Undialectical Conclusions: Adorno, his Habermasian Critics, Non-Identity and the Culture Industry

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The thesis defends Adorno's self-consciously contradictory method against the criticisms of Jürgen Habermas, whilst at the same time reading Habermas's critique of negative dialectics as an exemplary expression of postmodern experience. It starts by comparing the figures of thought to be found in Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialektik der Aufklärung with those of Habermas's theory of communicative action. Habermas's position turns out to be no less paradoxical than the negative dialectics, whose aporias he denounces as self-undermining. How are we to understand this shift from a method which consciously embraces contradiction to a theory that, though it throws up no fewer ambiguities, views paradoxical arguments as little more than logical inconsistencies? To explain the shift, I turn to the concept of non-identity as it is formulated by Adorno, but also as it appears - under different names - in the work of Karl Heinz Bohrer. Though Bohrer devotedly pursues heterogeneity, he seems constitutively unable to conceptualize the desired specificity. The theoretical cause of this inability is an unwillingness to mediate contradictions, an unwillingness he shares with Habermas. But this unwillingness is more than a theoretical failing. As a reading of Adorno's 'Der Essay als Form' discovers, it is the symptom of a subjectivity that can no longer trace the larger concatenations in which non-identity consists. If Habermas and Bohrer cannot mediate conceptually, this is because social mediation has itself vanished from view. A discussion of Adorno's texts on pop culture helps explain this changed subjectivity, exploring the mechanisms by which the culture industry hollows out contradiction and weakens mediation. More importantly, the discussion shows that Adorno's own texts are marked by the logic they criticize. Adorno's philosophy reproduces the structures of the pop culture it excoriates. This unexpected complicity leaves its mark on Adorno's method. His emphatic oppositions - such as that between Schönberg and Stravinsky insisted on by Philosophie der neuen Musik - fold in on themselves. It is tempting to assume that we therefore could replace Adorno's controversial choices - high art not pop culture, Schönberg not Stravinsky - with more paradoxical arguments in which all cultural artefacts appear radically ambivalent. But which subject could meaningfully articulate the conflicting impulses of the resulting aporias? A reading of Adorno's essay on Beckett's Endgame discovers that, though Adorno himself explicitly contemplates dialectics freezing into irresolvable ambiguity, he seems at the same time to lose the ability to think even paradoxically. What emerges instead are undialectical figures of thought that prefigure the unmediated arguments of the succeeding generation. Adorno has become like his successors.

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My thesis is a critique of Adorno's method that stays true to the dialectical spirit of his philosophy precisely by calling it in question. It opens, in Part I, with an account of Habermasian objections to negative dialectics. Habermas is concerned that Adorno's assault on rationality is so all-embracing that it undermines the very standards it requires rationally to legitimate its critique. Adorno consciously embraces this self-undermining position. But Habermas believes its aporias, however self-conscious, to be misguided because a less paradoxical standard was close to hand. Language itself could have supplied negative dialectics with the norms it needed to criticize the abuses of instrumental reason. If Adorno is not logically forced to adopt an aporetic position, the question arises why a philosopher so gifted should manoeuvre himself into a theoretical dead-end. Habermas's answer to this, in the essay on Dialektik der Aufklärung included in Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, is that Adorno illicitly privileges one of the three distinct logics of modernity, inappropriately judging cognitive and moral discourses by aesthetic criteria. When compared to the subject's awe-struck contemplation of a work of art, any more practical intervention in the world is bound to appear crude

and instrumental.

Habermas's account of negative dialectics misrecognizes its object, attributing to Adorno an undialectical model of critique to which he does not subscribe. In Dialektik der Aufklärung, Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly abandon the quest for sure-fire, external norms, to which Habermas remains committed. The book instead portrays reason as at once instrumentally oblivious to, and anxiously respectful of, heterogeneity, hoping to turn the more utopian side of rationality against its manipulative counterpart. Having, in a brief reading of Dialektik der Aufklärung presented this more ambiguous rationality, my thesis aims to explain why Habermas should misrecognize negative dialectics. To answer this question, I turn first to an analysis of the figures of thought behind Habermas's own position. Though Habermas disapproves of Adorno's contradictions, his own theory is no less paradoxical. The rationality of the lifeworld is said to spawn the system out of its inner logic, whilst simultaneously remaining qualitatively distinct - remaining, in theory at least, uncontaminated by the distortions and abuses it at another level engenders. Habermas cannot defend theoretically the normative purity he thus ensures for communication. He can only reaffirm it with bodily and topographical metaphors. Informing this defence of the communication is a double logic: a differentiating impulse, which divides, for instance, lifeworld from system; and an impulse to interlink and reintegrate, which traces, for instance, the connections between lifeworld and

system, or insists that the economy remains anchored in communicative rationality. Habermas consciously adopts this double logic so as to resuscitate the plans of a grand social theory embraced by Horkheimer when he acceded to the directorship of the Institute for Social Research in 1931. The problem with Habermas's strategy is not so much its lack of theoretical foundations, as an internal imbalance between its two sides. As a reading of his essay 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt' discovers, the differentiating impulse is far stronger than the impulse to interlink and reintegrate. Habermas's texts continually draw distinctions which, at each stage of the argument clarify his position, but which cannot retrospectively be ordered into a single narrative. Art, in the essay on modernity, is said at once to be a realm freed from moral and cognitive constraints, a reaction to the quickened pace of industrialized existence, and a tentative reunion of the three distinct logics of modernity. These three aspects of aesthetic experience could no doubt be reconciled with each other. But Habermas himself never makes the connections. Indeed, it seems that he could never. For, to the fact of ever proliferating distinctions, his theoretical voice can counterpose only the desire for reintegration. Albrecht Wellmer's texts on aesthetics offer themselves as a potential solution to this dilemma, but on closer inspection reveal themselves to be no less marked by the strategic imbalance. The synthesizing subject Habermas requires can, in Wellmer's texts, only be repeatedly invoked in an abstract vocabulary curiously

at odds with the imagined fluidity. No more than Habermas can Wellmer be that reintegrating individual himself.

The Habermasian project is frustrated by the very strategic logic which guarantees its norms. It claims to have have transcended the aporias of negative dialectics but it instead replaces the self-conscious contradictions of Adorno and Horkheimer with a strangely unreflexive self-undermining. The rest of the thesis seeks to explain this shift from a method which consciously embraces contradiction to a theory that, though it throws up no fewer ambiguities, can see in paradoxical arguments nothing but empty aporias and logical inconsistencies. For Adorno, paradoxical arguments cease to be empty sophistry to the degree that they capture, in their form as much as in their content, the complexities, rough edges and specificity of the objects they investigate. A dialectical method is more than an empty argumentative trick to the degree that it figures forth the non-identical. Part II of the thesis takes up the concept of non-identity, in the hope that an exploration of this often baffling term will elucidate the break between Adorno and his consciously undialectical successors. To understand this break it is as important to register how the succeeding generation conceives heterogeneity as it is to reconstruct Adorno's grasp of the term. No German critic has devoted more energy to the question than Karl Heinz Bohrer, so it is to his pursuit of the heterogeneous, particularly to the essays collected in the volume Plötzlichkeit: Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins, that

the argument then turns. Bohrer wishes to rescue from oblivion whatever it is that concepts, in ordering the world into manipulable objects, exclude. The irony of his endeavours is that the very act of naming heterogeneity appears, to his sceptical eyes, to deprive it of its specificity; conceptual reflection on non-identity unmasks each epiphanic quantity as in fact disappointingly familiar. Part II tracks Bohrer's successive, unsuccessful attempts to give a name to non-identity, showing how he turns first to the texture and specificity of everyday objects, then to untheorized residues of subjectivity, but comes finally to accept the emptiness of his concept, to accept his very inability to do more than negatively circumscribe the excluded novelty, as itself a cipher for the unknowable.

While Bohrer devotedly pursues heterogeneity, he seems at the same time constitutively incapable of conceptualizing the desired specificity. The theoretical cause of this paradox - as a brief comparison with Benjamin's essay on surrealism, and his theses on history shows - is an inability to mediate between terms without reducing one to the other. Where Benjamin describes a surreal epiphany that is at once quotidian and revolutionary, Bohrer cannot acknowledge the banality of his moment of insight without doubting its novelty. As soon as an epiphany shows even traces of social determination, it becomes, for him, wholly standardized. The dividing logic which jeopardizes Habermas's theoretical undertaking can similarly be explained as a failure of mediation. Habermas is no more

willing than Bohrer to admit ambiguities in the objects he theorizes, but counters such ambiguities with a proliferating armoury of conceptual differentiations. This unwillingness to mediate could be dismissed as a theoretical error, the theories of Bohrer and Habermas could be abandoned in favour of the more dialectical approaches of Adorno and Benjamin. My thesis construes the deficit instead as the record of an experience.

A reconstruction of Adorno's concept of non-identity, as it is presented in the essay 'Der Essay als Form', assists this new vision. Though the non-identity of an object might appear to consist in contradictions and ambivalences which the individual passively registers, Adorno questions any such clear division between subject and object to insist that things acquire heterogeneity and complexity only through the culture that mediates, fragments and destroys them. Society's interaction with objects unpacks their non-identity, bestowing upon them a history and scattered identity that, spared this disruption, they would never had enjoyed. This mediation is carried out by individual subjects. Though their contribution is made all but unknowingly, they can, in the process of reflection or essay writing, more or less consciously reconstruct the mediation in which they blindly participate.

This account of non-identity offers just the clue needed to reconstrue the absence of mediation as more than a failure of argument. For could it not be that individuals might lose the faculty to reconstruct the larger patterns of non-identity to which they nevertheless ceasely contribute? Certainly, the

inability of Habermas and Bohrer to trace connections between objects would seem to testify to subjects exiled from these larger concatenations, to individuals cut off from the history in which they nevertheless participate. Habermas's at once insensitive and impatient dismissal of the paradoxes and ambiguities of Adorno's style would thus seem to be more than a methodological divergence. It apparently expresses a qualitatively new experience of society. It is the theoretical approach of a subject to whom ambivalences, because they have no correlate in the world as it daily confronts her, have lost all theoretical significance.

But what has brought about this shift in experience? What has broken the links that bound consciousness to the larger patterns of non-identity and contradiction? The second half of the thesis sketches a possible answer: an explosion of the social totality, the logic, if not the causes of which Adorno explores in his texts on pop culture, most notably in the little discussed essay 'Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios'. Like the radio symphony, society must now be grasped as an untotalizable array of fragments. These fragments, in their shattering of totality, cease not only to conflict or compete with each other, they cease in any emphatic sense to relate to each other at all. Society explodes into a rubble of self-contained images, whose eerie isolation induces in individuals the perplexity at contradiction evident in the texts of Habermas and Bohrer.

As well as adumbrating the logic of an untotalizable

society, Parts III and IV trace a genealogy of Habermas's and Bohrer's condition, tracking down in Adorno's own arguments the harbingers of the troubled consciousness that will befall his successors. If Adorno's texts analyse and denounce the loss of contradiction, they simultaneously exemplify it. This is most strikingly illustrated in their discussions of the culture industry. Pop cultural artefacts loosely bind together disparate elements, line up side-by-side melodies, chords, characters or scenes which do not develop out of one another, do not complement or contradict their rivals but indifferently coexist. Tension and conflict in the culture industry are replaced by a blank contiguity. Adorno's texts on pop culture similarly line up irreconcilables without ever carrying out the tension - indifferently juxtaposing the idea that high art remains qualitatively distinct from Hollywood and Jazz, with the converse claim that the culture industry has swallowed art whole and usurped its history. This baffling juxtaposition of incompatible terms inadvertently reproduces the very structures it denounces.

This affinity would be of little import if it did not simultaneously skew Adorno's method. Adorno hopes, in his Philosophie der neuen Musik, to uphold a clear-cut distinction between Schönberg's holistic approach to composition, and Stravinsky's musical bricolage. A close analysis of the text discovers, however, that the opposition falls in on itself. Though he hopes to divide them, Adorno unites Schönberg and Stravinsky in the shared figure of a blind submission,

undermining his own polemical distinction with arguments that, despite themselves, make Schönberg and Stravinsky barely distinguishable from the culture industry. One conclusion to be drawn from this self-undermining would seem to be that art should no longer be emphatically protected from pop culture, that cultural artefacts of all types should instead be construed as radically ambivalent. Adorno's vertiginous dialectics should give way to a purer paradox. Certainly, undecidable ambiguities are occasionally consciously embraced by Adorno. Yet who is the subject strong enough to hold together these conflicting impulses, to grasp art, for instance, as at once reified to the core and emancipatory? Part IV turns to Adorno's meditations on subjectivity as they are expressed in his reading of Beckett's Endgame. As he reflects on the battered subjects presented in Beckett's play, Adorno not only contemplates how dialectical thought could grind to a halt. His own text seems at the same time to lose the ability to think even paradoxically. Adorno himself is not unaware of this movement, but he interprets it as a triumphant step towards post-dialectical perfection. For a reader schooled by the non-dialectical figures of Habermas and Bohrer, it is hard not to grasp the shift as a first inkling of the unmediated structures of postmodern conceptuality.

This collapse of dialectics transforms our understanding of Habermas and Bohrer. They appeared on first reading merely insensitive to the contradictions and ambivalences which are at once the defining attribute and signal achievement of Adorno's

texts. Now, however, their imperviousness to contradiction appears an unsuspected index of truth. Their impatience of ambivalence and their failure to mediate between conflicting terms register - however unconsciously - a movement beyond dialectics unwillingly initiated in Adorno's own texts, a movement beyond dialectics which is the trace left in philosophical discourse by the pristine, self-contained, unthinkable blocks in which a fragmented society is experienced. Though Habermas's rejection of negative dialectics travesties Adorno, it must unfortunately be grasped as both inevitable and true.

U N D I A L E C T I C A L C O N C L U S I O N S

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B E N M O R G A N

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for funding a two-year Research Fellowship during which the bulk of the text was written. Thanks are due also to Christina Howells, Rodney Livingstone, Jim Reed, Gillian Rose and Richard Sheppard, all of whom read earlier drafts of individual chapters, and whose comments and criticisms, though sometimes harsh, were indispensable. Terry Eagleton and Tom Kuhn have overseen the project from the beginning, patiently suggesting how each draft could be improved or refined. But special thanks must go to Peter and Christa Bürger for their advice, their criticism, and their unfailing support.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Aber nur die Übertreibung ist wahr.(1)

1. Contradiction and Experience

Adorno is a contradictory writer.(2) He can, with Horkheimer, in a single, staccato sentence, brush aside the claims of Enlightenment rationality: 'Aufklärung ist totalitär'.(3) Yet he maintains simultaneously that freedom, if it is ever attained, will be won only with the aid of Enlightenment critique.(4) He lavishes praise on Schönberg, presenting his compositional techniques as the archetype of authentic aesthetic creation, but he subjects his compositions to such searching, and critical scrutiny that Schönberg is provoked to denounce the philosopher as a heretic, and to add, for good measure, that he never liked the man anyway.(5) If Adorno displays a disturbing talent for seeking out the hidden violence in reason and in art, he is no less adept at perceiving traces of hope in the most despicable of human practices, a utopian longing in the anti-Semitism of Richard Wagner,(6) or a cipher for truth in the affirmative art he

otherwise impugns for dissolving the intractable conflicts of modern society in its sickly sweet reconciliations.(7)

Every reading of Adorno must cope, if only indirectly, with these dizzying changes of direction. One strategy is to edit them out, to track down the main thesis of Adorno's argument - the Enlightenment is totalitarian; Schönberg is the model for twentieth-century art - and treat any statements which qualify this basic position as additions which Adorno fails convincingly to integrate into the overall argument,(8) as confusions which a little exegetical ingenuity can resolve,(9) or as signs that Adorno came himself to see the error of his ways.(10) Alternatively, one can recognize the contradictions as part of the general plan, but view them as evidence of philosophical bad faith, as the double standards of a critic who baulks at no inconsistency if it helps him to champion his modernist canon.(11) For all their divergence, these two approaches are united in the conviction that Adorno has a clear programme. They differ only in the relation they perceive between programme and inconsistency. Where for the first, the qualifications weaken, impede, or retrospectively alter Adorno's undertaking, for the second they actively if dishonestly promote it. If Adorno's contradictions can be thought both unintentionally to hinder and maliciously to promote his argument, maybe we should reconsider the relation between thesis and qualification. A third approach, more sympathetic to Adorno's project, views the contradictions neither as an obstacle nor as a mendacious crutch for his

arguments, but as the very medium in which they move. It does not attribute to Adorno a thesis he then advertently or inadvertently undermines, but suggests that his position, if it can still be called a position, emerges through the process of reversal and inversion itself, through the constant, conscious play in which his dialectical style consists. The contradictions are not a supplement to the main thesis, they <u>are</u> the thesis. As Adorno, in a different context, pithily announces: 'Die Spaltung selbst ist die Wahrheit...'.(12)

Having thus affirmed and accepted the tensions of Adorno's arguments, interpretations of his texts would seem left with the job of reconstructing the movement of each dialectic, of painstakingly retracing the twists and turns of each dazzling argument.(13) Yet the irony of this approach is that it destroys the very contradictions it hopes to redeem. However closely it follows in Adorno's footsteps, it will always be at one remove from the text it interprets. For where Adorno's writings make themselves at home in the ambivalences, blind spots and self-contradictions of their objects, the exegete respectfully repeats what has already been said, reproduces contradictions already stated in the primary text. Contradictions thus rehearsed lose their substance. They forfeit the moment of shock, surprise, laughter, or horror that each reversal is intended to provoke,(14) subsiding into the predictable paradoxicality Adorno expressly rejected: 'die gelassene Darlegung dessen, dass jedes Ding seine zwei Seiten hat'.(15) How can an interpretation pay tribute to Adorno's

dialectical virtuosity without emptying it of substance?

One answer is to ignore it. The signal virtue of interpretations which pin Adorno down to a single main thesis is their tendency to highlight, focus and reinvigorate Adorno's contradictions by default.(16) Faced with a cogent summary of one aspect of Adorno's arguments, but aware, if only dimly, of conflicting claims, of passages where the very inverse is maintained, the reader is once again, and fruitfully, confronted with a problem. She must, for instance, reconcile the aspect of Adorno's Philosophie der neuen Musik rightly emphasized by Peter Bürger or David Roberts - that Adorno exalts the expressive intensity of Schönberg's music at the expense of Stravinsky's more calculating compositions - with passages which apparently reverse the hierarchy and admit of Stravinsky: 'Die leeren Augen seiner Musik haben zuweilen mehr Ausdruck als der Ausdruck'.(17) Undialectical readings reimbue Adorno's contradictions with an immediacy and drama no more measured summary of the two sides could hope to match. Yet the dialectical effect is not only unintentionally produced but depends on a reader who compares the interpretation with the original text. One way to circumvent this problem would be to strengthen the term more usually omitted - to portray Adorno as a champion of positivist science and an addict of B-movies, sitcoms and the soaps - trusting in the accepted image of the philosopher to complement one's apparently outrageous inferences. Yet, though such a reversal promises at the very least to be entertaining, it still does not explicitly engage

with Adorno's dialectical method. Is it possible to revitalize Adorno's contradictions with a reading that that does not underplay but consciously confronts their role in his philosophy?

Some critics have adopted the strategy of saying Adorno is not dialectical enough. The self-consciously aporetic style of his philosophy is acknowledged and respected, but it is suggested simultaneously that in certain crucial aspects - his analyses of pop culture, his treatment of women - he falls below his own high standards.(18) The critic, in her reading, then endeavours to make good Adorno's failure, to salvage from their undialectical execution the original, more critical intentions. Gillian Rose would insist that the resulting reading is nevertheless inadequate precisely because it stays so close to Adorno's method. The irreconcilable oppositions, between whose poles Adorno's texts indefatigably shuttle, in her view, fail themselves to be fully dialectical. Where for Hegel dialectical oppositions are, in a third speculative stage of the argument, united in a synthesis which disregards the specificity of neither term, Adorno's philosophy decides prematurely that no such speculative synthesis will be achieved. It fixes its oppositions in a state of permanent conflict, illicitly privileging play over reconciliation.(19)

Rose's approach has the virtue of neither summarizing, nor belatedly improving on Adorno's contradictions, but of critically engaging with the method that underpins them. This shift of focus is indispensable if one is to escape the

paradoxes of an exegesis that freezes the very contradictions it redeems. A reading must stop rehearsing, or even revising individual oppositions - the relations between Enlightenment and its other, between Schönberg and Stravinsky, high art and the culture industry - and scrutinize the contradictoriness itself. It must reconstruct the basic mechanisms behind Adorno's thought, recover the shapes, patterns and figures - what in German would be called the 'Denkform' - of Adorno's philosophy.(20) Having thus reconstructed the form of his texts, an interpretation can then dialectically evaluate their achievement.

But this attention to form raises a number of questions. Does not the move drain the method of substance as surely as exegetical summary? Even if the form is not deprived of content, how is it to be evaluated? (Gillian Rose compares Adorno's method with an existing Hegelian standard that it fails to satisfy.) What then becomes of the critics who do not dialectically unpack the figures of Adorno's thought? Are the readings which either productively overlook, inadvertently freeze or critically refine the ambivalences to be dismissed as wrongheaded, their positions castigated and abandoned 'wie wenn wir von etwas sagen, dies ist nichts oder falsch, und nun, damit fertig, davon weg zu irgend etwas anderem übergehen'?(21) The answer to these questions lies in a notion of experience. The figures of Adorno's thought cannot be treated as empty form, but must in their very structure be grasped as an attempt to round on and articulate society as it is experienced by the

individual. If a symptomatic reading helps illuminate Adorno's dialectics, it equally assists and reinvigorates a reading of his successors. Their arguments, no less than Adorno's, must be read as the record of experience, must be seen to grapple with, and articulate the texture of the society that shapes them, must be read, as William James would insist, as 'modes of feeling the whole push, and seeing the whole drift' of their environment.(22) As well as reconstructing the figures of thought which underpin Adorno's dialectical method, therefore, my argument analyses the patterns behind the later non-dialectical positions, reconstructs the figures of thought of the critics who repudiate dialectics. These positions emerge on closer inspection as no less paradoxical than the philosophy they criticize, as no less contradictory despite - or perhaps even because of - their discomfort with contradiction. This discovery does not lead me to vindicate the rejected dialectics, to champion Adorno at the expense of his detractors. The peculiar blend of rigour and inconsistency, unambiguous argument and paradox, which characterizes the arguments of the later generation is rather grasped as an index of their truth. The broken figures of thought are assumed to capture the spirit of the world they inhabit. Indeed, they are assumed to capture it so reliably - such reliability is attributed more usually only to literary texts - that, as an embodiment of contemporary experience, they become the perspective from which Adorno's method can most fruitfully be investigated. The later texts themselves become the standard by

which Adorno's philosophy can be evaluated.

To read texts as a record of an epoch would seem to presuppose a knowledge of the context informing their arguments, to presuppose a concept of society. How else is one to recognize the traces of history in the philosophies interpreted? I start out with no such concept, but not merely because I am not trained as a sociologist. Any such symptomatic reading faces a methodological problem. To match up the texts investigated with a pre-existing model, to read off the signs of a pre-established context, is to rob the texts of any specificity, but it is also - and this is the more pressing problem - to learn nothing new from the analysis. It is merely to confirm a model which already exists. If the exercise is to be more than perfunctory, the texts must teach us something unexpected about the society they exemplify. When the texts in question exemplify not a past epoch but our contemporary context, this methodological difficulty becomes as much a blessing as a challenge. For, contemporary society - as the disagreements over the terms postmodernism and postmodernity vividly demonstrate - has no model of itself mechanically to rediscover in its texts and arguments.(23) Rather than confirming a fixed image, therefore, the structures of thought must themselves give us a first inkling of the society they typify. Rather than representing, reflecting, or expressing social structures already understood, the texts themselves, their figures and forms, must in the course of the analysis be transformed into fragments of an as yet uncharted social

experience.

To understand the significance of these fragments, however, one needs an idea of society nevertheless, if only to ascertain how the emerging fragments turn accepted wisdom on its head. The model I adopt is that of Adorno's own texts, as it emerges in the discussions of the culture industry. Other critics reject this bleak vision, suggesting it has lost its relevance - Jürgen Habermas's reaction to Dialektik der Aufklärung is paradigmatic: 'Diese Stimmung,' he writes, 'diese Einstellung ist nicht mehr die unsere'.(24) Like Fredric Jameson, however, I take Adorno's analyses of a society that neutralizes resistance, that simultaneously marshals, standardizes, fragments and aestheticizes every corner of experience, his analyses, in short, of a society with no outside, as the basis from which we can most illuminatingly grapple with postmodernity.(25) Yet the comparison with Adorno's successors, with the picture of postmodern culture which emerges from the figures of their thought, forces us to acknowledge that for all their apparent acuity, Adorno's analyses err in one vital aspect. The weakness of his theory of the culture industry is not so much that, as Jameson ironically comments in a related context, 'he thought it meant fascism, but we know its only fun'.(26) It is not his straight-faced refusal to admit pleasure into his readings of Hollywood and jazz. The problem is rather his faith in dialectics, his implicit insistence on an analytic position beyond the culture industry, be it that of art, philosophy or sociology, which

resists, conceptualizes and renders transparent pop culture's mechanisms and sleights of hand.(27) The structures Adorno analyses and denounces in pop culture invade, in contemporary texts, theoretical argument itself. As the reconstruction of their figures of thought unexpectedly discovers, philosophers across the political spectrum from Karl Heinz Bohrer and Jean-Francois Lyotard to Habermas himself inadvertently reproduce the paralysing, fragmented patterns of the culture industry.(28) If we concede that these undialectical positions are not merely unsophisticated or inconsistent but are instead an index of society as it is ineluctably experienced, this insight must force us to relinquish the comfort of an external, critical position. The wheel thus comes full circle. The project to defend Adorno's method against undialectical misreadings is driven, by its very faith in contradiction, to question dialectical thought itself.

2. The Shape of the Argument

Habermas's is at once the most systematic and the most significant critique of Adorno. Not only do he and like-minded philosophers, such as Albrecht Wellmer and Axel Honneth, lucidly present the case against negative dialectics, they attempt equally to explain why Adorno should have committed himself to so unpromising an approach, whilst at the same time taking up the critical cause in whose service Adorno developed his paradoxical method. Having expressed their doubts about Adorno's desire to criticize not just aspects of reason but rationality as a whole, they endeavour to explain the roots of this overambitious project, whilst at the same time reformulating its aims in a less paradoxical, more theoretically promising vocabulary, distancing themselves from the first generation of the Frankfurt School even as they take up its mantle. For all its sympathy with Adorno's approach, this translation of negative dialectics into Habermas's theoretical idiom - into the vocabulary of communication, lifeworld and system - mistakes its object, attributing to Adorno an undialectical model of critique which he would not recognize. The first part of my thesis presents this misrecognition, juxtaposing Habermas's arguments with those of Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialektik der Aufklärung. The aim of the juxtaposition is not to disparage Habermasian arguments, but rather to gain a clearer view of the two approaches, to ascertain more exactly how Habermas's method differs from that of Adorno. Close analysis of the two approaches produces two

striking revelations. The first is that rationality as it is portrayed in Dialektik der Aufklärung is not monotonously exploitative, but rather an explosive blend of manipulation and wonderment, of reification and redemption. The second is that, though Habermas overlooks, underplays or misconstrues Adorno's self-consciously paradoxical method, his own approach is no less double-edged. The lifeworld, as it figures in Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, is at once radically distinct from the system, and inseparably intertwined. More importantly, the two logics which Habermas thus consciously combines - the differentiating logic which separates the lifeworld from the system, the reintegrating logic which allows communication to guide the economy and welfare state nevertheless - cannot be united. The differentiating logic - as a reading of Habermas's celebrated essay 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt' discovers - gathers a momentum of its own which threatens Habermas's critical project. Albrecht Wellmer's texts on aesthetics can be read as an attempt to temper this difficulty, that is itself undermined by the double logic it hoped to counteract.

Part I of the thesis offers a comparison of Habermas's and Adorno's differing models of contradiction and critique. Habermas's method emerges from the comparison not as the panacea to the problems of negative dialectics it aspires to be, but as itself no less contradictory and fragile than the figures of thought it criticizes. The rest of the thesis seeks to explain this shift from a method which consciously embraces

contradiction to a theory that, though it throws up no fewer ambiguities, can see in paradoxical arguments nothing but empty aporias and logical inconsistencies. For Adorno, paradoxical arguments cease to be empty sophistry to the degree that they capture, in their form as much as in their content, the complexities, rough edges and specificity of the objects they investigate. A dialectical method is more than an empty argumentative trick to the degree that it figures forth the non-identical.(29) Part II of the thesis takes up the concept of non-identity, in the hope that an exploration of this often baffling term will elucidate the break between Adorno and his consciously undialectical successors. To understand this break it is as important to register how the succeeding generation conceives heterogeneity as it is to reconstruct Adorno's grasp of the term. No German critic has devoted more energy to the question than Karl Heinz Bohrer, so it is to his pursuit of the heterogeneous, particularly to the essays collected in the volume Plötzlichkeit: Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins, that the argument then turns. Bohrer wishes to rescue from oblivion whatever it is that concepts, in ordering the world into manipulable objects, exclude. The irony of his endeavours is that the very act of pinpointing an example of heterogeneity appears, to his sceptical eyes, to deprive it of its specificity, revealing the supposedly epiphanic quantity to be disappointingly familiar. Part II tracks Bohrer's successive, unsuccessful attempts to isolate and name non-identity, showing how he eventually accepts the emptiness of his concept,

his very inability to do more than negatively circumscribe the excluded novelty, as itself a cipher for the unknowable.

Bohrer's arguments can be read as a devoted pursuit of non-identity which is, at the same time, constitutively incapable of conceptualizing the desired specificity. The theoretical cause of this paradox - as a brief comparison with essays by Walter Benjamin illustrates - is an inability to mediate between terms without reducing one to the other. Where Benjamin describes a surreal epiphany that is at once quotidian and revolutionary, Bohrer cannot acknowledge the banality of his moment of insight without doubting its novelty. As soon as his epiphany shows even traces of social determination, it becomes, to his eyes, wholly standardized. The dividing logic which jeopardizes Habermas's theoretical undertaking can similarly be explained as a failure of mediation. Habermas is no more willing than Bohrer to admit ambiguities in the objects he theorizes, but counters such ambiguities with a proliferating armoury of conceptual differentiations. Having pinpointed the theoretical cause of Bohrer's and Habermas's difficulties, the challenge is to see this logical failure not merely as a philosophical deficit but as itself the record of an experience.

A reconstruction of Adorno's concept of non-identity, as it is presented in the essay 'Der Essay als Form', assists this new vision. Non-identity appears in this essay as the skein of interconnections woven by subjects as they use and abuse the objects they encounter. It emerges as something akin to

history, as the web to which individuals in their day-to-day actions contribute blindly and unknowingly, but which, in the process of reflection or essay writing, they can more or less consciously reconstruct. This account of non-identity offers just the clue needed to reconstrue the absence of mediation as more than a failure of argument. For could not individuals lose the faculty to reconstruct the larger patterns of non-identity to which they nevertheless contribute, and could not this loss explain the inability of Habermas and Bohrer to trace connections, to grasp and value ambiguities? Part II closes with the suggestion that the failure to mediate is the theoretical expression of a society in which mediation itself has vanished behind the inscrutable surface of day-to-day life.

The second half of the thesis sketches a genealogy of Habermas and Bohrer's failure, tracking down in Adorno's own arguments the harbingers of their inability to mediate. To write this genealogy, I turn in Part III to Adorno's texts on pop culture. My reading discovers that the arguments with which Adorno criticizes the culture industry reproduce in their own form the very structures they denounce. This affinity would be of little import if it did not leave a mark on Adorno's philosophy. The trace which it does leave on his thought is most clearly evident in Philosophie der neuen Musik. In this book, Adorno hopes, despite dialectical qualifications, to uphold a clear-cut distinction between Schönberg's holistic compositions, and Stravinsky's musical bricolage. On close analysis, the opposition falls in on itself. Though he hopes to

divide them, Adorno unites Schönberg and Stravinsky in the shared figure of a blind submission. This blind submission not only breaks down the opposition between authentic and inauthentic music. On Adorno's terms, it equally renders high art indistinguishable from pop culture. Yet before we conclude that Adorno's emphatic oppositions, once weakened by the culture industry, degenerate, or develop, into a more slippery ambiguity - the stark distinction between Schönberg and Stravinsky yielding to arguments which portray both as insuperably ambivalent - we should ask which subject is strong enough simultaneously to conceptualize the conflicting impulses of the paradoxes which then appear. Part IV turns to Adorno's meditations on subjectivity as they are expressed in his reading of Beckett's Endgame. As he reflects on the battered subjects presented in Beckett's play, Adorno comes increasingly to endorse the radical ambiguities expressed only implicitly in Philosophie der neuen Musik. As he confronts the collapse of subjectivity, so his own arguments consciously embrace undecidability and aporia. At the same time, however, his own text loses the ability to think even paradoxically. Adorno himself is not unaware of this second movement, which he interprets as a triumphant step towards a post-dialectical perfection. For a reader schooled by the non-dialectical figures of Habermas and Bohrer, it is hard not to grasp the shift as a first inkling of the unmediated structures of postmodern conceptuality.

To present Adorno as an accomplice of the culture industry, and as the unwitting precursor of Habermas and Bohrer's undialectical arguments is at once heterodox and discomforting. It inverts two common images of the Frankfurt School philosopher: that of the mandarin abominator of popular culture;(30) and that of the dialectical authority to be invoked against the unmediated, undialectical arguments of poststructuralism.(31) But these heretical readings are the conclusions forced upon my argument by its very commitment to Adorno's dialectical style, by its commitment not merely to the brilliant ambivalences of his arguments, but to the experience that fills out the equivocations, imbuing dialectical virtuosity with historical content. What my readings discover is a shift in the experience recorded by theoretical texts, a shift from Adorno's last-ditch, acrobatic determination to round on the larger patterns of non-identity, to a state of mind for which this feat seems merely aporetic, self-undermining or inconsistent. This changed experience transforms dialectics. Ironically, it is the very stress on the substance of contradiction that, as the argument progresses, deprives it of its content, its context and its unimpeachability.

One final irony of the argument, however, seems beyond its own control. Bohrer and Habermas's inability to mediate is finally defended as the symptom of a broader sociological or experiential transformation. But the truth which their texts thus articulate is expressed without their knowledge. It is a truth available only to their interpreter. Apparently, my

argument can salvage the experience articulated in Bohrer and Habermas's texts only by breaking completely with their own views of their respective projects, with their intentions, aspirations and disappointments, with everything indeed which makes sensations and reactions more than empty reflexes. It would be a comfort to interpret this paradox as the scar left on the argument by the postmodern condition it analyses, to cast my own thesis as a quest for experience itself constitutively incapable of penetrating to the concrete contours of day-to-day living. The more likely explanation for the failure, however, is that the questions raised by the thesis, and the techniques developed to answer them are still too unfamiliar - to me, if to no-one else. The questions are, in retrospect, easily summarized. Can we read texts in a way that does more than stand outside them, pinpointing their logical inadequacies? Can we break with the idea that society, or experience obeys the laws of even dialectical logic (the need for mediation, for instance, or the dialectical interdependence of identity and difference), and so see logical slips and theoretical failings as ciphers for truth? In one aspect, of course, these questions are very old-fashioned. They posit something outside discourse to which the slips and fissures of textuality inadvertently gesture. But as an approach to theoretical texts they are unusual. If my argument cannot finally solve the problems they raise, I hope it can at least convince the reader that to ask such questions is to shed an unexpected, exciting and indeed irresistible light on

the theoretical texts interrogated, and so encourage her too to look for better answers.

PART I

A E S T H E T I C A P P E A R A N C E S :

Habermas's Critique of Adorno

> The thing to avoid, I don't know why, is the spirit of system.(1)

1. The Problem with Adorno

Adorno criticizes conceptuality as such. Habermas's writings on Adorno, from his earliest essays to the more recent critique of Dialektik der Aufklärung in Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, circle uneasily around this one problem. Adorno wishes to unmask the reifying aspects of rationality, but he sets his criticisms so deep that no concepts remain to be favourably contrasted with the distortions of instrumental reason. Even his own terms become entangled with the conceptual barbarities he exposes and abhors. The most disturbing consequence of this all-out assault on rationality, for Habermas, is that it undermines its own position. By attacking the very structure of conceptuality, it casts doubt on the critical concepts it itself needs to evaluate and denounce instrumental reason. As he succinctly formulates the dilemma in his Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns: 'Die Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft, die in der Negativen Dialektik auf ihren Begriff gebracht wird, dementiert, indem sie mit Mitteln der Theorie arbeitet, ihren theoretischen Anspruch'.(2)

Adorno is not troubled by this apparent contradiction. If concepts distort and manipulate, they simultaneously offer us the means to overcome distortion. Philosophical categories are, for him, both abstractions which ignore the particularities of the objects they subsume, and, by virtue of their very difference from the phenomena conceptualized, a first, tentative recognition of each object's inherent plurality. Equipped with this vertiginous, double-edged theory of conceptuality, Adorno hopes to dismantle instrumental reason from within, to make worn-out and manipulative philosophical categories round upon and overcome their own inadequacy. Philosophy, in his view, consists in the often mind-boggling labour of forcing bankrupt concepts to transcend their own limits: 'die Anstrengung, über den Begriff durch den Begriff hinauszugelangen'.(3) Habermas has little time for so self-consciously aporetic an undertaking, for he does not accept the underlying theory of conceptuality. If we are to criticize instrumental concepts, we cannot, in his view, use the distorting categories themselves. We must find uncontaminated standards with which to contrast and condemn the reifying processes of modern societies.

This conviction determines Habermas's objections to Adorno, but it also dictates the terms in which he reads his philosophy. He assumes that Adorno equally strives to find a sure-fire standard, and understands his failure as the failure of this normative quest. Initially, Habermas judges the search to have been successful. In an essay entitled 'Ein

philosophierender Intellektueller', written in 1963 to commemorate Adorno's sixtieth birthday, he suggests that Adorno's descriptions of a surrender, most obvious in love, which relinquishes the desire to control its object, mark the point at which Adorno overcomes his instinctive reluctance to sketch positive categories, and offers us the glimpse of a non-distorting reason which survives in an instrumentalized world: 'trotz allem'.(4) In these passages, Adorno points towards behaviour which, by yielding wholeheartedly to its object, wondrously escapes the distorting imperatives of self-preservation, and which consequently supplies him with the required benchmark. By 1969, when he writes Adorno's obituary, Habermas realizes that these positive standards cannot be attributed to Adorno himself. Though Adorno is thought still to pitch positive categories against the distortions of rationality, the terms - 'non-identity', 'reconciliation' - remain opaque tokens, empty signs which mark out a utopian space that Adorno dare not fill out in detail. To Habermas, this reticence is unnecessary. The positive ciphers could have been filled out very plausibly in linguistic terms. For what is non-identity if it is not the movement whereby, in conversation, words overcome their inevitable generality and convey to us the irreducibly particular situation of our interlocutor? What is reconciliation if it is not the respect which we display for our conversational partner when we resort to no more violent means of persuasion than the force of the better argument? Where Adorno refuses to elaborate alternative

criteria in the belief that no aspect of human life avoids contamination by the prevailing, fallen rationality, Habermas discovers that he can translate Adorno's ciphers into the vocabulary of linguistic interaction.(5) Language itself offers him a perspective from which to criticize the abuses of reason.

For Habermas, Adorno's critique of instrumental reason is thus not only paradoxically self-defeating, it is needlessly so. It deprives itself of the positive criteria it needs to justify its attack on instrumental reason despite the fact that these criteria were all along to be found in the very language of everyday speech. If the step beyond a self-undermining philosophy was so close to hand, why did Adorno not take it himself? Why did he prefer the dialectical somersaults required to take on conceptuality as a whole, when he could have embarked on the more feasible undertaking of measuring a reified reason against the undistorted rationality evident in ordinary language? Habermas's initial answer is that Adorno's idea of utopia - of what counts as non-distorting interaction - is too uncompromising. Adorno so constructs his philosophy that the repressed term, in the subject's relation both to her environment and to herself, is always nature. This means that simply to put an end to coercion between people, for Adorno, would not be enough to usher in the new, utopian epoch. Nothing but a reconciliation with nature itself could genuinely fulfil the promise stored up in the Enlightenment.(6) Such total reconciliation, however, could be achieved only if our concepts spoke the divine language in which nature addresses itself.

