. “Intention and Meaning,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 151. Although it is inherently problematic and evidently not all there is to art works ‘[t]he objective bearer of intentions, which synthesizes the individual intentions of artworks into a whole, is their meaning.’

non-conceptual layer.'³⁸

The organic adaptation to others and the organized control of mimesis is replaced, in the historic phase, by rational practice, by work and self-assertion. What is sought in nature is the key to its domination and use. Nature is disqualified as chaotic at the same time becoming a matter of mere classification, the possession of an all powerful and sovereign self. Domination of inner and outer nature aims at liberating people from fear and establishing rationality. In the process the sensuous mimetic elements are blocked, replace by an abstraction and instrumentality of absolute difference. Something like an address is made to rescue the subject through art.

'It is not through the abstract negation of the *ratio*, nor through a immediate eidetic vision of essences, that art seeks justice for the repressed, but rather by revoking the violent act of rationality by emancipating rationality from what it holds to be its inalienable material in the empirical world.'³⁹

The hegemony of the object and the concomitant deformations of social and enlightened thought are, as an axiological orientation of modernism, made manifest through its most estranged forms. For example in the world of contemporary music, high modernism is one of these estranged forms. In this instance high modernism means the progressive, technologically grounded, mathematized, computerized, and future orientated. The sort of thing exemplified by IRCAM, the state funded, internationally renowned, Paris based research institute connecting music with acoustics, technology with theory.

³⁸ "Art Beauty," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 96.

³⁹ "Coherence and Meaning," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 139.

The high modernist avant-garde is so complex and unconventional that it is unapproachable by everyone bar the specialist or the curious. In the absence of validation by the market or public in order to secure the future for this cutting edge music, high modernism, like other science based projects, retreats into institutions: subsidized arenas where legitimacy becomes a question after the accumulation of cultural authority. The technological wields its cultural power and marshals its forces against other disparate groups eager for some of that subsidized power. English opera, for one, could tell a different story about life in the subsidized zone. Beyond the question of funding what this example illustrates is a particular time-consciousness or understanding of time. Tying and untying these little knots of thought, as a kind of intentional problem within the thesis, is part of its dialectical conception and negative movement. A sense of negative affinity concomitant with de-systematization or contradiction, the process not the transcendental residue or resultant, can be said to inform to a degree all aspects of the work.

Chapter One: Language, Authenticity, Being.

*'Philosophy lives in symbiosis with science and cannot break from it without dogmatism and ultimately relapsing into mythology. Yet the content of philosophy should be to express what is neglected or excised by science, by the division of labour, by the forms of reflection entailed by the bustle of self-preservation. For this reason philosophy's progress simultaneously recedes from the goal of its progress; the force of experience that philosophy registers is weakened the more it is honed down by the scientific apparatus. [...] Philosophical progress is deceitful because, the tighter, the airtight and unassailable its propositions become, the more it becomes identity-thinking.'*⁴⁰

-Theodor W. Adorno

According Adorno philosophy cannot neglect the demand for clarity or deny the possibility of its existence.⁴¹ To paraphrase Adorno, that the expression fit the matter expressed should be the case even where the matter at hand does not conform to the norm of what can be indicated clearly. Clarity and distinctiveness are not themselves given and are not characteristics of what is given. Clarity is not self evident. To evaluate the worth of knowledge by how clearly and unequivocally items of knowledge present themselves belongs to a reified consciousness that freeze frames objects in order to make them available for science and praxis. Problems, in which the concepts used are not clearly defined, for example the concept of freedom, are choked off by a semantical taboo: preliminary considerations that degenerate into a ban on consideration. Accordingly means gain primacy over ends.

What may or may not be reflected on is regulated by approved modes of proceeding, methods of exactitude inappropriate to the goals of

⁴⁰ Theodor Adorno, "Progress," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (United States of America: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 158.

cognition.⁴² For Adorno philosophy is concerned with something that has no place within the pre-given order of ideas and objects, something that cannot simply be mapped on a system of coordinates.

‘Wittgenstein’s maxim, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,”⁴³ in which the extreme of positivism spills over into the gesture of reverent authoritarian authenticity, and which for that reason exerts a kind of intellectual mass suggestion, is utterly antiphilosophical. If philosophy can be defined at all, it is an effort to express things one cannot speak about, to express the nonidentical despite the fact that expressing it identifies it at the same time.’⁴⁴

Philosophy which in-itself doesn’t balk when confronted by the equivocal is faced with a paradox: to say clearly something that is unclear and does not accommodate reification, to say it in such a way that the unfixed or not accessible are indicated with the utmost distinctiveness. Philosophy must try to explain the limits of clarity itself by reflecting on material concreteness, definition, and fulfilment: language and its relationship to the matter at hand. The goal to be pursued and insisted upon is to utter the unutterable. For Adorno:

‘The plain contradictoriness of this challenge [for transparent language] is that of philosophy itself, which is therefore qualified as dialectics before getting entangled in its individual contradictions. The work of philosophical self-reflection consists in unravelling that paradox. Everything else is signification, second hand construction, pre-philosophical activity, today as in Hegel’s time.’⁴⁵

In general one does not understand philosophy by eliminating contradictions, something all significant philosophies contain. ‘One understands a philosophy by seeking its truth content precisely at the point

⁴¹ “Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel,” *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 101.

⁴² ““Pseudoproblems”,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 211.

⁴³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1992), p.189.

⁴⁴ “Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel,” *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 101.

⁴⁵ “The Concern of Philosophy,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 9.

where it becomes entangled in so-called contradictions.⁴⁶

According to Adorno, the central contradiction the specific problematic of Aristotle's work is that, on the one hand, form [*eidos*] the principle of organization of a thing which leads it to have its particular existence, is supposed to be something immanent, mediated, inhering in an existent and yet, on the other, form is made into something which has being in itself. For Adorno Aristotle raises the problem of mediation between the immediately given and its form, he raises the problem but doesn't solve it.

Aristotle understands the existent as composed additively of form and matter, as a conjunction of these two moments, an interrelatedness that is almost a quantitative agglomeration. How the two moments are not perceived is as abstractions each of which needs the other through their own concept. He conceives the relation between the categories such that although neither could exist without the other they are not dependent on each other in terms of their meaning and constitution. Because of this they appear as absolutely separate.⁴⁷ According to Adorno, Aristotle posits the sensibly certain as primary *for us*, and the pure forms as primary *in themselves*: as the metaphysically primary pure movers of everything.⁴⁸

Untenable as the idea of mutually exclusive moments each postulating something certain and primary actually is, the sensible given and its abstraction do lead on to considerations concerning the concept of mediation, a concept that, as utilized by Aristotle, is significantly different

⁴⁶ "Lecture Eight," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 53.

⁴⁷ Cf. Aristotle, "Book Two, Chapter One, Soul as Form," *De Anima*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (England: Penguin, 1986), p. 156.

⁴⁸ "Lecture Seven," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 44.

from the Hegelian.⁴⁹

‘To put this paradoxically, one might say that in Aristotle mediation is not itself mediated. [...] He was a mediating thinker in the sense that his concern was always to find an intermediate position between two extremes, so that existence is to be understood here as a middle term between form and matter. But this mediation is really only something existing *between* the extremes, and not that which is implicit in the meaning of the extremes and is accomplished *through* the extremes themselves. [...] I would say that he is the mediating thinker *par excellence*, yet one lacking the idea of the dialectic.’⁵⁰

The difference from Aristotle lies in the fact that for Hegel the two moments of the extreme are no longer rigidly contrasted. They produce and reproduce each other so that one can no longer find something immediate that is not mediated. The two moments are forged anew at each stage before vanishing reconciled in the unity of the whole. Thus a particular and concrete thing grounded in sense-certainty is sublimated [*aufheben*] via the abstract universal concept of perception becoming in its transcendence and immanence grounded as a thing of concrete universal perception: a moment in the absolute. This dialectical movement is then repeated via the understanding eventually to become knowledge, and with the Marxist addendum history.

According to Adorno, Hegel renews a controversy between Kant and Aristotle on a higher level. In Kant possibility is not separate from form. For Aristotle possibility is a definition of matter and this potentiality can be seen as the real foundation of every synthesis. This idea was misunderstood by epistemology and only reappears in Hegel's dialectic. In effect the idea states that every form depends on its material as much as material depends on its form. ‘There is no categorical form to which there is not a

⁴⁹ ‘Lecture Seven,’ *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 43.

corresponding moment in matter which calls for it.’⁵¹ On the other hand since Kant’s Copernican turn matter tends to be thought of as conditioned, so to speak, by form: spirit lays down the laws followed by nature, objects conform to knowledge not knowledge to objects.⁵²

For Aristotle synthesises the bringing together of facts in concepts, judgements, and conclusions, are not mere adjuncts to matter, they have a corresponding moment in matter. Matter is defined as mere possibility or potentiality because it must always have within it the possibility of attaining its reality or form. It is therefore a dynamic energetic principle not static and unchanging. Matter is conceived in an objective dialectic as a principle which has an inherent tendency to move teleologically or purposively towards a higher form.⁵³ Aristotle concludes from this that the prime mover is pure form or the absolutely perfect: Form is the perfect being and matter the imperfect. In the later idealist doctrine ‘[...] the matter of cognition is absolutely indeterminate, receiving all its determinates and thus all its content through form, that is, through subjectivity.’⁵⁴

Hegel’s work could be described as an idealist reprise of Aristotle, the reason being that in the dialectic, movement is produced, caused, or triggered just because matter opposes its own potential, is in contradiction to it. The static ossification of mere existence or the special rigidity of social conditions is made the actual cause of the opposed, radical development.⁵⁵

Aristotle conceives matter as a kind of autonomous principle that

⁵⁰ “Lecture Seven,” *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 47.

⁵¹ “Lecture Nine,” *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 66.

⁵² Cf. Immanuel Kant, “Preface to Second Edition” *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1929), p. 25.

⁵³ Cf. “Lecture Nine,” *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 63.

makes it possible for the lowest generic concepts [e.g. the general concept "human being"] to be divided into multiplicity of individuals. The result is a conception of the concrete existing thing as the sum of the absolutely indeterminate on the one hand and its concept on the other.

'It might be said with some exaggeration that matter is the *principium individuationis* in Aristotle, and not, as we are inclined to think, form, which is that which determines a particular thing as a particular. For him, however, individuation itself is founded precisely on this particularization - the lack of identity, or full identity, of an existent thing with its form.'⁵⁶

Individuation is thus something negative in Aristotle, a thesis basic to all western metaphysics. It reappears for example in Kant, where cognition means the determining of an object in its generality and necessity, and in Hegel:

'[...] where only the universal manifesting itself through individuation is the substantial - whereas anything which lies outside the identification with the universal principle is regarded as absolutely insignificant ephemeral and unimportant. [...] The universal manifesting itself as pure form is, of course, the existing form of social dominance *in abstracto*; and according to definition the bigger battalions in world history are justified in advance. You have here the equation of the universal with the good.'⁵⁷

By tirelessly mediating the immediate Hegel never relinquishes the effort to speak the universal. To speak the universal, instead of just reiterating its impossibility, Hegel's philosophy refuses to be intimidated to renounce the hope of coming to know the whole of reality and its contents. Hegel's version of the dialectic seems in constitution counterintuitive and raises doubts as to its possibility. The anticipation of moving in contradictions throughout projected into the region of the mind seems to teach a mental

⁵⁴ "Lecture Seven," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 49.

⁵⁵ Cf. "Lecture Eleven," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 79.

⁵⁶ "Lecture Eleven," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 79.

totality and is therefore part of the identity thesis that sees particulars as one-sided and wrong.⁵⁸

For Hegel the dialectic, totalizing in its momentum and direction, is to move towards the absolute through higher levels of abstraction. In practice the universality of its reason is the product of particular interests. What the individual maintains as irrefutably absolute and primary is derived and secondary even down to the immediacy of the sensory given. As itself the whole is not itself alone: it has its moments. Not until their synthesis or identification with each other will the moments be non-identical. This is why in the critique of positive negation '[t]he non-identical is not to be obtained directly, as something positive on its part, [...].'⁵⁹ The truth of the whole, without which the dialectic would lack motivation, is preconceived and conditioned by society which is the objective determinant of the spirit.

For Hegel whose dialectic finds its ultimate truth to be its own impossibility thanks to its unresolved and vulnerable quality, the quintessence of the conditioned is the unconditioned, the absolute. The absolute is literally something utterly detached and gives a suspended, up in the air, hovering quality to Hegel's philosophy.

'Only so far as reflection has connection with the Absolute is it Reason and its deed a knowing. Through this connection with the Absolute, however, reflection's work passes away; only the connections persist, and it is the sole reality of the cognition. There is therefore no truth in isolated reflection, in pure thinking save its nullification. But because in philosophizing the Absolute gets produced by reflection for consciousness, it becomes thereby an objective totality, a whole of knowledge, an organization of cognitions. Within this organization, every part is at the same time the whole; for its standing is its connection with the Absolute. As a part

⁵⁷ "Lecture Eleven," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁸ Cf. "The Antagonistic Entirety," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 10.

⁵⁹ "Critique of Positive Negation," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 158.

that has other parts outside of it, it is something limited, and is only through the others. Isolated in its limitation the part is defective; meaning and coherence it has solely through its coherence with the whole.⁶⁰

For Hegel the disparate and distant have, as elements of the whole, a relation. However if the Hegelian whole exists at all it does so as the quintessence of the partial moments which always point beyond themselves and are generated from one another. Hegel recognizes the primacy of the whole over its finite parts which are inadequate and in relation to the whole, which does not exist as something beyond them, contradictory. Hegel's category of totality is incompatible with any tendency to harmony. As a critic of Romanticism Hegel knows that the whole realizes itself through its parts, through discontinuity, sudden change, alienation, and reflection. 'This is what his category of totality is intended to convey.'⁶¹ A dialectics that subsumes under identity, the "use value" in Marxist terminology, still retains the ineffable. The ineffable remains a possibility and therefore part of the utopia that defies subsumption.

In the light of this concrete utopian possibility, '[...] dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it: neither a system nor a contradiction.'⁶² The mind that reflects on contradictions in the thing-itself because it, the mind, is the thing itself driving beyond any particular as one-sided and wrong is both the epitome and the negation of the subject.

According to Adorno, Hegel's deluded impulse to elevate spirit draws

⁶⁰ G.W.F Hegel, *Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, as quoted in, "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 61.

⁶¹ "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 4.

⁶² "The Antagonistic Entirety," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 11.

strength from a resistance to the experience of post Kantian German Idealism, the narrow compartmentalization of life, the accumulation of dead knowledge and reified consciousness that he both dissolves and in opposition to romanticism salvages. The sense of desperate conceptuality and objectivity is mistaken for something positive by idealism. 'Their own reason, unconscious like the transcendental subject and establishing identity by barter, remains incommensurable with the subjects it reduces to the same denominator: the subject as the subjects foe.'⁶³ In society subjects are unknowable and incapacitated, hence the desperation, because the object of a mental experience is an antagonistic system in-itself.

According to Adorno, the system is not of the absolute it is of the conditioned spirit which in its unresolved part, the part unreconciled with the subject, is the subjective preconception of the material production process in society. The material production process in society is, according to Adorno, 'basically different from its theoretical constitution.'⁶⁴

An achieved reconciliation, derived not from a seamless system but from a unity derived from un-reconcilable violence, gains ascendancy through production and exchange relations which, in all their moments, depend on certain social conditions of production. Production realizes the primacy of the whole over its parts and verifies the desperate impotence of the individual. Everything stands under the dominion of those who hold social production at their disposal. The self-forgetfulness of production that forgets human aims and unleashes the insatiable and destructive expansive principle of exchange into society, means that everything is to exist only for

⁶³ "The Antagonistic Entirety," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 10.

something else and not for its own sake. This systematic characteristic of a radicalized society is what is reflected in and anticipated by Hegelian metaphysics.⁶⁵

Except [*e contrario*] where he talks of it in others,⁶⁶ for Hegel clarity is never made thematic. According to Adorno, Hegel's formulations often sound like doctrine but they neither can be nor are intended to be conclusive. Hegelian texts are not fully worked because their intellectual medium is also not fully worked out. According to Adorno, Hegel's work and method, which cannot be separated from the matter at hand, is less subjectively individuated than one might think. In his own time Hegel provided key words for the reader and interpreters of his work. 'Entrances, as it were, such as occur in music.'⁶⁷ Husserl derived from the stubborn immediacy of the philosophy of reflection a distinction that acquiesces between fixed and mobile concepts. He accords to philosophical concepts as mobile concepts a distinction from exact concepts. The distinction is made by virtue of the nature of what the descriptive and exact sciences attempt to grasp. Hegel is far more vigorous: less exacting, more descriptive. According to Adorno, he attempts to construct concepts in such a way that the life of the thing itself shines out of them or is made manifest in them. Hegelian concepts are not constructed to accord with the abstract epistemological idea of clarity. Such a construction has a tendency to repel troublesome thoughts.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Cf. "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 27.

⁶⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *History of Philosophy* III, p. 176. 'The obscurity of this philosophy [Heraclitus'], however, chiefly consists in there being profound speculative thought contained in it; the concept, the idea, is foreign to the understanding and cannot be grasped by it [...].' Quoted in, "Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 102.

⁶⁷ "Skoteinos, or how to read Hegel," *Hegel: Three studies*, p. 110.

⁶⁸ Cf. "Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 104.

According to Adorno, the divergent, dissonant, and negative will appear so for just as long as the structure of our consciousness makes totality or unity the measure for whatever is not identical with it. This rule of law is not a cogitative law it is real, a product of the administered world and the world's abstract monotony, raised to a concept.⁶⁹ Cognition must bow to this concept. It's full legitimating moves beyond the qualitative moment of discrimination in the concept. Discrimination is where the experience of the object turns into a form of subjective reaction. Discrimination "gaps" the presentation of an object; presents structures that upon reflection are not final and do not directly communicate the object. What is different from the concept, the remainder, has no other stage than that which concepts suppress, disparage, and discard. To reach for the nonconceptual the concept must transcend the concept, the preparatory and concluding element; it must go beyond whatever the truth concepts cover in their abstract range. 'To change this direction of conceptuality, to give it a turn towards nonidentity, is the hinge of negative dialectics.'⁷⁰ All concepts refer to nonconceptualities because the reality that requires conceptual formation does so mainly for the control of nature.⁷¹

The motion of the concept that exempts it from the reality it is in turn harnessed gives the concept the semblance of being-in-itself: a self-sufficient totality. But what conceptualization appears to be in its sphere of engagement cannot be taken for what it is in itself. Inwardly in motion the concept is experienced as nonidentical, it is no longer purely itself: in

⁶⁹ "Reality and Dialectics," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 6. 'Its agony is the world's agony raised to a concept

⁷⁰ "Disenchantment of the Concept," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 12.

Hegelian terminology, it leads to its otherness, an otherness it cannot absorb as the concept is defined by that which it is not.

According to Adorno, 'Objectively, dialectics means to break the compulsion to achieve identity, and to break it by means of the energy stored up in that compulsion and congealed in its objectifications.'⁷² The otherness defines the concept but doesn't exhaust it. The concept is not itself alone. It is an element of dialectical logic and surviving in it is the nonconceptuality that has conveyed it by way of its meaning. To interpret the concept naively as the master of its own domain would be tantamount to a fetishistic viewpoint over which philosophical thought has no power.

The form of the copula, the "is," pursues the object in order to pinpoint it. According to Adorno, philosophy provides a corrective to this.

Philosophical language, marked by its own impossibility, is a language in opposition to language.⁷³ Language that obeys formal logical rules proceeds immanently: its assertions are measured by its presuppositions. For science the word is a sign. As a system of signs language is required to resign itself to calculation in order to know nature: mathematics is the model.⁷⁴ Language is susceptible to empirical confirmation; claims are to be followed by the leisurely marshalling of evidence rather than by further ambitious and ambiguous claims. By humbly deferring to mere existence thought fails to come to grip with nature and abandons the moment of freedom, spontaneity. In order to know nature science must discard the claim to be like her. Positive and reified language

⁷¹ Cf. "Disenchantment of the Concept," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 11.

⁷² "Synthesis," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 157.

⁷³ Cf. "Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 100.

presented in terms of first principles, that is, as static, invariant, and self-identical, is a system of detached signs devoid of any intention that would transcend the system. In this way thought seals itself off more from whatever does not emanate directly from its posited moment of truth. In contradistinction, for Adorno, the philosophical notion of truth-content consists in the negation of appearance; it seeks to transcend the immanence of appearance. To that end critical theory apprehends claims to immediacy or objectivity at the point where they effect to screen their social and historical mediation. Adorno contends that dialectics involves the attempt to provide a 'critical rescue'⁷⁵ of the rhetorical aspect of language, alongside the expressive and performative aspects of language.

Parallel to his understanding of social music as something that shocks the audience into a more active engagement, Adorno's philosophical writings intentionally thwart the efforts of the casual and passive reader.⁷⁶ This is most evident where, in order to wrest language from the reductive shackle of ordinary and disciplinary language, Adorno uses paratactical devices as a principle to organize paragraphs. Parataxis avoids the use of either coordinating or subordinating elements. The result is a certain ambiguity, interplay of attractions and aversions and transmutations. The essay, another of Adorno's favoured procedures, is anti-dogmatic and permits spontaneity in its method which is unmethodical. Thought is to arise

⁷⁴ Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 17-18.

⁷⁵ "Rhetoric," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 56.

⁷⁶ Cf. Theodor Adorno, "On The Social Situation of Music," trans. Wes Blomster; revised by Richard Leppert, *Essays on Music*, (United States of America: University of California Press, 2002), p. 393. 'Social postulates are offered [by music, which in this process stands equal to theories], the relationship of which to praxis might be, to be sure, extremely mediated and difficult or which, at any rate, cannot be generalized without great difficulty. It is these postulates, however, which decide whether and how the entrance into social

from the material and less from the concepts that precede and threaten to overwhelm it. In the essay discreetly separated elements crystallize into a readable context, a configuration, a force field that doesn't eliminate those irritating and dangerous elements that live within concepts. The essay as arena of intellectual experience doesn't simplify for the sake of its edifice: the clarity of its structural presentation. The essay draws its impulse from experiences and memories: it takes them seriously rather than sacrificing them for the sake of precision. The essay form also takes the matter of presentation seriously more seriously than those procedures that atomize, build a continuum of operations and separate material from method. In the essay aspects of an argument interweave and according to Adorno, the fruitfulness of thought depends on the density of this texture. The essay takes the anti-systematic impulse into its own procedure and in doing so it drives beyond itself: The essay abrogates indisputable certainty as an ideal. It seeks to illuminate the object by being open to it: it is praxis, a movement, not a static cognitive ideal. 'The essay is determined by the unity of its object, together with that of theory and experience which have migrated into the object.'⁷⁷ Mediation between different kinds of activity and consciousness is within the object itself, not between the object and that to which it is brought.

The subjectively created context, the assembled thought, resembles writing through its conversion into objectivity by way of language.⁷⁸ Language lends objectivity to concepts through the relations it enters into,

reality might be made.'

⁷⁷ "The Essay as Form," *The Adorno Reader*, ed, Brian O'Connor (India: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 105.

the potentiality it has for determining the objects interior. As this model of experience will end up as the concept of the thing itself it serves the intent of the concept to express itself and it's meaning unreservedly. This would fulfil the concept of the concept. Ideology is to be recognized in what fails to become substantial, what remains empty gesture, affirmative and one sided. Every impulse not yet comprehended in the immediacy of the collective schemata recollects what cannot be admitted to consciousness and so is repressed. Where impulses of anxiety and pain, vehement passions, have grown to an extreme degree they can no longer be controlled by the individual psyche and repression becomes a necessity. It is this state of repression, often appearing, in a positive light as a state of modesty and self-discipline which stands behind the rejection of expression, and that is itself one with suffering. What is needed is for expression to win back the density of experience.⁷⁹

The concept of metaphysics clings to the promise of happiness, of fulfilment, the frank exchange of a highly individuated reconstruction of experience which the world of the reigning universal denies. Experienced naively the joyful experience suggests acceding to the terms of the empirical world as in the final analysis it is they alone that can give metaphysics the chance of transcendence. The concept of metaphysics in its objective moment, a requirement of all metaphysical experience, is antithetical and antinomical and cannot be assimilated to the particular conditions of metaphysical experience, its fallibility and absolute presence in the living

⁷⁸ Cf. "Constellation in Science," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 165.

⁷⁹ "The Aging of the New Music," trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *Essays on Music*, p. 191.

subject. 'Happiness, the only part of metaphysical experience that is more than impotent longing, gives us the inside of objects as something removed from objects.'⁸⁰ The existing is overstepped by means of a universal derived from the existing order itself. The power of mere existence constantly threatens to reassert itself. Through the absolute rule of negation the movement of thought becomes implacably positive, an unambiguous, exclusive pattern of immanent antithesis.⁸¹ Despite the objectivity of metaphysical categories congealed in society a metaphysics proclaimed and imposed without recourse to the subjective experience of an immediately present subject fails to impresses. This is a version of the problem of the incommensurability between abstract, impersonal norms and the individual motivation for respecting them. The autonomous subject can simply refuse what it cannot understand. Negatively, metaphysics holds out in the demand "Can this be all?" tangible as a sense of waiting in vain.⁸² The two motifs together, the objective and metaphysical, form what Adorno calls the 'dialectical figure,' or the 'dialectical image.'⁸³ 'Dialectical images: these are the historically-objective archetypes of that antagonistic unity of standstill and movement that defines the most universal bourgeois concept: progress.'⁸⁴

The norm of progress, what is generally understood by way of the concept, is economic development. Everything is subsumed under the

⁸⁰ "Happiness and Idle Waiting," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 374.

⁸¹ "Bequest," *Minima Moralia*, p. 150.

⁸² "Happiness and Idle Waiting," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 375.

⁸³ "Lecture Eighteen," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 142.

⁸⁴ "Progress," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 160. There is a kinship as well as a contradiction between the concept of a metaphysical system that is static, concludes, brings to a standstill, and the dynamism of a pure, autarkic, subjective generation that establishes all philosophical systematics. Cf. "The Twofold Character of the System,"

principle economic phases that have historically shaped society. From hunting and gathering to agriculture and industry, from fear of demons to reason, from deprivation to provision against epidemics, famine, tyrants, etc, without the overall improvement in living conditions progress would have no content. Reconciliation, the *telos* of all progress measured by finite criteria, is wedded to the immanent process of enlightenment that removes fear by holding up the human and humanitarianism as the answer to human beings' questions. At times progress, which is not identical to society, is its own opposite. For Adorno this means humanity becomes aware of its own inbred nature and strains to halt the domination it exacts upon nature and through which the domination of nature continues.⁸⁵

A dialectical treatment of metaphysical experience today cannot suppose that the immutable is the true and the transient is the inferior. Historical compassion prevents one from presupposing such immutability. Historical experiences change the content and experience of metaphysics. The mutual indifference of the temporal world and ideas can no longer be maintained.

According to Adorno, there are isolated motifs scattered in the history of ideas, which hint at this. They are essentially heretical deductions of the infinite relevance of the intra-mundane and thus historical to the concept of transcendence. The metaphysics of the immutable is constantly confronted with evidence showing that it has abstracted its eternal values from the mutable and from experience. As far as they are able murderous apologetics attempt to keep such evidence at bay. A metaphysics that fulfilled its own

Negative Dialectics, p. 25.

concept, that acknowledged its constellation of form and content, would have to assimilate the relevance of the temporal to its own concept. What is to be realised is that the separation of existence from the concept of being is only apparent and arbitrary.

The assimilation of the element of content into the concept of metaphysics changes its core values. By keeping and regarding everything that has happened as beneath it, everything earthly and human, metaphysics sided with the inhuman. For Adorno the inhumanity that necessarily presents itself as positive in its meaning and purpose has become intolerable. The metaphysical orientation towards divine principles of truth, beauty and goodness, which philosophers have concocted, mock the victims and their torment: torture and brutality continue to exist as a permanent institution. In a secret order of being all this will have had some kind of purpose or meaning.

‘[T]he assertion of a purpose or meaning which is formally embedded in metaphysics is transformed into ideology, that is to say, into an empty solace which at the same time fulfils a very precise function in the world as it is: that of keeping people in line.’⁸⁶

Adorno directs his thesis against the attitude of the naïve, unreflecting consciousness that refuses to countenance any change in the objective content of metaphysics. Temporal elements that decisively affect thought centred on the metaphysical are dismissed as purely subjective, how one happens to feel towards metaphysics today.

That difficulties do exist for the subjective experience of metaphysics is not denied but given the entwinement between subjective and objective

⁸⁵ Cf. “Progress,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*. pp. 148-150

⁸⁶ “Lecture Fourteen,” *Metaphysics*, p. 104.

experiences the truth cannot be as neatly separated as is claimed. In the development of a train of thought the dialectic between word and thing and between individual words and their relation to other words becomes self-conscious. Philosophical language transcends dialectically in the “more” formed by the mediation of the conceptual constellation. ‘By themselves, constellations represent from without what the concept has cut away from within: the “more” which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being.’⁸⁷ In the contradiction between truth as what is and thought as what is more or supplementary the dialectic overcomes itself. In the process what is true of the true is its untruth.

Language by being expressed manages to transcend the dynamic of its own structure.

‘Speech though it deludes physical force, is incapable of restraint. Its flow is a parody accompanying the stream of consciousness, thought itself, whose unswerving autonomy acquires an aspect of foolishness—manic foolishness—once it enters reality in the form of discourse, as if thinking corresponded with reality, when in fact the former is superior to the latter merely by virtue of distance. But this distance is also anguish. Therefore it is intelligent tongues (contrary to the proverb) that are always ready to talk by the dozen.’⁸⁸

Forever escaping what it judges the blithering and irresponsible volatility of thought are elements from the unbarbaric side of philosophy. On the other hand Adorno proffers a cautionary note: Too much talk will allow force and injustice to prevail as a principle. The clever man is objectively conditioned to affirm the non-existent superiority, of the word over force. Often the result is to prompt into action those that are to be feared. Those that perform the acts we should be fearful of are compelled by the mythical

⁸⁷ “Constellation,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 162.

⁸⁸ “Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 68-69.

compulsiveness of the word that is weaker than the pre-historical compulsion whose complement is arbitrariness. With the word enlightenment perpetuates or draws down disaster upon itself.⁸⁹ There is a situation and a method, which Adorno talks of in terms critiquing the culture industry, wherein the wordsmith or language manipulator is geared to mimetic regression, to the manipulation of repressed impulses to copy.⁹⁰

The method involves anticipating the mark's or subjects imitation of itself, making it appear as if agreement already exists which the political manipulator or culture industry intends to create. 'The culture industry not so much adapts to the reaction of its customers as it counterfeits them.'⁹¹ The culture industry is tied to a counterfactual scenario whereby it models reactions to non-existent stimuli. 'Hence in the picture-house the enthusiastic music-titles, the idiotic nursery-talk, the winking folksiness; even the close up of the start seem to shout: how super!'⁹² Adorno does provide a negative image of this process. People prepare themselves for terrors, the monstrous total state, etc, by familiarizing themselves with gigantic images. 'In its absurd readiness to accept these, impotently prostrate humanity tries desperately to assimilate to experience what defies all

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Adorno uses the term 'culture industry' in preference to 'mass culture' in order to exclude the possibility of an interpretation that points to culture as the spontaneous expression of 'the masses.' Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry, Selected essays on Mass Culture*, ed, J.M. Bernstein. (United States of America: Routledge, 1991), p. 98. Cf. "The Schema of Mass Culture," *The Culture Industry*, p. 63. 'A poetic tremor is expected of every example of emphatic objectivity [...]. The tremor lives off the excess power which technology as a whole, along with the capital that stands behind it, exercises over every individual thing. This is what transcendence is in mass culture. The poetic mystery of the product, in which it is more than itself, consists in the fact that it participates in the infinite nature of production and the reverential awe inspired by objectivity fits in smoothly with the schema of advertising.'

⁹¹ "Service to The Customer," *Minima Moralia*, p. 200.

⁹² "Service to The Customer," *Minima Moralia*, p. 201.

experience.’⁹³ Where the object of experience is of a magnitude whose relation is out of all proportion to the individual, then the individual doesn't really experience it at all. The object of experience is registered directly as something external, incommensurable, in concepts divorced from intuitive knowledge. In such situations people report that they were surprisingly free from fear. Psychologically this is explained by the lack of preparedness for fear, of a lack of psychic and bodily attunement.⁹⁴

In a stable environment the culture industry can count on the agreement approval of its models as people in that situation aspire more to adapt to others and the whole. It is not only because the unconscious wishes horrors to come about. The culture industry doesn't produce the agreement it reiterates it ritualistically. The populace's own ideological sense of exaggerated equality and social impotence will itself invoke a kind of Popular Front of the “right thinking” presenting good-will as if it were enough to remove society's faults.

‘[T]he practical spirit of the message, the tangible demonstration of how things can be improved, joins forces with the system in the fiction that a subject encompassing the whole of society, such as does not at present exist, can put right if only everyone will sit down together and make up their minds about the root of the trouble. It is very agreeable to be able thus prove one's capacity.’⁹⁵

By enthusiastically setting out to clean and put the house in order the foundations on which it is built can be forgotten. On the proving ground of capacity, where the faculty, tendency or effort to actualize something is translated into action, determined to do so by external

⁹³ “Mammoth,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 115.

⁹⁴ Cf. “Just hear, how bad he was.” *Minima Moralia*, p. 179.

⁹⁵ “Grey and Grey,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 203.

conditions,⁹⁶ the idealists message, escape to freedom, is different from that promulgated by the psychological sciences that, in their fixity, school one in freedom from flight.

The differing schools of thought that circle around questions of repression and freedom ply their wares and chart their course against a backdrop of legality and history. For the idealist, as for most of the philosophical tradition, abstract universal freedom is spiritualized as being beyond nature: freedom is freedom from causality, heteronomy,⁹⁷ the body, the human, etc. With the greater freedom comes greater responsibility. Inevitably this will lead to guilt as in practice the theory fails: the subject was never endowed with an unabridged autonomy. More persuasively, in the psychological realm subjects are fixed with their own physical nature. They are rationalized by way of a natural causality.

Objectivations performed by psychological science are reflected upon the subject and with that comes a loss of legal responsibility. For Adorno it is the nature controlling sovereignty and its social form, domination over people, which suggest the opposite state of consciousness: the idea of freedom. 'What makes the subjects aware of the bounds of their freedom is that they are part of nature, and finally, that they are powerless against society, which has become independent of them.'⁹⁸ The universality of the concept of freedom, a concept shared by those oppressed by their own

⁹⁶ Similar to the way the possibility or potentiality of forming judgments is actualised under sensory stimulation.

⁹⁷ For Adorno heteronomy, only apparently the counterpart of fetishism, is the principle of exchange, '[...] and in it dominion is masked.' "Reception and Production," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 227.

individual nature as well, recoils against social dominion as freedom's model.

As purveyors of the rational general interest and by ceremoniously making itself the embodiment of authoritative pronouncements, a process that involves anticipation and calculation of probabilities, the culture industry becomes the irrefutable prophet of the prevailing order. Where it has made reconciliation a vocation the culture industry, through its representatives the chosen organs of society, has become the modern counter-part of the master, priest, and sorcerer. Every spot is peopled with emanations of mana, a multiplicity of sacred rites, places, and symbols that all perform a fetishistic function. Historically and in dread whoever harms the symbols of the supernatural is subject to the machinations of their earthly counterparts, the rational administrator privy to the nature of the sacred.⁹⁹ The new hip-priests impart professional knowledge, language that renders constant unidentified volatile manna. The finickiness of the administrative authority compensates for political impotence.

Interaction with technology and its accompanying institutions and industries gives rise to a situation where the individual must simply presume the validity of innumerable propositions. In a situation where sufficient knowledge eludes the grasp opinion stands ready as its imitator and usurper. The idea of truth as something solid, objective, unchanging, self-identical and meaningful to unified being has been increasingly criticized as being mere opinion. But what is true in the above sense cannot be ascertained immediately and the difference from opinion is denied to the greater glory of

⁹⁸ "Freedom and Organized Society," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 221.

opinion. In a society which must tremble in fear before its own reason which is not yet reason but faith in reason the difference between opinion and well founded judgment becomes untenable in principle. The abstract thesis claims that just as the irrational person believes in their dogma so whoever acts rationally does so in the belief reason will prevail.

However the claim conceals its own duplicity. Belief is different in each case. For reason belief is an intellectual posture a movement towards the determinate negation of false opinion. Dogmatic belief attaches itself to statements that are incompatible or contrary to reason. These ephemeral convictions are a way of being reinforcing the subject in its immediacy. The individual grasp, the act of holding something as true, is inessential to reason. 'What interests reason is knowledge not whatever knowledge considers itself to be. Reason's orientation leads the subject away from himself [...].'⁹⁹ With the subjective appropriation of the contents of consciousness, the subjective confiscation of the object, the underlying motivation emerges concretely. Since time immemorial forms of terror have imposed belief. With that stubborn and blind subjective self-interest becomes the measure of all things. The idea of truth as mere interest, the concern of the interested party alone, makes the true vulnerable to the objection that it is one again simply opinion to which it must give way. This chimes with the scientific attitude that has become indifferent to the concept of truth and contents itself instead with the imaginative production of ideally harmonious classificatory systems. In such a system everything ensnared is to find its meaning and its place, a position concomitant with aspects of

⁹⁹ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 20-21.

traditional metaphysics.

Without judgement and thought words leave their meaning behind. This institutes the more of words as something auratic [atmospheric], immediate, authoritative.¹⁰¹ Language dipped in the sacred quality of the authentic' talk is the trademark of societal closeness. Prior to any content it moulds thought and as something impossible to experience it suggests something higher.

'Elements of empirical language are manipulated in their rigidity, as if they were elements of a true and revealed language. The empirical usability of the sacred ceremonial words makes both the speaker and the listener believe in their corporeal presence.'¹⁰²

This obliterates the difference between the constellation, its mediated relations, the more which language seeks, and the in-itself of this more. The cult of authenticity overflowing with the pretence of deep human emotion confirms its mutual understanding on a higher level by excluding those that don't speak the same credo. Excluding what might otherwise disappoint is concomitant with a belief that knowledge ranks higher the less it is liable to failure. It may well be that this criteria excludes everything that really matters.

Although somewhat entrapped by its constitution and language philosophy nevertheless is constantly able to think beyond itself and its limits. 'And this thinking beyond itself, into *openness* - that, precisely, is

¹⁰⁰ "Opinion Delusion Society," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 113.

¹⁰¹ The words aura is bolstered by the charismatic, and the sensuous particularity of object and image. The immediacy is that of the legal-rational and logical, the instantaneous connection of signifier and signified. Mediation of both these moments is through the authority of tradition.

¹⁰² Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will, (Great Britain: Routledge, 2003), p. 4.

metaphysics.¹⁰³ Constellated within the concept of openness are the concepts of possibility, fallibility and disappointment. For Adorno fallibility is a condition of possibility for metaphysical experience. This is why metaphysics seems to be attached most strongly to the weakest and most fragile of experiences. Given the philosophical tradition and the way it eulogizes conviction the doubtfulness of this thought is its strength and is indispensable to it, just as fallibility is to thought in general.¹⁰⁴

Fallibility and relativity: This critical thought runs like a thread through Adorno's work, not the least because it is constitutive of language. Language constitutes thought no less than thought language, but the fate of language is the history of decay of the contents embodied in language.¹⁰⁵ For the addressee there is on the one hand a kind of sensuous contemplative passivity or mimesis. The spirit's mimetic labours are guided by what seems to be the intention of the whole: something intelligible but indistinct. On the other hand the addressee's activity involves an immersion in the precise details of the wording. This involves a self-forgetting sided, paradoxically, where subjective associations are subsequently checked against the text.

Language, spoken, written, musical, etc, is read against itself through the intentions of the whole realized in the parts, and then again against the intentions of the other, the nonidentical. The fractures, ambiguities and contradictions, conflicts, inconsistencies, slips, etc, are the kind of philosophical details upon which Adorno focused his interpretive effort. His interpretive process necessitates more than the immediate experience of the

¹⁰³ "Lecture Nine," *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴ Theodor Adorno, "Lecture Eighteen," *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Schröder, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2001), p. 141.

given, it requires the active intervention of the thinking subject. If truth resides in the object it is not ready at hand but requires the subject to release it though not at the cost of giving up the nonidentity between subject and object.

If individual words are authenticated by being written in an intonation that transcendently places them in opposition to the propositional force and thought content of the sentence then their formal character translates as jargon. For the connotations of effect jargon takes under its own control the preconceptual mimetic element in language. Positioned outside of history, which would intrude on every word, the jargon is set to recover some alleged original meaning by making us believe that the existence of the speaker has communicated itself simultaneously and immediately with the subject matter thereby restoring its dignity. The jargon in this way devalues thought.

‘The jargon makes it seem that without this surplus mimetic element of the speaker the speech would already be inauthentic, that the pure attention of the expression to the subject matter would be a fall into sin. This formal element favours demagogic ends. Whoever is versed in the jargon does not have to say what he thinks, does not even have to think it properly [...]’¹⁰⁶

That the whole man should speak is central to the understanding of the jargon of authenticity. The societal result of this idealistic tendency is to compress objective consciousness and historical consciousness into the sphere of self-experience especially in its attitudinal and qualitative aspects. Lofty words have become incommensurable with this experience. It is a characteristic of evil to appropriate the most noble and elevated words for its

¹⁰⁵ Cf. “Lecture Sixteen,” *Metaphysics, Concepts and Problems*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁶ *The Jargon of Authenticity*, pp. 5-6.

own use, as a screen for vileness. Situations of compulsion force people to think only what they need for self-preservation. Where people fear for their survival truth content is hopelessly compromised.¹⁰⁷

The stereotype of an officially sanctioned worldview reveals an intellectual constitution akin to the totalitarian mind which lives on in certain formal features of thought. Adorno names these features or syndromes, structures of thought. They include the eager adjustment to the reigning values of the moment; a two-tiered classification dividing the sheep from the goats, the doves from the hawks; the lack of an immediate spontaneous relation to people, things, ideas; a compulsive conventionalism; and a faith in the established order no matter what the cost.¹⁰⁸ At the opposite pole the inauthentic sound like something partial, broken or accidental; something critical; phenomenal; something that lacks discipline; commitment; mental hygiene; something fallible and limited: i.e. human.

According to Adorno, '[t]he less human immediacy is tolerated by the omnipresent mediating mechanisms of exchange the more it seems a compliant philosophy will assert that it possesses the basis of things in the immediate.'¹⁰⁹ The reification of consciousness implied in the philosophy of the absolute and total subject is a particular one; an identity set against the abstract universality of thought itself. Without the singularity of identical consciousness, which to be possible at all must be supra-individual, there would be no universal and vice-versa. Neither moment has priority over the other. The reification of consciousness lends itself to the critical analysis of

¹⁰⁷ Cf. "Lecture Sixteen," *Metaphysics, Concept and Problems*. P. 123.

¹⁰⁸ "Philosophy and Teachers," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 55.

a microphysics of power and political investment in the idealized body.

The externalization of scientific discipline, an intellectual form, is akin to the deployment of an ingrained conceptual apparatus that calls for the devotion of spirit to something opposed and alien to it, something physical through which alone the spirit attains freedom. This contradiction is reproduced in the violence perpetuated by an insatiable identity principle that tolerates nothing that is not like itself. The squandered image points to the return of the primacy of the subject or subject centred as the sphere of absolute origins. Between the subject and what is not its like:

‘Things congeal as fragments of that which was subjugated; to rescue it means to love things. We cannot eliminate from the dialectics of the extant what is experienced in consciousness as an alien thing: negatively, coercion and heteronomy, but also the marred figure of what we should love, and what the spell, the endogamy of consciousness, does not permit us to love.’¹¹⁰

The happiness of the reconciled condition lies in the fact that the alien is granted a proximity wherein it remains what is distant and different but also beyond the heterogeneous and beyond that which is ones own. A difference beyond the heterogeneous could be a unity, a fusion/confusion of elements thought of not in the cognitive sense that was responsible for the heterogeneous reproduction in the first place, but as a complex relation, nonidentical and nonconceptual, a determination outside of history and somewhat unrealisable. Open thinking points beyond itself and as such it is akin to a transformative praxis, a comportment that prior to all particular content is a force of resistance against the universal tendency to oppress.

‘The happiness that dawn in the eye of the thinking person is the happiness of humanity. The universal tendency of oppression is opposed to thought as such. Thought is happiness, even where it

¹¹⁰ “Objectivity and Reification,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 191.

defines unhappiness: by enunciating it.’¹¹¹

Exemplary characters are archetypes of conforming asocial beings. The immediate and direct identification with stereotypical values, the ontological pre-structuring of existence in which true being was to be revealed, means that there is no longer an internal or motivational conflict to form a basis for the development of the tribunal of consciousness. There is no object left for consciousness because the individual abrogates responsibility in favour of a contribution to the apparatus. For the mythological that seeks absolute identification through typified existence, real “experience” through the realization of racial types or nationalistic exemplars, mimesis, in one of its guises, in an excellent instrument. For Horkheimer and Adorno the ‘organized control of mimesis’,¹¹² by an instrumental rationality which outlaws uncontrolled mimesis is the realization of nightmare politics.

The critical philosophy is said to miss a newly discovered or rediscovered structure upon whose staging and elaboration the jargon of authenticity depends.¹¹³ Man in thinking is called to lend a hand to Being. Thinking as belonging to and needed by Being is the caretaking hand that receives and holds and shapes whatever is given to thinking to think. It rules in the ongoing manner in which everything that is presences—is encountered and appears through the openness, the clearing man provides. What is given to thought to think can easily be overlooked, being in a sense what lies nearest to hand: the Being of what ever is.

¹¹¹ “Resignation,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 293

¹¹² “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 180.

¹¹³ Cf. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. 96.

Being not to be identified with an entity, or concept, or as an aspect or element of totality or known reality is said to both transcend and govern what is. Going beyond the particularity of its presencing, Being is the way of beings. Everyone, everything travels their own path but in a fundamental sense Being illuminates the way.¹¹⁴ The inauthentic fails to click, fails to communicate the collective agreement. By commemorating what has been lost in the oblivion of Being, basically a more fundamental truth, the ontological real experience always takes place in the face of a lack since experience is the Being of beings or Being apprehended by being *qua* beings.

For Adorno the prompt immediacy of the collective coupled with the claim that the whole person or the authentic core speaks should make us wary of what is termed the “event.”

‘The supposition that experience is a mode of being, something that has presubjectively “been appropriated as event” *ereignet* or “been elucidated” *gelichtet*, is simply incompatible with Hegel’s conception of experience as a “dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object” inasmuch as the “new true object issues from it.”— ‘His [Hegel’s] thought would never have ratified Heidegger’s claim that “the new object that arises for consciousness in the course of its formation” is “not just anything that is true, or any particular being, but is the truth of what is true, the Being of beings, the appearance of appearance.” Hegel would never have called that experience; instead, for Hegel what experience is concerned with at any particular moment is the animating contradiction of such absolute truth.’¹¹⁵

The seriousness in the tone of the jargon that it itself stylises as “to occur”¹¹⁶ conspires outside of context or conceptual content with the augurs of the

¹¹⁴ Cf. “Introduction,” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translation and introduction by William Lovitt (United States of America: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. xiv-xv.

¹¹⁵ “The Experiential Content of Hegel’s Philosophy,” *Hegel: Three Studies*, pp. 53-54.

¹¹⁶ Heidegger’s term *Ereignis* is rendered as “event” in standard translation of *Being and*

sacred. 'The secret which is suggested, and from the beginning is not there, is a public one.'¹¹⁷ Like other closed systems of thought philosophy avails itself of the dubious advantage of refusing all content and objective criticism, which would have to be argued against, by the simple expedient of claiming to have already factored in any such difference or criticism into its account. Heidegger lets this slip in the tractatus on *Identity and Difference*.

'But if we assume that the difference is a contribution made by our representational thinking, the question arises: a contribution to what? One answers: to beings. Good. But what does that mean: "beings"? What else could it mean than: something that *is* ? Thus we give to the supposed contribution, the representational idea of difference, a place within Being. But "Being itself says: Being which is *beings*. Whenever we come to the place to which we were supposedly first bringing difference along as an alleged contribution, we always find Being and beings in their difference are already there.'¹¹⁸

Difference says: "I'm here already."¹¹⁹ Difference: a determined form of invariance; the projection of what has congealed and become reified in consciousness; the eversameness of a state of unfreedom.