Adorno's better life could be established only by God himself. His utopia is theological.(7)

This notion that it is theology which implicitly deprives Adorno of the terrestrial standards he needs to criticize and transform society is taken up and developed by Albrecht Wellmer and Axel Honneth. For Wellmer, Adorno's critique of instrumental reason is at once too extreme and not extreme enough. It is too extreme because the theological model of redemption to which it stubbornly clings ensures that no merely human action could live up to the divine measure. It thus opens up an unbridgeable gulf between human practice and utopia.(8) Accompanying this theological standard is a metaphysical desire to build an all-encompassing theory. Just as the scientific systems which he explicitly criticizes will not tolerate any fact to fall outside their explanatory jurisdiction, Adorno refuses to acknowledge that anything escapes the all-embracing web of a distorted rationality. For Wellmer, a genuine scepticism should doubt its own doubt. Had Adorno really been as sceptical as his dismissal of instrumental reason suggests, he would necessarily have called his own scepticism into question. The fact that he did not betrays the residual naivety behind his systematic critique of systematic thought.(9)

This naivety is most apparent in Adorno's theory of language. Unlike the later Wittgenstein, Wellmer argues, Adorno still thinks that the subject is herself the source of meaning. It is for this reason that her manipulative, instrumental designs on the object have such a disastrous effect on

language. Where language can do nothing but express the subject's intentions and these intentions are scheming and malicious, language is bound to distort the objects to which it refers. Wittgenstein, in contrast, teaches us that meaning arises not through individual intention but through the social forms which underlie any successful communication: what he calls 'customs', or on a more general level 'the common behaviour of mankind'.(10) At first sight, this might not seem to qualify Adorno's mistrust of conceptual thought. For could not the interaction which subtends and underwrites language be equally exploitative? For Wellmer, as for Habermas, the answer to this question is a resounding: no. The social practices, institutions and linguistic habits by which we make sense of, and interact with our environment are the sediment deposited by successful, open-ended and cooperative human action. Where, for Adorno, the subject's monological imposition on her environment equally petrifies relations between subjects, for Wellmer and Habermas, we cannot exploit the world without first cooperating with our fellow humans. Since our access to our environment is only in and through the common capital of language, without primordial shared linguistic practices we would not even have a world, let alone be able to abuse it. The very objectification of nature which Adorno presumes to be the fate of all concepts, presupposes evenhanded, non-exploitative communication between people: 'Die Objektivierung der Wirklichkeit verweist zurück auf ein Verständigung <u>in</u> der Sprache'.(11) Behind reification, there must always be communicative action.

In Wellmer's arguments, Habermas's objection that Adorno retains a theological concept of utopia is bolstered by the insight that Adorno's theory of language brackets out the intersubjective cooperation on which human action necessarily draws. Honneth's discussion of Adorno similarly focuses on Adorno's misplaced doubts about language and communication. In this account, Adorno is so obsessed with humanity's exploitation of nature that he blinds himself to the more uplifting aspects of relations between people. His sociological theory either omits social interaction altogether, or conceives relations between people in the same pessimistic terms that it employs to expose man's domination of the environment. Just as humans are supposed brutally to shape a passive nature to fit their needs, so power groups are thought to mould the mass of helpless individuals to fit their oppressive designs without the manipulated subjects playing any role in their own subjection. The conflicts, negotiations and shifting boundaries which, for Honneth, are the very stuff of social existence find no place in Adorno's theory. Indeed, the unstable quality of intersubjective struggles must inevitably be overlooked by an approach which models all relations not merely on the subject's interaction with the object, but on a subject-object relationship supposed to be inherently exploitative.(12)

Wellmer and Honneth elucidate Adorno's self-contradiction by isolating his theoretical mistakes: his pre-Wittgensteinian theory of language; his obsession with the subject's manipulation of nature. But they do not yet explain why a

philosopher as gifted as Adorno should commit these egregious errors.(13) What leads Adorno to espouse positions which so perversely, and so consistently underestimate the utopian potential of communicative interaction? Does Habermas's early discovery of theological motifs in Adorno's theory adequately account for this unnecessary and damaging suspicion of human speech and earthly concepts? Habermas's more recent texts play down the accusation of covert theology to offer a different explanation of Adorno's philosophical shortcomings. The key to Adorno's self-undermining, the key to his spurious theories of language and social relations, they suggest, is art.

The source of this reproach is an article published in 1973 by Thomas Baumeister and Jens Kulenkampf in which the two philosophers expose the circular interdependence in Adorno's theory, of art on philosophy and philosophy on art. Like Habermas, Baumeister and Kulenkampf presume that Adorno requires an untainted standard if he is to give his assault on concepts and conceptuality reasonable foundations. Having cast doubt on the very nature of philosophical categories, Adorno, they argue, is compelled to turn to autonomous art as the last refuge of a truth his scepticism has otherwise banished from society. These works of art, however, themselves depend on the very philosophy they are called upon to legitimate. Without philosophical interpretations to unpack the elusive mysteries of aesthetic form, Adorno has no way of knowing whether the enigmatic images of a text by Beckett genuinely herald an alternative rationality. His theory shuttles helplessly between

these two mutually conflicting alternatives, between a philosophy propped up by art, and an art propped up by philosophy. As if this was not damage enough, in summing up their argument, Baumeister and Kulenkampf add a further, related objection to the attack on Adorno's position: 'Was hier Theorie heisst, ist der unendlichen Bewegung eines Pendels vergleichbar und in Wahrheit die Wiederholung der paradoxen Selbstauslegung der ästhetischen Erfahrung selber, nicht aber ihr Begriff'.(14) Having rejected the firm foundations on which theoretical critiques depend, Adorno not only shores up his philosophy with aesthetic artefacts. By forcing his theory to oscillate precariously between incompatible alternatives, he effectively transforms his texts themselves into modernist works of art. He aestheticizes philosophy.(15)

Habermas's Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns (1981) reiterates these objections. Having failed to elaborate the requisite firm foundations (to do this, Habermas ironically comments, Adorno would have to write a theory of the mimetic behaviour whose distinguishing attribute is precisely its ability to elude theoretical determination), Adorno has no choice but to abdicate philosophical claims to genuine insight. Epistemological competence is conceded only to art - though art's access to an undistorted truth is in the long run no less problematic than philosophy's.(16) In the essay on Dialektik der Aufklärung included in Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne (1985), this questionable turn to art, and the aestheticization of philosophy which follows on its heels, is

then boldly placed in a broader sociological framework.(17) By thus situating Adorno's philosophy in the wider context of social modernization, Habermas at last finds the key to the theoretical failings of negative dialectics.

The essay initially approaches Adorno's theory from a new angle. Its main complaint is that Adorno and Horkheimer overlook the complex, differentiated nature of capitalist societies. In Habermas's view, rationality, since the end of the eighteenth century, has crystallized into three distinct forms each of which follows a logic of its own. Science follows the logic of propositional truth, ethics the separate logic of moral right, and art the laws of authentic self-expression. Though this differentiation defines modern society, the authors of Dialektik der Aufklärung blithely ignore its consequences and attack all three spheres as embodiments of instrumental reason. To this later Habermas, not even art survives to temper the contradictions in which Adorno and Horkheimer have consciously entangled themselves: 'Mit ihrer Analyse der Massenkultur wollen Horkheimer und Adorno schliesslich nachweisen, dass die mit der Unterhaltung fusionierte Kunst in ihrer innovativen Kraft gelähmt, von allen kritischen und utopischen Gehalten entleert werde'.(18) Nothing escapes the distorting, standardizing progress of the dialectic of Enlightenment.

Habermas is puzzled that Adorno and Horkheimer should subsume the three distinct logics of modernity under the single category of a destructive reason. Why should anyone thus

disregard the achievements of modern societies? His answer is unexpected. Like the genealogist Nietzsche, whose refusal to window-dress bourgeois reason they ambivalently admire, Adorno and Horkheimer assimilate conceptual thought to power. In Dialektik der Aufklärung, concepts are nothing more than tools with which the subject imposes her will on the environment and her fellow subjects. When we impose our will on something, we fashion it in our own image. We treat the world as if it existed solely to satisfy our capricious and insatiable palate, as an almost limitless forum for self-indulgence and self-expression. As soon as Habermas has made this connection with self-expression, the presuppositions behind Adorno and Horkheimer's dire scenario become blindingly clear. Adorno and Horkheimer, it emerges, construe the three logics of modernity as forms of instrumental reason paradoxically because they privilege one of the logics they deny: when they reduce concepts to self-expression, they reduce science and morality to the logic of art.(19) Habermas has long been aware of Adorno's aesthetic leanings. The article he writes in 1963 begins by praising Adorno for his dandyish, aestheticist sensibility to the most disguised traces of instrumental reason.(20) But it is only in Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne - once he has mapped out his theory of a differentiated modernity - that he at last appreciates the defining role played by Adorno's artistic disposition. Only then does he realize that Adorno's dilemmas arise not from theological residues, or philosophical incompetence, but from the aesthetic

standpoint, from the artistic criteria, his philosophy invariably presupposes.

The insight that Adorno has a parti pris for aesthetic logic seems potentially to explain all the Habermasian objections to his philosophy. It explains why Adorno hopes to shore up philosophy with works of art despite his failure to defend art's cognitive potential any more plausibly than philosophy's. More importantly, it explains the roots of Adorno's aporetic self-negations. Adorno necessarily commits himself to the pre-Wittgensteinian theory of language which makes him so overly suspicious of conceptuality, for his aesthetic starting point allows him to acknowledge only self-expression as a model for communication. The Wittgensteinian arguments with which Wellmer hopes to mitigate Adorno's scepticism could only bewilder a philosopher for whom authenticity is the one criterion of speech. If Adorno is thus bound to misunderstand language, he is doomed equally to demonize the subject's manipulation of nature. As an aesthete, he inevitably takes the individual's awe-struck contemplation of art to be the model for the subject's dealings with her environment. Given this presupposition, any practical intervention in nature inevitably appears crude, instrumental and exploitative.(21) Adorno's project then becomes the desperate endeavour to curb the violence of instrumental reason, to temper the distortions of aesthetic ideals he sees everywhere triumphant. Who can be surprised that he should eventually reduce theoretical writing itself to a paradoxical

self-effacing gesture, that he should finally convert philosophical texts into literature?

Habermas's revelation that Adorno illicitly privileges aesthetic criteria seemingly accounts for every aspect of Adorno's approach, but one. Why does Adorno attack art?(22) Habermas registers that art never achieves the status of a positive standard which Adorno supposedly desires. He registers, too, that Adorno contemplates the total engulfment of art by the commodifying forms of the culture industry. But he cannot explain why a philosophy so committed to promoting aesthetic criteria should thus assail its own foundations. This lacuna is but the most striking example of the way Adorno's texts, even as Habermas presents them, resist the interpretative categories imposed upon them. They constantly belie the claim that they seek out positive criteria. Any utopian terms they propose openly share attributes with the processes excoriated and denounced. Not just philosophical concepts, but art and indeed mimesis itself all bear the scars of the horrors they negate.(23) This ambivalence calls in question the Habermasian critique of Adorno, reminding us that Adorno draws on a model of critique very different from Habermas, a dialectical model which deploys distorting concepts against themselves, rather than judging them with secure, uncontaminated standards.(24) The analyses of Habermas, Wellmer and Honneth all astutely isolate the intriguing aspects of Adorno's theory, drawing attention to the insuperable

difficulty of criticizing reason, to Adorno's borrowings from theology, to his theories of language and power. But for all their acuity, the three critics always read past Adorno, ignoring, for whatever reasons, the dialectical energy, the conscious commitment to ambiguity and paradox, which motivates and distinguishes his texts. The driving tensions - the negative aspects of mimesis; the positive aspects of conceptuality - if they are acknowledged at all are banished to troubled footnotes.(25) This chapter will juxtapose Adorno's conception of critique, as it is elaborated with Horkheimer in Dialektik der Aufklärung, with Habermas's communicative alternative. The aim of this juxtaposition is not merely to cast aspersions on Habermas's non-dialectical method. To do so would be to be as undialectical as the theory impugned. Guided instead by the suspicion the Habermasian reading is more than a philosophical oversight, that it is in some sense inevitable, I want to reconstruct and understand the misrecognition. The first step in this reconstruction must be a sketch of Adorno's philosophy, a sketch which reveals to us what Habermas omits when he trims Adorno's texts to meet his alternative standards of philosophical accountability.

2. The Cry of Fear

When Habermas scolds Adorno for driving the normative substance out of philosophy, he stops the arguments of Dialektik der Aufklärung dead in their tracks. He is right to say that Adorno and Horkheimer undermine the very conceptual tools with which they criticize Enlightenment. But this self-undermining need not empty the arguments of all force. A passage in Negative Dialektik explains why not: 'Derlei Überlegungen zeitigen den Anschein von Paradoxie', Adorno admits, but then argues: 'Solche Paradoxie entspringt in der Cartesianischen Norm, Erklärung müsse das Spätere, wenigstens logisch Spätere aus dem Früheren begründen'.(26) Habermas's doubts arise because he reads Adorno's argument as a linear progression which at the end discredits the claims from which it started out. Adorno, however, consciously disregards demands for argumentative linearity, claiming: 'Die Norm ist nicht länger verbindlich'.(27) His constant redeployment of the very concepts he undermines must be read as something other than a double bind. An approach to his philosophical style must be found which does not judge it with criteria which it hopes - perhaps erroneously - to have transcended.

For the Habermasians, any positive attributes of Enlightenment rationality are damaged irreparably by the searing critique to which Adorno subjects them. If we re-read Dialektik der Aufklärung, but do not impose on it Habermas's logical standards, another argument emerges alongside the book's damning criticisms. This argument discerns a side to the

Enlightenment which inherently opposes the domination everywhere apparent in rational thought. The idea finds its pithiest expression in the paradoxical declaration: 'Aufklärung ist mehr als Aufklärung, Natur, die in ihrer Entfremdung vernehmbar wird'.(28) The sentence can be properly understood only if one grasps the architecture of the essay 'Begriff der Aufklärung'(DdA 9-49) as a whole. The main body of the text tracks the inevitability with which knowledge assimilates itself to the imperatives of self-preservation. The very form of concepts, the distance which their abstraction puts between the subject and her environment, transforms the world into a series of manipulable objects and so ties philosophy inherently to domination. The aim of this type of argument would seem to be an unmasking of the concepts traditionally pitted against repression. Terms such as reason or the collective, with which a more conventional Marxism hopes to overturn bourgeois patterns of thought, are shown to degenerate as surely as the concepts they oppose.

Having robbed us of all positive terms, however, the final stage of the essay takes the negative term that has developed - domination, or 'Herrschaft' - and flips it against itself. Reason has been said to distance itself from the specificities of its environment, except in so far as they further the subject's immediate survival. This alienated distance from the environment is precisely what allows us to control nature so effectively and so catastrophically. Yet we bridge this distance, for Adorno and Horkheimer, not by reinventing a lost

immediacy. We bridge it when we push reason's alienation yet further, when we make rationality step back not just from nature but from itself, and recognize in its own categories the nature which these categories objectify.

To prepare the ground for this recognition, Adorno and Horkheimer have taken an argument which they made earlier in the text and reconstrued it. The text frequently argues that the exploitation springing from our control of nature extends the natural violence which Enlightenment, in its various guises, has hoped to curtail. By distancing itself from its hostile environment and pretending - in such fictions as the bloodless, bodiless subject of knowledge - to have escaped nature's grasp, rational thought inadvertently imitates nature's rapacity. In the reinterpretation which Adorno and Horkheimer give this idea, the very failure of conceptual thought to escape its environment becomes a sign of hope. If the violence is the return of nature, then reason is not in fact the bloodless construct it believes itself to be. Enlightenment concepts emerge as more than a denatured rationality. They appear as blinded, crippled fragments of the environment they objectify: 'Aufklärung ist mehr als Aufklärung, Natur, die in ihrer Entfremdung vernehmbar wird'(DdA 46).

If Adorno and Horkheimer discern a redemptive ambivalence at the end of their argument, in the abstraction to which the Enlightenment degenerates, they find a similar ambiguity in the Enlightenment's very inception. To the opening sections of

Dialektik der Aufklärung the gods in all their incarnations are a negative term. To project behind the world's surface a power - be it a divinity, or simply Newton's infallible laws of motion - which controls nature's every stirring, serves only to make the world more stable, more predictable and more easily manipulable. Gods in this account are the first step in the evolution of a subject who falsely extricates herself from the irregular, concrete particulars of her surroundings. However, having persuaded us that the divine abstraction only damages the environment, Adorno and Horkheimer shift dialectically to offer us a conflicting account of how the gods were born. In this alternative version, the gods cease to be the correlate of alienation. They arise not so much out of a sovereign distance from the world as from a cry of fear which mimetically doubles the cause of its anxiety. Behind each individual object, the savage of Adorno and Horkheimer's anthropological speculations perceives the force of nature as a whole. The cry which escapes her in the face of nature's apparent omnipotence is then fixed as the name of a spirit. The doubling of the world into appearance and underlying essence in which science has its roots, in this account, arises in the weak savage's fearful recognition of nature's real power. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the mimetic shriek is intended to ward off the feared divinity. But this is not all:

> Wenn der Baum nicht mehr bloss als Baum sondern als Zeugnis für ein anderes, als Sitz des Mana angesprochen wird, drückt die Sprache den Widerspruch aus, dass nämlich etwas es selber und zugleich etwas anderes als es selber sei, identisch und nicht identisch. Durch die Gottheit

> wird die Sprache aus der Tautologie zur Sprache. Der Begriff, den man gern als Merkmalseinheit des darunter Befassten definiert, war vielmehr seit Beginn das Produkt dialektischen Denkens, worin jedes nur ist, was es ist, indem es zu dem wird, was es nicht ist. (DdA 21)

In imagining a spirit beyond the tree she can see, the savage does not so much abstractly fix the tree as intimate its essential heterogeneity. The tree is conceived as part of a web of affinities and interconnections from which objects cannot be abstractly isolated. The projection of a spirit behind the world, in this case, does not so much impoverish nature as anxiously enrich it. For the authors of Dialektik der Aufklärung, this enrichment is the paradigm of dialectical thought.

Adorno and Horkheimer begin and end their narrative of the Enlightenment's self-destruction with a perspective that contradicts their general argument. If the positivist abuses of reason are written into the story from the earliest stages, so too is a dialectical respect for the multiplicity of the objects which surround us. The abstraction away from objects which fixes them in empty self-identity is interpreted simultaneously as a baffled attempt to conceive how things differ from themselves; to grasp their non-identity. Adorno and Horkheimer do not present us with an Enlightenment that necessarily confounds its own best intentions. They paint instead the paradoxical picture of a reason which is at once reifying and dialectical, at once violent and redemptive. Admittedly, the happy image of thought's dialectical origins is

short-lived. As soon as they have sketched in the idea, Adorno and Horkheimer retract it. The redoubling cry with which the savage first gives an unknown quantity its name, is helpless to protect this non-identity because it has its origins in fear. The shriek may register the alterity of our environment, but it simultaneously fixes our terror, and confirms it. It prepares for the panic-stricken, paranoid exclusion of difference every bit as much as it opens the path for dialectical respect: 'Aufklärung ist radikal gewordene, mythische Angst'(DdA 22). Nevertheless, this change of tack is not intended to write off the Enlightenment. The qualifications which immediately succeed the brief, dialectical idyll disqualify the utopian image only when the text is assumed to be a linear progression.

But how else are we to understand the contradiction? The first thing to grasp is that Adorno and Horkheimer do not draw a clear distinction between conceptual abstraction and dialectical thought's sensitivity to the irregularities and rough edges of its object. The two types of thought are rather presented using a similar figure of thought, that of the projection of a layer behind, above, or in addition to the world of appearances. At the same time, however, Dialektik der Aufklärung does not collapse the two structures back into each other. It insists that reductive, scientistic abstraction and dialectical thought qualitatively differ. Adorno sheds light on this equivocation when, in an essay on Hegel written twelve years after Dialektik der Aufklärung, he says of the mediation of dialectical contradictions: 'die Vermittlung ereignet sich

durch die Extremen hindurch in ihnen selber'.(29) The two poles of Adorno and Horkheimer's opposition, the two extremes of conceptual thought cannot be emptily distinguished from one another, nor should they be measured against a communicative standard which lies outside both. The two poles must be mediated in and through each other and shown to be structurally similar but yet qualitatively distinct. Once we adopt this more dynamic, unstable view of contradiction, the positive passages in Dialektik der Aufklärung, which barely feature in Habermas's résumés, are not merely discredited by later developments in the text. The dire picture of the Enlightenment is significantly changed. Will the model of mutually mediating extremes help us meet the objection that Adorno eliminates his own norms?

At first sight, the answer would seem to be no. The changed view of contradiction makes the more positive passages visible, but it does not appear to bolster the norms which emerge sufficiently for them to underpin the argument. The dialectical conceptuality which anxiously accompanies the prehistoric beginnings of the Enlightenment vanishes almost as soon as we first see it, apparently confirming the self-undermining movement of which Habermas complains. If we are to understand how Adorno and Horkheimer legitimate their critique of rationality, we must revise our grasp of legitimation. Habermas believes that if a critique is to be reasonably grounded, the standards on which it depends should not themselves be compromised by the movement of the argument. The

standards in Dialektik der Aufklärung, in contrast, are not immune to the criticisms they make possible. Yet even as it undermines its normative foundations the text legitimates its fragile objections. Like Habermas, Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly state their commitment to a notion of Enlightenment thought: 'Wir hegen keinen Zweifel - und darin liegt unsere petitio principii -, dass die Freiheit in der Gesellschaft vom aufklärenden Denken unabtrennbar ist'(DdA 3). Moreover, in their interpretation of mana as an attempt non-reductively to conceptualize the slipperiness of our heterogeneous environment, they provide a model of enlightened respect for non-identity. They articulate clear norms. The main body of the text then dashes the hopes nurtured by these more optimistic passages. A respect for non-identity becomes almost indistinguishable from the most brutal forms of abstraction. Claims for Enlightenment seem only to shore up the barbarity they oppose. The situation seems unmitigatedly catastrophic until we realize that the undermining itself preserves the authors' weak dialectical standards. The structural doubling of reductionist and dialectical thought, the unsettling similarity between two ideas which are held simultaneously to be qualitatively different; this overlapping and interference between the two extremes is itself a form of non-identity. When the text mediates dialectical heterogeneity paradoxically with conceptual abstraction, it appears to enfeeble, indeed almost to erase the dialectical term. But the unstable

interpenetration acts out in the form of the argument the non-identity which its content all but eradicates.

Habermas does not see this normative performance because he misconstrues Adorno's critical project. The very first pages of Dialektik der Aufklärung explicitly take leave of the model of critique to which Habermas's theory is indebted. Adorno and Horkheimer baldly abandon the hope that critical, non-conformist versions of disciplines such as sociology, philosophy or psychology could be elaborated which resisted the propensity of academic discussion to reinforce existing social relations (DdA 1-2). They renounce the idea that concepts, in themselves neutral and objective, are distorted from without by social practice. The institutions which apparently restrict or prohibit enlightened enquiry cannot be separated from the concepts whose free operation they impede. The Enlightenment must no longer be understood as a collection of blameless principles unfortunately frustrated by irrational social bodies. Rather the principles must be grasped in their intimate relation to a destructive society, philosophy must round on its own inherent unreason and confront the interdependence of conceptual thought and social irrationality: 'die Verflechtung von Rationalität und gesellschaftlicher Wirkung'(DdA 5-6).

Having decided that rationality itself cannot be trusted as a standard for critique, it could be assumed that Adorno and Horkheimer look beyond reason for a norm against which to measure the irrationality of the Enlightenment. This is what

Habermas assumes when he argues that Adorno turns either to mimesis or to works of art for alternative criteria. Adorno and Horkheimer's reaction to the irrationality they discern in reason is yet more audacious. Having asserted that reason is inseparably intertwined with destruction and irrationality, the two philosophers shift dialectically to affirm that conceptual thought remains reasonable nonetheless. Rationality is portrayed as at one and the same time violently abstracting and respectfully particular. The first task of critique is to explore and to explain this root ambivalence, a task which finds paradigmatic expression in the comments on an originary cry of fear. We may have our doubts about this anthropological fairy tale, this myth of a inaugural moment of terror. We may similarly be concerned that, having posited this primordial ambiguity, Adorno and Horkheimer will never escape the ambivalence, that they will commit themselves to resigned acceptance of reason's insuperable self-destructiveness, effectively renouncing any prospects of improvement or change. But these doubts miss the point of Adorno and Horkheimer's conceptual reorientation. The tale of the cry of fear is specifically directed against a reason which believes itself to be free-floating, ethereal and objective. Positivism, with its stress on concepts as tools, or operations which intervene in the world (DdA 11), has begun a similar debunking. But in Dialektik der Aufklärung the argument is turned against positivism itself and taken to an extreme from which even the most hard-headed operationalists would recoil.(30) Reason is

rerooted not just in practice or necessity, but in emotion. Abstraction is stripped of its prized objectivity and unmasked as itself a terrified intervention in the environment. This rude demystification deprives reason of its most valuable attributes, of its impartiality and reliability. At the same time, however, it reimbues it with an unsuspected specificity, with affect, experience and desire. Regrounded in a moment of originary anxiety, reason loses its treasured objectivity but gains in its place a barely conceivable immediacy.

If the first step of critique was to explain the ambivalence of rationality by revealing the situative, context-bound materiality of conceptual thought, the second step must be to unearth this sediment of emotion, to retrieve and reinstate the experiential content of each concept. This is not a happy undertaking, for the emotion unearthed is fear. The connotations of awe, of wonder, of surrender which might be drawn from this state of mind are, in Adorno and Horkheimer's account, scarcely discernible. Rather than discovering a respect for heterogeneity, their critique digs up terror, panic and affliction, bringing to light a reason which seems barely to merit redemption. In dialectically reorienting critique, Adorno and Horkheimer apparently cast off the beneficial aspects of rationality and gain little in return but irrationality and paranoia: 'radikal gewordene, mythische Angst'(DdA 22). Yet the acknowledgement of otherness, the recognition of non-identity lives on nevertheless. It finds ambivalent expression, for instance, in Adorno and Horkheimer's

interpretations of the Siren's song, where the flip side to rational concepts is said to be a longing for surrender emblematically articulated in the incantations of the mythical monsters (DdA 38-41). Accompanying the abstractions of conceptuality and subjectivity, it emerges, is the constant desire to throw off the restrictions of identity, to blend deliciously, if fatally, with the environment. But how is this less violent side of reason to be redeemed? More urgently: how could it be reinstated without damaging the subject as irreparably as the Siren's ship-wrecking lament? Dialektik der Aufklärung does not finally answer these questions. Having demystified objectivity and recast reason as an awe-struck, ambivalent response to non-identity, Horkheimer and Adorno cannot fill out the vision of a new rationality they tentatively promise. The bold, dialectical shift is backed up only by fragments, the majority of which damn rather than salvage rationality. The one glimmer of hope is the structure of the argument itself, its self-conscious self-contradiction. This broken, paradoxical form traces the contours of a reason that has grasped both its materiality and its ambivalence, that acknowledges its roots in affect, and understands simultaneously the explosive blend of danger and promise that this lineage entails. The terse, aphoristic formulations, the circling movement by which the arguments take up themes and rework them - reformulating the subject's distance from the world as itself an expression of nature; recasting the projection of an order behind the world as itself a recognition

of nature's plurality - these variations, qualifications and developments weakly embody the reason that the content of the argument portrays only as aggression and self-destruction. The broken form itself acts out the redemptive, mimetic attributes of rationality.

This performance is the project which Habermas describes as the search for external criteria. This argument, whose inaugurating gesture is the denial of uncompromised standards, is the theory he berates for underestimating the normative potential of linguistic interaction. The prime casualty of Habermas's interpretation is the dialectical shift which underpins Adorno and Horkheimer's paradoxical endeavours, the conceptual somersault which binds reason to the distorting institutions only audaciously to declare that this new, situated, material reason is as redemptive as it is destructive, as awe-inspiring as it is paranoid. Once he has omitted this founding reorientation, Habermas is bound to find the paradoxes in which Adorno and Horkheimer knowingly entangle themselves baffling and unproductive. Once he has omitted this shift, he is bound to stop the arguments of Dialektik der Aufklärung in their tracks, unable to conceive that the ambivalences and aporias could have argumentative relevance. How should we respond to this omission and the misrecognition it engenders? One response would be to praise Dialektik der Aufklärung for its abandoning of external criteria, and to dismiss Habermas as theoretically naive. I want instead merely to highlight what Habermas overlooks, reinterprets or

aestheticizes in his account of negative dialectics. He does not acknowledge that Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly take leave of external criteria. He does not register the tense ambivalence which the two philosophers see in place of unambiguous norms, nor does he recognize Adorno and Horkheimer's faith that this ambivalence can be turned against itself and unsettled if not in the content of an argument, then in its structure and style. He does not, in a word, recognize what Adorno and Horkheimer understand by a <u>dialectic</u> of Enlightenment. What figure of thought does he counterpose to the ambiguous, material reason first articulated in the cry of fear?

3. A Strategic Choice

Habermas's theory centres on two concepts: lifeworld and system. The lifeworld, as it starts out in the narrative, is the collection of background knowledge and basic skills which enable us to talk to, and understand each other. The system refers roughly speaking to the market economy and the bureaucratic structures of the welfare state. To reconstruct what Habermas understands by the lifeworld's linguistic know-how, and to see how it is damaged by both market and welfare state, we must retrace the necessary conceptual link which he perceives between the two terms. By concentrating only on this conceptual link, I bracket out other elements of Habermas's theory. However, the link itself exemplifies the model of critique which Habermas pits against the aporias of negative dialectics.

Habermas divides his linguistic know-how into three different groups: that of objective facts, that of social norms, and that of subjective experience. Successfully to communicate with each other, he argues, we need grammar and knowledge enough to talk about the world around us (this comes under the heading of 'facts'); we need common values to help us regulate and patrol human relations (these would be 'social norms'); and we need finally to describe as accurately as possible what is happening inside our own minds (this would count as 'subjective experience'). On the surface, not every conversation deals with all three levels. Discussion seems instead to focus on one or other of facts, norms or experience.

Yet for Habermas, conversations always depend on all three. Moreover, each level features in the conversation in two ways. It is implicitly present in the form of all those things we take for granted when we talk to people who share our lifeworld. Furthermore, it is explicitly thematized by the process of conversation and is thus, partially at least, open to discussion and amendment.

To explain this double action, Habermas imagines a conversation on a building site during which an old hand tells a newly arrived, immigrant worker that it is his turn to fetch the beer for the mid-morning break.(31) Behind the discussion is everything that we trivially presuppose when we talk to each other, from common syntax and vocabulary, to a knowledge of conventions such as 'taking breaks at work' right through to the ability of our partner in conversation to listen, understand and reply to what we say. Explicitly under discussion however are certain facts ('Are the shops open today?'; 'Could the new worker reach the shops on foot?'), a common norm ('the new arrivals have to fetch the beer'), and personal states ('Is the older man serious, or is it all a joke?'). The facts, norms and experiences in the background silently make communication possible. They are neither disputed nor actively endorsed. The facts, norms and experiences that the construction workers are currently employing, in contrast, must all actively be agreed with if the conversants are to reach a consensus. If they cannot be agreed on, they must be modified in the course of the conversation until an agreement

is reached. Thus, the older worker might be assuming that shops are open that morning when in fact they are not. Alternatively, the other workers might decide that the convention which makes new workers fetch beer no longer holds on their building site. Finally, it might transpire that the older man's suggestion had not been seriously intended.

Of the two modes in which the lifeworld functions, the explicit operations most influence the development of Habermas's argument. If the lifeworld were only implicitly present, it would never change. It would constantly underlie conversations which, though they might focus on different sections of the lifeworld, would nevertheless unquestioningly reproduce the knowledge, norms and experiences on which they relied. When it is explicitly present, in contrast, the lifeworld appears in a new light. Less important than the specific content of each level - individual facts, norms or experiences - is the form without which we could not recognize them as facts, norms or experiences. When we are actively arguing, what we share is not so much objective, social or subjective information but the standards by which all three are presented, justified and evaluated: ways of talking about the world, more than a body of facts. Habermas takes up this stress on the formal processes of argumentation and constructs from it a theory of the lifeworld's evolution.

In traditional societies the lifeworld officially consists in a certain fixed framework into which facts, social relations and experiences must fit if they are to find recognition. When

Galileo's telescope helps him discern Jupiter's moons, church dogmatists cannot believe they exist, for their presence disturbs the neat order of the universe. As the dogmatist well knows, the heavens are built in units of seven, mirroring the seven orifices (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears and a mouth) of the human face.(32) Anything which does not fit into this divine order must be an optical illusion generated by the telescope. For Habermas, official frameworks of this sort are in fact constantly undermined by everyday conversation, or what he calls 'kommunikative Alltagspraxis'.(33) Day-to-day intercourse - about, say, farming problems - necessarily distinguishes between the three levels. If a farmer claims we cannot plant corn on the land by the river, for instance, we need to sort out if this a fact based on knowledge of the soil, a convention set up by the village, or just the farmer's pigheadedness. We need to tell fact from convention, and convention from subjective experience. Driven by this differentiating logic, the lifeworld gradually empties itself of specific beliefs - such as 'natural phenomena come in groups of seven' - and limits itself instead to the specific processes whereby we justify facts, defend social norms, and discuss experience. Indeed, it develops so far that in modern societies, each area acquires a logic of its own. The conventions of scientific investigation come to govern what counts as a fact. A moral discourse is developed distinct from science to deal with ethical issues. Moreover, aesthetic practices come to shape the ways we express our experiences.

The lifeworld crystallizes into the three separate spheres of science, morality and art.(34)

This process of differentiation exploits what Habermas believes to be the rational potential inherent in everyday conversation. A society which has separated out the three spheres has taken the distinctions upon which reasoned argument and consensus depend, and given them institutional protection. It has started out on what Habermas famously calls the 'project of modernity'.(35) Yet this enlightened project is not without drawbacks. As each of these spheres loses its content, communication becomes potentially more and more hazardous.(36) If we no longer have a body of facts, norms and personality types at our disposal, but have instead only the processes whereby facts come to be facts, norms are evaluated and people order their individual experiences, then strictly speaking each conversation about how to bake a loaf of bread must start again from scratch. Obviously, a society could not function in which every conversation had of its own strength to reinvent scientific, ethical and aesthetic discourses. It therefore becomes essential to limit the scope of the very discussion and dissent which for Habermas is the core of the Enlightenment. This can be achieved in two ways.(37) On the one hand, we can be assisted in our search for solid information by intellectual reputation and moral leadership. These two sources do not so much cut out intelligent argument as condense it. Arguments are developed and respected, but we are not individually required to know their every twist and turn, only rationally to

distinguish a reliable from an unreliable source of information. On the other hand, there are short cuts which circumvent discussion altogether. Where the short-cuts of intellectual reputation and moral leadership still place actions in a general normative framework, still ask what we aim to do and why, these other short-cuts appeal straight to our baser instincts. Rational considerations give way to merely empirical ones. We are not persuaded that a suggestion is true, or right. We are shown that we will be rewarded for assent, but punished for disagreement. Where the first type of short-cut compresses reasonable debate to manageable dimensions, the second type unceremoniously eliminates it.

Both types of short-cut can be found in modern societies, yet the less rational variant has the upper hand. To explain this imbalance, Habermas looks to the mechanisms by which a lifeworld reproduces itself. To sustain itself, a lifeworld must ensure two things. It must be certain that background knowledge and social know-how survive from conversation to conversation, and from generation to generation. But it must cater also for the material wants of its members, for food and shelter. The first type of reproduction occurs only through discussion. The knowledge contained in a culture, the norms by which it binds its members together, and the experiences by which individuals are schooled for active participation are all renewed by the very conversations they make possible. As partners in conversation come to an understanding, they take up the facts, norms and experiences explicitly thematized by their

discussion, and confirm them. In this process, even modification is a form of renewal, as bit by bit a lifeworld adapts and develops. Material reproduction, in contrast, does not depend on the niceties of discussion. It is more interested in doing a job than in coming to an understanding about it, more interested in effects than in norms or experience. To keep reproduction as efficient as possible, therefore, and to deliver it from a dissent whose likelihood increases as the traditional constraints on conversation wane, the lifeworld tolerates the emergence of communicative media that are not guided by discursive norms.(38)

The main medium is money. Money measures efficiency, and cares about the detrimental effects of an action only in so far as they might directly promote or inhibit its speedy execution. Discussion, and the norms or experiences to which it pays tribute, are all bypassed. Facts are more willingly tolerated, but only as the sort of facts which render the world more manipulable. As money replaces discussion as the main means of coordinating society's reproduction, so an independent system develops alongside the lifeworld. The devastating effects of this monetary system need hardly be recounted. Freed from norms and discussion, the market gains a momentum of its own so strong that it violently impinges on the lifeworld it was intended to reproduce. The instrumental imperatives which govern the economy come to dictate what happens in every sphere of society. Science, morality and art no longer follow their own specific logics. Research, politics, and the means of self-

expression are forced instead to obey the standardizing logic of instrumental reason. The lifeworld then finds itself in a contradictory position. It depends for its material reproduction on an economic system insensitive to the communicative processes without which its symbolic, or discursive reproduction is impossible. This situation is rendered doubly paradoxical by the fact that the economic system which in contemporary society so dangerously disregards the rational norms of the lifeworld, was set free precisely by the lifeworld's realization of its rational potential.(39) It is only once the know-how of the lifeworld itself consists in formal processes rather than specific facts, norms or types of experience, that a medium can arise which is indifferent to normative constraints. Until the moral code of a society stops forbidding specific actions, such as usury, and supplies its members instead with abstract principles by which to judge actions or conventions (are they fair? are they disinterested?), a break with the constraining norms is unthinkable.(40) Money's meteoric and destructive rise as an independent, non-discursive medium for the coordination of social reproduction is prepared for by the discursive processes of the Enlightenment itself.

This paradox sums up Habermas's version of the dialectic of Enlightenment, or what he calls: 'die unaufhaltsame Ironie des weltgeschichtlichen Aufklärungsprozesses'.(41) To a reader schooled by Dialektik der Aufklärung, it might appear that the rationality of the lifeworld is actually responsible for this

backfiring. Rationalization demystifies the stable but constricting content of lifeworlds, and substitutes for the old world views more formal, and consequently more accountable social norms. But this development not only makes it necessary to condense or limit the potentially endless debate it initiates. It equally paves the way for the non-linguistic short cuts which override more rational media such as academic reputation and moral leadership. If it enhances public debate, it equally unleashes forces which could silence discussion forever. Despite such appearances, Habermas never loses his faith in the process of Enlightenment. Unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, his criticisms of modernity are never set so deep as to call the rational potential of the lifeworld itself into question. How does he protect the lifeworld from the theoretical consequences of its own rationality?