The starkly visible heteronomy is opposed by another heteronomy: consciousness recoins immutability. Reified consciousness is only a moment, its elevation to transcendence sabotages reconciliation to difference with a doctrine of invariance that on its coercive side laments the loss of form even as it adapts to the heteronomy of a structural ideal as something beyond contradiction.¹²⁰ Man no longer oppressed by the

Time. "To occur" is a rendering of *sich ereignen*, chosen by translators for lack of an English verb corresponding to the noun "event." Cf. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ *The Jargon of Authenticity*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, "The Principle of Identity," *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 62.

¹¹⁹ "The Principle of Identity," *Identity and Difference*, p. 65.

¹²⁰ Cf. "Universal and Individual in the Philosophy of Morals," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 284. 'The belief that forms have been lost arose from the devastation of cities and landscapes by planlessly expanding industry; it originated in a lack of rationality, not in its excess. Anyone who traces de-formation to metaphysical processes rather than to conditions of material

heteronomous condition and who managed to save some of their freedom and rise above society and above the individuality that exists, would be less likely to be looking for self-righteous support. In the state of unfreedom no one has a liberated consciousness.

Where dialectical and negative distinctions are not made the positive mania for domination and determination takes hold. Within the concepts of authenticity and genuineness there dwells the notion of the supremacy of the first, the original over the derived, and the social legitimacy of the autochthonous.¹²¹ The philosophy of inwardness sublimates the barbaric law of the first, the genuine and authentic, against the priority of the self and those who feel at home where they dwell.¹²²

According to Adorno, '[w]herever a doctrine of some absolute "first" is taught there will be talk of something inferior to it, of something absolutely heterogeneous to it, as its logical correlate.'¹²³ The philosophy of inwardness confronts, comes to terms with something, literally by setting itself apart. Self-alienation: intellectually it means to learn by rote. On the other hand captured within the Hegelian notion of externalization the person develops through dialectic of self-abandonment and self-transformation. In effect this means having an open mind as well engaging in intellectual matters productively within ones own consciousness.¹²⁴

Through the peephole of the self [where "self" means "relating itself to itself," a relation, whose terms are not given, and a movement] the

production is a purveyor of ideologies.'

¹²¹ Cf. "Gold Assay," *Minima Moralia*, p. 155.

¹²² Cf. "Gold Assay," *Minima Moralia*, p. 155.

¹²³ "Peephole Metaphysics," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 138.

¹²⁴ Cf. "Philosophy and Teachers," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 28.

subject, as a mere moment,¹²⁵ remains imprisoned for an eternity within the pure in-itself: its potential, latent possibility. The heretical and obverse, the disparagement of the claim that all eternity is coloured by an observer, or by a group or species, calls upon the critique of the cognitive moment of subjective mediation in the objective realm to renege on the remembrance of the otherwise forgotten notion of the in-itself.¹²⁶ Being, in its experience and expression, has need of configurations of entities, '[w]hat would lie in the beyond makes its appearance only in the materials and categories within,' otherwise the philosophical substance becomes the poor result of a process of subtraction.¹²⁷

The true philosophical task, according to Heidegger, would be to conceive Being. And yet as Adorno points out if we attempt to accomplish what Heidegger asks of us, to conceive Being as distinct from the concept which circumscribes it, we first have to deduct entity, which objectivity is in essence,¹²⁸ and then the categories of abstraction. This would leave us with an unknown quantity which, according to Adorno, '[...] nothing but the pathos of its invocation lifts above the Kantian concept of the transcendent thing-in-itself.'¹²⁹ Thinking without a concept is not thinking at all. The prohibition against thinking that Heidegger's objectivism aims at the subject is nothing less than the subject's own reverse image. To conceive a Being that resists any cogitative definition is false only where it claims to make sense. What is at the core of Heidegger's philosophy is not sense but what is

¹²⁵ Subjectivity as the exclusive interiority of a personality or as a separate and one-sided agency for synthesizing representations are moments among others of the subject.

¹²⁶ Cf. "Peephole Metaphysics," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 139.

¹²⁷ Cf. "Peephole Metaphysics," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 140.

¹²⁸ Cf. "The Objects Preponderance," *Negative Dialectics*, p.183.

called knowledge of domination. Expounded as being genuinely the knowledge of salvation the philosophy of Being presents a promissory note as an echo of substance.

Without judgement there is no concept. So it cannot be said that judgments are a mere synthesis of concepts. The old tripartition of logic into concept, judgment, and conclusion is a relic: another system. Every analysis of judgment takes us to a subject and an object. This movement does not in itself create a region beyond the resulting constellation of moments.

If in the Heideggarian sense the “is” of a judgement is not a thing, not an entity, and not usually what we mean by objectivity then what is it? If we say the “is” of a judgement has no substrate no underlying surface in the state of facts that we mean, if we say that there is no corresponding individual thing we interpret it as being, we might conclude that “is” must indicate a third region beyond subject and object, which is Being. This conclusion, the result of a self-sufficient semantics, evokes a parallogism in the fact that we cannot conceive a supposedly pure substrate of “is”. According to Adorno, ‘Every attempt to do so runs into the transmissions¹³⁰ of which hypostatized Being would be relieved.’¹³¹

Being is not simply totality or the absolute: if positivity reduces it to anything then it is mere factuality. The concept is unthinkable without the “more” that makes a language of language. What echoes in the word “Being” is entwinement. Everything is more than it is. Being, added to the

¹²⁹ “Immanent Critique of Ontology,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 98.

¹³⁰ Cf. “Copula,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 102. ‘There is no entity whose determination and self-determination does not require something else, something which the entity itself is not; for by itself alone it would not be definable. It therefore points beyond itself. “Transmission” is simply another word for this.’

individual entity, is not confined to the particular entity. Entity stripped of all qualification and all categories thereby not needing to legitimize itself as a concept garbs Being in the dignity of immediacy. On the other hand entity contaminates Being with the temporal rudiment of material ontology. 'Being gets its life from the forbidden fruit, as if the fruit were Freya's apples.'¹³²

Heideggerian Being is something added to the individual entity, something immediate and primary beyond subject and object. The structure clings to the initiates while permanently eluding them. In the end it is human reason that is disparaged. The cult of Being and the polemics against the idealistic cult of the mind do presuppose a critique of the deification of Being. But the result is in the end no less repressive, only less transparent and therefore less capable of critical reflection. What it does insure is that philosophy has a post-existence, but only if it makes "one and all" its speciality. 'The expression of Being is nothing but the feeling of this aura.'¹³³ It is an aura where the indirect element becomes isolated and so direct. But indirectness as a kind of first person subjectivity involves the direct in a different sense than the transmission of something direct. Indirectness cannot be hypostatized any more than can the poles of subject and object. The concept of Being, whose transmissions are not to be put into words, is stretched into a kind of non-objective objectivity. It settles into an imaginary realm between brute facts and talk about *weltanschauung* a comprehensive world-view.¹³⁴

For Adorno it is neither the pure coherence of a work nor the

¹³¹ "No Transcendence of Being," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 105.

¹³² "No Transcendence of Being," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 108.

¹³³ "Immanent Critique of Ontology," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 99.

manifestation of the thinker's subjectivity that determines its character as philosophy but the degree, to which the real has entered into concepts, manifests itself in these concepts and comprehensively justifies them. The real is the binding nexus of concepts. The dialectical method has its essence in the recognition that the clarification of particular concepts can only be accomplished through analysis of the nexus of concepts it enters into. In the density of the nexus, similarities and differences become sharply apparent.

For Adorno the interpretation of philosophy as poetry is opposed to this. The poetical by turning away from the standards of the real is deprived the possibility of adequate criticism. Critical thought is that which allows philosophy to be tested historically. It is the newly emerging that confers on philosophy the reputation of being poetical. In the newly emerging the range and specificity of content as well as the articulation of form is missing. Everything in philosophy that was ambiguous and could or would not fit the requirements of scientific philosophy, that concepts be constituted as the distinctive characteristics of the objects subsumed by them,¹³⁵ was given the title of poetry.

For Adorno, dialectical concepts are the proper instrument of philosophy. Philosophy:

'[...] constructs ideas that illuminate and appropriate the mass of the simply existing; ideas around which the elements of the existing crystallize as knowledge. These ideas present themselves in dialectical concepts. As soon as this type of philosophy is tolerantly accepted as poetry, the strangeness of its ideas, in which its power over reality manifests itself, is neutralized along with the

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Theodor Adorno, "Poetry and Dialectical Concept," *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (The United States of America: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 3.

seriousness of its claims.’¹³⁶

It is the trivial that is evil. Triviality is the form of consciousness of mind which adapts itself to the world as it is. It obeys the principle of inertia, the replacement of knowledge by the mere registering, ordering and summarizing of facts: truth as no more than the practicable arranging of the mere existent. The way out of this dilemma is to reflect on the idea of truth as a procedure quite different from mere registration. The impulse opposed to the positivist motif can only survive by adopting the principle: renounce, that you might gain.

‘That is to say, one will not survive by preserving some so-called higher spheres, or what I would prefer to call nature reserves, which reflection is not allowed to touch, but by pushing the process of demythologizing, or enlightenment, to the extreme. Only in this, if at all, is there any hope that the philosopher, through his self-reflection, will not end by consummating triviality, the consummation of which is absolute horror.’¹³⁷

According to Adorno, the joy of thought, which is the motivation to think of metaphysical matters in the first place, is simply the joy of elevation, of rising above what merely is.

According to Adorno, one of the painful afflictions of philosophical engagement is that, ‘[...] in giving way to this joy of philosophizing – in refusing to be bargained out of truth by mere being – one is being lured into a demonic situation by this very truth.’¹³⁸ The situation arises from an indispensable moment of philosophical speculation: that the trivial, positivist awareness is adequate to the spell of the world. Dialectical reason follows the impulse to transcend the natural context and its delusions. Dialectics is

¹³⁶ “Poetry and Dialectical Concept,” *Kierkegaard : Construction of the Aesthetic*, p. 4.

¹³⁷ “Lecture Fifteen,” *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, p. 115.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

critical reflection upon that context.¹³⁹

For metaphysics to have a chance it will have to cease to think that there is something one can hold onto and never lose, and think against itself. 'And that means that it must measure itself against the ultimate, the absolutely unthinkable, to have any right to be a thinking at all.'¹⁴⁰

Given the above, what has been disclosed in the countenance of Being and the absolute, the claim and the reflection might seem paradoxical. The paradox springs from norm of explication in Cartesian logic: reason for what follows have to be found in what goes before. This norm, according to Adorno, is no longer compulsory.¹⁴¹ It is not the organizing drive of thought that brings us to dialectics. It is, rather, unreconciled matter.

¹³⁹ Cf. "Noncontradictoriness not to be hypostatized," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁰ "Lecture Fifteen," *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, p. 115.

¹⁴¹ Cf. "Noncontradictoriness not to be hypostatized," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 140.

Chapter Two: Concept and Constellation.

‘Is not memory inseparable from love, which seeks to preserve what yet must pass away? Is not each stirring of fantasy engendered by desire which, in displacing the elements of what exists, transcends it without betrayal? Is not indeed the simplest perception shaped by fear of the thing perceived, or desire for it?’¹⁴²

Theodor Adorno

In metaphysics all concepts, in order to refer to the subject matter of thought, must necessarily refer to something beyond themselves. How this operates at the epistemological level, how this brings forth meaning that is not subjective but conditioned by historical necessity working through mimesis, is the point of this investigation. More succinctly, carried through, the critique of identity becomes a groping for the preponderance of the object.¹⁴³

Experientially, some form of necessity, dynamic excess, compels philosophy to operate with concepts which are in turn entwined with the nonconceptual.¹⁴⁴ This means the concept cannot dominate or reify in the manner of speculative idealism; the non-conceptual survives in the concept as the meaning it conveys. Through the insight of negative dialectics, Adorno's epistemological move that rethinks the dialectic, the constitutional character of the nonconceptual ends the compulsive identification that arrives with the concept; a concept that, in its blindness and constancy, corresponds to the thing-in-itself.¹⁴⁵

Reflection on the thing-in-itself is the way out for a subject that cannot

¹⁴² “*Intellectus sacrificial intellectus*,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 122.

¹⁴³ “The Object's Preponderance,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁴ “Disenchantment of the Concept,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. “Property,” *Philosophy of Right*, p. 42. ‘While so-called ‘external’ things have a show of self-subsistence for consciousness, intuition, and representative thinking, the free

know itself directly. The subject is the object determinant of a society that is both the epitome and negation of that subject.¹⁴⁶ Concepts, virtually the idols of thought, are remote or removed from a subject which in effect crosses itself out, only to find itself returned objectified as an intra-personal subjectivity of socially constructed relations. As a subject-apparatus of sensibility and agency this subject is to be contrasted with the interpersonal subject whose subjectivity is always a feeling towards something from which, shaped as it is after the model of material, formal logic cannot erase the trace of entity.¹⁴⁷

According to Adorno, '[w]ithout specific thoughts, thinking would contravene its very concept, and these thoughts instantly point to entities—entities which absolute thinking in turn has yet to posit.'¹⁴⁸ To think means to think something, something that is meant or judged. The logically abstract form of "something" does not claim to posit a being, it dissociates thought from primacy and solidity. Conceptually entity represents a turn towards the object and materiality but at the same time by being neither abstract nor fully articulated it creates a cover concept that is not based on identity but on the fragment: Entity has a sense of indeterminacy but not as its ground and an objectivity that is fluid, not a historical progress: Entity takes a literal

will idealizes that type of actuality and so its truth.'

¹⁴⁶ Cf. "The Nominalistic Aspect," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 126. 'Society precedes the subject. That the subject mistakes itself for an antecedent of society is its necessary delusion, a mere negative statement about society.'

¹⁴⁷ Cf. "Copula," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 103. 'A rigorous distinction has to be made, first, between the purely logical subject-object relation in a judgment and the relation of subject and object as an epistemological-material one. What the term subject means in the two cases is almost contradictory. In the theory of judgments it is the basic assumption of which something is predicated, as opposed to the act of judgment and to what is judged in the synthesis of the judgment; in a sense, it is the objectivity upon which thinking works. Epistemologically, however, "subject" means the thinking function, and frequently also the entity which thinks and cannot be excluded from the concept "I" except at the price of

translation like “yes” non-literally.

The dissociation of thought fastens it to that which it is not, something that is not commensurable with thinking but is none the less indelible for it.¹⁴⁹ According to Adorno,

‘[t]he *ratio* becomes irrational where it forgets this, where it runs counter to the meaning of thought by hypostatizing its products, the abstractions. The commandment of its autarky condemns thinking to emptiness, and finally to stupidity and primitivity.’¹⁵⁰

Rationality recoils into mythology and falsehood where it conceives an autarky of thought and makes absolute, as in free suspension, the dissociating thought. For Adorno the conception of a self-preserving mental principle as the sphere of absolute origin is an attempt to bring thought to a halt. The deferment of truth as a fragile temporal substance, particularly for utility’s sake, is the consolation of a philosophy that cannot plunge into any abyss other than that of an agile sophistry that, for the sake of the absolute subject and its principle of identity, is moralistically asked to come to a decision beforehand.

‘Only thoughts that go to the limit are facing up to the omnipotent impotence of certain accord: only a cerebral acrobatics keeps relating to the matter, for which, according to the *fable convenu*, [the agreed upon fiction] it has nothing but disdain for the sake of its self-satisfaction.’¹⁵¹

Inconclusiveness as a never-changing realm is true for untruth only. Only thought is true and this is set against a surplus of the world of sense. If

ceasing to mean what it means.’

¹⁴⁸ “The Indissoluble “Something”,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁹ “Fragility of Truth,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. In the rationalist tradition the ontological ground and epistemological reason [*ratio*] were synonymous. The reason for existence was at the same time the ground for existing. Hence the two fundamental principles common to being and knowledge [in actuality fundamental propositions], the principle of contradiction – something cannot simultaneously be and not be – and the principle of sufficient reason – which held that everything that exists has a reason or ground for doing so.

thought defers to sense as sheer existence it will fail to grasp it and thus abandon freedom and spontaneity. Again, if conscious experience lacks the moment of self-assured and naïve spontaneity of thought it will become unsure of itself and lose what appears as the most primary and least subjective of experiences. Thought that is heedless of its own active dependencies will become a dull copy of what the establishment expects of it thereby sealing itself off even more from what does not emanate from it; the most subjective, the immediate datum, that which eludes the subject's intervention.¹⁵²

As a mode of conduct that shields no metaphysical certainty the open thought has no protection against a decline into randomness other than the consistency of its performance. A definite or determined presentation or style stops philosophy conceding too much to relativism. In this sense and experientially philosophy is analogous to music, not imitative, philosophy's relation to the heterogeneous is virtually thematic. One has to, in a sense; compose it first and in a manner that from beginning to end is comprehensive. 'The crux is what happens in it, not a thesis or a position—the texture, not the deductive or inductive course of one-track minds. Essentially, therefore, philosophy is not expoundable.'¹⁵³ This fact also situates the nonidentical. 'The test of the turn to nonidentity is its performance; if it remained declarative, it would be revoking itself.'¹⁵⁴ Accordingly the impulse that animates philosophy, is not fulfilled at once but rather in further articulation. Similarly music, something phenomenal, is

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² "Dialectics and Solidity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 39.

¹⁵³ "Fragility of Truth," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 33.

a critique of phenomenality, of the appearance that substance is present here and now. What is common to art and philosophy is a mode of conduct that resists or forbids pseudomorphosis, the prepared phantasm of a whole, the identification and absorption into a concept as something final. Both art and philosophy keep faith with their own substance dialectically, that's to say through their opposites. Art does this by refusing to be pinned down as to its meaning, philosophy by refusing to clutch at any immediate thing.

‘What the philosophical concept will not abandon is the yearning that animates the nonconceptual side of art, and whose fulfilment shuns the immediate side of art as mere appearance. The concept—the organon of thinking, and yet the wall between thinking and thought—negates that yearning. Philosophy can neither circumvent such negation nor submit to it. It must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept.’¹⁵⁵

Philosophy, which never stops reflecting its own course, determines the flaw in every concept thereby making it necessary to cite others. Conceptual mediation in the midst of nonconceptuality draws out the implicit history of the matter at hand, the fact that it is not simply so and not otherwise, but has come to be under certain conditions. Nonconceptuality, inalienable from the concept, by disavowing the concept's reification disavows epistemology. This can lead to an immediate and direct identification with stereotypical value scales: the apparent obviousness of the object.

‘Perception [as something conceptual, figured in time and space] is directness at one remove, reflection [as the nonconceptual or indeterminate] is the seductive power of sensuality [...]. Only the self-consciousness labour of thought can escape from this hallucinatory power [...].’¹⁵⁶

It is epistemology that obliges philosophy to be substantive and deal

¹⁵⁴ “Starting out from the Concept,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 154-155.

¹⁵⁵ “Infinity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁶ “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 194.

with historic entities as its objects. The inner historicity of thought is inseparable from both its content and from tradition. The texts philosophy deals with and criticizes are brought to it by the tradition they embody: Through engagement and mediation the conduct of philosophy becomes commensurable with tradition. According to Adorno, '[...] idealism sees in the inner history of immediacy its vindication as a stage of the concept, materialism makes that inner history the measure, not just of the untruth of concepts, but even more of their immediacy in being.'¹⁵⁷ A philosophy that became enthralled with the thought of supposedly immediate subjective data, the fictitious one-dimensional now, would de-historicize the content of thought. Under the spell of a pure present, the pure and timeless subject would seek to eliminate the traditional moments of thinking that serve to mediate between known objects. This theme, when taken up, turns against all labour and effort of the concept: Mediation is irreconcilable with the urge to reduction. But according to Adorno, the critique is misconceived.

'Knowledge no sooner starts from scratch, by way of a stabilizing objectification than it will distort the objects. Knowledge as such, even in a form detached from substance, takes part in tradition as unconscious remembrance; there is no question which we might simply ask without knowing of past things that are preserved in the question and spur it.'¹⁵⁸

The hypostatization of the concept of nonconceptuality is an act that runs counter to its meaning. If the purpose were to posit a *Prima philosophia* then its basic philosophizing would necessarily carry with it the primacy of the concept. Aware that the conceptual totality is mere appearance Adorno claims that the concept's own concept, the way it claims to being an order-

¹⁵⁷ "Thing, Language, History," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁸ "Tradition and Knowledge," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 54.

creating invariance, has become a problem.¹⁵⁹ The concept necessarily cuts across immanent changes in the subject, setting it on the path to unfreedom. Entity is no mere datum it is not immediate it is mediated through the concept whose basic character it dissolves: it changes the concept. As a static cognitive ideal the concept is at odds with the dynamism of what it would seek to cover.

‘The concept in itself, previous to any content hypostatizes its own form against the content. With that, however, it is already hypostatizing the identity principle: that what our thinking practice merely postulates is a fact in itself, solid and enduring. Identifying thought objectifies by the logical identity of the concept.’¹⁶⁰

In light of this the deformation of spontaneity should be seen as a reactive adaptation to the over subscribed mythologizing and bureaucratizing of the administered world. Where this adaptation becomes intentional then self-empowerment is optimised through a mode of rational interaction. Adaptation is repeated adaptation, repetition of the same. A term that has come to represent this idea is “common-sense”. In the attempt to reconcile reason with nature common sense retains a grain of truth. For example, according to Adorno, identity thinking as mimesis of the hardened and estranged is the reproduction of an earlier state. ‘The reflexes of stiffening and numbness in humans are archaic schemata of the urge to survive: by adaptation to death life pays the toll of its continued existence.’¹⁶¹ Playing dead, hiding out, incorporating death into life, self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of the other, positive freedom, etc., are expressions that point to somewhat paradoxical or contradictory ways of avoiding external confrontation.

¹⁵⁹ “Dialectics not a Standpoint,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ “Starting out from the Concept,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 154.

¹⁶¹ “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 180.

Identity thinking can lend itself to a kind of moral centralism or universalism the belief that there are moral principles whose validity logically transcends their employment in particular cases. As part of a “top-down” hierarchical entelechy they move to transcend even the ability to be put into practice, i.e. beyond the empiricism or materialism of “vile bodies”. This unreasonable or visionary aspect has not diminished the ability to orientate or guide behaviours. However Adorno is adamant that the ingenuity as practiced by irrationalists and intellectual-baiters of all persuasions cannot be defended. Cunning and obscurantism remain what they always were, unmediated, uncomprehending and immediate lies, the justification of social injustice as a law of nature. Phrases like “that’s just the way it is” or “life’s like that” affirm the tacit assent and primacy of the general over the particular.¹⁶² When pressed moral universalism comes across as not much more than a generalization of a particular specificity.

As something inescapable to thought dialectics reveals the falseness of all claims to identity thinking. It does this by enacting a critical consciousness that unfolds the inadequacy immanent to all concepts. ‘The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy.’¹⁶³

The dialectic allows for the definite negation of the individual moments whereby subject and object are identified with each other as absolute opposites. Absolute duality would be unity or total monism.

‘If speculation on the state of reconciliation were permitted, neither

¹⁶² “On the Morality of Thinking,” *Minima Moralia*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁶³ “Starting out from the Concept,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 154.

the undistinguished unity of subject and object nor their antithetical hostility would be conceivable in it; rather, the communication of what was distinguished. Not until then would the concept of communication, as an objective concept, come into its own. The present one is so infamous because the best there is, the potential of an agreement between people and things, is betrayed to an interchange between subjects according to the requirements of subjective reason. In its proper place, even epistemologically, the relation of subject and object would lie in the realization of peace among men and well as between men and their Other. Peace is the state of distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other.’¹⁶⁴

Subject and object lend themselves to a bilateral unfolding, but they are not primary states of fact. The conceptual polarity of subject and object point to their being, resultant categories of reflection. The duality of subject and object needs to be maintained against the totalising of thought, and against the attendant ideological overtones concealed in all talk of synthesis that boasts of uniting what consciousness has arbitrarily divided.

‘In truth, the subject is never quite the subject, and the object never quite the object: and yet the two are not pieced out of any third that transcends them. [...] The division, which makes the object the alien thing to be mastered and appropriates it, is indeed subjective, the result of orderly preparation; but no critique of its subjective origin will reunify the parts once they split in reality.’¹⁶⁵

The rational processes of labour are a model of this fragmentation. The conditions needed for the production of goods resemble the general conceptual procedure of synthesis.

What is so compelling about Hegel's dialectic and system and is made to approximate real compulsion through the principle of identity. The real compulsion is societal debt relations which deluded thought claims as its own.¹⁶⁶ Its closed circle brings about the illusion that it is a natural end: it

¹⁶⁴ “Subject and Object,” *The Adorno Reader*, p. 140.

¹⁶⁵ “Subject-Object Dialectics,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 175.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. J. K. Galbraith, “The Bill Collector Cometh,” *The Affluent Society*, (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1962) p. 167. ‘The process of persuading people to incur debt, and the

lends itself to the metaphysical ratio between Being and beings. Negative Dialectics brings this appearance back to nothing. It confutes the identity that it attributes to the whole. This is the paradox of Adorno's dialectic. It utilizes a totalising critique to criticize the totality. Reason, the high point of enlightenment thought, is suspected of confusing power and validity claims. As instrumental, reason has assimilated itself to power and thereby relinquished its critical force. Reason collapses into understanding conjoining with the compulsion to categorize. This final disclosure of ideological critique applies to itself. In this antagonistic state the difference between thinking and thought seared in our theoretical awareness expresses the condition that the falsehood of dualism is truth.

The embittering part of dialectics, the part that disillusiones and frustrates, is its objective contradictoriness. Within the abstract rules of logic objective contradictoriness designates what entity remains outside of our judgment, that which escapes the preformed in the definition—the truth claimed by our subjective conceptual mechanism. Yet, according to Adorno, objective contradictoriness also designates something in the way we judge. 'For what we mean in the judgment is always the entity due to be judged *beyond* the particular that is included in the judgment—otherwise, according to its own intention the judgment would be superfluous.'¹⁶⁷ Particularity in the judgment points beyond itself, to the unresolved as such. This means that in the unity of consciousness or in the ideality of spirit the judgment is partial and as such, conceptually, it cannot rest content within itself. The

arrangements for them to do so, are as much a part of modern production as the making of the goods and the nurturing of the wants. The Puritan ethos was not abandoned. It was merely overwhelmed by the massive power of modern merchandising.'

unresolved is the non-identical to which we are reconciled. Dialectical cognition does not set out to construe contradictions and thereafter resolve them; it pursues the inadequacies of thought and thing as experienced in the thing.

‘Dialectical contradiction “is” not simply; it means it has the subjective significance—that it cannot be talked out of this. In this meaning, this intention, dialectics aims at what is different. It is as philosophy’s self-criticism that the dialectical motion stays philosophical.’¹⁶⁸

Identity thinking, via the concept, subsumes, represents or exemplifies that which it is not. Traditionally antinomy is that which thought seeks to overcome, the idea of something beyond contradiction, yet contradiction is immanent to thought itself. ‘The antithesis of thought to whatever is heterogeneous to thought is reproduced in thought itself, as its immanent contradiction.’¹⁶⁹ The reciprocal criticism of universal and particular by identifying acts of judgment was formalized by idealism into an affirmative principle. This is reflected in the terminology. The copular affirms what something is, it is so and not otherwise, what is at work in such a synthesis is the will to identify. Negative Dialectics is part of this logic not beyond it.

‘Totality is to be opposed by convicting it of nonidentity with itself—of the nonidentity it denies according to its own concept. Negative dialectics is thus tied to the supreme categories of identitarian philosophy as its point of departure.’¹⁷⁰

In order to free ourselves from the universal coercive mechanism, and this is a question of intent, we must attain identity with the concept in order to see reason against its reason. ‘To use the strength of the subject to break through

¹⁶⁷ “Objectivity of Contradiction,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 152.

¹⁶⁸ “Objectivity of Contradiction,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 153.

¹⁶⁹ “On the Dialectics of Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 146.

¹⁷⁰ “On the Dialectics of Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 147.

the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity.’¹⁷¹

Adorno's partial solution to the problem of the concept is to have the concept enter into a constellation: A constellation of concepts.¹⁷² Constellation is not a formal system it does not resolve or equalize concepts but juxtaposes them. The specification and configuration of its moments are qualitatively different from a lack of ambiguity in every particular moment. The configuration itself is more and other than the quintessence of its moments. One moment sheds light on the other. Together the individual moments form a figure which is a legible and specific sign.¹⁷³ Whereas traditionally concepts succumbed to a felt need for greater and greater abstraction, the constellation is the specific and more than the specific. It is meant to illuminate specifically what to the more generalized cover concept is a matter of indifference.

‘The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects—by the actualization and concentration of something which is already known and is transformed by that knowledge. Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. As a constellation theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but a combination of numbers.’¹⁷⁴

The constellation as creative, spontaneous thought and action presents a possibility, a way to transcend the conceptual and reach the nonconceptual. Doing so allows us to challenge the archaic features, the subjective

¹⁷¹ “Preface,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. xx. Cf. “Against Personalism,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 277. ‘The subject is the lie, because for the sake of its own absolute rule it will deny its own objective definitions. Only he who would refrain from such lies—who would have used his own strength, which he owes to identity, too cast off the façade of identity—would truly be a subject.’

¹⁷² “Constellation,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 162.

¹⁷³ “Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel,” *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 109.

¹⁷⁴ “Constellation,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 163.

heteronomous moment in the object that cuts across the rational. It enables us to rethink, dialectically, how, for example, essence and appearance, semblance and truth, are transmitted. How they are able to point beyond themselves.

Remembrance of the particular in its immanent connection with other things, the way they came to be and the conditions under which they exist: The model for this is language not so much in the definitions it utilizes, which as simple representations of identitarian thinking seek to exhaust the categorical performance of the object, but in the way it lends objectivity to the conceptual relations clustered around the thing.¹⁷⁵

If the thing itself is its context, concrete context in Hegelian terminology, then the subjectively assembled constellation can by way of language become a sign of objectivity and of spiritual substance.¹⁷⁶ The constellation by gathering around the object looks to its possibility. It releases the object from the limitations historically sedimented within it. Constellation as an indicative device presents an image of unfulfilled potentialities. History may have cheated the object but the baneful spell of

¹⁷⁵ In a different context but with the same sense, cf. Theodor Adorno., "Lecture Nine: The Concept of the Thing," *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2001), p. 103. 'These relations, these functional concepts that refer to something relatively self-subsistent and permanent - these are in fact what we mean by things. In this sense no distinction can be made between things and the concept of things; instead, the things *qua* laws to connect the appearances are themselves just concepts.'

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Part II of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. William Wallace, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), § 378, *Zusatz*, p. 3. 'Spirit is not an inert being, but on the contrary, absolutely restless [*unruhig*: "troubled," "agitated," "restless"] being, pure activity, the negating or ideality of every fixed category of the abstractive intellect; not abstractly simple but, in its simplicity, at the same time a distinguishing itself from itself; not an essence that is already finished and complete before its manifestation, hiding itself behind its appearance, but an essence which is truly actual only through the determinate forms of its necessary self-manifestation.' As cited in, Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel: The Restless of the Negative*, trans. Jason Smith and Steven Miller, (The United States of America: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 6.

its all embracing rationality can theoretically be broken

The static cognitive ideal is the concept that prior to any content hypostatizes its own form. To reiterate, solid and enduring identifying thought objectifies by the logical identity of the concept.¹⁷⁷ The logical order of dependency, connection, progression, and union of concepts is grounded in the corresponding conditions of social reality and labour. The social characteristics of categories of thought are not expressions of social solidarity but marks of the inscrutable unity of society and domination. The supraordinated concept and the dependencies within its domain that have established the object in turn conceals the most real, the dependence on society, that is inadequately compensated by the individual thing which the concept covers. The concept as symbol or sign undertakes a fetishistic function signifying the recurrence of nature and representing the permanence of social pressure and paranoiac forms of consciousness. 'The dread objectified as a fixed image becomes the sign of the established domination of the privileged. Such is the fate of the universal concept [...]'¹⁷⁸ The social aspect in the development of thought is levelled down to the immediately given, to the extensive. All that is genetic, intensive, and uncomfortable about conceptual relationships, is rejected and forgotten.¹⁷⁹

Etymologically the German word for concept - *Begriff* - translates the Latin verb *concipere*: to take to oneself, to take and hold.¹⁸⁰ As a substantive it first appears in the philosophical vocabulary in the late seventeenth

¹⁷⁷ "Starting out from the Concept," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 153.

¹⁷⁸ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁹ "Elements of Anti-Semitism," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 197.

century; prior to this it meant a provisional sketch or rough draft of a legal document or agreement.

It was first used in a philosophical and epistemological context by Leibniz and his followers where it was broadly defined as any representation of a thing and was classified according to the degree of clarity, distinctness, completion and adequacy. The logical and epistemological ambiguities inherent in this usage were carried over by Kant into his critical philosophy.

In Kant there is a twofold meaning for the term concept. On the one hand it is a discursive concept, a universal or reflected representation of the act of synthesis which was common to several particular representations: the concept is the generic identity of several representations. On the other hand concept has a meaning that is much closer to its sense of grasping, seizing.

A concept [*Begriff*, act of seizing] is the clear or obscure consciousness of the unity of the act of grasping together a sensible manifold. The latter concept is to be understood as the consciousness of an act of combining and grasping that is prior to the sense of concept as generic identity, the universal representation formed by discursive acts of comparison, reflection, and abstraction.¹⁸¹ Aristotle's expression "One in the Many" is relevant here as it recurs, according to Adorno, in almost exactly the same form in Kantian philosophy.

The synthesis formed by the mind, which is the act of cognition or is

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, (Great Britain: Blackwell, 2000), p.118.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Beatrice Longuenesse, "The "Synthesis of Recognition in a Concept", *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, trans. Charles T. Wolfe, (The United States of America: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 46. 'That a concept should thus be understood as *consciousness of an act*, and more precisely of an act of *combining and grasping together*, is what Kant seems to be insisting upon when he calls attention to the word "concept," *Begriff*: for even more explicitly than the Latinate *concept*, the German *Begriff* carries the connotation of *grasping, seizing*.'

cognition itself, is referred to as unity in diversity. Historically the unity in diversity has been transposed into the notion of an ordering subject through which this unity is produced. This idea has its origin in ontology, from the fact that this unity is supposed to be the unity of being itself: something prior to the individual and the particular. Initially Aristotle's idea of the universal is not substantial; it is not like the Platonic Ideas which are universal concepts, existing in and for itself, independently of its realization. In Aristotle's deliberations he does not go so far as to conceive universal concepts as pure abstractions in relation to the particulars subsumed under it. One can only speak of a universal in so far as it manifests itself in a particular.

For Aristotle in contrast to the universal only the particular is substantial: only the single, apparent, concrete phenomena is real, has primary being. This is the source of the debate about whether Aristotle was a nominalist. For Adorno to describe Aristotle thus would be a grave misunderstanding.

'I could say that his *Metaphysics* circles around this theme; that its problem lies precisely in the contradictory situation whereby on the one hand the universal is denied substantiality while, on the other, universal concepts are not mere abbreviations of the particulars subsumed under them - rather, they have an attribute which raises them above *flatus vocis*, above the mere breath of the voice'¹⁸²

For Aristotle the particular is the real. It is as a "this" that the particular has true being and yet in a peculiar and self-contradictory way the universal or form or reason has, just as it had for Plato and later Hegel, the higher reality.

Reason which at first exists as an inner possibility is actualised through education and experience and by these means the external and

outward authority is internalised: actualised. For the actual to be rational requires that it be a feature of some existent element of the social world, an institution, a mode of behaviour, a technology, etc. But this logical necessity is not conclusive.

According to Adorno, despite the not always conscious conformism encountered in the workplace and in the instruments of domination, language, weapons, machines, etc, that would encompass all and must allow themselves to be encompassed by all, there prevails an aspect of rationality unreconciled with the fixed forms of the material and intellectual apparatus. 'In thought, men distance themselves from nature in order thus imaginatively to present it to themselves—but only in order to determine how it is to be dominated.'¹⁸³ The objectivity of means already implies the criticism of domination, power, knowledge, and mythology. This free live thought, compulsive and divisive, ultimately refers to society itself as the real subject of thought.

For Kant immediate perception is an unconscious synthesis, a unity arrived at by way of the apprehension of the fragmentary in intuition. The fragmentary or chaotic is framed as a simultaneous unity temporally not by reflection but by an act of appropriation. By thinking of it as "something" by claiming it the subject makes "something" its own.¹⁸⁴

According to Adorno, 'In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, sensation as "something," occupies the place of the indistinguishably ontical.' On the other hand '[...] sensation holds no higher cognitive rank than any other real

¹⁸² "Lecture Five," *Metaphysics, Concept and Problems*, p. 26.

¹⁸³ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁴ "Lecture Nine: The Concept of the Thing (1)," *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 101.

entity.’¹⁸⁵ For Adorno “something” is the indispensable substrate of any concept. It is the most extreme, highest, or supreme abstraction of the subject matter that is not identical with thinking, ‘[...] an abstraction not to be abolished by any further thought process.’¹⁸⁶ What is presupposed in the “something” has to be named before it can be said in a proposition, a meaningful statement. The definition of the statement is to say something about “something” that is presupposed in the subject prior to predication. The object, the “What”, that is postulated by every conceivable idea for a concept of subject, is never, as contrasted with the subject, the epitome of mediation, the “How”, of something.¹⁸⁷

According to Adorno, when defining the meaning of concepts it is not enough to outline the main areas of subject matter, the philosophical circles within which they move. To make claims as to the essential content and the way it is treated also falls short of the mark. The understanding of concepts includes a moment of negation. If one seeks to understand a concept or a philosophy, then one needs to know what its specific rhetoric was really directed against.

‘If one seeks to understand a philosophy purely from within itself, just from what is written down, one usually does not get very far. One needs to develop a faculty for discerning the emphases and accents peculiar to that philosophy in order to uncover their relationships within the philosophical context, and thus to understand the philosophy itself [...].’¹⁸⁸

To register the process of revealing and discerning discrimination, to claim “something” as mine as existing in my consciousness, means that a direct

¹⁸⁵ “Compulsory Substantiveness,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 137.

¹⁸⁶ “The Indissoluble “Something,”” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 135.

¹⁸⁷ “Subject and Object,” *The Adorno Reader*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁸ “Lecture Eight,” *Metaphysics*, p. 51.

connection to a nexus of qualities already exists prior to the indirect connections based on concepts such as recognition and memory. And it is not as if the highest precludes the lowest or the “something” precludes the “nothing” which may be the indeterminate, but is not *only* indeterminate, it is not absolute. That which is divested of all specific determinations may still crave determination and this qualifies it as possibility.¹⁸⁹

In abstraction possibility remains a myth. Myths intended report, naming, the narration of a beginning [or Beginning], presentation, confirmation, and explanation. Myths like the concepts they become are characterized by discipline and power, they become the “right mark” mainly through sacrifice, the labour of the un-free through the word of command.¹⁹⁰

The three-fold synthesis,¹⁹¹ for Kant the highest point on which the possibility of the logical form of all knowledge necessarily depends,¹⁹² is the product as well as the condition for material existence. According to Adorno, not until the moments of a synthesis identify with each other will their identity obtain that restlessness that inward shudder which Hegel calls

¹⁸⁹ Cf. “Lecture Eight,” *Metaphysics*, p. 53.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 8.

¹⁹¹ The synthetic unity of apperception. The synthesis of apprehension in intuition; the synthesis of reproduction in a representation of imagination; and the synthesis of recognition in a concept. Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 32. ‘The three-fold schema is intended to free the present moment from the power of the past by referring that power behind the absolute barrier of the unrepeatable and placing it at the disposal of the present as practical knowledge. The compulsion to rescue what is gone as what is living instead of using it as the material of progress was appeased only in art, to which history itself appertains as a presentation of past life. So long as art declines to pass as cognition and thus is separated from practice, social practice tolerates it as it tolerates pleasure. But the Siren’s song has not yet been rendered powerless by reduction to the condition of art.’

¹⁹² Cf. “Lecture Twenty: The Concept of the Transcendental (iv),” *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 221. ‘[W]ith the idea of discovering transcendence at the innermost core, it follows that pure spirit (Geist), the ‘I think’ which is the end point of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, has to become an entity, an existent thing-in-itself, and ultimately an Absolute, if it is truly to be able to act as the precondition of everything that exists. In this sense it was Kant’s successors, Fichte and [with some reservations] Hegel, who actually hypostatized the concept of spirit. By insisting that it should not derive from experience, that it should be

becoming.

‘As the concept is experienced as nonidentical, as inwardly in motion, it is no longer purely itself; in Hegel’s terminology, it leads to its otherness without absorbing that otherness. It is defined by that which is outside it, because on its own it does not exhaust itself. As itself it is not itself alone.’¹⁹³

The strain of holding the I together in all its stages, along with the blind determination to maintain it and the temptation to lose it, has always been there.¹⁹⁴

For Adorno the sense of freedom feeds upon the memory of the archaic impulse, mimesis, not yet steered by any solid I. The more rigorously the I curbs the impulse the more chaotic and thus questionable will it find the pre-temporal freedom. In the philosophical concept of spontaneity there resounds the echo of that freedom whose control and ultimate destruction the I of idealist philosophy derives its idea of freedom. In idealism freedom is freedom from impulses that have been banished to the zone of unfree bondage to nature. Freedom reinforces the ego against a compulsive impulse.

In the case of neurosis stubborn delusion, an unfree and pathological state, bids consciousness to act within the circumference of its own immanence. Freedom is denied in its own native realm in line with laws

the absolute preconditioning element, they transformed it into a genuine transcendence.’

¹⁹³ “Synthesis,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 157.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 33. Cf. Ibid. ‘The narcotic intoxication which permits the atonement of deathlike sleep for the euphoria in which the self is suspended, is one of the oldest social arrangements which mediate between self-preservation and self destruction—an attempt of the self to survive itself. The dread of losing the self and of abrogating together with the self the barrier between oneself and other life, the fear of death and destruction, is intimately associated with a promise of happiness which threatened civilization in every moment. Its road was that of obedience and labour, over which fulfilment shines forth perpetually—but only as illusive appearance, as devitalized beauty. The mind of Odysseus, inimical to his own death and to his own happiness is aware of this.’

which consciousness experiences as alien to the I.¹⁹⁵ ‘The truth content of neuroses is that the I has its unfreedom demonstrated to it, [...]’¹⁹⁶

To reiterate, immanent to the Kantian concept of apprehension is a direct synthesis that takes place before the indirect functions of reproduction in imagination and recognition in a concept intervene. The element of subject mediation, subjective preconditions in Kantian terms, that’s to say, immediate perception as the apprehension of the fragmentary in intuition is a synthesis, a unity, an unconscious act of appropriation.

Successive unity is concerned to unify phenomena by regarding them or relating them to what we have already seen and heard. Kant unlike Descartes does not identify representation with conscious representation, and only representation by concepts is called thought.

The distinction between representations and representations of which we are conscious requires that the latter have been the object of a synthesis of apprehension that’s to say has been distinguished within a manifold of other representations. In the formation of the I the immediacy of primary reactions is broken and, according to Adorno,

‘[...] broken with these reactions was the spontaneity which the pure I, according to transcendental custom is to contract into. The centristic identity of the I is acquired at the expense of what idealism will then attribute to it.’¹⁹⁷

In Kant the “I think” accompanies all representations, and the nonconceptual abuts the conceptual in its twofold meaning. “Concept” on the one hand is the consciousness of the unity of a synthesis of a sensible manifold. On the other hand, it is a discursive concept, a universal or

¹⁹⁵ Cf. “The Impulse before the Ego,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 221-222.

¹⁹⁶ “The Impulse Before the Ego,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 222.

reflected representation of the act of synthesis that was common to several particular representations. This is what makes it possible to recognize them as genetic. It is this Kantian conceptual bifurcation and the Hegelian tripartite dialectical move, which is itself a conceptual moment, that forms, negatively, the background to Adorno's conceptual constellations.

Temporal relations of simultaneity and succession are objective. They are the actual and sensible form of empirical objectivity and this remains so even if the empirical content, thought of as the fulfilment or development of a thing, is subjective in accordance to the circumstance or empirical conditions. There could hardly be rules governing the order in which one met people and, apart from freedom of choice and decision, this accidental element seems to contradict the claims of freedom. With the phenomena of prior engagement,

‘[...] a loved person refuses herself to us not through inner antagonisms and inhibitions, too much coldness or repressed warmth, but because a relationship already exists that excludes another. [...] Thus the priority of the fortuitous has powerful arguments on its side: someone ousted by a newcomer is always misused, a shared past life annulled, experience itself is deleted. The irreversibility of time constitutes an objective moral criterion.’¹⁹⁸

On the other hand tenderness between people can be the awareness of the possibility of relations without purpose.¹⁹⁹ Being separated from the immediacy of human relations leaves the way open for domination by the abstract principle of exchange. Adorno maintains that in order for metaphysics to fulfil its own concept it would have radically to assimilate the relevance of the temporal to the constellation of forms and contents,

¹⁹⁷ “Reversal of the Subjective Reduction,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 176.

¹⁹⁸ “Morality and Temporal Sequence,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 78.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. “Struwwelpeter,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 41.

concepts and what they comprise, that make up the concept of the metaphysical.²⁰⁰

What holds only for the self in its present state of perception is both contingent and somatic. According to Kant the unity of consciousness is both my own, a judgment of perception, and insofar as it is transcendental unity of self-consciousness, the conscious effort towards judgment which makes possible the objective temporal order, it is so constituted that it is capable of transcending the point of view of myself in the present state of perception to the point of view of everybody always, that's to say a judgment of experience.

The transcendental unity of self-consciousness, in effect an effort, an act, that draws on the universal forms of synthesis and analysis, is inseparable from the empirical unity of consciousness associated with ones own body.

That the act of grasping of taking and holding can, nevertheless, produce the effect of a unified representation, the homogeneity of the universal and the particular, is 'guaranteed by the schematism of pure understanding, or the unconscious operation of the intellectual mechanism which structures perception in accordance with the understanding.'²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Cf. "Lecture Thirteen: Athens and Auschwitz," *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, p. 101.

²⁰¹ "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 82. Cf. "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 84. 'The true nature of schematism, of the general and particular, of concept and individual case reconciled from without, is ultimately revealed in contemporary science as the interest of industrial society. Being is apprehended under the aspect of manufacture and administration. Everything—even the human individual, not to speak of the animal—is converted into the repeatable, replaceable process, into a mere example for the conceptual models of the system. Conflict between administrative, reifying science, between the public mind and the experience of the individual, is precluded by circumstance. The conceptual apparatus determines the senses, even before perception occurs; *a priori*, the citizen sees the world as the matter from which he manufactures it. Intuitively Kant foretold what

Without intellectual perception or schematism the understanding would fail to impress the intelligibility of the matter, which subjective judgement discovers there, with an objective quality prior to its entry into the ego.²⁰²

Synthesis of the manifold brings forth a cognition which at initially may be raw, crude and confused and in need of analysis. And yet it is synthesis alone that collects the elements for cognition and unites them into content. Synthesis is in general the result or effect of imagination, '[...] of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom conscious.'²⁰³

Between consciousness and "psychological darkness" smaller degrees obtain.²⁰⁴ As the non-conceptual, the non-identical, these represent moments of anticipation, possibility, expectation, and spontaneity in the subject. Confronted with these heterogeneous elements thought is driven by a sense of insufficiency, inadequacy and guilt to exceed its limits.

Adorno critiques synthesis, the individual act of thought which unites separate moments, where it is thought of as a guiding and supreme idea. This is a mandate to analyze, not to synthesize. The concept that is inwardly in motion is to be experienced as nonidentical. The measure of the turn to nonidentity is its performance: procedural rather than declarative the dialectical thought form will no longer turn its objects into immutable ones.

Hollywood consciously put into practice: in the very process of production, images are pre-censored according to the norm of understanding which will later govern their apprehension. Even before its occurrence, the perception which serves to confirm the public judgement is adjusted by that judgment.'

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ "On the Pure Concepts of the Understanding or Categories," *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 112.

²⁰⁴ Immanuel Kant, "Second Part of the Main Transcendental Question," *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Paul Carus, revised by James W. Ellington, (The United States of America: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p. 50.