The immediate answer is that, as Habermas describes them, destructive influences always come from outside the lifeworld. They never spring from the lifeworld itself. At once the most subtle and most extreme version of this figure of thought can be seen in Habermas's concept of a pre-fixed 'pattern of intelligibility' ('Verständigungsform').(42) The concept is developed to solve a simple problem. If the rational potential of everyday conversation is so strong, how does the system impose its instrumental imperatives on the lifeworld, without resorting to naked repression? How does it inhibit the drive towards open discussion inherent in everyday conversation? Habermas's answer is that the repression is structural, that it

insinuates itself into the very forms of day-to-day interaction. With the means of communication thus fundamentally distorted, questions that would cast doubt on the imperatives imposed by the system simply cannot arise. In pre-modern societies this effect is achieved by a rational lag ('Rationalitätsgefälle') between sacred interpretations of the world, and profane everyday practice.(43) In the mythical or religious interpretations by which a society understands itself, the separate logics of facts, norms and experience which day-to-day conversation presupposes remain confused.(44) It is thus impossible to separate, say, the material injustice experienced by a serf at the hands of his feudal lord from religious notions that the miscreant peasant has somehow earned his fate. In modern societies, where religious interpretations have been finally swept away, the sacred world no longer lags behind the profane. Yet the system imposes on the lifeworld with even more vehemence than before. Though the mystificatory discrepancy has vanished, the structural distortion of communication which it made possible has not. It has sunk to a level deeper. Systems no longer rely on misperceptions to mask the violence they inflict on the lifeworld. Rather, they ensure that everyday consciousness is too weak to round on its affliction, or bring it to conceptual expression. Where in traditional societies everyday consciousness is deluded, in modern ones it is almost irremediably fragmented.(45)

This shift of level requires closer inspection. As long as discussion was inhibited by a rational lag, it was easy to

understand why the pre-fixed patterns of communication appeared to be inflicted from outside. The model behind the argument was that of a differentiating dynamism inherent in everyday conversation which religion or myth restrained. Once Habermas locates the problem in the very shape of consciousness, this division seems less secure. The clear-cut divide between communication and mythical restraint is replaced by a communicative consciousness at once differentiated and fragmented, but for which differentiation is a positive, dynamic attribute, fragmentation the cause of a deathly stasis. The question which arises is: how does Habermas defend the strong, qualitative distinction which he draws between differentiation and fragmentation? The two ideas are very similar. In both, a unity is so divided that old models of totality, or of self-reflexion no longer apply. In the case of differentiation, this is cause for celebration. The old paradigms of subject-centred philosophy make way for more open-ended versions of totality, identity or self-reflexion which Habermas describes with the metaphor of an on-going conversation.(46) In the case of fragmentation, the old models do not yield to a new, communicative totality. Consciousness is so shattered that it forfeits its ability for rational reflexion. Where differentiation reveals the essence of the new rationality, fragmentation is termed a 'systemically induced lifeworld pathology' ('systemisch induzierte Lebenswelt-pathologie').(47) Yet behind both we find the common principle of division. What distinguishes healthy segmentation from its

pathological antithesis?

A metaphor which Habermas uses when he first introduces the idea of pre-fixed discursive patterns or 'Verständigungs-formen' throws light on this distinction. Habermas tells us that, if the system is to impose its imperatives on the lifeworld without the lifeworld being aware of the imposition, it must hide itself in the very pores of communication: 'Reproduktionszwänge, die eine Lebenswelt instrumentalisieren, ohne den Schein der Autarkie der Lebenswelt zu beeinträchtigen, müssen sich gleichsam in den Poren des kommunikativen Handelns verstecken.'(48) If communication has pores, it must have a body. If it has a body, it has a growth pattern and a pregiven coherence. The differentiation which even the simplest everyday exchange carries in embryonic form is nothing but the natural growth of this body, the development of its separate organs. Dysfunctions, in contrast, are a disease, a 'lifeworld pathology', which attacks this body from outside. Recast in these terms, the emphatic distinction between differentiation and dysfunction, and the milder version of the dialectic of Enlightenment which it underwrites, make more sense. As long as the lifeworld is grasped as a body whose development has a naturally imposed limit and whose coherence is as it were genetically guaranteed, fragmentation and weakness must seem externally imposed afflictions. For a theory in which everyday discussion features as a healthy body it is inconceivable that the breakdown of communication, as a form of sickness, could have the same origins as its steady growth.

The body metaphor strikingly illustrates how Habermas conceives of the relation between system and lifeworld, and to that extent explains why he softens the implications of the dialectic of Enlightenment. But the explanation is insufficient. In the course of the argument, a switch has occurred which the image of the body cannot itself account for. To begin with, Habermas insists that the system grows out of the lifeworld. The increasing differentiation of the lifeworld makes short-cuts essential, and simultaneously prepares the ground for media, such as money, which by-pass language altogether. When he is examining the damage inflicted by the system on the lifeworld, however, these ties between the two spheres are forgotten. The system is recast as a destructive force which imposes its alien logic on the everyday communication. The system initially extends the lifeworld, but the logic it subsequently develops is said to bear no relation to the purer rationality of discussion and debate.

Underpinning this switch is another group of metaphors: the family of spatial or topographical figures, which allocate to each of system and lifeworld a realm of their own. Habermas initially defines the lifeworld as the precondition of interaction. This is an abstract idea which different philosophers express in different ways. Wittgenstein leans heavily on his metaphor of a language 'game', and talks of the rules which govern play.(49) Rorty uses economic metaphors such as 'profit' or 'cash value' to explain why phrases do or do not stay part of a common vocabulary.(50) Habermas, even when

talking in the most abstract terms, uses metaphors of space. The lifeworld is described as the transcendental 'site' where partners in conversation meet ('Die Lebenswelt ist gleichsam der transzendentale Ort, an dem sich Sprecher und Hörer begegnen...').(51) As the argument continues, this transcendental site gradually acquires all the attributes of more earthly territories. The explosive expansion of state and economic systems demote lifeworlds to being a mere 'province' of society ('je komplexer die Gesellschaftssysteme, um so provinzieller werden die Lebenswelten').(52) But far from handicapping communication, this spatialization furthers its cause. Admittedly, it opens it up to invasion by colonizing powers ('die Imperative der verselbständigten Subsysteme dringen [...] von aussen in die Lebenswelt - wie Kolonialherren in eine Stammesgesellschaft - ein...').(53) But as a self-contained territory, the lifeworld has only to patrol the borders between itself and the aggressive subsystems, and colonizing armies will be repulsed. Skirmishes on the border - Habermas talks of 'Grenzkonflikte'(54) - are all that need further concern it. The only worrying sign is that the lifeworld seems in the course of the argument drastically to have shrunk. 'Mikrobereiche der Alltagspraxis' are all we eventually have left to defend against colonial invasion.(55)

The destructive excesses of the monetary system can be said to invade everyday communication from outside, because everyday communication is, from the outset, conceived of as a self-contained space: a site, a province, an arena - albeit

microscopic. Where imagining the lifeworld as a body allows Habermas to portray disturbances to discussion as qualitatively distinct from communication, the redescription of conversation as a space - as opposed to a Wittgensteinian game, or a Rorty-esque transaction - dictates that disruptions to debate must always be grasped as invasions, as spatial incursions, as colonization. It might seem strange to cite figures of speech to explain how Habermas tempers the dialectic of Enlightenment. But it is precisely at the level of rhetoric that Habermas's arguments occur. When, having presented the paradoxical side-effects of rationalization, Habermas introduces the conceptual tools with which he will grasp the irony of the lifeworld's self-destruction, the spatial topography has already been silently established. 'Ich möchte zunächst nur die begrifflichen Mittel inspizieren, mit denen die Hypothese genauer gefasst werden kann,' Habermas comments with apparent neutrality, then tellingly adds:

> Die Annahme einer Mediatisierung der Lebenswelt [Habermas's term for the erosion of communicative practices by non-discursive media such as money] bezieht sich auf Interferenzphänomene, die dort entstehen, wo sich System und Lebenswelt soweit voneinander differenziert haben, dass sie aufeinander einwirken können.(56)

The terms 'interference', 'differentiation', 'influence' all unspokenly presuppose that lifeworld and system are best described as spatial spheres. The metaphors of topographical separation are already in place to mark off language from the economy, to protect its inherent rationality from the external

influence of the system. The bodily metaphors used later in the narrative, the talk of pores, and finally of pathologies,(57) only reaffirm a distinction which is already established. The arguments which would defend such metaphorical divisions, the arguments which would so present the paradoxical developments of modernity that communicative rationality could be seen to engender the system without itself being compromised by its offspring, are always rhetorically pre-empted, settled out of court - we could figuratively suggest - by Habermas's choice metaphor and trope.

These strong metaphorical distinctions might seem to commit Habermas's theory to a form of sociological dualism, to a theory which explores the eternal conflict between system and lifeworld, between labour and interaction. Yet Habermas rejects so Manichean an approach, and this not only because he should have theoretical difficulties justifying his originary opposition. In Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, he lays considerable stress on small, tribal societies where, if there is instrumental action, it is supposed not to conflict with, but be enveloped by the lifeworld.(58) This picture of instrumental action guided and contained by discussion is then reinforced by his insistence at other stages in the argument that, even at its most rampant, the system remains grounded in the lifeworld it imperils (as Habermas puts it: '[die systemischen Mechanismen] bleiben freilich über die Basisinstitution des bürgerlichen Rechts mit der kommunikativen Alltagspraxis rückgekoppelt').(59) These assertions would seem

conversely to move the argument closer to the more dire evaluation of reason Habermas explicitly repudiates. If the system is so closely tied to the lifeworld, what is to convince sceptics that the short cuts and distortions which characterize systemic logic do not themselves belong as inherently to linguistic action as the celebrated processes of formal accountability? An affinity of sorts is occasionally implied by Habermas's own vocabulary. Though he most frequently terms money a non-linguistic medium, he occasionally calls it an - albeit impoverished - form of language,(60) as if its non-discursive, opaque, irrational coordination of actions, its ability to produce an effect regardless of the message, was as much a part of speech as the transparency of discussion.(61) Yet this darker view of communication is never permitted a foothold in Habermas's theory. Though it is conceded that language empirically contains impurities, anomalies and irrationalities, these faults are assumed to lie not in language but in ourselves. If only we could purify dialogue of restricting traditions, could protect it from repressive forms of individuality, we would finally achieve discursive transparency. Though Habermas admits that language cannot be conceived apart from the content of the specific cultures in which it is embedded, though he concedes moreover that lifeworlds have an inherent tendency to curtail dissent, he still separates off a pure structure, to whose high ideals he pledges his allegiance.(62) Short cuts, constraints, or abuses of power are always confined to the content of language, not

its rational form.

Habermas's theory is marked by a double logic, a paradoxical balancing act which keeps lifeworld and system at once conceptually connected and spatially distinct; which believes the inner logic of each sphere to be at once commensurable and incomparable; coupled and uncoupled simultaneously. How are we to understand this tension? That it should not be grasped as a dialectic is made clear by Habermas's dismissal of the self-undermining position Dialektik der Aufklärung purportedly engineered for itself. This wariness of dialectics is confirmed by the vocabulary Habermas chooses to describe his own alternative to the dialectic of Enlightenment: the terms 'paradox' and 'irony'. One term in particular explains the motivation behind the apparently inconsistent position Habermas seems to have adopted, revealing how consciously he embraces the conceptual imbroglio. Habermas is describing the obstacles awaiting a theory which does not adopt his bifocal approach. A sociology which employed only the concept of the lifeworld would relinquish the ability to explain social malfunctions. An approach which conversely jettisoned the lifeworld in favour of the system would forfeit the right to criticize the reifying processes explained by the concept of system, for, with the lifeworld it would abandon normative foundations. Habermas sees only one option, if sociology is to escape this double bind: '[die Theorie] muss eine Theoriestrategie wählen, die die Lebenswelt weder mit der Gesellschaft im ganzen identifiziert, noch auf systemische

Zusammenhänge reduziert.'(63) The key word here is the term 'Theoriestrategie'. The double logic with which Habermas plays off the claims of system and lifeworld, it emerges, is a tactical choice. His paradoxical arguments are strategic.

The purpose of the strategy is clear. Adorno and Horkheimer, who do not make the tactical decision, debilitate their own theory. They deprive themselves of the norms they need to write a systematic but critical analysis of society. In substituting his strategic, dual-focus account of modernity for Adorno and Horkheimer's sombre dialectic, Habermas hopes to take up and fulfil the plans that inspired the endeavours of the Frankfurt School in the early 1930s.(64) The programme of a normatively grounded, interdisciplinary critique of capitalist society presented by Horkheimer in his inaugural lecture as director of the Institute for Social Research returns with renewed strength.(65) Horkheimer's theory had hoped initially to find both its epistemological and normative foundations in the working class. Though his brand of Marxism was exploratory and undogmatic, it still viewed the proletariat as the social agent from the perspective of which the mechanisms of society could be analysed and evaluated.(66) Confronted with the collusion of the working class with both fascism and the American culture industry, however, the Institute gradually abandoned its faith in the proletariat as the bearer of social critique, let alone revolution. For a brief period, reason itself harboured an image of a freer society against which to measure the abominations of the present.(67) But soon

rationality equally appeared to the exiled Critical Theorists to contribute its share to the catastrophe of history. If philosophy was to understand this unexpected complicity, it had to give up its initial critical project and direct its scrutiny instead at the inherent ambiguities of reason.(68) Habermas disputes whether such pessimistic self-scrutiny is necessary. He suggests that by strategically protecting the lifeworld from the system, sociology can resuscitate the Frankfurt School's original plans. Whatever the connections and cross-overs between communication and systemic distortion, to Habermas's tactical double vision the promise of language stays qualitatively distinct from, and critical of, the empirical failures of communication. However intricate and compromising the interplay sketched by one side of the argument, the other, distinguishing logic always limits the damage. Communication, enclosed in the self-contained space guaranteed by the metaphorical topography, unassailably retains its rational purity. Irrefragably, it underpins a new critical theory.

Habermas does not justify this faith in language theoretically. As other critics have noticed, the arguments with which he separates healthy communication from distorting pathology always assume the model of linguistic transparency they are intended to legitimate.(69) Practices which distort, delude, obfuscate, or disguise the process of open communication, it is always decreed, come from <u>outside</u> language, as disease, spatial incursion or colonization. They never inhere in communication itself. The irony of this <u>parti</u>

pris for language is that it contravenes the very criteria of reflexivity which it establishes as binding.(70) The reasons for a decision are supposed always to be open to debate. If we do not agree that new workers are duty bound to fetch beer for us, we can express our disapproval, and so reorientate the conversation. When it comes to Habermas's own theory, however, this is not the case. If we do not agree that language is inherently emancipatory, that it presages a world of non-coercive, rational consensus, we cannot air our views without being told that we have ourselves tipped the balance in favour of communication. The norm we hoped to question constantly eludes interrogation. Communication is always in place, established by a strategic move which falls below its own high standards of accountability, just as for Derrida the American constitution is inaugurated unconstitutionally by people who have no mandate because they have no constitution.(71) The metaphors of healthy bodily growth and spatial separation are the scars left on Habermas's style by this discursive coup.

These logical paradoxes are in themselves no argument against a theory that has consciously and strategically adopted double standards. If Habermas's tactical choice is fruitful, if it allows him to rekindle the hopes of a grand social theory that Horkheimer, in his American exile, felt compelled to abandon, the appearance of self-contradiction is but a small price to pay.(72) But what if the strategic protection of the lifeworld shores up the very structures of violence, coercion and instrumentalization it is intended to combat? Nancy Fraser

has questioned the strategic division saying that the distinction between lifeworld and system occludes the degree to which the family - for Habermas the central organ of the symbolic reproduction he defends against systemic incursions - is itself shaped and misshaped by inbuilt injustices. Women in the home are not the equal partners in conversation that Habermas's social topography implies.(73) Habermas's faith in everyday discourse, in Fraser's view, not only naively underestimates the distortions of face-to-face communication. His underestimation actually masks the oppression it set out to expose. The spatial metaphors with which he encloses the lifeworld foster the politically misleading illusion that a social arena exists in which communication is not warped by coercion. They conceal, and thus collaborate with power. Habermas's strategic choice, following Fraser's arguments, thus subverts its professed intention. It is meant theoretically, topographically, metaphorically to protect the communicative norms which Habermas requires to write his critique of society. But the choice instead benefits coercive habits of discourse, exempting them, as habits of the lifeworld, from criticism.

To counter this objection, Habermas could conceivably refine his view of the lifeworld, could sensitize his theory of communication to patriarchal as well as economic colonization. He could differentiate and distinguish anew, separating those aspects of the lifeworld which promote the cause of communication from those alien elements which shore up patriarchal power. As long as Habermas is protecting language

from external abuse, this propensity to separate and divide assists his undertaking. But this propensity to differentiate is itself deeply problematic. It underpins Habermas's tactics, but at the same time the divisions it spawns acquire a momentum of their own which disputes the claim to agency implicit in the words 'strategy' and 'choice', indeed which finally jeopardizes the very project the differentiations make possible - as I now hope to show in a reading of Habermas's, and of his colleague Wellmer's texts on art.

My focus on Habermas's and Wellmer's writings on aesthetics is partly pragmatic. These texts can be more satisfactorily surveyed than the mammoth Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Yet more important than these practical concerns is the role attributed to art by a number of Habermas's commentators. In a movement which oddly parallels the Habermasian critique of Adorno, art is said to be central to the normative grounding of Habermas's theory. Joel Whitebrook, commenting on Habermas's inability to legitimate his legitimating criteria, argues that the way we come to terms with his normative standpoint 'ultimately bears a closer resemblance to aesthetic taste [...] than to emphatic philosophical proof'.(74) We opt for communicative standards because they appeal to our moral palate, not because we can rationally defend them. On a different tack, Martin Jay, concerned that Habermas's norms, even when established, are too abstract to serve as an image of a better society, suggests that Habermas should turn to the aesthetic sphere for a more

concrete conception of the Good Life. He should abandon discursive processes and validity claims in favour of the desires and aspirations tentatively articulated in works of art.(75) David Ingram goes so far as to claim that he does. In his reading, Habermas explicitly roots his theory not in the reflexivity of discursive norms, but in aesthetic artefacts.(76) The essay 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt' (1980) confirms the high claims which these critics make for the aesthetic sphere, confirms that the project of modernity, as it is envisaged by Habermas, depends for its success on art.(77) Yet the essay betrays simultaneously that the faith in art of both Habermas and his critics is misplaced. Aesthetic rationality, a reading of the essay discovers, is neither the spontaneous foundation, nor the implicit substance, nor indeed the retrospective guarantee of the project of modernity. It is a further instance of the project's fragmentation, a further example of its lack of reflexivity, evidence that Habermas is not so much the strategic theorist as the helpless symptom of the lifeworld pathologies he hopes to alleviate.

4. A New Totality

'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt' (1980) shifts focus from the conflicts between system and lifeworld to explore the contradictions of the lifeworld itself. The essay reiterates Habermas's conviction that the three distinct discursive spheres whose development characterizes modern societies represent a qualitative gain. Technological innovation, legal and ethical practice, and the aesthetic models with which we explore our identities, all immeasurably benefit when their autonomy and specificity are institutionalized. Yet their independence is not without its disadvantages. For all their internal efficacy, the three spheres of knowledge invent specialized vocabularies whose application to everyday practice is at best indirect. The wealth of learning, the efforts of research remain, as society develops, trapped in their individual institutions, cut off from the culture they were intended to enrich.

The challenge facing the Enlightenment, if it is to make good the promise stored up in the autonomous spheres, is to re-establish links between the specialist vocabularies and everyday life. Some theorists have trusted in just one of the three logics to redeem the project of modernity: Popper in the power of reasoned, scientific analysis; Adorno in the emancipatory potential of the aesthetic sphere.(78) By overcoming the gap between their favoured logic and everyday life they hope to rescue the potential of the Enlightenment as a whole. Habermas disapproves of these endeavours. A society

guided by a single, specialized rationality would fall far short of the Enlightenment ideal. Moreover, the focus on a single logic brings with it the temptation not just to guide society, but to do away with institutionalized autonomy and actually remodel everyday interaction on the favoured rationality. As Habermas argues citing the surrealists' failed attempt to aestheticize reality, such undertakings are not only dangerous, they are self-destructive. Deprived of their institutionalized foundations, the specific logics lose their efficacy. The freedom they seemed to promise vanishes with their autonomy. If the contradictions of modernity are to be resolved, we must find a means of rearticulating the three spheres with day-to-day existence which nevertheless protects their life-giving independence.

The solution Habermas proposes draws its inspiration from Peter Weiss's Die Ästhetik des Widerstands. The first volume of Weiss's novel portrays a group of working-class teenagers in the Germany of the Third Reich intensely interested both in works of art and in resisting the Nazi regime. Their discussions of aesthetics, as they are presented in the book, are not abstract, specialist disquisitions. Their readings of novels, sculptures and paintings draw connections between works of art and the difficulties the young men confront in their own politicized existences. This idea of a non-specialized but nevertheless sophisticated interpretation challenges the institutional isolation of art without endangering autonomy. It transforms aesthetic experience from within: 'Die ästhetische

Erfahrung erneuert dann nicht nur die Interpretation der Bedürfnisse, in deren Licht wir die Welt wahrnehmen; sie greift gleichzeitig in die kognitiven Deutungen und die normativen Erwartungen ein und verändert die Art, wie alle diese Momente auf einander verweisen'.(79) In Die Ästhetik des Widerstands, aesthetic discussion not only reconnects works of art with everyday debates about identity and political purpose, it simultaneously transforms the role played by the other two logics in day-to-day communication. In breaking down aesthetic barriers, private discussions about art simultaneously further the reintegration of moral and scientific discourses with everyday interaction.

What do we learn from this example? In response to the increasing abstraction of specialist discourses, Habermas turns suggestively to individual subjects, turns, that is, to the very subjects from whom the autonomous embodiments of Enlightenment reason seemed irremediably remote. To balance the detrimental effects of a differentiation deemed generally beneficial, Habermas calls on the integrative powers of the individual. Peter Bürger has criticized Habermas's proposal because it misjudges the difficulties of coupling specialized artefacts with the biography of individual readers. The division which Habermas suggests lay subjects can effortlessly bridge is, in Bürger's view, a social fact, an institutionalized contradiction which subjects on their own are not strong enough to resolve. Following the rules of the aesthetic institution, only pulp literature can be applied

directly to everyday experience. The high culture, in contrast, whose accumulated wisdom Habermas hopes to redeploy, must be interpreted without reference to external, non-aesthetic factors, must be read as form and topos, not as real-life event. When he hopes to reintegrate autonomous artefacts with the habits of reading appropriate to Mills and Boon, Habermas, in Bürger's argument, ignores the determining role which these institutional rules play in aesthetic practices. We may applaud his aims, and ourselves long for the integrated interpretations to which he aspires. But, if we are not to make exorbitant demands of individual readers, we must admit that, for the institutional codes which govern aesthetic behaviour, what Habermas proposes is a contradiction in terms.(80)

Habermas's essay implicitly admits this difficulty. For the individuals who achieve the feat of reintegration are themselves fictional, the subjects strong enough to smooth the fissures of modernity not real people but the heroes of a novel. This slippage need not discredit Habermas's suggestion. In his own discussion of Weiss's novel, Bürger emphasizes the degree to which Die Ästhetik des Widerstands, in its very formal devices, blurs the boundaries between aesthetic artefacts and everyday practice, between fiction and reality.(81) The rules of the institution may govern behaviour, but that is not to say they cannot gradually be challenged. More disturbing in Habermas's essay is a discrepancy between the stated desire to rearticulate specialized logics with the lifeworld, and the tendency of the argument itself to

exacerbate and multiply divisions. The essay espouses the aim of a reintegration. But not only is the subject whom it calls upon to reunite the diverging discourses in all likelihood too weak to meet the challenge. The voice which defends these aspirations is itself incapable of synthetic cohesion.

This inability is clearest in the inconsistencies in Habermas's presentation of art's particular rationality. Autonomous art is defined as a discourse in which a subject, freed from the constraints of cognition and morality indulges in a pleasurable, decentred self-exploration most famously analysed by Kant in his Kritik der Urteilskraft.(82) In this account, the establishing of an autonomous aesthetic enclave permits a new, fluid self-analysing subject to come into being. For conservative critics, such as Daniel Bell, art is not the only sphere of society where we find an unstable, self-obsessed subject. Social life is increasingly saturated with these volatile individuals, a saturation Bell explains by saying that the self-indulgent habits of an aestheticist elite have damagingly spread into other walks of life.(83) Habermas defends art against these accusations by saying that the changes in subjectivity lamented by Bell are not the responsibility of modernist artefacts. Individuality has instead been altered by changes in the structure of society, by the new attitudes to work, consumption and leisure time brought forth by the expansion of consumer capitalism.(84) Alongside the decentred subject of aesthetic autonomy, therefore, Habermas places a social counterpart: the decentred subject of

consumption. It is tempting to link these two subjectivities and argue that the volatile, aesthetic subject arises as artists react to the changes in individuality wrought by economic expansion. Habermas's own text suggests such an interpretation when it reads modernism in art as a response to the accelerated sense of time experienced in the industrialized, urban environments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.(85) Yet this connection undermines Habermas's definition of aesthetic rationality, for it suggests that the aesthetic subject, which Habermas explains as the positive product of autonomy, is rather the negative result of industrialization. It suggests that decentring is not, or not only, the privilege of an individual freed from cognitive and moral constraints. It is simultaneously the malaise of a subject battered and buffeted by modernity.

Habermas's brief interpretation of Peter Weiss adds a further complication to these conflicting definitions of art. For the art which the heroes of Die Ästhetik des Widerstands reconnect with their own biographies bears little resemblance to the decentred play otherwise said to be constitutive of post-Enlightenment aesthetic experience. The fluid subjectivity explored when art turns its back on ethics and epistemology gives way in the Weiss example to works of art at least potentially in touch with the logics of morality and science. For Peter Hohendahl, such contradictions arise because Habermas is juggling irreconcilable demands, hoping vainly to unite aesthetic autonomy with its polar opposite, reintegration.(86)

Neither of the tensions is, however, so intractable that a plausible resolution could not be found. It could be explicitly argued that art's inner logic is at once autonomous and socially determined. It could be reasoned that works of art, though self-enclosed, simultaneously point towards the technical and political practices they exclude.(87) Habermas would never propose such dialectical solutions, would never consciously reformulate the contradictions as contradictions. To understand why, we need only re-examine the function which these apparent inconsistencies have for his arguments. The inconsistencies are in each case the vehicle of clarity. In each case, the argument is differentiated, the debate enriched with a further conceptual level. Aesthetic decentring is complemented with a transformation of subjectivity whose roots lie in social change itself. Specialist interpretations of works of art are contrasted with lay readings which do not confine themselves to the specific, restricted logic of the aesthetic sphere. Each new differentiation assists the argument, defending art against accusations of hedonism or arcane abstraction. Yet the art thus championed disappears in the plethora of its determinations. As soon as we interrupt the text to ask what the distinctions have protected, the feeling of clarity which so distinguishes Habermas's prose melts away. The fragments differentiated do not retrospectively concatenate. They remain uncomfortably at odds with each other, obscuring rather than explaining art's particular logic. Works of art are both autonomous and social, both expert and lay, but

the narrative which could bind together these different facets, could make sense of the distinctions which, at each turn of the argument appeared cogent and convincing, eludes us. Worse than that, the ideal of reintegration which Habermas explicitly espouses in the text becomes itself but a further unrelated fragment of argumentative lucidity. Spoken by the voice which differentiates and distinguishes, the dream of a rearticulated lifeworld is itself but a further differentiation.

The goal of Habermas's theory is an account of society as a rearticulated, flexible totality. In the belief that social processes can no longer be productively likened to the growth of a self-reflexive, self-contained macro-subject, Habermas describes society as a series of autonomous subsystems bound together nevertheless by continual, mediating discussions.(88) This alternative concept of totality is the achievement Martin Jay defends against post-structuralist criticisms of the Habermasian project:(89) against Lyotard's fear that Habermas strives for a social unity 'within which all the elements of daily life and of thought would take their places as in an organic whole';(90) or against the contrary objection that Habermas's clear-cut distinctions ignore the cross-overs and spillages between social and discursive spheres.(91) An open-ended model of totality which avoids the twin dangers of organicism and fragmentation is no doubt what Habermas <u>hopes</u> to have sketched. But it is not what the texts themselves contain. The essay on modernity rather vindicates both post-

structuralist objections, despite their apparent divergence. Habermas introduces distinctions which he cannot bridge between social and aesthetic decentring, between expert and lay readings. He irrevocably fragments the social totality. At the same time he dreams of reuniting the severed particles, both of his argument and of modernity. He longs for a subject who, with her personal, or as Lyotard might call it, organic biography, could bind society back together.

This conflict is the mark left on Habermas's theory by his strategic double logic. The double logic is not evenly balanced, it logically favours differentiation. Though the lifeworld is supposed to spawn and control the system which subsequently threatens and destroys it, language is said nevertheless to remain distinct, to remain differentiated from distortions and abuse. Connections and affinities between communication and the economy are constantly analysed. But the interrelations thus discerned are never permitted to alter the basic fact of language's self-enclosure. This imbalance founds Habermas's theory, endowing him with the uncompromised norms he requires to criticize instrumental reason. At the same time, however, it frustrates the entire project. The subject who opts strategically for categorical distinctions and unimpeached norms cannot - if the evidence of Habermas's own text is to be believed - control the processes her choice unleashes. To the <u>fact</u> of proliferating divisions, she can counterpose only the <u>desire</u> for integration. To the ever expanding array of conceptual levels, she can counterpose only the recognition

that the project, to be completed, requires a different voice than her own; that modernity, to be redeemed, requires an alternative, stronger, synthesizing subject. Having committed himself to strategic division, Habermas cannot apparently be that conciliatory individual himself.(92)

Albrecht Wellmer's bold solution to this dilemma is to decree that art will train the reintegrative subject for which Habermas's essay is a coded appeal. He believes that Adorno's analyses of modernist art, when read judiciously against the grain, adumbrate just the understanding of works of art needed by Habermasian theory to reunite its diverging logics. In Adorno's account, modernist art, such as Schönberg's, can no longer overlook the authoritarian impulse lurking in the closed aesthetic structures of the nineteenth century (in Schönberg's case the key example would be sonata form). These forms claim harmoniously to integrate individual moments into their overall shape, but - as the modernists realize - the integration succeeds only because each part is stamped by an organizing principle; cut down to size and allocated its standardized space on the composition's formal rack. Whilst they criticize organic forms, however, the modernists most dear to Adorno do not abandon aesthetic structure. They search instead for forms which, though they reject the pre-established and standardizing options offered by tradition, nevertheless coherently unite the fragments from which the new pieces are composed. Far from weakening aesthetic structure, the modernists invigorate it.

They search out forms that, in their elasticity and pliability, accommodate the heterogeneous elements which traditional artefacts could have included only at the price of structural incoherence. Modernist works of art pull off the well nigh impossible feat of being coherent without being coercive.(93)

This non-coercive coherence exactly corresponds to the restructured totality sought by Habermas's theory. In Wellmer's argument, however, modernist artefacts not only prefigure the new totality, their dislocated structure simultaneously trains the subjects appropriate to the new model, schooling them in ambiguity and difference. It moulds individuals who are at once robust and supple enough to interfuse the disparate spheres in their own biographies without at the same time falling prey to myths of organic uniformity. To say, however, that artefacts prefigure and train aesthetic subjects is not to tell the whole story. Indeed, in Wellmer's view it is to repeat Adorno's errors and ignore the active role played by the reader in modern aesthetic experience.(94) If works of art offer a model for a new subjectivity, they exist only through the subjects whose new identity they foreshadow. Wellmer's paradigm for this paradoxical arrangement is an event which Joseph Beuys staged outside the Dokumenta in Kassel. Beuys arranged seven thousand basalt rocks to form an arrow at whose point was a tree. Beside the rocks was a written exhortation to interested members of the public that they should take a stone away with them, plant out an oak and drive the basalt into the ground beside it.(95) For Wellmer, the meaningful heterogeneity which the work of art

tentatively articulates exists fully only through the interaction with readers, who in their turn consume the work of art so thoroughly as to eliminate its original form.

Wellmer's argument is consciously paradoxical. Artefacts are an image of subjectivity, yet this image exists only through its destruction by the subjects it prompts into being. It takes up the two ideas that in Habermas's essay on modernity jostled uncomfortably side-by-side and welds them together in a single, self-conscious coup de grâce. The desire to preserve art as an autonomous realm, respected by Wellmer's insistence on aesthetic form, and the competing wish to reconnect art's expert logic with everyday life, fulfilled by Wellmer's emphasis on the destructive intervention of the aesthetic public, are here unstably united. The strong, supple, synthesizing subject required by Habermasian theory now creates herself with Nietzschean self-assuredness through her interpretations of modernist works of art. Yet, for all its edgy virtuosity, Wellmer's argument is flawed. In Wellmer's essays on postmodernity, the description of the interplay between open aesthetic forms and subjectivity appears three times word for word. Each time the argument culminates in an identical invocation of the aesthetic individual, an appeal to: '"kommunikativ verflüssigte" Ich-Identität'.(96) Wellmer notes and apologizes for these repetitions,(97) but the tenacity with which he returns to the same formulations seems more than just an accident of anthology. The reiterations mark the vulnerable spot in his Habermasian position. His arguments sketch the

subjectivity to complement the voice which distinguishes, encloses and protects. They conjure for us the individual who could smooth over and contain the ruptures of modernity. But they betray at the same time that this fluid individual does not exist. She is the subjectivity towards which Wellmer's elaborations inevitably tend, but which they themselves cannot embody, which they can only implore to come into existence in a frozen conceptual jargon irreconcilable with the courted fluidity: '"kommunikativ verflüssigte" Ich-Identität'. She is the elastic self-overcoming of Habermasian distinctions which Wellmer needs and longs for, but which eludes him as surely as it escapes his colleague and mentor.

One essay, 'Wahrheit, Schein, Versöhnung: Adornos ästhetische Rettung der Modernität', promises to overcome this deadlock. Rather than attributing to art its own autonomous logic, it approaches aesthetic artefacts as a blend of the three Habermasian discourses: propositional truth, moral right and subjective authenticity, and sets out to explore how two of these logics, propositional truth and authenticity, are intertwined in works of art. Works of art, for Wellmer, present an experience we have ourselves undergone but never clearly articulated: 'Das diffus schon immer Vorhandene, Vor- und Unterbewusste tritt zusammen zur Erscheinung eines Bildes und wird gleichsam "greifbar"...'.(98) As the quotation implies, however, the experience is not left unchanged by the work of art. As it is expressed, the diffuse, unarticulated knowledge is also subjected to aesthetic criteria. It acquires what

Wellmer calls 'ästhetische Stimmigkeit',(99) or coherent form. Once the experience has been thus aestheticized we approach it with new standards. Though we are naturally concerned with the truth of the feelings narrated, we are equally interested in the accuracy or authenticity with which they are relayed. The work of art thus combines two of the logics of modernity. In so far as it states something we previously only dimly intuited, art follows the rules of propositional truth; in so far as it aims accurately to reproduce an already existing truth, it follows those of subjective authenticity.

Having thus appealingly redefined art as a blend of discursive logics, Wellmer unexpectedly switches direction. Discussions of individual artefacts, he tells us, mediate between these two levels, judging the truth and authenticity of particular artefacts by comparing them with everyday experience ('lebensgeschichtliche Erfahrung').(100) The introduction of everyday experience appears innocuous enough, but this founding, non-aesthetic layer prompts Wellmer to declare that we cannot strictly employ the discursive epithets 'true' or 'authentic' to talk about art. When we use them, he decides, we transfer them from their original, real-life context into the fictional sphere of aesthetic experience. Our usage is always metaphorical.(101) This distinction returns us to the very dilemma Wellmer's essay seemed to have sidestepped. Works of art seemed briefly to entwine the three types of discourse, seemed fleetingly to patch up the pieces of modernity. But if this union is metaphorical, Wellmer must still explain how we

are to transfer its open unity back to real life. How are we to liberate the new totality from its metaphorical enclave? How are we to unite modernity with the reunited image of itself in art?

The answer which both Habermas and Wellmer have so far given to this question is: the subject. The individual herself will bridge the gap between specialist discourse and quotidian experience. In each case, however, the subject thus invoked is herself a point of tension, a fault line in the argument rather than the promised solution. 'Wahrheit, Schein, Versöhnung' suggests an alternative approach to the problem. Where previously the role of the synthesizing subject was explicitly but problematically thematized, her position is now silently presupposed. The crucial jump between metaphorical truth and its literal counterpart - the jump which would reunite modernity - is now assumed to be as straightforward as it is desirable. This disingenuous normalization of the very issue the texts investigate is aided by Wellmer's choice of metaphors. The relation between aesthetic and everyday truths appears so obvious because the different logics are likened to human faces. Both the propositional truth we acknowledge though we see it for the first time, and the form whose aptness we simultaneously evaluate, are compared to individual countenances, to visages which we recognize intuitively, or which, though barely altered, we perceive to be radically transformed.(102) Recast as human faces, the aesthetic truths seem neither specialist nor metaphorical, but immediate. Where

previously the fluidity of modernist artefacts was supposed to train subjects elastic enough to reunite the diverging discourses, now the specialist logics are themselves figuratively modelled not on elastic but on everyday subjects, on familiar faces whose connection with day-to-day life it seems churlish to call in question. The subject who caused both Habermas and Wellmer such argumentative distress, returns in Wellmer's rhetoric in a new, normalized incarnation to smooth over the fissures she could elsewhere only highlight and exacerbate. The metaphorical gap which divides the reunified spheres from real life is bridged at last by Wellmer's reassuring facial figures.

This rhetorical appeal to the self-evidence of the human subject can be found throughout Wellmer's texts. When he redefines the notion of architectural language, he does so to include everyday communicative processes otherwise dismissed as opaque by the functionalists planning building projects. Architecture, he insists, is to be conceived from the point of view of 'real people' - of 'konkrete, geschichtliche Subjekte'.(103) When he proposes his particular version of postmodernism, he marks it off from Adorno's messianic utopia by describing it almost tautologically as the 'historical' project of 'human beings': 'ein geschichtliches Projekt der Menschen'.(104) When he illustrates his suggestion that clear, directly intelligible construction is the main criterion of beauty in industrial design, he chooses the bicycle as his positive example and contrasts it with electronic technology.

Whereas the mechanics of a bicycle are easily grasped and in direct proportion to human experience, microchip technology disrupts this reassuring human plane, monstrously flouting what Wellmer assumes to be the natural limits of day-to-day perception.(105)

This rhetoric is not in bad faith. Wellmer never attacks the category of the subject. In his long essay on postmodernism, he instead takes issue with theories, such as those of Freud, Nietzsche and Adorno, which turn the subject against herself.(106) A theory which sees in power and repression the very mechanisms by which we constitute ourselves as individuals condemns itself to being insuperably but unproductively sceptical of subjectivity. The individual will always appear to these theorists to perpetuate the violence by which she was herself moulded, wreaking on her environment a misplaced revenge. For these pessimists, even philosophy must prop up the purview of power, generating the aporias, self-contradictions and cul-de-sacs of which Wellmer and Habermas despair in Adorno.(107) Wellmer believes it more productive to follow the lead of the later Wittgenstein, who does not assault the subject so much as gently displace her, directing attention away from the individual speaker to the rules and conventions which underwrite her speech. While this approach deprives the individual of her philosophical centrality, it protects her from too searching a scrutiny. She is thrust from the philosophical limelight, but her ability to follow rules, to shift between language games, to refrain from abusing her

interlocutor, her ability in other words, to be in command of the language games which cut across her, is at the same time unquestioningly and comfortingly presupposed.(108)

Wellmer's texts thus propose two solutions to the dilemmas which fragment Habermas's essay on modernity. One is a self-creating, Nietzschean subject, an individual modelled on the artefacts she herself destructively creates. The other is the ordinary citizen, the woman on the street who intuitively recombines the competing logics of linguistic interaction. Neither of these subjects matches the voice which writes the texts. The elastic subjectivity can only be cited, in a repeated invocation which each time unsatisfactorily ends the argument. The text itself cannot perform the reintegrative labours which the new, fluid individual is to master. The ordinary citizen, meanwhile, though she might help rhetorically to smooth over the gaps, cannot prevent the texts from throwing up discrepancies, such as the distinction between literal and metaphorical truths, that the subject writing is incapable of theorizing. Wellmer's arguments promised to contain the diverging tendencies of Habermas's essay. It transpires that they can no more outwit the double logic than the essay on modernity. At the same time, the texts reveal that the desire to reintegrate is itself scarred by the tactical divisions it is supposed to temper. The longing for reunion finds expression in two competing subjects, the Nietzschean and the everyday.(109) These two individuals are not bound together as stages in a narrative, as the developing phases of a

dialectical progression. They coexist in the argument without interrelation, the symptoms of a desire itself distorted and fragmented. They exacerbate the splintering they were called upon to contain.

The double logic was introduced as a strategic choice. It was consciously adopted as the tactics required if Horkheimer's plan of a grand social theory was ever to be executed. Yet despite the self-consciousness of the decision, the Habermasian dual focus unleashes an energy which it cannot control. The words strategy and choice conjure the impression of a theoretical subject as sovereign as the individual of Wellmer's rhetorical appeals. But the texts seem unable to restrain the distinguishing logic on which the purity of their norms depend. The strategy should entail the balanced juxtaposition of two alternatives, an evenhanded oscillation between a tendency to differentiate and a contrary ability to regroup, rearticulate, and reunite. Yet this desirable equilibrium gives way in the texts to a more troubling imbalance, to arguments which ceaselessly divide and differentiate, despite their stated desire loosely to interfuse the disparate fragments as an open totality. The strategist, it emerges, is not in charge of the logic he tactically deploys.

Does this matter? Is the subject's control of a theory vital to a theory's success? In the essay on modernity, the distinguishing logic indirectly empties art of specific content, attributing to it facets which never unite to reveal

the essence of aesthetic rationality. Could it not be that the same fate awaits Habermas's norms, that his norms could be hollowed out by the very precision with which they are marked off from instrumental reason? Certainly, the emptiness of the norms is what disturbs Seyla Benhabib in Habermas's position. She worries that Habermas, to preserve the purity of his linguistic standards, has had to drain them of the last trace of empirical communication, had to locate them in a discursive realm devoid not just of coercion and obfuscation, but also of emancipatory longings. Just as Adorno, in her view, had finally to situate his norms in an unreal realm beyond a uniformly reified society, so Habermas, despite his critique of Adorno's position, draws his criteria from a discursive ideal as otherworldly as Adorno's state of reconciliation.(110) Habermas, in Benhabib's view, thereby lets slip the most innovative aspect of his theory. Where liberal theory generally presupposes an abstract subject, an individual who has shed all distorting idiosyncrasies and desires, Habermas's model of discourse requires from subjects only a reflexive attitude towards their individual circumstances, only the willingness to reflect on and modify their particular desires, whilst at the same time acknowledging and respecting the specific needs of their interlocutor.(111) With his emphasis on the formal processes of discussion, as opposed to the specific content of any single debate, however, with his stress on the abstract criteria of accountability, rather than the attempts by groups and individuals to have their needs and desires recognized by

their partners in the political process, Habermas robs his own theory of this potential specificity. He substitutes for concrete needs 'the language of an anonymous species-subject'.(112)

The emptiness which disturbs Benhabib is thus Habermas's stress on the formal processes of discussion, on the way facts, values and desires are debated rather than on the particular morality to be practised in a freer society. She is worried by the, in her view, unnecessary, distinction between the content of communication, and its form. The emptiness which perturbs me is of a different order. Habermas does not merely distinguish between the form and content of linguistic interaction, he differentiates between categories of form itself. The primary differentiation is that between the three logics of modernity, between the distinct rationalities of scientific, moral and aesthetic discourse. In Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, he adds a further distinction, distinguishing between problem-solving and world-disclosing language, roughly speaking, between non-fiction and poetry, between literal usage and rhetoric.(113) More importantly, in response to Wellmer's suggestion that works of art blend the three logics of truth, righteousness and authenticity, he separates aesthetic rationality from the logic of authentic expression to which it had previously been tied, and adds a fourth logic to his modern trinity: 'propositionale Wahrheit, normative Richtigkeit, subjektive Wahrhaftigkeit und ästhetische Stimmigkeit'.(114) As in the essay on modernity, each of these new distinctions

promotes argumentative clarity. The distinction between problem-solving and world-disclosing language counters the poststructuralist tendency reductively to equate philosophical arguments with literature. The addition to the triad of a fourth rationality acknowledges Wellmer's insistence that works of art cannot be pinned down to any one of Habermas's three discursive types. Yet is Habermas any more able to articulate these proliferating distinctions than he is to bind together the different facets of autonomous art? In Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, the fourth logic is mentioned as if it made no difference to the argument, as if the addition did not revise the entire theory of a threefold modernity,(115) suggesting that the larger texts remain as unconsciously in the thrall of the differentiating logic as the shorter essay on modernity.

Benhabib complains that Habermas's norms are unnecessarily formal. Their formalism is, however, more extreme than she dared imagine. As the distinctions, spheres and conceptual levels proliferate, what emerges is not the abstract logic of the three discursive types. Rather than clarifying the nature of the different spheres, the competing qualifications blur the boundaries. What emerges instead is the mere fact of categorical distinction, the empty process of differentiation itself, a theoretical machine that distinguishes, isolates, separates and divides, but which can no more articulate the purpose of these divisions than it can round on its own machinations to reunite the broken fragments. Of course, this

inexorable mechanism is always accompanied by the desire for unity. But we will expect this desire to regiment the endless series of conceptual differences only if we take the rhetoric of strategy and choice at face value. The texts themselves paint a different picture. The controlled tactics - as they are actually practised - appear as an uneasy, almost schizophrenic conflict of impulses, as the disintegration of a theoretical voice which longs for unity but which itself can only ceaselessly, uncontrollably differentiate and divide.

Art is no more a solution to this problem than it was a panacea to Adorno's normative disorders. The discussions of aesthetics do not substantiate, ground or flesh out Habermas's formal norms. They only further exemplify the split logic, only repeat the spectacle of incessant distinctions disturbingly interlocked with a vain, frustrated longing for coherence. I want neither to offer an alternative remedy to the double logic, nor to suggest how Habermas might shore up his strategy. My aim has been to clear away the aesthetic appearances which obstruct the view of both Adorno's and Habermas's arguments, and to compare the figures of thought which then emerge, to juxtapose Dialektik der Aufklärung with its Habermasian successor. Habermas presents his theory as a normatively grounded, systematic critique of instrumental reason which sidesteps the self-undermining contradictions of negative dialectics. This account misrepresents its predecessors. It omits the gesture which inaugurates the investigations of Dialektik der Aufklärung, the renunciation of uncompromised

critical standards with which the book begins. It also overlooks Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectical wager, their bid to find in the destructive origins of instrumental reason traces of a rationality which respects heterogeneity. Having made these omissions, Habermas can grasp the contradictions of the book only as the failure of a theory to elaborate normative foundations. The notion that these very contradictions act out the standards which the arguments simultaneously undermine cannot feature in his account, for he is too staunchly committed to uncompromised, unambiguous critique. Yet his own foundations are no less paradoxical. The purity of communication is ensured by a two-pronged approach that separates language from the incursions of the economic system even as it traces the roots of this system to the rationalization of the lifeworld. Habermas calls this approach a theoretical strategy, but to call the separations a strategy is to make a virtue of necessity. For Habermas's texts seem unable to do anything but divide and differentiate. Distinctions continue incessantly to be drawn, even though the divisions - the introduction of a fourth logic is a case in point - obscure the very clarity they are intended to promote.

Comparing the two approaches, we see the contradiction and ambivalences of Dialektik der Aufklärung replaced in the later texts by ceaseless differentiation. Faced with these two alternatives, with Adorno and Horkheimer's self-conscious aporias and Habermas's strangely unreflexive self-undermining, it is tempting to propose a return to Adorno, a rehabilitation

of ambiguity and paradox, a renaissance of negative dialectics.(116) But this renaissance, for all its appeal, confronts a problem. Is it to dismiss Habermas as straightforwardly misguided, to abandon his approach as a simple theoretical error? Rather than uncritically reinstating Adorno's method at the expense of communicative action, it seems more fruitful to ask why Habermas misrecognizes Adorno's intentions, why the contradictions of negative dialectics appear to him at worst as needless self-undermining - as performative contradiction - at best as a dubious aestheticization of philosophy. Has something happened to contradiction - to the linch pin of Adorno's method - which makes Habermas's misreading not just inevitable but in some sense truer than the most faithful defence of negative dialectics? Is Habermas right to ignore Dialektik der Aufklärung's normative performance, its enactment of standards it can barely articulate?

To begin answering this question we need to turn to the term on which the defence of Dialektik der Aufklärung and its ambivalences depended: non-identity. As well as reconstructing Adorno's theory of heterogeneity, however, we must investigate the treatment of similar concepts by later critics. It is after all the fate of contradiction in the generation after Adorno that is at issue. No German critic has devoted more attention to the exploration of radical difference, of concepts equivalent to Adorno's non-identity, than Karl Heinz Bohrer. It is to his explorations of aesthetic alterity that I want to

turn in the next chapter. The added bonus of studying Bohrer's investigations is their explicit opposition to the Habermasian position. Habermas sees himself as a successor to the first generation of the Frankfurt School, taking up and renewing Horkheimer's critical ambitions. Bohrer plunders the messianic texts of Adorno or Bloch, but he borrows just as surely from the conservatism of Ernst Jünger to concoct an angry, right-wing anarchism. His texts offer a stark, and perhaps welcome contrast to Habermas's more considered reformism. What emerges on closer inspection, however, is not so much the difference as the similarity between the two positions, a similarity which cuts across the political spectrum to mark both critics as exemplary expressions of a shared postmodern malaise.

PART II

THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION

Bohrer's Plötzlichkeit

and the Concept of Non-Identity

> I should mention before going any further, any further on, that I say aporia without knowing what it means.(1)

1. An Elusive Alternative

In 1987, Bohrer publishes an ambitious article entitled 'Nach der Natur'.(2) The article promises nothing less than to rewrite the history of modernity, and in so doing to save the embattled concept of subjectivity. Bohrer proposes that we grasp modernity not as a single, linear development, but as two competing tendencies which shadow one another from the early nineteenth century into the present. One tendency he calls a 'social project',(3) and, though his comments about this half of modernity are limited to a few asides, the term 'project' suggests that he has in mind a version of industrialization similar to the picture sketched by Habermas in his lecture 'Die Moderne - Ein unvollendetes Projekt'.(4) Although the promise which modernity potentially contains has not been wholly fulfilled, the modern project in this upbeat, Habermasian account, is an unfolding process in which technology improves the material lot of humanity, but which is continually held in check by the rational potential stored up, if nowhere else, in

the subtle differentiations and switches of perspective of everyday conversation. Bohrer thinks this optimistic vision is one-sided. If modernity can be described as the steady progress towards a comfortable and rational society, it must be viewed simultaneously as an era of disruption and insecurity. To grasp this other side of modernity he proposes the concept of aesthetic subjectivity.

Aesthetic subjectivity can be best understood against the background of what is, for Bohrer, the defining characteristic of modern existence: our exile from nature. When the modern subject surveys her environment, she sees neither the workings of a divine creator, nor a comforting reflection of her own desires and aspirations. She looks out on a landscape devoid of subjective intention.(5) This chastening experience throws the subject back on her own resources, or as Bohrer puts it, her own origins. Any meaning she can wrest from her existence will henceforth be derived solely from her own powers of rational reflection.(6) If this reflection were a Habermasian reason, the subject's exile need not be a lonely one. Habermas's rationality is grounded in our communication with other subjects, in cooperative efforts to influence and shape a common lifeworld. Bohrer's reason has none of this uplifting communality. It consists in the fraction of subjectivity that is left over once we have subtracted work, politics, civil society, indeed the whole project of modernity. It is a residue of selfhood jealously guarded from all action and interaction. Alienated from nature, Bohrer's subject is simultaneously cut

off from society itself.

A subject who has broken all ties with social existence is hard to conceive. However, Bohrer makes a first, paradoxical step towards a definition by denying this pure subjectivity any positive attributes, by arguing that the residue of reflexive selfhood consists solely in a blanket rejection of social life. Subjectivity is the pure act of negation: 'Subjektivität meint vor allem das Widerspruchspotential gegenüber dem offiziellen Diskurs in allen semantischen Ausdifferenzierungen, weil das Subjekt seit 1800 zunächst immer bei sich selbst ist'.(7) This claim generates a dialectical dilemma. If a subject consists solely in negation, if she has no substance of her own, does she not inadvertently extend the purview of the society she condemns? That Bohrer is aware of this dilemma can be seen from his comments on Habermas. In his essay on modernity, Habermas interprets the dandyish lethargy of Aestheticist ennui as an expression of social alienation.(8) But for Bohrer, such an interpretation misses the point. By describing ennui primarily as alienation, he demotes it to a negative image of the constricting conditions against which it rebelled. Ennui is not merely a sign of discontent which points impotently back to society. Over and above its social determinations, it is behaviour with positive content of its own; a state of mind in which the imagination dreamily stumbles across ideas that, in their randomness and idiosyncrasy, leave sociological categories like alienation far behind.(9)

Bohrer's subject is thus both a blanket negation of

society and a source of positive content. Having defined subjectivity by default as the absence of society, Bohrer overcomes his initial hesitancy, and grants his anti-social subject substance of her own. Yet this second step in his argument does not take back the first. The initial step has modified irreversibly what Bohrer understands by the term subject, and so dictates which content is to be readmitted. A subject which exists as pure negation, which casts off any connection with what Bohrer disparagingly dubs 'official discourse', cannot be understood as a person or individual, for a person actively participates in practical life. Even if she seeks to transform everyday practice, by her very participation this subject opens herself to contamination by the instrumental vocabularies Bohrer abhors. There will always be psychological, social, or medical explanations at hand to bring the most stubborn of rebellions back down to the level of everyday interaction, and so deprive it of its individuality. If Bohrer's non-person is to be conceded a substance of her own, she must find some non-empirical way of being a subject - an exacting requirement, admittedly, but one which she meets in Bohrer's eyes by becoming a work of art. A work of art records the imaginative trajectory traced in moments of ennui, but in such a way that the record cannot be translated back, at least not without residue, into psychological or social terms. No work of art is purely autobiographical. Yet, even as it severs links with empirical individuals, aesthetic form conjures up an impression of subjectivity. When we read a Hölderlin poem, we

may not directly empathize with the disappointed idealist hopes which prompted the poem's composition. Indeed, only the worst culture vulture would claim to share emotions with the real Hölderlin (Bohrer talks of 'bildungsbürgerlich-fromme Epigonalität').(10) More sophisticated readers identify with the poem nonetheless, finding in it a voice or speaker whose disappointment reflects their own. This voice, this free-floating, non-empirical but nevertheless subjective lyrical I is what Bohrer means by aesthetic subjectivity.

The aesthetic subject negates society in a different manner from the dialectical negation which seemed earlier to trip up Bohrer's arguments. The difference can best be described spatially. The subject who, although she rejects society in its entirety, still helplessly extends its power, is enveloped by the forces she rejects. Her rebellion is total, but because she is trapped inside the instrumental machine, her actions supply no content which is not decipherable as a negative image of society. Bohrer's aesthetic subject, in contrast, negates from a position securely outside the social envelope. Her rebellion is less active, in fact hardly a rebellion at all. She does not endeavour vainly to cast off the categories by which an instrumental modernity controls and manipulates her life. For these categories never controlled her. She could perhaps be conceived as an unexplored aspect of personality, as uncolonized subjectivity, but even these names move too close to the instrumental vocabularies she eludes. She is neither a person, nor an individual intention. But she is

equally not a psychological stimulus, or the firing of a nerve ending that has yet to be accounted for. She frustrates scientific explanation as surely as she confounds philosophical inquiry. She is an act of pure imagination.

We may not agree that anything so magically escapes the clutches of modernity; or we may think that, if there are such reserves, that there are more productive ways of describing them than Bohrer's perplexing and barely conceivable aesthetic subjectivity. But we must try nevertheless to grasp the figure of thought which underlies his paradoxes. Bohrer suspects dialectical models of negation for the ease with which they recuperate individual acts of rebellion and reconstrue them as an integral part of the movement of a more general concept. He aims instead to establish a non-dialectical model of negation. This aim is complicated by his extreme sensitivity to anything which even indirectly prepares the ground for the hegemony of the universal. He rejects grand categories such as history, and society. But he also casts out portions of these larger concepts - social institutions and even empirical individuals - as if these terms could smuggle back the general movement he despises. Every category laboriously honed in the service of the more upbeat construction of modernity is overturned - every category, that is, but aesthetic form.

But why should Bohrer condemn himself to this conceptual asceticism? To what purpose does he question the whole project of modernity? The starting point of his argument, the subject's exile from nature, gives us a clue. Bohrer wants to record what

happens when an individual looks out at the nature of which she is herself a part, and sees neither a fellow subject, nor an object which she could catalogue, explain, or manipulate; who sees nothing that could comfort, or even make sense to her; who sees contingency itself. The irony of Bohrer's argument is that only the most artificial of experiences, only the slippery fictionality of a work of art is supposed to capture this Sartrean nausea without trimming it to meet the demands of a conceptual system.(11) Aesthetic artefacts alone can salvage the experience which the other, more practical side of modernity, with its technical expertise and its myths of improvement and reform, unthinkingly excludes. Secreted in the artificiality of aesthetic form are the remnants of contingency, the last traces of an unconquered and unconquerable residue: ciphers of what Adorno might have called non-identity.

But the ciphers are disappointingly obscure. A non-dialectical model of negation, in Bohrer's account, depends on discrete, positive content which the movement of the negated concept cannot comprehend. The content has its source in the unfettering of the imagination which accompanies ennui. But it is protected from being analysed in social or psychological terms by the form of the works of art in which it is articulated. Having made these claims, it would seem logical for Bohrer to scrutinize both the content and form of aesthetic artefacts for traces of the incommensurable experience, to devote himself to a history of non-identity. Such a history

would naturally be doomed to failure. Written necessarily in conceptual language, it could do little more than squint ineffectually at the debris left behind by conceptualization. But it would nevertheless pay tribute to the contingency modernity ignores. Bohrer's essay does not even gesture towards this admirable, if thankless undertaking. It tells us nothing more about the positive content intuited by the unfettered imagination than the fact that it cannot be conceptualized, that it summons up: 'etwas definitiv Unbestimmtes'.(12) It betrays nothing more about aesthetic form than the separation which it effects between aesthetic content and everyday concepts: 'das Sprechen [scheint] sich zu verselbständigen'.(13) Bohrer defines his categories only negatively. He never supplies even tentative fragments of the positive substance on which his alternative model of negation relies. His essay challenges the complacency of upbeat visions of modernity by sketching an image of the experience they exclude. Yet the sketch remains an empty outline and its initial bold promise is only fitfully fulfilled. Worse than that, as an empty outline, the essay renders its own endeavours futile. Deprived of the content which could sustain its irreducible difference, the alternative negation collapses back into the society it rejects. Although Bohrer longs to escape the vicious dialectical circle in which every negation contributes to the movement it negates, his essay helplessly reinforces it. For it can show us nothing which eludes the relentless, dialectical progress of modernity.

In the argument that follows, I retrace the path which leads Bohrer to place his hopes for a non-dialectical negation paradoxically and self-defeatingly in an empty form. Having explored the successive failures which force Bohrer finally to embrace the vacancy of aesthetic subjectivity, I then pinpoint the theoretical presupposition which prohibits Bohrer from supplying the positive content that his alternative negation requires. Adorno's concept of non-identity seems a more fruitful approach to the radical heterogeneity of which Bohrer is the self-appointed guardian. Yet the question arises whether Adorno's treatment of non-identity does not itself rely on a concept of subjectivity which we can no longer uncritically presuppose: a subject who can grasp theoretically what she cannot theoretically grasp. If we no longer believe in this supple, self-transgressive subjectivity, Bohrer's texts appear in a new light. Rather than being examples of philosophical muddleheadedness, his self-defeating arguments appear as the form to which postmodern theories of non-identity are ineluctably condemned. His failure appears at once symptomatic and inevitable. Philosophical reflection is then left with the job, not of ingeniously redefining non-identity, but of grasping why no amount of ingenuity or commitment could today help us adequately to conceptualize alterity.

2. Objective Hopes

The empty space marked in Bohrer's later texts by aesthetic subjectivity was once occupied by history itself. During the 1970s, at the beginning of his career, Bohrer believes that if we could only put aside the distorting spectacles of fixed conceptual systems, we could explore the real texture of historical development, where subjects are no longer guided by theories or blueprints, but where their every action is an improvised experiment, a condition which he sums up in the phrase: 'Denken und antizipieren zu müssen, ohne der objektiven Richtigkeit solcher Vorwegnahme gewiss zu sein'.(14) His early texts wish to analyse the mixture of intuition, know-how and receptiveness to one's immediate surroundings which guides such improvisation. They want to document the peculiarities and surprises of the history which slips through the net of grander theories. In this rejection of overarching, historical narratives they seem to herald the postmodern era. But where Lyotard's Postmodern Condition optimistically claims that 'Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative',(15) Bohrer still longs to replace the exhausted systems with a narrative of what it really feels like to be a subject taking part in the historical process.(16) Indeed, he still hopes that the historical process will culminate in a profound, if unspecified transformation of society: his early texts are filled with the word utopia.(17) By speaking out for an experience which more systematic approaches distort or obliterate, he hopes to usher in the changes which systems,

even the most radical, unwittingly hinder. The vacant space in Bohrer's later theory of modernity is filled in the early texts not merely by history, but by a history charged with almost revolutionary aspirations.

The problems which confront so audacious an attempt to salvage the authentic texture of historical experience are outlined by Bohrer in Der Lauf des Freitag - an extended analysis of Robinson Crusoe which he publishes in 1973 - when he is defending his conviction that fictional texts are particularly suited to the task of historical prognosis:

> Der utopische Kern imaginativer Schreibhandlungen ist nämlich den anderen Formen des Geistes darin überlegen, dass er sich nicht den Objekten unterwerfen lässt. Er bezieht seine Erkennungszeichen nicht aus den schon vorgegebenen Objekten, auch nicht bloss aus dem Subjekt, sondern aus den Konflikt zwischen beiden.(18)

Where one might expect the appeal to undistorted history to make Bohrer privilege raw data, he in fact rejects any such naive empiricism. Facts themselves do not edge us closer to historical experience for they are static. They record the image of a society frozen at the moment when the data was gathered. The historical experience which Bohrer wishes to salvage is not a static image, but the experience of imminent transformation. Yet to register a change before it happens is nigh on impossible. Like the early Frankfurt School, with whom he otherwise has little in common, Bohrer faces the paradox that he believes he can adequately grasp the dynamic, changing, contradictory nature of contemporary society only if he knows

how it will develop in the future. Only this knowledge will let him sort telling contradictions from historically insignificant twists and turns. Yet this knowledge is not written on social phenomena. They do not themselves announce whether they will contribute to future transformation. But neither does Bohrer, again like the Frankfurt School, believe in a theory - such as Marxism - which could help him scientifically to pinpoint the hidden indices of development. He has instead to gamble on the direction of future change. He is forced to speculate how phenomena will later fit together - which aspects of society will contribute to change, which will with all probability impede it - and make this unsubstantiated wager the basis of interpretation in the present. For Horkheimer, such wagers could be expressed in the form of a theoretical hypothesis which, unlike dogmatic Marxism, is open to constant revision.(19) The Bohrer of the 1970s, in contrast, doubts the ability of any social theory - even the open-minded experiments of the Frankfurt School - to overcome a debilitating dependence on facts, and so looks to works of fiction to gamble creatively on the future. Yet he insists simultaneously that these speculations are not purely invented. A subject which projected private desires onto the course of history would be as incapable of intuiting future developments as positivist science. To be other than idle, her speculations must arise from the friction between her desire for change, and the actual, if elusive movement of the phenomena themselves.

The utopian history to which Bohrer pledges his faith is

thus not an isolatable body of facts which official historiographers have ignored. It is an experience, or form of consciousness springing from the conflict between a contradictory reality and the longing of a utopian subject. But how does this conflict arise? How can the subject so confront reality that the friction generates an intuitive knowledge of future change, rather than frustration or resignation? Bohrer's answer echoes Walter Benjamin, whose essay 'Der Sürrealismus' he evidently admires: 'ein methodisches Sich-Faszinieren-Lassen durch die Mythologie des einzelnen Dinges, das von keiner Philosophie mehr abgestützt ist'.(20) To spark off ideas which transcend the present without being emptily fictitious, the subject surrenders to the aura of everyday objects. This surrender is achieved on the precondition that she renounces all conceptual props, that she forgets any theories which may clutter her head about the social implications of the contemplated object. Yet despite this conceptual renunciation, her speculations are neither solipsistic nor irrational. Instead, the ideas tumbling through her imagination as she yields to the object's fascinating allure, are constrained by the very object which sparks off her revery, endowed by the individual phenomena with a non-conceptual rigour (Bohrer speaks of 'ein methodisches Sich-Faszinieren-Lassen'). Freed from conceptual systems but guided by reality itself, aesthetic reveries improvise an unsystematic logic of their own: a logic intuitively attuned to the movement of history.

This ecstatic surrender to the texture of everyday objects is a far cry from the self-propelled vacancy of the aesthetic subject. How has Bohrer shifted from such optimism to the pallid compensations of a lyric I? An answer to this question can be found in the essays gathered together in the volume Plötzlichkeit.(21) Written between 1976 and 1981, the essays track the switch of focus from objects which anchor revolutionary hope, to a subject whose utopian substance fades gradually into invisibility. Although it is tempting to interpret this metamorphosis biographically as the predictable disillusionment of a young revolutionary, careful reading of the essays reveals that the disillusion was always in place. Bohrer does not ripen into maturity and disenchantment. From the very outset, his texts battle with impediments and ambiguities which the vacant aesthetic subjectivity merely brings out in the open. Authentic history is non-empirical being in another guise.

Plötzlichkeit opens with an essay on essay form entitled 'Ausfälle gegen die kulturelle Norm: Literarische Erkenntnis und Subjektivität'. The essay as a genre is defined by its fragmentation, by its wariness of systematicity and artificially induced coherence. In the past, the form has characteristically enjoyed a renaissance in periods in which people still entertain hopes of far-reaching social transformation, but in which any consensus as to the nature of this change has collapsed along with the systems which hoped to predict it - Bohrer's examples are the Romantics disappointed

by the French Revolution, and Musil and Benjamin left high and dry by the turmoil of the Great War and the ensuing insurrections (Plötz 25). Bohrer wishes to revive the genre as the form best suited to the not-quite-postmodern era after May 1968, in which, as he sees it, grand narratives have lost their appeal, but 'revolutionaries without a revolution'(Plötz 25), such as Bohrer himself, still hanker for an alternative.

The medium of the essay's acuity is the anomalous detail: the oddity which no system can account for or explain. Such details bear a clear affinity to the auratic objects, whose contemplation was to launch us towards authentic history. They similarly break open existing conceptual systems (they represent, for Bohrer: 'die Aufkündigung des absehbar Allgemeinen durch das Besondere', Plötz 21), but this explosion is once again not detonated by raw data. Just as the fascinated contemplation of everyday objects depended for its richness on an interplay between the rigour of the object and subjective speculation, so essayistic insight arises from interaction between anomalies and the very act of writing. The subject discovers an anomaly only by dint of an unexpectedly happy formulation, a turn of phrase which, if it does not call the unexpected detail into existence, makes it visible for the first time (Bohrer's paradigm here is Kleist's essay 'Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden', Plötz 20). Essayistic details thus share the slippery, double structure of fascinated, surreal speculations. But where these speculations implicitly gave the impression of a drawn-out process, of an

extended revery, Bohrer's anomalies add a new facet to our grasp of authentic experience. Essayistic insights always burst into the subject's consciousness as an instantaneous, unexpected epiphany, they consist always in a cataclysmic explosion of knowledge ('ein plötzlich sich seiner selbst inne werdendes Ereignis', Plötz 20). It is this instantaneity which ties them most surely to historical experience. Not only do they divine the secrets of authentic history, they share its form. Like events themselves, the details exist only as unpredictable and irrevocable eruptions. Like the revolutionary turmoil they both interpret and prepare for, they follow: 'die Moral der Sekunde' (Plötz 21).

Bohrer's essay does not merely give a theoretical account of the structure underlying essayistic discovery - the play of stylistic innovation and historical transformation which brings an essay momentarily to life. It also records how an epiphany feels from the inside:

> Man liest das Buch eines Soziologen über die Ablösung des naturgeschichtlichen Interesses durch das entwicklungsgeschichtliche. Man fühlt sich dennoch in das Laboratorium der Seele versetzt. Je objektiver, je datenversessener ein solcher Text sich liest, um so herausfordernder erreicht er meine Subjektivität und setzt sie instand, ihrerseits den faktenschleppenden Bewusstseinsstrom an beliebiger Stelle zu unterbrechen. Plötzlich. (Plötz 16)

What is striking about this epiphany is that it does not match the theoretical account. When Bohrer applies his attention not to the authors of the Romantic essay but to a modern reader's

experience of revelation, he alters the status and significance of the details. The passage describes someone reading a sociological text that contrasts two methodologies, a static, descriptive approach and a dynamic alternative. Bohrer tells us that the text is laden with positivist facts and figures. But he also adds that it is these statistics which spark off the epiphany. Rather than an anomaly being discovered by the inventive exertions of a stylist, therefore, rather than a novel insight arising from the explosive collision of felicitous phrasing with unimagined aspects of reality, the revelation is generated by facts already in existence, by everyday empirical data. Moreover, these facts do not have their cataclysmic effect because they are themselves unaccountable. The reader does not stumble across a statistic which calls in question concepts or ideas she previously accepted without question. The substance of the details, the information they convey, is irrelevant. The facts affect the reader by their sheer statistical density, causing her, of her own volition, to interrupt her own consciousness of time ('[...] je datenversessener ein solcher Text sich liest, um so herausfordernder erreicht er meine Subjektivität und setzt sie instand, ihrerseits den faktenschleppenden Bewusstseinsstrom [...] zu unterbrechen'). Where Bohrer's descriptions of the Romantic essay show us details which the stylistic speculations of the writing subject bestow with a barely conceivable significance, here the details provoke by the abstract fact of their specificity. The words 'ein solcher Text' give us the

argument in a nutshell. Both the text and the details are interchangeable. The facts are not compact nuggets of information which overturn conceptual norms. They are form without substance. They are the empty husk of particularity.

If the details have changed, so has the conception of history. The epiphany about which Bohrer theorized in his account of the Romantic essay touched the pulse of social upheaval as each instantaneous insight itself practically constituted a revolutionary event. Explanatory paradigms were blasted away to make space for a history that was immediate and dynamic. In the epiphany described from the inside, in contrast, although predictive systems and grand historical narratives are likewise dispensed with, they are not replaced by a direct encounter with upheaval. The epiphany culminates instead in a doleful resignation sceptically distanced from history - in 'Zeitmelancholie':

> Zeitmelancholie: der geschichtliche Prozess hat sein Pathos verloren und zeigt nur noch den Mechanismus von Beschleunigung, Stillstand oder Wiederholung des alten. Das ist eine Erkenntnis über die derzeitige Verfasstheit unseres Zeitgefühls: der Abriss von Erwartungsverhalten, das Eintauchen in einen postrevolutionären Zustand, der Verschleiss der geschichtlichen Metaphorik. (Plötz 17)

To the victim of temporal melancholy, history appears as the repetition, sometimes faster, sometimes slower, of the same old mechanisms, as a process running on the spot. When the melancholy subject throws out the narratives which vainly forecast historical movement, it seems that she abandons the idea of movement itself. What remains is a feeling of

stagnation, the roots of which Bohrer's text has made adequately clear. To a reader who reacts not to the substance, but to the abstract specificity of details, every detail is identical: identically detailed. Whatever she looks at, whatever she reads or analyses, the world to this abstracting subject invariably looks the same.

Bohrer's essay presents us with two competing epiphanies. The more upbeat revelation actively contributes to the history which emerges once we free ourselves from the constraints of grand historical paradigms. The other insight takes us no further than a discrediting of historical metanarratives. If we were fortunate, this break with grands récits would make way for a cheery, postmodern conviction that we had cast off the illusions of history. Yet in Bohrer's sociological epiphany we survey a substanceless repetition which not even the most stalwart postmodernist could affirm. To bridge the gap between his two revelations, Bohrer argues that, when we abandon explanatory systems and relinquish our faith in historical movement, we clear our head of the rubble of exhausted concepts, and make way for new ideas. Our melancholy, though it itself offers no new insights, prepares the ground for future epiphanies. It opens up a utopian horizon (Plötz 17). But it seems that Bohrer's lugubrious epiphany, far from breaking paths, merely empties the world of the very details whose discovery could trigger novel revelations. Though his essay is a plea for, and defence of writing which innovatively confronts

the bankruptcy of systematic knowledge, his argument never wholly recovers from the melancholy induced by the sociological text. There is an underlying uncertainty, a nervousness which comes to expression in the increasing aggressiveness of the metaphors (Bohrer eventually likens the epiphany to rape: 'die gewaltsame Beiwohnung der Vernunft durch den Essay', Plötz 28). More significantly, he abruptly abandons anomalous details in the following chapter of the book. The two competing accounts of an epiphany throw light on this otherwise inexplicable change of direction. Though Bohrer wanted to anchor his authentic knowledge in the rigour of particular phenomena, in the logic of the object itself, his object emerges Janus-faced. The object which the subject stumbles upon in her reveries or stylistic enthusiasm is irreducibly particular. The object which the reader intuits in her sociological epiphany, in contrast, is static, standardized, and drained of all utopian energy. Faced with this ambiguity, Bohrer relinquishes real phenomena as a source of inspiration, and turns to the other side of his utopian equation: to the speculating subject. In the second essay of the book, 'Die "Antizipation" beim literarischen Werturteil', it is on the individual, and her unfettered powers of anticipation, that Bohrer's hopes for a utopian experience devolve.

3. Subjective Disillusion

Anticipation, for Bohrer, means that speculative wager, constitutive of utopian thought, by which the subject kicks off the bonds of existing conceptual systems and lays a theoretically unverifiable bet on the shape of future society. Such utopian wagers are not made only late at night, where people gather round drunken tables to discuss the state of the nation. A speculative moment is discernible every time we pick up a novel and judge whether it is good or bad. In Bohrer's eyes, we cannot evaluate a literary text without gambling on an alternative society.

Works of art are judged in two stages. The second stage is governed by norms which we are able rationally to articulate. If we were challenged to explain our preferences, we should be able to do so. The first phase, in contrast, is intuitive, premature and rationally indefensible:

> Die erste, methodologisch vor allem relevante Phase nennen wir Antizipation. Antizipiert wird hier schon das endgültige Urteil durch den Vorgang der Sympathie. Diese Sympathie beruht nicht auf dieser oder jener schon erkannten formal-ästhetischen Wertigkeit, nicht auf dem Wiedererkennen vorab gegebener Ideen. Sie ist ein Ereignis zwischen Subjekt und Objekt, bei dem die ganze diffuse Komplexität des Subjekts antizipierend in Kraft tritt. (Plötz 31)

These arguments about literary anticipation concentrate on the moment, in the early stages of reading a book, when, even though we have not read enough of the text to make an informed judgement, we nevertheless have a strong feeling of enthusiasm or aversion. They describe this premature enthusiasm

emphatically as an 'event' - the German 'Ereignis' is very strong - between reader and text, thereby recalling the conflict between subjective speculation and a recalcitrant object which Bohrer singled out as the defining characteristic of historical consciousness, and suggesting that anticipation is a further form of this authentic experience. As Bohrer develops his case, however, it emerges that the object's part in this conflict has shrunk to such a degree that the original experience is changed beyond recognition.

One possible explanation of the first phase of literary judgement is that we react to elements of style or plot which have gripped or bored us in previous texts, and, assuming the book will maintain a consistent standard of quality, make a snap judgment as to the text's worth. Such a verdict would be a condensed version of the conclusion to be reached once we had read the whole book, an implementation of aesthetic criteria which differs from later stages of evaluation only in the amount of data which it has at its disposal. Against this more rational account, Bohrer insists that the first phase expresses a judgement which cannot be retrospectively rationalized ('ein elementares Wertverhältnis [...], das sich auf keines der später gefundenen Kriterien stützt', Plötz 31). Yet he defends this claim only by eliminating the object from the first stage of judgement. As if any reference to actual details of the evaluated text would compromise anticipation, smuggling in the standards with which the first verdict is supposed to have broken, Bohrer maintains that anticipation is best described as

a declaration of independence by the subject ('eine Souveranitätserklärung des Subjekts', Plötz 32), which, because it has no data about the text ('sie hat noch keine nachprüfbaren Daten', Plötz 32) does not respond to attributes of the text so much as qualities which the subject herself has projected onto her reading matter. To read is to experience our own intensity. Interpretation is 'ein Erlebnis der eigenen Intensität' (Plötz 33).(22)

In the concept of anticipation, Bohrer thus replaces the conflict between the subject and object of the earlier texts, with the subject's untrammelled self-experience. Yet just as surreal speculations were supposed to follow an improvised logic of their own, so the subject's self-experience should not be branded as irrational. Though he excludes the object from the equation, Bohrer still hopes to describe how the discerning reader attains that truer knowledge which bankrupt systems have all but occluded. This knowledge is now not called history but 'avant-garde consciousness', or 'the gradual development of modernist consciousness' ('Bewusstseinsgeschichte der Moderne', Plötz 35). Though in the first phase of literary judgement the subject has no contact with the object itself, she spontaneously intuits the contours of a reason beyond reason, a reason to be found neither in philosophy, nor in science, but only in a counter-tradition of experimental, or 'incommensurable' works of art ('die heimliche Linie der "inkommensurabel" verfassten ästhetischen Konstrukte selbst', Plötz 35). The oddity of this aesthetic rationality is that it

reinstates the very artefacts which Bohrer's anticipation was supposed blithely to ignore. Bohrer dare not tie judgement to the actual details of aesthetic artefacts for fear they might bind it back to the everyday standards which for him are synonymous with instrumental reason. At the same time, he casts works of art as a sanctuary for the authentic, unpredictable movement he previously called history, but which here is cordoned off as an isolated sphere of society. Though his subject has no contact with its detail, aesthetic form remains nevertheless the empirically indescribable guarantee of an alternative rationality.

These arguments do not yet exonerate themselves of irrationalism. The simple assertion that anticipation intuits the new reason embodied in works of art is unlikely to persuade us of the rational probity of literary judgements. To flesh out his claim, therefore, Bohrer explores in more detail the connection between anticipation and avant-garde consciousness. At the beginning of this exploration, he appears to reinstate the very normativity he at first rejected. Having intractably insisted that literary anticipation disregards standards and criteria, he seems to relent and argue instead that the initial verdict draws on the reader's knowledge of innovative works of art, comparing the artefact in front of her with her previous experience. This experience cannot strictly be called a norm, for it lacks the necessary rigidity and permanence. It would be better described as a form of unarticulated and highly flexible

aesthetic know-how. However, this know-how is not so fluid that literary critics could not begin to record it. Such a record would have the advantage of establishing standards which bear some relation to the artefacts they judge, rather than being drawn artificially from an old-fashioned notion of tradition (Plötz 37).(23) With this exhortation to catalogue the techniques of the avantgarde (he writes of a 'Datenkatalog der Avantgarde', Plötz 36) Bohrer seems to forsake the logical somersaults which opened his essay in favour of the more down-to-earth argument that prevailing aesthetic criteria are hopelessly outmoded. The distinction between first and second steps of judgement appears retrospectively as a manoeuvre which makes space for Bohrer's alternative programme, and allows him to suggest that, however they may later rationalize their opinions, readers initially judge works of art by standards unconsciously attuned to the newest developments in art.