Kant allowed no movement of practice, the totality of acts that would satisfy the idea of freedom, to differ from pure consciousness. For Adorno the part of the action that differs from pure consciousness which for Kant compels the action, the part that abruptly leaps out, 'this is spontaneity, which Kant transplanted into pure consciousness, lest the function of the "I think" be imperilled'²⁰⁵ According to Adorno, the impulse of freedom needs something else, an addendum, something physical which consciousness does not exhaust. The addendum is the name for something conveyed to reason, is qualitatively different from it, and yet the two moments are by no means separately experienced. In general, philosophical analysis has linguistically tailored the phenomenon in such a way that it cannot be put otherwise: it is something that, as it were, is added to rationality. Adorno's concept of experience reverses the polarity of the relation between subject and object, bringing to the fore the nonidentical. The addendum is the name for that which was eliminated in the process of abstraction, something long past and all but grown unrecognizable whilst still remaining a possibility, inhabiting a space between the twin poles of representation.

The determinate negation of the formal and abstract as it is posited in the universality of the transcendental subject reveals the limitations of the Kantian conception: Not so much in the fact that it seems to imply that every subject is interchangeable, and so not really individual at all, but in the way it down plays more common denominators of human thought: somatic and historical particularity, empirical conditions and circumstance. Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual. Thought which

²⁰⁵ "The Addendum," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 229-210.

relates the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts was the result of a secret mechanism of the soul that prepared direct intuitions in such a way that they could be fitted into the system of pure reason.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer claim that the secret has been deciphered, the mechanism is in effect always already planned for, the data of experience is pre-packaged by the power of society through its instrument: the culture industry. The industry robs individuals of their function. The schematising serves the customer. There is nothing left for the consumer to classify or produce. In the prearranged harmony the whole and the parts are alike. Atomized: there is no antithesis and no connection. Culture carries within its schematization an embryonic process of cataloguing and classification that brings it within the sphere of administration. Inwardly the subjective and restricted form of truth is at the mercy of the outwardly powerful. Amusement and pleasure, which always means not to think about anything, replaces higher and harder things determining consumption excludes the untried as a risk, and becomes the ideal in slogans paid for by advertising interests. Imitative style and obedience to the social hierarchy have become the watchwords of the cultural monopoly. Not to conform means to be rendered a stranger: excluded, powerless and blithely accused of incompetence.²⁰⁶

For Kant, ultimately, reason is dialectical and negative. Reason is doomed to follow its own impulse and obey its own laws even if this lands it in contradictions. Kant's successors turned this necessary and inevitable negative element into something positive, into an organ of truth. Kant's

²⁰⁶ "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,

dialectic with its negative connotations is transformed into dialectics as a method for the discovery of the truth and simultaneously as truth revealing itself. When, in the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant asks “How is metaphysics as a natural disposition possible?” he intends the question of how it is that people are driven to ask the kinds of question that Kant calls metaphysical. For Kant the natural disposition of reason to follow its own destiny means transcending its own finite condition. But finally, so as not to end up in an infinite progression reason must end unconditionally.

‘[I]t must somehow postulate the existence of a frontier in the shape of an ultimate cause, an ultimate form of existence, an ultimate absolute being in which everything can be anchored. And, Kant asserts, this is an entirely legitimate and unavoidable need that is simply rooted in the impulse to ground knowledge in other foundations [other concepts], and hence in its logical structure. It is rooted in the circumstance that we have no right to judge unless we can provide a reason for it. But by acceding to this entirely legitimate and unavoidable coercion, we end up in these difficulties [the antinomies].’²⁰⁷

The antinomical structure of the Kantian system, the contradictions in which it necessarily entangles itself, expresses something from the philosophy of history. Kant’s critique is first of all a theory of scientific judgements. Its epistemological logic is concerned with exploring and subsuming the empirical world under laws. Latterly or post-Kant the critique is thought of primarily as the successful separation of valid cognition and metaphysics. According to Adorno, however, Kant does intend more. ‘Through the medium of epistemological reflection he answers the so-called metaphysical questions in a far from metaphysically neutral way: they really

pp 134-167.

²⁰⁷ “Lecture Four: Metaphysics (1),” *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 38-39.

must not be asked, he tells us.²⁰⁸ And although when pressed, Kant does move against himself he, in this sense, anticipates Hegel's doctrine that logic and metaphysics are the same.²⁰⁹

At the same time the critique empowers the positivistic doctrine in which 'the hard metaphysical questions on which everything depends'²¹⁰ are bypassed, abolished by indirect negation. German idealism extrapolated its position on epistemology and metaphysics through its fundamental claim to be the carrier of the whole. It is by its express denial of objectively valid cognition of the absolute that it makes an absolute judgement. The consistency of thought will inevitably turn into an absolute for itself. Eventually German idealism came to vest its authority in "mind," in the absolute subject. Finite but unrestricted and resigned the critical subject wants to be undisturbed. Its critical function becomes positive and practical. Imagining the absolute becomes, if at all, an idle concern.

Questioning critique moves away from thoughts about consciousness in favour of thoughts about practical matters and materialism. This was fundamentally Marx's criticism, that, notwithstanding Hegel's achievements,²¹¹ philosophers by starting from the standpoint of

²⁰⁸ "Kant's Resignation," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 381-382.

²⁰⁹ Cf. G.W.F Hegel, "Preliminary Notion," *Hegel's Logic*, trans. William Wallace (Malta: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 36. 'For in point of contents, thought is only true in proportion as it sinks itself in the facts; and in point of form it is no private or particular state or act of the subject, but rather that attitude of consciousness where the abstract self, freed from all the special limitations to which its ordinarily states or qualities are liable, restricts itself to universal action in which it is identical with all individuals. [...] With these explanations and qualifications, thoughts may be termed Objective Thoughts—among which are also to be included the forms which are more especially discussed in the common logic, where they are usually treated as forms of conscious thought only. *Logic therefore coincides with Metaphysics, the science of things set and held in thoughts*—thoughts accredited able to express the essential reality of things.'

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Cf. Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy," Selected Writings, ed, David McLellan. (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 101. 'The

consciousness and not the world had in fact inverted the world. For Adorno, following Hegel, thought is always accompanied by talk about a material that it knows to be distinct from itself. 'For thought is always accompanied by the moment of violent exertion, a reflection of the dire necessities of life, that characterizes labour: the strains and toils of the concept are not metaphorical.'²¹² The move to distance philosophy from the preponderance of rationalism is in part what had motivated Kant, awakened him from his philosophical slumber²¹³—with contradictory and circulatory results.

In the Critique of Pure Reason the regulative idea, as against concept, of the "I think" was Kant's formula for a lack of distinction between logical identity and productive spontaneity: that's to say between judgments of perception which are particular and contingent and judgments of experience which are necessary and common to all. According to Kant 'it must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations.'²¹⁴ But for Kant not all representations are conscious and only representation by concepts is called thought.²¹⁵ Representations of which we are conscious are those that have been the object of a synthesis of apprehension, claimed or distinguished within a manifold of other representations. Conversely those of which we are not conscious, while we know that we have them are representations we do not apprehend but can still conclude are somehow present. Some of the representations considered may become conscious,

outstanding achievement of Hegel's *phenomenology*, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle, is [...] that he [...] grasps the nature of labour, and conceives objective man (true, because real man) as the result of his own labour.'

²¹² "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 21.

²¹³ "Preface," *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, p. 5.

²¹⁴ "The Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception," *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 152.

²¹⁵ Cf. "The Logical Employment of the Understanding," *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 106. 'Thought is Knowledge [cognition] by means of concepts.'

their apprehension lies in the future, while others may have apprehended in the past but are now lost. Yet others may never reach the threshold of consciousness. According to Longuenesse, Kant [in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798)] gives various examples of representations we do not apprehend, while we know that we have them:

‘[...] the features of a house from afar, the individual notes of a chord struck in the course of a musical improvisation, the representations excluded from our attention in favour of other representations (an exclusion due perhaps to our sense of decency, to operations of abstraction necessary for the formation of general concepts, or any other reason).’²¹⁶

For Adorno that which takes a stand and posits itself as I is an example of an ideological reification of the abstract centres of domination: epistemological categories are turned into moral ones.²¹⁷ Kant’s notion of the individual spontaneous knowing subject maintains both the I and the view that experience of the object is conditioned and structured by subjective forms and categories. For Kant the pre-designed unit underlying every identity, every individual human consciousness, is the guarantor of solid identity.²¹⁸ The categorical object in this formulation is something that is essentially identical to the transcendental subject.

The Kantian systematic calls for an orderly organization and presentation of thoughts consistent with the structure of topical disciplines. ‘The precedence of consciousness which is to legitimize science, as presupposed at the start of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is then inferred from

²¹⁶ “The Kantian “Cogito,”” *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, p. 65. Cf. “The Kantian “Cogito,”” *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, p. 66. “To sum up: according to Kant we certainly have many representations of which we are not conscious; among our conscious representations there are some we just apprehend without reproducing them or reproduce without subjecting them to the rules of synthesis that allow them to be reflected under concepts, that is, to be thought.”

²¹⁷ “Against Relativism,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 35.

procedural standards that confirm or refute judgments in line with scientific rules.²¹⁹ The processes of consciousness are reduced to the scientific cognitive ideal of step by step verification the test of which is subjectively accentuated and retroactive: '[...] judgments are retroactive treatments of already constituted facts, under the norms of their subjective intelligibility.'²²⁰

What Kant and scientific systems fail to do, from the object's point of view, is insist upon the inner unity of its aspects as something that in-itself wasn't spawned in Abdera.²²¹

The *Critique of Pure Reason* is a theory of science. The precedence of consciousness, which is to legitimize science as presupposed at the start of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is then inferred from procedural standards that confirm or refute judgments in line with scientific rules. The *Critique of Pure Reason* reflects the path the cognitive subject takes in judging.

For Adorno what confounds the thesis of subjective apriority is the fact that '[h]e to whom something is given belongs apriori to the same sphere as the given thing.'²²² Materialism finds its place in critical philosophy through its dissolution of things understood as dogmatic: the segregation of body and mind, which in idealistic philosophy was tantamount to the supremacy of mind. Historically in the evolution of rationality the two have come into opposition. The logic of noncontradictoriness balks at the idea that neither is without the other. But

²¹⁸ "Starting out from the Concept," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 154-155.

²¹⁹ "Materialism and Immediacy," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 196.

²²⁰ "Materialism and Immediacy," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 197.

²²¹ Democritus of Abdera (c. 460—c. 370 BC) along with Leucippus, founded classical atomism.

that logic is logic insulated against itself it is a validity that has submerged its own genesis.

Freedom for Kant was freedom from sensation, freedom in the abstract universal concept of things “beyond nature” is freedom spiritualised into freedom from the realm of causality. According to Adorno, despite and for all his categorical localization of freedom in the sphere above psychology there is something narcissistic in Kant’s argument.

‘According to his *Foundation for a Metaphysics of Morals*, everyone including, including “the most arrant knave,” need only be “shown examples of honest intent, of constancy in following good maxims, of compassion and of general good will,” to wish that he too were so minded. He can expect no “gratification of desires” from this “no condition that would satisfy any of his real or otherwise conceivable inclinations, but only a greater inner worth of his persons... But he believes that he is a better person when he puts himself on the standpoint of a member of the intelligible world—a move he is involuntarily compelled to make by the idea of freedom, i.e., independence of determining causes from the sensible world...”²²³

Freedom for Kant is coupled with the need for self-exaltation, reflection on a person’s practical and moral reason and worth. Yet the more freedom is ascribed to the subject itself the greater the responsibility and guilt: in practice the subject has never been endowed with the unabridged autonomy accorded to it in theory.

What makes the subject aware of the limits of its freedom is the fact that it is a part of nature and at the same time its powerlessness against a society which has become independent of it.²²⁴ According to Adorno, it didn’t occur to Kant to ask whether freedom, an eternal idea for Kant, might

²²² “Materialism and Immediacy,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 196.

²²³ “Freedom and Organized Society,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 220.

²²⁴ Cf. “Freedom and Organized Society,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 221.

be essentially historic, not just as concept but in its empirical substance.²²⁵ Before the formation of self-conscious individual in the modern sense, meaning both the biological human being and the one constituted as a unit by its own reflection, it is an anachronism to talk of freedom.

Freedom or unfreedom is not as primary as it is made out to be by the transcendental principle founded in the subjective consciousness. 'Whole epochs, whole societies lacked not only the concept of freedom but the thing.'²²⁶ Society destines the individual to be what they are, indicative of historical and material existence.

The task of materialist criticizing is to judge, along with their dynamics, the subjective and objective share. The criticism denies the false objectivity of concept fetishism by reducing it to its social subject. On the other hand it denies the false subjectivity of the "all in the mind" by revealing it as a parasitic fraud, as well as demonstrating its immanent hostility to mind. By way of its critique materialism turns philosophical, despite and because of its criticism of philosophy. According to Adorno, 'the only way to pass philosophically into social categories is to decipher the truth content of philosophical ones.'²²⁷ This is what materialism achieves. The truth or untruth of philosophical teaching has more to do with social conditions, objective structures, objective truth and its cognition; less the sociologically inspired analysis of society as nothing but the average value of individual reactive modes.²²⁸

According to Adorno, where Hegel no longer opposes production and

²²⁵ "Freedom and Organized Society," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 218.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ "Dialectics not a Sociology of Knowledge," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 198.

deed to matter,²²⁹ as subjective accomplishments but looks for them in specific objects, in concrete material reality, he recalls the affinity the cohesive force which objects have for each other outside the surrogate schemata: outside the postulation of an equivalence and a unity which, itself, is bound up with the presupposition that all things in being are identical with the cognitive principle.

‘What the objects communicate in—instead of each being the atom it becomes in the logic of classification—is the trace of the objects’ definition in themselves, which Kant denied and Hegel, against Kant, sought to restore through the subject.’²³⁰

Unity and unanimity are indirect, oblique projections coordinated along the lines of a pacified, no longer agonistic, supremacist, oppressive thinking. It is the transcendental quest for unity that turns dialectical difference into a dialectical contradiction.

‘What we differentiate will appear divergent, dissonant, negative for just as long as the structure of our consciousness obliges it to strive for unity: as long as the demand for totality will be its measure for whatever is not identical with it. This is what dialectics holds up to our consciousness as a contradiction.’²³¹

Once delivered from the systems thought is transposed, it enters the open realm of definition by individual moments. According to Adorno, Hegelian logic was not altogether alien to this procedure. To perceive the individual moment in its immanent connection with others is reflected in the tendency to recall how they came to be, the cohesive force, the sense of objectivity, which the idealistic systems had signed over to the transcendental subject

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ The abstract self-identical relation and formless substrate of things, an undifferentiated compound of faculties, cognitions, and emotions, etc.,

²³⁰ “The Twofold Character of the System,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 25.

²³¹ “Dialectics not a Standpoint,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 5-6.

and its sense of subjectivity.²³²

According to Adorno, for the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, in whom the consciousness of spirit was a living dynamic activity, immediacy and spontaneity are mediated by an objective spirit which itself is none other than social labour, labour that by its nature transcends the contingency of the individual subject.²³³ Hegel construes his Unitarian principle, the spirit, as a simultaneous being-in-itself and pure becoming. The relationship of spirit to what is given manifests itself on the model of a social process. Spirit must work its passage: physically labour its concept. 'The path natural consciousness follows to the identity of absolute Knowledge [Wissen] is itself labour.'²³⁴

The implausibility of this construction lies in its contradiction, the fact that it concludes, and thus brings to a standstill, whilst within the conceptual dynamics of pure, autarkic, subjective generation. Subjective generation and ontology, nominalism and realism, syncopated at the Archimedian point will prevent the resolution of the tension immanent to the system.

'The microanalysis of individual categories, which simultaneously appears as their objective self-reflection, was to let each concept pass into its otherness without regard to an overlay from above; to Hegel, the totality of this movement meant the system.'²³⁵

The movement of the concept, separated from the thing in the original form of objectifying definition, was from the beginning the product of dialectical thinking: everything is always that which it is, only because it becomes that

²³² Cf. "The Twofold Character of the System," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 26. 'What the conception of the system recalls, in reverse, is the coherence of the non-identical, the very thing infringed by deductive systematics.'

²³³ Cf. "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, pp. 17-18.

²³⁴ "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 21.

²³⁵ "The Twofold Character of the System," p. 25.

which it is not, a product of socialization and historical circumstance.²³⁶

‘We know that Hegel, in his chapter on master and servant, develops the genesis of self-consciousness from the labour relation, and that he does this by adjusting the I to its self-determined purpose as well as to heterogeneous matter. The origin of the “I” in “Not I” remains scarcely veiled. It is looked up in the real living process, in the legalities of the survival of the species, of providing it with nutriment. Thereafter, Hegel hypostatizes the mind but in vain.’²³⁷

Hegel exalts into transcendence the coextensive historical objectivity and popular spirit. Within this frame individuals can differ from other individuals but not from the popular spirit and the level of adjustment it facilitates: the submission of the weak to the more powerful.

The sense of duty and world history as divine plan that pervade Hegel’s thought and which he puts into philosophy’s mouth is on a par with the gilding of the heteronomous and substantial universal. Adorno thinks Hegel apes Heidegger in advance: “For reason is the perceiving of the divine work.” The omnipotent thought has to abdicate and to make itself complaisant as mere perceiving.²³⁸

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel controversially comes out against the notion that all, as individuals, should share in deliberating and deciding on political matters of general concern.²³⁹ Marx reacted to this notion by opening up another perspective on the self-organization of society.

‘The actual individual man must take the abstract citizen back into himself and, as an individual man in his empirical life, in his individual work and relationships become a species-being; man must recognize his own forces as social forces, organize them, and thus no longer separate social from himself in the form of political forces.

²³⁶ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 15.

²³⁷ “The Concept of Mind,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 198.

²³⁸ “The Supramundane Character of the Hegelian World Spirit,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 324.

²³⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, “The State,” *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox, (United States of America: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 200.

Only when this has been achieved will human emancipation be complete.²⁴⁰

This perspective, praxis philosophy's determination of modernity, is guided by the intuitive thought that, however complex and functionally constraining social systems become, it still makes sense to try and realize an ethical totality. By ceaselessly fastening human consciousness to points it wants to get away from, points that link it to a world objectively set for totality, this kind of thinking will be so much less the prey of the historic form of its problems than a thinking that heedless of history begins again anew.

The model of modern philosophy is driven by two subject object relationships. In one the emphasis falls on a knowing subject which forms opinions capable of being true about something in the objective world. The other emphasizes the acting subject whose purposive activity is measured by its success in bringing about something in the objective world. Between knowing and acting there is, posited in philosophical concepts, a mediating function of formation processes.²⁴¹

For Hegel mediation is never a middle element between extremes, a mistaken depicted since Kierkegaard's time, instead mediation takes place in and through the extremes.²⁴² In the movement of thought to one extreme or another there arises a moment where the extreme and one-sided convicts itself of its own absurdity, i.e. form without content. In the dialectic the law of contradiction means the contradiction between fixed concepts and concepts in motion.

²⁴⁰ "On the Jewish Question," *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, p. 57.

²⁴¹ Cf. "The Continuation of the Hegelian Project in the Philosophy of Praxis," *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 63.

²⁴² "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 8.

Concepts are both pinned down, so as to remain concepts, and set in motion, altered by the dictates of the object. Therefore for knowledge's sake and for the concept to remain true to its own meaning as an instrument of the intellect it must change, animate in consciousness both the identity of and the difference between the concept and thing expressed: naïve realism and its negation.²⁴³

According to Habermas:

'The philosophy of reflection, which accords to knowledge a privileged status, conceives the self-formative process of the spirit (on the model of relation-to-self) as a process of becoming conscious. Praxis philosophy, which accords privileged status to the relationship between the acting subject and manipulable worldly objects, conceives the self-formative process of the species (on the model of self-externalization) as a process of self-creation. For it, not self-consciousness but labour counts as the principle of modernity.'²⁴⁴

Forces of production; technological; scientific; artistic, are derived from this principle. Marx's philosophy of praxis assimilated labour to the normative content of the aesthetic. This allows him to differentiate between an objectification of essential powers and their alienation. On the aesthetic model the artist externalises her essential powers and appropriates the product, the artwork. For alienated labour this process is interrupted. The products of alienated labour cannot be realized or developed in the self. Impeded, fractured, and fragmented, the concrete function of labour is transformed into an abstract performance or functional contribution to the formation and self-realization of capital. However Marx's theory of labour and purposive rationality derived from the normative content of the aesthetic model is ambiguous and problematic. It gives rise to different Marxist

²⁴³ "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, pp. 70-71.

²⁴⁴ "The Continuation of the Hegelian Project in the Philosophy of Praxis." *The*

traditions. Some see the development of productive forces, scientific and technological, as progressive, as means to revolutionize and rationalize society.

Technological progress in the rationalization of society is not the same as progress in humanity. The stated concentration on the survival of the species carries with it an implication that humanity in general already exists, and therefore can progress. Whereas in fact it may yet have to be established.²⁴⁵ If effective humanity is something that remains trapped in the totality it has it-self fashioned then no progress has taken place at all.

The totalized subject presupposes as principles of subjective thinking noncontradictoriness and causal relation. On the other hand dialectical logic respects that which is to be thought, the object, the analysis of which is tangential to the rules of thinking. Thought, without abandoning it, need not be content with its own legality: the object does not heed the rules of thinking. Thought can think against itself.

According to Adorno, that it is subjectivity that presupposes facts while objectivity presupposes the subject is unbearable only to one who hypostatizes subjective principles as a hierarchical schema, an objective order summoned from outside.²⁴⁶ With that the positivistic sense of objectivity shines as the brightest star in constellation. Rescuing the rhetorical element in such a configuration is initially the next concern.

Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 63.

²⁴⁵ Cf. "Progress," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 145.

²⁴⁶ Cf. "Noncontradictoriness not to be Hypostatized," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 140-141.

Chapter Three: Objectivity

*'All objectification is a forgetting.'*²⁴⁷

-Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer

*'Objectivity is the self-unconscious schema under which the subject brings its otherness. The less affinity to things it tolerates, the more ruthlessly will it identify.'*²⁴⁸

-Theodor W. Adorno.

'The only way to make out objectivity is to reflect, at each historic and each cognitive step, on what is then presented as subject and object as well as on the mediations. [...] The objective content of individual experience is not produced by the method of comparative generalization; it is produced by dissolving what keeps that experience, as being bias itself, from yielding to the object without reservations – as Hegel put it: with the freedom that would relax the cognitive subject until it truly fades into the object to which it is akin, on the strength of its own objective being.'²⁴⁹

Rending the veil, breaking with the formal and violent exertion the subject usually weaves around the object is an act whereby knowledge of the object is approached passively, fearlessly. Trusting itself to its own experience the primacy of the object shimmers through where subjective reason scents subjective contingency. The subject is not the objects constituent it is the objects agent. Primacy of the object over the subject is legitimated only when that primacy is somehow definable. To grasp the object as something definitive its subjective qualities are not to be eliminated by subjective reduction. The object of undiminished experience is more objective than the ideal of depersonalizing knowledge by deducting the subject. The object's subjective qualities are much more an element of objectivity if the subject has an objective core.²⁵⁰

Objectivity itself is what stops objectivity from becoming cognitive in

²⁴⁷ "Idle Horror," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 230.

²⁴⁸ "Causality as a Spell," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 270.

²⁴⁹ "Subject and Object," *The Adorno Reader*, p. 146.

²⁵⁰ "Subject and Object," *The Adorno Reader*, p. 143.

a subject that can never from the point of view of objectivity be objective enough.²⁵¹ The superiority of objectivity in the subject is also that which stops subjects from becoming subject. Thought, a compulsive mechanism of nature becomes illusionary where it seeks to deny its divisive function of distancing and objectification.

In order to transmit and illuminate objectivity requires the emancipation of the embodied subject from its inherent limits, its immanent spatiality and ordination. Subjective mechanisms of mediation serve to lengthen the objective ones: the subject remains harnessed to everything objective it thinks.²⁵² By reflecting on the historical and cognitive development of what is presented at the cognitive stage as subject and object, objectivity can be realised. The subject, as a socially engaged entity, is possible because the subject is itself an object of a certain kind. Its subjective qualities, unity and meaning, are essential to what it is as an object. Defining the object means that something objective is subjectively captured by means of a fixed concept. Reflection is cut short for the sake of

²⁵¹ "The Critical Philosophy," *Hegel's Logic*, pp. 67-68. Objectivity—'First, it means what has external existence, in distinction from which the subjective is what is only supposed, dreamed, &c. Secondly, it has the meaning, attached to it by Kant, of the universal and necessary, as distinguished from the particular, subjective, and occasional element which belongs to our sensations. Thirdly, as has been just explained, it means the thought-apprehended essence of the existing thing, in contradistinction from what is merely *our* thought, and what consequently is still separated from the thing itself, as it exists in independent essence.'

²⁵² Cf. "Introduction," *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 32. '(α) The will is purely and simply objective in so far as it has itself for its determination and so is in correspondence with its concept and genuinely a will; (β) but the objective will, being without the infinite form of self-consciousness, is the will absorbed in its content or condition, whatever the content of these may be; it is the will of the child, the ethical will, also the will of the slave, the superstitious man, &c.; (γ) Objectivity, finally, is the one-sided form opposed to the subjective volition, and hence is the immediacy of existence as external reality; the will first becomes objective to itself in this sense through the fulfilment of its aims.'²⁵² Cf. "Introduction," *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 43. 'As a person, I am myself an *immediate* individual; if we give further precision to this expression, it means in the first instance that I am alive in this bodily organism which is my external existence, universal in content and un-divided, the real pre-condition of every further determined mode of existence.'

conceptual flexibility.²⁵³

The cognitive function for its part has arisen historically. Without the cognitive function there would be neither difference nor unity of the subject. The subject's reflection upon its own formalism is reflection upon society: society is immanent to experience. 'Nothing but the social self-reflection of knowledge obtains for knowledge the objectivity that will escape it as long as it obeys the social coercion that holds sway in it, and does not become aware of them.'²⁵⁴ That the captive cognitive subject is dependent on space, time, and concomitant forms of thought marks out its dependence on the species. The species finds its continued expression in these formative constituents.

The categorical captivity of individual consciousness is something posited and thus, "merely subjective." But subjectivity becomes a moment that is held fast and endures because the primacy of the object requires both reflection upon the subject and subjective reflection. 'The primacy of the object proves itself in that it qualitatively alters the opinions of reified consciousness that are smoothly consistent with subjectivism.'²⁵⁵ That the object becomes something at all arises from its being determinate. If the determinations seem to be merely affixed to it by the subject then it is the subject's own objectivity that comes to the fore, framed in the image of the object which it constitutes.²⁵⁶

According to Adorno;

'What transmits the facts is not so much the subjective mechanism of

²⁵³ Cf. "Subject and Object," *The Adorno Reader*, pp. 138-139.

²⁵⁴ "Subject and Object," *The Adorno Reader*, p. 143.

²⁵⁵ "On Subject and Object," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 251.

²⁵⁶ "On Subject and Object," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 250.

their pre-formation and comprehension as it is the objectivity heteronomous to the subject the objectivity behind that which the subject can experience. This objectivity is denied to the primary realm of subjective experience. It is preordained to that realm.²⁵⁷

That thinking is mediated by objectivity, that society comes before individual consciousness and all its experience does not negate thinking nor the objective laws that make it thinking.²⁵⁸ Subjectivity is always indirect it is always by way of mediation that we know it. The subjective moment is framed in the objective moment as its limitation.²⁵⁹

It is the fetishization and isolation of the subjective element of historical movement, its spontaneous moment that increases the objective impotence of theory. This in turn motivates the transition to praxis without theory. At the moment it expresses its incapacity for self-conscious reflection and exempts itself from reality-testing the sanctioned delusional praxis becomes a fawning and malicious servant of the pleasure principle.

‘Wherever, in the current manner of speaking, judgment is too

²⁵⁷ “Indirectness by Objectivity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 170.

²⁵⁸ For the kind of thing Adorno’s thinking here, Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, “The ‘Subjective,’” *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, (United States of America: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 17. ‘In place of what will be the quantity of a determinate judgment, reflection can already compare givens under the “heading” (*Titel*) of their identity or their difference, and in place of what will be the modality of a determinant judgment, it can compare givens under the “heading” of their determinability or determination. The distortion or the monstrosity that affects the categories by means of which the analysis of taste proceeds, results from the fact that here the movement of reflective anamnesis works from the objective to the subjective.’--“The Heuristic,” *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, p. 27. These “headings” [identity/difference; agreement/ opposition; inner/ outer; determinable (or matter) / determination (or form)] regroup the spontaneous ways of synthesizing givens. One might say that they all respond to the question, What does (this given) remind us of? They are always comparisons.’

²⁵⁹ Cf. “Introduction,” *Philosophy of Right*, p. 31. ‘The subjective, in relation to the will in general, means the will’s self-conscious side, its individuality in distinction from its implicit concept. The subjectivity of the will means therefore (α) the pure form of the will, as the absolute unity of self-consciousness with itself (a unity in which self-consciousness, as I = I, is purely and simply inward and abstractly self dependent), the pure certainty, as distinguished from the truth, of individuality; (β) the particular will as the arbitrary will and the contingent content of optional aims; (γ) in general, the one- sided form of the will for which the thing willed, whatever its content, is but a content belonging to self consciousness and an aim unfulfilled.’

subjective at the present historical stage, the subject, as a rule, will automatically parrot the *consensus omnium*. To give the object its due instead of being content with the false copy, the subject would have to resist the average value of such objectivity and free itself as a subject. It is on this emancipation, not on the subject's insatiable repression that objectivity depends today.²⁶⁰

The deformation of spontaneity is a reaction to the administered world. By blinding itself to the totality and claiming and behaving as if it stems immediately from people spontaneity tows the party line: the objective practice of progressive dehumanization. The rigidified institutions are dialectically the result and the determinative of the way the subjective aspects of spontaneity have atrophied in the historical process. Without spontaneity the moment of immediacy, a bonus from the subjective thought that looks beyond the dialectical structure and the law of immanent context, dialectics would be the totality that goes back to the identity principle.

According to Adorno, instead of thrashing about indiscriminately or abstractly 'spontaneity, which would be animated by the neediness of the object, should attach itself to the vulnerable places of rigidified reality, where the ruptures caused by the pressures of rigidification appear externally [...].²⁶¹ This represents the rational element in Adorno's understanding of spontaneity: its entwinement with society [civil society, the state, etc] as a determinant of the excess of rigid generality in every particular that comes into being. His pessimism is reflected in the thought that this might not be enough, that it would be illusory and idealistic to think that it might be when set against societal omnipotence.

This is a charge Adorno levels at Existentialism and existentialists. To

²⁶⁰ "Indirectness by Objectivity," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 170-171.

²⁶¹ "Marginalia to Theory and Practice," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p.

posit an isolated, allegedly ontological concept of the subjectively spontaneous is too optimistic even as an act of desperation.²⁶² Even where Existentialism split with fundamental ontology by entering into political commitments it remained in idealistic bonds. 'To Existentialism as to Fichte, any objectivity is a matter of indifference.'²⁶³ Sartre's philosophy is most effective where it stresses the moment the reigning practice will no longer tolerate, spontaneity, organized according to the old idealistic category of the free act of the subject. Kant had posited '[...] absolute self-activity (freedom)'²⁶⁴ a thought taken up by Fichte and Schelling.

For Adorno the notion of an absolute freedom of choice is as illusory as Fichte's notion of the absolute and immediately certain I who's *Tathandlung* [literally a "deed-action"] is the source of the world: for Fichte the notion of the Being of the world independent of our thinking can make no sense.

Subjectivity as a being-for-itself and as the sole substantial being, posits as a mere fact of existence the isolated individual, but this absolute subject cannot get out of its entanglements, the bonds of dominion, which are as one with the principle of subjectivity as the formalism such thinking will relapse into. Subjectivity indirect and mediated by history has an open side.

'What man ought to be as such is never more than what he has been: he is chained to the rock of his past. He is not only what he was and is, however, but equally what he can come to be, and to anticipate that, no definition suffices.'²⁶⁵

266.

²⁶² Cf. "Progress," *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p.155.

²⁶³ "Existentialism," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 50.

²⁶⁴ "The Antimony of Pure Reason," *Critique of Pure Reason*, (A 418/B 446) p. 392.

²⁶⁵ "Existentialism," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 51.

Identity is a self-reflexive relation that grounds itself through the negation of its absolute essence. Put another way Rational identity or necessity grounds itself or perhaps grinds itself out of the in-itself of its own reason, something which it is just as capable of losing. 'The strain of holding the I together adheres to the I in all stages; and the temptation to lose it has always been there with the blind determination to maintain it.'²⁶⁶ Historically, thinking through the concept of temporal possibility and indirect mediation in the context of what something may become, reason had resorted to the symbolic.²⁶⁷ The symbol is as much an active force in life as the symbolized thing itself. Allegorical like the symbol doesn't necessarily have to express what it symbolizes.

The symbol or allegorical figure as the representation of a hidden significance can suggest meanings other than its intensive, anticipatory, and intimating realization suggests. Impulsive, arbitrary, singular, multitudinous, fractured and fragmented, the I or transcendental subject is by turns conceptual and symbolic, direct and indirect, and in the immediacy and immanent necessity of its embodiment, very real.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 33.

²⁶⁷ In the Critique of Judgement Kant's approach to the concept of indirectness, mediation, or second reflection is explicated through the concept of *Hypotyposis* [exhibition]. This consists in making a concept sensible and this is either *schematic* or *symbolic*. Schematic hypotyposis contains direct exhibitions of the concept, determinate judgments, the intuition corresponding to it having been given a priori. With symbolic hypotyposis there is no adequate sensible intuition and the concept is supplied with an intuition or form that is an analogy. This artistic doubling of the productive imagination allows Kant to make the claim that, for example, the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good; a hand-mill a symbol analogous to a despotic state. Cf. § 59, "On Beauty as the Symbol of Morality," *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 225-228.

²⁶⁸ Cf. § 17, "Introduction," *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 28. 'An impulse is simply a uni-directional urge and thus has no measuring rod in itself, and so this determination of its subordination or sacrifice is the contingent decision of the arbitrary will which, in deciding, may proceed either by using intelligence to calculate which impulse will give most satisfaction, or else in accordance with any other optional consideration.'

According to Adorno, the concept transmits itself immediately according to its own nature. As rational intuitive immediacy this is not an infallible mark of objective validity and truth. There is no transmitted thing without the indirectness of something direct. Indirectness always refers to the direct thing without which there would be no directness. For this mediation is essential. To think mediation is to think the impossibility of keeping the determinacies isolated. However, '[...] the fact that indirectness is universal does not entitle us to reduce all things between heaven and earth to its level, as if transmitting an immediacy were the same as transmitting a concept.'²⁶⁹ Subjective mediation does not exhaust the direct thing.

Indirectness involves the direct in a way that is different from the way the direct involves the indirect. 'The transmission of something direct refers to its mode: to knowledge of it, and to the bounds of such knowledge. Immediacy is no modality, no mere definition of the "how" for a consciousness'²⁷⁰ Immediacy in this sense is objective: its concept points to that which is non-identical in its concept, that which mediation makes no claim to cover or exhaust according to its own concept. If immediacy was wholly indirect it would become totalised in a subject that perpetuates the absolute rule of the subject. But objectively and dialectically the concept of immediacy points to that which cannot be excised in the concept, the difference spirited away in the problematic concept of a total and unified identification.²⁷¹

In epistemology the transcendental subject, the subject considered in

²⁶⁹ "Indirectness by Objectivity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 171.

²⁷⁰ "Indirectness by Objectivity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 171-172.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

terms of the conditions of its possibility, discloses the precedence of the abstract, rational relations that determine the real conduct of people. The word “abstract” is equivocal and this is what causes the opposite poles of cognition to be equated at the expense of their qualitative difference. The abstract negates the particular through its concept. In that sense the word “abstract” is still too abstract it cuts short what cannot be directly named and replaces this with identity. ‘This negative, wrong, and yet simultaneously necessary moment is the stage of dialectics.’²⁷²

Psychological individuals are deformed by this mechanism that was then philosophically transfigured into the transcendental. For Adorno, there is a sense in which the transcendental subject far more determines the conduct of people and society than the psychological subject or empirical subject. ‘The transcendental subject faithfully discloses the precedence of the abstract, rational relations that are abstracted from individuals and their conditions and for which exchange is the model.’²⁷³ The living human individual is forced to act out a role for which she has been internally marked. As the incarnation of *homo oeconomicus* the individual is closer to the transcendental subject than the immediacy of the living individual.²⁷⁴

The living individual person constrained to act is turned into an appendage of the social machinery: What they are for themselves, what the individual immediately thinks they are, is secondary. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel develops the genesis of self-consciousness from labour relations, the relation of master and servant. On Hegel’s account the I adjusts

²⁷² “Particularity and the Particular,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 173.

²⁷³ “On Subject and Object,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 248.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

to its self-determined purpose as well as to heterogeneous matter. In this the origin of the I in not-I is scarcely veiled. It is as a palliative for the subject's suffering in society that, the not-I moving ahead of the I, the subject becomes an ideological screen for society's objective function.

According to Adorno, prior to its partial emancipation the subject was in a sense more immediately social than integrated. The subject's growing independence from the immediacy of social controls is ultimately bound up with the social structure. Subsequently known as the historical and philosophical emancipation of the individual its singular origins remain somewhat opaque. People had to do fearful things to themselves before the self-identical and purposive was formed. Something similar recurs in every childhood. The social hierarchy is ultimately dependent on force. Mastery over nature is reproduced within humanity which equates spiritual freedom with oppression. Women, Jews, children, the oppressed aboriginal inhabitants of distant lands all bear witness to the emotion that corresponds to the practice of oppression: contempt, not reverence.

According to Adorno, Christianity's attempt to ideologically compensate for the oppression of women by means of reverence and ennoblement, to cultivate rather than suppress the memory of an archaic age, reverses into resentment of the ennobled women and the theoretically emancipated pleasure. 'Woman arouses the primitive anger of the half-converted man who is required to revere her, just as the weak individual awakens the enmity of the superficially civilized strong man who is supposed to protect him.'²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 111.

Fear and weakness, and the greater affinity to nature, enrages the strong who alienated from nature must always suppress their fear. In society nature is the product of history: really a second nature. Woman's alleged nature denaturalizes her. Man as ruler and oppressor denies woman the honour of individualization.

'Socially, the individual is an example of the species, a representative of her sex; and therefore male logic sees her wholly as standing for nature, as the substrate of never-ending subsumption notionally, and of never-ending subjection in reality.'²⁷⁶

The allurements of a state of nature, the attraction of the physiological, biological, national, and social underdog reanimates in the dominant the cruelty of an aborted civilization: barbarism is the other face of culture. In light of its failings, its weaknesses, the dominant returns possibly crueller than ever. This time the annihilation allows of no exception. 'The will to destruction is totalitarian.'²⁷⁷

Society, in a sense, becomes totalised through the problems it faces, the problems it creates. An ego unreflective and weakened by its own rigidity reproduces, even in its symbolic and aesthetic sensibility, an identity that is reactively-aggressive. According to Adorno, being reconciled to the nonidentical would pave the way for a multiplicity of different things, a diversity of objects.²⁷⁸

'It is not up to philosophy to exhaust things according to scientific usage, to reduce phenomena to a minimum of propositions [...]. Instead, in philosophy we literally seek to immerse ourselves in things

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 112.

²⁷⁸ Cf. "Lecture Six", Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, p. 57. '[W]hat I have in mind here above all is what might be called the philosophical substance of Hölderlin's thinking. He foremost among others, interpreted this idea of absolute nature of the one and of unity in such a way as to insist that the true unity was the reconciliation of the many, and not a mere identity which came into existence by riding roughshod over the many of which it is composed.'

that are heterogeneous to it, without placing those things in prefabricated categories. We want to adhere as closely to the heterogeneous as the programs of phenomenology and Simmel tried in vain to do; our aim is total-relinquishment.²⁷⁹

To attempt the above would require relinquishing any claims to possession of a finite, conclusive philosophy. The changed philosophy would have to be infinite, fluid. Refusing to be pinned down in enumerable theorems the changed philosophy would find its substance in the diversity of objects, ways and means that it seeks or which impinge upon it. 'Disenchantment of the concept is the antidote of philosophy. It keeps it from growing rampant and becoming an absolute to itself.'²⁸⁰ The disenchantment is objective in the sense that a given alternative is always objective and this openness points to the preponderance of the object. This has social and material resonances that are the inverted in subjective idealism: the particular, singular thing is subsumed in the universal.

The dialectics of speculative idealism resolves the difference between the particular and the universal from the viewpoint of the universal. Nothing is to escape this positive move toward the universal, everything is grist for the dialectical mill that would grind all differences into the same; for Adorno such differences cannot be tidied away, subsumed under the concept.²⁸¹ The contents of experience are not to be reduced to cases of categories.

Adorno's reconfiguration of the dialectic is negative; it highlights oppositional tensions and refuses to affirm underlying identity or final

²⁷⁹ "Infinity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 13.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Cf. "Noncontradictoriness not to be Hypostatized," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 141-142. 'In Hegel there was coincidence of identity and positivity; the inclusion of all non-identical and objective things in a subjectivity expanded and exalted into an absolute spirit was to effect the reconciliation. On the other hand, the force of the entirety that works in every single definition is not simply its negation; that force itself is the negative, the untrue.'

synthesis. Neither hostile nor resolved to its content and independent of idealistic machinations, negative dialectics would allow for substantive insights without the predominance of an absolutist subject.

‘The only way out of the dialectical context of immanence is by that context itself. Dialectics is critical reflection upon that context. It reflects its own motion [...]. Such dialectics is negative. Its idea names the difference from Hegel.’²⁸²

For Hegel, ‘The true is the whole.’²⁸³ Through determinate negation of partial truths the whole is to be revealed.²⁸⁴ For Adorno, ‘The whole is the false;’²⁸⁵ or put another way the socio-historical totality we have at the present is untrue. This is revealed through the process of determinate negation of various cultural phenomena. For example: art serves to disclose truth through its own process of determinate negation. By asking what the future holds for art, society and the relationship between them truth is revealed as a dynamic or historical process and not a fixed criterion.

According to Adorno:

‘The cultural critic makes such a distinction his privilege and forfeits his legitimating by collaborating with culture as its salaried and honoured nuisance. This, however, affects the substance of criticism. Even the implacable rigour with which the criticism speaks the truth of an untrue consciousness remains imprisoned within the orbit of that against which it struggles, fixated on its surface manifestations.’²⁸⁶ — ‘The justness of the image is preserved in the faithful pursuit of its prohibition.’²⁸⁷

This pursuit, or process of “determinate negativity”, is not protected by the

²⁸² “Noncontradictoriness not to be Hypostatized,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 141.

²⁸³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans. A.V. Miller, (United States of America: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 11.

²⁸⁴ Cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 51. ‘But when, on the other hand, the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely a *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself.’

²⁸⁵ “Dwarf Fruit,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 49.

²⁸⁶ T.W. Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (The United States of America: MIT Press, 1983) p. 20.

sovereignty of the abstract concept. Also it receives no immunity against corrupting intuition, after the manner of total scepticism.

For Pyrrhonist's both true and false are equally vain. But determinate negation is not rigorism. It does not confront its object with an Idea that it cannot match up to. 'Dialectic, on the contrary, interprets every image as writing.'²⁸⁸ That's to say the dialectic process within which determinate negation moves or is a moment, interprets every representation reproduced in imagination by imagination as a faculty or power, as writing.

The squandered image, if that is indeed the case, points to the return of the primacy of the subject. Dialectical thought opposes such reification, it refuses to affirm individual things in their isolation. Separateness, alienation, is a product of the universal.²⁸⁹

According to Adorno, the presumptuous and self-satisfied knowledge that a transfiguration of negativity leads to redemption is what distinguishes the enlightenment from the positivist degeneracy Hegel attributed to it. By making the abstract totality sovereign, by making the whole process of negation--that's to say totality in system, history and intent--into an absolute, Hegel contravened the prohibition against invoking the finite as infinite. He underestimated the power of the negative and lapsed into mythology: the explanation of the world as all or nothing. Yet with the notion of determinate negation Hegel reveals an element that, when divorced from the defective idea of the absolute, is part of the very texture or fabric of

²⁸⁷ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24. See below, p. 146.

²⁸⁸ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24.

²⁸⁹ "How sickly seem all growing things," *Minima Moralia*, p. 71.

experience.²⁹⁰ ‘The task of cognition does not consist in mere apprehension, classification, and calculation, but in the determinate negation of each immediacy.’²⁹¹

To comprehend the given as something more than the mere facts of abstract spatio-temporal relation is to conceive them as superficies, ‘[A]s mediated conceptual moments which come to fulfilment only in the development of their social, historical and human significance.’²⁹² Thought, before all particular content, is an act of negation. The resistance to that which is forced upon it has been inherited from its archetype the relation between labour and material.²⁹³

As the counterpart to passive contemplation philosophical thought moves beyond the immediately given, it heeds a potential in the object, whilst simultaneously making conscious the unconscious idea of making amends for irreconcilable thoughts.

‘Accompanying irreconcilable thoughts is the hope for reconciliation, because the resistance of thought to mere things in being, the commanding freedom of the subject, intends in the object even that of which the object was deprived by objectification.’²⁹⁴

In those places where we resolve the insoluble, we reveal a moment of cogitative transcendence.

To reiterate, the pursuit of images, their determinate negation, does not immunise thought against the objective tendency of enlightenment to reduce the power of the image by distancing itself, taking leave, in a

²⁹⁰ For Adorno determinate negation remains what it was for Hegel, a way of uncovering the truth. Cf. “On the Truth Content of Artworks,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p.129. ‘Artworks have no truth without determinate negation; developing this is the task of aesthetics today.’

²⁹¹ “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 27.

²⁹² “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 26-27.

²⁹³ “Presentation,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 19.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

knowing kind of way.²⁹⁵ According to Adorno, the move does not represent any subjective process towards freedom from images, rather, in the estrangement of schemata and classificatory systems from the data subsumed beneath them, a second figurativeness appears that resists or turns against the image: its spontaneity and power of abstraction.

Hieroglyphical in appearance the little silhouettes, outsized and simplistic, are a triumph of representation over what is represented. They represent the norm, the wholly general, the average or standard model. They also represent the false comprehensibility of intellectual processes. The blind unthinking subsumption and archaic retranslation into sensuous signs arises out of '[...] the sheer quantity of material processed, which has become incommensurable with the horizons of individual experience.'²⁹⁶ Schooled by countless precedence the particular general image is a kind of immediacy, the instantaneous sizing up of the situation, a predominance of the object devoid of meaning, a sign of a positive intellectualism and rational enchantment set against the negative disenchantment of a damaged life.

Nonidentity, non-conceptuality cannot stay within epistemological bounds. On the other hand epistemology, if defined within space and time, requires the contingency of different things. The epistemological thematic is directed towards direct knowledge of its object which dialectically is the finite, limited and fallible thing.

When an attempt is made to define the concept and fix its meaning it becomes evident that it encompasses nonidentity. That the concept and the thing itself are not one and the same is required by the logical form of

²⁹⁵ Cf. "Picture-book without pictures," *Minima Moralia*, p. 140.

definition. Hence for the concept to remain true to itself it has to change.

Art too desires what has not yet been, though it is the case that everything art is has already been. Art cannot escape the shadow of the past.²⁹⁷ By wanting to give permanence to the transitory the aesthetic image protests against nature's fear that it will dissipate into the chaotic. We would be wrong, therefore, to discard the ideal of identity whilst simultaneously attempting to locate its particular in space and time. 'Living in the rebuke that the thing is not identical with the concept is the concept's longing to become identical with the thing.' Adorno goes on to say;

'The matters of true philosophical interest at this point in history are those in which Hegel, agreeing with tradition, expressed his disinterest. They are non-conceptuality, individuality, and particularity - things which ever since Plato used to be dismissed as transitory and insignificant, and which Hegel labeled "lazy Existence." Philosophy's theme would consist of the qualities it downgrades as contingent, as a *quantité négligeable*. A matter of urgency to the concept would be what it fails to cover, what its abstractionist mechanism eliminates, what is not already the case of the concept.'²⁹⁸

In a philosophical experience the universal is not immediately available as a phenomenon; it is as abstract as it is objective. We are constrained to take our leave from the particular remembering that we know but do not have. This is why Adorno, invoking Heraclitus, states that philosophical experience is twofold: One leading upward, one downward. The assurance given by the concept with regards to the determination of phenomena cannot be propounded ontologically, as truth-in-itself. The concept is fused with untruth, with an oppressive principle. The assurance and concept does not constitute a positive telos that would exhaust cognition.