But then Bohrer redirects his argument: he denies that avant-garde consciousness is merely a new catalogue of devices to be ticked off by the reader as she encounters them (Plötz 38). The ultimate reason for this denial is not concern that such a catalogue would freeze into a norm as inappropriate as the standards it succeeds. Bohrer changes tack for the more fundamental reason that the data in the catalogue is not gathered from the avant-garde. It documents the devices which innovatory artists used in the past to create inventive, or experimental artefacts, but it does not list the tricks which they should need to employ to make an innovative work of art in

the present. This lack cannot be explained by a deficiency in the catalogue. It does not arise because the data-bank has neglected to assimilate information from the most recent works of art. The catalogue fails to document the devices of the avant-garde only because the avant-garde does not as yet exist, only because, as Bohrer argues, there is no authentic art which can be separated off from the standardized leisure of consumer society, from television, aerobics and sport, and given the label avant-garde (Plötz 38-39). Rather than possessing a reliable canon of tricks and formal devices, artists and critics alike, gaze helplessly at an imaginary museum of devices, all of which could perhaps be used to outwit the culture industry - there are no longer rules prohibiting styles or effects - but none of which could be said in advance to answer the claims of the present moment (Plötz 39). Only the future will show which devices genuinely herald an alternative rationality. Like the judgement it guarantees and sustains, avant-garde consciousness is itself an act of anticipation, a speculative gamble on futurity.

Bohrer's argument tumbles vertiginously into the future, living on a credit, whose only guarantee is further credit, drawn from an infinite fund of aesthetic speculation. Where auratic objects and essayistic details seemed inconceivably to touch the present moment, the present in the essay on literary judgement has itself broken off relations with contemporary society. Bohrer rounds off his essay with the startling claim:

'"Gegenwart" bedeutet wieder nichts anderes als eine Form der "Antizipation", die das Ganze noch nicht kennt'(Plötz 42). But even this redefinition of contemporaneity is misleadingly commonsensical. The final 'which does not yet know the whole future' implies that, though we do not know everything, we know a little, that a few fragments of the present unmistakably herald future developments. The literary judgement cut free from empirical details, in contrast, or the avant-garde consciousness devoid of individual devices, knows nothing at all. For these, the future is not a contradictory extension of the present. It is an ineffable blank. Every move which Bohrer undertakes to fill out this blank only more effectively drains it. The end of the essay suggests that avant-garde consciousness responds not to devices, but to the epistemological content, the system-busting insights stored up in Dada and surrealist artefacts. But when he describes these insights, Bohrer tells us nothing more than that they are provocative (Plötz 41), and that, in their singularity, they break with systematic knowledge (Plötz 224). He once again makes no mention of the knowledge itself, of the post-systematic wisdom which the artefacts convey. He stresses nothing but its anticipatory form: the fact that it too free-falls into futurity.

This free fall could be an invigorating experience akin to the joy of 'exterritorialization' - of movement without destination, of pure escape - which the carefree Deleuze and Guattari find in Kafka's prose.(24) But Bohrer does not throw

himself ecstatically into the void. The realization that anticipation and the avant-garde share the same unprotected, speculative structure is presented not as if it daringly pulled the carpet from underneath literary judgement, but as if it wrapped up a sound argument: as if the suggestion that the subject leaps intuitively into a second intuitive leap the epistemological core of which is itself intuitive and unfounded were a logical proposition.(25) This appeal to firm logic is best read not as a rhetorical sleight of hand, a trick to shore up an argument which Bohrer knows to be shaky, but as an indication of Bohrer's own desire for reassurance. Though he describes an avant-garde which is little more than the optical illusion induced by ever receding layers of anticipation, he longs to draw a firm line between authentic historical consciousness and the conceptual systems whose bankruptcy he never tires of asserting. Though his arguments undermine every candidate that could feasibly underwrite subjective speculation, Bohrer nevertheless dreams of an external guarantee for the subject's self-experience.

This desire for security is expressed most graphically in the acid asides he makes about art or criticism which does not heed his anticipatory catalogue of avant-garde devices. Arguing that a reconstruction of the aesthetic know-how implicit in avant-garde consciousness would uncover a tradition - from surrealism to the happening - which mainstream criticism has ignored, he claims that this counter-tradition could help us overcome the lamentably subjective grasp of the contemporary

scene apparent in established criticism (Bohrer talks of 'konditionsloser Subjektivismus', Plötz 37). It would then emerge that much of the prose currently lauded by the establishment is not art at all, or, as Bohrer writes, that: 'Es sind sozusagen Tiefflieger, die unterhalb des Radarschirmes anfliegen'(Plötz 37). To make the extent of his contempt quite clear, he then adds: 'Texte, die auf die Bewusstseinsherausforderungen der Avantgarde-Grenze nicht antworten, sind ästhetisch-historisch irrelevant'(Plötz 37). The claim that all literary judgements gamble on a future they cannot foresee would seem to have as a consequence the admission that every artefact, even the most ostensibly conservative, could appear after the event to have been prophetically in tune with the course of history. If we have no sure criteria for good artefacts, then we equally have no standards with which to exclude certain styles as reactionary. Yet Bohrer angrily insists that he can tell the difference nevertheless, that he can distinguish the avant-garde from the dilatory, the revolutionary from the irrelevant. What is surprising about this insistence is not so much the paradox to which it points. Bohrer could relinquish firm foundations but still state a preference for particular types of art with the same equanimity as the antifoundationalist Rorty when he waves aside accusations of relativism.(26) He need only admit that his foundations are speculative: as Rorty might put it, that there is no non-circular argument with which he could justify his final preferences. The dismissive metaphors are troubling

because they suggest that Bohrer's text is unknowingly pursuing two irreconcilable lines of argument. While one half of the text strips away content, denying the existence first of empirical details, then of individual devices and finally of art itself, the other half doggedly defends an aesthetic border (Bohrer's 'Avantgarde-Grenze') as if the first half of the argument had not occurred. The only connection between the two sides of the argument seems to be their nervous energy. The vitriol with which Bohrer impugns non-experimental art curiously matches his restless inability to fill out the sketch of an alternative rationality.

Bohrer confesses that the essays in the first part of Plötzlichkeit, five in all, do little more than throw up questions to which the essays in Part Two offer more systematic answers (Plötz 10). One of these questions would seem to be how Bohrer is to express the fragmentary, genuinely historical knowledge which is the stuff of art, without in his arguments emptying the artefacts of the priceless insights he intended to redeem.(27) Part Two's radical solution is to make a virtue of the very emptiness which frustrates the earlier essays. The vertiginous tumble through layer on layer of non-conceptual speculation is consciously recast as an attribute of the instantaneous, temporal epiphany - the 'Plötzlichkeit' of the title - which the essays of the second half explore. The difficulties which tripped up anticipation are reflexively incorporated into the epiphany itself. In an essay on Die

Geburt der Trägodie, for instance, Bohrer praises Nietzsche, and claims - not without interpretative violence (28) - that he was the first to grasp the bottomless fictionality which characterizes aesthetic appearance. The groundlessness which the essay on anticipation attempts vainly to overcome is here taken up and openly celebrated.(29)

Yet Bohrer censures Nietzsche, even as he praises him. Nietzsche's concepts may grasp the slipperiness of aesthetic appearance with unparalleled precision, but the price he pays for this theoretical acumen is to forfeit contact with history (Plötz 126). It transpires that although Bohrer incorporates the emptiness of anticipation into his arguments, he has not relinquished the desire to grasp history in its fullness and authenticity. The hollowing movement which complicates his earlier attempts to describe the substance of authentic consciousness is absorbed into his argument, but only further to exacerbate the original aporia. In the more self-reflexive mood which characterizes the second half of the book, however, the tension between empty descriptions and the desire for fullness ceases to be an unexamined weak spot and becomes instead the vehicle of non-identity. The very vacancy of the epiphany is now cast as an uninterpretable cipher for history's plenitude.

This movement reaches a peak in the final essay of the book, 'Utopie des "Augenblicks" und Fiktionalität'. Taking up the concept of an intense, discontinuous moment in time, or 'Jetztzeit' explored by Benjamin in the aphorisms 'Über den

Begriff der Geschichte', Bohrer redefines his authentic consciousness as a self-contained temporal anomaly. In a sudden interruption of everyday consciousness, our prevailing sense of time as a succession of continuous units - of seconds, hours, years which follow one after the other - is rudely replaced by a suspended split-second with neither before nor after. Benjamin is not the only writer in whose work Bohrer finds such temporal interruptions. He observes similar epiphanies in Breton, Proust, Woolf, Joyce, and Musil (Plötz 185). What the comparison reveals is that, despite differences of emphasis and formulation, the interruptions are invariably portrayed as moments of intense happiness. This modernist fascination with ephemeral ecstasies Bohrer explains as a reaction to the loss of credibility which theories of social progress suffered as of about 1870 (Plötz 185). After this date, intellectuals gave up the hope that society could be humanely remodelled, and if they did not indulge in Orwellian visions of social tyranny, confined their utopian hopes to the individual subject.(30) This private epiphany, triggered by nothing grander than a momentary hiccup in the subject's inner experience, also suits the postmodern critic who has abjured all hope of social improvement. The self-interruption which Bohrer sketched almost despite himself in his discussion of the essay here comes into its own. Utopia is no longer a productive conflict between the speculation of the subject and the object's recalcitrance. Liberated from the drudgery of empirical data, liberated moreover from the more ghostly control of avant-garde

consciousness, the subject turns back on her own resources, and momentarily grants herself happiness and fulfilment.

Yet Bohrer insists that although the modernist epiphany abandons concrete hopes of social transformation, it does not ignore society. The turn to a private instant of joy presupposes a conscious rejection of regimes which do not offer their subjects opportunities for a more communal fulfilment (Plötz 187-188). Moreover, the moment of happiness itself heralds a world where the instrumental vocabularies on which the subject turned her back have no place. The epiphany expresses not merely an alienation from the present. It contains the seeds of a society which no social reformer has yet sullied by imagining. Yet how can this be so? As it has been described so far, the epiphany is, as Bohrer himself admits (Plötz 211), a logical and psychological absurdity. If we did experience an instantaneous ecstasy, we could not realize what we had undergone without re-establishing the link with continuous time which the epiphany was supposed to sever. In Bohrer's view, it is this very alogicality that draws the modernists to the experience. Only an epiphany so patently paradoxical resists reabsorption by society's fallen habits of thought. To ensure, nonetheless, that the revelation is not dismissed as an empty intellectual folly, the modernists often describe their momentary happiness theologically. This is how we are to understand the mysticism of 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', the suggestion that every second is potentially the doorway through which the Messiah would enter history,

bringing time forever to a standstill.(31) The messianic invocations of the aphorisms are not references to God. They hijack the power of religious imagery for a secular epiphany. God incarnates objectivity, yet he cannot be grasped. He founds right reason, yet surpasses mortal imagination. He is simultaneously authentic and ineffable. The divine metaphors employed by Benjamin or Musil or Joyce are intended to convey to the reader that the modernist ecstasy, though it cannot properly be conceived, nevertheless has a sublime objectivity comparable only to the ungraspability of Jehovah (Plötz 211).

Yet, although this sublime objectivity reconnects with society, we should not mistakenly believe that the epiphany could be translated back into sociological terms, or reformulated as a blueprint for future society. If it can be translated back into any vocabulary, it is that of anthropology and psychology (Plötz 218), into concepts which discuss individuals not as modern social entities, but as raw humanity. The utopian content which Bohrer fences round with theological metaphors springs, not from social interaction, but from that residue of subjectivity which is left over when the subject turns her back on society. Of course, as Bohrer swings back and forth between the terms of his non-dialectical negation, he re-affirms that it is this very absence of social or historical traces which opens the epiphany up for real history ('Die totale Nicht-Deckung von Fiktion und Geschichte lädt sozusagen die leer gewordene Utopie neu auf: mit einer hypothetischen Antizipation', Plötz 218). Yet the central category remains the

subject. The distressing emptiness of anticipation is overcome by audaciously declaring vacuity itself to be the defining attribute of temporal epiphanies. But whilst the isolated subject's inner experience guarantees that the revelation stay appropriately ineffable, her psychological and anthropological resources simultaneously promise that this emptiness could one day miraculously be filled. The subject becomes her own external guarantee, the individual the point where vacancy intersects with the inconceivable certainties of the future.

Bohrer's trust in the individual is, however, short-lived. His suspicion could possibly be explained by the literary character of his subjective epiphany, by the fact that it appears primarily as a revelation enjoyed by the fictional heroine of a modernist novel. But Bohrer has arguments to bridge the gap from the epiphany experienced in the text to that undergone by the reader. He suggests that, since it is impossible to capture the temporal interruption in anything but theological language, the texts are deprived of a secure referent, and thus display a bottomlessness analogous to the tumble of anticipation or Nietzsche's aesthetic appearance. This bottomlessness causes the reader's epiphany (Plötz 217). Instead, the difficulty, for Bohrer, seems that the subjects of the epiphany, even in his eyes, cannot escape social determination. Towards the end of the essay, Bohrer expands the sociological explanation of the epiphany which he sketched at the beginning. Not only the discrediting of narratives of

social progress, but also the upper-middle-class backgrounds of writers such as Benjamin and Musil were determining factors in the stress they lay on isolated, anti-social instants. The epiphanies are as much an expression of haut-bourgeois isolation, as they are of the vicissitudes of historical metanarratives (Plötz 214). Apparently, Bohrer suspects that the reader's ecstasy is no less prone to sociological recuperation than the author's. In the study which follows Plötzlichkeit, Der romantische Brief, he gives up his enthusiastic praise for empirical attributes, for the unexplored humanity which was to fill out the emptiness of the epiphany. The personae which Kleist, Günderrode or Brentano create for themselves in their correspondence may have had their origins in emotions and opinions of the individuals who wrote them. But once an emotion or event has been taken up into the rarified aesthetic air of Romantic correspondence, it ceases to be comparable, indeed it ceases to have any connection, with real life.(32) The subject as she now appears has not only broken off all relations with society. She has left her own body behind, cast off anything which could be 'expressed' or 'communicated' in epistolary form, and become an act of self-referential, monologic self-invention.(33) Yet Bohrer insists that she remains a subject. Cut off from her biographical, biological self, she does not degenerate into a textual machine, or lose her individuality in the arbitrary play of tropes and rhetoricity.(34) She becomes instead subjectivity in its purest form: self-creating and self-

contained.(35) It is for this aesthetic subject, who is at once the elimination and fulfilment of subjectivity, that Bohrer sketches his alternative modernity.

Bohrer's texts are never unambiguous, they are never free of tension or uncertainty. The tensions hollow out the experience of authentic history, until nothing is left but the empty form of subjectivity. But they also give it body and substance, qualifying the flight from objects and reality with ideas which could prepare the way for the surprising, undistorted knowledge which Bohrer vainly chases. In a discussion of Ernst Jünger's essay 'Über den Schmerz', the momentary experience of time stopping is not said to show us an indefinable history. It is said itself to be historical. It is the form temporal consciousness takes in a society where the subject could at any second be instantly eradicated by the technology that surrounds her. The epiphany is not an empty revelation, but the unexpected eruption of terror at industrialized society.(36) In two essays on literary evil, Bohrer suggests a further filling for his epiphany. The revelation is here sparked off not by empty self-referentiality, but by events which make a nonsense of the reader's moral preconceptions, forcing upon her attention an act or object for which she has no ethical concepts.(37) Yet the books which these exceptions briefly point towards - an investigation of industrialized experience; a study of the particular instances of amorality with which art upsets ethical

categories - are never written. The irresistible drift towards aesthetic vacancy is but momentarily interrupted.

Martin Seel explains the unsettling vacuity of Bohrer's key terms by suggesting that Bohrer's concepts of art and of philosophy are exaggeratedly inflexible. The philosophy which the aesthetic epiphanies are said to overturn is presented as though it were incapable of rounding on its own limits, reflecting on existing concepts, or modifying its grasp of the world. It is denied both adaptability and self-awareness and for this reason excoriated and abandoned. The epiphany is equally inflexible. Its new knowledge is portrayed as if it bore no resemblance to the systems it overturns. But since the only words Bohrer has to describe this new vision are the defunct concepts of the epistemologies he despises, he can disclose nothing more about his authentic experience than the fact we cannot grasp it. He breaks so radically with existing terminology that he is left literally speechless. If he admitted that philosophical concepts are capable of perceiving and transcending their own limits he could overcome his inarticulacy and use the reinstated concepts cautiously to circumscribe the new experience. Yet the price he would have to pay for this restored eloquence is the recognition that art is not the only form of knowledge in which paradigms are called in question. Other experiences equally overturn our preconceptions and confront us with startling and unexpected knowledge. Aesthetic artefacts do not have a monopoly on epistemological innovation. Indeed, they do not themselves innovate at all. In

Seel's toned-down aesthetic theory, works of art are not the last refuge of innovatory or authentic knowledge, they are privileged only in so far as they allow us to reflect on epistemological change at one remove. Aesthetic artefacts are about situations in which the boundaries of reason are redrawn. They are not themselves the experience.(38)

In Albrecht Wellmer's view, Bohrer could never make this concession that experiences other than art overturn existing preconceptions. For he shares with the first generation of the Frankfurt School the conviction that standardized and alienated patterns of thought are so widely disseminated that innovative, flexible and self-transcending reflection has been all but eradicated. Only art magically escapes this standardization to offer us a glimpse of more mobile, open-ended forms of truth. As long as Bohrer clings to this erroneously pessimistic analysis of contemporary society, he can neither admit that other experiences bear the seeds of innovation, nor can he tell us more about his epiphanies than that they relentlessly negate the reified reason prevalent in post-war societies. His utopia remains emptily cut off from practical existence.(39)

For both Seel and Wellmer, the vacancy of Bohrer's emphatic experience has its roots in theoretical errors: the mistaken presupposition that existing concepts are too inflexible to see beyond themselves, and the related assumption that society is too reified to permit flexibility anywhere but in art. If we give up these presuppositions, we cease to deprive ourselves of the words to describe art's fluid and

innovative insights. If we modify our starting point, we can fill in the blanks. Peter Bürger, in contrast, does not suggest that Bohrer trade in his defunct presuppositions, he proposes that he submit them to dialectical critique. Unlike Wellmer and Seel, he does not attribute the emptiness of Bohrer's emphatic experience to theoretical misguidedness, but interprets it more generally as the symptom of an impasse in contemporary aesthetic theory.(40) Where Wellmer and Seel emphasize only the emptiness of Bohrer's epiphany, its exaggerated isolation from other, social or philosophical, categories, Bürger points up a contradictory double movement. Bohrer insists that his epiphany breaks finally with existing norms and concepts, but he maintains simultaneously that it has a higher social validity. When he is stressing the incommensurability of his new knowledge, Bohrer, in Bürger's view, treads in the footsteps of traditional, idealist aesthetics, and defends art's autonomy from other social practices. When he is staking claims for the epiphany's higher validity, on the other hand, he takes up the legacy of the avantgarde movements of the early twentieth century, who wanted to overcome aesthetic autonomy, reintegrate art with everyday life and so reimbue reified, day-to-day categories with something of the vitality preserved in art.(41) He is right to <u>retain</u> the category of autonomy, in so far as the concepts developed by the rich tradition from Kant to Adorno necessarily dictate the point from which contemporary aesthetics should start theorizing. At the same time, he is right to <u>attack</u> autonomy, in so far as actual developments in

art since the First World War have largely disregarded art's supposed separation from society. Bohrer's mistake, for Bürger, is that he unreflexively absorbs this conflict between aesthetic theory and aesthetic practice into his own position: 'Auch Bohrers Widersprüche verweisen einmal mehr auf die Notwendigkeit einer Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik'.(42)

Bürger's criticisms have the advantage that they read Bohrer's inconsistencies as the symptom of a real contradiction rather than the product of inept philosophy, and argue that we must tackle this underlying problem if we are not unwittingly to reproduce the same aporias in our own theory. I differ from Bürger in that my diagnosis of the underlying problem is more extreme. Where he attributes the tensions to a lag between the theory and practice of art, I see them as the symptom of a deeper disorder in subjectivity itself. The characteristic which repeatedly prevents Bohrer from filling out the blank at the heart of his theory simultaneously marks him out as a postmodern subject. A comparison of Bohrer's writings with the Benjamin essays he so admires, and with Adorno's explorations of non-identity - for which he equally has increasing respect (43)- will help us to pinpoint this determining characteristic, and, at the same time, understand why it is an attribute he shares with his contemporaries.

4. Mediation

Benjamin's epiphanies have two stages.(44) The first of these is a moment of shock, bafflement or intoxication, whose latent powers, the essay on Surrealism argues, could potentially be harnessed for social transformation: 'Die Kräfte des Rausches für die Revolution zu gewinnen, darum kreist der Sürrealismus in allen Büchern und Unternehmen'.(45) To rescue the revolutionary potential of shock and perplexity, however, it is not sufficient to linger with the moment of intoxication itself. We must uncover the causes of our surprise. This is the second stage of the epiphany. The surrealists often neglected this more analytic phase of the experience, preferring to play up the pure fact of their initial consternation. But Benjamin worries that by lingering in a state of permanent suspense, they consign the revolutionary content of their epiphany inadvertently to oblivion. By cultivating surprise without analysing its origins, surrealists condemn their activities to being either empty rehearsals for an event which never happens, or premature celebrations which pre-empt the revelation they wanted to commemorate.(46) The reasons for their astonishment constantly elude them, and with these reasons any hope of capitalizing on the epiphany's potential explosiveness. To prevent this loss, Benjamin proposes a more sober approach:

> Es bringt uns nämlich nicht weiter, die rätselhafte Seite am Rätselhaften pathetisch oder fanatisch zu unterstreichen; vielmehr durchdringen wir das Geheimnis nur in dem Grade, als wir es im Alltäglichen wiederfinden, kraft einer dialektischen Optik, die das Alltägliche als undurchdringlich, das Undurchdringliche als alltäglich erkennt.(47)

Where the surrealists dare not unpack the first shock for fear that cold logic would break its spell, Benjamin insists that we ruthlessly demystify the experience. Yet his demystification is double-edged. We may bring our consternation back down to earth and admit that it was not an unspeakable force which mystically sparked off the emotion, but profane, everyday objects. But our reward for this realism is a changed understanding of everyday life. The day-to-day drudgery with which we supposed our revelation irrevocably to have broken, becomes infused with the same revolutionary explosiveness that we experienced in the epiphany. The more we debunk the apparent unintelligibility of the epiphany, the more the world ceases to be an image of instrumental reason. The everyday objects by which we are surrounded cease to be tools which we can exhaustively label and manipulate and become instead the ambiguous heralds of social upheaval.

The analysis of the epiphany achieves this magical transformation because it uncovers the disappointed desires which hug the contours of reality, and which, when they suddenly come to light, trigger our first intoxication. The surrealists great achievement, in Benjamin's eyes, is to have discovered where this coating of desire is most clearly visible: on objects about to date, on knickknacks which have lost their glamour and now look trivial or passé. An historian who studies such relics - Benjamin lists outmoded dresses, the earliest photographs and first factories, the mammoth iron

bridges and railway stations with which the nineteenth century celebrated its own achievements (48) - sees nothing but their quaintness. If she learns anything from them, it is a lesson in the ephemerality of fashion and the whimsicality of the past. The surrealists, in contrast, by switching from an historical to what Benjamin calls a political perspective,(49) view these awkward left-overs as ciphers of human misery.(50) They glimpse the pain which ludicrously constricting clothes inflicted on the human body. They catch an image of the slaughtered navvies and despoiled landscape which each mile of railway track demanded in tribute. Yet, if they catch a glimpse of suffering, in Benjamin's view they equally intuit something more uplifting. They perceive that the objects are not merely enslaving, but themselves enslaved (51): that they strive beyond themselves. They realize that if the out-dated knickknacks scarred the lives of those who used them, they simultaneously, in their curlicues and useless ornamentation, pointed towards a grander project: to the fulfilment of the very aspirations they frustrated and contained. This suggestive blend of longing and disappointment can, in Benjamin's view however, be retrieved only if we submit to the discipline of his dialectical double-vision. Only a rigorous debunking of our first, mystical intoxication will furnish an otherwise vacuous mysticism with everyday objects restored to their revolutionary ambivalence.

The two-step epiphany returns, but in inverted form, in the aphorisms on history, where the ambiguity which the surrealists discerned in dated artefacts is dramatically recast as a redemptive ambivalence in each second of history. Redemption is typically thought to be a future beatific state which, if it bears any relation to the present does so by default, by not being the misery that we are now enduring. For Benjamin, however, the most ordinary images of happiness in the here and now - people we could have spoken to, lovers we could have slept with - are laden with redemptive power. Far from emptily negating beatitude, each era already bears the seeds of its own fulfilment: 'Die Vergangenheit führt einen heimlichen Index mit, durch den sie auf die Erlösung verwiesen wird'.(52) In a similar vein, class struggle is often assumed to be concerned only with material improvements. If it is supposed to have any relation to culture, to the finer things in life, it is that these luxuries will fall to the revolutionaries as loot should they ever be victorious. Benjamin argues, however, that the tenacity, humour and cunning that necessarily accompany such struggles are themselves examples of civilization, images of the Good Life which survive even after the defeat of individual campaigns.(53) In the decency and courage of the oppressed, as much as in the images of happiness to which they aspire, each era is endowed with what Benjamin calls a weak messianic force,(54) it is shot through with intimations of salvation.

These intimations have been buried by historians who

construe as social progress developments which are better understood as a single continuous disaster: 'eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft...'.(55) By painting the past as a steady progress towards the technological achievements of the present, such historians hinder any chance of breaking with the never-ending catastrophe which their optimism misrepresents. To counter such misrepresentation, Benjamin suggests we work traditional history against the grain, unmasking the degree to which the growth of culture is in fact steeped in barbarity: in the pain and exclusion of the larger part of humanity.(56) However, even as it unmasks historical developments as monotonously barbaric, this unconventional historiography simultaneously unearths the shards of redemption which Benjamin believes each epoch to contain. It shows the past to be at once repetitively brutal and bursting with messianic hope. It arrives at this perplexing and contradictory grasp of historical events by repudiating linear conceptions of time. Having demystified what we once took for progress, and unmasked development as universal stagnation, it rips individual epochs from the supposedly irresistible march of time, and studies them as isolated moments.(57) Freed from the chain of causes and effects, cut loose from the linear concatenations favoured by conventional historiography, the disappointment which the hopes in fact suffered no longer lurks on the horizon to skew our understanding. The story could still go either way. The era, isolated and self-contained, recovers its original, messianic

ambiguity.

This rediscovery of past hope would seem a potentially infinite labour if every epoch is to be rescued from the flow of history and re-endowed with ambivalence. However, it is a side-effect of Benjamin's break with linear time that history can be salvaged in its entirety, that every second of longing and injustice can be recollected and redressed, if we restore a single moment of the past. A single epoch, a single life, even a single work of art, when grasped as a monad cut off from development and progress, carries within itself the totality of time.(58) This monad is not rescued by surrendering to the feel of the past, by casting off the distorting spectacles of the present and empathizing with our ancestors. Such empathy, in Benjamin's view, never scratches below the surface of conventional history. It always reaffirms the account of history disseminated by the victorious minorities: the sagas of progress, glory and success.(59) The hidden energies of the past can be released only by active intervention: 'Die Geschichte ist Gegenstand einer Konstruktion, deren Ort nicht die homogene und leere Zeit sondern die von Jetztzeit erfüllte bildet'.(60) The investigating subject does not surrender passively to the past, but actively builds bridges between former eras and her own. Just as the French Revolution understood itself to be a reinvented Rome; just as fashion sorts through earlier dress styles for cuts and trimmings which appeal to our present self-understanding, the historian juxtaposes a past era with her own, uniting them in the frozen

temporality Benjamin calls 'Jetztzeit'. In this petrified moment, the messianic energy of the past era, and the hopes and ambiguities of the present alchemically combine. History in its entirety is redeemed.

Richard Wolin has suggested that of the two eras melting together in Benjamin's frozen temporality, only the past carries traces of redemption. Messianic energy stored up in a former epoch bursts in on a present which bares not the slightest sign of salvation.(61) The aphorisms do not despair so unequivocally of the present. Just as the surrealist revelation is demystified only the better to unsettle everyday reality and restore its explosive ambivalence, so the Benjaminian historian demystifies the past only that the present's inherent ambiguity, its messianic promise might be protected: that it might be saved, like Tradition, from conformity.(62) In both surreal and historical epiphanies we see a common insistence on demystification and analysis - on criticizing the initial surreal shock; on working history against the grain. But in both cases this demystification paradoxically reveals the present to be itself mystically equivocal. In both cases, contemporary society re-emerges volatile and ambivalent.

For all Benjamin's criticism of surrealist irrationalism, there would seem to be an unaccountable moment in his descriptions of both revelations. Benjamin tells us that the switch of perspective which brings on the surrealist shock is

most aptly described as a trick.(63) Yet to call the switch a trick is not to explain how the manoeuvre unearths the disappointment which is then seen to hug the contours of outmoded knickknacks. Similarly, how is the historian to transmogrify the permanent catastrophe of history into an image, however fleeting, of salvation? It would seem that only Benjamin's theological and esoteric metaphors - his talk of redemption, of 'hidden indices', of 'secret heliotropisms'(64) - can explain the miraculous transformations. Certainly, this is the conclusion drawn by a left-wing critic such as Julian Roberts, who argues that we can spare ourselves the intellectual embarrassment of supposing armageddon will unaccountably flip over into paradise if we trade the theological pessimism of Benjamin's final text for the more sanguine faith in technological and political progress which he exhibits in his Brechtian phase.(65) Yet Roberts is overhasty in his dismissal of Benjamin's theology, for the secret of the transmogrification, the force behind the metaphors is no more or less esoteric than the magic, revitalizing force - 'die Zauberkraft' - which Hegel attributes to a steadfast confrontation with lifeless negativity in the Preface to Phänomenologie des Geistes.(66) In both instances, the magic power is the ability to move between conflicting terms without reducing one to the other: dialectical mediation.(67) It is this ability which lets Benjamin argue that old-fashioned objects are ciphers of past desire, without denying that they are simultaneously instruments which contributed to the

suffering and are now laughably out-of-date. It is this ability which lets him work history against the grain, to argue that every document of culture is at the same time a document of barbarity, and conversely, that there is no struggle, however instrumental or unsuccessful, which does not, in the cunning and tenacity which sustains it, prefigure the civilisation for which it vainly battles.

Bohrer does not share this ability. He defends the theological metaphors of the aphorisms on history, but not because an apparently esoteric vocabulary lets Benjamin play the aspirations of an era off against its brutality and inhumanity, nor because it paradoxically underwrites the unparalleled plasticity of his texts, allowing him to find hope in the most ordinary of objects. Bohrer rescues the metaphors because they erect a protective fence around an area which reason has not yet colonized; because they shield the epiphany from contamination.(68) Benjamin's attitude towards theology is as oxymoronic as the phrase 'profane illumination', or 'profane Erleuchtung',(69) which he uses to characterize surreal shock. He wishes to haul a messianic vocabulary back down to earth just as surely as he wants to propel everyday life towards transcendence. The metaphors are integral to this dialectical approach as they mediate between the apparently mystical moment of consternation, and the day-to-day objects which sparked it off. For all their unworldliness, they retrospectively return to the epiphany the contact with life which the more mystical surrealists believed shock momentarily to have severed. For

Bohrer, in contrast, the metaphors reinforce the break between a manipulative society and the moment of insight. They put an unbridgeable, and strictly speaking unthinkable gulf between the revelation and everyday experience. They do not facilitate mediation, but irrevocably interrupt it.

This elimination of mediation and ambiguity is the driving force behind Bohrer's writings. Every new description of an emphatic experience, call it history, avant-garde consciousness, 'Plötzlichkeit' or aesthetic subjectivity, claims finally to have broken with society, to present a phenomenon untouched by the cold hand of instrumental reason. At the same time, however, every shift betrays the failure of the previous attempts, points up in retrospect that authentic history, or the avant-garde were not the unambiguous heralds of salvation which they at first appeared to be. How are we to understand these paradoxical volte-face? The contradictions seem less baffling once we grasp that the elimination of ambiguity brings with it a notion of social determination which persuades Bohrer that the society he flees is in fact ineluctable. Since Bohrer will not countenance ambivalence, he interprets the slightest trace of society to be found in his epiphany as evidence that the revelation has in fact been wholly assimilated to the norms he abhors. In Benjamin's surrealism essay, dialectical debunking tracks down the everyday objects which triggered our initial shock, but this demystification does not then convince us that the epiphany is as alienated and uninspiring as out-of-date clothing. The

outmoded objects which first surprised us take on a new ambivalence. They appear both outmoded and prophetic. The transcendent and the quotidian jostle side by side, held by Benjamin's arguments in precarious suspense. In Bohrer's arguments, there is no such tension or suspense. The contradictions unearthed by Benjamin's double vision yield instead to experiences either incorruptibly pure or irredeemably standardized. Where the realization that a surrealist epiphany is socially mediated convinces Benjamin that society itself is unstable and ambivalent, the same insight persuades Bohrer that a shock he previously mistook for an epiphany is trapped in fact in an immovable grid of reified social norms. Once he has discarded ambiguity, Bohrer can conceive of society only as this inflexible, fixed framework; of social determination only as unconditional surrender to this grid. Either an experience impossibly shakes off the net of social determination, or it is mercilessly and completely enmeshed.

Bohrer's wariness of ambiguity is accompanied not only by a tyrannical view of social determination. Another factor contributes equally to the chain of volte-face. In the search for an experience which eludes the grid of standardization, it is not enough, in Bohrer's eyes, that the subject enjoy a brief, private, inexpressible freedom. Her revelation must be verifiable. There must be an object to which he can point and unambivalently declare that it is the arena of illumination.

Bohrer's first choice in this search for unimpeachable proof is anomalous objects. The speculative liberties of the subject, he suggests, could be anchored in the irreducible specificity of phenomena themselves. But phenomena, in his arguments, are Janus-faced. They cannot be said to be properly contradictory. (Bohrer's suspicion of ambivalence prevents them from becoming a Benjaminian cocktail of particularity and standardization.) Rather, they lurch erratically between two states of being: one moment they presage upheaval, the next they have been drained of all content and bear witness only to stagnation. Bohrer is not fantastical enough to root his experience in objects - moonrocks or deep-sea fish - which genuinely have no contact with society. But having ruled out exotica, he falls victim to his own unmediated model of society. His auratic phenomena necessarily bear traces of everyday life, and are condemned as a result to switching suddenly into frozen, empty images of the social machine.

If objects themselves cannot ground the epiphany, what of works of art? Avant-garde consciousness suggests itself to Bohrer as an alternative benchmark because it grants him a more flexible model of verification, in which the epiphany is not matched up with an external object, but vouched for by a higher level of consciousness. Yet this higher consciousness must itself be described if it is to corroborate the subject's anticipatory judgements, a requirement which once more drives Bohrer's text into schizophrenic oscillation. The attempt to isolate the qualities in avant-garde consciousness which save

judgement from solipsistic isolation continually defers its answer, in the knowledge that as soon as it settles for a concrete response, the chosen aspect will vanish behind the network of standardized leisure activities. Yet the angry rhetoric acts as if the higher consciousness had already been substantiated. Again, it would be wrong to call this discrepancy a contradiction. Bohrer's argument switches without warning between the two apparently unconnected states of mind. One moment, it is tumbling vertiginously through layer on layer of anticipation. The next it is impatiently certain that a secure standard has been established.

Bohrer can combine his tyrannical social determination with the demand for a verifiable, non-ambiguous epiphany only by emptying his epiphany of all content and modifying what counts as verification. In the later texts, he openly accepts that the experience must be empty, that no substance will be discovered which will not fall prey to his omnivorous concept of society. But it is hard to verify the content of an empty space. The final essay in Plötzlichkeit experiments with two different tactics. On the one hand, it hopes that a theological vocabulary will pledge for the revolutionary potential of the experience by suggesting that, though it is ineffable, the epiphany is nevertheless as genuine as God himself. On the other hand, Bohrer puts his faith in unexplored corners of subjectivity: in the anthropological residues to which he appeals in the closing paragraphs, claiming that they will at some future date emerge to fill out the empty space of the

revelation. Yet Bohrer is too secular a theorist permanently to adopt the esoteric vocabulary he defends in Benjamin. Moreover, his evaluation of the subject in this final essay is as inconsistent as his earlier views on the object or avant-garde consciousness. If she has hidden reserves with which to feed the epiphany, she equally fuses so completely with her social role that the private revelation is nothing but the knee-jerk reaction of a haut-bourgeois loner. If Bohrer is to verify his epiphany, he must find a more stable grounding than theology or anthropology.

Works of art appear the perfect solution. The ideal of aesthetic autonomy, which Bürger rightly argued to be central to Bohrer's theory, protects the epiphany from society's ineluctable grid. At the same time, aesthetic artefacts lend this protected enclave physical form. (Any doubts as to which individual devices elude standardization sufficiently to underwrite the empty space are adroitly side-stepped, as Bohrer turns away from detail to the overall impression of coherence and subjectivity which novels, poems and letters are supposed to evoke: to the lyric I.) Bohrer can now point to works of art as the concrete, but nevertheless autonomous embodiment of an alternative modernity. Moreover, the charge that art's autonomy is itself socially determined - and therefore vulnerable to social recuperation - can be dismissed, in Bohrer's undialectical theory, as wrongheaded, as another illegitimate attempt to commandeer an art whose independence from society is surely self-evident.(70) Yet the charge is not as easily

countered as Bohrer would hope. He reassures himself that a subjectivity which, in the metamorphosis of aesthetic form, has voided itself of all empirical life, escapes determination from outside. He guarantees the purity of his epiphany with the very vacancy imposed on him by the contradictory demands of his unmediated thought. But this empty subjectivity ironically exemplifies the reason it despises. It is supposed to harbour an experience undamaged by manipulating concepts. Yet an entity as univocal, wholly itself, and splendidly isolated from all other entities as Bohrer's aesthetic subject, unwittingly parodies the most instrumental of logics. The slippery, heterogeneous experience which, in its rawness and unpredictability, was to be shielded from exhausted and distorting systems, emerges finally as the abstract form of systematicity itself: as pure identity.

Bohrer's desire to break definitively with existing reason founders on the paradox that the desire itself typifies the analytic, clear-cut logic which it wishes to outmanoeuvre. Having freed himself of all contaminating content, Bohrer is left with nothing but the pure form of a reason which operates by excluding contaminating and irrelevant content. This realization explains why his non-dialectical negation is so disappointingly insubstantial. His thought is not non-dialectical in the sense that it struggles to reformulate contradictions and so salvage the irreducible, unsynthesizable differences between each term. It is non-dialectical in the

sense that it has no notion of contradiction, ambiguity or ambivalence. It knows nothing but identity. Retrospectively, his efforts to break away from theories of modernity which ground subjective experience in a grander movement appear misconceived. He needs so desperately to break free only because his understanding of the movement is itself so undialectical. Subjective experience, in his version, is not preserved at a higher level, as it would be in a Hegelian dialectics; nor is it precariously juxtaposed with other, non-subjective terms, as it would be in the negative dialectics of an Adorno or Benjamin. The individual disappears into the grid of social determination. Only when confronted with this undialectically omnivorous society must a theory take refuge in a non-empirical experience.

How are we to respond to Bohrer's paradoxical self-destruction? Should we conclude that his theory stumbles unnecessarily on its own false preconceptions, and move on, with the Habermasians Seel and Wellmer, to a more propitious, less self-defeating starting point? On closer inspection, Wellmer's alternative itself exhibits an emptiness not unlike the vacancy of aesthetic subjectivity. His aesthetic theory, like Bohrer's, depends on anticipation: on a subject whom works of art have yet to train up. Moreover, his descriptions of this new subjectivity are always incomplete. They always break off at the same point, reiterating a formula curiously at odds with the fluidity Wellmer hopes to evoke: '"kommunikativ verflüssigte Ich-Identität"'.(71) Nor is Wellmer's the only

theory of a flexible, non-identical experience which hinges on an absence. Rüdiger Bubner wishes aesthetic experience to be viewed as a mental free-wheeling, unencumbered by conceptual categories, and draws on Kantian theory to describe this non-conceptual ecstasy. His appeal to Kant is misplaced. In Kritik der Urteilskraft beauty is not separated as radically from cognition as Bubner suggests. We may not subsume the beautiful object under a concept, but we nevertheless intuit that the image which it leaves on our imagination potentially matches our conceptual resources.(72) More importantly, having divided art so intransigently from conceptual thought, Bubner, like Bohrer, can offer no clues as to what triggers aesthetic experience. He can only fudge the issue - rooting the experience sometimes in the subject's spontaneity (like the Bohrer of anticipation),(73) other times in a structurally ungraspable attribute of works of art, which he calls 'das Kunsthafte'.(74) He hopes to unite these two accounts in a concept of aesthetic appearance, but he defines this slippery illusion only by making it doubly unintelligible, by claiming both that it eludes our grasp, and simultaneously that its elusiveness is itself ungraspable: 'Die Struktur der Unfasslichkeit muss also in dem Sinne anerkannt werden, dass das Unfasslichsein selber dasjenige an dem Phänomen ist, was sich nicht fassen und bestimmen lässt'.(75)

Jean-Francois Lyotard is equally in pursuit of an empty space, though in his case, as with the later Bohrer, emptiness is openly celebrated. Lyotard's key aesthetic concept is a

version of the sublime in which we stop trying to predict and control future events with existing, institutionalized categories, and face up to the terrifying prospect of a future we cannot foresee. To ensure that this unforeseeable future remain inaccessible to predictive concepts, Lyotard draws our attention away from the content of the impending novelties to the loftier issue of whether the occurrences will happen at all. In his account, the question which first springs to mind in the event of an incipient catastrophe is not 'What is happening?', but the more fundamental 'Is this really happening?', from which he concludes that novelty, when it does burst in on our lives, does so, not as a specific phenomenon, albeit inconceivable, but first and foremost as an uncertainty as to whether anything is occurring: 'The event happens as a question mark before happening as a question'.(76) This change of perspective effectively redefines what counts as an event. A properly sublime occurrence, in Lyotard's view, is not a thing (a car crash, an earthquake) so much as the hiccup which precedes it, the split second of indecision before the event blunders in and disrupts our ineffable indecision. Novelty is not an occurrence, an unexpected meeting, but the frozen, empty instant in which - not unlike Bohrer's 'Plötzlichkeit' - we wonder whether anything will succeed the present: '<u>now</u> like the feeling that nothing might happen: the nothingness now'.(77) Thus reconstrued, novelty is necessarily empty.(78)

Wellmer, Bubner and Lyotard all share the vacancy which undermines Bohrer's aesthetic subjectivity. We could perhaps look elsewhere for a more substantial theory of alterity, whether aesthetic or non-aesthetic.(79) But given the sheer number of aesthetic vacancies, it seems equally urgent to tackle the mystery of the emptiness itself. So far the problem has been treated as primarily theoretical. Bohrer has been shown to force himself into a corner with his own philosophical preconceptions: his elimination of ambivalence, his totalitarian grasp of social determination, his search for an unimpeachable proof. But this version of events raises a question. If nothing else, Bohrer's self-imposed need for verification should have long ago helped him to overcome his concept of society. Rather than delivering his chosen objects into the jaws of total determination, his search for an empirical arena, like the second step of Benjamin's epiphany, should have cast doubt on the rigid grid, and forced him to acknowledge some form of ambiguity. Why has Bohrer not been saved by naive empiricism, not been catapulted by raw reality beyond his theoretical impasse?

The answer to this question lies in Bohrer's style. Bohrer's texts are distinguished by their idiosyncratic use of abstract nouns. To describe the auratic glow of everyday objects, he talks, as we have seen, of 'die Mythologie des einzelnen Dinges'.(80) To describe the discrediting of historical metanarratives he talks of 'der Verschleiss der geschichtlichen Metaphorik'(Plötz 17). The list could be

extended: 'die Rhetorik des Erblassens'(Plötz 176); 'die Semantik seiner [Kleists] Prosa'(Plötz 171); 'die Imagination des Bösen'.(81) What these phrases share is a tendency to slip between levels of abstraction. In the first example, for instance ('die Mythologie des einzelnen Dinges'), the context suggests that Bohrer uses the word mythology to refer to particular, concrete attributes of objects, to the aura of their physical presence. Yet the word mythology could just as well denote a second order discourse, legends and fairy tales about the power of individual objects, rather than the specific qualities of things themselves. If Bohrer is not sure whether specificity is an attribute of phenomena, or a second level myth, it is not surprising that his theory of anomalous objects should be equivocal. The word 'Metaphorik' from the phrase 'der Verschleiss der geschichtlichen Metaphorik' slips in the other direction. Bohrer is discussing the decline of grand visions of history. But rather than singling out individual narratives which have fallen into disrepute, Bohrer sets the discussion at the more abstract level of 'historical metaphoricity'. The phrase suggests that history is itself a metaphor, that historical events are indistinguishable from the metanarratives into which historiographers arrange them. It is therefore only consistent that, as the argument develops, the loss of the illusion that history follows orderly, theoretical patterns should in Bohrer's eyes become synonymous with a collapse of history itself. Where history has blended totally with historical metanarratives, the demise of the grands récits must

simultaneously put an end to the haphazard progress of events themselves.

One particular example supplies the key to these idiosyncratic figures of speech. In an article which he writes in 1982 for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Bohrer admires the apparently uncomplicated patriotism which he witnessed in Britain during the Falklands Crisis. Germany, he argues, could never celebrate its national identity with the attractive combination of sincerity and self-irony that Britain displayed as the task force sailed towards the South Atlantic. The country is too marked by what Bohrer calls liberal sociology, and the sociology of peace ('die liberale Soziologie'; 'die Soziologie des Friedens').(82) Sociology in this context does not refer to the theory or study of human societies. Bohrer is not arguing that so much of the German population has studied the work of liberal sociologists that the country is now inured to the seductions of nationhood and jingoism. The word refers to society itself. Liberal sociology, and the sociology of peace, for Bohrer, means aspects of post-war Germany: an unease about its past, a shyness of military intervention, a commitment to pacifism whatever the cost. The word substitutes an abstract noun for concrete development. More importantly, the derogatory phrase 'the sociology of peace' assimilates society to the abstract category. It implies that post-war Germany is indistinguishable from a liberal sociological textbook about post-war Germany. It says that society and sociology are identical.

Naive empiricism cannot catapult Bohrer beyond his theoretical impasse because Bohrer does not see raw reality. When he looks out on the world he sees abstract nouns: not objects, but mythology; not historical events, but metanarratives; not society but sociology. This skewed vision explains why his arguments slip between conceptual levels. (Why should a theory distinguish between things and their concepts, when the subject who writes the theory no longer experiences any noticeable difference?) It explains why he can find no object to guarantee his extraconceptual epiphany. (Every object he sees has fused with the categories which define it.) It explains why he protects his counter-modernity only by draining it of empirical content and wrapping it round with aesthetic form. (Ironically, it is the very standardization of Bohrer's aesthetic theory - his assumption that works of art are really as autonomous as Idealist theory hopes - which shields his epiphany from the standardizing clutches of sociology.) Most importantly, the skewed vision changes the level of argument. We are no longer discussing a <u>theory</u> which is constitutively incapable of articulating a novel experience. We are dealing with a <u>social experience</u> whose traces can be found in the very fabric of Bohrer's style. The subject herself - a subject who is not merely Bohrer, nor indeed Wellmer, Bubner and Lyotard, but, more generally, the individual shaped and constrained by postmodern society - cannot peer beyond her concepts.

The shift of level from a theoretical, to an experiential constraint may elucidate why not only Bohrer but a whole

generation of aesthetic theorists wittingly or unwittingly cast a void as their central term. But it does not explain why a subject whose field of vision includes nothing which is not conceptually preshaped, should ever embark on a theory of non-identity? The infuriation of the phrase 'the sociology of peace' suggests a partial answer, for it implies that though Bohrer sees nothing but prefabricated concepts, he is not happy with what he sees. It conveys the impression of a subject whose interaction with the world is reified to the core, but who is nevertheless angrily aware that her perception is distorted, that something unimaginable eludes her grasp. It suggests a subject who, though she is constitutively incapable of perceiving it, nevertheless longs for non-identity. The schizophrenia evident in the details of Bohrer's arguments thus characterizes and disfigures his undertaking as a whole, suggesting an intriguing parallel with the problems which beset the theory of communicative action. Just as Habermas was caught schizophrenically between the compulsion to differentiate, and a frustrated but irrepressible longing for integration, so Bohrer compulsively hollows out an alterity, the desire for which he nevertheless cannot forget. This desire finds expression in Bohrer's anger, but it is latent as well in the sheer energy with which he vainly chases the epiphany through its successive, unsuccessful incarnations. To understand this double consciousness, to understand a subjectivity which cannot conceive of heterogeneity, but which nevertheless longs for otherness, we must turn to Adorno's version of non-identity. By

sifting through the components of Adorno's theory, we may uncover the element which, when it disappears, leaves behind the schizophrenia of the postmodern subject.

5. What is Non-Identity?

Non-identity, for Bohrer, would be a stable quantity which fell outside the catalogue of existing concepts, but which was nevertheless a thing one could point to and verify: a physical anomaly, a work of art. Adorno's non-identity is elusive, playful and inseparable from a notion of experience. The discussion of anomalous details to be found in the programmatic essay 'Der Essay als Form' strikingly illustrates this instability. Like Bohrer, Adorno suggests that the essay draws on anomalies which cast doubt on systematic vocabularies.(83) Yet although such unclassified and unclassifiable minutiae grant the essay its epistemological power, they simultaneously jeopardize its quest for knowledge. Oddities and epiphenomena may blast an essay beyond the confines of ordinary logic, but they damn it just as often to empty superficiality. This unreliability does not, however, lead Adorno to banish anomalies from his theory, or to redirect his hopes towards the idiosyncrasies of subjective experience, as it did Bohrer. It encourages him instead to make unpredictability an inherent attribute of the genre. Just as a traveller who learns a foreign tongue by immersing herself in the language without the help of a dictionary pays for her greater awareness of idiom by exposing herself to error and miscommunication, so the essay pays for its sensitivity to nuance and ambiguity by laying itself open to misjudgement and egregious <u>faux pas</u> (<u>NzL</u> 21):

> Die Romanbiographien und was an verwandter Prämissen-Schriftstellerei an diese sich anhängt, sind keine blosse Ausartung sondern die permanente Versuchung einer Form,

> deren Verdacht gegen die falsche Tiefe durch nichts gefeit ist vor dem Umschlag in versierte Oberflächlichkeit. (NzL 12)

Having said that the texts are never safe from literary mediocrity, Adorno could proceed to distinguish superficial from insightful essays, to pick out the anomalies which harbour genuine novelty from the dross which waylays and distracts us. Anomalies could be said to be ambivalent in principle, but close study of individual examples could temper this ambivalence and seek out the unambiguous nuggets of knowledge. Adorno, however, does not merely admit that essays are prone to error. He elevates the fallibility of essayistic details to the very condition of the genre's success. He abandons the distinction between insightful and trivial anomalies, and argues instead that the details explored by the essay are without exception deficient, partial and potentially misleading. Essays thus do not catalogue discrete fragments of unsystematic knowledge. They explore each detail to the point where its fraudulence comes to light, and other, equally unaccountable factors appear on the conceptual horizon: 'Das Gewagte, Vorgreifende, nicht ganz Eingelöste jedes essayistischen Details zieht als Negation andere herbei...'(NzL 28). But these new anomalies are as inadequate as the details they succeed. Were they to be pursued with the same literal-minded rigour, they would equally incriminate themselves. The truth of an essay does not reside in the individual parts, but rather in the act of negation, in the movement whereby each

detail is forced to display its insufficiency: 'Die Unwahrheit, in die wissend der Essay sich verstrickt, ist das Element seiner Wahrheit'(NzL 28).

If individual details are not the vehicles of truth, are they perhaps truth's inversion? Has Adorno replaced particular insights which are unequivocally right, with details that are unequivocally wrong? If he has, all we would have to do is turn each detail on its head and the unambiguous truth which Adorno's argument seemed to question would be reinstated. Such a reading would implicitly rely on the presuppositions which drove Bohrer to the hollowness of aesthetic subjectivity: it would assume that each detail was not only unequivocal, but also a self-contained unit (in this case of untruth). Adorno's details are neither unequivocal nor self-contained. The truth towards which they gesture arises not through simple inversion but through the tension, conflict and overlap between individual details, through the connections and affinities between individual insights, through an interdependence which Adorno captures with the metaphor of a force field ('Kraftfeld', NzL 22; 'Kräfteparallelogramm', NzL 25). This force field of veracity does not hover aloof from the insufficiency of each detail. The essay does not weave a web of negation cut loose from the anomalies whose inadequacy it demonstrates. The truth remains entangled with the anomalies, paradoxically inseparable from their very dishonesty and unreliability: 'Bewegt sich die Wahrheit des Essays durch seine Unwahrheit, so ist sie nicht im blossen Gegensatz zu seinem

Unehrlichen und Verfemten aufzusuchen sondern in diesem selber...'(NzL 29). Adorno's truth is thus relational; it exists in the tensions, discrepancies and similarities between inadequate terms. But at the same time it is not fixed, not structured. The very mercurial insufficiency which directs us towards other details is itself integral to veracity. Adorno's truth exists not as a product but a process, a series of disruptions and negations, in which each new term is unsettled, each level of self-containment destabilized. This never-ending turmoil is the form truth is condemned to take in a society dominated by clear-cut logic, by the reified reason to which Bohrer's non-identity falls prey. But it is not only the prevalence of a fallen rationality which prevents truth from appearing in a more stable, less confusing guise. Whilst the slipperiness and ambiguity of Adorno's arguments is intended to elude fixed conceptual systems, the very instability of his concepts simultaneously prefigures the form truth would take in a freer society. Veracity, under any conditions, should be flighty and volatile: 'die vom Spiel verlassene Wahrheit wäre nur noch Tautologie'(NzL 29). Adorno's truth, we could perhaps fancifully conclude, is itself unsettled and ambivalent. It is both the scar left on thought by the logic it repudiates, and simultaneously the image of a ludic thought, of playfulness and speculation come into their own.

Is this play an attribute of objects themselves? The discussion - in this chapter, but also in the earlier

discussion of Dialektik der Aufklärung - has so far perhaps created the impression that the subject explores oddities and peculiar details which are themselves inherently unstable. The writer need only tease out these natural instabilities and she will sketch an image of the truth. This impression is misleading, and likely moreover to encourage the belief that non-identity is a permanent characteristic of things themselves, that it represents nature in an undiluted, uncontaminated form.(84) The truth which Adorno's essay redeems is not the inherent, but previously repressed complexity of objects, not moving contours or hidden irregularities - or at least, not just. If it is a property of phenomena which the essay faithfully records, it is equally something actively contributed by the writer. It is an exchange between both parties, a trade-off between the parts of the object which resist the despoilments of manipulative reason and the subject's imaginative potential. It is this conviction which provokes Adorno's otherwise surprising assertion that the essay-writing subject, in her quest for heterogeneity, projects ideas of her own invention onto her object: 'Nichts lässt sich herausinterpretieren, was nicht zugleich hineininterpretiert wäre'(NzL 11). Such interpretative self-indulgence would seem to spell death to objective ambiguity. But paradoxically it is this very element of travesty which brings the writer as close as she will come to the complexities and equivocations of the phenomena she interprets: 'Die objektive Fülle von Bedeutungen [...], die in jedem geistigen Phänomen verkapselt sind,

verlangt vom Empfangenden, um sich zu enthüllen, eben jene Spontaneität subjektiver Phantasie...'(NzL 11). Just as Benjamin's historian constructed a subjective constellation between two moments of history so as retrospectively to uncover the redemptive energies which the supposedly objective documentation of facts occludes, so Adorno's subject makes something up about her object which, by its very fictionality, comes closer to reality than reality itself. The essay writer productively oversteps her material, she takes it beyond itself and so both initiates and sustains the process of disruption in which heterogeneity consists. She mediates her object, and so endows it with its own non-identity.

The vehicle of this subjective mediation is style. Judicious phrasing and the cunning juxtaposition of concepts allow the writer to twist the instrumental categories, which are her only material, against themselves. Close attention to the form and shape of her argument enable her to transform terms which would otherwise rigidly pigeonhole phenomena, into a fluid rhetoric, a web of affinities and contradictions which draws objects out into non-identity. As Adorno describes this rhetorical virtuosity, however, it emerges that the subject's contribution occurs on two different levels. Indeed, as his account of the two levels develops, one level all but eliminates the other, casting doubt on the very subjective contribution which he sets out to defend:

> Die Darstellung nimmt [der Essay...] schwerer als die Methode und Sache sondernden, der Darstellung ihres vergegenständlichten Inhalts gegenüber gleichgültigen

> Verfahrensweisen. Das Wie des Ausdrucks soll an Präzision erretten, was der Verzicht aufs Umreissen opfert, ohne doch die gemeinte Sache an die Willkür einmal dekretierter Begriffsbedeutungen zu verraten. Darin war Benjamin der unerreichte Meister. Solche Präzision kann jedoch nicht atomistisch bleiben. Weniger nicht, sondern mehr als das definitorische Verfahren urgiert der Essay die Wechselwirkung seiner Begriffe im Prozess geistiger Erfahrung. In ihr bilden jene kein Kontinuum der Operationen, der Gedanke schreitet nicht einsinnig fort, sondern die Momente verflechten sich teppichhaft. Von der Dichte dieser Verflechtung hängt die Fruchtbarkeit von Gedanken ab. Eigentlich denkt der Denkende gar nicht, sondern macht sich zum Schauplatz geistiger Erfahrung, ohne sie aufzudröseln. Während aus ihr auch dem traditionellen Denken seine Impulse zuwachsen, eliminiert es seiner Form nach die Erinnerung daran. Der Essay aber wählt sie als Vorbild, ohne sie, als reflektierte Form, einfach nachzuahmen; er vermittelt sie durch seine eigene begriffliche Organisation; er verfährt, wenn man will, methodisch unmethodisch. (NzL 20-21)

Adorno here begins by marking the essay off from philosophy which believes it can separate language from the content of a thought, or, as A. J. Ayer would put it, can distinguish a sentence from the proposition it purports to express.(85) (This is what Adorno means by 'das definitorische Verfahren': a method which insists on strict definitions of its terms to ensure that each term points reliably towards the appropriate logical unit, thus reducing language to the neutral vehicle of stable propositions.) The essay does not separate the content of a phrase from its form. The particular context in which a word is applied modifies its connotations. Moreover, no sentence exists in isolation. If a concept takes its colour from the sentence which surrounds it, so a sentence cannot be understood apart from the claims with which it competes, conflicts or collaborates. Thus far the argument echoes the

treatment of the anomalies, although we now see that anomalies are not waiting to be recorded but, as with Bohrer's romantic essay, appear only when existing concepts are split open by the peculiarities of style. As Adorno describes how the essay binds its stylistic gems together, however, aspects of the arguments sound less familiar. On one level, Adorno argues that essay-form and non-identity reciprocally interpenetrate. The essay is said to encourage its concepts to interfere with each other ('[der Essay urgiert] die Wechselwirkung seiner Begriffe im Prozess geistiger Erfahrung'). By thus fostering interference, the form increases the likelihood of fruitful insights ('Von der Dichte der Verflechtung hängt die Fruchtbarkeit von Gedanken ab'). Nevertheless, the experience which this attention to form provokes is not directly pictured by the essay. The overlappings, ambiguities and jagged edges of intellectual experience appear in the writing only indirectly, in the conflicts and contradictions between its concepts ('[der Essay] vermittelt [die geistige Erfahrung] durch seine eigene begriffliche Organisation'). For this level of the argument, the form of the essay nurtures an experience, whilst simultaneously recording it at one conceptual remove. It is paradoxically both the cause of the insights, and their mediated effect. At another level, Adorno questions this circularity. Rather than encouraging an experience which it simultaneously documents, the essay is portrayed as the passive vehicle of an opaque insight.

The key sentence is the claim that the thinker does not

think but opens herself up to an experience which she does not unravel ('Eigentlich denkt der Denkende gar nicht, sondern macht sich zum Schauplatz geistiger Erfahrung, ohne sie aufzudröseln'). Adorno has earlier in the essay insisted that the spontaneous intuitions by which the subject oversteps her object are not private or immediate, but filtered through the larger category of history: 'die bloss individuelle Erfahrung, mit welcher das Bewusstsein als mit dem ihr nächsten anhebt, ist selber vermittelt durch die übergreifende der historischen Menschheit'(NzL 18). The turn to style reinforces this scepticism about spontaneous experience by placing the roots of the subject's productive misrepresentations not in an antisocial corner of the imagination, but in language. Yet Adorno is not content to explain the unexpected acuity of the subject's intuitions by revealing that they are themselves socially, or linguistically mediated. He now not only recasts the subject's intuitions as the experience of a whole culture acting through the individual (what he calls 'geistige Erfahrung'). He adds that the individual who surrenders to intellectual experience does not know what she has intuited. She does not unravel ('aufdröseln') the insights to which she has yielded. Where the subject previously nurtured non-identity with her wit and eloquence, she is now the passive mouthpiece of a knowledge she does not herself consciously experience.

This rupture between subject and insight is prepared for earlier in the passage by a slipperiness in the relation between essay and event. The verb 'urgieren' (in the phrase

'[der Essay urgiert] die Wechselwirkung seiner Begriffe im Prozess geistiger Erfahrung') means 'to encourage', but it also has less active connotations of entreating or pleading, thus suggesting that the essay is pressing for a boon which it can gain only as a favour bestowed by a higher power. The weakening of the essay's agency is then further underscored by the ensuing, abrupt switch of focus from the written text to the experience the text records, from essay to 'geistige Erfahrung'. The essay ceases to be the subject of the sentence. Its contribution ceases to be even ambivalently conceded, as the ambiguous, latinate 'urgieren' gives way to a reflexive verb ('die Momente verflechten sich teppichhaft') - to thoughts which weave themselves rather than being either woven, or encouraged to weave by the essay.

The one interruption in this decline into passivity is the agency attributed to the subject even in her surrender. Although she does not actively think, she nevertheless volunteers to be the scene of the experience ('[der Denker] macht sich zum Schauplatz geistiger Erfahrung'). Yet this last shadow of control disappears when it emerges that even systematic philosophies which scorn the formal experimentation of the essay are, without their recognizing it, the stage for an intellectual event ('aus [der geistigen Erfahrung wachsen] auch dem traditionellen Denken seine Impulse [zu]'). For it then appears that the experience occurs with or without the sly, rhetorical promptings of essay-form. By the end of the argument, the subject has not only been deprived of the ability

to reflect on the insights of which she is the unwitting vehicle. She has also lost the capacity to solicit visitation with an open-ended form. She would be just as likely to nurture intellectual experience writing analytic philosophy.

One side of the argument intertwines the essay with intellectual experience, anchoring style in the irregular pattern of the insights, whilst nevertheless implying that the shape of the essay actively conjures up knowledge. Whether the essay is cultivating the experience, or absorbing it into its fabric, the form, for this side of the argument, is both actively involved in the process of knowledge, and conscious of the fissures and irregularities of the epistemological event. For the other side of the argument, there is neither active intervention, nor awareness. An unbridgeable gap instead separates subject and insight. The reciprocity of form and event gives way to an experience independent not only of the subject's conscious reflection, but, equally, of the weave of the text. The idea that experience is mediated by a larger category is here driven to such an extreme that the individual's contribution dissolves. The subject no longer moulds new insights, but is traversed by an opaque and insensible knowledge.

This unnerving transformation is caused by a split between the subject and mediation. It seemed initially to be the subject who, by tracing constellations, consciously sustained the mercurial movement of non-identity. But now mediation

weaves its own patterns, sublimely indifferent to the linguistic ingenuity of the individual. Non-identity bypasses the subject. This parting of ways is not an inconsistency in Adorno's theory, a slip which the watchful deconstructor searches out and exposes. It is an integral part of the argument, the dialectical counterweight to Adorno's insistence that non-identity is fostered by subjective intervention. If one side of the argument plays up the subject's contribution and suggests that the rhetorical skill of the essay-writer returns to the object an instability which categorical faithfulness suppresses (Adorno talks of '[eine] Freiheit dem Gegenstand gegenüber, welche diesem mehr von dem seinen gibt, als wenn er unbarmherzig der Ordnung der Ideen eingegliedert würde', NzL 30), if it, moreover, praises these subjective speculations as a properly non-distorting image of their object (NzL 31), and adds that the essay pieces together the broken fragments, the membra disiecta of phenomena, granting them an open coherence they never previously enjoyed (NzL 31), the other side dismisses these feats of dynamic representation as impossible. The essay, it insists, never coincides with its object (NzL 26; 32). Phenomena have a slipperiness over and beyond the instability injected into them by subjective mediation, which ensures that the individual's fictions always miss their mark, always betray the object which they elsewhere in the arguments rescue from abstraction. This non-coincidence does not cause Adorno to throw up his hands in despair. If it confirms that he will never finally know the object as it

really is, it equally comforts him that the restless movement of non-identity will never be closed off or contained. A gap will always remain to rekindle the conflicts between concepts and phenomena in which true heterogeneity consists, deferring the dread day when essays have nothing better to do than tautologically to restate the truth of their objects.

Adorno thus plays off two competing conceptions of mediation so as to protect a suitably open-ended non-identity. If this juxtaposition is to have the desired effect, however, the subject's conscious contribution to mediation must not only be confounded by a broader, more slippery mediating force. The subject thus outflanked must be conscious of the divergence, and so prompted into accounts yet more faithfully fickle of the phenomena she interprets. So far the argument has shown a subject unconscious of her defeat. The individual is traversed by a knowledge she neither actively solicits nor consciously experiences. How does Adorno reconcile this obliviousness with the other, more conscious mediation? The first link - implicit in the structure of his argument - is that the subject, whether she knows it or not, is the carrier for both levels of non-identity. Her interpretations are both a conscious attempt at philosophy, whether traditional or essayistic, and simultaneously the scene of a less subjective event, the stage on which the experience of a whole culture or society, Adorno's 'geistige Erfahrung', is acted out. The distinction which Adorno eventually draws between an essayistic approach and traditional philosophy supplies the second, unexpected link in

the chain. Adorno suggests that the subliminal incursion of the impersonal force leaves a trace which the individual, should she be so inclined, is capable of resuscitating: 'Während aus [der geistigen Erfahrung] auch dem traditionellen Denken seine Impulse zuwachsen,' he writes, 'eliminiert es seiner Form nach die Erinnerung daran. Der Essay aber wählt sie als Vorbild...'(NzL 21). The insensible knowledge which cuts across the subject unbeknownst to her can be remembered.

Non-identity must be imagined as an incessant play, which is not an attribute of objects themselves, but which is rather bestowed on objects by a process of mediation. This mediation is borne by subjects, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. It is the trace left on phenomena by human intervention, the life which they acquire through culture. It is their history.(86) Of course, human intervention does not merely endow objects with a fluid existence which, in an unimaginable, unpopulated world, they would have had to forego. It distorts, manipulates and dominates nature. It categorizes, pigeonholes and controls. Nevertheless, without culture, there would not be the affinities and conflicts, relationships and contradictions, the patternings and discrepancies in the web of which objects are at once destroyed and reconstituted, in the weave of which they live out their non-identity. The essay rounds on this cultural weaving: 'das Verhältnis von Natur und Kultur ist sein eigentliches Thema'(NzL 28). It retrieves the scattered, irregular history of an object's acculturation, at

the same time redressing the distortion and fragmentation which this acculturation has equally inflicted, delicately reconnecting the threads of development and dissemination.

In a small, organic culture, this act of memory is not hard to conceive. The network of connections in which subjects acquire a history, in which their different attributes are unpacked and articulated can easily be recovered. The final outcome of the process can naturally not be foreseen, for the patterns continue to grow. Nevertheless, their growth can be gathered in, reconstructed, and retold. The web can be rewoven. In the sprawling society of modernity, the act of recollection is more arduous. The paths of an object's history are grown too diverse, its attributes too multifarious, the interconnections too convoluted to be retraced. Individual facets break free from the network of non-identity, and appear as self-contained, isolated units: as objects in their own right. The subject's dealings with these objects continue to contribute to, and participate in the larger movement of society, but their place in this movement is obscured. Benjamin's essay on surrealism captures the individual's consternation when she does occasionally intuit the connections, when she does glimpse the history in which familiar objects are embedded. But he also warns that the initial shock is empty. The object is not restored to its interconnectedness. As it ages, it is but indistinctly defamiliarized. It just seems inexpressibly strange. The essay on Surrealism hopes to overcome this vacancy by patiently oscillating between the isolated objects and their

inexplicable aura. This dialectical process should not just abstractly recast trusted trinkets as period pieces. It should not just reveal that platform soles shock because they so succinctly articulate the aspirations of the Seventies. It should name the points of the constellation, should piece together the peculiarities and details of the historical web in which platform soles become more than the ephemeral tack of twenty years ago. It should actively rediscover non-identity. But how does dialectical oscillation thus fill out empty shock? Where can it turn to retrace the connections which normally escape the subject? Adorno's bold answer is to language itself. The slippages and ambiguities, the contradictions and unwitting puns to be heard in even the most reified of vocabularies are the traces left in language by the otherwise elusive process of acculturation. Language itself records the shape of cultural constellations. If we listen to and rhetorically exploit this secret network of affinities, we will resurrect the object's non-identical identity (NzL 31).

Bohrer cannot perform this feat of linguistic recollection. He cannot turn to language to retrieve the non-identity to which he nevertheless contributes. It could be speculated that postmodern society has become so distended that the subject loses even the punctual, indirect connection with non-identity which Benjamin and Adorno's individual occasionally enjoyed. She is still the vehicle of heterogeneity, but she bears it without knowledge, or active solicitation.(87) Certainly, Fredric Jameson's path-breaking

essay on postmodernity - 'The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' - takes exactly this experience to be definitive of contemporary society. The postmodern subject, for him, lives in a depthless world, in which she is unable to discern the patterns of a larger totality behind the images she confronts, in which she is incapable of reconstructing the historical configuration of which she is a part, except as a series of 'pop images and simulacra of [a] history which itself remains forever out of reach'.(88) To explain the causes of this depthlessness, to isolate the upheavals in society that have cut off the subject from non-identity, would need a fully-fledged sociological study.(89) The effects, however, are visible in Bohrer's texts. Where objects for Benjamin appear simultaneously reified and revolutionary, Bohrer sees only their reification. He perceives units so self-contained, so self-identical that even the distinction between a thing and its concept fades. The surprising side of this skewed vision is the disquiet it engenders in the subject. The self-containment of the objects disturbs her, perhaps because pure, isolated self-identity is as theoretically inconceivable as mediation is now socially invisible. The subject shuttles schizophrenically between uncontaminated self-sufficient intensities.(90) She has no memory of the links between each state, of the connections between concepts. But their isolation upsets her. How does she react? Bohrer's response is finally to fix the unthinkable space between intensities as though it were itself non-identity. The affinities and conflicts of heterogeneity have

withdrawn into invisibility, so Bohrer reconstrues the very absence left behind by their withdrawal as the elusive alterity. Jacques Derrida has the opposite response. Like Adorno, he looks to language for traces of non-identity. But where Adorno's language bears covert patterns, evinces shapes and constellations which contain the movement of heterogeneity, Derrida's language has lost all pattern and structure. It is an infinite chain of differences and ambiguities, any of which could potentially harbour otherness. To unearth non-identity, Derrida must pun through the whole alphabet, plunder the lexical resources of the entire Littré in a quest potentially endless.(91)

Derrida's limitless reweaving, and Bohrer's empty space are two sides of the same coin. Both are symptoms of the subject's inability to round on and reconstruct the non-identity she ceaselessly engenders. Habermas's dilemmas can equally be interpreted as the signs of a broken relation to mediation. His unwillingness to tolerate the aporias in Adorno's theory makes more sense once we grasp that the social substance of these aporias, the ambivalences which Adorno and Benjamin so painstakingly reconstruct, have faded from view. In a society which appears as an ever expanding array of self-contained units, it must seem theoretically perverse to cling, like Adorno, so stubbornly to paradox and contradiction.(92) If the change in mediation explains Habermas's interpretation of negative dialectics, it also throws light on his own problematic alternative: the double strategy. His constant

differentiations, it now transpires, compulsively register the form of the society they confront, a society fragmented into sections and subsections the connections between which have faded from view. Yet even as it reproduces social fragmentation in its own categorical distinctions, Habermas's theory is, like Bohrer's, perturbed by the proliferating units. Habermas longs to reunite the social splinters, dreaming of a subject strong enough to stem the flood of divisions, to reconstitute society as an, albeit open, totality. This longing is paradoxical, but not merely because the subjects of so distended a society could never hope reflexively to encompass their own activities, hope consciously to rearticulate their own actions and history. Habermas affirms the fragmentation even as he bemoans it, perceiving in the constant divisions the potential guarantee of a utopian project, the potential protector of the purity of communication. Little does he realize that this purity, this implausible self-containment is itself but the sign of a deeper dysfunctioning, but the illusion thrown up by the social totality's explosion.

Bohrer chases a non-identity he cannot conceptualize, finally recasting an empty space as the coveted alterity. Habermas, meanwhile, negates a differentiation in which he hopes simultaneously to ground his critical project, oscillating uncomfortably between the conscious affirmation and troubled critique of the proliferating divisions. To understand the origins of these parallel schizophrenias is perhaps too ambitious a project to attempt. Adorno, however, has already

begun the investigation. In his texts on pop culture, he reflects on the mechanisms which limit the subject's vision, which prevent her from conceiving otherness, ambiguity or affinity whilst at the same time shattering totalities into unrelated fragments. By studying these texts, we may come nearer to grasping the changes of which Bohrer and Habermas are the unwitting victims. We may also overcome the illusion, often implicit in Adorno's texts on jazz and Hollywood, that the subject who reflects on pop culture magically escapes the standardization she never tires of denouncing.

PART III

A B L I N D B I T O F D I F F E R E N C E

Adorno and the Culture Industry

> Und dann kommen noch die angestellten Philosophen und machen uns zum Vorwurf, dass wir keinen festen Standpunkt hätten.(1)

1. Der Gestus Münchhausens

Adorno's attitude to pop culture is contradictory, as is strikingly illustrated by two related aphorisms in Minima Moralia. He seems at first sight to despise it. 'Aus jedem Besuch des Kinos,' he writes in an aphorism entitled 'Herr Doktor, das ist schön von Euch', 'komme ich bei aller Wachsamkeit dümmer und schlechter wieder heraus'.(2) For this Adorno, film belongs to a world of deceiving pleasures, that by their very ability to beguile and soothe us shore up the inhumanity which prevails in late capitalist society. In this context, intellectuals such as the 'Herr Doktor' of the title should resist populism and the temptation to hail Hollywood's calculated and calculating amusement as a latter-day form of popular culture (it is for this reason that Adorno and Horkheimer invent the disdainful term 'culture industry').(3) They should abstain from facile, popular pleasures and in dry-eyed, pitiless isolation pay paradoxical tribute to the compassion and solidarity which alone could be the basis of a humane society. 'Alles Mitmachen, alle Menschlichkeit von

Umgang und Teilhabe ist blosse Maske fürs stillschweigende Akzeptieren des Unmenschlichen. Einig sein soll man mit dem Leiden der Menschen: der kleinste Schritt zu ihren Freuden hin ist einer zur Verhärtung des Leidens'.(4)

Yet this withdrawal to a pleasureless negativity is not the whole story. The aphorism from which Adorno's appalled response to the cinema is taken is followed immediately by another entitled 'Antithese'. In the antithesis, Adorno attacks the rejection and retreat from contemporary culture that he has just defended, suggesting that any withdrawal is shaped absolutely by the society it rejects. The intellectual may hope to flee from a complacent, commodified culture to a stoic haven of learning, but her retreat will always be contaminated by the culture she escapes: 'Wir stellen den Verfall der Bildung fest, und doch ist unsere Prosa, gemessen an der Jacob Grimms oder Bachofens, der Kulturindustrie in Wendungen ähnlich, von denen wir nichts ahnen'.(5) Where in the first aphorism we could at least stay loyal to compassion by abstaining, in the second aphorism even self-denial is denied us. The very way we round on the culture industry to assess its damage extends its hold over us, as our critical prose without our knowledge transforms itself into a higher species of advertising copy.

If the intellectual's philosophical critique of the culture industry - 'unsere Prosa' - is itself scarred by commodification, is there perhaps another means of voicing our displeasure which is not similarly contaminated? Critics across the spectrum from Baumeister and Kulenkampf to Habermas, as we

have seen, believe Adorno finally to escape this double-bind by turning to art. Where both pleasure and critique strengthen the grip of instrumental reason, art is supposed to sustain a fragile autonomy that exempts it from the blanket condemnation with which Adorno otherwise greets society.(6) Yet when we turn to Adorno's aesthetic writings, we see the same double movement we have just observed in his aphorisms on the intellectual. The section of Ästhetische Theorie called 'Entkunstung der Kunst; Zur Kritik der Kulturindustrie' initially describes the authoritarian principles lurking behind the pleasurable surface of the culture industry. Because it demands no effort, pop culture is said to impose the alienated world on its passive viewers as if it were not alienated but sensuous and close to hand. But this unmasking of the culture industry ends with the declaration: 'Von der autoritären Schmach der Kulturindustrie war die autonome Kunst nicht durchaus frei'.(7) Art does not stand outside the standardizing, authoritarian process of consumer capitalism. Rather, in the very coherence of the form by which it marks its distance from society, it internalizes aspects of the social standardization it longed to have eluded. 'Unmöglich, im Bewusstsein dieses Zusammenhangs, Kritik an der Kulturindustrie zu üben, die vor der Kunst verstummte'.(8) Where at the beginning of the section Adorno had denounced the attempts of 'vested interests' to erase the borders between art and life as the actions of a society embarrassed by the purity of art,(9) by the end of the argument he forces us to acknowledge that aesthetic artefacts are themselves marked by

the standardizing process for which he initially criticized pop culture.

If we cannot escape standardization, perhaps we should forego the attempt to differentiate authentic culture from its commodified shadow. Turning our attention to pop culture would seem more consistent in Adorno's dire scenario, for the culture industry at least makes no pretence of being anything more than a commodity. Yet Adorno will not make this step. When he is discussing the tendency to reject high culture in favour of its competitor, Adorno insists that, however well-founded our discontent with art, to think that pop culture could in any way replace the artefacts of High Modernism is a dangerous illusion. In an essay on jazz - 'Zeitlose Mode. Zum Jazz' - he refuses to concede that Cubism, Eliot or Joyce are in any way comparable to the mass-produced, mechanical dronings of popular music: 'Wer sich von der anwachsenden Respektabilität der Massenkultur dazu verführen lässt, einen Schlager für moderne Kunst zu halten, weil eine Klarinette falsche Töne quäkt [...] hat schon vor der Barbarei kapituliert'.(10) Art may be as ineluctably scarred as the culture industry, but this is no reason for abandoning it in favour of the trash which pays open tribute to the prevailing barbarity. We should instead continue to demonstrate the qualitative difference between art and pop culture. For, as the essay on jazz argues, the claims for the innovation and spontaneity of jazz made by its supporters cannot be substantiated. Far from exemplifying a new liberation, jazz incessantly rehearses the same conformist

spectacle, as syncopated rhythms break free from the beat only to slip back into time at the end of the phrase and so confirm the beat's unshakeable authority. Rhythmic innovation can never break the hold of an unquestioned time signature. If spontaneity briefly flashes up it is only so that we might hear it crushed by the weight of the jazz-machine, and so participate in a masochistic ritual that Adorno understands to be a symbolic, self-inflicted castration.(11)

Yet, despite the depravity which he sees everywhere embodied in commodified culture, Adorno contravenes his own embargo and mixes up the two poles of his opposition. The culture industry is treated as if it were itself a form of art: '[unsere Analyse hält] sich an den objektiv den Produkten innewohnenden Anspruch, ästhetische Gebilde und damit gestaltete Wahrheit zu sein'.(12) Adorno and Horkheimer thus equate pop culture methodologically with authentic art in the hope of demonstrating the mendacity of Hollywood and jazz. In the essay on the culture industry in Dialektik der Aufklärung, however, the demystification turns out to be two-way. The distortions of mass cultural stereotypes are analysed and denounced, but these distortions emerge as characteristics shared by art itself. The standardized forms of the culture industry and its false manipulation of emotions - it transpires - only take to their logical conclusion tendencies already present in the aesthetic categories of style and catharsis (DdA 138-139, 152). Pop culture tears off the false veneer of art to reveal the inherent violence of aesthetic form, to unmask the

colluding deceitfulness of emotional intensity. More surprisingly, Tinseltown occasionally even betters high culture. The sheer absurdity of revue films, it is claimed, comes closer to freedom than the seriousness of an art which, in its very effort to transcend society, resembles more and more the onerous work it intended to negate (DdA 150-151). Given these cross-overs and interconnections between the two forms of culture, it is but a small step to a final abandoning of the opposition between genuine aesthetic artefacts and mass culture, to the admission that the culture industry is but the next chapter in the history of art. Adorno will never make this concession. His insights into the parallels between art and pop culture are invariably accompanied by the insistence that the two spheres qualitatively differ: jazz is not Picasso. To posit a continuum is to be a cynical barbarian.(13) Whatever similarities or affinities exist between Palestrina and Cole Porter, art must be treated simultaneously as distinct from pop culture.