²⁹⁶ "Picture-book without pictures," *Minima Moralia*, p. 140

²⁹⁷ Cf. "Methexis in Darkness," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 134.

²⁹⁸ "The Concern of Philosophy," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 8.

It is in turn the negativity of the universal which is responsible for the changes in the direction of thought. This turn welds cognition to the particular as that which is to be realised. Thoughts which claim to understand themselves are untrue, only thoughts which cannot understand themselves are true. All Philosophy carries the rudiments of unfreedom in the understanding of its inalienable general elements: society then prolongs them into existence. The coercion of thought is something inherent in philosophy. However, this coercive character can be critically known and this thereby protects philosophy from degenerating into licence.²⁹⁹

Hidden within the supposition of identity as posed by Hegel, is the truth moment of an ideological element that pledges there should be no contradiction, no antagonism. 'In the simple identifying judgment the pragmatist, nature controlling element joins with a utopian element.'³⁰⁰ For Adorno this utopian element, beyond identity and contradiction, is an idea, a negative sign. In its way it does present an element of hope and possibility being a break in the form of predicative identity that comes between what things claim to be and what they are. "'A" is to be what is not yet.'³⁰¹ The ray of light this directs against the whole shows it to be untrue in all its moments, this for Adorno is utopia. The utopia of the as yet to be realized whole truth who's absolute distance is at the same time its absolute proximity.³⁰²

Rationality's rigid opposition to the particular is the untruth attacked by art not rationality per se. The rationalistic separation of intuition from the

²⁹⁹ Cf. "Substantiality and Method," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 47-48.

³⁰⁰ "Cogitative Self-Reflection," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 149-150.

³⁰¹ "Cogitative Self-Reflection," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 150.

conceptual is an ideology that society perpetuates and enjoins. If art separates out intuition and valorizes it as a particular then it endorses the rigidification and reification of the spiritual element.

According to Adorno, if art was in a rigorous sense intuitable then it would endorse the contingency of what exists sensuously and immediately. In point of fact the artwork opposes this with its own logic. The quality of the artwork is determined by its integral elaboration: the way its concretion is divested of its contingency. The prevalence of the doctrine of intuition is a reflex of social reification that establishes a sphere of immediacy that excludes the constitutive thing-like dimensions of the artwork: the very thing that is necessarily transcended in the artwork. By following the artwork's own immanent logic what becomes available to intuition is mediated by the structure of the work.

The artwork suffers from its immanent condition as a thing which complicit with social reification lends itself to the fetishization of process and relation. As a condition of its aesthetic autonomy the objectivation³⁰³ of the social labour sedimented in the artwork, which is at once both a process and an instant, is also rigidification.³⁰⁴ Consequently, and immanent to the epistemological tradition, the doctrine of subjectivity understands the subject's substance as its own possession, as something it can call 'mine'.

'Epistemological tradition places anything immediate on the subject's side, but as the subject's datum or affection. The subject is said to have power to shape immediacy insofar as it is autonomous and

³⁰² Cf. "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 88.

³⁰³ Something capable of objectivation is something capable of becoming a product of human activity available to both producers and to others as elements of a common world. Cf. "Excursus on the Obsolescence of the Production Paradigm," *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 76.

³⁰⁴ Cf. "Intuitability and Conceptuality," *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 98-100.

spontaneous; but to be powerless in so far as the directly given thing flatly exists'³⁰⁵

In the process the embodied subject objectifies itself—it struggles to give shape to or overcome the otherwise dominant unconscious and unreflecting impulses.

In truth, at heart and in essence the effort required to realise the potential of conscious life defines and names who and what we become. This means we have a history which reflects the internal divisions and transformations made over time. Reflection upon this personal history reveals that, in terms of duration, it is expectation rather than probability that carries us through.

Expectation as against probability is an expression of what ought to be rather than what is. Where anything is possible, infinite possibility, there is faith in the absurd. Negative finite possibility in stating why something is not possible thereby points to where possibility lies. At this point we should highlight a difference between Adorno's philosophy and an older tradition which puts the question above the answer.

'[I]n philosophy the authentic question will somehow almost always include its answer. Unlike science, philosophy knows no fixed sequence of question and answer. Its question must be shaped by its experience, so as to catch up with the experience. Its answers are not given, not made, not generated: they are the recoil of the unfolded, transparent question.'³⁰⁶

In philosophy question and answer are weighted differently than they are in other disciplines. A given solution does not remove either, they both remain open—'their rhythm would be more that of duration and oblivion.'³⁰⁷ A

³⁰⁵ "The Object not Datum," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 186.

³⁰⁶ "Question and Answer," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 63.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

philosophy that never delivers, that keeps owing what it promises raises failure to experiential levels.

Adorno's "*Minima Moralia*," subtitled "Reflections from Damaged Life", is an ironic reflection on the contemporary fate of a philosophy whose domain was the, 'teaching of the good life'.³⁰⁸ Ironic because in a world that radiates disaster triumphant, 'wrong life cannot be lived rightly.'³⁰⁹ In light of this what might be the best mode of conduct. Adorno suggests an uncommitted, suspended one, '[...] to lead a private life, as far as the social order and one's own needs will tolerate nothing else, but not to attach weight to it as to something still socially substantial and individually appropriate.'³¹⁰

But driven to an extreme, as a fully developed thesis, the paradox leads to destruction, a loveless disregard for things and people. The individual who can no longer rely on any firm possession clings to the self in its extreme abstraction as the last supposedly un-losable possession. In the most extreme case the self-impressed is the fascist. The fascistic are not accessible to reason, because for them reason lies in the other persons agreement with their own ideas.³¹¹ There is no argument only a choice between on the one hand an immediate and direct identification with stereotypical values and on the other death, or worst.

Inherent to the self-liberating subject is self-preservation. The wish to be right, in discussion, argumentation or logical reflection, is an expression of that spirit of self-preservation. The self-preserving subject enamoured

³⁰⁸ "Dedication," *Minima Moralia*, p. 15.

³⁰⁹ "Refuge for the Homeless," *Minima Moralia*, p. 39.

³¹⁰ "Refuge for the homeless," *Minima Moralia*, p. 39.

³¹¹ Cf. "Why it is Better Not To Know All The Answers," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 210.

with its own constitution and driven by fear is in its performance cold and indifferent to the feelings and thoughts of others. The self-impressed and self-preserving subject is wary of attaching itself to a life that turns into something that makes it shudder and threatens its substance.

Guilt accrues in the thought that life is lived at the expense of another's life. 'The guilt of a life which purely as a fact will strangle other life, [...].'³¹² Guilt haunts our consciousness; it attaches us to something that our waking consciousness perceives to be nonexistent. This guilt, because it is never fully present, reproduces itself in ways that are irreconcilable with living. This state of affairs, this guilt context of living is what, according to Adorno, compels us to philosophise.³¹³ And what philosophy is concerned to break down is that expression of self-preservation manifest in the wish to be right unconditionally.

The grasping subject sits unconformably upon the direct datum, which as objectivity within the subject, a basic fact, is the form of objective resistance to the devouring subject.³¹⁴ What is "mine" in experience, "my experience", is tied to ontical conditions.

The animating contradiction of experience is in no way intended to capture the phenomenological ur-experience nor get at something ontological, the truth of the true, the Being of beings, instead the dialectical movement between its knowledge and its object which consciousness exercises tragically concludes as a "something" inasmuch as the object

³¹² Cf. "After Auschwitz," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 364.

³¹³ Cf. *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ Cf. "Idealism as Rage," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 23. 'The system is the belly turned mind, and rage is the mark of each and every idealism...Nietzsche's liberating act, a true turning point of Western thought and merely usurped by others later, was to put such mysteries into

issues from it.

‘There is no Being without entities. “Something”—as a cogitatively indispensable substrate of any concept, including the concept of Being—is the utmost abstraction of the subject-matter that is not identical with thinking, an abstraction not to be abolished by any further thought process.’³¹⁵

“Something” as mimetic remnant, exists in time which is a condition of its possibility. There is no sequence of time save in temporality and there is no temporality without an entity, an “I think” that accompanies “my” conceptions. The pronoun “my” without which there would be no “I think” points to a subject as an object among objects.³¹⁶

In the spirit of labour the compelling force of objective phenomena are reflected in the object and are sedimented in it, but not exclusively and not exhaustively. ‘If the individual is a socially transmitted phenomenon, so is his form of theoretical epistemological reflection. It is unfathomable why “my” individual consciousness should take precedence over anything else.’³¹⁷

If sensation as “something” was required before the transcendental subject could function then it would be quasi-ontologically tied not only to pure apperception but also to matter its counter-pole.³¹⁸ This undermines constitutive subjectivity as it adjusts to a moment not of its making and to which it remains part blind. “My” is a proprietary relation, but philosophy becomes mythology where it thinks it has found some ultimate datum. ‘To break off reflection, to take a positivist’s pride in his own naïveté, is nothing

words.’

³¹⁵ “The Indissoluble “Something,”” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 135.

³¹⁶ Cf. “The Objects Preponderance,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 183.

³¹⁷ “The Nominalistic Aspect,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 126.

³¹⁸ Cf. “Compulsory substantiveness,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 137.

else but thoughtless, stubbornly conceptualized self-preservation.³¹⁹

If as a “something”, as remnant of a copy of that which thought means, the “I think” that should be able to accompany all my conceptions, finds itself without specific thoughts and so contravenes its concept, then: ‘Its own absoluteness is the measure by which the least surplus of nonidentity feels to the subject like an absolute threat. [...] Subjectivity changes its quality in a context which it is unable to evolve on its own.’³²⁰

But just by positing “something” as an absolute form will not be enough to shake off this substantive experience of the subject which is paradoxically taken from objectivity.³²¹ Mediation of the object can only be known as it entwines with subjectivity, but there would not be a subject without a moment of objectivity. According to Adorno, it is in the nature of the subject to also be an object but it is not necessary for an object to also be a subject.

‘Due to the inequality inherent in the concept of mediation, the subject enters into the object altogether differently from the way the object enters into the subject. An object can be conceived only by a subject but always remains something other than the subject, whereas a subject by its very nature is from the outset an object as well. Not even as an idea can we conceive a subject that is not an object; but we can conceive an object that is not a subject. To be an object also is part of the meaning of subjectivity; but it is not equally part of the meaning of objectivity to be a subject.’³²²

Objectivity is the self-unconscious schema under which the subject brings its otherness. Thought abandons itself to the predominant impression, sensation bringing thought to full productivity. The more ruthless the will to identify

³¹⁹ “The Nominalistic Aspect,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 127.

³²⁰ “The Objects Preponderance,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 183.

³²¹ Cf. “Copula,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 103. ‘[...] something which, however generally it may designate that vacant place, means substantive things and requires substantive things to become that which it means.’

becomes, the more intuition is turned into a direct and positive truth, the less affinity to things it tolerates. Affinity—without which there is no truth, no reflection on causality—is the definite negation of identifying schemata. It is negation, not a remnant left over after the identifying categories have been overcome.³²³

The negation of impulse and moment has as its ramification freedom of consciousness, whose intervention in the total social constitution will alter the complexion of the individual. What 'is' only comes to be through the confrontation of expression and thing.

'The test of the power of language is that the expression and thing will separate in reflection. Language becomes a measure of truth only when we are conscious of the nonidentity of an expression with that which we mean. [...] Language is more than a sign only where it shows significative strength, where it most exactly and succinctly covers what is meant. It "is" only insofar as it comes to be, in the constant confrontation of expression and thing.'³²⁴

The word "object", lends itself to subjectivity when we reflect upon the possibility of its definition. Indefiniteness is equated with the undefined as its definition. The undefined, synonymous with nothingness, is an abstraction, a purely logical relation known irrespective of factuality, and yet nothingness, indefiniteness, the undefined still recalls the material constellation of subject and object.

To define, to say what something is identification. But by placing its mark on the object the definition seeks to be marked by the object. Identification also approaches that which the object itself is as nonidentical.

³²² "The Objects Preponderance," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 183.

³²³ Cf. "Causality as a Spell," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 270.

³²⁴ "The Childs Question," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 111-112.

‘Nonidentity is the secret *telos* of identification.’³²⁵

The non-identical is not immediate, it points beyond itself [Transmission is another word for this] yet as self-transmission the non-identical is identical in the sense that it is subject, not the subject that gets confused with subjectivity, subject thought of either as an agency for synthesizing representations or as the exclusive interiority of a personality, which are moments amongst others of the subject, but subject which through what it does, its acts, dissolves all substance. This subject is a self-relation in which no terms are given. What this subject does in its doing is the experience of the consciousness of the negativity of substance. If it were the case that through an archaic vestige this names something primary writ large and close, then resignation and delusion are its ideological components and the point of attack for conceiving the non-conceptual and nonidentical especially, although not exclusively, as epitomized in the artwork. Nevertheless the nonidentical is nonidentical, it is other to all its identifications.³²⁶ Mediation turns out to be the implicit history of the non-conceptual, negative dialectics its logic: A logic that refers to dialectical patterns of arguments that highlights tension in polar opposites and negative because it refuses to affirm any underlying identity or final synthesis. So for example perception is directness at one remove, reflection a return to the seductive power of sensuality, and mimesis the remembrance in the subject. But if either pole or any of the configurations is announced as first or

³²⁵ “Cogitative Self-Reflection,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 149. Cf. “Deaestheticization of Art, Critique of the Culture Industry,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 17. ‘Prior to total administration, the subject who viewed, heard, or read a work was to lose himself, forget himself, extinguish himself in the artwork. The identification carried out by the subject was ideally not that of making the artwork like himself, but rather of making himself like the artwork.’

immediate it is already mediated by the announcement.

The fear that the subject might be losing its substantiality prepares the ground for claims that unarticulated Being, equated with substantiality, will survive the functional context.³²⁷ We are especially made aware of this in those philosophies where “Being”, the totality of that which is, turns the copula into its object and leaves behind the beyond to which it points. Whereas the claim that the definition of the object is imposed leaves the primacy of the subject in place the forms of subjectivity are not cognitive absolutes. It is subjective delusion and myth that maintain *prima philosophia* and styles itself as absolute. For Adorno, ‘*Prima philosophia* and dualism go together. To escape from this, fundamental ontology must try to avoid defining what comes first to it.’³²⁸

Objectively the subject is mediated, determined as to its identity, only in reference to the nonidentical. As mimetic impulse it is that excess or abundance that imparts a given timbre, tone or quality to the subject. If there was no concrete intimation or experience of nonidentity we would lose the possibility of reflection. Dialectically the cognition of nonidentity is made possible because it identifies to a greater extent and in other ways, than identity thinking.

‘This cognition seeks to say what something is, while identitarian thinking says what something comes under, what it exemplifies or represents, and what accordingly is not itself.’³²⁹

Adorno’s use of the non-conceptual changes the traditional formalization

³²⁶ Cf. “Ontologization of the Ontical,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 120.

³²⁷ Cf. “Affirmative Character,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 65. ‘[...] the cult of Being, or at least the attraction of the word as of something superior, lives by the fact that in reality, as once upon a time in epistemology, concepts denoting function have more and more replaced the concepts denoting substance.’

and metaphysics of the concept. The force of thought that shatters conceptual identity by thinking the non-identical, the non-conceptual, disavows the concept's being-in-itself.

Outside of systematic thinking, the power of thought is delivered over to the realm of definition by individual moments. This recalls, from the object's point of view, the inner unity of its aspects and the affinity which objects have for each other without being obliged to fit everything into a surrogate and usurping schemata.

'What the objects communicate in—instead of being the atom it becomes in the logic of classification—is the trace of the objects' definition in themselves, which Kant denied and Hegel, against Kant, sought to restore through the subject. To comprehend a thing itself, not just to register it in its system of reference, is nothing but to perceive the individual moments in its immanent connection with others.'³³⁰

Such anti-subjectivism seeks in the coherence of the non-identical the way things have come to be. Objectivity is not immediate in the sense of being naïve realism. 'To grant precedence to the object means to make progressive qualitative distinctions between things which in themselves are indirect; it means a moment in dialectics—not beyond dialectics, but articulated in dialectics.'³³¹ According to Adorno, 'Criticism of systems and asystematic thought are superficial as long as they cannot release the cohesive force which the idealistic systems had signed over to the transcendental subject.'³³²

"Possibility" remains the means that negative dialectics employs for

³²⁸ "Peephole Metaphysics," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 138.

³²⁹ "Cogitative Self-Reflection," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 149.

³³⁰ "The Twofold Character of the System," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 25.

³³¹ "The Objects Preponderance," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 184.

³³² "The Twofold Character of the System," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 26.

the penetration of the hypostatized. Hardened objects which refuse to reveal what, nevertheless, is still visible, frustrate the possibility for linguistic expression of the history congealed within. 'To represent the mimesis it supplanted, the concept has no other way than to adopt something mimetic in its own conduct, without abandoning itself.'³³³ This nonconceptual mimetic moment of expression, the "something", is objectified by presentation in language. 'Dialectics—literally: language as the organon—[...] appropriates for the power of thought what historically seemed to be a flaw in thinking: its link with language.'³³⁴ Linguistics is our means of expression; the words we use are concepts.

With critiques of language, the analysis of words to make sure of their truth, an attempt is made to rescue the rhetorical, the element wherein culture, society, and tradition animate thought, so that differences fade and there is a mutual approximation of expression and thing expressed.

'In dialectics, [...] the rhetorical element is on the side of content. Dialectics seeks to mediate between random views and unessential accuracy, to master this dilemma by way of formal, logical dilemma. But dialectics inclines to content because content is not closed, not predetermined by a skeleton; it is a protest against mythology. Mythical is that which never changes, ultimately diluted to formal legality of thought.'³³⁵

The negative element in negative dialectics will not allow the rhetorical element come to rest as if it were totalized: closed.

Where tradition and speculation had attempted to divest itself of any kind of content, '[...] where immediacy has been so truly abolished as in the world in which we exist, the temptation is doubly strong to mistake the

³³³ "Infinity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 14.

³³⁴ "Rhetoric," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 56.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

remnants of life, or even the negation of the prevailing condition, for the absolute.³³⁶ Through abstraction the *ratio* was to produce the order it had negated outside itself. 'The ego system that founds the system, the pure method before any content, has always been the *ratio*, it is not confined by anything outside it [...].'³³⁷ In the unity of the *ratio* the self acknowledges power as the principle of all relation.

'The unification of intellectual functions by means of which domination over the senses is achieved, the resignation of thought to the rise of unanimity, means the impoverishment of thought and of experience: separation of both areas leaves both impaired.'³³⁸

In their sovereignty over existence, but also in their alienation from it, the creative god and the systematic spirit are alike as rulers of nature.³³⁹ The subjective spirit masters a despiritualized nature by cancelling some of its animation and adopting some of its rigidity. Despiritualizing itself in turn, '[...] the *ratio* which supplants mimesis is not simply its counterpart. It is itself mimesis: mimesis unto death.'³⁴⁰ By progressively distancing itself from the object, the *ratio*, the sovereignty of ideas, supplants mimesis.³⁴¹

'Thought that completely extirpated its mimetic impulse—the kind of enlightenment that does not carry out the self-reflection that forms the content of the Hegelian system, naming the relation of the matter at hand to the idea—would end up in madness.'³⁴²

³³⁶ *Metaphysics-Concepts and Problems*, p. 144. Cf. "Idealism as Rage," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 22-23. 'Idealism—most explicitly Fichte—gives unconscious sway to the ideology that the not-I, *l'autrui*, and finally all that reminds us of nature is inferior, so the unity of the self-preserving thought may devour it without misgivings.'

³³⁷ "The Antinomial Character of Systems," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 26 'The ego principle that founds the system, the pure method before any content, has always been the *ratio*.'

³³⁸ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 36.

³³⁹ Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 9.

³⁴⁰ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 57.

³⁴¹ Cf. "Cogitative Self-Reflection," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 148-149. 'The *ratio* recoils into irrationality as soon as in its necessary course it fails to grasp that the disappearance of its substrate—however diluted—is its own work, the product of its own abstraction. When thinking follows its law of motion unconsciously, it turns against what has been thought, against that which calls a halt to the flight of subjective intentions.'

³⁴² *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 40.

By transcending the identifying mode of thinking, that's to say egocentrism, by revealing what has been withheld, rational identity through its consciousness of the nonidentical is the palliative for reductive identifying abstractions.

As the systematic need, the need to achieve absolute knowledge, the ratio is already claimed in every concise individual judgement. But this need, according to Adorno, 'was more, at times, than a pseudomorphosis of the spirit into the irresistibly successful method of mathematical and natural science.'³⁴³ The one, *ratio*, that takes precedence, tolerates nothing outside itself. And yet, for Adorno, *ratio*, is no more to be hypostatized or made subject than any other category.

'The transfer of the self-preserving interest from individuals to the species is spiritually coagulated with the form of the *ratio*, a form that is general and antagonistic at the same time. [...] The universality of the ratio ratifies the needfulness of everything particular, its dependency upon the whole, and what unfolds in that universality, due to the process of abstraction on which it rests, is its contradiction to the particular.'³⁴⁴

The *ratio* that aggregates and conceptualises phenomena into species is just as much the ability to discriminate qualitative differences and segregate like from unlike. Abstract unification, the synthetic function of thought, would not be possible without the qualitative moment of presentation, which, as discrimination, is the substrate in all quantification. Discrimination, which no objectivity and therefore no subjectivity or mimesis can do without, traces the infinitesimal, the nuance that escapes the concept. Discrimination, as the capacity to experience the object through a subjective reaction provides a haven for the mimetic element of knowledge, for the element of

³⁴³ "Attitude towards Systems," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 20-21.

elective affinity between knower and known.³⁴⁵ The process of discrimination, which blends the mimetic element with the rational, retains in part a chance and individual character.

How uniqueness with its own content and a history beyond abstraction comes out of the repetition that creates the 'something' as 'mine' implies a connection with the body.

'The somatic moment as the not purely cognitive part of cognition is irreducible, and thus the subjective claim collapses at the very point where radical empiricism has conserved it. The fact that the subject's cognitive achievements are somatic in accordance with their own meaning affects not only the basic relation of subject and object but the dignity of physicality. Physicality emerges at the ontical pole of subjective cognition, as the core of that cognition. This dethrones the guiding idea of epistemology: to constitute the body as the law governing the link between sensations and acts—in other words, to constitute it mentally. Sensations are already, in themselves, what the system would like to set forth as their formation by consciousness.'³⁴⁶

The embodied 'my' is mistaken for a juridical notion by experience.³⁴⁷ Its unity is derived from the concept's tendency to be constant; as is the idea of something immutable, identical with itself. Dialectical thought opposes such reification. 'It refuses to affirm individual things in their isolation and separateness: it designates isolation as precisely a product of the universal.'³⁴⁸ The epistemological tradition, as a doctrine about meaning and understanding, maintains that all our knowledge must be of, or derive from,

³⁴⁴ "Historical Reason Antagonistic," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 317-318.

³⁴⁵ Cf. "Quality and Individual," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 45.

³⁴⁶ "Passage to Materialism," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 193-194.

³⁴⁷ Cf. Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 85.

'The rational thinking subject can only exist embodied. In this sense we can truly say that the subject *is* his embodiment, that, e.g., I as a thinking being am my living body. And yet at the same time this embodiment in life has a tendency to carry us along the stream of inclination, of impulse towards unreflecting unity within ourselves and with nature. Reason has to struggle against this in order to realize itself. And in this sense his embodiment is not only other than the thinking rational subject, but in a sense his opposite, his limit, his opponent.'

³⁴⁸ "'How sickly seem all growing things'," *Minima Moralia*, p. 71.

logical propositions about our subjective experience. This claim all too readily lends itself an absolute status, which as the systematic ideal of fixed ideas and universal commitments rejects anything not already analytically assimilated, i.e., dissenting critical thought, as irrational.³⁴⁹

The way the subject has come to dominate its environment and the world is the premise behind Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. By being non-systematic, or rather, not straightforwardly historical, Adorno and Horkheimer's reconstruction of the history of domination attempts to avoid the reification of history and society, a reification that sees the movement of history as something natural, a 'second nature'. Second nature as imposed and distorted history perseveres with, preserves, and even legitimises acts of severe brutality.

'Christianity, idealism, and materialism, which in themselves contain truth, are therefore also responsible for the barbaric acts perpetuated in their name. As representatives of power—they themselves became historical forces which could be organized, and as such played a bloody role in the true history of the human race: that of the instruments of organization.'³⁵⁰

The systems of thought that arose in the seventeenth century were compensatory in purpose. The philosophies of the Baroque period, and their champions, had, by proselytising the *ratio* as principle, ultimately broken the domination of the feudal order and scholastic ontology. But those that came

³⁴⁹ Cf. M. Horkheimer, "Means and End," *Eclipse of Reason*, (Great Britain: Continuum, 2004), pp. 6-7. 'Despite his philosophy [Bertrand Russell], which holds 'ultimate ethical values to be subjective,' he seems to differentiate between the objective moral qualities of human actions and our perceptions of them: 'What is horrible I will see as horrible.' He has the courage of inconsistency and thus, by disavowing certain aspects of his anti-dialectical logic, remains indeed a philosopher and a humanist at the same time. If he were to cling to his scientific theory consistently, he would have to admit that there are no horrible actions or inhuman conditions, and that the evil he sees is just illusion. According to such theories, thought serves any particular endeavour, good or bad. It is a tool of all actions, but must not try to set the patterns of social and individual life, which are assumed to be set by other forces.'

after, when faced with the ruins, were struck by fear. '[T]his fear shaped the beginning of a mode of conduct constitutive for bourgeois existence as a whole: of the neutralization, by confirming the existing order, of every emancipatory step.'³⁵¹ Because the process of emancipation was incomplete, the fear of annulment by a more advanced consciousness lead the prevailing consciousness to establish, by way of compensation, a rational order of coercive mechanisms whose origin, placed in formal thought divorced from content, allowed the *ratio* to prevail as a system. But, in the process virtually all qualitative definitions are eliminated. This brings the *ratio* system into conflict with the very objectivity it is meant to be able to grasp. 'The *ratio* came to be removed from objectivity—the farther removed, the more completely objectivity was subjected to its axioms, and finally to the one axiom of identity.'³⁵²

According to Adorno, 'Hume in the name of immediacy, criticized identity, the principle of the I that would like to maintain itself as autochthonous in the face of immediacy.'³⁵³ Yet both positions, Hume's and the identity theorists he criticises, seek an exclusive standard for their respective epistemologies. For Hume, because uncertainty is part of our experience, because the mind moves from one thing to another according to the association of ideas, fear is the ground state manifested in this restless action of the mind.³⁵⁴ According to Adorno, '*Angst*, that supposed

³⁵⁰ "Notes and Drafts," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 224.

³⁵¹ "Attitude towards Systems," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 21.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ "The Object Not Datum," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 186-187.

³⁵⁴ Cf. David Hume, "Of the Direct Passions," sec. IX in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969).

“existential,” is the claustrophobia of a systematized society.’³⁵⁵ The underlying disposition gives rise to single eruptive impulses or excrescences which show the untruth, the mania of the systems themselves.

‘Whenever something that is to be conceived flees from identity with the concept, the concept will be forced to take exaggerated steps to prevent any doubts of the unassailable validity, solidity, and acribia of the thought product from stirring. Great philosophy was accompanied by a paranoid zeal to tolerate nothing else, and to pursue everything else with all the cunning of reason, while the other kept retreating farther and farther from the pursuit.’³⁵⁶

With the secularisation of the principle of divine omnipotence the concept of the world spirit became the principle that posits unity.³⁵⁷ The relentlessness of the world spirit is manifest in what happens in the world, i.e., modernisation and the unleashing of productive forces. ‘Modernization’ is a tool of social-scientific functionalism, an abstract, spatio-temporally neutral model for processes of social development in general.³⁵⁸ This makes it easier for the bundle of processes, the concept to which modernization refers, to be foisted upon societies that sit outside the historical context in which they developed.

So it came to pass that for many the spirit that controls nature has an affinity with the violent control and destruction of nature. Social forms that come into conflict with the world spirit and its claims to periods of harmony

³⁵⁵ “Idealism as Rage,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 24.

³⁵⁶ “Attitude towards Systems,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 22.

³⁵⁷ “Harmonizing with the World Spirit,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 305. Cf. “The Spell,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 344. ‘Human beings, individual subjects, are under a spell now as ever. The spell is the subjective form of the world spirit, the internal reinforcement of its primacy over the external processes of life. Men become that which negates them, that with which they cannot cope.’

³⁵⁸ Cf. “Modernity’s Consciousness of Time and its Need for Self-reassurance,” *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 2. ‘The concept of modernization refers to a bundle of processes that are cumulative and mutually reinforcing: to the formation of capital and the mobilization of resources; to the development of the forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labour; to the formation of national identities; to the proliferation of rights of political, of urban forms of life, and of formal schooling; to the

and happiness, are crushed, or overpowered by the objective spirit.

‘The universality of ideas as developed by discursive logic, domination in the conceptual sphere, is raised up on the basis of actual domination. The dissolution of the magical heritage, of the old diffuse ideas, by conceptual unity, expresses the hierarchical constitution of life determined by those who are free. The individuality that learned order and subordination in the subjection of the world, soon wholly equated truth with regulative thought without whose fixed distinctions universal truth cannot exist. Together with mimetic magic, it tabooed the knowledge which really concerned the object. Its hatred was extended to the image of the vanquished former age and its imaginary happiness.’³⁵⁹

The world spirit is worshiped like a deity, though, depersonalised and stripped of the attributes of providence and grace, it is somewhat devoid of qualities other than the sense of being overpowering. To experience the world spirit as a whole is to experience it negatively.³⁶⁰

To be touched by the world spirit or hear its murmurs of approval, above the roar of suffering and fallibility, is to become a hostage to fortune. If the individual mind is self-mediated in its objectivity, then, this is not necessarily hostile to the subject, but this changes with the dynamics of history and second nature. With the darkening of the world spirit and the rise of mediocrities, the advanced thinker, who, still in harmony with the world spirit, is misunderstood, upon being ruined feels that all was not in vain. The individual reflects a fortune beyond individual misfortune.³⁶¹ ‘The instants in which a particular frees itself without in turn, by its own particularity,

secularization of values and norms; and so on.’

³⁵⁹ “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 14.

³⁶⁰ Cf. “Harmonizing with The World Spirit,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 305. ‘This was the point of Schopenhauer’s critique of the official optimism—a critique that remained as oppressive, however, as the Hegelian theodicy of “this world”. That mankind lives only in concatenation, that it may have survived only thanks to that concatenation, this did not refute Schopenhauer’s doubts whether to affirm the will to live.’

³⁶¹ Cf. “The Spell,” *Negative Dialectics*, ‘This much of Hegel’s insistence on the universality of the particular is true: in its perversion, as impotent individualization at the universal’s mercy, the particular is dictated by the principle of perverted universality.’ p.

confining others—these instants are anticipations of the unconfined, and such solace radiates from the earliest bourgeoisie until its late period.’³⁶²

Obdurate particularity is reflected in the individual as self-preservation. This is more than just preservation of the species. It reflects a moment wherein pleasure is constituted as an end. Pleasure remote to meaning, impervious to reason, which alone could prove the means, reason to be reasonable, transcends subservience to nature.³⁶³ Once pleasure is disparagingly consigned to a cunning form of reason, ostensibly to aid the survival of the species, then the truth located in blind somatic pleasure is lost and with it the involuntary and beneficent annulment of the self in wild erotic abandon. This indictment of society is part of art's dark message. It highlights the moral tensions that exist between the individual and society. Indeed, what goes to make up the problems of morality is the divergence between particular interests, the interests of particular individuals, and universal interests: the interests of society.

Conflicts remain even after the introduction of a reconciling ethical dimension, an existential cult of the personality, that profligates the good life or right action through the notion that one should act according to the way one is, one's ethos; nature; constitution; all which, supposedly, becomes the measure of one's behaviour. As a philosophical apologetic, this kind of sociological reductionism and relativism reduces the possibilities inherent in so-called “forms of consciousness” and in the process becomes an

344.

³⁶² “The Unleashing of Productive Forces,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 306.

³⁶³ Cf. “This side of the Pleasure Principle,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 61.

ideological doctrine of subjective idols.³⁶⁴ The resultant would be a diminishment in the experiential truth content of philosophical categories or even an end to materialist dialectics and philosophy per se.³⁶⁵

That which posits itself as 'I' is caught up in its own reflective hierarchy. It is indeed an ideological prejudice but necessarily so as its removal makes the residue vulnerable to the demands of rationalization: Instinctual renunciation and adaptation to the prevailing reality principle.³⁶⁶

'Narcissism, deprived of its libidinal object by the decay of the self, is replaced by the masochistic satisfaction of no longer being a self, and the rising generation guards few of its goods so jealously as selflessness, its communal and lasting possession.'³⁶⁷

Selflessness is the well functioning I [something of a contradiction] successfully adapted to sheepish, standardized consciousness.

According to Adorno, aesthetic experience as a model of consciousness can break through the spell of obstinate self-preservation in order to reach a stage of consciousness in which the I no longer has its happiness in its interests or in its reproduction. The self in aesthetic experience is not completely adapted or is less successful in its adaptation to dominant instrumental rationality.³⁶⁸

The priorities of self-interested society shows signs of having arisen from sublimation of the brutal and barbaric whereby whatever was first or whatever is strongest has the greatest rights. In the return to this natural primitiveness inwardness binds itself all the more tightly to the man-made,

³⁶⁴ Cf. "Dialectics not a Sociology of Knowledge," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 198.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Ibid, 'The excuse of the sociology of knowledge—that the truth or untruth of philosophical teaching has nothing to do with social conditions—remains undisturbed; relativism allies itself with the division in labour.'

³⁶⁶ Cf. "Ego is Id," *Minima Moralia*, p. 64.

³⁶⁷ "Always speak of it, never think of it," *Minima Moralia*, p. 65.

³⁶⁸ Cf. "Aesthetic Experience as Objective Understanding," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 346.

to commodities and exchange, thereby revealing its contempt for the world.³⁶⁹

The self is entwined with and owes its existence, literally, to the object relations of society. Here in the bosom of society the self shines basking in those relations. But inherent to the self-liberating subject, driven by fear and enamoured of its own constitution, is a separation through which the self becomes in its performance cold and indifferent. It is here that questions of authenticity in relation to the self arise.

‘Genuineness is nothing other than the defiant and obstinate insistence on the monadological form which social oppression imposes on man. Anything that does not wish to wither should rather take on itself the stigma of the inauthentic. For it lives on the mimetic heritage. The human is indissolubly linked with imitation: a human being only becomes human at all by imitating other human beings. In such behaviour, the primal form of love, the priests of authenticity scent traces of the utopia which could shake the structure of domination’³⁷⁰

The concept of genuineness, the authenticity of self, rooted as it is in the Enlightenment’s glorification of the factual, clears a path to the denunciation of anything made of foreign metal, base coinage.

Anything that cannot show genuine worth or rectilinear succession is designated and therefore appears as waste product, eccentric, derisory, irrelevant, against which the heroic and authentic individual is meant to make its stand, and yet what appears in the blind spots is the potential that develops out of them, that which cuts across the laws of historical movement.³⁷¹

‘If a stroke of undeserved luck has kept the mental composition of some individuals not quite adjusted to the prevailing norms—a stroke of luck they have often enough to pay for in their relations with their

³⁶⁹ Cf. “Gold Assay,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 155.

³⁷⁰ “Gold Assay,” *Minima Moralia*, p.154.

³⁷¹ Cf. “Gold Assay,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 153.

environment—it is up to these individuals to make the moral and, as it were, representative effort to say what most of those for whom they say it cannot see or, to do justice to reality, will not allow themselves to see. Direct communicability to everyone is not a criterion of truth.³⁷²

Society insists on control, the exercise of will, which in practice means work, the work ethic. Only love is supposed to be involuntary and spontaneous: the pure immediacy of feeling. Love and longing supposedly transcend society's demands and promises time off from work.³⁷³ But established as a principle, love's very involuntariness contributes to the whole and as such, the truth of the former is 'perverted' into the untruth of the latter.

'The love, however, which in the guise of unreflecting spontaneity and proud of its alleged integrity, relies exclusively on what it takes to be the voice of the heart, and runs away as soon as it no longer thinks it can hear that voice, is in this supreme independence precisely the tool of society. Passive without knowing it, it registers whatever numbers come out in the roulette of interests. In betraying the loved one it betrays itself. The fidelity exacted by society is a means to unfreedom, but only through fidelity can freedom achieve insubordination to society's command.'³⁷⁴

By holding fast to love, by finding strength to go beyond the immediate, beyond an immediacy which, according to the dialectic, is already mediated, sublimated, and preformed by society; to persist unto permanence, even obsession, to hold out against a sanctioned economic order that makes '[...] now this, now that person seem spontaneously attractive [...]', to resist in order for love to represent a better society; all this, '[...] demands precisely the element of voluntariness that the bourgeois, for whom love can never be

³⁷² "The Privilege of Experience," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 41.

³⁷³ Cf. "After Auschwitz," *Negative Dialectics*, 'People, of course, are spellbound without exception, and none of them are capable of love, which is why everyone feels loved too little,' p. 363.

³⁷⁴ "Constanze," *Minima Moralia*, p. 172.

natural enough, forbid it.³⁷⁵

In the above Adorno's difference from Hegel is manifest in the way the different 'truths' within society, partial truths that reflect different standpoints, remain unresolved. Hence the claim, the truth of the untrue whole is revealed through the tensions and fractures that permeate society.

Adorno's philosophy of the fragment and the particular is a philosophy of excess and the inconceivable totality.

'The contents of philosophical thinking are neither remnants after deducting space and time nor general findings about spatial temporal matter. Philosophical thinking crystallizes in the particular in that which is defined in space and time.'³⁷⁶

Immanent to the above is the experiential free spirit whose open thought attempts to consume the standpoint. Standing against this, epistemological exclusivity is a situation that would like to rig the standards of conclusiveness in advance. It seeks to extract from the object what it has already prepared in thought. 'In immediacy, the direct datum and the equally directly given forms are tailored so as to complement each other.'³⁷⁷

However what is indirect, the mediated object, is as much part of the subject-object dialectics as is immediacy.

'Unconsciously, so to speak, consciousness would have to immerse itself in the phenomena on which it takes a stand. [...] If thought really yielded to the object, if its attention were on the object, not on the category, the very objects would start talking under the lingering eye. [...] The interpretive eye that sees more in a phenomenon than it is—and sorely because of what it is—secularises metaphysics.'³⁷⁸

Hegel's absolute identity, the presupposition of a process whereby the subject yields to the object, the thing itself, contains a truth, which acts

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ "Compulsory Substantiveness," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 138.

³⁷⁷ "The Object not Datum," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 187.

against presumptive idealism. '[T]he object, the positive expression of nonidentity, is a terminological mask.'³⁷⁹ The subject does not create the object; instead, aided by the cognitive, it passively "looks on". The object's objective determination is the measure of this process.

'He who wants to know it must think more, not less, than the point of reference of the synthesis of diversity, which is the same at bottom, as not to think at all. And yet the thing itself is by no means a thought product. It is nonidentity through identity. Such nonidentity is not an "idea," but it is an adjunct. The experiencing subject strives to disappear in it. The truth would be its demise—a demise merely feigned, to the greater glory of the subject objectified in a scientific method, by the subtraction of all specific subjectivity in that method.'³⁸⁰

The object, as object of cognition, is understood epistemologically by way of a process of reduction.

For Adorno, the object takes precedence in ways that differ from the empiricist's account. 'Ever since the surface of life, the immediacy it makes available to people, has become ideology, naivety has reversed into its opposite; it has become the reflex of reified consciousness to a reified world.'³⁸¹ However, despite the sensualistic reduction of things to facile appearance, custom and habit, empiricism, through the sensory 'given', does register something of the objects preponderance. '[T]ied to the factitious character of immediacy and sceptical of the subject *qua* creator; in spite of everything, it [empiricism] remained rudimentarily 'realistic.'³⁸²

Supposedly freed by this process of abstraction from the ideology of the subject, empiricism, and all those who supposedly philosophise

³⁷⁸ "The Antinomial Character of Systems," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 27-28.

³⁷⁹ "Passage to Materialism," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 192.

³⁸⁰ "The Object not Datum," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 189.

³⁸¹ "Draft Introduction," *Aesthetic Dialectics*, p. 336.

³⁸² "The Object not Datum," *Negative Dialectic*, p. 187.

objectively, move the not-I ahead of the I.³⁸³ In a society moving towards total administration the not-I becomes the concrete other the purveyor of a categorical structure which if accepted uncritically as extant and absolute lends itself to the unreflective immediacy of method. Method, reduced to a set of axioms or formulas, is inherently subjectivistic. The subject presumes that, in all probability, aspects of the world are arranged in accordance with its own preferences and postulates of thought. When every possible perspective and interest is approached from the single viewpoint of the knowledgeable subject, then reason becomes instrumental and identity the subject of domination. Where the single aspect viewpoint is bureaucratic and instrumental the impression is given that '[...] to be is to be relative to other persons and things, and to be irrelevant in oneself.'³⁸⁴ Nonidentity thinking in this scenario is the means to engage a political critique against one-sided and repressive domination.

³⁸³ Cf. "Incapacitation of the Subject," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 67. 'In Heidegger's philosophy the fact is detoured but registered; in his hands that historical primacy becomes an ontological precedence of "Being" pure and simple over all ontical and real things.'

³⁸⁴ Cf. "Affirmative Character," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 65.

Chapter Four: Mimesis and Rationality.

'The sentimentality and debility of almost the whole tradition of aesthetic thought is that it has suppressed the dialectic of rationality and mimesis immanent to art. [...] The two points of view are actually complementary. [...] The survival of mimesis, the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other, defines art as a form of knowledge and to that extent as "rational." For that to which the mimetic comportment responds is the telos of knowledge, which art simultaneously blocks with its own categories. Art completes knowledge with what is excluded from knowledge and thereby once again impairs its character as knowledge, its univocity.'³⁸⁵
Theodor Adorno

In attempting to shed light on the constellation of concepts and practices that surround mimesis and rationality, we will turn to consider, amongst other things, the insights into the nature of these two concepts that unfold within the pages of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno and Horkheimer set out with the worthy aim of discovering, '[...] why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.'³⁸⁶

Casting a wary eye at the verification zeal of the traditional disciplines, the assertion and assumption of fixed judgments and definitions which arrest thought at a point determined by societal needs on the one hand; and on the other coupled with the mythical, the false clarity of irrational and compulsive language and thought, Adorno and Horkheimer were led to consider how their own organized control of mimesis, as the organized adaptation to others, could escape the entanglement of blind domination.

³⁸⁵ "Mimesis and Rationality," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 54.

³⁸⁶ "Introduction," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xi. Cf. "Great and Small," *Minima Moralia*, pp. 125-126. 'Philosophy retained the barbarism of immediate quantity as a legacy from its earlier alliance with administration and mathematicians: whatever does not bear the stamp of the world-historical bustle is handed over to the procedures of the positive sciences.'

‘The dilemma that faced us in our work proved to be the first phenomenon for investigation: the self destructive aspects of the Enlightenment.[...] In the enigmatic readiness of the technologically educated masses to fall under the sway of any despotism, in all its self-destructive affinity to popular paranoia, and in all uncomprehended absurdity, the weakness of the modern theoretical faculty is apparent. We believe these fragments will contribute to the health of that theoretical understanding; [...]’³⁸⁷

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be considered a genealogy of modern enlightened reason that seeks to demonstrate how the preponderance of a single aspect, instrumental rationality, has stained or left its mark upon all relations. The ideal of Enlightenment is a system, coherent and predicable, from which everything follows. Although the individual schools of thought might disagree on how they interpret the axioms they live by the rationalist and empiricist versions of Enlightenment are structurally the same in that, in advance, they recognize as being and occurrence only what can be apprehended in unity. In the progression towards unity the multiplicity of forms, the mythological that had prevailed from earlier times was reduced to the formal logic of a unified science.³⁸⁸

Formal logic provided the Enlightenment thinkers with a schema of the calculability of the world. Rationality is reproduced in the realization of the whole. At the same time the symbols of the new knowledge undertake a fetishistic function. Objectified and fixed the image or sign in its permanence and recurrence, reflects through its hierarchy and coercion not an expression of social solidarity but the established domination of the privileged. The particular individual is indebted to universals i.e. thought, even for the possibility of its existence. To that extent the individual is a

³⁸⁷ “Introduction,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xiii.

³⁸⁸ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 7.

societal relation and, alienated from the self, is thereby subjected to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements by the whole organization of society.

‘What is done to all by the few, always occurs as the subjection of individuals by the many: social repression always exhibit’s the mask of repression by a collective. It is this unity of collectivity and domination, and not direct social universality, solidarity, which is expressed in thought forms.’³⁸⁹

According to Adorno, and Horkheimer, ultimately what survives of the metaphysical after the Enlightenment consumed its symbols and their successors, universal concepts, is the abstract fear of the collective from which it arose.³⁹⁰

Knowledge, synonymous with power and theoretically available to everyone, has as its essence technology. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, technology does not work by concepts and images or fortunate insight. On the definition of substance and quality, activity and suffering, being and existence it is silent. Technology refers to method, the exploitation of others’ work, and capital. ‘A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself. It is the coercive nature of society alienated from itself.’³⁹¹ The achievement of the technological culture industry is standardization and mass production of a hierarchical range of products.

‘The culture industry as a whole has moulded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product. [...] The stereotyped appropriation of everything, even the inchoate, for the purposes of mechanical reproduction surpasses the rigor and general currency of any real style, [...]. Every detail is so firmly stamped with sameness that nothing can appear which is not marked at birth, or does not meet with approval at first sight.’³⁹²

³⁸⁹ “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 22.

³⁹⁰ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 23.

³⁹¹ “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 121. Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 4. ‘What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men. That is the only aim.’

³⁹² “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,

The formal procedure of classifying, organizing, and labelling consumers advances the rule of complete quantification. Culture monopolies are weak and dependent in comparison to the most powerful sectors of industry. Culture through the artwork as an expression of suffering and contradiction attempted to grasp the good life. Expression is dissonance the consonant and harmonious seek to eliminate it.

Enlightenment's dissolvent rationality presses for conformity, the rule of computation and utility, the triumph of factual mentality. Whatever does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, is deemed suspect, mere subjective projection, anthropomorphism, literature, or illusion. In terms of idealism in relation to identity the move towards formal logic represents a point of indifference between logical and psychological moments. 'The individual I is one I solely by virtue of the generality of the principle of numerical unity; the unity of consciousness itself is a form of reflection of the logical identity.'³⁹³ Imitation of anthropomorphized man is consciously contrived adaptation, in which the rationalized mode of apprehension awakens to a self that acknowledges power as the principle of all relations. Submitting to the occurrence of the self means ruthlessly extinguishing any trace of self-consciousness, every resistance encountered merely serves to increase the power of dissolvent rationality.

'Renunciation, the principle of bourgeois disillusionment, the outward schema for the intensification of sacrifice, is already present *in nuce* in that estimation of the ratio of forces which anticipates survival as so to speak dependent on the concession of one's own defeat, and, virtually, on death.'³⁹⁴

pp. 127-128.

³⁹³ "Noncontradictoriness not to be Hypostatized," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 142.

³⁹⁴ "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 57.

The struggle for survival is gained at the price of self-abasement and mortification of the instinct for happiness.

Coincidental with the disenchantment of the world and the extirpation of animism the myths which fell victim to the calculative and factual were its own product. 'Myth intended report, naming, the narration of the Beginning; but also presentation, confirmation, explanation: a tendency that grew stronger with the recording and collection of myths. Narrative became didactic at an early stage.'³⁹⁵ Myths are characterized by their discipline and power. Ritualised, the words of the myths became commands or magical influences creating or subjugating the world after the image of man.

Horkheimer and Adorno argue that in order to secure itself against the return of the mythical, enlightenment anticipates the identification of the wholly conceived and mathematized world with truth. In advance mathematical procedures are the ritual of a thinking objectified and automatic, a self-activating process that mimics the machine that will replace it. 'When in mathematical procedure the unknown becomes the unknown quantity of an equation, this marks it as the well-known even before any value is added.'³⁹⁶ Thought is turned into a fetish, a thing, an instrument for the principle of equivalence whereby the dissimilar is made comparable by being reduced to abstract quantities.

In the patriarchal climate of domination man knows things in so far as he can manipulate them: make them fit his own ends. With the arrival of the *logos* proper this becomes a question not of intent but relatedness.

³⁹⁵ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 8.

³⁹⁶ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24.

Everything unknown, alien, primary or undifferentiated in the intricacies of its nature transcends the limitations of experience and is named by the gasp of surprise that accompanies it. Originating in human fear the expression, the gasp or cry, marks the unknown in its relation to the known. Terror as sacredness equips the transcendence of expression by explanation with echoes of the real supremacy of nature in men: the separation of animate and inanimate. Thus are the first lines drawn between subject and object, concept and thing.³⁹⁷

In a radical reversal of the mythological, enlightenment compounds the animate with the inanimate. Its ultimate product, a universal taboo, seeks to secure the sovereignty of ideas. Everything is to be drawn into its compass, nothing is to remain outside because even the mere idea of an outside, an unknown, is a source of fear. The annihilation of fear through knowledge would be enlightenment's ultimate end.

‘In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy.’³⁹⁸

Art is not immune from this process. According to Adorno, art is a stage in the process of disenchantment. Entwined with technique, rationalization is the source of art's means and methods of production. Development, for example, is one of art's means, part of its autarchy. And yet the absorption and development of art alien techniques, external to art

³⁹⁷ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 15. ‘But this dialectic remains impotent to the extent that it develops from the cry of terror which is the duplication, the tautology, of terror itself.’

³⁹⁸ “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 3.

but originating in society, is not necessarily progressive in the sense of enlightenment universally opposed to domination. Art's blind economic tendency allows the perpetuating injustice to be measured. In the flight from necessity, in progress and civilization, mankind cannot hold the course without abandoning knowledge itself.³⁹⁹

Instrumental reason or subjective reason is concerned with the means to ends that are more or less taken for granted. Strategies for coping with nature and getting technology under control point to self-preservation. The more intense the concern with things the more those things come to dominate. Hence submerged people are cajoled and conditioned to imitate their superiors.

Blatant advertising or educational appeals that exhort them to the cultivation of personality are at once hypocritical and condescending. Celebrated ontologies that emphasize the value of the harmonious personality have an element of coldness about them. Within the macrocosm of the universe the microcosm of the personality is said to correspond to an immutable social and natural hierarchy. The positing of an infinite and immutable order implies a static view of history, one which precludes the hope of a progress emancipation of the subject from eternal childhood, in nature and in society. For this reason the transition from objective to subjective reason was historically unavoidable: a necessary process.⁴⁰⁰ Real history is the history of real suffering and this has not lessened in proportion to the growth of the means for its abrogation.

³⁹⁹ Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 40.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. M. Horkheimer, "Rise and Decline of the Individual," *Eclipse of Reason*, (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 87-90.

True revolutionary practice, emancipation of the subject, requires the intransigence of theory, a movement and a reorientation that flies in the face of the insensibility, the rationalisations and retrograde conclusions within which society allows thought to ossify.⁴⁰¹ Technique in the arts is mobilized and points in a diametrically opposite direction from Enlightenment's rationalist domination. 'Artworks do not repress; through expression they help to make present to consciousness the diffuse and elusive without, as psychoanalysis insists, "rationalisation."' ⁴⁰² Psychoanalysis furnishes concrete mediating links between the structure of artworks and the social structure.⁴⁰³

Enlightenment and art are not simply antithetical or mutually exclusive. According to Adorno, the ideology of cultural conservatism which claims Enlightenment and art are antitheses overlooks the moment of enlightenment in the genesis of beauty. Not merely content with dissolving all the qualities that beauty had traditionally adhered to, Enlightenment originally posits the quality of beauty.

'The disinterested pleasure that according to Kant is aroused by works of art, can only be understood by virtue of historical antitheses still at work in each aesthetic object. The thing disinterestedly contemplated pleases because it once claimed the utmost interest and thus precluded contemplation. The latter is a triumph of enlightened self-discipline.'⁴⁰⁴

Hegel excluded natural beauty from his account of the aesthetic. For Hegel things in nature are beautiful when they are viewed as art or as human products. Things are beautiful or have certain effects if they appear to

⁴⁰¹ Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 40-41

⁴⁰² "Mimesis and Rationality," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 55.

⁴⁰³ Cf. "Critique of the Psychoanalytic Theory of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁴ "Magic Flute," *Minima Moralia*, p. 224.

express something human and awaken our interest: For Hegel society constitutes natural beauty.⁴⁰⁵

The ideology and irrationality of those that insist on “rationalization” in artworks accuse irrational art of irrationalism for playing a trick on the praxis-orientated rules of reason and for failing to serve the needs of apparatchiks of every persuasion.⁴⁰⁶ And yet art-forms as the representation of Ideas depend on an audience not apparatchiks. Art’s highest claim to spirituality, today as from earliest times, brings chaos into order. As paintings, sculpture, etc, it translates the mute language of things into something higher. Similarly ‘[...] music rescues name as pure sound - but at the cost of severing it from things.’⁴⁰⁷

For Adorno, artworks participate in enlightenment because they do not lie. As they make no claims to the truth they have no need to feign the literalness of what speaks out of them.⁴⁰⁸ Artworks are magic-fetishes delivered from the lie of being truth.

Something of art’s magical heritage persists throughout art’s transformation. For Adorno the claim that art produces something magical, a sense of wonder, has a ring of truth about it. The rational aspects of art are strained to the utmost tension and threatened by the magical in art which

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. “The Range of Aesthetic Defined, and Some Objections against the Philosophy of Art Refuted,” *Hegel: Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (, England: Penguin, 1993) p. 4. ‘But the mind [spirit] and its artistic beauty, in being ‘higher’ as compared with nature, have a distinction which is not simply relative. Mind [spirit], and mind [spirit] only, is capable of truth, and comprehends in itself all that is, so that whatever is beautiful can only be really and truly beautiful as partaking in this higher element and as created thereby. In this sense the beauty of nature reveals itself as but a reflection of the beauty that belongs to the mind [spirit], as an imperfect, incomplete mode of being, as a mode whose really substantial element is contained in the mind [spirit] itself.’

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. “Mimesis and Rationality,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 55.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. “In nuce,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 222.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. “On the Relation of Art and Society,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 5.

refuses to speak in one voice and which secularized as the new is a qualification as old as art's concept and is just as unfilled.

'The survival of mimesis, the non-conceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other, defines art as a form of knowledge and to that extent as "rational." For that to which the mimetic comportment responds is the telos of knowledge, which art simultaneously blocks with its own categories. Art completes knowledge with what is excluded from knowledge and thereby once again impairs its character as knowledge, its univocity. Art threatens to be pulled apart because magic, which art secularizes, actually refuses this process, whilst in the midst of secularization the essence of magic sinks to the level of mythological vestige, to superstition.'⁴⁰⁹

Alienated from the known the unknown is made manifest in consciousness as anxiety in face of the enigma. The subjective reaction is secularized as discrimination: the process whereby mimetic elements in turn blend with rational ones. This provides a haven for the mimetic elements of knowledge, the elective affinity between knower and known.

The sentimental and traditional suppress the dialectic of mimesis and rationality immanent to art. The astonishment and chance like fatalism of the new is likened to a fire from heaven. Magical delusion places beyond doubt the striving after concordance. On the other hand the unreflected logic of the Enlightenment, after the manner of prosaic pragmatism, would have to discard the dialectic: 'Art must first prove its utility.'⁴¹⁰ Which in effect means duration—artworks are meant to endure. Aesthetic structures create a continuum that is totally spirit. However objectivation frees art from spiritual coercion, the goals of domination.

⁴⁰⁹ "Mimesis and Rationality," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 54. Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 19. 'The work of art still has something in common with enchantment: it posits its own, self-enclosed area, which is withdrawn from the context of profane existence, and in which special laws apply.'

⁴¹⁰ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 18. Cf. Plato. *Republic*. Book X.

‘The word for this process is discrimination. It contains the faculty of mimetic reaction as well as the logical organ for the relation of genus, species, and *differentia specifica*. In the process, the differentiating faculty keeps an accidental a character as does any undiminished individuality compared with the universal of its reason.’⁴¹¹

All artworks are enigmas to which immanent understanding remains a problematic category. According to Adorno, one does not understand art one understands something of it, something that does not extinguish the enigmaticalness of art.⁴¹²

It is against the background of an unleashed rationality that Adorno posits the dialectic of mimesis and rationality. Mimetic comportment, a distinct attitude towards reality, is seized in art by semblance which becomes its bearer: the complement to the autonomy of form. As the image of reconciliation mimetic comportment resists the reification of the antithesis of subject and object. Art works against itself. A coherence of meaning, unity, is contrived because it doesn't exist. Its semblance character negates the being-in-itself for the sake of which the organized meaning was undertaken: artifice. Those artworks that are a tour de force, speak to the equilibrium of the whole. In truth they achieve the impossible. ‘In uncovering the tour de force of an art work, the performance must find the point of in difference where the possibility of the impossibility is hidden.’⁴¹³

Within the non-coercive relation it is art's accidental and unintended object that predominates. The unfolding of art is a quid pro quo which not only neutralizes mimesis, but also derives from it.

Where reification is the artworks essential determination then

⁴¹¹ “Quality and individual,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 45.

⁴¹² Cf. “Enigmaticalness, Truth Content, Metaphysics,” *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 120-122.

⁴¹³ “Semblance, Meaning, and “tour de force,”” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 106.

expression ceases to be something immediate: alive. Expression is the archetypal and permeable juncture through which copies of non-aesthetic, fictive, and cultural experiences, refracted and transformed, reach most deeply into the artwork. Expression in artworks is a rebellious and dissonant dissatisfaction with the self and with semblance, which bound as it is to the consonant, harmonious and affirmative powers of society, excises the expression of suffering expression.

‘Expression and semblance are fundamentally antithetical. [...] Yet in that artworks as such remain semblance, the conflict between semblance—form in the broadest sense—and expression remains unresolved and fluctuates historically.’⁴¹⁴

The fruition of an artwork, the realization of all labour expended, arises from how it deals with these antinomies in the lineaments of its own possibility and quality.

Tending towards nonidentity the reconciled condition of a changed consciousness resists the subjugating impulse, the act of aggression of a dominating subject which would violently reduce uniqueness to essential principles by way of deification of exemplars.

The mimesis of artworks is their resemblance to themselves. Whether univocally or ambiguously, this law is posited by the initial act of each artwork; by virtue of its constitution each work is bound to it. It divides aesthetic from cultic images.⁴¹⁵

Therefore radical modern art is ideally progressive, not only in the techniques it has developed but in its truth content. And this remains the case in spite of the critique and summary verdict of the politically interested.

Existing artworks are more than mere existence through the eloquence

⁴¹⁴ “Expression and Dissonance,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 110.

⁴¹⁵ “Crisis of Semblance,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 104.

of their language.⁴¹⁶ Authentic artworks remain so even where they refuse any form of semblance, be it phantasmagorical illusion or auratic breath. The attempt to purge them of whatever contingent subjectivity might want to confer on them has the involuntary effect of more clearly delineating their own language. In artworks the term expression refers to this language.⁴¹⁷ Where this term has been technically employed longest and most emphatically i.e. in the "Classical" genre as against the "Romantic", it demands no particular emotional content and nothing is specifically expressed.

‘The expressive music of the West, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, assumed an expressiveness which the composer allotted to his musical structures in much the same way as the dramatist did to his theatrical figures, without the expressed emotions claiming to have immediate presence and reality within the work.’⁴¹⁸

As we cannot eliminate from dialectics what is experienced in consciousness as alien, we should recognize not only the unbroken and all too human slogans and forms that interject between the subject and the negatively coercive and heteronomous thing but also the congealed fragments of the subjugated.

Existing artworks draw their authority from reflections they compel towards their own non-existence. The non-existing that emerges suddenly in artworks is mediated to them through fragments of the existing assembled into an *apparition*. Artworks, being non-conceptual and non-judgemental, do not decide whether by existing the non-existing that appears is an exalted

⁴¹⁶ Cf. "Intuitability and Conceptuality," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 98. 'Precisely in its great and emphatic forms, music embodies complexes that can only be understood through what is sensuously not present, through memory or expectation, complexes that hold such categorical determinations embedded in their own structure.'

⁴¹⁷ Cf. "Crisis of Semblance," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 104.

expression, an appearance that enters history, or mere semblance. 'On the behalf of what cannot be exchanged, art must through its form bring the exchangeable to critical self consciousness.'⁴¹⁹ The artworks formal structure through which the content [inhalt] becomes eloquent is socially decisive.

The new as such must be interpreted and not just made to cohere in the false clarity of given.⁴²⁰ The new, not to be identified with reason has become the critique of omnipotent reason and thereafter for that reason, absurd. 'The darkness of the absurd is the old darkness of the new.'⁴²¹ This creates a zone of conflict between the new and ineluctable as it is problematic—duration. The new creates gaps in what would otherwise be seen as the authentic movement of the present which, legitimated by a congruent and convergent past, prescribes futures. The new is longing for the new. It must be something willed as other, however, it could not be what was willed. The new wants nonidentity and yet intention reduces it to identity. 'Only in the new does mimesis unite with rationality without regression.'⁴²² The musician who follows the minute impulses of a new score understands it and yet in a certain sense does not know what she plays. The situation is the same for the actor:

'[...] and precisely in this is the mimetic capacity made manifest most drastically in the praxis of artistic performance as the imitation of the dynamic curves of what is performed; it is the quintessence of understanding this side of the enigma.'⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ "Schoenberg's Criticism of Illusion and Play," *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 38.

⁴¹⁹ "The Nonexistent," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 83.

⁴²⁰ Cf. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 134. 'What is new about the phase of mass culture compared with the late liberal stage is the exclusion of the new. The machine rotates on the same spot. While determining consumption it excludes the untried as a risk.'

⁴²¹ "Second Reflection," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 27.

⁴²² "The New: Its Philosophy of History," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 20.

⁴²³ "Enigma, Script, Interpretation," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 125.

As soon as the performance regresses to the stage of mimicry, of just going through the motions, there is a hardening and coarsening that presents the enigma of the works as a grimace.

Where impulse can no longer find security in established forms or content, experimentation is the means to release the unforeseen.⁴²⁴ Through the loss of its expressive quality the artwork opens itself up to being for another and becomes eloquent in itself. This is the antithesis of art's mimetic consummation.⁴²⁵ Where what is consumed is the abstract being-for-other of cultural commodities then art's mimetic element is betrayed, bartered off as something which it is itself incompatible.⁴²⁶ With the withering of the sensuous moment, nothing remains but the reified social relations of the administered world.

The immediate and implicit object of inquiry, set in the language of Hegel's *Philosophical Anthropology*, is the Spirit in Nature or the soul.⁴²⁷ The restless Spirit is set to awaken phenomenally and teleological to a consciousness that sets itself up as Reason. Exemplified as the unified self, Reason thereafter sallies forth as a judging rationality, put on the path to an objectivity made real through social relation and social establishments. Through his command of language Hegel highlights a process, a movement of consciousness which, in accordance with his own philosophical ideals, comes down heavily in favour of what is rational and reasonable in the particular and universal. This rationalist tendency is reflected again in

⁴²⁴ Cf. "The New: Its Philosophy of History," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 23.

⁴²⁵ Cf. "Subject-Object," *Aesthetic Theory*, p.112.

⁴²⁶ Cf. "Deaestheticization of Art, Critique of the Culture Industry," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 17

⁴²⁷ Cf. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, Part 3 of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Millar (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1971) p. 25. § 387.

Hegel's aesthetic theory, which finds its content, in what are considered worthy subject matters: Subject matters that are to act like stepping stones on the path to the Hegelian Absolute.⁴²⁸ The union or rather lack of union with one unique individual is the primary concern. The aim is wholeness a sense of completion, an ideal set and reflected in cultural institutions.

‘Since the beginning of the bourgeois era, all great music has founded its sufficiency in the illusion that it has achieved an unbroken unity and justified through its own individuation the conventional universal legality to which it is subject.’⁴²⁹

The body socially and historically framed in unruly passions has been posited as standing outside the strictures of the mind. This is the root of an unsatisfactory separation rather than union. The spirit consoles itself against the separation through the endorsement not of heroic ideals but rules and regulations; stoic virtue and logistics; the numbing of all particular feeling and expression in favour of immediate intentions and universal forms. Dramatic music, drawn towards the ideal of immediate intentions and universal forms, is presented as stylised communication, as the representation of passions. Where claims for the music extend beyond this stylised representation it is usually done so in the name of substantial but non-specific emotions or relations of the soul: something logically inferred as immediate and direct. The claim to validation and ultimately its semblance rests on the totality of form, the control exercised over the

⁴²⁸ Cf. *Hegel: Introductory lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 76. ‘It has already been said that the content of art is the [Absolute] idea, and that its form lies in the plastic use of images accessible to sense. These two sides art has to reconcile into a full and united totality. The *first* attribution which this involves is the requirement that the content, which is to be offered to artistic representation, shall show itself to be in its nature worthy of such representation.’

⁴²⁹ T.W. Adorno, “Schoenberg's Criticism of Illusion and Play,” *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloster (United States of America: Continuum, 2003) p. 39.

musical characters and their correlation. For the sake of social comprehension and the objective spirit the heteronomous individual is ordained to invoke a mimetic taboo in its name.⁴³⁰

The composer Arnold Schoenberg in a *tour de force* crashed through the taboo, revolutionizing musical expression with a change of function.

'Passions are no longer simulated, but rather genuine emotions of the unconscious—of shock, of trauma—are registered without disguise through the medium of music. These emotions attack the taboos of form because these taboos subject such emotions to their own censure, rationalizing them and transforming them into images.'⁴³¹

The dissolution of one area of obscurity, art's foundation as the immediate self-certainty of unquestioningly accepted materials and forms, had the effect of relieving that suffering whereby the substance of intellectual conception is brought to consciousness. Conversely the all-powerful culture industry appropriating both the enlightening principle and the configurations of the deposed obscurity trumpets the triumph and the trophy, now the deposed opposition, to the furtherance of the prevailing style of the times. Despite the fact that the demise of a region of obscurity gives on to another, art vehemently opposes this tendency by opposing the false clarity of the world with its own *methexis* in darkness.⁴³²

According to Adorno, even great artists, such as Bach, who more or

⁴³⁰ Cf. "Elements of Anti-Semitism," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 181-182. 'In the bourgeois mode of production, the indelible mimetic heritage of all practical experience is consigned to oblivion. The pitiless prohibition of regression becomes mere fate; the denial is now so complete that it is no longer conscious. Those blinded by civilization experience their own tabooed mimetic features only in certain gestures and behaviour patterns which they encounter in others and which strike them as isolated remnants, as embarrassing rudimentary elements that survive in the rationalized environment.'

⁴³¹ "Schoenberg's Criticism of Illusion and Play," *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 39.

⁴³² Cf. "Intellectualism," *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 15. Cf. "Methexis in Darkness," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 134. 'Aesthetic experience is that of something that spirit may find neither in the world nor in itself; it is possibility promised by its impossibility. Art is the ever broken promise of happiness.'

less agree with the objectively valid zeitgeist find themselves as cultured individuals in permanent conflict with their administrations. In more recent times an artist as great as Pierre Boulez, one time director of the internationally renown Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) a man in step with the zeitgeist still finds himself in conflict not only with administration but also the totality of fragmented subjectivities that abound under the rubric of contemporary art.

'The creator's intuition alone is powerless to provide a comprehensive translation of musical invention. It is thus necessary for him to collaborate with the scientific research worker in order to envision the distant future, to imagine a less personal, and thus broader solutions. [...]Technology and the composer: collaboration between scientists and musicians [...]. Our grand design today [...] is to prepare the way for their integration and, through an increasingly pertinent dialogue, to reach a common language. [...]What is absolutely necessary is that we should move towards global, generalizable solutions.'⁴³³

As aesthetics fell out of fashion Boulez sensed the need for it all the more strongly. The critical self awareness of the artist, in order to move beyond the naïve, requires reflection on the convergence of the historical situation and contemporary artistic production. With his historicophilosophical theory of art Boulez is far from envisaging a normative aesthetics of the traditional sort.⁴³⁴ In all of this there appears to be an underlying presumption that the nature of music is sonic and therein supposedly lies its significance. The scientific attitude is a reflexive belief that maintains that the domain of scientific rationality is in principle universal in scope. This totalising claim equates knowledge with causal analysis. Its quantifiable law like processes,

⁴³³ Pierre Boulez, from IRCAM publicity 1976 and from Boulez (1977) quoted in publicity ca. 1981). As cited in, Georgina Born, "Introduction," *Rationalization and the Institutionalization of the musical Avant-Garde*, (United States of America: University of California Press, 1995) p. 1.

⁴³⁴ Cf. "The Need for Aesthetics," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 342.

subject to experimental manipulation, have become paradigmatic for all claims to rationality and theoretical knowledge. From this viewpoint all rival claimants to knowledge have been de-legitimated, vanquished.

‘In the fully administered world, the mimetic taboo—a keystone of bourgeois ontology—encroached on the zone that had been tolerantly reserved for mimesis, whereby it beneficially revealed human immediacy to be a lie.’⁴³⁵

Beyond the abstract negation of the subject the allergy to expression support’s a hatred of the now powerless subject. Music as the fetishism of material and process, on the one hand, and music as unfettered chance, on the other, both in a sense belong in the category of relief for the weakened ego. In their effect the extremes of absolute determinism and absolute chance coincide.

‘Hardly any harmonic tensions are created; hardly any complementary harmonies; hardly any monodic, much less polyphonic lines. This shrinkage is out of all proportion to the compositional expenditure of means and construction. It may have something to do with what one calls the preponderance of extras, of the extra musical [...].’⁴³⁶

The diminished and functional subject in compensation inflates itself by feigning a relevance which was withdrawn from it. Without this false-consciousness there would be no critique of the commodity world and no attempt to emancipate society from the dominance of its relations of production. But the attempt to establish the subject as real miscarried. In the somewhat profoundly legitimate allergy to expression the subject is abstractly negated. However expression is not simply the hubris or mendacity of the subject. By being spoken, distance is won from the trapped immediacy of suffering. Expression transforms suffering just as screaming

⁴³⁵ “Dialectic of Inwardness; Aporias of Expression,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 117.

⁴³⁶ “Difficulties,” *Essays on Music*, p. 659.

diminishes unbearable pain.⁴³⁷

According to Adorno, with the departure of any serious opposition scientific rationality felt free to rationalize social practices. In the process it became obsessed with calculation, standardization, impersonal rules and self discipline. The asceticism of cold calculating efficiency became the order of the day. As practices became more rational and orderly, the lives of individuals, and life itself, came to be seen as more and more meaningless: superfluous. As people became disconnected from the conceptual structures that had made them unique in each case, identical with themselves, so individuality became a way of affirming things in their isolation, collectivity, and fungibility.⁴³⁸ 'The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual: for individuality makes a mockery of the kind of society which would turn all individuals to the one collectivity.'⁴³⁹

The destruction of non-legislative narrative authority severed the affective links with individual experience in favour of an elitist and vocational rationality whose highest values, scientific truth and reason, being educationally unobtainable thereafter become vacuous and devalued. 'Stupidity is a scar.'⁴⁴⁰ A child's ceaseless questions are symptomatic of a hidden pain. Preliminary groping is easily thwarted when questions find no answers—not even how the first question is to be appropriately framed. According to Adorno, the scar, a calloused area of insensitivity, forms where the urge to know, or play, or cry, was stifled: thwarted instead of being

⁴³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ Cf. "How Sickly Seem all Growing Things," *Minima Moralia*, p. 71.

⁴³⁹ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 13.

encouraged. Good will gives way not through any lack of good will but because of flagging energy. Blind spots in the individual without even the indexical gesture of “look here” are stages devoid of hope. Such scars lead to deformities of fanaticism, spite, malice; the quiescence of blindness and impotence. However, scars can also build hard and able characters.⁴⁴¹

‘Direct expressions of hurt or damage are all too familiar: disillusionment, alienation, disaffection, boredom, despair, anger. The indirect expression of hurt in forms of flight from rationalization are more common, since they are precisely strategies for coping with and escaping hurt, and diverse in character: cynical adaptation to the demands of rationalized society; the redivinization of the world through the making of one fragment of modern life (a political creed, the practice of science) be the one, all-embracing meaning of the whole; a retreat into almost mystical “experientialism” as what, at the psychological level, rationalized society has eschewed (pursued most concretely in a dedication to eroticism or aestheticism); religious fundamentalism and the return of religion generally; obsessive consumerism and a commitment to lifestyle.’⁴⁴²

Dialectic of Enlightenment read in conjunction with *Minima Moralia* reveals that the norms of instrumental rationality compromise the institutions of society making them unavailable or unattractive as spheres of ethical practice. As a result, ‘[w]hat the philosophers once knew as life has become the sphere of private existence [...]’⁴⁴³

The fear of departing from the immanent myths of society and cliché-

⁴⁴⁰ “Notes and Drafts,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 257.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Ibid. Cf. “The New: Its Philosophy of History,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 21. ‘Art is modern art through mimesis of the hardened and alienated; only thereby, and not by refusal of a mute reality, does art become eloquent; this is why art no longer tolerates the innocuous.’ Cf. “Canon of Prohibitions,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 35. ‘Each and every important work of art leaves traces behind in its material and technique, and following them defines the modern as what needs to be done, which is contrary to having a nose for what is in the air. Critique makes this definition concrete. The traces to be found in the material and the technical procedures, from which every qualitatively new work takes its lead, are scars: They are the loci at which the preceding works misfired. By labouring on them, the new work turns against those that left these traces behind; this, not shifts in subjective feelings for life or in established styles, is the actual object of what historicism treated as the generational problem in art.’

⁴⁴² J.M. Bernstein. “Introduction,” *Adorno, Disenchantment and Ethics*, (The United States of America, Cambridge University Press: 2001) pp. 19-20.

ridden facts of the immediately given paralyses enlightenment thought. Thought's guilty conscience accrues through its acquiescence to and reliance on the everyday conceptual language of affirmation and opposition. Philosophy is cautioned to speak the truth by the same materialized consciousness that lament this very precision in the expressed meaning.

'A usage of current opinion makes such complaints comprehensible. We like to present alternatives to choose from to be marked True and False. The decisions of a bureaucracy are frequently reduced to Yes or No answers to drafts submitted to it [...].'⁴⁴⁴

Without the labour of conceptualization the technical apparatus and the social groups that administer it devalue individual economies. 'It is by way of concepts that art sets free its mimetic, non-conceptual layer.'⁴⁴⁵ Necessity compels philosophy to work with concepts but this should not be turned into the virtue of their priority. With that the individual disappears into the cultural nexus of judging rationality and social-actuality and in pursuit of particularized judgments as exemplars of the universal it becomes beholden to the dazzling truth of a false but necessary immediacy: necessary in the sense that all judgments, even negative ones, assert and assume something.

The positivity of thought restricted to the acquisition of singular facts that ultimately define an area of dissimulation, discerns in conceptual relationships something uncomfortable and useless and so, for the sake of self-preservation, positive thought holds fast to immediacy.

'Reflection, which in a healthy person breaks the power of immediacy, is never so compelling as the illusion which it dispels. As a negative, considered movement which is not directed in a straight line, it lacks the brutality inherent in positive movement.'⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ "Dedication," *Minima Moralia*, p. 15

⁴⁴⁴ "Vertiginousness," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁵ "Art Beauty," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 96.

⁴⁴⁶ "Elements of Anti-Semitism," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 195.

The tangents of the empirical world converge in the insight that the concrete, by being in some way distinct, can be identified, possessed, sold. This point of departure is markedly an inability to participate in the negativity of thought where in contradistinction to the formal legality of fixed judgements thought comes into its own taking steps beyond individual judgment.

To want substance in cognition is a utopian ideal that is blocked not by immediate reality but by the consciousness of possibility which even prior to figuration is rooted in the concrete. ‘The utmost distance alone would be proximity; philosophy is the prism in which its colour is caught.’⁴⁴⁷ “Utopia” —for Adorno an abstract and inextinguishable colour in the midst of extant things—comes from the Greek and means “not-place” or “that which is not”, to which its servant, existent thought, extends. Closed in on itself the self-preserving principle is the neurosis that thwarts the implicit better potentiality of men. That utopia might be obtained is a spatiality that spurs men beyond the false condition. The impulse to do right, non-identical although associated with a mythical mystical name i.e. “pure will” or “intelligible character”, is the concrete intermittent anticipation of the possibility that flares point like and briefly in consciousness. As something neither alien with regards to mankind nor identical with it, the impulse is not possessed and therefore not falsified.

According to Adorno, the separation of the moral, intelligible character from the empirical one is eons-old. ‘Negatively, it breaks through the subject’s painful perception that in their reality, in what became of them, all men are mutilated. What would be different, the unperverted essence, is

withheld from a language that bears the stigmata of existence [...].⁴⁴⁸ The elevation of interiority to the status of an immediate and implicit ideal sharply separates subject and object in the experience of remembering. Memory from the viewpoint of present subjectivity grasps the discrepancy between the subject's ideal image and the existent object.⁴⁴⁹ The identifying subject thereafter endeavours to block out external considerations and shut down the moment categorized as irrational, the manifold subaltern concerns of a false society. This moment, the addendum, would move beyond the reflexive beyond the block. The nonidentity which determines critique from within, after the criterion of identity, is at the same time that which it claims to be controlling—the moment of spontaneity. No critique can serve itself, be its own purpose wholly without outside knowledge '[...] without a moment of immediacy, if you will, a bonus from the subjective thought that looks beyond the dialectical structure.'⁴⁵⁰

Inwardly the block is made manifest in tendencies of stubborn or persistent egotism and thereafter neurosis, the projection of particular private interests as the prescription, often on pain of death, for the whole of society. 'Neuroses are pillars of society; they thwart the better potential of men, and thus the objectively better condition which men might bring about.'⁴⁵¹ Neuroses are a priori. They sally forth to interfere with the interests of

⁴⁴⁷ "Rhetoric," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁴⁸ "Truth Content of the Doctrine of Intelligibility," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 297.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Georg Lukács, "The Romanticism of Disillusionment," *The Theory of the Novel*, Trans. Anna Bostock, (Great Britain: The Merlin Press, Ltd, 1978), p. 114. 'The elevation of interiority to the status of a completely independent world is not only a psychological fact but also a decisive value judgement on reality; this self-sufficiency of the subjective self is its most desperate self-defence; it is the abandonment of any struggle to realise the soul in the outside world, a struggle which is seen as hopeless and merely humiliating.'

⁴⁵⁰ "Transcendental Illusion," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 182.

⁴⁵¹ "Truth Content of the Doctrine of Intelligibility," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 298.

others. With all the cunning of the unconscious at their disposal neuroses dam up and redirect the instincts of right action towards narcissistic self-gratification and hidebound self-preservation. Once they are transcribed, stamped on the world, neuroses relative to their origin appear as something estranged and thereafter are in some measure objective. The transcendental agreement is now coupled with the deadly seriousness of a comprehended truth. Polemical self-revelation is a thing that comes to be, not a thing that is. Within it denial is stylized as an end. Unmarred by meanness the part that is considered higher or more sublime is essentially a sense of inadequacy. Unable to change the causes of its humiliation the paralysed rational will is in the end the intelligible character. 'And yet, among men there is nothing better than that character—the possibility to be another than one is, even though all are locked up in their selves and thus locked away even from themselves.'⁴⁵²

Marked by neurosis the artist, anarchic, free floating and on a collision course with the reality principle, displays violent instincts. The enactment of antagonisms in the work, the antagonistic elements, the nonidentical, heterogeneous, and unformed that the artwork seeks to unify, although unity itself is only a partial element in an artworks, is the processual element that is enciphered in its objectivation. Objectivation is not sublimation. According to Adorno, artists do not sublimate: The most legitimate art is socially undesired. Artists neither satisfy nor repress their desires and [despite the psycho-analytic illusion] neither do they transform them into

⁴⁵² Ibid. Cf. "Truth Content of the Doctrine of Intelligibility," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 298. 'Weakness that will mistake itself for strength, if possible, is a hinge in the machinery of evil.'

socially desirable achievements. This outrages psychological normalcy which unbidden is established as the criterion of aesthetic quality.

‘According to the tone of psychoanalytic monographs, art should deal affirmatively with the negativity of experience. The negative element is held to be nothing more than the mark of that process of repression that obviously goes into the artwork.’⁴⁵³

This positivistic tone neglects the artworks own objectivity, its inner consistency, level of form, idea of truth, critical impulse, etc. In a theory more productive psychologically than aesthetically psychoanalysis considers artworks as essentially unconscious projections analogous to the dream. This is a positivistic overestimation. Projection is but one element one sort of impulse in the artwork and almost certainly not the definitive: idiom, material, the product itself, all play a part. The artist's lot is to be hysterically excessive, uninhibited. To sublimation and diminished reactions they oppose idiosyncrasies: the coarse, inane, indecent, and the like.

Despite insights into the workings of symbolism and the dream psychoanalysis, according to Adorno, lacks an adequate concept of expression. Expression is appearance measured by the reality principle it wishes to circumvent. Expression negates reality, not by substituting itself delusively and symptomatically for reality, but by holding up to it what is unlike it. The whole complex experience and movement is blocked by reality which denies direct communication with its object. Expression achieves an unfalsified manifestation of itself and the concomitant resistance to it in sensuous imitation. The strength of expression is that it survives modification into a mere image on its outward path.

According to Adorno, by interpolating images between itself and that

which it thinks consciousness, unwittingly or not, would be in the process of reproducing idealism. Within the praxis of representational thinking a body of ideas, authoritative, subjective and arbitrary would be substituted for the object of cognition. Representation [*Vorstellung*] is not a knowing, rather it is a limitation. Conforming to its "vision of things" it is the positing of an object before and for a subject of knowledge.⁴⁵⁴ Materialism concurs with the theological and endorses a secular ban on images: it is only with the absence of images that the full object could be conceived. 'Materialism brought that ban into secular form by not permitting Utopia to be positively pictured; this is the substance of its negativity.'⁴⁵⁵ The materialist longing to grasp the thing aims at the opposite of subjective arbitrariness. In the transverse of the concept materialism's great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh, something foreign to the idealism of the absolute spirit.

'The perspective vanishing point of historical materialism would be its self-sublimation, the spirit's liberation from the primacy of material needs in their state of fulfilment. Only if the physical urge were quenched would spirit be reconciled and would become that which it only promises while the spell of material conditions will not let it satisfy material needs.'⁴⁵⁶

Reality that is not given visually but functionally is an abstraction in itself.

Artworks are not being but a process of becoming. Their continuity is demanded teleologically by particular elements in need of it; enabled either by their incompleteness, or even insignificance. Art desires what has not yet been: a presence, presentation (*Darstellung*) an upsurge in the being-subject

⁴⁵³ "Critique of the Psychoanalytic Theory of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 8.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Becoming," *The Restlessness of the Negative*, trans. Jason Smith, Steven Miller (United States of America: University of Minneapolis) p. 11.

⁴⁵⁵ "Materialism Imageless," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 207

as such and consequently the negation of every and all given presence, be that of an "object" or of a "subject." It is as a result of their own constitution that artworks pass over into their other and find continuance in it. By pursuing its own identity with itself art assimilates itself with the nonidentical.

The self-preserving principle and acts are easier to rationalize than the addendum of the pure will: the instincts that spur men and women beyond the false condition. The addendum is the embodied will, the negative or sublimation of the will.⁴⁵⁷ The redirection of impulses to act into lines of thought is what makes the will substantial and unanimous. Rational insight in order to be in practice just that, "rational insight" must abstract itself from the demands of practice. In order to think through a new mode of conduct, a new orientation, theory requires a withdrawal from action. It is through just such a contemplative immersion that the processual quality of artworks is set free: moves in itself.⁴⁵⁸ Institutionalizing that withdrawal from action as itself a new mode of conduct codifies it as the rules for what is now a separate reflective activity.

Once the mode of conduct is established,

'[e]ach act of the will breaks through the mechanical autarky of logic; this is what makes theory and practice antithetical [...] if the motor form of reaction were liquidated altogether, if the hand no longer twitched, there would be no will.'⁴⁵⁹

Willing is the elaboration of motor reactions. Without a will there is no

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. "The Addendum," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 230. 'In the most profound concept of transcendental epistemology, the concept of productive imagination, the trace of the will invades the pure intellectual function. Once that has happened, spontaneity is curiously skipped in the will.'

consciousness but it is not as if the will were nothing else but consciousness. The genesis of pure consciousness [logic] is obscured by the machinations of idealistic identity. Reason that has genetically evolved from the force of human drives, as their differentiation, could hardly have done so without the kind of willing whose arbitrary nature is manifest in every thought act—‘the kind that furnishes our only reason to distinguish such an act from the subject’s passive, “receptive” moments [...].’⁴⁶⁰ Pure consciousness has come to be in the moment of the negation of the will. Logic sits in isolation and its subjective correlate, contemplation, is a conduct that wills nothing. The addendum is the name for that which was eliminated in the process of abstraction, the otherness of pure practical reason. In reality the elimination was incomplete.

‘The addendum is an impulse, the rudiment of a phase in which the dualism of extramental and intramental was not thoroughly consolidated yet, neither volitively bridgeable nor an ontological ultimate. This also affects the concept of the will that contains so-called “facts of consciousness” (which at the same time, purely descriptively, are more than such facts—this lies hidden in the will’s transition to practice). The impulse, intramental and somatic in one, drives beyond the conscious sphere to which it belongs just the same. With that impulse freedom extends to the realm of experience; this animates the concept of freedom as a state that would no more be blind nature than it would be oppressed nature. Its phantasm—which reason will not allow to be withered by any proof of causal interdependence—is the phantasm of reconciling nature and the mind.’⁴⁶¹

The division of mind and nature as expressed in folk psychology—the social actuality of self-understanding—is an abstraction that cannot be undone. The anxiety and difficulties that this produces cannot be overcome by immediate

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. “Aesthetic Experience is Processual,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 176.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ “The Addendum,” *Negative dialectics*, pp. 228-229.

theoretical fiat. For Adorno, the addendum figures as an ancient impulse, the promise of a reconciliation between mind and nature. 'It is a flash of light between the poles of something long past, something grown all but unrecognizable, and that which some day might come to be.'⁴⁶² This aspect of the addendum refers back to a point where the duality of mind and body had yet to be conceptualised, a point now uninhabited. The addendum is an X, a notion introduced to make intelligible the relation of will to consciousness. As Adorno's term for what is not strictly somatic nor purely mental the addendum is 'something physical which consciousness does not exhaust.'⁴⁶³ Working in both directions the addendum is a somatic addition to conscious understanding and a cognitive addition to physical reaction. As such it is a new imperative, a moral addendum, our practical abhorrence at physical agony.⁴⁶⁴ According to Adorno:

'Dealing discursively with it would be an outrage, for the new imperative gives us a bodily sensation of the moral addendum—bodily, because it is now the practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony to which individuals are exposed even with individuality about to vanish as a form of mental reflection. It is in the unvarnished materialistic motive only that morality survives.'⁴⁶⁵

According to Adorno, '[t]he unconscious innervations which, beyond thought processes, attune individual existence to historical rhythms, sense the approaching collectivising of the world.'⁴⁶⁶ The process of integration and absorption, which each individual must dread, is also felt to be

⁴⁶² "The Addendum," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 229.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. J. M. Bernstein, "After Auschwitz," *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 386.

13n. 'Abhorrence includes the sense of horror and disgust, where the notion of disgust has the sense of what cannot be taken in or incorporated. Thus a feeling of abhorrence has a sense of a response to something that sketches out a limit to our capacity for response; thus abhorrence is, precisely, the feeling attendant to a limiting condition; in this case the human as inhuman.'

⁴⁶⁵ "Metaphysic and Culture," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 365.

inevitable. The way by which integral society takes up the individual is less something positive more a process of crushing them into an amorphous malleable mass. As a kind of counter-irritant to the threatening collectivization the sensorium attempts to get in training for it, to try to outdo the danger by coaching oneself as a member of the mass. According to Adorno, this can be observed in the nervousness and restlessness that settles on everyone like a plague, in the reckless haste to join up, be in the swim of things in order not to miss the boat, the party, the warning bells, etc. The demand that everybody must have projects on the go all the time including one to extract the maximum from leisure makes the whole of life resemble a job, something relative to pecuniary gain or loss. However this resemblance only conceals a deeper fear. Production processes that are transferred to private life take with them not only a false-consciousness but also preparatory pseudo-activities.

‘Pseudo-activity is an insurance, the expression of a readiness for self-surrender, in which one senses the only guarantee of self-preservation. Security is glimpsed in adaptation to the utmost insecurity. It is seen as a license for flight that will take one somewhere else with the utmost speed.’⁴⁶⁷

Art's participation in and self-examination of collective and self-positing forms of thought combats the pathological and paranoiac consciousness. The language of artworks is not imprisoned in the spectrum or telos of a pre-established universality. The non-existing that emerges suddenly from the artworks is mediated to them by fragments of the existing. The assemblage is the fragmentary as appearance not as copy.

⁴⁶⁶ “Vandals,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 139.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid. Cf. “Suffering Physical,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 203. ‘Even the steps which society takes to exterminate itself are at the same time absurd acts of unleashed self-

Artworks are images as *apparition*. As something incommensurable to experience the image is permeated with the historical antagonism of subject and object, the ancient shudder which the world seeks to free itself through its demythologizing. The authority of the artwork is the reflection it compels through its *apparition*.⁴⁶⁸

‘Aesthetic images are no more translatable into concepts than they are “real”; there is no *imago* without the imaginary; their reality is their historical content, and the images themselves, including the historical images, are not to be hypostatized—Aesthetic images are not fixed, archaic invariants: Artworks become images in that the processes that have congealed in them as objectivity becomes eloquent.’⁴⁶⁹

The disintegrating materials and categories having lost their a priori self-evidence is a triumph of their being-for-other.⁴⁷⁰ In concordance with its own concept the broken and fragmented has no systematic argument straining towards the crescendo of the conclusion, there is to be no consoling fixed traditional linguistic and conceptual structures. Each fragment dances to its own intrinsic rhythm, follows its own hidden contours. ‘Philosophy condenses into experience so that it may have hope. But hope appears only in fragmented form.’⁴⁷¹ The fragment acts as its own centre of power and possibility. The fragmentation process is productive where it prohibits its own completion. To the law of form the fragment remains unrealised. Unexhausted in its partiality and possibility the fragment makes a reconcilable claim to an order beyond the present totality of fixed and formal structures. In the process the fragment, as the emancipation of form, defines and incorporates the alienated without the acquiescence demanded by a

preservation.’

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. “The Nonexistent,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 83.

⁴⁶⁹ “Art Beauty,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 85.

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. “Disintegration of the Material,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 16.

rationalized reason. Fragments that are recombined into a new dynamic generate their own sense of signification and disillusionment.⁴⁷² In this the fragment or series of fragments is concomitant with the impulse.⁴⁷³ As a newly prescribed textual or cultural reproduction of reason and power the fragment in its semblance and image character requires its own separate critical analysis.

In order to exist as a social reality a particular truth has to enter the ledger on the side of the universal.⁴⁷⁴ It is incumbent on artworks to grasp the universal, the ruling universality that dictates the nexus of the existing, in the particular. The particular becomes a conceptual power by being expressed. In concordance with the rationality of subjective means the universal in the particular is virtually pre-established. Language mediates the particular through universality, through the social and ethical. Its assimilation of the unutterable converges with a properly objectified and functional style of administering events.

The plain contradictoriness of answering to the challenge of uttering the unutterable, qualifies philosophy as dialectics even before it gets down to

⁴⁷¹ "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," *Prisms*, pp. 240-241.

⁴⁷² Cf. "On the Concept of Philosophy," *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 167. 'Each concept must be seen as a fragment of an inclusive truth in which it finds its meaning. It is precisely the building of truth out of such fragments that is philosophy's prime concern. There is no royal road to definition.'

⁴⁷³ Cf. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, Part 3 of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Millar (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) § 473A. 'Impulse must be distinguished from mere appetite. The latter belongs to self-consciousness [...] it is something single and seeks only what is single for a single, momentary satisfaction. Impulse, on the other hand, since it is a form of volitional intelligence [...] embraces a series of satisfactions, hence is a whole, a universal.'

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. "Particularity and the Particular," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 173. 'The unity of that which general concepts cover differs fundamentally from the conceptually defined particular. The concept of the particular is always its negation at the same time; it cuts short what the particular is and what nonetheless cannot be directly named, and it replaces this with identity. This negative, wrong, and yet simultaneously necessary moment is the stage of dialectics.'

the task at hand, which inevitably entails being entangled in individual contradictions: rendering the impossible possible. The work and goal of philosophical self-reflection is the insistent unravelling of the paradox.

‘Though doubtful as ever, a confidence that philosophy can make it after all—that the concept can transcend the concept, the preparatory and concluding element, and can thus reach the nonconceptual—is one of philosophy’s inalienable features and part of the naïveté that ails it.’⁴⁷⁵

Concept formation on the model of the subjective philosophy of immanence assumes a monadological structure: free will as the lawful unity of impulses, both spontaneous and rationally determined, within a causal framework of volitive acts. And yet the decision making power of this structure is contradicted by the invasion of countless moments of external reality: notably social reality.⁴⁷⁶

Art too exhibits this double character of immanence and social reality. Art’s character of pure immanence is the burden it must bear if it is to seek autarky, which at the same time threatens it with sterility. In-itself and for the sake of its own preservation art seeks to escape its own sphere. ‘For art is not only social by virtue of its own movement, as a priori opposition to heteronomous society.’⁴⁷⁷ Society itself, in its concrete form, is the immediate situation of art. The question of what is possible, of productive formal approaches is immediately determined by society. According to Adorno, the other, the in-itself of the work, easily turns demagogical and ideological. The distance by which art transcends mere existence collapses to the absolute nearness of absolute integration. Art’s escape from its own

⁴⁷⁵ “The Concern of Philosophy,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. “Pseudoproblems,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 212-213.

⁴⁷⁷ “Paralipomena,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 310.

domain of immanence carries anti-intellectual overtones. In the name of the people what mocks “artistic artists” or “art for art’s sake” ogles the barbaric. Art is bewitched by the semblance that is the ruling criterion of its being-for-other—the exchange relation that has been established as the measure of all things.

‘Insofar as art is constituted by subjective experience, social content penetrates to its core, though not literally, but rather in a modified, fragmentary and shadowy fashion. This, not psychology, is the true affinity of artworks to dreams.’⁴⁷⁸

In spite of its autarky and by means of it art seeks its other. What is external to its spell drives artwork beyond the fundamental determination of its identity with itself. The truth of artworks is not what they mean but what it is, what idea it is, that decides whether in itself the artwork is true or false. This truth of the work in-itself, the progressive self-unfolding *sui generis*, is commensurable and coincides, with regard to the idea, with the idea of philosophical truth. Philosophy and art converge in their truth content. The possibility for the convergence is to be sought in art’s element of universality, its specification as language. This universality is collective; philosophical universality points back to the collective subject. ‘However,’ according to Adorno:

‘In aesthetic images precisely that is collective that withdraws from the I: Society inheres in the truth content. The appearing, whereby the artwork far surpasses the mere subject, is the eruption of the subject’s collective essence.’⁴⁷⁹

The anticipation of a condition beyond the diremption of individual and collective, which every artwork seeks, is simultaneously the trace of memory in mimesis. The collective remembrance in artworks takes place

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

by way of the subject: it is not identical with the subject nor separated from it. It is in the subject's idiosyncratic impulses that the collective form of reaction becomes manifest.

'For this reason, too, the philosophical interpretation of the truth content must unswervingly construe the truth content in the particular. By virtue of this content's subjectively mimetic expressive element, artworks gain their objectivity; they are neither pure impulse nor its form, but rather the congealed process that transpires between them, and this process is social.'⁴⁸⁰

The autarky of the I is an abstraction which like the mythological Being has no ontological priority. I myself as subject, freely determine myself. On the subjective side dialectics subjectively thinks in a way that will no longer turn the thought form itself and its objects into immutable ones. Experience shows us that objects do not remain the same. The traditional guarantor of solidity and of the pre-designed unity underlying every identity, individual human consciousness, is unstable. Resignation that affirms self-abnegation as an instance of the self is spoilt by an obstinacy that turns the dissolution of the self into an inflexible stoic positing of the self. The attitude and semblance of total self-sufficiency becomes an Ur-image of defiance in self-abnegation. According to Adorno, the extreme confirmation of the self, abstract selfness, 'is that grinding of the teeth which says nothing but I, I, I,'⁴⁸¹ the counterpart of the nothingness that the self becomes in death. If identity no longer goes forth and becomes other to itself then it is no longer an identity of something it is nothing at all. This also applies to wholeness, as that which is constitutively preestablished over its

⁴⁷⁹ "Art and Philosophy; Collective Content of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. 125. Cf. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. 131. 'The subject is never so authentic for Heidegger as in that holding out in which it endures an extreme of

parts.