It would appear that Adorno proposes mutually incompatible readings of pop culture. One moment, he condemns jazz for insidiously stultifying its audience and contrasts it with the ascetic rigour of autonomous art. The next, he not only finds traces of the culture industry in the style in which high culture expresses itself, but suggests that pop culture has usurped art's history, drawing it to a perverse and unexpected conclusion. He defends art in its qualitative difference from

pop culture, but claims nevertheless that the culture industry has as it were hollowed art out from the inside and assimilated it to its commodified existence.

The letter which Adorno writes to Benjamin in response to the latter's 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' goes some way to explaining these contradictions. The letter criticizes Benjamin for being undialectical. Though Benjamin's appraisal of modern technology is dialectical to the point of perversity (he rescues from the very alienation which technology introduces between people and their environment the impulses which could overcome alienation), he condemns autonomous art outright as ritualistic and mystificatory.(14) This condemnation was in Adorno's eyes a mistake. If - as Benjamin would be the first to admit - autonomous art and the culture industry are both scarred by capitalism, both also nurse fragments of what Adorno famously calls an integral freedom to which they do not however add up.(15) Rather than redeeming the culture industry alone, as Benjamin does in the mechanical reproduction essay, we should redeem and criticize both sides, building our aesthetic theory as a dialectic of extremes: as Adorno puts it in his letter to Benjamin, as 'eine Dialektik zwischen den Extremen, die Sie von einander reissen'.(16)

Adorno is often seen as the undialectical mirror image of Benjamin. If Benjamin praises film, but scorns autonomous art, Adorno is thought to redeem autonomous art with dialectics no less perverse than Benjamin's, but to dismiss pop culture out

of hand.(17) Adorno's oscillation between mutually incompatible attitudes to pop culture questions this interpretation. But we are still left with the problem of how we should articulate the two poles of Adorno's dialectic of extremes. It might seem plausible to say that Adorno admits how tightly art is embroiled with pop culture but maintains, in the end, that art's particular treatment of commodification differentiates it from its reified counterpart.(18) But any such compromise misconstrues the way Adorno engages with Hollywood. It hopes to unite as one position perspectives which have been expressly elaborated to make any such unification impossible. For Adorno, the paradoxes which spring from such irreconcilable perspectives are the legacy of dialectical thought, a claim which he defends in Minima Moralia with reference to the two competing perspectives on which Hegel based his philosophy. Hegel, bolstered by his faith that we and the world are both made of the same conceptual material, could make conflicting demands on the thinking subject. In the introduction to the Phänomenologie des Geistes, he could insist that the thinking subject retrace by observation alone - 'das reine Zusehen' - the immanent development of the object, only to argue, two pages later, that we should always also relate developments in the object back to those in the subject.(19) These twin perspectives can be united because Hegel believes that observation which surrenders itself to the categories of its object, and theoretical efforts to grasp the object in the subject's categories are one and the same. The object's

development coincides for him with that of the thinking subject. Adorno, in contrast, believes in no such reassuring coincidences, yet maintains nevertheless that both subject and object have the right to be conceived in their own categories. Dialectical thought is thus left philosophizing from two perspectives which it has no hope of uniting: 'Vom Denkenden heute wird nicht weniger verlangt, als dass er in jedem Augenblick in den Sachen und ausser den Sachen sein soll - der Gestus Münchhausens, der sich an dem Zopf aus dem Sumpf zieht, wird zum Schema einer jeden Erkenntnis...'.(20)

If Adorno 'appears to bet on all sides at once' when writing on art and the culture industry,(21) this is because he feels impelled to adopt a double perspective, to position himself occasionally inside and occasionally outside autonomous art. Sometimes he explores art's internal logic, looking for the formal processes by which it establishes its autonomy and marks its qualitative difference from pop culture. On other occasions, he is outside art, recognizing that it has been finally engulfed by the culture industry, that pop culture now dictates the terms of aesthetic experience. This double vision, and the confusions which it gives rise to, can be found throughout Adorno's writings on art and the culture industry. His entire aesthetic theory could be read as the impossible articulation of two mutually excluding perspectives.(22) The ultimate aim of this double vision is to redeem high culture. Adorno hopes, by his paradoxes, to permit himself an emphatic, redemptive concept of autonomous art. Yet this redemption

succeeds only if Adorno in the next breath admits the vanity of his endeavours. The double perspective retains a utopian concept of art only by denying that any such concept is still possible. It keeps art alive only by drowning it in the culture industry.

The double perspective, however, is more precarious than even Adorno dare imagine, for the cross-eyes with which he hopes impossibly to outwit the culture industry were given him by pop culture itself. The paradoxes with which he helps art to an unexpected recovery cannot fend off the culture industry, for they are themselves the products of the processes they abominate, as we discover when we investigate in more detail what Adorno holds against Hollywood.

2. What's Wrong with Pop Culture?

The culture industry breaks every promise it makes, indeed it consists entirely in broken promises: 'Immerwährend betrügt die Kulturindustrie ihre Konsumenten um das, was sie immerwährend verspricht'(DdA 148). It promises to distract us with a constant stream of innovative attractions, but its innovations are so branded by the industry which produced them as to be indistinguishable from existing products. Adorno's key example is the cinema. If individual effects break unexpectedly from the stereotypical mould, the film as a whole, in its construction from mutually interchangeable building blocks, cannot help but communicate the rhythm of the conveyor belt whose clutches we hoped in our leisure time briefly to have evaded (DdA 145). The great skill of the industry consists in its ability to conceal from its consumers that their desires are not being satisfied. This feat is achieved primarily by preventing us from imagining alternatives to its repetitive monotony. We never dare miss a film in case it turn out to be the unmissable, life-enhancing opportunity which each new product is invariably cracked up to be (DdA 170). Once we are inside the cinema, we can never look away from the screen, for the material - though insignificant in itself - is conveyed with such alacrity that it holds us spellbound (DdA 134-135).

If the form of pop culture eliminates genuine innovation, so too does the content. The culture industry reproduces reality with all the accuracy of the photographic technology at its disposal, but in reproducing reality it fixes and affirms

the world, glorifying it in its present degradation. At first sight this hyper-realism seems pernicious because an otherwise meaningless copy of everyday life is imbued retrospectively with false significance, with ideological content.(23) But the fraud is yet more cunning. The false significance which the culture industry adds to the world is nothing other than reality itself. This inadequate, senseless existence becomes its own meaning, as if life could mean nothing more than its present abasement: 'Durch solche Übertragung wird das Dasein selber zum Surrogat von Sinn und Recht'(DdA 157). Pop culture even takes this abuse of realism so far as to incorporate suffering in its products. Rather than naively eschewing unhappiness, the culture industry positively revels in the lurid details of distress and disappointment, hoping by the portrayal of human misery not only to flatter its audience that a heroic fate is still possible, but to seduce it into a perverse enjoyment of its tribulations (DdA 160). This substitution of suffering for significance ensures that the culture industry reigns unchallenged. For with this sleight of hand, pop culture not only occludes more humane alternatives to its broken promises, it redefines what counts as pleasure. It transforms its audience into masochists who long for disappointment as though it were itself a form of heavenly satisfaction (DdA 150). It calls forth a public which so wallows in the spectacle of unfulfilled and unfulfillable desires that it outstrips censoring bodies like the Hays Office in its demand that satisfaction be either banished from the

screen, or meted out the appropriate punishment (DdA 142).

We internalize the redefinition of pleasure with such unexpected gusto because pop culture has finally slipped itself between us and the real impulses which might have known better. 'Die ganze Welt,' Adorno and Horkheimer write in the Dialektik der Aufklärung, 'wird durch das Filter der Kulturindustrie geleitet'(DdA 134). (The thought returns in Adorno's later essays on television, in which the telly in our living room dispenses with the auratic vestiges that once separated art from a secularized society only the better to replace that secularized society with its own simulated images.)(24) Both inside its audience, and in the outside world, the culture industry dictates what counts as reality. Both inside its audience, and in the outside world, pop culture preforms and manipulates desire (DdA 129, 176). So totally does the culture industry control us that even protest is unmasked as a calculated move to catch the boss's eye. As Adorno and Horkheimer put it, resistance to the culture industry is little more than 'gut organisierte Auffälligkeit' (DdA 140).

The culture industry breaks its promise of pleasure, but ensures simultaneously that we never grasp how badly we have been duped. As the extension of the conveyor belt, it stops us dreaming of alternatives; as a photocopy of distress it persuades us to accept disappointment for satiety; as a replacement reality, it dissolves any objective standard by which we might expose or overturn its grand deceit. Pop culture annihilates any reference to what lies beyond it, indeed,

strictly speaking the culture industry has no outside. Jazz and Hollywood have swallowed us whole.

There are two ways of responding to this doomladen scenario, one optimistic, the other pessimistic. The optimistic reading, characteristic of American interpretations, comes eventually to adopt towards pop culture the same double perspective that we have observed in the relation between pop culture and art.(25) It explores the ambivalent status of pleasure in the culture industry, seeing enjoyment and desire as pop culture's greatest weapon but also as its signal weakness. The pessimistic reading - my reading - does not look for chinks in the manipulative armour of the culture industry but rather explores the hollowing out of desire which lets pop culture twist even our most authentic pleasures to its inauthentic ends.

The optimistic reading develops through the 1970s and early 1980s among American critics generally sympathetic towards the critical project of the Frankfurt School. Its basic move is to insist that though desire can be manipulated, it cannot finally be controlled. Once a limit has been drawn to the brainwashing effects of mass culture, we can begin to 'recognize the public's needs as legitimate' and so escape the dire diagnosis for which no other antidote exists to pop culture than the 'mere negativity' of hermetic, modernist art.(26) The key text for this interpretation is the radio lecture entitled 'Freizeit' which Adorno republished in his

Stichworte in the late 1960s. Towards the end of the lecture, Adorno cites an empirical study of popular reactions to a Dutch-German royal wedding undertaken by the Institute for Social Research. The results suggest that the interpretation of the event offered by the media was not unquestioningly accepted by the public. Rather, people who experienced the event just as the media demanded - as an occasion of unique and immediate import - simultaneously judged it to be of relatively little significance in political and economic terms:

> Was also die Kulturindustrie den Menschen in ihrer Freizeit vorsetzt, das wird, wenn meine Folgerung nicht zu voreilig ist, zwar konsumiert und akzeptiert, aber mit einer Art von Vorbehalt, ähnlich wie auch Naive Theatererereignisse oder Filme nicht einfach als wirklich hinnehmen. Mehr noch vielleicht: es wird nicht ganz daran geglaubt. Die Integration von Bewusstsein und Freizeit ist offenbar doch noch nicht ganz gelungen.(27)

Once Adorno has admitted that the spurious leisure activities of the culture industry do not exhaustively dominate consciousness, the way has been opened for the casting off of his otherwise reductive assimilation of mass culture to the monotonous deception of the culture industry.(28) Indeed, once we realize that the culture industry and consciousness cannot be unthinkingly equated with one another, the way is open for a reinterpretation of Adorno's entire oeuvre. If Andreas Huyssen introduced the new, upbeat Adorno with a chronological distinction between earlier gloomy texts and later texts which betray a qualified optimism, Miriam Hansen dismisses this distinction as so much biographical claptrap and argues that

most of the ideas which appear in the later text: 'can be found - in isolated asides - scattered throughout Adorno's earlier writings'.(29) Ever since 'Schema der Massenkultur' - a draft on mass culture from 1942 written for but not eventually included in Dialektik der Aufklärung - Adorno can be seen to temper his thesis of total manipulation to make room for a residue of authentic subjectivity that survives the manipulative orgy of pop culture.(30) However, this residue turns out to be of little use to the optimistic student of the culture industry. For, as Andreas Huyssen argues in a second text on the issue, when we look closely at the subject who eludes indoctrination, we find that she is far too contradictory to bear the burden of expectation placed upon her. The magical residues do not just innocently prefigure an emancipation from the culture industry, they also hark back to the primitive prehistory of the subject.(31) To trust in these impulses may lead us not to the realm of freedom so much as to the dark lands of political regression.

If the subjective residue which first gave cause for optimism is so fatally ambivalent, how is a positive evaluation of pop culture to be salvaged that stays true to the critical tenets of Adorno's undertaking? The answer, in the work of Fredric Jameson, is - as he said of Adorno - to bet on all sides at once. Jameson keeps the ambivalent subject, but adds to it a second subject whose desires we can rely on to escape the clutches of manipulation. He can thus meet Huyssen's demand that we respect the public's needs whilst nevertheless keeping

in mind the fickle nature of pop cultural enjoyment. His essay on 'Pleasure: a Political Issue' typifies this structure. Jameson argues that our enjoyment of pop culture - or as he calls it 'the culture of the simulacrum' - is radically ambivalent.(32) The 'daily ecstasies and punctual fits of jouissance' which it affords us are both flashes which shake us beyond ourselves fleetingly to intuit a non-reified identity, and moments in which we surrender masochistically to the forces responsible for our reification. Pleasure evinces this 'fundamental ambiguity' for its barely comprehensible, punctual ecstasies are, for Jameson: 'so many points of contact with that equally unfigurable and unimaginable thing [...] the great suprapersonal system of late capitalist technology'.(33) The pleasure that shakes us momentarily beyond reification optimistically to suggest a mismatch between consciousness and the culture industry appears simultaneously to be the moment of our total surrender to the capitalist machine.

Yet, even as he assimilates all enjoyment to this depressing ambiguity, Jameson indicates that a pleasure exists which points beyond alienating social forces to prefigure a very different, utopian collective. Indeed, the very entanglement with a larger totality that condemns the pleasure of the simulacrum to its ineluctable ambivalence helps this other pleasure to gesture beyond ambivalence to the reconciled society of the future. Where pleasure's 'fundamental ambiguity' was previously accounted for by the unconscious contact between enjoyment and the fallen totality of capitalist relations, the

utopian force of the good pleasure is discovered in its magical ability to key into a collective totality apparently uncontaminated by the ambivalence of capitalist jouissance. If pleasure for Jameson always points beyond itself to a larger context with which it interacts, this contact for the second pleasure is unambiguously utopian.(34)

This double perspective is the key to the otherwise disconcerting argumentative dislocations that shape and misshape Jameson's analyses of pop culture. Though in the late 1970s he sees himself going beyond Adorno the better to grasp the bivalence of commodified culture, the arguments he proposes adopt a double vision very similar to Adorno's, rescuing for our enjoyment of pop culture the kind of impossible, non-commodified existence which Adorno hoped to salvage for autonomous art.(35) Where Huyssen and Waldman hoped initially to unhitch genuine desire from the manipulative machinery, Jameson counterbalances such unhitching with the awareness that the subject has been inextricably assimilated to the technologies of reification. True to Adorno's impossible dialectics, he insists that the subject can be delivered from pop culture only if we simultaneously surrender her to its seamless, ideological web. As though it were the paradoxical fee extracted for social hope, he can imagine a subject untroubled by reification only to the degree that he subdues her with pop culture's mystificatory spell. This trade-off is curiously reassuring. Despite his constant insistence on the complicities and masochistic abnegations of pop cultural

enjoyment, Jameson always achieves moments of olympian serenity when his subject eludes the nets of illusion to foreshadow a utopian collective. Collective images in his work are always fatally embroiled with myths of social harmony, and - simultaneously - independent of this ambivalence. They frustrate the very hope they kindle, but they nevertheless tear down the veil of ideological obfuscation to push our communal aspirations towards revolutionary realization.(36)

The optimistic reading faithfully reproduces the twists and turns of Adorno's arguments, adding to the cross-eyed interpretation of art's involvement with mass culture a similarly paradoxical reading of the culture industry itself. By perceiving moments of truth in the delusions of pop culture, the reading makes visible an aspect of Adorno's work which, though it informs the very structure of his arguments, has frequently been overlooked.(37) The constant inversion and hyperbole by which Adorno seeks out and articulates the fallen aspects of autonomous art, the constant self-questioning and repositioning of his fragmented, post-Hegelian dialectics necessarily entail an engagement with the redemptive potential of commodified culture.(38) Consistent with his own inconsistency, Adorno contemplates the notion that, not authentic art, but the culture industry itself might be the best antidote to its own ideology. Adorno's sober reply to Benjamin's celebration of mechanical reproduction, 'Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik und die Regression des Hörens',

closes with the prospect that the depraved listening habits he analyses in connection with popular song might themselves flip over into positive attributes, might in their very alienation mysteriously prefigure the aesthetic practices of a future society.(39) In a later set of aphorisms on cinema, he argues further that to command our attention, films are forced to cater for and engage with our every desire, even those that ultimately undermine its authority. To lure us into the cinema, Hollywood must create for us baddies and libertines whose subversive behaviour it can never guarantee we will repudiate:

> Will sie die Massen ergreifen, so gerät selbst die Ideologie der Kulturindustrie in sich so antagonistisch wie die Gesellschaft, auf die sie es abgesehen hat. Sie enthält das Gegengift ihrer eigenen Lüge. Auf nichts anderes wäre zu ihrer Rettung zu verweisen.(40)

At the same time, however, as Jameson would be the first to point out, Adorno radically qualifies his own cautious optimism. If the culture industry supplies its own antidote, it also ensures that that antidote can never be effective. It stimulates elements of consciousness which it cannot manipulate but freezes them simultaneously into ineffectiveness. In its perfect reproduction of the contradictions of everyday thought patterns, the culture industry changes those contradictions. The act of reproduction freezes them in their present form and robs them of their self-transcending potential. Where art, in its constitutive fictionality, runs playfully ahead of existing conventions, pop culture petrifies consumers in their present

consumptive form.(41) Though Adorno occasionally insists that we would rather break out from this deathly stasis, he more often registers with troubled consternation the passion with which the victims of the culture industry embrace its fraudulent stagnation.(42)

In response to the initial, doomladen scenario, therefore, an optimistically construed Adorno discerns a subject who resists the products to which she nevertheless ecstatically surrenders. The very processes by which pleasure is manipulated jeopardize manipulation, ensuring that, for one side of the argument at least, the subject's reification is never complete. The all-controlling machine has constantly to reassert its grip on the consuming public. For the pessimistic reading, the realization that consumers see through the products to which they simultaneously submit is but cold comfort. For, though it might appear to destabilize the very foundations of the culture industry, Adorno's texts at other points acknowledge that the doublethink engendered by pop culture is in fact the open secret of its undeniable success. The paradoxical, untainted knowledge which reassures the optimistic reading, can for the pessimistic reading, never be mobilized against the culture industry. Rather, its continuing presence seals pop culture's victory. The culture industry is successful not because it all but eliminates authentic pleasure, but because the authentic longings make no difference to our submission. Desire is not an irrepressible force which will some day break free from the

bondage of television and Hollywood. It impotently accompanies the operations it is supposed by the optimists to undermine.(43) The culture industry does not repress authenticity. It induces in its customers a helpless, imitative surrender to commodities whose duplicity is simultaneously lucidly ascertained: 'die zwangshafte Mimesis der Konsumenten an die zugleich durchschauten Kulturwaren' (DdA 176).

Over and again, Adorno's essays on pop culture return to this double consciousness, commenting on the propensity of individuals to profess a faith in the arcane cycles of the stars whilst simultaneously ironizing their beliefs,(44) or on the responses of listeners who surrender to popular music even as they clear-sightedly see through the banality of individual devices.(45) Over and again, this contradictory structure does not provoke subjects to reject the culture industry, but binds them more surely to its mechanisms. 'Massenkultur,' Adorno sarcastically comments in his appendix to Dialektik der Aufklärung, 'ist ungeschminkte Schminke'.(46) Where the culture industry seemed at first to function by eliminating authentic alternatives to its broken promises, the optimistic reading - by default - draws our attention to a more disturbing structure, to a schizophrenia by which individuals yield unreservedly to a deceit they simultaneously rumble. This schizophrenia, not the elimination of authentic desire, is what is wrong with pop culture.(47)

But how can insight coexist with delusion without dispelling the error, without undermining the surrender? How

can the culture industry juxtapose irreconcilable alternatives, desire with aversion, truth with truth's refutation, without one term eradicating the other? The answer which Adorno gives is the loss of totality. Both inside the subject and in pop culture at large, insight exists side by side with delusion, authenticity with inauthenticity, because the context which could bind the opposing factors in relations of conflict or contradiction, the totalizing context has melted away. To understand this disappearance we must turn to Adorno's reflections on the consequences of mechanical reproduction.

3. The Logic of Simulation

The loss of totalizing context is best described in the essay 'Über die musikalische Verwendung des Radios' in which Adorno reworked the results of a research project to which he had contributed in America in the 1940s.(48) In this essay, Adorno examines the changes which a Beethoven symphony undergoes when we hear it on the radio. He starts by describing the original from which the radio symphony differs, maintaining that a Beethoven symphony performed in a concert hall generates in the listener an impression of absolute immediacy and the feeling of belonging to an organic community. Beginning with the briefest of musical statements, the symphony elaborates material that at once differs from the initial statement and, as its inevitable musical implication, remains identical with it. The form of the symphony can thus construct from nugatory tonal fragments a musical totality to which every note belongs and in which any note can be fully understood only once the whole symphony has been performed. This integrative tour de force fosters in the listener the illusion of time suspended in an indefinite present ('gestaute Zeit' Radio 376). Moreover, the apparent inevitability with which one statement follows from another sucks the listener up inside the totality, evoking the feeling of a power which she cannot evade ('das Gefühl des Zwangs, der den Hörer nicht auslässt' Radio 376). As the form embraces each individual part, so too the individual listener is gathered up into its unstoppable organic progress, creating the impression that the crowd of people gathered in the concert

hall form as organic a whole as the music overwhelming them.

The tone of the orchestra contributes fundamentally to this overpowering experience. Not only must the forte passages be loud enough to dwarf the individual listener, but the dynamic range from the loudest fortissimo to the softest pianissimo must be broad enough to provoke the sensation of time coming to a standstill in the enormity of symphonic space. This sensation can be properly experienced only if the listener, in following the form's development, is absorbed by its unfolding totality. Yet the plastic immediacy which is the precondition of our absorption cannot be reproduced in the living room at home. Adorno gives a number of reasons why this is the case, and it becomes apparent how little his argument depends on the deficiencies of broadcasting technology in the 1950s. Whilst he does argue that a small receiver cannot reproduce the almost physical overpowering that we experience before a symphony orchestra, he maintains that even perfect images of the orchestral sound are robbed of their original effect. If we turn sophisticated hifi up loud enough to recreate the original orchestra the perfect image flips over into wild protest that such domestic reproduction is impossible, causing our neighbours to call the police and the image to take on an entirely new significance. Alternatively, if we install a perfect hifi system in our car and drive off into the countryside, the image remains faithful but the sensation of community towards which the original music strove eludes us. We can either shrink the orchestra to fit into the

living room, or we can reproduce it so it exactly that its substance changes. Whichever way we turn, the music's immediacy is neutralized: 'Aus der Neutralisierung kein Ausweg'(Radio 378).

If we cannot recreate the plastic immediacy of the concert hall, the very fabric of the symphony falls in tatters. The progressive unfolding will overwhelm us only if the initial statement appears to merit exhaustive symphonic unpacking. The tonal building blocks from which Beethoven elaborates his orchestral compositions are so minimal as to be practically banal. To us, however, they must appear as flashes of creative authority, as luminous instantiations of musical truth, a transformation which can be sustained only by a live symphony orchestra. The canned orchestra which greets the ears of the domestic listener can never fully convey this creatio ex nihilo. Consequently, the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony must remain the tonal cliché that they always were, the initial statement must lose its binding force. This has dire implications for the elaborations that succeed it. Once the opening has lost its ontological priority, the statements which ensue do not develop the original so much as line up another, equally banal idea alongside it. Any sense of development evaporates, leaving the music to veer erratically between the crushing banality of its individual units and moments of mysterious beauty when these building blocks slot inexplicably together to form a melody:

Die intensive Totalität der Symphonie erschlafft zur

> chronologischen Folge von Episoden. Wohl ist die symphonische Intensität nicht ganz auszurotten, aus dem Einzelnen die Transzendenz zum Ganzen nicht vollends zu tilgen. Aber sie wird vergiftet. Die Trümmer erscheinen wie solche eines verwischten oder abwesenden Kontexts. Mit anderen Worten: wie Zitate. (Radio 379)

The mechanical reproduction of a symphony reduces music to an unintelligible rubble of quotations. Such fragments will never achieve a loftier status than that of musical information about the original music ('musikalische Information über die Musik' Radio 379). They can inform us which melodies to expect should we ever have the good fortune to hear the symphony ourselves, but they can never enter into the relations of difference-in-identity from which the former symphonic whole was wrought. Robbed of their context, two quotations side by side no longer strike us as a statement and its development, they do not even appear as a statement and its musical contradiction. They degenerate into isolated melodic sound-bytes that have no more emphatic relation to each other than the fact that one was chronologically prior to the other. Meaningful progress gives way to the abstract and meaningless passage of time. Contradiction slackens into an indifferent contiguity.

How should we respond to this indifferent contiguity? Adorno's answer in the latter half of his argument reveals, perhaps despite itself, as much about the inner logic of mechanical reproduction as his initial demystifying analysis. The correct reaction to the radio's dismantling of the symphony, it emerges, is not to return to the concert hall. The

simulated images of the mass media cannot change our appreciation of a symphony without retrospectively upsetting our evaluation of the concert they replace. Where live performance first functioned as a standard against which to measure the distortions of recorded music, the coherence of the symphonic whole and the associated sense of community appear in the second half of the essay as ideological fictions which the radio unwittingly exposes (Radio 377).(49) In dismantling the structure of the symphony, broadcasting merely uncovers a formlessness latent but disguised in symphonic form itself: 'insofern ist die Zerstörung der Symphonie im Radio auch eine Entfaltung der Wahrheit'(Radio 377). This retrospective debunking of totality, however, does not lead Adorno wholly to abandon the concept. Having demystified the musical whole, Adorno shifts dialectically to ask whether the radio could not salvage the very coherence it destroyed. Recorded music, he suggests, could become the preserve of performances so faithful to the music's original intentions as to render the concert hall redundant. Using the technology of the recording studio, musicians could overcome the inevitable imperfections of live performance to arrive at definitive renditions of the orchestral canon. The radio could redeem totality.

Adorno thus hopes to redeploy the technological potential of the recording studio to simulate the totality which the concert hall can no longer supply. That this positive reinterpretation of recording is not without its pitfalls is strikingly demonstrated by the picture of studio techniques

which Adorno then briefly sketches. Far from rescuing overarching structure, mechanical reproduction appears to replace it with more and more accurate, but also more and more fragmentary musical information. The one-off performance in the concert hall gives way to the endless series of takes and retakes from which a single recording is spliced together (Radio 392), while the unitary perspective of the individual listener is replaced by the potentially infinite perspectives of mobile microphones as they move between the players to highlight formal details of the music performed (Radio 397). Despite these proliferating sound-bytes, Adorno insists that the new techniques potentially recapture the missing aesthetic whole. Their very dissection of the music, he maintains, prepares the way for a new totality, revitalizing our relation to aesthetic form. But how do analytic recordings achieve this feat? The implicit answer lies in a metaphor Adorno uses to defend the mobile microphone technique:

> Nicht länger beanspruchte sie, die Ganzheit eines Werkes in sakraler Wiederholung zu zelebrieren; wohl aber legte sie Schnitte durchs Werk gleichwie in ästhetischer Anatomie. Das vermöchte umzuschlagen in eine neue Gestalt der Beziehung zur Sache selbst. (Radio 397)

The key phrase is aesthetic anatomy. The metaphor suggests that, like a human body, the music we technologically dissect has an inherent, natural unity. It is this image of a coherent body which lets Adorno, for all his scepticism of aesthetic unity, for all his refusal unquestioningly to celebrate musical totality (Radio 400-401), cling to his belief that dissection

will uncover not disorder, but structure and coherence, that technological analysis will one day reach a point where the music slots back together again, where 'selbst die akustische Erscheinung schwieriger zeitgenössischer Werke in jähem Umschlag zur lesbaren Chiffre wird; wo heterogene Bestandteile zur Musik sich formieren' (Radio 398-399).

Yet the metaphor of aesthetic anatomy admits of another reading, a reading apparently more appropriate amid the welter of mobile mikes and re-recordings. Unlike human anatomy, musical dissection is not preparation for a separate enjoyment of live musical bodies. The aesthetic morgue - or recording studio - remains our only access to the music. The corpse which reassures Adorno that everything will fit back together at the same time chokes off all hope of aesthetic coherence. Its dissected organs do not recombine but lie inertly on the morgue table, unrelated and unrelatable. If the metaphor guarantees an organic unity, it equally suggests a quest for organizing principles which only further shreds the original body. Jean Baudrillard would call this quest pornographic.(50) Lured by the promise of meaning which each new microphone perspective irresistibly exudes, the simulated image coerces its object into revealing ever more of itself. Each new step in this musical pornography, however, only further dissects the meaning. Aesthetic anatomy might inform us almost perfectly of the structure of the piece to hand. But for all this information, it can never, in itself, make the structure significantly cohere.

In the explosion of takes and microphone perspectives, and in the image of aesthetic anatomy used to characterize these new techniques, Adorno thus undermines his own faith in totality. Yet to conclude, against Adorno, that the redeployed technology only disrupts musical form would be to oversimplify. Even as it destroys the form, simulation enhances the quality of information. The simulated image is not only much clearer than the original, not only uninterrupted by the rustlings, bum notes and false pomp of the concert hall, but, as Adorno insists, the product of hours of analysis, rehearsal and re-recording (Radio 392). It is this enhancement of performance which inspires in us the hope that simulations might reconstitute the elusive meaning. Each further fragmentation of the original - each retake, each time the microphone shifts within the orchestra the better to capture a particular timbre - promises to bring us closer to the music's formal structure. Yet, unless the music is supposed to have an inalienable inner unity, a body of its own, this very proximity only further banishes meaning. Each new perspective improves the clarity of the original perception, but it equally reinforces our ability to see through its clarity and be dissatisfied. Each step closer to the reality reproduced changes what counts as reality, and so removes the standard by which the simulations could be assessed, so dismantles the very coherence to which it simultaneously contributes.

Rather than being the dialectical passage to a renewed totality, mechanical reproduction is a bewildering double

movement. On the one hand, it discredits the reality we once took for granted, dissolving the structure on which musical meaning depends into a mess of micro- and macroscopic perspectives from which no single pattern can any more be deduced. Reality reproduced dissolves into a flurry of uncombinable images. On the other hand, even as they discredit the notion of reality, these images bring us ever closer to the real. Each new perspective, each innovatory detail brings us within tantalizing reach of the overview from which all the conflicting levels would magically cohere. The radio does not simply abolish coherent totalities, or replace the illusion of a single reality with the total absence of the real. Its simulations are not merely the 'truth effect that hides truth's non-existence' that Baudrillard ambivalently describes.(51) Were simulations simply to erase real life, we could happily accept their images as a qualitatively new, 'virtual' reality. Simulations do not so much eliminate real life as intensify our desire for it. Even as they undermine the reality of their own images, they promise perfectly to capture the real, forever improving standards of veracity. We do not throw off reality in a joyous celebration of artifice and construction. We do not accept the images as a new and pleasurably unstable form of truth. In a culture of simulations, we are condemned instead to chase the tail of a reality in whose existence we simultaneously have lost all faith.(52)

The first half of Adorno's essay recounts the destruction wreaked by mechanical reproduction on musical totality, arguing that aesthetic structures, when simulated, collapse into a rubble of indifferent quotations, degenerate into lifeless, arbitrary fragments, which neither conflict with nor contradict each other, which just drably coexist. The second half explains the fascination which each of these drab fragments nevertheless exudes, explains the immediacy each sound-byte promises and betrays, explains, both consciously and unconsciously, the allure and the addictiveness of the very process it critically denounces. Does this process - the fragmentation of totality into indifferently contiguous, but nevertheless absorbing details - explain the double consciousness of the culture industry's victims, their surrender to products they simultaneously demystify? Does mechanical reproduction <u>cause</u> the fractured subjectivity of pop culture?

Adorno does not give a definite answer to this question. The disparate coexistence of irreconcilables is the structure he discerns over and over in his analyses of Hollywood, jazz, popular song and television. It is the pattern he unearths at every level of the culture industry: in the responses of individual listeners who treat compositions not as coherent totalities but as isolated details of colour and texture haphazardly strung together;(53) in the music itself which, in the case of popular song, apparently absorbs the destructuring into its very form.(54) The structure even recurs in the organization of pop culture as a whole, which cultivates the

coexistence of sects, clubs, churches and associations regardless of their mutual compatibility (DdA 158); which fosters Beethoven alongside the Casino de Paris, authentic art alongside its commodified negation (DdA 143). Despite the ubiquity of the pattern, however, the connections between its various embodiments - the possible causal links between individual subjects, individual products and the whole industry - remain obscure. Rather than being positively elaborated, causal connections are circumscribed by a series of negations. Adorno thus denies that the habits of listening which dismantle and destroy aesthetic totalities could be explained psychologically as the deficiencies of individual psyches. The origins of the dismantling, he insists, lie beyond the inadequacies of particular subjects in an external force.(55) Yet before we turn to the songs themselves as the possible embodiment of this force Adorno warns us that the fetishizing, incoherent perceptions of the pop cultural subject should not be supposed to be inflicted on the individual by the products she listens to: 'Es lässt sich kein Kausalnexus etwa zwischen isolierten "Einwirkungen" der Schlager und deren Effekten auf die Hörer säuberlich herauspräparieren'.(56) The reason which Adorno then offers us for this lack of connection finally casts light on his reluctance to trace causal chains. 'Wenn wirklich heute die Individuen nicht länger sich selber gehören,' he argues, 'denn bedeutet das auch, dass sie nicht länger mehr "beeinflusst" werden.'(57) Adorno will not trace the pathways of determination because the separation of levels,

the distinctions between individuals, works of art and the broader culture, which such arguments silently presuppose can no longer be taken for granted. Individuals are no longer autonomous enough to be 'influenced' or 'manipulated'. Their individuality does not exist outside the disintegrating patterns of pop culture to be perniciously misshaped by them. It exists only in and through the dislocated structures, part and parcel of the recurring disintegration. This realization changes Adorno's attitude to causal connections. Rather than looking for the chains of influence and determination between the levels of the culture industry, he steps back a level to investigate the shared principle, to explore the common logic which binds them together before and beyond causality.

The key to this single logic is, for Adorno, the commodity. When, in the essay 'Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik und die Regression des Hörens', he wants to elucidate the degeneration of aesthetic form, when in his sociological texts he wants to explain the forces which pervade, shape and unify every level of society, it is to the exchange relation that he invariably turns.(58) Yet commodification only fitfully explains the logic it is called on to illuminate, as we see in the essay on listening habits. Adorno, in this essay, explores a notion of musical, or aesthetic exchange value. He argues that, in a society dominated by the commodity form, works of art are no longer enjoyed for their content. The music ceases to be an end in itself. For manufacturers, it becomes a means of selling further products, an indirect advertisement for

sheet music, for records, or for the hifi needed to listen to the music.(59) For the listeners, the songs lose any intrinsic appeal and function only as a means of belonging, a function Adorno illustrates with the example of an amateur radio-builder, who builds wirelesses at home for the sole purpose of tracking down short-wave stations, the frequencies of which he catalogues and collects:

> Was er hört, selbst wie er hört, ist ihm ganz gleichgültig; ihn interessiert nur noch, dass er hört und dass es ihm gelingt, mit seinem privaten Gerät in den öffentlichen Mechanismus sich einzuschalten, ohne dass er auf diesen auch nur den geringsten Einfluss ausübte.(60)

This image of subjects clinging desperately to an empty form - as Adorno puts it elsewhere in his argument, of shoppers shopping not for particular products but for the ecstasy of purchase (61) - no doubt touches a nerve, pinpoints a peculiarity of pop culture. But it does not explain the disintegration into disparate units which Adorno's texts repeatedly unearth. It does not explain the coexistence of irreconcilables that characterizes the culture industry.

Though Adorno would not have accorded it so lofty a status, mechanical reproduction, as he describes it in the essay on radio, seems better suited to explain this dominant logic. By focussing not on the way music is drained of content, but on the symphony's transformation into indifferent information, into sound-bytes and musical citations which neither conflict with nor contradict each other, but rather indifferently cohabit, Adorno sheds more light on the

structures he incessantly discovers, on the coexistence of insight and delusion, of high art and Hollywood, of authentic desire and its inauthentic negation. Simulation, not commodification, provides the key to late capitalist culture. This is not to say that the technology of recording itself, in some science-fiction nightmare, fractures and fragments society. Unless one subscribes to a thorough-going technologism, simulation will not be held solely responsible for the broken structure shared by individuals, products and society alike. A causal explanation can be given, if at all, only at an abstract, theoretical level, as the hypothesis that, to thus indifferently coexist, the isolated parts, of individuals, of films, of society, must have lost the totality that bound them together, forfeited the context that was the ground of their original conflict. Simulation does not so much produce this loss of totality, as typify the fragmentation which the absence induces. The essay on reproduction thus does not explain the cause of the culture industry's broken contradictions. It illustrates the salient characteristics and inner dynamic of the all-pervading social logic. It explores how music - and by extension subjectivity, and culture - having lost the old totality, is emptied of meaning, deprived of coherence, reduced to a neutralized rubble of quotations. But it does not merely describe the destructiveness of the new logic. It describes equally how each quotation fascinates by its luminosity, promising meaning even as coherence disintegrates. By this double movement - a movement which

Adorno's text does not so much consciously theorize as unconsciously enact - the essay suggests not merely that the totality Adorno wishes to redeem cannot be redeemed, but that the resulting scramble exhilarates every bit as much as it bewilders. The essay explores the new logic in both its destructiveness and its promise.

Adorno's relation to this logic is ambivalent. He analyses the loss of conflict it entails, tracing the indifferent contiguity to every corner of society. At the same time he imagines an escape from its neutralizing clutches, a return to totality and to contradiction. We see this hope in the essay on radio, in the notion that the radio's very disruption of meaning could reconjure the lost coherence. But we see it more generally in Adorno's arguments about aesthetics, in which Adorno maintains that art qualitatively differs from pop culture even as it is engulfed by the ubiquitous jazz and Hollywood. The problem with this double perspective is that it reproduces, in its own form, the very fragmentation which, in one side of its arguments, it soberly criticizes. Like the shattered totalities of the culture industry it lines up side by side arguments which should be mutually excluding. The parallel might seem unimportant. But in adopting the double perspective, Adorno's theory re-enacts not just one aspect of the culture industry, but its inner mechanism. The very move by which Adorno wishes to preserve an emphatic concept of art, to defend totality against its dissolution, to protect desire and

insight against manipulation reiterates the disintegrative logic by which art is transformed into a rubble of quoted devices, totality into an explosion of sound-bytes, desire, insight, knowledge into the empty fragments of a shattered subjectivity. 'Wir stellen den Verfall der Bildung fest,' we saw Adorno observe, 'und doch ist unsere Prosa [...] der Kulturindustrie in Wendungen ähnlich, von denen wir nichts ahnen.'(62) Startlingly perspicacious as this self-criticism may be, it remains an understatement. Adorno's critique of pop culture does sporadically resemble Hollywood. It embodies in its very structure the logic it abhors.