In remembrance of the past a person does create a kind of unity however unreal or elusive it might be. 'Yet the "I" which he remembers in this unreality, the I which he was at one time and potentially becomes again—this I turns simultaneously into another, into a stranger to be detachedly observed.'⁴⁸² The ambivalence of this identity and nonidentity extends into the logical problem of identity. The formula of "identity in nonidentity" would first have to be contrasted with the nonidentity in identity. According to Adorno, the test of the turn to nonidentity would be in its performance, if it remained declarative, it would be revoking, withdrawing itself.⁴⁸³

'In the unreconciled condition, nonidentity is experienced as negativity. From the negative, the subject withdraws into itself, and to the abundance of ways to react. Critical self-reflection alone will keep it from a constriction of this abundance, from building walls between itself and the object, from the supposition that its being-for-itself is an in-and-for-itself. The less identity can be assumed between subject and object, the more contradictory are the demands made upon the cognitive subject, upon its unfettered strength and candid self-reflection.'⁴⁸⁴

Anything that resembles a structure is flattened by the universal barter relation and the bigger institutional forms. Gestures become chaotic, hemmed in and deformed in their image.⁴⁸⁵ The problem remains that orientated towards the primary, the ur-text or the systematically fixed and closed in itself, the notional subject becomes ideological, a screen for the objective and functional identity of society which in its blindness to the

pain, following the example of the ego.'

⁴⁸² "Starting out from the Concept," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 154.

⁴⁸³ Cf. "Starting out from the Concept," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 155.

⁴⁸⁴ "Argument and Experience," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 31.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. "Ontology Prescribed," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 88.

prismatic is diminished, transfixed in a single glance.

According to Habermas, if Adorno and Horkheimer, '[...] do not want to renounce the effect of a final unmasking [of reason and power] and still want to *continue with critique*, they will have to leave at least one rational criterion intact for their explanation of the corruption of *all* rational criteria.'⁴⁸⁶ If Adorno and Horkheimer are to abide in the paradoxical ground then there must be a minimum plausibility in the claim that there is no way out—there is no overcoming the theoretical and performative contradiction of a determinate negation that resists the fusion of reason and power.

'Adorno's *Negative Dialectic* reads like a continuing explanation of why we have to circle about within this *performative contradiction* and indeed even remain; of why only the insistent relentless unfolding of this paradox opens up the prospect of that magically invoked "mindfulness of nature in the subject in whose fulfillment the unacknowledged truth of all culture lies hidden".⁴⁸⁷ Twenty-five years after the conclusion of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno remained faithful to its philosophical impulse and never deviated from the paradoxical structure of thinking as totalising critique.'⁴⁸⁸

For Kant, Enlightenment is, "[...] man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without the guidance of another person."⁴⁸⁹ Kant puts his faith in reason, reason is to be our guide out of immaturity. Freud was much more pessimistic. Beneath the adult struggle to be reasonable are archaic images

⁴⁸⁶ "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno," *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 126-127.

⁴⁸⁷ "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 40.

⁴⁸⁸ "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno," *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 119-120. Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24. 'The self-satisfaction of knowing in advance and the transfiguration of negativity into redemption are untrue forms of resistance against deception. The justness of the image is preserved in the faithful pursuit of its prohibition. This pursuit, "determinate negativity" does not receive from the sovereignty of the abstract concept any immunity against corrupting intuition, as does skepticism, to which both true and false are equally vain.'

⁴⁸⁹ I. Kant. "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" *Kants Werke* (Akademie-Ausgabe) Vol VIII, p. 35. As cited in, "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality." *Dialectic*

of what strength and power should be. Unable to forgo the narcissistic perfection of childhood the adult projects an ego ideal, the voice of the conscience, as a substitute for the childish narcissistic ideal. This narcissistic ideal is the product of repressions which in turn are the product of countless contingencies that never enter experience. The consequence of this is that experiences, thoughts and emotions, are channelled in very specific ways. This explains why the same person can be excessively kind in one scenario and blindingly cruel in another. People are always in danger of regressing to and mimicking these earlier stages in their development.⁴⁹⁰ In the constitution of the ego formed in resistance to mimicry, adaptation to nature becomes obdurate objectivizing behaviour.

The organized compulsion reproduced in individuals as rational self-preservation rebounds onto and threatens nature as social domination. The hierarchy of number and mathematical formulae are the most sublimated manifestation of mimicry. The power of instinctual, generational, and unconscious forces are sublimated as the *ratio* which science maintains as a archetype. Science endorses and preserves regularity by way of refined observations. Technology converts these mental processes, which like magical rites were once performed for survival purposes, into automation, blind examples of expediency and rote. 'With its triumph human statements become both controllable and inevitable.'⁴⁹¹

Individual spontaneity and development is marshalled by external

of Enlightenment. p. 81.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Trans. David McLintock (England: Penguin Books, 2002) p. 24. 'It is contended that much blame for our misery lies with what we call our civilization, and we should be far happier if we were to abandon it and revert to primitive conditions.'

forces which first embodied in the father later assumes different forms: schoolteacher, employer, government agent, etc. The societal forms of resistance coupled with the pressure of circumstance produce unbearable tensions in the nominally mature and experienced authorities who are called upon to set in motion a course of action that will alleviate the tension in themselves and others.

‘The process of civilization, whose agents are the teachers, aims not least of all at levelling everything. It tries to eradicate from the pupils that uncultivated nature that returns in suppressed form in the idiosyncrasies, speech mannerisms, symptoms of rigidity, tenseness, and awkwardness of the teachers. Those pupils rejoice who perceive in the teacher that against which they instinctively feel the entire painful process of education is waged. This indeed comprises a critique of the educational process itself which in our culture to this day has generally failed. This failure is attested in the double hierarchy that can be observed within the school: the official hierarchy founded on intellect, achievement, and grades, and a latent hierarchy, in which physical strength, “being a guy,” and certain practical abilities that are not honoured by the official hierarchy play their role.’⁴⁹²

All authoritarian figures manipulate and capitalize upon this state of ambivalence arresting thought at a point determined, in theory at least, by the needs of society as a whole. Where common interest still complies with the kingdom of ends, the determination and classification of societal processes, ‘Being is apprehended under the aspect of manufacture and administration.’⁴⁹³ The apprehension of images is pre-censored and governed according to the norm of the understanding. People are displayed as types. Their success or failure belongs to a logic or sense of Being which is nothing if not democratic.

⁴⁹¹ “Elements of Anti-Semitism.” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. p. 181.

⁴⁹² “Taboos on the Teaching Vocation,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*. p. 177.

⁴⁹³ “Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 84.

According to Nietzsche, it hardly seems to matter how rational or how stupid, the whole as moral custom takes precedence over the individual and whether willingly or grudgingly to do good means to do what is customary.⁴⁹⁴ Bataille makes the observation that to transgress the customary is taboo and even though the taboo is maintained by acts of violence, it ostensibly serves to eliminate violence from society. Bataille also recognized that the taboo intensifies the desire for the transgression that keeps the taboo in place.⁴⁹⁵ The shift in the Christian commandment from “thou shall no kill” to “thou shall not murder” is an expression of how violence is integrated into the social milieu as a norm.

‘The conception of unfettered activity, of uninterrupted procreation, of chubby insatiability, of freedom as frantic bustle, feeds on the bourgeois concept of nature that has always served solely to proclaim social violence as unchangeable, as a piece of healthy eternity.’⁴⁹⁶

Hostility to qualitative difference coupled with the demands for an integrated totality dominated by quantification lends itself to the naïve supposition of an unambiguous development in one direction only: towards increased production. ‘It is not man’s lapse into luxurious indolence that is to be feared, but the savage spread of the social under the mask of universal nature, the collective as a blind fury of activity.’⁴⁹⁷

In art it is not the savage dynamism of commodity production that is

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. F. Nietzsche, “On the History of Moral Sensation,” *Human, all too Human*, trans. R.J Hollingdale, (The United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 51. ‘He is called “good” who does what is customary as if by nature, as a result of long inheritance, that is to say easily and gladly, and this is so whatever what is customary may be (exacts revenge, for example, when exacting revenge is part of good custom, as it was with the ancient Greeks).’

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. G. Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood, (Great Britain: Marion Boyars, 1994) p. 69. ‘Man must combat his natural impulse to violence. This signifies an acceptance of violence at the deepest level, not an abrupt break with it; the feeling responsible for the rejection of violence is kept going in the background by this acceptance.’

⁴⁹⁶ “*Sur L’Eau*,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 156.

the most human it is the artist's own idiosyncrasies. By being prohibited idiosyncrasies become objectively binding and so the particular is literally the universal. The necessity for reflection in art means being conscious of and articulating the particular idiosyncrasies of the artist. Art that preserves its distance from the immediacy of life retains its autonomy but pays for this in its renunciation of communication.

‘Thinking men and artists have not infrequently described a sense of being not quite there, of not playing along, a feeling as if they were not themselves at all, but a kind of spectator. [...] The inhuman part of it, the ability to keep ones distance as a spectator and to rise above things, is in the final analysis the human part, the very part resisted by ideologists.’⁴⁹⁸

By its absolute liberation from the universal the particular is rendered universal through the obtaining principle and polemical relation existing between universal and particular. A relation the mind will in its surety and objective immediacy raise above the particular, cleansing it of all that resists its own concept. The concept of the particular is always its negation, its cuts short what the particular is and what cannot be directly named replacing this with identity. ‘Today immediacy of aesthetic comportment is exclusively an immediate relationship to the universally mediated.’⁴⁹⁹ The dialectic of universal and particular does not eliminate their difference. The particular is inhabited by that sense of abhorrence, sense of disgust, at what cannot be incorporated.

In order to reach out to touch what both fascinates and disgusts its sense of taste the fine aesthetic sensibility would have to overcome its own hostility and taboos on expression. The repugnance for all artistic

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ “After Auschwitz,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 363.

subjectivism, expressions of exaltation, because of their historical lack of taste and tact is an immediate impulse, historically determined by the same delicacy of late bourgeois organization as that against which the cultivated taste rebels.

‘Taste is the most accurate seismograph of historical experience. Unlike almost all other faculties, it is even able to register its own behaviour. Reacting against itself, it recognizes its own lack of taste. Artists who repel or shock, spokesman of unbridled cruelty, are governed, in their idiosyncrasy, by taste; the cultivation of a fine sensibility, the domain of nervous neo-romantics, is as patently coarse and unfeeling, even to its protagonists, as in Rilke’s line: ‘For poverty’s a great glow from within [...]’⁵⁰⁰

Erotic pathos is just as intolerable for the fine aesthetic sensibility as any self-righteous aesthetic and therefore it too joins the list of prohibitions.

‘In art since Expressionism the prostitute has become a key figure, though in reality she is dying out, since it is only by portrayal of figures devoid of shame that sex can now be handled without aesthetic embarrassment.’⁵⁰¹

The purely inhuman is alone in being the worthy subject for art’s transgression.

Dialectically what now seems alien are those mimetic features, gestures and behaviours tabooed by the experience of civilization. The infectious gestures of direct contact, touch, soothing, coaxing, etc, have an old fashioned feel, as does the other side of the same social condition, the howling voice, the yell ‘as cold as business’ that seeks to influence by flattery, threat and entreaty.⁵⁰² When we do encounter these gestures in others there is a tendency to mistake them for unconscious power relations, undisciplined mimicry, or passed down generational remnants. And yet

⁴⁹⁹ “Art in the Industrial Age,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 219.

⁵⁰⁰ “Damper and Drum,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 145

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

coldness is the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity.⁵⁰³ The tabooed impulses are therefore seen as embarrassing, rudimentary and isolated remnants. Along with regression the pitiless prohibition of the mimetic heritage and of all practical experience is first denied and then, along with the denial, consigned to oblivion.⁵⁰⁴

For those hardened souls that conform in their reactions to social reality, the power relations of the external world, the immediacy and formless familiarity of the intimate sphere violates their imponderable auratic individuality. Undiminished nearness as a denial of strangeness and humanity virtually negates the particular individual. Slackness and lack of tact in the intimate sphere, the “being cruel to be kind”, becomes a pretext for violence, coldness, and incorporation of the other into the inventory of property. Despite claims to the contrary intimacies estrange and this becomes the subject of critical scrutiny.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 181-182.

⁵⁰³ Cf. “After Auschwitz,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 363. ‘His mere survival calls for the coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz; this is the drastic guilt of him who was spared.’

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ “Just hear, how bad he was,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 182. ‘Only by recognition of distance in our neighbour is strangeness alleviated: accepted into consciousness. [...] Wherever immediateness posits and entrenches itself, the bad mediateness of society is insidiously asserted. The cause of immediacy is now espoused only by the most circumspect reflection. This is tested on the smallest scale.’

Chapter Five: Reflection/Reflexion.

*"What is, is more than it is. This "more" is not imposed upon it but remain immanent to it, as that which has been pushed out if. In that sense, the nonidentical would be the thing's own identity against its identifying, stabilizing procedures. The innermost core of the object proves to be simultaneously extraneous to it, the phenomenon of its exclusion, the reflex of an identifying, stabilizing procedure. This is where insistent thinking leads us in regard to the individual: to his essence rather than to the universal he is said represent. Communication with others crystallizes in the individual for whose existence they serve as media."*⁵⁰⁶

Theodor W Adorno

The perennial paradox of art comes to fruition in the idea that spontaneous reactions are genuine, equated with the true. However, undeviating self-reflection shows us that, even in childhood, the impulses reflected upon are not quite "genuine" and always contain an element of wilful imitation, play, or of wanting to be different. Art's own comportment and formal language reacts spontaneously to the objective situation thereby making itself equal to high industrialism—the extant force and relations of production. Modern art is critical where the most progressive and differentiated technical procedures are saturated with concomitant social experiences.⁵⁰⁷

According to Adorno, the here and now of spontaneous experience has long since been stripped of its power by corporate interests and for that reason spontaneity as the development of an ever diminishing number of technical faculties is to be mistrusted. The conception of an ultimate and absolute substantiality of the individual spontaneous self fell victim to an illusion of authenticity: one which protects the established order.⁵⁰⁸ An example of this can be seen in Kant's deteriorating declamations on morality

⁵⁰⁶ "Individuality not the Ultimate Either," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 161-162.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. "Modern Art and Industrial Production," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 33.

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. "Gold Assay," *Minima Moralia*, pp. 152-153

and the freedom of the will. Kant contrasted the idea of freedom with the object of research of the individual sciences, particularly psychology. By banishing the latter's object of research to the realm of unfreedom Kant manages to assign the positive sciences a place below speculation.⁵⁰⁹

This antithesis has been exacerbated to the extreme. 'The sciences paid the price in narrow mindedness, and philosophy in noncommittal vacuity.'⁵¹⁰ Protocol statements, data collection, the solidified reactive modes and individual reactions of the behaviourist's canon are an ideology that relieves consciousness of what runs counter to its outward situation. 'No note is taken of the fact that what has been solidified brings forth new qualities, qualities distinct from the reflexes from which it may have arisen.'⁵¹¹ The quantifying method, whose primacy acquiesces in so-called preliminary questions and reflections on instrumentation and what might be cognoscible, secures itself as a basic science and retains the conception that whatever is can be reduced to the general constitution of knowledge. This reflection leaves knowledge indifferent, its substance untouched.⁵¹² 'The equality of their quantifying method leaves no room for the evolving otherness than does the spell of fate.'⁵¹³ In such a climate, talk of free will or freedom would be concept fetishism.

According to Adorno, the integration of society is the cause of the indifference to talk of freedom as well as the thing itself. To speak of

⁵⁰⁹ "A Split in the Concern with Freedom," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 214.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ "Freedom, Determinism, Identity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 216.

⁵¹² Cf. "The Disappointed Need," *Negative Theory*, p. 72. 'The first formula to express this was Kant's famous line that the "transcendental Idealist" is an "empirical realist.' Cf. "Paralogisms of Pure Reason (A)," *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 347. 'The transcendental idealist is, therefore, an empirical realist, and allows to matter, as appearance, a reality which does not permit of being inferred, but is immediately perceived.'

freedom, especially where it lends itself a bombastic tone causes alarm in the subject. It raises the fear that freedom would leave the subject unprotected and paralyse the interests already provided for, interests to which they have become accustomed.⁵¹⁴

Objectification of the dialectic of human reflexes with regards to character and will, a process which entails being for reflex or against reflex according to context, embodies the principle of dominion: the identity of self and its alienation.

‘Identity, the condition of freedom, is immediately and simultaneously the principle of determinism. There is a will insofar as a man objectified himself into a character. Towards himself—whatever that may be—he thus becomes something external, after the model of the outward world of things that is subjected to causality.’⁵¹⁵

The positivistic concept of “reaction” presupposes a passive dependence on each situation. Descriptive in intent the ideology of adjustment denies the interaction of subject and object thereby excluding by its method what fails to follow the world’s course. The dogma of rationalism requires an external authority such as the authority of an impersonal objective reason. To qualify as a rational being one is thereafter supposed to dutifully acquiesce with its laws or rules. The doctrine of equivalence of action and reaction asserts the principle of immanence: the explanation of every event as repetition.

According to Adorno, the concepts of subject and object, or rather what they refer to, by resisting all definitions have a certain priority if not a little vagueness. The separation of subject and object is both real and semblance. It is real in the sense that in the realm of cognition the separation

⁵¹³ “Freedom, Determinism, Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 216.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ “Freedom, Determinism, Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 217.

gives expression to the rivenness of the human condition—semblance where the separation, the result of coercive historical processes, is hypostatized into an invariant.

Separation without mediation becomes ideology. ‘Semblance is the magical transformation of the subject into the ground of its own determination, its positing as true being.’⁵¹⁶ Where the subject claims independence it forgets how much it is object itself. Under the levelling domination of abstraction subject and object posit the principal of immanence. ‘Representation is exchanged for the fungible—universal interchangeability.’⁵¹⁷ Subjectively, by way of rigidly applied categories, description captures something objective, truncating what the thing might be in itself for the sake of conceptual manageability.

The separation of subject and object, the alienation that is imparted to epistemology is also divulged in the dialectic of forces and reciprocal relations of will and consciousness. Where will takes a consciousness and correlatively consciousness takes a will there is an eventuality that transcends and calls for more than conditioned reflexes. Self-preservation in preparing for what it will eventually transcend emulates the biological individual's prescription of the form of the reflex. ‘The strengthening moment is the self of self-preservation; it is to this that freedom opens as the difference that has evolved between the self and the reflexes.’⁵¹⁸

As participation in the social bustle, spontaneous expression infers an

⁵¹⁶ “On Subject and Object,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 251.

⁵¹⁷ “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 10.

⁵¹⁸ “On Subject and Object,” *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 251.

ability to yield to the superior power of the existent.⁵¹⁹ It is the tacit acceptance of the given or preformed: the power that happens to be recognized at the moment.

‘How lovely!’ becomes an excuse for an existence outrageously unlovely, and there is to be no beauty or consolation except the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better.’⁵²⁰

Unreflective thought, the pre-determined non-thought of the received idea travels the line of least resistance. Spontaneity is reduced to replaceable, exchangeable dispositions which precisely annul thought of its necessity. The cultural bustle which endangers concentration with its myriad claims on our attention, coupled with categorical demands and the pressures of conformity, diminish the demands that individuals make on themselves. Relevance is now determined by organizational considerations, topicality by the prevailing objective tendency. The effort required to produce something worthwhile is now so great it is hardly worth the bother.⁵²¹ Much easier to “be in the swim”, “to go with the flow.”

‘Thinking subjectivity, however, is precisely what cannot be fitted into a set of tasks imposed heteronomously from above: it is adequate to them only in the sense that it is no part of them, so that its existence is a pre-condition of any objectively binding truth.’⁵²²

The dominant are both adaptive and compliant and affirm in their coarseness, insensitivity and violence the pre-condition of all power:

⁵¹⁹ Cf. “Aldous Huxley and Utopia,” *Prisms*, p. 102. ‘Mind, the spontaneous and autonomous synthesis achieved by consciousness, is possible only to the extent to which it is confronted by a sphere outside its grasp, something not categorically predetermined—‘nature’.

⁵²⁰ “How nice of you, Doctor,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 25. Cf. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. 20. ‘A landscape becomes uglier when an admirer disrupts it with the words “how beautiful.” The same happens to customs, habits, institutions which barter themselves away by stressing their own naïveté instead of by changing it.’

⁵²¹ “If knaves should tempt you,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 29.

⁵²² “Great and Small,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 126.

Oppression. Domination finds its root in the oppressed. Oppression is the recognition of an existent power to which the domineering adapts.⁵²³ This is a fatality which resistance has to clarify.

The principle of dominion which antagonistically rends human society is as coercion the general element of un-freedom whereby society prolongs its existence. Coercion is inherent in all philosophy, even that which intends freedom. It is manifest in the difference between philosophical conception and performance, the accounting of its method and its execution.

Immanent to our thinking the coercive character is the medium of deliverance of critical knowledge. As freedom to the object has yet to be achieved the divergence between dialectic as a method and substantial dialectics continues. As the method can only be legitimised in execution this situation would end in the performance rather than in the accounting of the philosophical ideal: substantive dialectics. But in reality the execution the act, would deny the method, by showing the insufficiency of that method. This cannot be rectified by a surplus of method.

The remnant left after the divergence of conception and execution denotes some excess or nonidentity that allows for the fact that the method fails to quite absorb the contents. This necessarily gives precedence to the matter. To be in or part of the matter and not always beyond it means to penetrate the immanent content of the matter.

The reason why to talk of freedom seems obsolete and unrealisable is that it is conceived in just such an abstract and subjective manner. In such a form it is easily overcome by objective and integrative social trends.

⁵²³ Cf. "How nice of you, Doctor," *Minima Moralia*, p. 26.

Where interests are being provided for, subjects find what happens to them to be irresistible.⁵²⁴

‘Pleasure always means not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown. Basically it is helpless. It is flight; not, as is asserted, flight from a wretched reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance. The liberation which amusement promises is freedom from thought and from negation.’⁵²⁵

The little pleasures of life, those seemingly innocuous expressions that exempt themselves from thought have a callous silliness about them, a defiant disregard that serves their diametrical opposite. Every spontaneous expression, every casual and amiable remark contributes to the silencing of the negativity of life. Rubbing along in the spirit of a warmed up egalitarianism is condescending, an insulation from the totality of social processes. An unalleviated consciousness of negativity means holding fast to the possibility of what is better. ‘It is the sufferings of men that should be shared: the smallest step towards their pleasures is one towards the hardening of their pains.’⁵²⁶

The various elements or factors that make up society gather around themselves a plurality of theories, with concomitant theorists, each with their own particular take on the complex relations that exist between the universalistic society and particular individuals. However, at the back of the relation there remains an ever present dark foreboding, an event horizon in memory, where the restless spirit progresses around a point of pain.

According to Nietzsche,

‘When man decided he had to make a memory for himself, it never

⁵²⁴ Cf. “Freedom, Determinism, Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 216.

⁵²⁵ “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment and Mass Deception,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 144.

⁵²⁶ “How nice of you, Doctor,” *Minima Moralia*, p. 26.

happened without blood, torments and sacrifices: the most horrifying sacrifices and forfeits (the sacrifice of the first born belongs here), the most disgusting mutilations (for example, castration), the cruellest rituals of all religious cults (and all religions are, at their most fundamental, systems of cruelty) - all this has its origin in that particular instinct which discovered that pain was the most powerful aid to mnemonics.⁵²⁷

In order to aid the survival of the good and impose discipline terror is installed as a threat, which as a pledge and the promise of a specific undertaking is the dark basis of all dominion.

Rationality as a means of domination does not mean that reason is dominating what people do. Rationality that compels obedience fulfils and preserves the interests of those authorities controlling the media of domination, the enabling tools and means of expression.⁵²⁸ Authorities have the capacity to inspire fear because they have the power to annul consciousness. In English the root of the word, *authority*, is, *Author*, the connotation is that authority involves something productive. Assurance, superior judgement, the ability to impose discipline, inspire fear, awe, embarrassment, etc.; these are characteristics of authority which, generally, is an attempt to control the frames of reference that give meaning to life.⁵²⁹

Experiences are meaningful where they are grasped reflectively. Meaning

⁵²⁷ F. Nietzsche, "Second Essay: 'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience' and Related Matters," *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe, Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, (The United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 41.

⁵²⁸ Cf. K. Marx & F. Engels. *The German Ideology*, Ed. C.J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985) p. 64. 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.'

⁵²⁹ Cf. R. Sennett, *Authority*, (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Limited, 1980) pp. 16-27. Cf. "Novissimum organum." *Minima Moralia*. pp. 228-229. 'As a general principle the individual is not merely the biological basis, but the reflection of the social process; his consciousness of himself as in-itself is the illusion needed to raise his level of performance, whereas in fact the individuated function in the modern economy as mere agents of the law of value.'

emerges from the way the subject regards its experience. What is valued in experience is determined by authority, by production, authorship, a relation and a process from which dialectics is not excluded.

According to Adorno, dialectics interprets every image as text. In this process, of determinate negation, the image is deprived of its power and appropriated for truth.⁵³⁰ Subjective experience contributes images that are collective and therefore are not images of something they are rather the experiential content [Erfahrungsgehalt] that constitutes every language. The eloquence of language, its collective substance, originates in this image character. It is by virtue of this experiential content, not in the objective forming and fixation that artworks diverge from empirical reality. Artworks are *empiria* through empirical deformation⁵³¹

Images are material, we work with them, ensnare them. They are something that confronts us and the memories of that which we were previously confronted with. Images that have come to belong to the motivational set of a rationalized reason are thoroughly mediated—a complex process involving education, training, experience, imagination, reflection. Collective identification characterized as false-consciousness belongs to those individuals who, immersed or immured in the images they equate with their own self-image, believe them to be at one with the whole as a result of direct cognition. Within false consciousness the actual social situation the level and degree of conscious mediation is hidden from the individual.

‘The more the whole divest itself of all spontaneous elements, is

⁵³⁰ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24.

⁵³¹ Cf. “Image Content is Collective,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 86.

socially mediated and filtered, is 'consciousness', the more it becomes 'culture'. In addition to being the means of subsistence, the material process of production finally unveils itself as that which it always was, from its origins in the exchange-relationship as the false consciousness which the two contracting parties have of each other: ideology. Inversely, however, consciousness becomes at the same time increasingly a mere transitional moment in the functioning of the whole. Today, ideology means society as appearance. Although mediated by the totality behind which stands the rule of partiality, ideology is not simply reducible to a partial interest. It is, as it were, equally near the centre in all its pieces.⁵³²

'Conflict concentrates past and future in the present'—real desperation expresses itself in silence, mute witness to the fact that there is nothing more to be recounted, that all we can do is recognize the horror for what it is.⁵³³ For mass culture conflict is paradoxical. On the one hand it cannot tolerate conflict, it disrupts the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, on the other, a degree of conflict because of the various ways it collapses time into the present can facilitate the smooth running of the system's control mechanisms. Condemned but immovable the invariant frames of reference 'are made in the image of an omnipresent terror, of the dizziness that overcomes a society threatened by total destruction.'⁵³⁴ The more a-historical and preordained its procedures are the less temporal relations become a problem, they are simply excluded.

A degree of conflict helps bind more of the external temporal relation into a dialectical unity of temporal moments. In order to stop conflict from exploding the temporal continuum its relevance as an item of reality is determined by its relation to the latest *imago* to be distributed. Events are mediated through fragments of the existing into an apparition which

⁵³² "Cultural Criticism and Society," *Prisms*, pp. 31-32.

⁵³³ Cf. "The Schema of Mass Culture," *The Culture Industry*, p. 74.

⁵³⁴ "The Wrong Need," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 93.

illuminates and touches.

‘In art something momentary transcends; objectivation makes the artwork into an instant. [...] If, as images, artworks are the persistence of the transient, they are concentrated in appearance as something momentary. To experience art means to become conscious of its immanent process at a standstill [...].’⁵³⁵

The aesthetic image is both the paradoxical the attempt to transfix this most fleeting instant and a protest against nature's fear that it will dissipate into the chaotic.⁵³⁶

The decisive aspects of reality elude representation through the aesthetic *imago*. This is because the way it maintains its monopolistic hold on culture forbids anything that cannot be grasped immediately.⁵³⁷ This is the source of the glaring contradiction between the culture industries' elegant, technical and modish presentation on the one hand, and the culturally derived and decayed content on the other. The reality of the appearing historical content renews the sense antagonism at the aesthetic levels for the fixed and unreal *imago*.

The aesthetic image escapes the mythical by subordinating itself to its own unreality. This is the meaning of its law of form. Artworks distance themselves from the empirical by becoming appearance and by becoming more than they are. This more is the sense of spirit pertaining to artworks⁵³⁸ and objects in general.

‘What is, is more than it is. This “more” is not imposed upon it but remains immanent to it, as that which has been pushed out of it. In this sense, the non-identical would be the thing's own identity against its identifications. The innermost core of the object proves to be simultaneously extraneous to it, the phenomena of its seclusion, the

⁵³⁵ “Image Character,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 84.

⁵³⁶ “Mimesis of the Fatal and Reconciliation,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 134.

⁵³⁷ Cf. “The Schema of Mass Culture,” *The Culture Industry*, pp. 61-97.

⁵³⁸ Cf. “Art as Spiritual,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 86.

reflex of an identifying stabilizing procedure.⁵³⁹

In the artwork the individual is linked to otherness and linked to others through the identifying principle of the subject which, according to Adorno, is itself the internalized principle of society.⁵⁴⁰

Through aspects of its idea incarnate in individuals the concept of Enlightenment is an expression of movement within society as a whole. The technical apparatus and social groups which administer its dominant conventions brook no negative treatment from the spirit which is therefore increasingly made taboo. In modern life the fallen spirit and social progress go hand in hand. This is reflected in the way the individual is devalued in relation to the economic powers. For Adorno, the important issue is prescience not that of culture as value. 'The point is rather that the Enlightenment *must examine itself*, if men are not to be wholly betrayed. The task to be accomplished is not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of the hopes of the past.'⁵⁴¹ The true concern of the spirit is the negation of reification something it fails to engage in where it is fixed as cultural commodity.

From the standpoint of the developed exchange society the individual has the one choice, deceit or failure—deception is the mark of the *ratio* which betrays its particularity and the possibility of failure allows for the postulate of a moral excuse for profit. Deception is a mode of exchange where everything proceeds as it should, contracts are fulfilled and yet the other party is deceived. In this sense, radical socialization means radical

⁵³⁹ "Individuality not the Ultimate Either," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 161.

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. "Objectivity in the Antinomy," *Negative Dialectics* p. 241.

⁵⁴¹ "Introduction," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xv.

alienation.⁵⁴²

For the sake of universal equivalence and comparability, the formal techniques and procedural structures of economics and culture are the import that ties the subject to the principle of being-for-something-else, of being merchandise.⁵⁴³ For Adorno it is art that suggests that not everything in the world is exchangeable. Playing over into the ideological art is the image of what is beyond exchange. Art speaks for what cannot be exchanged through its form: it brings the exchangeable to critical consciousness. The telos of artworks is a language not imprisoned in a pre-established universality.⁵⁴⁴

Formal and abstract, the synthesis of equivalence and the unification of the multiplicitous damage's both what is synthesized and the synthesis itself. Articulation, identification, always coincides with a certain defeat of form which extends to the needs, both spiritual and material, that the articulated is designated to express.

No less subject to criticism than the ontological and material drafts which enunciate them, needs are subject to social processes and the vagaries of supply and demand. On the one hand, needs being real and not invariable do not guarantee satisfaction, on the other, their ideological form, limited and heteronomous, advances the illusion that they should be met even in their semblance. However, this does not allow us to criticize them out of existence.

'For in the needs of even the people who are covered, who are administered, there reacts something in regard to which they are not fully covered—a surplus of their subjective share, which the system has not wholly mastered. Material needs should be respected even in

⁵⁴² Cf. "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 60-62.

⁵⁴³ Cf. "Weakness and Support," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 94.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. "The Nonexistent," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 83.

their wrong form, the form caused by overproduction. The ontological need too has its real moment in a state in which men can neither recognize nor admit the rationality, the sense of necessity that rules their conduct.’⁵⁴⁵

The faulty consciousness whose inverted needs aim at things not needed by the subject believes in the attainability of the unobtainable. The faulty consciousness is misdirected in its aims and needs. Blocked by extant society consciousness falls back on hopeless and impossible longing which thwarts fulfilment, making the subject believe it should pursue in the name of desperate self-preservation the unattainable and unnecessary, a trend irresistible to philosophies that are both desperate and self-preserving.

A thought without a need that wished for nothing would be nothing. However needs in their subjective form present us with a confusing mix of truth and falsehood. Needs as primitive wish fulfilment, substitute satisfaction, and cultural delusion, the result of treating the mind as a dumping ground, rub up against what is true—the thought that wants the right thing.

‘If there is any truth to the doctrine that human needs cannot be told by a state of nature, only by the so-called cultural standard, the condition of social production along with their bad irrationality are also part of the standard. Its irrationality must be ruthlessly criticized against the needs of the mind, the substitute for all that has been withheld.’⁵⁴⁶

Despite the fact that institutions are more powerful than ever forming the world after the style of the culture industry, in the lament that the world has become formless and in the call for a binding order, there is a more specific need for a structure of invariants.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ “The Wrong Need,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 92.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. “Weakness and Support” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 94.

Prior to judgement and understanding there is in a sense a choice between heteronymous objectifying elements, the intelligibility of the matter which the subjective judgement discovers there and makes manifest. The objective emphasis is a reflexive response, a specification. Critical argument is specifically the exchange of alternative specifications. At its most serious level the argument is an analysis of how the really basic conditions of life, those pertaining to physical existence and survival, are perceived, selected, interpreted.⁵⁴⁸

Although blocked by the present form of society and so no more than a helpless longing, the cultural conservative and self-preserving stylists are desperate not to be buried by historical dynamics they feel helpless against. 'Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the categories of mass product turned out for his type.'⁵⁴⁹ The need for something solid inspires the ontology's—it is what they adjust to. According to Adorno:

'The subjective consciousness of men is socially too enfeebled to burst the invariants it is imprisoned in. Instead, it adapts itself to them while mourning their absence. The reified consciousness is a moment in the totality of the reified world. The ontological need is the metaphysics of that consciousness even when its doctrinal content leads it to exploit the critique of reification that has nowadays become so cheap. The form of invariance as such is the projection of what has congealed in the reified consciousness. Incapable of experiencing things not already contained in the repertory of eversameness, that consciousness recoins immutability into the idea of something eternal—of transcendence.'⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Raymond Williams, "Problems of Materialism," *Culture and Materialism*, (United Kingdom: Verso, 2005), pp. 108-109. 'To re-emphasize, as a fundamental materialism, the inherent physical conditions—a specific universe, a specific planet, a specific evolution, specific physical lives—from which all labour and all consciousness must take as their origins, is right and necessary.'

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 123.

⁵⁵⁰ "Weakness and Support," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 95.

The consciousness that feels impotent, that has no confidence in its ability to change institutions or stop obeying formal categories will reverse the conflict and identify with the aggressor. The identification with an external and heteronomous ideal is a failure of emancipation, a retreat into the familiar, a loss of philosophical nerve. Modern art by merely existing and by reminding us of lost chances reveals the dubiousness of the heteronomous structural ideal.⁵⁵¹

For Hegel society is constituted out of the innumerable spontaneous acts made by individuals who count and depend on each other for self-preservation. According to Hegel:

‘In civil society each member is his own end, everything else is nothing to him. But except in contact with others he cannot attain the whole compass of his ends, and therefore these others are means to the end of the particular member. A particular end, however, assumes the form of universality through this relation to other people, and it is attained in the simultaneous attainment of the welfare of others.’⁵⁵²

As objects of political power people surrender their spontaneity to events.

Events do not show in any context other than the conceptual. They are the historical trend that shatters the continuity—events are things that happen to people, things that they did not bring about themselves. ‘Events are the private affair of the oligarchs and their assassins; they do not arise from the dynamic of society but rather subordinate society to an administration

⁵⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.* Cf. “Spirit as Social Totality,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 315. ‘The universal by which every individual is determined at all, as one of his particular kind, that universal is borrowed from what is extraneous [its application] and therefore as heteronomous to the individual as anything once said to have been ordained for him by demons.’ Cf. Robert Hullot-Kentor, “‘I still hear...’ and the Question of Music Appreciation,” *Things Beyond Resemblance*. (United States of America: Columbia University Press), p. 49. ‘For musical memory, as among the mind’s pre-eminent powers of sensory reproduction, is involuntary in the highest degree. Its obliging dictum, fluently engaging rhythmically nodding head and gesturing limb, is the simplest: the more any music is heard, the more there is a need to hear it again whether from a loud speaker or left hemisphere.’

⁵⁵² “Additions,” *Philosophy of Right*, p. 267.

intensified to the point of annihilation.⁵⁵³

For whatever reason or pretext, i.e. self-preservation; irrational states of dominion, more and more individuals are caught up in the tightly woven web of integration. The differentiation that accompanies integration is lost as individuals are, on pain of destruction and against their own better judgement, absorbed into its legality. Coercion acquires an exalted meaning through ideologies that claim for the idea its being-in-itself. The principle of unreflected self-preservation, the bad universal hypostatized in the individual, is taken over by society as a social mechanism.⁵⁵⁴ The individual returns as a microcosmic copy of that mechanism. This sanctioning of an internalised and hardened super-ego has as its reflex response the call for freedom and with that its counterpart in repression. 'How much aggression is so far inherent in freedom can be seen whenever, in the midst of general unfreedom men act as if they were free.'⁵⁵⁵ For theory to rise above the antagonisms of the existent, the society that exists and the individual that exists, the subject as the I would have to be reconciled with the non-I.⁵⁵⁶ Subjective reason is expected to see reason against itself.⁵⁵⁷

The failure to make good on the claim that the non-I is finally the I is owed to ideology—its complicity with identifying thought that presents the thing, and what has happened to it as its "in-itself." Identity becomes the

⁵⁵³ "Spengler after the Decline," *Prisms*, p. 59.

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 87. 'Individuals, who have to look after themselves, develop the ego as the instance of the reflective preliminary and general view; it is extended and contracted as the prospects of economic self-sufficiency and productive ownership extend and contract from generation to generation. Finally it passes from the dispossessed bourgeois to the totalitarian cartel-lords, whose science has become the inclusive concept of the methods of reproduction of the subjugated mass society.'

⁵⁵⁵ "Universal and Individual in the Philosophy of Morals," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 283.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

doctrine for a doctrine of adjustment whereby the more the I thinks, the more it becomes debased into an object that repays the subject for what the subject has done to it.

The non-identical element in any identifying judgement is clearly intelligible in that individuality is “not yet”. The un-established is the contradiction between particular and universal. ‘The potential for freedom calls for criticizing what an inevitable formalization has made of the potential.’⁵⁵⁸

According to Adorno, difficulties within the social situation requires the means for explicating social phenomena to be inherent to the technical apparatus of an economy previously determined or indexed. Without theoretical ambiguity, a trace in the living, literally this is ideology, socially a necessary illusion. ‘To preserve itself, to remain the same, to “be,” that society too must constantly expand, progress, advance its frontiers, not respect any limit, not remain the same.’⁵⁵⁹ Identity needs the non-identical as much as the universal requires its particular difference.

Installing the particular as simply extant would hide how much the particular has come to be a function of the universal: a complementary ideology. The universal appears in differing aspects according to partiality and context. The traditional idea of the universal is arrived at by abstracting from particular properties in order to align the more common and general instances of a given type or thing. In such a process we can still see the universal as being-in-itself. That’s to say the universal exists as an idea

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. “On the Dialectics of Identity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 148.

⁵⁵⁸ “Cogitative Self-reflection,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 151.

⁵⁵⁹ “The Antinomical Character of Systems,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 26.

without the necessity of any inner relation to the particular features of the its instances. Conversely, we can view the universal as instantiated by its particulars in the same way as particular thoughts become the embodiment of the concrete universal by being expressed, or the way individuals through spontaneous acts become universal society. The I therefore can be seen as an abstract universal relative to the changing content of the mind or as the concrete universal the experiential embodiment of the concept which reaches out to touch all of reality.⁵⁶⁰

Society tolerates the particular only as a category, as a form of the supremacy of the universal. 'A true preponderance of the particular would not be attainable except by changing the universal.'⁵⁶¹ Universality is a criterion of correctness in the handling of objects it is not a criteria of their truth. Without the pluralism of individual spontaneities, without conceptualization as the consciousness of an act of combining and grasping, universality would not have come into being.

The self-preserving interest of individuals is transferred to the species. The logic behind this reproduces a historical concern: without the transfer of the self-preserving interest to the species, and everything that entails, individuals could not preserve themselves in more complex or strained social realities.

'There are innumerable times when unavoidable motives of self preservation force people, even conscious people capable of criticizing the whole, to do things and to take attitudes which blindly help maintain the universal even though their consciousness is opposed to it. It is only because, to survive, they have to make an alien cause their own that there arises that appearance of reconciliation.'⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. C. Taylor. *Hegel*, "Self-positing Spirit," p.112.

⁵⁶¹ "Dynamics of Universal and Particular," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 313.

⁵⁶² "Law and Equity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 311.

What seems paradoxical because of its universal mediation but nevertheless demands to be paired with the above reflection is Hegel's doctrine of a universally self-restored immediacy. 'Compared with epistemological reflection on the universal in individual consciousness, that consciousness is right in its refusal to be consoled about evil, sin, and death by references to the universal.'⁵⁶³

The concept of society resists definition because what it refers to cannot be wholly known in advance. At one level society is non-identical, compulsive, and incomprehensible. On the other hand society, its institutions and processes, are made comprehensible through the self-understanding of the individuals who partake in them. The commitment to a linguistic community as the source for a reinvigoration of communal life is the overarching disposition of modern social formations orientated towards technologically rationalized categorical frameworks. From this viewpoint what is significant and worthy is the intelligible—exemplified by the way language resonates within us.⁵⁶⁴

'Nowadays this sort of fetishism takes the most drastic forms. Thoughts have to be answered for as though they were deeds. Not just the word as authority's target but the tentative, experimenting word, testing the possibility of error, is for this reason regarded as intolerable.'⁵⁶⁵

The intolerance to ambiguity in authoritarian thinking makes the un-

⁵⁶³ "Dynamics of Universal and Particular," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 313.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. "Authors Note," *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. xix. 'Ideology has shifted into language. Social and anthropological changes have brought about this shift, though without breaking the veil. The fact that language is actually ideology, i.e., societal necessary *Schein*, "appearance," can be shown from within it. [...] Language gives itself over either to the market, to balderdash, or to the predominating vulgarity. On the other hand language shoves its way towards the judge's bench, envelops itself in judicial garb, and in this way asserts its privilege.'

⁵⁶⁵ "Notes and Drafts," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 244.

regimented thought an anathema, something dirty, defiled, and impure. According to Adorno, the psychologically insular, inhibited, conventional, and in response to threatened narcissism, aggressive reactionary individuals, exhibit defence mechanisms through which a weakly developed ego, repudiates that which disturbs its restricted functional capacity. In the rebellion against semblance and expression lie the roots of the resentment against modernism.

‘This psychological posture is that of an “*intolerance to ambiguity*,” an impatience with what is ambivalent and not strictly definable; ultimately, it is the refusal of what is open, of what has not been predetermined by any jurisdiction, ultimately of experience itself. Immediately back of the mimetic taboo stands a sexual one: Nothing should be moist; art becomes hygienic.’⁵⁶⁶

Objectivity has come to mean consensus; the non-controversial aspect of things; the unquestioned impression; majority thinking. The objective façade is made up of reified subjective impressions. Breaking through the objective shield the subjective favours relatedness rather than consensus. The claim that that something is too subjective flares only briefly as an objective criterion. For the subjective engages with the specific experiences of the matter. The formal objection to subjective relativity is vacuous when one considers that the particular area of concern for subjective relativity is that of aesthetic judgement.⁵⁶⁷ Subjecting oneself to the artworks immanent law of form, the compulsion of the structure has an incomparably greater force than any objective analysis.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ “Dialectic of Inwardness; Apories of Expression,” *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 115-116.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. “Unfair Intimidation,” *Minima Moralia*, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁶⁸ Cf. “Choice of Thematic Material; Artistic Subject; Relation to Science,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 230. ‘On the thematic level, in the language of indictment, no boundary can be drawn between aggressiveness and conformism. [...] Real denunciation is probably only a capacity of form, which is overlooked by a social element that believes in themes. What is socially decisive in artworks is the content [*Inhalt*] that becomes eloquent through the

For Adorno 'History is the content of artworks. To analyse an artwork means to become conscious of the history immanently sedimented within it.'⁵⁶⁹ The artworks own development, its inner time and monadological nucleus mediated problematically to real history and historicism as appearance, explodes the continuity of its own inner temporality. This discharge is the result of the artworks inwardly antagonistic forces and the impossibility of bringing these forces, like those of knowledge, to any equilibrium in the unreconciled world. '[T]he conflict between semblance—form in the broadest sense—and expression remain unresolved and fluctuates historically.'⁵⁷⁰

The artwork's thematic content and substantive subject matter, the material, technique, situation, etc, is embodied, infused with an import which although nonconceptual is, as a play of forces, the semblance of meaning in the artwork. This being syntactically articulated and organised becomes the artwork's intention. '[A]esthetic form is the objective organization within each artwork of what appears as bindingly eloquent.'⁵⁷¹ The instant in which these forces become image, the instant in which what is interior becomes exterior, the *apparition* which makes them an image makes them shine at the same time destroy them as image. The path to objectivation destroys the auratic image.

'As a result of its determination as appearance, art bears its own negation embedded in itself as its own telos; the sudden unfolding of appearance disclaims aesthetic semblance. Appearance, however and its explosion is essentially historical.'⁵⁷²

work's formal structures.'

⁵⁶⁹ "Explosion," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 85.

⁵⁷⁰ "Expression and Dissonance," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 110.

⁵⁷¹ "Form and Content," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 143.

⁵⁷² "Explosion," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 85.

Both static and dynamic, the *imago* is as much the trajectory the artwork traverses as it is the goal. The specific artistic achievement takes place through immersion in experiences that are fundamental to this overarching binding of the artwork.

It is not through the use of thematic material or the manipulation of effects that takes the artwork beyond the monad. To arrive at aesthetic realism from the premise of philosophical materialism is false, unreal. Art as a form of knowledge implies knowledge of reality and reality is always social. In truth art transcends the knowledge of reality as what exists. But this mediated truth content and social content becomes social knowledge where art is grasped in its essence, in the immediacy and ferment of experience, the point where mimetic impulses are driven to the point of self-consciousness, not in theories or endless reflection. The figuration of art brings its essence into appearance in opposition to its semblance.

In art primacy is given to the object in a way that makes it entirely distinct from empirical reality. As a characteristic of art, aesthetics can only affirm the primacy of the object through the unconscious writing of history, through the way it forgets the vanquished, repressed, a forgetting that goes as far as to exclude possibility: the forgetting of what is possible. In art the principle that gives primacy to the object has a potential that enables the artwork to free itself from objects and the domination of what is.

The discipline and lawfulness exerted by an artwork enables it to forfeit the crude authoritarian character of human relations.

‘Immersion in the individual work, which is contrary to genres, leads to an awareness of that work’s immanent lawfulness. The works

become monads and are thus withdrawn from any disciplinary effect they could exercise externally.’⁵⁷³

Through the immanent and primary play of forces the artwork converges with external reality. Where secondary sensuous pleasing gives access to the alluring sensuousness of pain by transfiguring into its antithesis, the importance of dissonance, the seal of everything modern, is revealed as an archetype of ambivalence.

Dissonance elicits from within the work social alienation. ‘Its power over the subject intensifies in parallel with the increasing autonomy of the work.’⁵⁷⁴ Dissonance congeals into indifferent material, a new form of immediacy. Without the memory trace of its own development and what it developed out of it becomes anonymous. Without its place in society the artwork fragments into on the one hand a reified cultural possession and on the other a subjective source of pleasure that has little to do with the object.⁵⁷⁵ ‘Subjective pleasure in the artwork would approximate a state of release from the empirical as from the totality of the heteronomous.’⁵⁷⁶ The happiness gained through art’s escapism is accidental and less essential than the happiness in its knowledge. ‘[T]he concept of aesthetic pleasure as constitutive of art is to be superseded.’⁵⁷⁷ The accidental and psychological projection of feeling related to the aesthetic object makes way before the

⁵⁷³ “On Antiquity’s Genre-Aesthetics,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 202.

⁵⁷⁴ “Aesthetic Hedonism and the Happiness of Knowledge,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 15.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Theodor Adorno, “New and Old,” *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique* trans. Willis Domingo, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 38-39. ‘Dialectics is the quest to see the new in the old instead of just the old in the new. As it mediates the new, so it preserves the old as the mediated. If it were to proceed according to the schema of sheer flow and indiscriminate vitality (*Lebendigkeit*), then it would degrade itself to a replica of the amorphous structure of nature, which it should not sanction through mimicry, but surpass through cognition. Dialectic gives its own to the old as reified and consolidated, which dialectic can move only by releasing the force of its own weight. Dialectic itself reaches the insight that the closed process also includes the non-included. It thus reaches a boundary to knowledge itself.’

artworks demand that knowledge does it justice. 'The work wants its truth and untruth to be grasped. [...] Happiness in artworks would be the feeling they instil of standing firm. This holds true for the aesthetic sphere as a whole more than for any particular work.'⁵⁷⁸

The primacy of the object in art is aesthetically confirmed in the character of art as the unconscious writing of history, in the displacing, dissolving, and reconstructing according to the works own law.⁵⁷⁹ Where art must grasp its thematic content [*Gehalt*] in its other it does so from within its own immanent nexus. An event or situation is able to retroactively shape a preceding development by awesomely spiritualising its mimetic impulses whose elements are not juxtaposed but grind away at each other in the praxis of their form.⁵⁸⁰

The historicophilosophical significance of the emancipation of form is crucial in that the critical stance defines the alienated as such. By hardening themselves to alienation in the image, hermetic works refuse the conciliatory interests and intelligible criticisms of the culture industry. In the dialectics of form and content, content can all too easily degenerate to a positive given, a mould for reification. Axiomatic to the conception of art history and cultural history are transformations in the comportment of the aesthetic subject that are specific to aesthetic forms.

'Thus the more deeply the content [*inhalt*] is experienced and transformed unrecognizably into formal categories, the less the unsublimated materials are commensurable with the content [*Gehalt*] of artworks. Everything appearing in the artwork is virtually content

⁵⁷⁶ "Aesthetic Hedonism and the Happiness of Knowledge," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 15.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. "Primacy of the Object and Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 258.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. "Primacy of the Object and Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 259.

[*Inhalt*] as much as it is form, whereas form remains that by which the appearing determines itself and content remains what is self-determining.⁵⁸¹

It is through the eloquence of the collective substance, the expression or gesture—*It is thus*—that arises out of the fissures and fragments that originate in the image, that art becomes its own character of eloquence [*Sprachcharacte*].⁵⁸² Fundamentally distinct from language, the language of artworks, like every language, is constituted by the collective undercurrent of collective experiences and their objectivation: something that happens through the instantiation of their inner historicity and sedimented external history.⁵⁸³ The spirit of transcendence is manifest in artworks through their becoming appearance, something that cannot be fixated as to its immediate identity, and is akin to their determination as phenomena. That “which is” also the name of “that which is not.”

Epistemology compels philosophy towards substantiveness, towards dealing with historical entities as its object. However, the concept of nonconceptuality cannot stay with its epistemological self or substance. ‘Nonconceptuality, inalienable from the concept, disavows the concept’s being-in-itself. It changes the concept.’⁵⁸⁴ Something immutable, identical with itself, would be blind to “matter” as well as to its own blindness. Art is the corrective for conceptual knowledge. It carries through what conceptual knowledge, because of its non-pictorial subject-object relation, cannot achieve and so longs for in vain.

According to Adorno, art in complete isolation and through a

⁵⁸¹ “Form and Content,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p.145.

⁵⁸² See footnote 7.

⁵⁸³ Cf. “Image Content is Collective,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 86.

subjective act unveils what is objective. Spirit does not simply animate the work as phenomena; it is as much the force or interior of the work, the force of their objectivation.

The impulses that are transposed into artworks by virtue of their integration remain the plenipotentiary in the aesthetic continuum of extra-aesthetic nature. The impulses are those of the subject, at the same time they are impersonal, nonidentical to the ego, simple participants in its integrative power. The subject is the instrument of expression. The expression of artworks is the nonsubjective in the subject; not so much the subjective expression as its copy.

‘The spirit of artworks is their immanent mediation, which transforms their sensual moments and their objective arrangements; this is mediation in the strict sense that each and every element in the artwork becomes manifestly its own other. [...] The spirit of artworks is objective, regardless of any philosophy of objective or subjective spirit; this spirit is their own content and it passes judgement over them: It is the spirit of the thing itself that appears through the appearance. Its objectivity has its measure in the power with which it infiltrates the appearance.’⁵⁸⁵

The modification of mimesis is the constitutive act of spiritualization in all artworks. It is only later that art develops this act, although it is already posited in the modification of mimesis through the work. The development does not occur through mimesis itself, the physiological form of spirit, but through imagination whose modification shares the guilt of the affirmative character of art. Shared guilt because imagination mollifies the pain, ‘[...] just as the spiritual totality in which this pain disappears makes it

⁵⁸⁴ “Compulsory Substantiveness,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 137.

⁵⁸⁵ “Art as Spiritual,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 87.

controllable and leaves it untransformed.’⁵⁸⁶

Despite superficial similarities what comports itself in art and what comports itself in the world are not reduced to the same. In the world what is seen as unidentical nature, or not literally nature, such as expression, is reduced to being material of the domination of nature, to a vehicle of social domination.⁵⁸⁷ In the world unidentical nature is truly alienated. However,

‘[e]xpression, by which nature seeps most deeply into art, is at the same time what is not literally nature, a memento of what expression itself is not, of what could not have become concrete except through the *how* of that expression.’⁵⁸⁸

The subject, the epitome of mediation, is the How demanded by any comprehensible idea of its concept. If the subject is not to be nothing, and according to Adorno no matter how we define the subject it contains an entity, then it needs to refer to something active. The “something” indicates an irreducible objective moment on which the subject depends.

Form is that in the artworks by which they become artworks. Form, by repudiating the view that artworks are immediately given, endeavours to banish from the artwork mere existence, whose heterogeneous shadow is melancholy. Comparable if not equivalent to mediation and objective reflection, form in artworks is the relation of parts to each other and to the whole, as well as the elaboration of details. Form seeks to bring the particular to speech through the whole and this is its melancholia. Form limits what is formed thus creating its specific difference. The artistic labour

⁵⁸⁶ “Expression as Eloquence,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 113

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. “Subject and Object,” *The Adorno Reader*, p. 143. ‘For society is immanent in experience [...]. Nothing but the social self-reflection of knowledge obtains for knowledge the objectivity that escapes it as long as it obeys the social coercion that holds sway in it, and does not become aware of them.’

⁵⁸⁸ “Domination and Conceptual Knowledge,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 113.

of forming, a process of selecting, trimming and renouncing, confirms this. If the artwork is so formed that it resembles language then after the manner of the dialectical image it is thus transform into the antithesis of form, the mimetic impulse.⁵⁸⁹ The rejection process is the way art becomes entangled in the guilt context of living. Art's utopian moment, unlike its possibility, is disfigured through incision. As the reverse image of longing, melancholy anticipates the negation of meaning in the undermined.

‘What radiates wordlessly from artworks is that *it is*, thrown into relief by *it*—the unlocatable grammatical subject—*is not*; it cannot be referred demonstratively to anything in the world that previously exists.’⁵⁹⁰

In the utopia of its form, art is disfigured by the weight of pluralism it engenders as soon as it enters the empirical domain and from which as art, it steps away. The antithesis to mere existence in the artworks is semblance in which meaning predominates. Yet this does not exhaust meaning in the artwork which also summons into appearance what appearance would otherwise obstruct: the essence that conceals itself in the factual. Art summons and indicts this appearance, negates it, even as it posits as its own measure an essence that is not present: possibility. In artworks even the disavowal of meaning is endowed with meaning. Yet because what is manifest in the artworks is bound up with semblance, even the most successful, complete artworks radiate sadness, the feeling of, “‘ Oh, were it only so.’”⁵⁹¹ Hence artworks demand of themselves an integration through which their content appears immediately present. In art unity, a coherence of meaning is contrived because it does not exist. As artificial meaning it

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. “Form and Content,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 144.

⁵⁹⁰ “Semblance, Meaning, and “tour de force”,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 105.

negates the being-in-itself, the potential for which the organization of meaning was undertaken. Every artefact works against itself. It is and it is not. Artworks are thus a balancing act that demonstrates something about art as a whole: They achieve the impossible. They contrive a unity that doesn't exist. The impossibility of every artwork in truth defines even the simplest as a stunning success.⁵⁹²

The philosophical investigation of music is concerned with the specific configurations in compositional procedures, the unprogrammatic concept inherent in the object. The reason for this is that the true nature of aesthetic form is revealed in the concrete crystallization of structure, in the music itself, not in discussions of style or generic categories, but in the extremes of form. In such extremes the essence of music can be defined. This alone permits the perception of its concept of truth.⁵⁹³ For Adorno, the composers Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg are two innovators whose uncompromising consistency has driven forward to the point where the impulses present in their works have become legible as concepts: the object of investigation itself.⁵⁹⁴

'Precisely in its great and emphatic forms, music embodies complexes that can only be understood through what is sensuously not present, through memory or expectation, complexes that hold such categorical determinations embedded in their own structure.'⁵⁹⁵

Music in this sense is autonomous rather than functional. As autonomous art it forms a separate world of its own—an essence beyond appearance where the listener, immersed in the immanent logic and dynamic of the sound

⁵⁹¹ "Semblance, Meaning, and "tour de force,"" *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 105.

⁵⁹² Cf. "Semblance, Meaning, and "tour de force,"" *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 106.

⁵⁹³ Cf. "Introduction: Choice of Subject," *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. "Introduction: Choice of Subject Matter," *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 4.

forgets the individual self. The power of music manifest in the force of will generates a visionary world beyond individuation.

Art has a double character: language is both a constituent and mortal enemy. Artworks are eloquent in the highest degree and incommensurable with all communicative language. Art's character of eloquence is fundamentally distinct from language as its medium. The true language of art is mute and its muteness takes priority over poetry's significant element, which in music too is altogether lacking. That aspect of the artwork that most resembles speech depends most likely on their "*Here I am*" or "*This is what I am,*" a selfhood not at first excised by indentificatory thought from the interdependence of entities. Thus it is that the rhinoceros that mute animal, seems to say: "I am a rhinoceros." Art says "*it is thus*" and this, art's expression, does not communicate the subject or how something is mediated, rather it reverberates with the proto-history of subjectivity that survives in the subject.⁵⁹⁶

Philosophical reflection allows us to see through the assimilation of the spirit to the reigning principle of pure aggression which lies at the back of every worry about where to take hold of philosophy. Common sense and traditional thinking demand a frame of reference whose intelligibility is not so important as long as unframed thoughts are kept out.⁵⁹⁷ The shock of inconclusiveness the lack of a unequivocal position threatens those whose happiness consists in being able to hold onto something be it the existent, a bit of ontology, or the perpetuation of unfreedom.

⁵⁹⁵ "Intuitability and Conceptuality," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 98.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. "Expression as Eloquence," *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 112-113.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. "Vertiginous," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 32-33.

The tendency in epistemological reflection to turn towards the subject, the process of abstraction whereby the subject first comes to be subject, means a reduction in objectivity. 'Abstraction is the subject's essence. This is why going back to what it is not must impress the subject as external and violent.'⁵⁹⁸ In empirical reality appropriation and return, the negation of the negative, is hardly ever an affirmation. The facts included under sensation and feeling that the empirical school distils and elevates into the form of general propositions and laws have no other import or validity beyond the fact that they can be shown to exist in phenomena. The empirical attitude to objectivity tells us in a judgment what something is. On how something ought to be and what thus can be said not to exist, it says very little. In the aesthetic sphere things are different. The dialectical maxim negation of the negation bears some truth because the subjective artistic production is not shackled as it is externally. Released from the world by its formal constituent's art is paradoxically less illusory, less deluded by the subjectively dictated lawfulness that is empirical knowledge.

The prohibitions of art and the idiosyncrasies of artists are the sedimentations of a collective form of reaction and so the particular is made universal. 'The dialectical postulate that the particular is the universal has its model in art.'⁵⁹⁹ Popular music's institutional and stereotypical pattern divests the listener of their spontaneity and promotes conditional reflexes, contiguous recognition. Complicated rhythmic and harmonic formulations are replaced by schemas of abstract embellishments. Following not so much the course of the music as its substitution by individual elements the illusionary force is the

⁵⁹⁸ "Transcendental Delusion," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 181.

simple. This falls within the sphere of the natural.⁶⁰⁰ 'Aesthetic objectivity, the reflection of the being-in-itself of nature, realises the subjective teleological element of unity; exclusively thereby do artworks become comparable to nature.'⁶⁰¹ The refusal to establish the universal as metaphysical truth means concentrating on the particular. That the particular owes its existence to the universal is a societal relation. By virtue of its tendency towards radical particularization the artwork says nothing but what is said by its own elaboration, through its own immanent process. By speaking, something goes beyond the here and now and yet art's transcendence only becomes universally eloquent through its specific impulse, its opposition to the universal.⁶⁰² Language is hostile to the particular nevertheless it seeks to rescue it through transmission, through the constellation of the universal. Language does justice to its own universals not when they accord to the semblance of their own rigid autonomy but rather when they are concentrated on what is specifically to be expressed. 'The universals of language receive their truth content by way of a process that countervails them.'⁶⁰³ The closer art approaches language the stronger the universals. The element in art that mostly resembles language is its mimetic element. 'The paradox that art says it and at the same time does not say it, is because the mimetic element by which it says it, the opaque and particular, at the same time resists speaking.'⁶⁰⁴ With regards to its substance and universal it is the inextinguishably idiosyncratic particular subject that reaches out to

⁵⁹⁹ "Nominalism and the Decline of Genres," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 202.

⁶⁰⁰ "On Popular Music," *Essays on Music*, p. 446.

⁶⁰¹ "Transition from Natural to Art Beauty," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 77

⁶⁰² Cf. "Philosophical History of Conventions," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 205.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*

grasp art's indispensable mimetic element.

'That reflection is a requisite of art today means that it must become conscious of its idiosyncrasies and articulate them. As a consequence, art threatens to become allergic to itself; the quintessence of the determinate negation that art exercises is its own negation.'⁶⁰⁵

Art in essence is a comportment that through the subject is necessarily linked to expression. Proclamations of the demise of art because everything is to become art and the insistence on culturing uncultivation are gestures of resentment and conformism reciprocal with the faltering of aesthetic powers. As a reprise of futurist and dadaist actions they furnish barbarism and the profit interests of the culture industry with a subterfuge: immediate and momentary pleasures that fail to live up to what is expected of them.⁶⁰⁶ The pleasure resembles the appetitive, culinary, and remains ultimately unfulfilling. The unmistakable symptom of deaestheticization is the passion for not allowing the artwork to be what it is by touching it, narrowing its distance from the viewer, dressing it up, in short possession for the sake of extra-aesthetic reasons, status, commerce, vested interests.⁶⁰⁷ Through immersion in meaningful experience one's identity as an artist becomes the organon of the work of art.

As something spiritual art is compelled by its situation to undergo subjective mediation in its objective constitution. The impulse will not be fulfilled at once but only in further articulation. The mediate role benefits philosophy no less than art. The collective impulse, of philosophy, and idiosyncratic compulsion, of the artist, is itself a piece of objectivity that

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ "Canon of Prohibitions," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 36.

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. "Paralipomena," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 319.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. "Situation," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 16.

stands watch over regressive unconscious tendencies. The objectivity that weighs upon the subject is the cause of its suffering. The expression of that suffering, the subject's most subjective experience, is objectively conveyed. The resistance needs to unfold. Where the particular and the social universal converge, there is freedom. 'Where the thought transcends the bonds it tied in resistance—there is its freedom. Freedom follows the subjects urge to express itself.'⁶⁰⁸ The overwhelming unconscious and collective forces embedded in technological and productive processes are obliged to correct themselves by way of the subject.

The individual consciousness becomes in the unity of the self and its experience an objectified subject. Objectivity presses the individual to look or turn towards itself through the principle of self-preservation, to the impairment of that objectivity. Even though concepts give continuity to experience, which by definition is always more than the purely individual, the fact that logical universality tends to predominate in individual experience works against any such expansion and halts or postpones the point of departure: being-in-the-world.⁶⁰⁹

'When thought in the process of cognition identifies as conceptual the conceptual elements which are directly posited in perception and hence so compelling, it progressively draws them back into the subject and rids them of perceptive power. In this process each previous stage, including that of science, appears as perception by comparison with philosophy, as an alienated phenomenon which is marked by unrecognised intellectual elements; it is part of the pathology character of cognition to stop there, without negation. The naïve devotee of absolutes, however universally active he may be, is a victim of the

⁶⁰⁸ "The Speculative Moment," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 16.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. "Individualistic Veil," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 312. 'A candid look at the predominance of the universal does all but unbearable psychological harm to the narcissism of all individuals and to that of a democratically organized society. To see through selfhood as non-existent, as an illusion, would easily turn all men's objective despair into a subjective one. It would rob them of the faith implanted in them by individualistic society: that they, the individuals, are the substance.'

dazzling power of false immediacy. But this dazzle is a constitutive element of all judgement, a necessary illusion. Every judgement, even a negative one, asserts and assumes.⁶¹⁰

In its generality the individual experience goes as far as the universal, not only on the subjective formal side of individual consciousness but also in the fact that every content is carried for the sake of self-preservation and reproduced along with that self-preservation. Self-reflection where it is able to overcome the principle of self-preservation may raise and expand individual consciousness. Surviving in the individual speculative moment is resistance to the prescribed. 'What awaits the qualitative subject in the matter is the potential of its qualities, not the transcendental residue of this potential.'⁶¹¹

The quantifying tendency on the subjective side that makes a taboo of subjective reactions reflects a desire for concordance, a place beyond doubt. Where social conditions would make cognition accord with a law of perpetual sameness—'Ideology conceals itself in the calculation of probabilities.'⁶¹² Hidden within the calculation of probabilities is the ideology of the unbroken entirety. Proselytizing against the transient, invariance is produced by peeling the invariables out of the variables in the confident hope that from immediacy, from the fixed and solid, an unbroken entity will spring.

Unlike the systems intent [the exclusive conclusion of knowing that cognitive definitions by dissecting and profligacy will inevitably miss the mark: the idea of being] conclusiveness is heteronomous and beyond

⁶¹⁰ Cf. "Elements of Anti-Semitism," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 194.

⁶¹¹ "Quality and Individual," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 44.

⁶¹² "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,

achievement either by rational will or social totality. 'To dialectics, immediacy does not maintain its immediate pose. Instead of becoming a ground it becomes a moment. At the opposite pole the same thing happens to the invariants of pure thought.'⁶¹³

With the concept of duration "Being" takes refuge in isolated and absolute derivatives. Being claims precedence to each abstraction, yet no immediacy is the whole of cognition. 'Each immediacy is a moment. No ontological draft can do without absolutizing single culled out moments.'⁶¹⁴ Inherent to a extensional concept formation is the detemporalization of what it refers to. Detemporalization is not an attribute of the concept in-itself, it is something that has become, that has arisen. Timelessness in the concept is mediated through abstraction and by simple omission. Pure becoming, the pure act, eliminating all heterogeneous being recoils into timelessness.⁶¹⁵ So formed and maintained the concept is attributed constancy as its in-itself quality and superior status.

'In order to create some kind of order in successive circumstances, nomenclatures or systems of thought were created which would survive with a certain constancy in relation to temporal elements which they encompassed. Now it seems to me to be the case at this point - and, indeed, in the whole tendency to see ontology as a doctrine of invariants, of timelessly abiding - that this timelessness of the concept represents [...] an impoverishment, a deficiency of the concept.'⁶¹⁶

Lost to the totality, duration is modelled on fixed inheritable

p.145.

⁶¹³ "Dialectics and Solidity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 40.

⁶¹⁴ "Being," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 83.

⁶¹⁵ Cf. "Tradition and Knowledge," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 54. 'A knowledge wholly conforming to the idol of that purity, of total timelessness—a knowledge coincident with formal logic—would become a tautology; there would be no more room in it even for transcendental logic. Timelessness, the goal which the bourgeois mind might be pursuing in order to compensate for its own mortality, is the acme of its delusion.'

⁶¹⁶ "Lecture Ten: The Problem of Mediation," *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, p. 71.

possession. The spiritual, like material, becomes property. Freed from the illusion of fixed inheritable possession duration, in accordance with its own concept, would internalise transience and approximates an idea of truth, not as the abstractly enduring, but in consciousness of its temporal essence. 'The concept of existence as the essentiality of transience, the temporality of temporal things, keeps existence away by naming it. Once treated as the title of a phenomenological problem, existence is integrated.'⁶¹⁷

Resignation and delusion reference and evocation are ideological complements of the name. What dissolves the fetish of the name is the insight that things have come to be under certain conditions but could well be otherwise. The becoming that fades and dwells within things is a temporal experience that cannot be stabilized in concepts. The precision in the concept substitutes for the thing itself, opening a gap between word and thing.

'The determinable flaw in every concept makes it necessary to cite others; this is the font of the only constellation which inherited some of the hope of the name. The language of philosophy approaches that name by denying it. The claim of immediate truth for which it chides the words is almost always the ideology of a positive, existent identity of word and thing.'⁶¹⁸

Philosophy admits its linguistic nature, its dependency on the texts it criticizes. It comes together in the traditions it would seek to deny. The question of how thinking might preserve and transform tradition by relinquishing tradition has its archetype in the secularisation of sacred texts. Voluntarily submitting thought to a subjectively chosen tradition forswears the ideal of autonomy, the authoritative autarkic thought of being. However,

⁶¹⁷ "Historicality," *Negative Dialectics*, pp.130-131.

⁶¹⁸ "Thing, Language, History," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 52.

as a properly constitutive factor the traditional moment in thinking is not a point-like subjectivity but a quasi-transcendental mechanism hidden in the depths of the soul.

‘What accedes to language [and therefore a tradition] enters the movement of a humanness that does not yet exist; it is compelled towards language and alive only by virtue of its helplessness. Stumbling along behind its reification, the subject limits that reification by means of the mimetic vestige, the plenipotentary of an undamaged life in the midst of a mutilated life, which subverts the subject to ideology.’⁶¹⁹

According to Adorno, the Kantian claim that the subject's totality and its determination predominates over the moments it lives by was progressive, an assist to freedom: the subject becomes moral for itself and is protected from the violence done to it by the reflexive ordering of society.⁶²⁰

One of the foremost achievements of Kantian deduction was perceived remembrance, the trace of historicity at the stage of imaginative reproduction in the unity of the “I think.”⁶²¹ For Kant, however, formation is essentially deformation. The exertion of cognition is by and large the destruction of its usual exertion. What grounds selfhood is Man's dominion over the self. This almost certainly involves the destruction of the subject in whose name the dominion serves. The functions and achievements of self-preservation, the definitions and determinations of its substance, is the very life that is dissolves, dominated, and suppressed by virtue of self-preservation.⁶²² The unfolding of life is a paradox, a contradiction. ‘[...] by

⁶¹⁹ “Dialectic of Inwardness; Aporias of Expression,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 117.

⁶²⁰ Cf. “The Will as Thing,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 238-239.

⁶²¹ Cf. “Tradition and Knowledge,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 54. Cf. “Incapacitation of the Subject,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 68. ‘Restricting the mind to thoughts open and attainable at the historical stage of its experience is an element of freedom; non-conceptual vagary represents the opposite of freedom.’

⁶²² Cf. “Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 54-55.

adaptation to death life pays the toll for its continued existence.'⁶²³ What is a contradiction to the logical theorists is familiar to artists as their sense of form.

The sense of form is the reflection of the work in itself. It is that on which that reflection must depend. As spontaneity amid the involuntary it is both blind and binding at once, the blindness corresponding to the necessity in the object. As objectivity closed to itself it devolves upon the subjective mimetic capacity, a fatal capacity, which gains its force through its antithesis, rational construction: hence the contradiction. What unfolds in the artist's work, the controlled mimetic element; the procedures that summon up in order to redeem and destroy spontaneity; mimesis as the fulfilment of objectivity, these are elements that traverse the extremes. Expression, not restrained by any preordained irrationality or superficiality, converges with the bluntness of rational objectivity, the immanent understanding of the material. 'Aesthetic rationality must plunge blindfolded into the making of the work rather than directing it externally as an act of reflection over the work.'⁶²⁴ Semblance, form in its broadest sense, seeks to salvage what the active spirit eliminated from what it reduced to its material, to what is for another. Semblance seeks that fatal capacity, the trace of the damage artworks want to revoke. In the process what is to be salvaged becomes dominated, produced. The redemption through semblance is itself illusory.⁶²⁵

The developmental process that Hegel describes; the sublation of one nature by another nature qualified by its fit to the functional context of

⁶²³ "Elements of Anti-Semitism," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 180.

⁶²⁴ "Expression and Mimesis," *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 114-115.

⁶²⁵ Cf. "Towards the Redemption of Semblance," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 107.

society; the movement from awakening consciousness to social and institutional constructs—family, church, state, that kind of thing, but also friendship, shared interests, civility, etc,—echoes the more anthropological, speculative, and productive history of mimesis and rationality found within the pages of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno and Horkheimer posit three phases in the development of mimesis and rationality: The pre-historical, the magical, and the historical.

‘Civilization has replaced the organic adaptation to others and mimetic behaviour proper, by organized control of mimesis, in the magical phase; and, finally, by rational practice, by work in the historical phase. Uncontrolled mimesis is outlawed.’⁶²⁶

At the earliest phase there is an adaptation to environment a self-conscious following of the course of nature, carried out in order to avoid the contingency and excesses of the world. Confrontations with what is ordered as amorphous and immediate nature, bolster a mimetic taboo against the immediate, the sensual. In the later so called civilized phase of the mimetic the taboo is maintained and developed by a dictatorial minority that projects Stoic virtues as virtuous nature.⁶²⁷ Since the mimetic taboo art became the organ of mimesis.⁶²⁸ Art now defines an area tolerantly reserved for mimesis.

Adaptation to nature, to the seasons, migration of animals, etc, is an aspect of archaic mimesis, adaptation to the inanimate, inorganic another.

‘[A]s the animate approaches the inanimate, and the more highly developed form of life comes close to nature, it is alienated from it, since inanimate nature, which life in its most vigorous form aspires to become, is capable only of wholly external, spatial, relationships. Space is absolute alienation.’⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶ “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 180.

⁶²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ Cf. “Expression and Dissonance,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 110.

⁶²⁹ “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 180.

Mimesis of inanimate, inorganic nature as a way to escape the terrors of nature, a nature from which the animate self, with no little effort, had recently estranged itself, is an adaptation to death. Playing dead, hiding out, incorporating death into life, are ways of avoiding external confrontation. This becomes much more important in the mythical/magical mimetic phase where the notion of sacrifice is advanced. Whether fear of nature is causally predicated of nature or through social relations [and there is reason enough to think of both, an individual shaman/magician providing an instance] the important thing to note is that fear or one of its relations, from Aristotle to Heidegger and beyond, have provided the template and orientation for thinking about the passions in particular and philosophy in general.⁶³⁰

‘What some like to call *angst* and to ennoble as an existential is claustrophobia in the world: in the closed system. It perpetuates the spell as coldness between men, without which the calamity could not recur. Anyone who is not cold, who does not chill himself as in the vulgar figure of speech the murderer “chills” his victims, must feel condemned. Along with *angst* and the cause of it, this coldness too might pass. *Angst* is the necessary form of the curse laid in the universal coldness upon those who suffer it.’⁶³¹

Mimesis of the hardened and estranged is reproduction of an earlier state: adaptation is repeated adaptation, repetition of the same. Once the doubling of nature becomes intentional then self-empowerment is optimized through a mode of rational interaction. In the magical phase there is developed an organized control of mimesis. This contains a form of rationality whereby prescriptive scenarios, myths, rites, sacrifices etc, are

⁶³⁰ Cf. C. Lévi-Strauss. *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham. (Penguin, Great Britain: 1969) p. 142. ‘Actually, impulses and emotions explain nothing: they are always *results*, either of the power of the body or of the impotence of the mind. In both cases they are consequences, never causes. The latter can be sought only in the organism, which is the exclusive concern of biology, or in the intellect, which is the sole way offered to psychology, and to anthropology as well.’

⁶³¹ “The Spell,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 246-347.

performed in the belief that nature will look favourably on human goals. The Shaman/Magician copies something in the future. What we have come to know as art has its roots here in the magical and, to a greater or lesser extent, intentionally or not, they retain their powers of prescription. Many works of art that reach out from the past radiate a humanity that seem strangely at odds with, and thereby alienate themselves from, the growing inhumanity of the world. It is here, in their divergence from the empirical world that artworks, Ancient and Modern, old and new, converge. Both are less deluded by the subjectively dictated lawfulness of immediacy than empirical knowledge.

The criterion and unifying principle of “good will” is the internalised and identifying principle of society as a whole. In its spontaneity the will is defined as the subject, and yet, ‘[...] solid and identical like reason, it is objectified into a hypothetical but factual power [...] from which all impulses that refuse to be objectified are banned as heteronomous.’⁶³² The positivity and infallibility of this moral aspect is the *raison d’être* of closed societies where the individual is virtually powerless to effect changes over the conditions of those crying out for change. In those situations where the individual harnessed to the social order accrues guilt through decay of the moral aspect, individual and isolated acts, being not absolutely good or absolutely evil, become venial where the will achieves some measure of independence. The criterion and unifying principle remains “good will.”⁶³³ However, ‘[w]hatever an individual or a group may undertake against the totality they are part of is infected by the evil of that totality; and no less

⁶³² “Unfreedom of Thought,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 235.

affected is he who does nothing at all'⁶³⁴

Bourgeois evil is the post-existence of older things, things which are subdued, but not quite, things that do not comply: the pre-logical natural moment. Surviving in the will, weakened in imagination, are physical impulses without which there would not be a will. The will that tames and negates impulses is dialectically defined as, '[...] the force that enables consciousness to leave its own domain and so to change what merely exists; its recoil is resistance.'⁶³⁵

Each time a conscious decision is made it more or less reflects the moment it consistently has access to. All productive thought that does not simply reconstruct or recapitulate to what has come before and wants to gain knowledge of something without covering categories has to surrender to it without reservation. This itself is not a recipe for success. To succeed the knowledge that is actualised through immersion in the object would have to potentiate theory, ready and waiting however concealed with sudden flashes of illumination. Philosophical knowledge begins where it opens up what traditional thought considers opaque, impenetrable and individual.⁶³⁶

'For the right practice and for the good itself, there is really no other authority than the most advanced state of theory. When an idea of goodness is supposed to guide the will without fully absorbing the concrete rational definitions, it will unwittingly take orders from reified consciousness, from that which society has approved. A will detached from reason and proclaimed as an end in itself [...] such a will, like all ideals that rebel against reason, stands ready for every misdeed. Good will may be self-understood but in the mirage it grows obdurate, a historic sediment of the power which the will ought to resist. In contrast to its pharisaism, the irrational moment of the will

⁶³³ "The Will as Thing," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 239.

⁶³⁴ "Dialectical Definition of the Will," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 243.

⁶³⁵ "Dialectical Definition of the Will," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 241.

⁶³⁶ Cf. "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy," *Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 81.

condemns all moral aspects to fallibility as a matter of principle.⁶³⁷

Theory prevents the mind from becoming an absolute. Critical self-reflection keeps the subject open, keeps it from building walls between itself and its object, from constricting the abundance of ways to react. The mobility of consciousness, one of its best features, points to a double mode of conduct: On the one hand an immanent dialectical process that criticizes the system and recalls what would be outside of it and, on the other, free, unbound, unregimented thought that allows us to step outside of the dialectic. Both aspects of consciousness are linked by the non-compromising and critical attitudes they take to each other. Their elective affinity lies in the fact that, 'the force that liberates the dialectical movement in cognition is the very same that rebels against the system.'⁶³⁸

The motif of one reason [logos] which offers a refuge to the unelucidated remnant and to repression, culminates in the formula that the moral aspect is always self-understood. To be self-understood, self-impressed, is the mark of civilization i.e. neurotic, one, identical. By excluding rational reflection the mere assumption of moral certainty is immoral, nothing survives in it which we could grasp as the moral. We are left with non-thought of received ideas, reiteration of the same, myth. The objectification and rationalization of the will, the subordination of acts to a unifying moment of reason, makes the will something other than its content, its material, diffuse impulses.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ "Dialectical Definition of the Will," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 242.

⁶³⁸ "Argument and Experience," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 31.

⁶³⁹ Cf. "The Will as Thing," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 238. 'The individual impulses' objectification in the will that synthesizes and determines them is their sublimation, their successful, delaying, permanence-involving diversion from the primary goal of drives. Kant

'All conceivable definitions of the moral aspect down to the most formal, the unity of self-consciousness *qua* reason, were squeezed out of that 'matter' with which moral philosophy did not want to dirty its hands. Today, morality has been restored to the heteronomy it loathes, and its tendency is to void itself. Without recourse to the material, no ought could issue from reason; yet once compelled to acknowledge its material in the abstract, as a condition of its own possibility, reason must not cut off its reflection on the specific material. Precisely this would make it heteronomous.'⁶⁴⁰

Material is what you work with or what is available to work with. Presupposed by alternatives it is everything that requires a decision. Technique, how we approach the material, is no less dependent on its material than material is dependent on the transformation of technique.⁶⁴¹ Because concretely only a tiny part of the abstract material is employable, the part that does not clash with the condition of the spirit, the part that joins the spirit in its agonic restlessness, material is thoroughly historical.

Whatever subjectively 'is' includes an objectivity, entity, that has yet to be established. The element of objective reason internal to subjective reason the *ratio* that transcends its subjective place holders is called rational identity. Its moment of universality, linked to the realm of pure purpose, cannot be divorced from a plethora of drives, natures, mortalities, etc. The most subjective, naïve immediacy eludes for a brief spell the interventionist intentions of the subject and presents us with an opportunity to see

faithfully circumscribed this by the rationality of the will. It is this rationality that makes the will something other than its "material," the diffuse impulses. To stress a man's will means to stress the unifying moment of his actions, and that is the subordination of those actions to his reason. A common adjective for a libertine is "dissolute," dissolved; the language opts for morality as the unity of the person in accordance with the abstract rational laws.'

⁶⁴⁰ "Dialectical Definition of the Will," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 243

⁶⁴¹ Cf. "On the Concept of Material," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 148. 'It is obvious how much a composer who, for instance, works with tonal material receives this material from tradition. If, however, he turns critically against tradition through the use of autonomous material, one completely purged of concepts such as consonance, dissonance, triad, and diatonic, the negated is nevertheless retained in the negation. Such works speak by virtue of the taboos they radiate [...].'

something as it really is.

‘To receive something as it is offered at a time, dispensing with reflection, is potentially always tantamount to recognizing it the way it is; virtually all thoughts, on the other hand, cause a negative motion.[...] The most subjective, the immediate datum, eludes the subject's interventions. Yet such immediate consciousness is neither consciously maintainable nor downright positive [...].’⁶⁴²

According to Adorno, in terms of essence the permanent exercise of caution in both directions, the implicit and the explicit, points to the non-dimensional in Being. Being is compressed into a point. As a procedure this has its foundation in categorical vision, the growing awareness of a concept. This is a corresponding moment to but beyond sensory matter. Categorical vision has an immediacy that resembles viscosity, this makes it a self-adjustment rather than an activity. Traditional epistemology knew this as a synthesis, as categorically constituted facts. The factual moment isolated and hypostatized, a protest against the split between concept and entity, ceases to be a moment and becomes a thing: the separation and reduction of phenomenal and spontaneous thought to a thought deemed both scientific and necessary. Being as the *Arcanum* of fundamental ontology is nothing but this categorical fact.

That mental facts can be purely described, isolated, accepted as what they claim to be is both a dogma and a demand.

‘[A]s if reflecting on things of the mind, re-thinking them, did not turn them into something else. The unhesitant supposition is that thinking, an inalienable activity, can really have an object that will not be made a product by the mere thought.’⁶⁴³

The view of sensory things in their not being absolute or irrefutable corresponds to a moment of direct vision. What is at stir in this seemingly

⁶⁴² “Dialectics and Solidity,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 38-40.

directness of the given is the experience, the congealed transmission, of what has come to be. The sense of evolved objectivity in things that supposedly merely are, is an awareness of the break between a things identity and its concept. This allows for a binding physiognomy of the mind, a physiognomic flash, or essence perception that does not simply attribute mental objectivity to projections of a contemplating subject.

‘[E]ssence perception is our word for the physiognomic view of mental facts—a legitimate view because things of the mind are not constituted by the cognitive intentionality of consciousness but are based objectively, far beyond the individual author, on the collective life of the mind, in accordance with its immanent laws.’⁶⁴⁴

A thinking that claims to gather all definitions to its side, a doctrine categorical vision too naively relies upon, disqualifies the vis-à-vis. With regard to structures of the mind this turns a second immediacy into a first immediacy.

The stress on Being as something aloof from the merely conceptual, an exemplary consciousness, has a positional value that is inclined to inflate historically.

‘Günther Anders remarked that the more socialized the world, and the more tightly the network of general definitions covers its objects, the greater will the tendency of individual facts to be direct transparencies of their universals, and the greater the yield a viewer obtains precisely from micrological immersion.’⁶⁴⁵

However the immediacy of insight, the receptivity within synthesizing consciousness, is a phenomenon not to be denied. It gives rise to, in the judgement, a recognition and configuration of both example and comparison. Without the moment of insight the particular could not be the

⁶⁴³ “On Categorical Vision,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 81.

⁶⁴⁴ “On Categorical Vision,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 82.

⁶⁴⁵ “On Categorical Vision,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 83.

universal. It is only its hypostasis that is to be denied. Categorical vision, despite its fallibility, contributes to the understanding of the thing itself not its classification.

According to Adorno, the cult of Being reaching out for a positive relation to the world and life transposes the way things are, an empirical claim to superiority, into the realm of essence. 'That Being shows, and that the subject should accept it passively, is borrowed from the old epistemological data which was supposed to be factual, ontical in character.'⁶⁴⁶

For Adorno, the objectivity of dialectical cognition requires more subjectivity not less if philosophical experience is to flourish. The positive zeitgeist is allergic to this need. 'It holds that not all men are capable of such experience; that it is the prerogative of individuals destined for it by their disposition and life story; that calling for it as a premise of cognition is elitist and undemocratic.'⁶⁴⁷ It would be fictitious to assume that philosophical experiences are equally accessible to everyone. Not many can withstand what the administered world makes of its compulsory members. Criticizing the world's course has become a privilege.⁶⁴⁸

However the *ratio of domination* is not simply the same as the

⁶⁴⁶ "Immanent Critique of Ontology," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 99.—Cf. Martin Heidegger. *Identity and Difference*, p. 51. 'Nor does discourse about "Being" ever understand this name in the sense of a genus, an empty generality under which the historically represented doctrines of beings are subsumed as individual cases. "Being" ever and always speaks as destiny, and thus permeated by tradition.' For an alternative translation see, Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, 2nd ed., Pfullingen 1957, p. 47. 'Our talk of "Being" never understands this name in the sense of a species to whose empty generality the historically offered doctrines of entity belong as individual cases. "Being" speaks ever and ever as sent and hence pervaded by tradition.' As cited in, "Sense of Being," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 87.

⁶⁴⁷ "The Privilege of Experience," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 40

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. "Dialectics and Solidity," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 41. 'The construction of truth in analogy to a *volonté de tous*, which is the final consequence of the concept of subjective

*domination of reason.*⁶⁴⁹ The *ratio* is rational insofar as it preserves and fulfils the interests of those who dominate [rationalize] the social situation, e.g. a ruling class with fatal means. Reason on the other hand should transcend mere domination and travail beyond the limitations of the instrumental reason that is the historical *priori* of modern times. The historical may be *priori* but it is not thereby a fate that is fixed, inescapable and unchangeable.⁶⁵⁰ The substance of the changed philosophy sought by negative dialectics,

‘[...] would lie in the diversity of the objects that impinge upon it and of the objects it seeks, a diversity not wrought by any schema; to those objects philosophy would truly give itself rather than use them as a mirror in which to reread itself, mistaking its own image for concretion.’⁶⁵¹

As the physiological primordial form of spirit mimesis and its modification is the process whereby reason sets itself up as the psychologically real self, the ‘I’ of self-consciousness and self-preservation.⁶⁵² ‘In the constitution of the ego reflective mimesis becomes controlled reflection. “Recognition in the concept,” the absorption of the different by the same, takes the place of physical adaptation to nature.’⁶⁵³

Through having to choose between their subjugation to nature and the subjection of nature to the self the essence of enlightenment is revealed to be

reason, would in all men's name defraud all men of what they need.’

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. Hauke Brunkhorst, “The Dialectic of the Medium,” *Adorno and Critical Theory*, (Great Britain: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 19. ‘The difference between *ratio of domination* and *domination of reason* distinguishes between the mere *affirmation* of historical a priori (Heidegger) and the *critique* of history that is *immanent*.’

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ “Infinity,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 13.

⁶⁵² Cf. “Expression as Eloquence,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 113. ‘The modification shares the guilt of the affirmative character of art because it mollifies the pain through imagination just as the spiritual totality in which the pain disappears makes it controllable and leaves it untransformed.’

⁶⁵³ “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 181.

that of domination. As the non-identical within the rational mimesis expresses, through the dialectic of eloquence a refusal to reflect the categorizing order. With a different mimetic a different notion of space and time is involved, this splits asunder the idea of a single unified rationalisation of reason calling everything to account from a single aspect viewpoint.

The objects that impinge on philosophy and which it seeks are diverse and not wrought by any schema. Philosophy does not use them as a mirror in which to reread itself: mistaking its own image and power of representation as guarantee for concretion. The capacity for representation is both progressive and regressive at the same time: the capacity of representation is the measure of domination and in performance domination is the most powerful thing that can be represented. Adaptation to the power of progress involves the progress of power in its capacity for representation. For the dominant to survive it must not be tempted by that which is unrepeatable.

The fixed order of time, the three fold schema of past, present and future, is intended to free the present from the clutches of the past. The power of the past is referred behind the absolute barrier of the unrepeatable. Nevertheless the past is placed at the disposal of the present as practicable knowledge. The practical by directly invoking the recent past with the irresistible promise of pleasure turns the temptation of self-abandonment into a mere object of contemplation—becomes art. In practice impulses must be doggedly sublimated in an additional effort, an addendum, which must ignore the drive that impels to diversion. But all unification remains deception and so thought becomes illusionary wherever it seeks to deny its

decisive function.

As a specific undertaking integration binds the centrifugal counterforces, absorbs the manifold, and creates abstract unity by removing the antithetical element—by virtue of which the unity came to be in the first place. Released from the empirical as from the totality of the heteronomous, subjective pleasure, the happiness in artworks would be the feeling of holding firm.⁶⁵⁴ Art appeases the compulsion to rescue the past as something living. Instead of using the past as the material of progress art appertains to a presentation of past life which is not cognition. This separates it from social practice which merely tolerates art as it tolerates pleasure.⁶⁵⁵

The spiritualized artwork expresses or reverberates with the proto-history of subjectivity. For example, the fact that music as a whole has its source in the collective practices of cult and dance is no mere point of departure. The historical source remains the unique sensory subjective impulse of music, something that continues to weave its spell on the collective practice.⁶⁵⁶ The subject as the only adequate instrument of expression is itself mediated. The impulses are those of the subject and yet participating in the integrative power of the ego they nevertheless remain nonidentical with respect to the ego formation.

‘The subjective impulse that registers what is to be done is the appearance of something objective transpiring back of this impulse, the development of productive forces, which art in its innermost has in common with society and at the same time opposes through its own development. In art, development has multiple meanings’⁶⁵⁷

The transposition of impulses, the plenipotentiary in the aesthetic continuum

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. “Art, Society, Aesthetics,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 15.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. “The Concept of Enlightenment,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 34.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. “The Antimony of Modern Music,” *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 18.

of extra-aesthetic nature, is in effect a claim that by virtue of the artistic integration the impulses are no longer incarnate as the extra-aesthetic nature's afterimage.⁶⁵⁸ Aesthetic structures create a continuum that is totally spirit. In that way they become the semblance of a blocked being-in-itself in whose reality the intentions of the subject would be fulfilled and extinguished.⁶⁵⁹ Art develops this act through the work that, mollifying the pain, modifies mimesis through imagination. Development, the absorption of art alien techniques external to art but originating in society, is one of art's means, and part of its autarchy.

Even though it resembles the subject the expressed is the nonsubjective in the subject. Expression is a priori imitation that having been objectified endures. The expression of artworks is not so much the subject's expression as its copy.

'Expression, by which nature seeps most deeply into art, is at the same time what is not literally nature, a memento of what expression itself is not, of what could not have become concrete except through the *how* of that expression.'⁶⁶⁰

With regards to the question of *how* [of expression] the key position for the subject in cognition is experience, and not the constituent form. Knowledge steps up and comes close where the subject as agent and entrusting itself to its own experiences acts, rendering the veil it weaves about the object without anxiety.

⁶⁵⁷ "Development of Productive Forces," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 192.

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, Part 3 of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Millar (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1971) § 473A. 'Impulse must be distinguished from mere appetite. The latter belongs to self-consciousness [...] it is something single and seeks only what is single for a single, momentary satisfaction. Impulse, on the other hand, since it is a form of volitional intelligence [...] embraces a series of satisfactions, hence is a whole, a universal.' As cited in D. Knowles. *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* (Routledge, London: 2002) p. 39.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. "Domination and Conceptual Knowledge," *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 113.

The more art expels the pre-established the more it is thrown back on the dimensionless point of pure subjectivity. In the art's secularization of transcendence, the tendency of the subjective point to expel the pre-established leads to an absence of social resonance, a contraction of the accessible.⁶⁶¹ The resulting impoverished powerless gesture, the scream of the destitute, is a confession concerning the impossibility of artistic objectivation: a postulate common to all artistic manifestations.

The aesthetic concept of anti-art anticipates this dialectic and constantly tries to abrogate its postulate. The implication being that art must go beyond its own concept in order to remain faithful to that concept.⁶⁶²

'Artists with the integrity of Picasso and Schoenberg went beyond the subjective point. Their difficulties in this could be sensed and feared right from their efforts to achieve a so called new order. Since then these difficulties developed into the difficulties of art as such. To date, all requisite progress beyond the subjective point has been brought at the price of regression through assimilation to the past and by the arbitrariness of a self-positing order.'⁶⁶³

Without conceptual labour the melodious discord of something's possibility

⁶⁶⁰ "Domination and Conceptual Knowledge," *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 113-114.

⁶⁶¹ At one level this would be existentialism. Cf. "Objectless Inwardness," *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, pp. 29-30. 'In Kierkegaard there are so little of a subject/object in the Hegelian sense as there are given objects; there is only the isolated subjectivity, surrounded by a dark otherness. Indeed, only by crossing over this abyss would subjectivity be able to partake in "meaning" that otherwise denies itself to subjectivity's solitude. In the effort to achieve transcendental ontology, inwardness takes up the "struggle with itself," on which Kierkegaard the "psychologist" reports. Yet no psychology is required to explain this struggle [...]. Mourning can be shown, pragmatically, to be Kierkegaard's central affect in the foundational nexus of his philosophy. [...] From a historico-philosophical perspective, Kierkegaard, the psychological solitary, is least solitary. He himself vouches for a situation he never tires of asseverating that he has lost reality. [...] In the image of the concrete individual, subjectivity rescues only the rubble of the existent. Subjectivity, in the form of the objectless inwardness, mourns in its painful affects for the world of things as for "meaning."

⁶⁶² Cf. "'Dialectic of Integration and the "Subjective Point",'" *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 30.

'[T]he program of their surrealist successors rejected art, yet without being able to shake free of it. Their truth was that it would be better not to have art than have a false one. But they fell to the mercy of the semblance of an absolute subjectivity existing purely for-itself and objectively mediated, yet without the ability to go beyond the position of being-for-itself. Surrealism expresses the foreignness of the alienated only by seeking recourse in itself.'

and aspects remains unrealised.

The materialist dialectic of social meaning and intentions has as its antecedent the theological *imago*. The dialectical movement becomes, in theory, one of regression and utopian development. By contrast the dialectical image *in memoriam*, a homily to forgotten affects, challenges this image of development and regression—there is on the one hand a use-value which persists and on the other a non-functioning alien survivor, something that outlives its own immediacy and the forfeiture of betrayal and despair.

According to Adorno, consciousness of the sordid hidden aspects of culture breaks through its husk of self-contentment. This is the source of the contemporary predilection with the disruptive, the sordid and shabby.⁶⁶⁴ There is a point where this particular predilection converges with the spiritualization of art.

‘Art that forswears the happy brilliance that reality withholds from men and women and thus refuses every sensual trace of meaning, is spiritualized art; it is, in its unrelenting renunciation of childish happiness, the allegory of the illusionless actuality of happiness while bearing the fatal proviso of the chimerical: that this happiness does not exist.’⁶⁶⁵

If the idiosyncratic or alien survivor presents itself as an ambiguous cultural accumulation or with a living trace that points to the more seamier side of the compass, the flotsam and jetsam of debased life, then the mentality that cedes the decisions about essentiality and inessentiality to the disciplines which deal with an object at a particular time, will more than likely ‘[...] not bother with the dignity of the objects to be dealt with and will either parrot public opinion about this dignity or choose the criterion of whether, as they

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. “On the Truth Content of Artworks,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 130.

say, a "thing has not been worked upon yet."⁶⁶⁶

In formal terms the greatness of the art object measured by what the transcendental subject has marked as "idea" is independent of what it, the artwork, has to say. A priori ideology posits something spiritual as being independent of its material production. And yet to travail beyond the classification of social effects and in the interest of the social decipherment art must become conversant with its material.

The spirit of artworks negates the spirit that dominates nature and so does not appear as spirit. 'The uncheckable movement of spirit towards what has eluded it becomes in art the voice that speaks for what was lost in the most distantly archaic.'⁶⁶⁷ Contrary to spirit is the prespiritual [mimesis] which along with what is opposed to spirit [materiality] is that on which spirit ignites. Thereafter spirit becomes the principle of construction.

'In artworks, spirit has become their principle of construction, although it fulfils its telos only when it emerges from what is to be constructed, from the mimetic impulses, by shaping itself to them rather than allowing itself to be imposed on them by sovereign rule. Form objectivates the particular impulses only when it follows them where they want to go of their own accord. This alone is the methexis of artworks in reconciliation. The rationality of artworks becomes spirit only when immersed in its polar opposite. The divergence of the constructive and the mimetic, which no artwork can resolve and which is virtually the original sin of aesthetic spirit, has as its correlative in that element of the ridiculous and clownish that even the most significant works bear and that, unconcealed, is inextricable from their significance. The inadequacy of classicism of any persuasion originates in its repression of this element; a repression art must mistrust.'⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ "Essence and Appearance," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 169. Cf. "Theodor Adorno. Letters to Walter Benjamin," *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ed. Ronald Taylor (Verso, Great Britain: 1986) p. 110. '[...], your draft seems to me full of the most important ideas. Of these I should like to emphasize only the magnificent passage about living as a leaving of traces, the conclusive sentences about the collector, and the liberation of things from the curse of being useful.'

⁶⁶⁷ "Critique and Redemption of Myth," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 118.

⁶⁶⁸ "Critique and Redemption of Myth," *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 118-119.

The aesthetic principle of construction where it exhorts the blunt primacy of a planned whole over the details tends towards stasis. With its complement in the over elaborate and dense, construction obscures what it means for one thing to merge wholly with another.

The assumption of a historical tendency in artistic material use contradicts how material is traditionally defined: The sum total of all material at the disposal of the artist. All material specifications are characteristics and indications of historical processes. The demands made upon the subject by the material are itself a crystallization of the creative impulse, an element socially predetermined. The artist's altercation with the material is at the same time an altercation with society. Into this image of creativity seeps the fetishism of commodities, monopolistic production, ontological Being, as well as a sense of puzzling bewilderment at the ridiculousness of artwork and concomitant feelings of impotence, frustration, rage, etc, and their contrary.

According to Adorno, society's own concept seeks to establish free relations. This remains unrealized as society remains as rigid as it is defective. Institutional forms hem in and deform an increasingly chaotic life. The production and reproduction of life is not transparencies of a reconciled realization of reason that would be one with a non-violent order. The course of society, its objectified legality, is not as anarchic as it appears to the irrational and accidental form of individual fate. 'But its objectified legality is the converse of a state of Dasein in which men could live without fear.'⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁹ "Ontology Prescribed," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 88-89.

The premonitions of objective negativity are drowned out by the ontological drafting of an order-in-itself which runs to the most abstract order, the structure of Being. As ever the world is set to shift to the horrors of order. Where men cannot even think of rationally determining their lives or the life of the whole without adding to their torment then they tend to prefer the invidious form of the bad rather than the semblance of the better.

‘When men are forbidden to think, their thinking sanctions what simply exists. The genuinely critical need of thought to awaken from the cultural phantasmagoria is trapped, channelled, steered into the wrong consciousness. The culture of its environment has broken thought of the habit to ask what all this may be, and to what end; it has enfeebled the question what it all means—a question growing in urgency as fewer people find some such sense-evident, as it yields more and more to cultural bustle. Enthroned instead is the being-thus-and-not-otherwise of whatever may, as culture, claim to make sense. The weight of existing culture ends all insistence on the reality of its asserted meaning, or the legitimacy of that meaning.’⁶⁷⁰

Into the vacuum steps fundamental ontology, self proclaimed spokesperson for the pilfered interest and all that has been “forgotten.” Epistemology tends to list such interests as prejudice. This, according to Adorno, is not the least of reasons why ontology is adverse to epistemology.

The ontological positing of an order-in-itself is historically reflected in art in those works that tended to absorb materials that mocked all attempts at subjective inspiration [e.g. montage in early radical painting and cinema]. In music the tendency was set to eliminate the element of musical language in music. The subjectively mediated musical coherence was to end, replaced by tonal relations dominated by exclusively objective mathematical relationships. But this objectification turns into complete reification.

‘The desire to be pure nature corresponds to the purely manufactured thing. The ontological region that lies beyond the subjective accident

⁶⁷⁰ “Sense of Being,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 85-86.

is exposed as subjective mastery over nature that has been absolutized as a mere technique, in which the subject of absolute rule only divests itself of its own humanity and simultaneously fails to recognise itself.⁶⁷¹

Mimetic comportment as the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other claims rationality where it responds to the telos of knowledge. To that extent art is rational. To accuse art of irrationalism because it refuses to conform to a single aspect instrumental reason is simply ideological.⁶⁷² ‘The telos of artworks is a language whose words cannot be located on the spectrum; a language whose words are not imprisoned by a prestabilized universality.’⁶⁷³ Art is rationality that criticizes rationality. Rationality that applies extra-aesthetical logic and causal criteria, thereby pre-empting art through theories of the rational and irrational are despite good intentions, their having being provoked by the ideological misuse of art, nevertheless faulty. ‘Rationality in the artwork is the unity-founding, organizing element, not unrelated to the rationality that governs externally, but does not reflect its categorizing order.’⁶⁷⁴

The hegemonic conception of radical and modern time-consciousness places culture towards the centre of its analysis. Culture as lived or professionally produced tends to elicit a certain kind of response, naturalism in regards to the appropriation of psychic configurations and discourse. The hegemonic conception takes it as a given that the horizon open to the future

⁶⁷¹ “Music, Language, and Composition, *Essays on Music*, p. 121.

⁶⁷² Cf. “Mimesis and Rationality,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 55. ‘Artworks do not repress; through expression they help to make present to consciousness the diffuse and elusive without, as psychoanalysis insists, “rationalization.” —To accuse irrational art of irrationalism for playing a trick on praxis-orientated rules of reason is in its own way no less ideological than the irrationality of official faith in art; it serves the needs of apparatchiks of every persuasion.’

⁶⁷³ “The Nonexistent,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 83.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

is determined by expectations in the present that guide our access to past experiences which orientated towards the future are said to preserve an authentic present as the locus of innovation and tradition. As this process accelerates, as more is drawn into the orbit, the distance that opens between the past experience and the horizon of expectation lends itself to a utopian quality even as it closes off the future as a source of disruption. In practice what can be characterized as effective history or critical history grounds itself and circles around assumptions about certain kinds of cultural goods.

The hegemony of the object and the concomitant deformations of social and enlightenment thought, as an axiological orientation of modernism, are made manifest through its most estranged forms. In the world of contemporary music, high-modernism is one of these estranged forms. In this instance high-modernism means the progressive, technologically grounded, mathematized, computerized, and future orientated. The high-modernist avant-garde is so complex and uncongenial that it is unapproachable for everyone bar the specialist and curious. In order to secure the future for this cutting edge music, technology, and theory in the absence of validation by the markets or the public, high-modernism like other sciences retreats into institutions, universities, etc, subsidized arenas where subsidy becomes the mark of high-culture and legitimacy becomes a question after the accumulation of cultural authority. In this situation the institutionalised and bureaucratic way of thinking becomes the model for a thought less free.

‘But the responsibility of philosophical thought in its essential situations is not to play this game. A given alternative is already a piece of heteronomy. The legitimacy of alternative demands has yet to

be judged by the very consciousness that is moralistically asked to make its decision beforehand. To insist on the profession of a standpoint is to extend the coercion of conscience to the realm of theory. With this coercion goes a coarsening process in which not even the great theorems retain their truth content after the adjuncts have been eliminated.⁶⁷⁵

For Adorno the disavowal of every existential posture, the sense of being not quite here, of not playing along, is an attitude towards immediacy common to artists and thinkers. The ability to keep ones distance to become a spectator and rise above every occasion is at once the most inhuman and in the final analysis the most human of stances. The experience has a moment of objective truth beyond the appearance of the self-preserving motive. "What does it really matter?" without its associations of callousness and dread, is the line most likely to make the individual aware of the insignificance of existence. Being both spellbound the aesthetic of the ephemeral and the bestiality of the involved are the wrong ways of living. Mediation of the extremes is required for an atmosphere of free and easy sympathy and spontaneity.⁶⁷⁶

The ephemeral is discredited where through its indifference to temporality it perpetuates the status quo. "A-historicity" is the necessary complement to the concept of dynamism. In line with the inevitability of change, with that which it cannot cope, the subject simulates individualization and promotes the dynamic of the subjecting form, reinforcing its primacy over the external processes of life. Under the spell of identity what is different, incompatible with the spell, will turn to poison. On the other hand, under the compulsion to identity the non-identical grows

⁶⁷⁵ "Vertiginousness," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 32.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. "After Auschwitz," *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 363-364.

abstract and adopts a legally fateful, event like character. The nonidentical as an undigested scrap of subjugated nature, acquires an irrationalism that converges with the necessity posited in the subject. It is not through the defiance or extirpation of the unintended but reflection on the difference that helps reconciliation.

Chapter Six: Art and Aesthetics.

*'But art, mimesis driven to the point of self-consciousness, is nevertheless bound up with feeling, with the immediacy of experience; otherwise it would be indistinguishable from science, at best an instalment plan on its results and usually no more than social reporting.'*⁶⁷⁷

Theodor Adorno

In Adorno's theory of philosophical aesthetics aesthetic comportment is the capacity to perceive more in things than they are.⁶⁷⁸ As the given is transformed into an image aesthetic comportment is defined as the capacity to shudder. What later became "subjectivity" is at the same time the shudder's own development.

*'Intensity is the mimesis achieved through unity and ceded by the multiplicity to the totality, although this totality is not immediately present in such a fashion that it could be perceived as an intensive force; the power accumulated in the totality is, so to speak, restored to the detail.'*⁶⁷⁹

The productivity and sheer explosive power of basic aesthetic experience is that of a subjectivity released from the imperative of purposive activity. To the dominant rationality and the status quo aesthetic comportment is irrational and inadequate. The rational injunction which urges that all steps to a conclusion are to be made explicit and exposition should exactly reproduce the process of thought invokes the liberal fiction of universal communicability of each and every thought. But for Adorno the value of thought is measured by its distance from the continuity of the familiar.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁷ "The Problem of Solipsism and False Reconciliation," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 259.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. "Theories on the Origin of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 330.

⁶⁷⁹ "The Category of Intensity," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 187.

⁶⁸⁰ For the distance between Nietzsche and Adorno, cf. "What is Romantic," *A Nietzsche Reader*, p. 133. '[H]e [the suffering man, the man poorest in life] will likewise [as well as most need of kindness, peaceable, goodness in thought and action] have need of a logic, the conceptual comprehensibility of existence – for logic tranquillizes, makes trusting – in short, a certain warm, fear-averting confinement and enclosure within optimistic horizons.

Where thought repudiates the nonidentity that makes it thought in the first place it also repudiates its inviolable distance. Every thought which is not idle carries with it the impossibility of its full legitimation. Distant thoughts are manifest in the delicacy, fragility, and intricacy of thinking. Distance is a field of tension not a comfort zone. 'Only at a remove from life can mental life exist, and truly engage the empirical.'⁶⁸¹ What aesthetic comportment and artworks do is distance thought from reality. As the precipitate of history in concepts the artwork reminds us of ends rather than the rationality of means and as such it is objectivity freed from categorical structure: free to reflect. This is art's rationality and knowledge character. The more it approximates the pre-existing standard, the further its antithetical function is diminished. Aesthetics, which shouldn't believe it achieves affinity to art by enunciating what art is, becomes normative through its power of articulation. Aesthetics begins with reflection on the demands of the concrete historical situation of art. As such it is not in isolated existence that aesthetic claims to knowledge are founded

'[...] knowledge comes to us through a network of prejudices, opinion, innervations, self-corrections, presuppositions and exaggerations, in short through the dense, firmly founded but by no means uniformly transparent medium of experience.'⁶⁸²

Religious symbolism in its appearance lays claim to the transcendence of the immediately present. Aesthetically obedient to the administered world mediaeval iconography, a kind of theology of art was in general governed by

[...] and my eye became ever and ever sharper for that worst and most insidious form of *retrograde conclusion* in which most errors are committed – the retrograde conclusion from the work to the author, from the deed to the doer, from the ideal to him who has *need of it*, from every mode of thought and evaluation to the *requirement* which commands behind it. –With regard to all aesthetic values I now avail myself of this principle distinction: I ask in each individual case 'is it hunger or is it superfluity which has here become creative?'

⁶⁸¹ "Keeping One's Distance," *Minima Moralia*, p. 126.

fixed laws that could not easily and simply be broken by the dictates of individual imagination.⁶⁸³ With its withdrawal from theological dogma art became secularized. As the secularization of transcendence it participates in the dialectic of enlightenment: a dialectic that in order to stay true to its own concept of going beyond its own concept art confronts with the aesthetic conception of anti-art. Art has to step outside of its own concept in order to remain faithful to its concept. By being secularized art did not lose its claim to transcendence nor its being appropriated by a basic style defining power. According to Adorno, the stereotypical appropriation of everything, even anti-art and the inchoate, for the purposes of mechanical reproduction and exchange is the power that manages to surpass or suppress the rigor and currency of any "real style".⁶⁸⁴ What maintains the power of convention is the immanent rule of production and exchange that sustain a constant pressure manifest as a need to produce new effects all the more whilst still conforming to the old pattern of checks and balances.

'No mediaeval theologian could have determined the degree of the torment to be suffered by the damned in accordance with the *ordo* of divine love more meticulously than the producers of shoddy epics calculate the torture to be undergone by the hero or the exact point which the leading lady's hemline shall be raised.'⁶⁸⁵

Everything is shaped down to the last detail according to the language of the anathema, the catalogue of explicit and implicit, exoteric and esoteric. Everything is to be stamped with sameness nothing can appear that does not meet with approval at first sight. What and how something is said must be

⁶⁸² "Gaps," *Minima Moralia*, p. 80.

⁶⁸³ Cf. Emile Male, *The Gothic Image*, Trans. Dora Nussey, (Great Britain: The Fontana Library, 1961).

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. "The new and Duration," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 29.

⁶⁸⁵ "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,

measurable by the everyday language of reproduction and exchange. Imitation and repetition become absolute. An artwork has been essentially objectified and made viable before the established authorities began arguing about it.⁶⁸⁶ As a result of the critique of meaning categories such as unity and harmony have not vanished, they survive even in the most extreme and dissonant in which art revolts against its neutralization as an object of contemplation. In the throes of inspiration the principles of harmony, metamorphosed, and in the end unrecognizable, is at work organizing, making elements gel. Inspiration if it is to count tacitly presupposes an element of coherence even if just as a limit, a vanishing point.⁶⁸⁷ In harmony art senses acquiescence to the administered which it continues to oppose. But with steadily increasing autonomy comes the continuation of the domination of nature which in real terms is progressive something art finds painful to admit much like the necessity of that progress within itself.⁶⁸⁸

The secularization of the world and the secularization of art do not necessarily coincide. Notwithstanding the inevitable losses that follow in its wake art scholarship retains and adds to its historical understanding even though society as a whole has chosen to forget or shows little interest outside of an absolute scandal. Monad like and in-itself, artworks never forget. As a fragment artworks are that part of the totality that opposes totality. In this way art becomes a specific undertaking. Art's integration binds the centrifugal counterforces even though as the fragmentary it affects

p. 128.

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 128-129.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. "The Concept of Harmony and the Ideology of Closure," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 157.

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. "The Concept of Harmony and the Ideology of Closure," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 158.

to transcend its own concept. The fragmentary contains both these elements. The secularization of art allowed it to develop and this is what distinguishes artworks from religious symbols. At the same time art was condemned to provide the existing world with a consolation for the loss of hope: the hope of a better world beyond.

Although they are more, there would be no valid artworks without the power of longing.⁶⁸⁹ According to Adorno, '[o]nly in memory and longing not as copy or as an immediate effect, is pleasure absorbed in art.'⁶⁹⁰ That the artwork transcends longing in its immanence is explained by the neediness of the world, a soliciting force that is inscribed as a figure in the historically existing. Artworks by retracing the dialectical figure or image in its neediness are able to summon forth fulfilment and change. Artworks are the language of this wanting. The artworks content; import, and essence is as substantial as this wanting. What it wants the other, not as it is but as it might become. Immanent to the displacement of the elements within its constellation is the hope that they might thereafter find their rightful position. For the idealists this would be the *imago* of the absolute. By being more than what simply exists and by retracing the historical and worldly figure artwork's participate in objective truth. Artworks make a case for what is to come: reality should imitate the artwork, a reversal of the doctrine that artworks imitate reality. Artworks signal the possibility not the actuality of the nonexisting. By testifying to the possibility of the possible the object of art's longing, the reality of what is not is metamorphosed in art as remembrance. Remembrance remains bound to semblance. 'In remembrance

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. "Truth as Semblance of the Illusionless," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 132.

what is qua what was combines with the nonexisting because what was no longer is.⁶⁹¹

For art, utopia [literally “non-place” but here meaning “the yet-to-exist”] remains a recollection of the possible in opposition to the actual that suppresses it. ‘Each artwork is utopia insofar as through its form it anticipates what would finally be itself, and this converges with the demand for the abrogation of the spell of self-identity cast by the subject.’⁶⁹² In artworks the actual destructive power of myths, which in reporting and naming intend the repetition of the same, is mollified through the negative determination of difference, the particularization of the repetition that myth exercises in empirical reality.⁶⁹³ According to current logic the particular would not be identifiable without the identifying universal. The general concept of particularization is an instance where the particular is not particular anymore. Dialectically the particular is indissoluble in the cover concept. In the surety of logic this is treated as a universal state of facts. The indissolubility of the particular is taken as its own cover concept: reason in its rigidity can not make sure of the particular without the concept. In the process identity wins over nonidentity.⁶⁹⁴ Art’s rejection of the empirical world inheres in it’s concept as a law immanent to it: It is thus no mere escapist fantasy. On the other hand this law sanctions the primacy of reality it strengthens the spell of that which the autonomy of art seeks to free itself. Against the somatic stimulation of the “popular arts” and in contrast to

⁶⁹⁰ “The Pleasure of Art,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 14.

⁶⁹¹ “Truth as Semblance of the Illusionless,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p.132.

⁶⁹² “Mimesis in Darkness,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 135.

⁶⁹³ Cf. “Mimesis of the Fatal and Reconciliation,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 134.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. “Particularity and the Particular,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 173.

religious and ceremonial functions, the autonomy of art is its quality of being a law unto itself. By undertaking to posit totality out of itself, whole and self-encompassing, the principle of autonomy is suspected of giving consolation by transferring the image of autonomy to the world in which art exists and that engenders it.⁶⁹⁵ Art exists in a historically changing constellation of elements and cannot be reduced to the single formula of providing consolation. By recognizing the difference that has been spirited away, by historicizing and negating its particular rationality, dialectics breaks the spell of total identification.

The idea of art is to gain control, determine and negate as unreal the semblance of the artefact: the fact that it says more.⁶⁹⁶ This more is other mediated through a nexus of elements and yet divided from it. Artworks become what they are in the production of this more. In it they posit what they are not permitted to posit: more as what appears. Art in an act of liberation re-enacts the spell of reality, sublimating it as image where sublimation and freedom mutually accord.

‘That by virtue of their organization artworks are more—not only as what is organized but also as the principle of organization—for as what is organized they obtain the semblance of being nonartifactual—determines them as spiritual. This determination, when recognized, becomes content. It is expressed by the artwork not only through its organization but equally through its disruption which organization implies.’⁶⁹⁷

Artworks produce their own transcendence. As a pure process of becoming

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. “Art’s Self-Evidence Lost,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. “Truth as Semblance of the Illusionless,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 132. ‘The definition of art is not fully encompassed by aesthetic semblance: Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless. Cf. ““More” as Semblance,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 78. ‘Nature is beautiful in that it appears to say more than it is. To wrest this more from that more’s contingency, to gain control of its semblance, to determine it as semblance as well as to negate it as unreal: This is the idea of art.’

⁶⁹⁷ “On the Truth Content of Artworks,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 130.

they go beyond the appearance that they are in the nexus of elements which is the arena of transcendence. It is only insofar as these elements asymptotically approximate nothingness and are drawn into the amorphous do they meld into a whole. As differentiated partial elements they want to be something that previously existed: the remembrance of a motif or theme. In this way once again they become separated from transcendence.

It is not through meanings but through transcendence, which is akin to expression, that artworks are spiritual. Artworks fail when they seek to produce transcendence as an effect. For Adorno art is probably never more transcendent and expressive than in the moment it falls silent, falls mute, where by virtue of its own movement it converges with its natural element—the desolation of an open infinity which grants no affirming finality—and says adieu to life: farewell. The evanescent fleeting associations which confound any efforts to pin them down say more of the hope of return than any general reflection on the essence of the fleeting and enduring. To grasp such micro-logically constructed figures requires philosophical aesthetics namely internally developed, mediated thought.⁶⁹⁸

What is essential to art is that which is not the case. That which doesn't measure up and is incommensurable with the empirical. Movement against and beyond the empirical requires a sense of proportion, an understanding of the limits and limitations of experience and empirical deduction relative to their prospective concrete relations and context. 'The compulsion to aesthetics is the need to think this empirical

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. "Methodology, "Second Reflection," History," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 358.

incommensurability. The objective difficulties in this are compounded subjectively by broad resistance.⁶⁹⁹ For most people aesthetics is superfluous, it disturbs their pleasures. The subjective resistance unintentionally helps give expression to the fact that art allies itself with the repressed and dominated in society. At the same time industry turns this resistance into an institution. Art is cultivated as a market, a natural reserve for the irrational. Art is to become a direct source of pleasure from which thought is to be excluded. This fundamentally confuses the ever problematic objectivation of art.⁷⁰⁰ The aporia of art is not cured through any willing subordination to authority. 'It remains an open question just how, without coercion, it would be possible, given an unmitigated nominalism, to achieve anything on the order of an objectivity of form; this is impeded by instituted closure.'⁷⁰¹ The observer takes part in objectivity when, for example, the energy of subjective projections [even if misguided] penetrate or extinguish themselves in the artwork giving rise to an awareness of objectivity from within.⁷⁰²

Originating in aesthetics and fed on art-historical theses the idea, drafted by conservative cultural critics, that art has lost its sense of form, has since spread to become a view of the world as a whole: the world has become formless. This opaque and despairing negativity is conflated with the positivity of redemption. The art-historical thesis that maintains that Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart are more metaphysically substantial than the later romantics [i.e. Wagner] is not diminished by pointing out that music's

⁶⁹⁹ "The Changing Function of Naïveté, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 335.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷⁰¹ "Objectivity and Reification," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 175.

turn towards language created hitherto unimagined expressive values and a wealth of qualitative possibilities. The devalorization of metaphysical sense was appropriate to the state of social consciousness under developed capitalism. What makes this inauthentic, the despairing conflation of the negative with the positivity of redemption, at the same time honours the determining historical experience.⁷⁰³ Although the basic assumption that the loss of form is in fact a loss is in no way established the reaction to the idea and popularised since is a specific need for a structure of invariants. For Adorno the dubiousness of this claim turns on the fact that the institutions of the culture industry are more powerful than ever: '[...] they have long since produced something like the neon-lit style of the culture industry, a style that covers the world as the turn to the baroque did once upon a time.'⁷⁰⁴ Consolidating the subject's enslavement to the merchandise character the rule of universal equivalence and comparability depreciates qualitative definitions reducing them to the form of invariance which as such is the projection of what has congealed in reified consciousness. According to Adorno, no theory, including aesthetic theory, can dispense with the element of universality. 'This tempts aesthetics to take the side of invariants of precisely the sort that emphatic modern art must attack.'⁷⁰⁵ The situation of art means that the concepts aesthetics is compelled to drag helplessly behind and without which it could hardly be conceived are the concepts it art seeks to undermine. The lack of any sense of the historical situation of artistic

⁷⁰² Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷⁰³ Cf. "Music, Language, and Composition," trans. Susan H. Gillespie, *Essays on Music*, p. 123.

⁷⁰⁴ "Weakness and Support," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 94.

⁷⁰⁵ "Irreconcilability of Traditional Aesthetics and Contemporary Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p.

phenomena corresponds to the tendency of philosophical aesthetics towards abstract rules, for example reducing the new to the ever-same. However, according to Adorno, '[w]hat sets itself up as an eternal aesthetic norm is something that has developed and is transient; the claim to imperishability is obsolete.'⁷⁰⁶ The universal in the midst of aesthetic particularization is driven beyond the semblance of a static being-in-itself. The critique of invariants which maintains even the excluded through their negation conceives invariants in their own variability. Art and probably life in general does not need the prescription of norms where and when it finds itself in difficulty. Rather it needs whatever will provide the capacity for reflection.

The conflict between subjectivity and form is undiminished. If form does not prove by itself—by its transparent function—that it is entitled to live, but instead is simply posited in order to be available for a mind persuaded that it is thus sheltered, then this form is coercive, untrue and inadequate. The obeyer of formal categories cannot wholly repress their inadequacy to a mind which opposes the visible heteronomy with another heteronomy. The dubiousness of this heteronomous structural ideal is reflected in radical modern art which reminds us of lost chances. The sense of frustration and loss of confidence in the ability to change institutions and their mental image reverses the conflict into identification with the aggressor. 'The subjective consciousness of men is socially too enfeebled to burst the invariants it is imprisoned in. Instead it adapts itself to them while mourning their absence.'⁷⁰⁷ In a state of unfreedom no one has a liberated

339.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ "Weakness and Support," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 95.

consciousness: the doctrine of invariants perpetuates how little has changed.

The subject that abdicates and adapts was prompted to do so by more powerful subjects. Even in its fallibility and weakness the subject is not expected to retreat from the claim to objectivity. The subject as a *tabula rasa* would not be the most qualified to judge and understand. If the converse was true then the philistine devoid of any relation to art would be the most qualified to judge it: the unmusical would be the best music critics.

Objectivity begins to play its part where the energy of the misguided subjective projection has extinguished itself in the artwork. A cognitive posture more applicable or more just to the aesthetic runs counter to the observing subject whose feelings provoked by the artwork are real and to this extent extra-aesthetic. The distinction between the subordination of concepts and the coordination of sensations marks the difference in the form of thought between what holds for consciousness in general and individual consciousness which as empirical consciousness is different from all others.

The mediated forms are orientated to the necessity in the object.

‘Like art itself, knowledge of it is consummated dialectically. The more the observer adds to the process, the greater the energy with which he penetrates the artwork, the more he then becomes aware of objectivity from within. [...] The subjective detour may totally miss the mark, but without the detour no objectivity becomes evident.’⁷⁰⁸

The artworks immanent exigency and its growing integration is also its immanent contradiction. Carried through the immanent dialectic reflects itself as resolved: this is aesthetically a false principle. The totally objectivated artwork congeals into a thing which is no less essential than its negation. If the artwork evaded objectivation altogether it would regress to

⁷⁰⁸ “Objectivity and Reification,” *Aesthetics Theory*, p. 175.

empirical realm and the impotently powerless subjective impulse.⁷⁰⁹

Modern art can be understood as the perpetual intervention of the subject in the unreflected governance of the traditional play of forces. The permanent interventions of the ego are matched by a tendency to abdicate out of weakness. The abdication of the subject from what has become distant, foreign, and dangerous is mistaken for a guarantee of objectivity.⁷¹⁰ The more the pre-established is expelled the more art is thrown back onto the dimensionless point of pure subjectivity.

In the contemporary stage of development of art's mimetic essence, art's comportment assimilates itself with the nonidentical countermanding the idea of reconciliation in artwork's whose form dictates intransigence.⁷¹¹ The belief that a work of art is to be reconciled as an object of immediate contemplation is unsound. Older art possesses a certain immediacy of effect. This is no longer present in new art which requires something more, mediation, a helping hand, in order to be understood. The difficulty in understanding the new art, namely the experience, the production, materials, task and demands of the artist, arise from the work having become divorced, in principle, from consumption: Divorced, that is, from immediate presumptions, claims and possibilities.⁷¹² All artworks are enigmas. That they say something and in the same breath conceal it expresses this enigmaticness from the perspective of language. The enigma of art makes understanding a problematic category. The demands of the artwork, to be

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁰ Cf. "Dialectic of Integration and the "Subjective Point"," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 29.

⁷¹¹ Cf. "Mimesis of the Fatal and Reconciliation," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 134.

⁷¹² Cf. "Why is the New Art so Hard to Understand?" trans. Susan H. Gillespie, *Essays on Music*, p. 128.

grasped in its content, less its effect, is bound to their specific experience. 'The solution of the enigma amounts to giving the reason for its insolubility, which is the gaze artworks direct at the viewer.'⁷¹³ The mediation of the enigma can only be fulfilled by way of the theory that reflects this experience.

Aesthetics, protesting against abstracting and classifying procedures, partakes in history and thereby, overcoming its own uniqueness, it becomes the nexus in a problem; aesthetics requires classificatory genres and abstractions as its object—especially in relation to the art manifestos it becomes.⁷¹⁴ 'Art desires what has not yet been, though everything that art is has already been. It cannot escape the shadow of the past. But what has not yet been is the concrete.'⁷¹⁵

Aesthetic theory, being wary of all a priori constructions and abstractions, is a derivative of discursive logic, and not identical with it. It is, therefore, able to suspend its own rigour, which as an idea made concrete gives rise to the many forms of discord and disruption that we find in modern art.⁷¹⁶ Conversely, artworks that disavow their own logical rigor, and have a tendency towards integral construction, suspend what is heterogeneous to their self-determination and with it the mimetic trace on which their construction depends.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹³ "Enigmaticalness and Understanding," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 122.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. "Methodology, "Second Reflection," History," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 358-359. Cf. Ibid, 'The concrete historical situation of art registers concrete demands. Aesthetics begins with reflection on them; only through them does a perspective open on what art is. For art and artworks are exclusively what they are able to become.'

⁷¹⁵ "Mimesis in Darkness," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 134.

⁷¹⁶ Cf. "Logic, Causality, Time," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 138. 'The autonomous law of form of artworks protests against logicity even though logicity itself defines form as a principle.'

⁷¹⁷ Cf. "The Problem of Solipsism and False Reconciliation," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 259. 'But art, mimesis driven to the point of self-consciousness, is nevertheless bound up with

The double character of artworks provokes permanent conflict in our understanding of the affinity between identifiable and non-identifiable elements and relations.

‘In that no artwork is capable of resolving its immanent tension fully, and in that history ultimately attacks even the idea of such a resolution, aesthetic theory cannot rest content with the interpretation of given artworks and their concept. By turning towards their truth content, aesthetics is compelled—as philosophy—beyond the works.’⁷¹⁸

In terms of discursive thought, art and the artwork, as semblance, are both irrational. And yet art and artworks are, indeed, logical. Aesthetics, the study of the conditions and mediations of the objectivity of arts, has need of a logical consistency to become self-alike. And yet this logic is without concept or judgement. Art’s logic draws its consequences from phenomena that have already been spiritually mediated and so is analogous to the logic of experience rather than practical empirical reality. ‘By way of their logical character, artworks are determined objectively in themselves without regard to their reception. Yet their logicity is not to be taken *à la lettre*.’⁷¹⁹ What needs to be comprehended in artworks is their incomprehensibility: semblance is indeed their logic.

There is a contradiction, an aesthetic inconsistency, between what an art work appears to be and what it is. When called to legitimise itself to the world every artwork is a priori helpless. The success and truth of the artwork depends on its nonidentity with the concept. The artwork succeeds when that which is accidental to its concept is absorbed into its own immanent

feeling, with the immediacy of experience; otherwise it would be indistinguishable from science [...].’

⁷¹⁸ “Methodology, “Second Reflection,” History,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 359.

⁷¹⁹ “Logicity,” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 136.

necessity. Without this immanent necessity, art's anti-mimetic impulse, there would be no objectivation, no integration, and no material consequence. Art finds its continuation in this objective need, the neediness of the world which as an individual and specific undertaking is ideological; an abstract unity created by the loss of art's antithetical element.⁷²⁰ Art redeems itself where the spirit throws itself away and re-ignites on the pre-spiritual: the mimetic.

Aesthetic comportment, '[...] is neither immediately mimesis nor its repression but rather the process mimesis sets in motion and in which, modified, mimesis is preserved.'⁷²¹ This process allows the I, in its individual relation, to comprehend something beyond itself.⁷²² Where aesthetic comportment is repressed, rationality becomes powerless. Its narrow minded wisdom separates feeling from knowing.⁷²³

'Yet feeling and understanding are not absolutely different in the human disposition and remain dependent even in their dividedness. [...] The fatal separation of the two came about historically and is revocable. *Ratio* without mimesis is self-negating. Ends, the *raison d'être* of *raison* are qualitative, and mimetic power is effectively the power of qualitative distinction. The self-negation of reason clearly has its historical necessity: The world, which is objectively losing its openness, no longer has need of a spirit that is defined by its openness; indeed, it can scarcely put up with the traces of that spirit. With regard to its subjective side, the contemporary loss of experience may largely coincide with the bitter repression of mimesis that takes the place of

⁷²⁰ Cf. "Situation," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 29.

⁷²¹ "Theories on the Origin of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 331.

⁷²² Cf. *Ibid*, 'That shudder in which subjectivity stirs without yet being subjectivity is the act of being touched by the other. Aesthetic comportment assimilates itself to that other rather than subordinating it. Such a constitutive relation of the subject to objectivity in aesthetic comportment joins eros and knowledge.' p. 331.

⁷²³ Cf. "Quality and Individual," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 46. 'Yet the isolated individual unhampered by any ukase may at times perceive objectivities more clearly than the collective, which is no more than the ideology of its functionaries, anyway.' Cf. "Out of the Firing-Line," *Minima Moralia*, p. 55. '[T]he mish-mash of enlightened manipulation of public opinion and oblivious activity: all this is another expression for the withering of experience, the vacuum between men and their fate, in which their real fate lies. It is as if the reified, hardened plaster-cast of events takes the place of events themselves.'

its metamorphosis.⁷²⁴

The unconformable situation is derived from the fact that the system is able to produce rage. What first appears as rage later, under the auspices of a superego, becomes identity: not literal identity, a point for point relation with the object, but still the subsumption under a concept.⁷²⁵

Both rage and the need to identify point to an excess. Manifest in the sublimation of impulses, sublimation remains an ambiguous concept. Sublimation may shape the creative process but it is also ideological and reactionary, adapting the individual to the 'normal rationality' of an irrational society.

'There is a total lack of any adequate criteria for distinguishing 'positive' from 'negative' ego-functions, above all, sublimation from repression. Instead, the concept of what is socially useful or productive is rather innocently dragged in. But in an irrational, society, the ego cannot perform at all adequately the function allotted to it by that society.'⁷²⁶

As an element within fully comprehending experience [*Erfahrung*], aesthetic or lived experience [*Erlebnis*] is the psychologically real response to a particular and abstracted aspect in the interplay between constructive and mimetically expressive elements.⁷²⁷ As cultural surrogate it would be conventional experience, arrested attention, which means, explicit in the gesture of pointing, being open to persuasion: The spontaneous mimetic

⁷²⁴ "Theories on the Origin of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 331.

⁷²⁵ According to Adorno, this has its counterpart in a social process. Cf. "Idealism as Rage," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 23. 'In the form of the barter principle, the bourgeois *ratio* really approximated to the systems whatever it would make commensurable with itself—and it did so with increasing, if potentially homicidal, success. Less and less was left outside.'

⁷²⁶ Theodor Adorno. 'Sociology and Psychology' (1955), trans. I. N. Wohlfahrt, *New Left Review* 47 (January/February 1968) pp. 86-87. As cited in, Max Paddison., *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 131.

⁷²⁷ Cf. "Notes," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 375. '[...] "Erlebnis," or lived experience, and "Erfahrung," or comprehending experience is a distinction for which there is no comparable

reaction to the immediacy of this gesture is the weakening of the I.

‘Against this stands the individuation of knowledge. Not only the way the object is perceived depends upon that individuation and differentiation; the differentiation itself is demanded by the object, which demands therein its *restitutio in integrum*, so to speak. Just the same, the modes of subjective reaction which the object needs require ceaseless objective correction in their turn. This occurs in self-reflection, in the ferment of mental experience.’⁷²⁸

Without the distraction of a supposed equivalence between the content of experience, the particular aspect in abstraction, and the subjective experience of the recipient, the utmost tension makes it possible for the I to catch a slight glimpse beyond the prison that it itself is. It is through the utmost exertion of an inclusive subject which, drawing on all its accumulated impulses and experiences to mediate the object, will yield in its immediacy to a moment of self-reflection that strikes at the static heart of all subject/ object dualisms. ‘For a few moments the I becomes aware, in real terms, of the possibility of letting self preservation fall away.’⁷²⁹

The shock to the I, an involuntary mimetic comportment preserved by the moment of tension, is the possibility of its own disappearance. In terms of art,

‘[...] this shock is the moment in which recipients forget themselves and disappear into the work; it is the moment of being shaken. The recipients lose their footing; the possibility of truth, embodied in the aesthetic image, becomes tangible. This immediacy, in the fullest sense, of relation to artworks is a function of mediation, of penetrating and encompassing experience [*Erfahrung*]]; it takes shape in a fraction of an instant, and for this the whole of consciousness is required, not isolated stimuli and responses. [...] Full comprehending experience [*Erfahrung*], which terminates in judgement on the non-judging work, demands a decision and, by extension, the concept.’⁷³⁰

pair of succinct English concepts.’

⁷²⁸ “Quality and Individual,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 47.

⁷²⁹ “Attitude to Praxis; Effect, Lived Experience, “Shudder,” ” *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 245.

⁷³⁰ “Attitude to Praxis; Effect, Lived Experience, “Shudder,” ” *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 244-245.

As an element of objective truth the subjective experience [*Erfahrung*] is directed against the I in its limitedness. In its truth or untruth this is more than subjective experience. Subjective reaction at its most intense mediates the irruption of objectivity into the subjective consciousness. The shudder, aesthetic comportment, is a response, coloured by fear of the overwhelming 'thus it is.' The ineluctable into which the I is submerged and transmuted can in the 'shudder' reveal limitations in the I.⁷³¹

'Shudder, radically opposed to the conventional idea of experience [*Erlebnis*], provides no particular satisfaction for the I; it bears no similarity to desire. Rather, it is a memento of the liquidation of the I, which shaken, perceives its own limitedness and finitude. This experience [*Erfahrung*] is contrary to the weakening of the I that the culture industry manipulates.'⁷³²

The withering of experience is the transformation of *Erfahrung* into *Erlebnis*, a process allows no time for mimesis nor for consciousness to formulate a strategic response to events, for exchanging conscious experience for memory. The immediate binding of impressions, even in their difference, allows the turn around of events to take place much quicker, certainly more than if time was allowed for reflection. The result is an impoverishment of the internal narrative that gives structure to our lives. We sense that things are happening to us that hardly registers and that there is a loss of integrity in the content of experience.

The rapid calling forth of involuntary memory hastens the sense of dissolution. Conversely involuntary remembrance loosens or frees up earlier

⁷³¹ Cf. "Theories on the Origin of Art," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 331. 'Ultimately, aesthetic comportment is to be defined as the capacity to shudder, as if goose bumps were the first aesthetic image. What later came to be called subjectivity, freeing itself from the blind anxiety of the shudder, is at the same time the shudder's own development; life in the subject is nothing but what shudders, the reaction to the total spell that transcends the spell.'

experiences thereby keeping them alive. 'The interior where the soul accommodates its collection of memories and curios is derelict. Memories cannot be conserved in drawers and pigeon-holes; in them the past is indissolubly woven into the present.'⁷³³ Where memories are controlled and objectified they tend to fade losing detail in the process. No memory is guaranteed against the empirical present. The present, immediacy, is constituted through the mediation of memory and in the process even the most blissful of memories can be irrevocably damaged by the substance of later experiences.⁷³⁴

The content of artworks are mimetic impulses that are drawn into the world of image, apparition, appearance. Aesthetically, this formal coherence and objective determination, is a product of and fulfils the desiderata of both that on which subjective activity takes place and the activity itself. Hence form is more than simply subjective activity. Artworks are not copies, they are auratic, unique. If mass reproduction threatens their mystery then critique, by penetrating the vanishing, salvages the ancient shudder in the measure of what it provokes. Thereafter, '[...] that shudder is permanently reproduced in the historical antagonism of subject and object.'⁷³⁵

Thought, negation, as micrological activity, as a particularized, intratemporal, motivated, and progressive motion, has macrological means,

Consciousness without shudder is reified consciousness.'

⁷³² "Attitude to Praxis; Effect, Lived Experience, "Shudder," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 245.

⁷³³ "All the Little Flowers," *Minima Moralia*, p. 166.

⁷³⁴ Cf. Ibid. 'He who has loved and who betrays love does harm not only to the image of the past, but to the past itself. Irresistibly evident, an impatient movement while waking up, a distraught tone of voice, a faint hypocrisy in pleasure, obtrudes itself in memory and turns earlier closeness even then into the distance it has since become. Despair has the accent of irrevocability not because things cannot improve, but because it draws the past too into its vortex.'

⁷³⁵ "Image Character," *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 84.

the motion of history internalised in the structure of thinking. This raises the possibility that the universal as history may be located within the particular. As imaginative reproduction or perceived remembrance this trace of history is more than a fact-gathering branch of science.

‘Ever since the fundament of knowledge came to be sought in supposedly immediate subjective data, men have been enthralled by the idol of a pure present. They would endeavour to strip thought of its historic dimension. [...] But their critique misconceived that tradition is immanent in knowledge itself, that it serves to mediate between known objects.’⁷³⁶

If physics offers the possibility of breaking the subjective apriority of space, time, and causality it does so by arguing for the primacy of the object, an object that is more than factuality. But factuality, in the sense of binding statements, is here to stay and is one side of a dialectical relation within Adorno's negative metaphysics.⁷³⁷

Metaphysics is a compelling force that manifests itself in those experiences that lead to the question: Is that all? Adorno argues the situation is one that mostly resembles fruitless waiting.⁷³⁸ The authenticity of this situation is not guaranteed. You would think that avidly constructing innumerable analysis thereby rendering each one worthless would be conducive to such an experience. ‘But the consistency of its performance,

⁷³⁶ “Tradition and knowledge,” *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 53-54. Cf. “The Object not Datum,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 187. ‘Immediacy does call a halt to the idolatry of derivation, but it is also something abstracted from the object, a raw material for the subjective process of production that served as a model for epistemology.’

⁷³⁷ Cf. “The Object not Datum,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 188. Cf. “Argument and Experience,” *Negative Dialectics*, p. 29. ‘The call for binding statements without a system is a call for thought models, and these are not merely monadological in kind. A model covers the specific, and more than the specific, without letting it evaporate in its more general super-concept. Philosophical thinking is at the same as thinking in models; negative dialectics is an ensemble of analyses of models.’

⁷³⁸ Cf. “Lecture Eighteen,” *Metaphysics, Concept and Problems*, p. 143.

the density of its texture helps the thought to hit the mark.⁷³⁹

Essence, no longer the pure, spiritual being in itself, comes between what things are and what they claim to be. Conceptual rather than immediate, essence makes the supposed facts what they are and in so doing confirms the subjects participation in the object. 'Essence recalls the nonidentity in the concept of that which, by the subject, is not posited but followed.'⁷⁴⁰ As something that simultaneously *is* and *is not*, the conceptuality of essence points to the fact that the world is not the subjects own.

'An index of the object's preponderance is the impotence of the mind—in all its judgements as well as, to this day, in the organization of reality. The negative fact that the mind, failing in identification, has also failed in reconciliation, that its supremacy has miscarried, becomes the motor of its disenchantment.'⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁹ "Fragility of Truth," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 35.

⁷⁴⁰ "Essence and Appearance," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 167.

⁷⁴¹ "The Objects Preponderance," *Negative Dialectics*, p. 186.

Summary, Concluding Remarks

What the thesis has achieved is a kind of consensus. It argues, by way of Adorno, that the negative movement, rationalized as determinate negation, is anti-foundational; the *ratio* adapts to its contrary that has not developed any fixed identity. In order to critically rescue the experiential it is argued that mimesis, the un-posed affinity for the non-conceptual other, has become somewhat disengaged and this state of affairs has, in part, come about through an essential change in aesthetic sensibilities. The culture industry and concomitant instrumental rationality loom large.

The thesis argues that with the declension of experience the world is becoming less open, up to and including what is, in effect, the dissonant, the new and unintended. The aesthetic sensibility, as an arena of theoretical research and possible reconciliation, moves to speak the unspeakable. This means the unintended, the new, the abhorrent, gives rise to an experiential interest. Its priori determination disqualifies it as such.

The supplementary argument against authenticity in voice and being, details, however indirectly, the rational idea of constellation and material praxis. A changed praxis and changed aesthetic sensibility stops the theoretical abstract idea from turning into mere license. The question of conceptual relations and praxis, the constellation and its movement, is fully comprehended in the light of the experiences it embodies. In its detail the thesis and its argument becomes the setting for an engagement with those philosophical concerns that moves and motivates experientially, especially as to their antecedences and consequences.

One of the unintended consequences of the works philosophical engagement, and its real achievement, is this re-inscription of a changed metaphysics and changed aesthetic sensibility and praxis. This provides proof or support, if needed, for Adorno's claim that theory has as its addendum or supplement, embodiment.

This material consciousness, the crystallization of the tensions, contradictions and ambiguities of the social, envelops the new as the dissonant. A changed aesthetic sensibility and praxis in the dissonance of the new is a powerful expression of the theoretical. The dissertations import is by way of its detailed theoretical engagement or comportment. The thesis, the theoretical, to a degree, outlines the power that lies behind such concepts as are theoretically engaged. This critical experience rescues such concepts, pointing them out and opening them up to view and regard as to their specific usefulness as conceptual tools.

In brief, the thesis 'Experiential Embodiment and Human Immediacy: Adorno's Negative Affinity,' set out with the worthy aim of attaining an understanding of Adorno's philosophical concerns, a movement within understanding itself. The movement delimits the possibility of another area of research that pertaining to the essential nature of the understanding, however paradoxical, untimely, or unfruitful such a quest may seem. What is understood is not the understanding itself but a 'something' or an entity which in appearance is relational and social.

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