4. A Blind Bit of Difference

This complicity leaves a scar on Adorno's theory.(63) At the very moment when, over and beyond art's similarities with the culture industry, a space is carved out for authentic culture, the similarities return in the figures which describe its authenticity. Nowhere is this clearer than in Adorno's Philosophie der neuen Musik, for nowhere does Adorno more clearly delineate an opposition between authentic art and its inauthentic counterpart.

The overall project of the book is to defend Schönberg's wholistic approach to composition against what Adorno sees as Stravinsky's dangerous but influential musical cobbling. Yet - as Adorno spells out in his introductory comments on method - the book does not simply celebrate Schönberg's success. It does not crudely contrast Schönberg's mastery with Stravinsky's musical ineptitude so much as present two qualitatively different types of failure. These failures are determined, for Adorno, by the era in which the composers wrote their music, rather than by individual shortcomings of the artists themselves. Indeed, they are determined to such an extent as to appear historically inevitable (Adorno writes of 'das in seiner Notwendigkeit begriffene ästhetische Misslingen').(64) If Schönberg is praised nevertheless, this is because he fails less perniciously than Stravinsky. Where Stravinsky's failure lays his music open to the authoritarian impulses of late capitalist society, Schönberg's failure is - potentially at least - the precondition for the musical defeat of these

impulses.

To demonstrate that Schönberg's failure is better than Stravinsky's without disguising this superior failure as success, Adorno employs two approaches which he makes no claims to unite. On the one hand, he uses internal, musical analyses which contrast the ideal that the compositions strive towards with the musical feats that, in Adorno's eyes, they actually achieve. On the other hand, he relies on external, historical and philosophical categories by which alone he can formulate, understand and evaluate the music's inachievable ideals. In a passage which echoes the discussion of Hegel in Minima Moralia, he says that unlike the Hegel of the Phänomenologie, he cannot rely on the internal perspective alone, for he can no longer comfort himself that the object's development in any way corresponds to the development of the subject. Consequently, he must import categories which cannot be justified from the material itself (PhnM 34-35). To compensate for this ultimately indefensible choice of underlying categories, the philosophical framework constantly calls itself into question. At the same time, however, the claims that Adorno wishes to make for Schönberg's brand of failure are intelligible only within this broader framework. The difference between the composers is thus marked by terms which are simultaneously undermined.

Schönberg's treatment of the subject is a clear example of this categorical self-undermining. At two points in the essay, Adorno attacks the category of the subject, despite the fact - or perhaps precisely because - it underpins the entire

narrative of Schönberg's musical achievements. Schönberg's most successful works, for Adorno, are those of the expressionist period in which he composed in an atonality as yet unconstrained by the rigours of the twelve-tone system. These free atonal works register directly and without compromise the shocks inflicted on the subject by a society in which she feels isolated and abandoned. Tonality not only dictates which notes can make up which chord, but by establishing quasi-natural relations between different tones determines the shape of the very forms by which musical expression is communicated. By disposing of established tonal convention, Schönberg's expressionist atonality purifies music of the arbitrary constrictions which previously mediated and distorted the expression of musical emotion. Furthermore, in casting off convention, it discredits music's claim to self-sufficiency. Tonal and formal conventions had appeared to be purely musical phenomena which could create an autonomous music by wrapping compositions in a logic not apparently indebted to anything beyond themselves. The traumatized panic which Adorno hears in Schönberg's expressionism challenges any claim to autonomy, tying music to a heterogenous emotion. If traditional opera stylized the emotions of its characters with musical form, Schönberg throws off stylization to give us direct access to the passion itself: 'Es sind nicht Leidenschaften mehr fingiert, sondern im Medium der Musik unverstellt leibhafte Regungen des Unbewussten, Schocks, Traumata registriert'(PhnM 44).

Having thrown off the trappings of convention and autonomy, this raw music becomes more and more like a form of knowledge. As Adorno approvingly quotes Schönberg in writing: 'Musik soll nicht schmücken, sie soll wahr sein'(PhnM 46). Nevertheless, the epistemological music that results is not anarchic. Rather, the suffering recorded in the music generates its own form. Robbed of the support of tonality, each tone must create out of itself the movement which binds it to the notes around it. The result is an artefact in which no single note is alterable. Unlike a Mozart symphony, no overall system of conventions guarantees the playful interchangeability of its constitutive parts. Instead, the music wrests from its undistorted emotions a form of musical inevitability: 'Schönberg's Stücke sind die ersten, in welchen in der Tat nichts anders sein kann: sie sind Protokoll und Konstruktion in einem' (PhnM 46).

Schönberg's music thus throws off the conventions and illusion of autonomy which previously prevented music from speaking for the subject. Its success is precisely its ability to lend undistorting form to the traumas of a collapsing subjectivity. Of course, Adorno also disputes whether we can abandon autonomy for the cause of disintegrating subjectivity. The unmediated expression which the earlier Schönberg achieves is simultaneously said to be impossible. The very act of faithfully fixing the emotions in musical form betrays those emotions (PhnM 52-53). Moreover, this betrayal directly paves

the way for the impersonal machinations of the twelve-tone system. However, these criticisms of Schönberg are closer to the praise than they seem at first sight. Underlying both the enthusiasm for, and the criticisms of free atonality is a common term. In both instances, Adorno's case depends on the category of the subject. Schönberg's music is either wondered at or condemned for its ability to register the traumas of the individual.

Yet in two passages, Adorno casts doubt on the very existence of the subject which is otherwise the secret of Schönberg's failure. The first of these is the analysis of the musical drama entitled 'Die glückliche Hand', a composition which Adorno hails as being perhaps Schönberg's most significant creation ('vielleicht das Bedeutendste, was ihm gelang' PhnM 48). The composition protests against the violence done to the individual by the division of labour. In a crucial scene, the hero mocks with a single gesture the laborious, subdivided work he finds under way in a workshop. This single, dismissive wave of a hammer, however, magically brings forth a golden ring, which the workers themselves could only have produced by a series of complex, isolated processes. The gesture is supposed to contrast to the alienated labour of the workman the spontaneous, unmediated creation of a sovereign individual. Yet, its mocking tone could just as well express the scorn of the capitalist who has invented a more efficient machine. Moreover, we do not actually witness any non-alienated labour. We are magically presented with an end product. Like

the successful artefact of traditional aesthetics, the ring bears no traces of the labour which produced it.

This similarity with a work of art undermines the very protest which the gesture was intended to support. For the alienated individual whose suffering was to be combatted with an image of genuine creation disappears with the self-effacing labour of the golden ring. Far from reporting the traumas of a collapsing subjectivity, the work of art shows us a work of art whose body bears no traces of its origins. Schönberg had insisted: 'Musik soll nicht schmücken, sie soll wahr sein'. Adorno replies:

> Aber das Kunstwerk hat nur wieder Kunst zum Gegenstand. Es kann dem Zusammenhang der Verblendung nicht ästhetisch entrinnen, dem es gesellschaftlich angehört. Das radikal entfremdete, absolute Kunstwerk bezieht in seiner Blindheit tautologisch sich einzig auf sich selber. Sein symbolisches Zentrum ist die Kunst. So höhlt es sich aus. Schon bemächtigt sich seiner auf der Höhe des Expressionismus die Leere, die in der neuen Sachlichkeit manifest wird. (PhnM 50-51)

Art hopes to escape the limited horizons and misperceptions imposed on individuals by the increasing specialization of their activity. It hopes to stand up for an individual beyond the crippling effects of specialized and divided labour. Yet its protest inadvertently prefigures the subjectless constructions of Neue Sachlichkeit. The music which hoped to break with the distortion and hollowness of outmoded conventions conceals by its protest a hollowness of its own. Adorno's explanation for this surprising turn of events is straightforward: 'Die Rückkehr in den Schein wird dem

expressionistischen Protest so leicht, weil er in Schein entsprang, den der Individualität selber'(PhnM 51).

If Schönberg's expressionist music records the traumas of a subject who never existed, the twelve-tone system - which for Adorno springs necessarily from the expressionist dismantling of aesthetic codes - draws the logical consequences of this discovery. It abolishes the subject altogether. Yet, where for much of the text, twelve-tone music is explicitly condemned for its mathematical abandoning of the subjectivity which alone could endow it with meaning, in the discussion of Anton Webern, this abandonment becomes its specific achievement. The criticism of duodecaphony from the perspective of the subject that it betrays flips over into the constatation that no subject exists to be betrayed. Music, other than Webern's, which ignores the elimination of subjectivity effected by late capitalism (what Adorno calls 'die Insuffizienz des Subjekts' PhnM 108) and still pretends to genuine expression will always bear the unmistakable traces of commercialization ('die Spur der Ware' PhnM 108). To criticize twelve-tone music because its abstract, mathematical exactness precludes subjectivity can thus only ever be one side of the argument: 'Die andere ist, dass das Recht des Subjekts auf Ausdruck selber verfiel und einen Zustand beschwört, der nicht mehr ist'(PhnM 108).

In organizing his arguments around the interrelated concepts of subject and expression, therefore, Adorno judges the failures of Schönberg's music by a standard which he simultaneously calls in question.(65) Yet this questioning does

not seem to weaken the concepts in their positive uses. Rather, the suggestion in some passages that expression has been effectively erased seems in others to strengthen the subject. Schönberg's later twelve-tone compositions achieve a degree of failure second only to his expressionist compositions precisely by reasserting subjectivity in the teeth of twelve-tone reification. By submitting wholly to the inhuman rules which he inflicted on his post-expressionist music, Schönberg masters the mathematical logic which previously controlled him. He learns how strategically to distort and transgress the terms of twelve-tone composition, and by his transgressions rediscovers expressive intensity. This is particularly apparent in his Fourth Quartet, which recreates the dynamic movement of the earlier music. Of course, this recreation has its own problems. Re-using - or 'quoting' as Adorno puts it (PhnM 100) - expressionist gestures in a duodecaphonic composition can be construed less as a solution than a restatement of the perennial problem. If the gestures are not integrated into the overall composition, they remain quotations, pointing up the lack of expression, rather than triumphantly announcing its return. Yet whilst the Fourth Quartet is sometimes seen to be trapped in this ineluctable aporia (PhnM 100), at other points in the essay, the music seems momentarily to have overcome it. At these points, when expression miraculously floods across twelve-tone aridity (PhnM 112-114), Schönberg is attributed with a sovereignty akin to that of Nietzsche's overman, a parallel made all the more striking by the concept of

'forgetting' by which Adorno describes Schönberg's simultaneous submission to, and distortion of, his self-imposed regulations (PhnM 117-118).(66) In his role as sovereign super-subject, Schönberg successfully excavates layers of genuine subjectivity which lurk below the reified patterns imposed on us by society (PhnM 122). He thus not only wrests twelve-tone music beyond its inexpressive abstraction, but unearths precisely those resources of pre-subjective humanity which the comments on Webern had forever consigned to the dustbin of commodification.(67)

Yet, if Schönberg momentarily succeeds in rescuing subjectivity, this success is to be had only through the abstraction of the twelve-tone system. The strategic forgetting whereby he is supposed to reassert the powers of the individual is, as ever in Adorno, paradoxical. He forgets only on condition that he surrender to - or completely remember - the alienation he is striving to transcend. This double-edged forgetting exactly describes the quality which ultimately differentiates Schönberg's failures from those of Stravinsky. Schönberg succeeds in impossibly bathing the ruins of the twelve-tone system in a subjective light, because he has previously been so thoroughly defeated by its unbendable rules. He reinvents the subject only because he so completely forgets his subjectivity in his submission to the twelve-tone system. Without this self-forgetting, Schönberg could never repudiate the scepticism with which Adorno elsewhere meets the category of the subject. Without this self-forgetting, he could never

mark the qualitative difference that separates his music from Stravinsky's: 'Alles hängt davon ab, ob [die grosse Musik heute] durch Haltung die Authentizität als schon gewonnen reklamiert oder ob sie, geschlossenen Auges gleichsam, die Forderungen der Sache sich überlässt, um sie erst zu gewinnen'(PhnM 192-193). If the implications of the phrase 'geschlossenen Auges gleichsam' are obscure, they are elucidated by a mythological analogy Adorno draws at the close of the essay 'Schönberg und der Fortschritt'. Adorno here grandly likens the composer to Oedipus, claiming that his compositions resemble the answers with which Oedipus defeats the Sphinx and her riddle. However, where in the traditional myth the Oedipus who answers the riddle is a man at the height of his powers, confident he can outwit the prophecies of the oracle, Adorno's Oedipus is already blind (Adorno writes of a 'verblendeter Ödipus' PhnM 125). He is the sightless, broken wreck of a king. The subject who, in Adorno's interpretation of the saga, casts the Sphinx and the terrorizing mythology she personifies into the abyss has already haplessly submitted to fate's alien logic. Applied back to Schönberg, the analogy implies that the composer who could overcome the inhumanity of the twelve-tone machine, the composer who could differ radically from Stravinsky, has similarly submitted without calculation or reserve, without foreknowledge or reflection - blindly, indeed - to the subjectless, inhuman logic of twelve-tone composition.

For Adorno, the high points of Schönberg's music are those where the subject shimmers impossibly through its constructed fabric. Though he casts doubt on the very idea of subjectivity, Adorno simultaneously redeems the subject through a blind self-abnegation. At these moments, despite passing similarities between the two composers' failings, Schönberg's music differs qualitatively from Stravinsky's. These are the moments when the double perspective reaps its benefits, glimpsing briefly the authenticity which it elsewhere uncompromisingly dismantles. The irony of this blind submission is that it precisely echoes those passages in which, over and beyond the qualifications of the double perspective, Stravinsky is wholeheartedly condemned.

Stravinsky does not only meet with disapproval. Like the Schönberg essay, 'Stravinsky und die Restauration' both affirms and negates the subject. In those passages which presuppose the hollowing out of subjectivity under late capitalism, Stravinsky's music is dialectically endorsed. If Schönberg's attempt to retain musical expression foundered on the very fixing of emotion, Stravinsky's music bypasses this contradiction by forbidding expressivity. Adorno defends this interdiction with an analogy from psychology. Stravinsky is like a schizophrenic whose catatonic indifference to her environment conceals a wealth of emotions to which no corresponding object in the world could possibly do justice. His music shrinks from expressing emotion, for the musical image of a passion could only ever distort it. Its frozen

reserve pays tribute to a subject whom musical expression could only belittle and betray: 'Die leeren Augen seiner Musik haben zuweilen mehr Ausdruck als der Ausdruck'(PhnM 163).

Underlying the awareness that expression will always betray real emotion is a critique of subjectivity. In the terms of idealist philosophy, the subject is a contradictory category. She is at once the seat of objective reason and herself radically contingent. Stravinsky, for Adorno, could be said to have grasped that these two sides of the subject can no longer be united. The languages - both conceptual and musical - which the subject invents to articulate objectivity will always turn out to be arbitrary and inappropriate. When they are too rashly imposed on objects, or on people in so far as they too are objects, the results are catastrophic. Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialektik der Aufklärung reflects mournfully on this arbitrary, irrational side of rationality. Stravinsky's best music arises from his critical refusal to let arbitrary musical languages masquerade as objectivity.(68)

This refusal leads him in the Rite of Spring to search out a musical language beyond the subject, to strip away the false layers of meaning and intention that have accrued to musical convention and arrive at a music which pretends to an originary authenticity. In the later music, however, the same critical faculty which makes Stravinsky cast off musical convention in the name of a primordial immediacy also makes him suspicious of his own authenticity. After the Rite of Spring, Stravinsky stops dabbling in an archaicism, whose musical origins - as

Adorno is quick to point out - lay no further afield than Mahler and Debussy, and borrows instead from a music whose inauthenticity is precisely its attraction. Where other early twentieth-century composers hope to borrow from jazz a spontaneity now missing from their own tradition, Stravinsky's interest in jazz is precisely its lack of spontaneity, its total commodification:

> Anders als die zahllosen Komponisten, die durch Anbiederung an den Jazz ihrer "Vitalität", was immer das musikalisch bedeuten mag, aufzuhelfen meinten, deckt Strawinsky, durch Verzerrung, das Schäbige, Vernutzte, dem Markte Verfallene der nun seit dreissig Jahren etablierten Tanzmusik auf. Er nötigt gewissermassen ihren Makel, selber zu reden, und verwandelt die standardisierten Wendungen in stilisierte Chiffren des Zerfalls. (PhnM 157)

Having discredited his own primitivistic search for an authentic language, Stravinsky throws himself into the arms of the commodification. He abandons the positive pursuit of a music unscathed by petrifying, commercial forms and tries instead to capture a pure music negatively, by surrendering to the limitations of the commercial idiom.

For one side of the double perspective, then, Stravinsky protects an image of an inaccessible, better subjectivity by renouncing expression and surrendering to the inauthenticity of commodified musical vocabularies. For the other side, Stravinsky's surrender to fallen musical idioms is always at the expense of the subject. This unsuccessful surrender is described once more using an analogy from psychology. Stravinsky's failed absorption of inadequate musical

vocabularies is likened to the shock victim's inability to escape her original trauma. The shock victim can never progress beyond the point of crisis, but is condemned continuously to re-enact the trauma, prolonging it indefinitely. Stravinsky's music is similarly condemned indefinitely to rehearse an original trauma. To explain what this trauma is, Adorno draws on an analysis of shock as an aesthetic device. Aesthetic shock is said to register the subject's awe at the disproportion she discerns between her own powers and those unleashed by industrialization (PhnM 144). It is an aesthetic reflection on the continuous traumas of industrial society. Good aesthetic shock might be seen to have absorbed these traumas and so to be in control of the jolts it gives its listener. Stravinsky, in contrast, is still reeling from the shock of modernity. The shocks he gives his listener helplessly reproduce the violence he suffers at the hands of society. Adorno finds the most striking evidence of this affliction in Stravinsky's use of rhythm. The Rite of Spring is racked by rhythms of immense complexity. But Stravinsky does not integrate them with the melodic material. Rather, melodic fragments and baffling rhythmic ostenati cut across each other to generate the illusion of movement where there is nothing but the incessant repetition of the same original motifs. Just as the shock victim rehearses her original crisis, the music rehearses identical tortured fragments. Far from absorbing the shock of technology, the Rite of Spring remains permanently enthralled (PhnM 145).

Later pieces by Stravinsky seem superficially to control their complex rhythms, rather than to be controlled by them. But the regular time signatures to which the impossible syncopations are reducible signify instead Stravinsky's total capitulation before the traumatizing power. Rather than transcending shock by its aesthetic reflection, the music internalizes the authoritarian impulses suggested by technology's capacity effortlessly to eradicate the individual subject. Everything is marshalled into the iron grid of the time signature. The rhythms may have the outward appearance of variety, but in fact any impulses which resist orderly marshalling have been eliminated (PhnM 182). Where for one perspective, Stravinsky's coldness pays negative tribute to an unimaginable subjective warmth, for the other perspective, his renunciation of the subject collaborates with those forces in society which every day threaten to expunge subjectivity.

Stravinsky's pact with authority is, for Adorno, all the more pernicious because it disguises itself as a rediscovery of the very impulses whose healthy existence his early asceticism denied. Having twisted the vocabulary of jazz against itself, Stravinsky realizes that he can use the same techniques to appropriate any idiom. The criticism of expression which led him away from the emotional excesses of the late nineteenth century eventually rehabilitates the very styles it abhorred. Tchaikovsky becomes as ripe for plunder, Weber as open to parody as any of the degenerate stylizations of jazz (PhnM 185). However, where the jazz parodies managed to cast a

salutary spell on commodified culture, the later parodic music is bewitched by the styles it hopes to travesty. Stravinsky's music about music becomes indistinguishable from the music it parodies (PhnM 185). The air of familiarity which it acquires from the parodied styles is particularly insidious. For the perfect assimilation of outmoded idioms encourages us to expect the same musical meaning we might have discovered in the older styles. Yet, though the music sounds intelligible, there is nothing left to understand. The music simply quotes the older vocabulary. Melodies are included because they exemplify an idiom, not because they have developed intelligibly from the material which preceded them. Dynamic development of the sort which Adorno sees in Beethoven, and which Schönberg is thought occasionally to have recaptured, is replaced by the abstract principle of citability. The traditional feel of the music continually belies this unintelligible abstraction:

> Die objektive Unverständlichkeit gerade, beim subjektiven Eindruck des Traditionellen, verhält jede widerstrebende Frage des Gehörs eisern zum Schweigen. Der blinde Gehorsam, den autoritäre Musik antizipiert, entspricht der Blindheit des autoritären Prinzips selber. (PhnM 189)

The familiar form of the music exhorts us to understand it, but its formal construction precludes any real comprehension. By rehabilitating the tradition he originally scorned, Stravinsky seduces what is left of the subject into submitting blindly to her self-effacement. The subject's blindness is second only to that of the principle she obeys, which commands obedience for no better reason than obedience itself (PhnM 188). The parodic

techniques that with jazz tear a negative image of the subject from the rubble of commodification, in the later music put the final touches to the subject's abdication.

One side of the double perspective praises Stravinsky for the ascetic rigour of his music, agreeing with him that any pretence to rescue subjective expression only further condemns the subject to silence. The other side dismisses Stravinsky, claiming that his renunciation of expression does not negatively harbour an undamaged subjectivity so much as extinguish all hope of the subject's revival. One perspective presupposes that the subject is too weak to find expression; the other that the parodic inexpressiveness of Stravinsky's music actually contributes to the subject's demise. Schönberg was discussed with a similar double standard. Here too it was occasionally admitted that the subject was too weak to find expression. In these passages Schönberg's 'most significant creation' - 'Die glückliche Hand' - was found not to express the subject's anguish so much as to turn back on itself tautologically. Similarly, Webern's abstract numerology was found to contain a moment of truth precisely because it abandoned the myth of individual expression. In other passages, however, there was a subject to be redeemed and Schönberg's music was marvelled at for impossibly achieving this redemption.

If one takes only one half of either perspective, it becomes possible to draw a line between Schönberg and

Stravinsky. Stravinsky is then seen to trample the subject whom Schönberg improbably reinstates. The tone of the book constantly encourages us to make this distinction. Frequent references to the rigour, consistency, and indisputable superiority of the Schönberg School exhort us to make a judgement, even as the double perspective undermines the categories by which this verdict can be reached.(69) But the verdict contains an irony over and beyond the paradoxes of Adorno's double vision. For the attributes by which the two composers are distinguished are compellingly similar. Both the upside of Schönberg and the downside of Stravinsky are described as moments of blind submission. Of course, the blind submission of Schönberg's double-edged forgetting is supposed to redeem the subject, whilst the surrender to the unintelligibility of Stravinsky's citations is supposed to erase it. Moreover, whilst on Schönberg's side, the surrender is the composer's, on Stravinsky's it is that of the listener. Nevertheless, the similarity demands attention, for it inverts the rhetorical thrust of the passages where it arises. At the very moment when the overall movement of the argument proclaims that Schönberg's failure can be distinguished qualitatively from Stravinsky's, the metaphors in which the proclamation is made declare this is not so.

It might seem that this similarity is just an arbitrary coincidence. Yet the metaphors of blindness, and of blind submission recur throughout Adorno's writings when, over and above his double perspectives, Adorno wishes to mark a

difference between authentic and inauthentic aspects of culture. The self-evidence of positivist facts and advertising slogans is unmasked as an opacity, or blindness (DdA 174), which excludes discussion and uncompromisingly demands our submission. Yet the innovation of authentic art is similarly blind: 'Das Neue ist ein blinder Fleck, leer wie das vollkommene Dies da'.(70) Like the positivist fact, it will admit of no metalanguage in which it could be adequately discussed, for aesthetic innovation overturns explanatory paradigms. If she is to be authentically innovative, therefore, an artist must abandon her existing habits of reflection and trust blindly in the logic of aesthetic form: 'Mit verbundenen Augen muss ästhetische Rationalität sich in die Gestaltung hineinstürzen...'.(71) Yet even then there is no guarantee that anything will come of her sightless submission. It remains uncertain whether art can drag itself away from the culture industry, or indeed whether we can talk about art at all in any emphatic sense. In this situation, Adorno admits it would be foolish, even ideologically suspect to act as if art might not imminently be engulfed by pop culture: 'Die adäquate Haltung von Kunst wäre die mit geschlossenen Augen und zusammengebissenen Zähnen'.(72) But this cramped, and voluntarily blinded posture is exactly the one adopted by the victims of the culture industry. Only, here the posture is not meant to ward off the culture industry, so much as prepare us for a contradictory submission:

> [Die Konsumenten] wollen bereits einen Betrug, den sie

> selbst durchschauen; sperren krampfhaft die Augen zu und bejahen in einer Art Selbstverachtung, was ihnen widerfährt, und wovon sie wissen, warum es fabriziert wird.(73)

The coincidence that Schönberg's upside and Stravinsky's downside should be described with similar metaphors of blind submission, far from being arbitrary, appears to echo a more general movement in Adorno's aesthetics, whereby the extremes of aesthetic experience uncannily resemble one another. At the very moment when differences between authentic and inauthentic culture should be clearest, the two are curiously alike.(74) This similarity could simply be read as the failure of Adorno's polemical project, in Philosophie der neuen Musik and elsewhere. This reading would argue that Adorno's big oppositions - between Schönberg and Stravinsky, between art and the culture industry - are untenable. The figurative coincidence could then be cited as evidence of the flaws in his argument, playing an unconscious logic of the text off against Adorno's conscious intention. It is more productive, however, to privilege neither the unconscious or conscious logics of the text, but to credit both with equal weight. Adorno's Philosophie der neuen Musik then appears to do two things of equal importance simultaneously. It describes a substantial and unbridgeable opposition between the compositions of Schönberg and Stravinsky, showing how Schönberg's save the subject and Stravinsky's collaborate with her executioner. At the same time, it hollows out the content of the opposition, betraying that for both musical schools the subject is blinded,

substanceless and submissive. The book at once persuades us of the need to prefer one composer over another, and urges that no choice can be made for their projects are identical. It portrays an opposition that is at once filled with tension, and empty of movement; at once real and imaginary. It describes a simulated contradiction: a contradiction between simulations.

The metaphors of blindness betray the degree to which both Schönberg and Stravinsky succumb, in Adorno's eyes, to the logic of simulation. To claim that Stravinsky's music is stricken by the same unthinkable double logic as pop culture is hardly controversial. In Philosophie der neuen Musik, Stravinsky threatens subjectivity precisely to the degree that his music resembles the culture industry. The compositions which Adorno particularly dislikes - those of Stravinsky's neoclassical phase - bear a striking resemblance to the Beethoven Symphony, whose simulated destruction Adorno describes in his essay on radio. Like the radio image, Stravinsky's music about music is a rubble of quotations no longer bound together by an immanent, dynamic logic (PhnM 189). The radio symphony exposed the unintelligibility of the live symphony, pointing up the element of illusion, or force necessary to gather the listener into its organic whole. Stravinsky equally coerces the listener into acting as if his unrelated graftings could be understood. Though his pieces consist in little more than musical sound-bytes - information about melodic form and the shapes of cadences in Handel say

(PhnM 189) - they demand to be treated as a coherent whole. His compositions follow the logic of simulation before they come anywhere near a recording studio. Yet the simulations of the radio essay seem harmless in comparison with Stravinsky. The movement of aesthetic anatomy constantly undermines the details it presents as a new access to musical meaning. Stravinsky, in contrast, passes off the promise of meaning as meaning itself. The familiarity which the quoted idioms exude dupes the listener into treating nonsensical fragments as though they could significantly cohere. The element of deceit and coercion which in the radio essay retreats as Adorno dialectically redeems the recording studio, remains in the Stravinsky essay virulent. Stravinsky's music, for Adorno, embodies the logic of simulation at its most dangerous and ineluctable.

A similar affinity to the culture industry is evident in Schönberg's music. The twelve-tone system, which is invented to generate post-tonal form, dismantles musical structure just as did the radio. By underwriting each note before it has been allocated a place in the larger argument of the music, tone rows remove all dynamism from the relations between notes. The notes which follow an individual tone do not develop out of it, they follow a preordained pattern. Each note, as it sounds, is related not to its immediate context, but to the abstract pattern of the tone row. Yet this pattern remains forever elusive. Of the forty-eight permutations which one can abstract from any order of twelve notes, no single one can claim to be the original.(75) Each permutation gives us more information

about the original, but the original does not itself exist. Like reality once it has passed into a simulation, the tone row is forever present, but forever eluding us. In the simulations, the elusiveness of a stable context hollows out contradiction, as it removes the common ground over which two terms could conflict. The twelve-tone system, similarly, loses any sense of contradiction. Tonality and atonality exist side by side. The structure of chords is determined not by the movement of the piece but by the abstract ideal; old-fashioned major chords, if thrown up by the machinations of the tone row, can exist side by side with the harshest discords. Where tonality could not tolerate unmotivated discords, and free atonality forbade all harmony, twelve-tone music tolerates harmony and discord simultaneously. Neither is there for itself, both are only there for the tone row (PhnM 84-85). This indifference dismantles form from within. The twelve-tone system can order notes, but it cannot meaningfully bind them together. It can give them their place, but it can neither bring them into conflict, nor reconcile them (PhnM 101). Thus fragmented, the music acquires a new, uneasy relation to itself. To compensate for its inherent formlessness, it tries constantly to point up an overall structure, to create the illusion of form. Twelve-tone compositions become didactic examples of themselves, lessons in what a twelve-tone composition should sound like (PhnM 103-104). They become exemplary information.

Adorno notoriously criticizes duodecaphonic compositions, provoking Schönberg to call him a turncoat and declare that he

never liked the man anyway.(76) As such, it is only to be expected that twelve-tone music, in the course of Adorno's analysis, should acquire many characteristics of the culture industry. It might then seem that Schönberg's music is hollowed out and fragmented only when the double perspective is discussing its downside. For the upside - the moments when Schönberg rescues the subject from her late capitalist disintegration - the music could gloriously escape the logic of pop culture. But this is not the case. Twelve-tone music is not simply an error which the later Schönberg corrects. If music is to rediscover either form or meaning, it will only be through the nonsensical formlessness of the twelve-tone system. Empty, duodecaphonic machinations are the discipline to which music must submit if it is to regain expressive substance (Adorno writes of 'der Engpass der Disziplin, durch den alle Musik hindurch muss, die nicht dem Fluch der Kontingenz verfallen will...' PhnM 110). To recover itself, music must submit to becoming musical information about an original which forever escapes it. Of course, the aim is finally to transcend musical simulation, not to accept the fragments of the twelve-tone system as if they were themselves musical meaning. But the point is that there is no non-simulated Schönberg that the double perspective could contrast with simulation. Not only is the discipline of twelve-tone inescapable, but if one re-reads the discussions of expressionism, one sees that there too the logic of simulation is already at work. The unmediated access that Schönberg was meant to give us to the subject's

traumatized collapse emerges as a sound-byte about loneliness, not loneliness itself, as Adorno puts it: 'Einsamkeit als Stil'(PhnM 51). Given this degeneration, Adorno's choice of metaphors is once again revealing. Schönberg's free atonality was praised as a report ('Protokoll') which perfectly recorded ('registriert') the suffering of the subject. At the very moment when the music was to give us anguish itself, it fobbed us off with detailed information, with recordings and reports. The metaphors were chosen because their documentary rigour made suffering seem so close. But the detailed information they conveyed to us froze into a tautological empty style (PhnM 51). As with a simulation, the documentary report promises immediacy and clarity but simultaneously postpones them.

Whether she listens to Schönberg or Stravinsky, the listening subject confronts music hollowed out from the inside by the logic of simulation. This is what the metaphors whisper at the points where the argument itself marks the qualitative difference between the two composers. Even before the music has been broadcast or recorded, the disjunctions of simulation are fragmenting its structure and neutralizing its contradictions. Where the general argument insists that, despite superficial similarities, Schönberg confronts problems of form that Stravinsky only dodges (PhnM 195), the metaphors argue that both, in their own way, are grappling with a shared logic, that Schönberg and Stravinsky are reducible to a common denominator.

This common denominator transforms the way we read Philosophie der neuen Musik. The double perspective admits that the authenticity to which it pays tribute is always also inauthentic. Yet it hopes to carve out a space for authenticity, a space which the text carves through its organization. Adorno's texts do not constantly affirm the double status of their insights, do not constantly remind us that the arguments they defend are simultaneously undermined. Instead, whilst some passages mercilessly criticize the categories by which distinctions are drawn, other passages insouciantly distinguish between authentic and inauthentic culture. In the long section of the Schönberg essay entitled 'Lossage vom Material'(PhnM 112-118), Schönberg's paradoxical forgetting is celebrated as if the harsh critique of subjectivity which we find elsewhere in the book did not exist. At the same time, the notion of forgetting itself casts doubt on another of Adorno's key concepts: that of the objective state of aesthetic materials. Where in other parts of the book Stravinsky is condemned because he does not submit to the irrefutable, immanent logic of his materials but wants to stand outside them like a movie director (PhnM 195), Schönberg is praised precisely because he seems to be able to submit to, or resist the logic of his materials at will. Far from a composer enchained by the state of the material, 'Lossage vom Material' portrays a Schönberg constantly able to disobey the very rules he established as the only adequate response to music's objective difficulties (PhnM 115-116). Adorno does not announce

in an individual fragment that the subject is both hopelessly etiolated and miraculously able to fight off its etiolation; nor does one passage both forbid us to disrespect the objective state of material and insist that to transcend the material is the only hope of salvation. These insights are instead distributed across the text, with different passages all staking their conflicting claims.

It would be tempting to arrange these conflicting claims into a single linear process, ordering them into the dialectical narratives of how the hollow subject came to be filled and the constraints of aesthetic materials were finally overcome. Adorno, however, does not supply us with the information to tell these stories. Like the twelve-tone system, he lines terms up alongside each other in static paradoxes, but he neither brings the terms into conflict nor reconciles them. His text is as devoid of movement as a twelve-tone composition constantly repeating the same absent row, or the Rite of Spring rehearsing identical rhythmic jerks under the guise of melodic difference.(77) The double perspective denies this stasis. It hopes by correctly spacing the contradictions to pull the paradoxes apart and generate a movement, which it simultaneously impedes. But the metaphors of blindness confound this brave attempt. They freeze the contradictions before they can thaw into fluidity.

To understand Philosophie der neuen Musik, and take into account the text's figurative self-undermining, it would seem,

therefore, that we must substitute for the linear distribution of the double perspective a bewildering simultaneity. Schönberg's expressionism, it would appear, must be grasped as both a record of the subject's anguish, and a pose of isolation, which conceals the fact that no subject exists whose anguish could be recorded. His later compositions are apparently both the subject's triumphant deliverance from the cold logic of simulation, and the point where the subject vanishes forever into the simulated clatterings of twelve-tone composition. Once Schönberg's music is seen to be so paradoxically embroiled with simulation, the qualitative difference from Stravinsky's music becomes harder to uphold. It can no longer be argued that Schönberg confronts a problem which Stravinsky knowingly ducks out of. Both composers appear at once victims and opponents of the same logic, both falling for and outwitting the neutralizing effects of simulation. If Schönberg's subject is both swallowed by the twelve-tone machine, and outside it, manipulating it against itself, Stravinsky is both passing off the promise of meaning for meaning, and - as we saw in the jazz parodies - exposing the inadequacy of the information cited. Where Adorno so articulated the successes and failures of both composers that they occurred in isolation from each other, it would seem that we have to grasp the two simultaneously. The blind submission to the simulacrum which we find in the two composers must apparently be read as both the subject's self-effacement before a blind authority, and a self-forgetting which launches her

miraculously beyond her withered frailty: salvation and damnation at a stroke.

This paradoxical assertion, though it arises from a deconstruction of Philosophie der neuen Musik, is not alien to Adorno's texts. The aporetic figure of thought sketched inadvertently by the texts on Schönberg and Stravinsky is occasionally explicitly embraced by Adorno. The utopian imbalance of the double perspective, its tendency to privilege one term even as it undermines it, is abandoned, at such points, for arguments which present ambivalences that cannot be resolved in one direction. In Philosophie der neuen Musik, for instance, during a brief discussion of Berg's Lulu, Adorno contemplates diametrically opposed interpretations of the opera's harmonic devices, thereby renouncing the comforting space which more often holds two such poles apart. He argues that the harmonic technique with which Berg replaces tonal harmony does not reanimate the music so much as bring it crashing to a halt. This halt can be interpreted in two very different ways:

> Es verkündet nachdrücklicher als die anderen Symptome jenen Zustand musikalischer Geschichtslosigkeit, von dem heute noch unentschieden ist, ob ihn die grauenvolle Fixierung der Gesellschaft in den gegenwärtigen Herrschaftsformen diktiert oder ob er aufs Ende der antagonistischen Gesellschaft hinweist, die ihre Geschichte hat bloss an der Reproduktion ihrer Antagonismen. (PhnM 81)

The stasis which Adorno criticizes in Schönberg as a surrender to meaninglessness, and in Stravinsky as the helpless

enthralment to shock, is here seen to be both an image of contemporary forms of domination and an inkling of a society that has overcome these conflicts. Berg pushes the indifferent coexistence of different tones to the extreme at which all twelve notes sound simultaneously. Yet this stasis is at once an image of substanceless, frozen contradictions, and a prefiguring of a world beyond conflict: dystopia and utopia in in one and the same chord.

This ambivalent stasis is not the only example of explicit paradox in Adorno's texts. Sport, in the posthumously published 'Schema der Massenkultur', appears as both the autotelic prefiguring of utopian play, and a parody of freedom, in which the sole liberty conceded to the subject is the liberty to abuse her own body, to iron out its idiosyncrasies and force upon it the ritualized mould of the athlete.(78) Versuch über Wagner, rather than containing isolated examples of paradox, is a whole monograph which tracks the unthinkable ambivalences of Wagner's music, a monograph which criticizes Wagner's leitmotifs and orchestration for depriving the music of movement and battering the subject monotonously into submission, but which interprets this very authoritarian stagnation simultaneously as the herald of a subjectivity redeemed of its passivity.(79) Is this heightened paradox the figure of thought left behind by the logic of simulation? Having pinpointed the mechanism which shores up the power of the culture industry, and noted the complicity between Adorno's double perspective and the double consciousness of the pop

cultural subject, do we then openly embrace ambiguity, substituting for the dream of a renewed totality, of resurgent dialectical conflict, the admission that simulated contradictions and ghostly paradoxes are all that remain? Such a step would be doubly comforting. It would vindicate Adorno's method against the criticisms of the Habermasians, vindicate the contradictions at which the theory of communicative action despairs. Yet it would simultaneously criticize Adorno's method, noting the unexpected affinity between his philosophy and the Hollywood films he despises and drawing the consequences. Adorno's whole corpus could then be reinstated as the conscious or unconscious exploration of radical paradox. The self-consciously aporetic figure of thought which emerges from the deconstruction of his texts could be embraced as a dialectics for the era of simulation, a dialectics for the postmodern age.

But who is it that binds together these incompatible extremes in a single moment of sublime cogitation? The switch from Adorno's double perspective to an out-and-out paradoxology could succeed only if the subject who registered and recorded the ambivalences were exempt from the disintegration she theorizes. Only this sovereign individual could round on the aporias, could meaningfully force together their fragmented components. As Adorno's own descriptions of pop culture suggest, however, the subject does not escape the dissociation which afflicts art and the culture industry. She exists as a subject - meagre existence though this may be - only through

the disintegrative logic which distorts both Hollywood and Schönberg. The scramble of simulation constructs her even as it deconstructs her. In his 'Versuch, das Endspiel zu verstehen', Adorno consciously, if reluctantly reflects on this problem, reflects on the fate of thought in a society which has dismantled subjectivity. A reading of this essay will help me sketch the figure of thought which succeeds Adorno's unparalleled bid to redeem dialectics, will help me mark out the theoretical dissolution of which Habermas and Bohrer are the more or less unwitting heirs. Before we read Adorno's elegy for dialectics, however, we need briefly to explore the work of art which provoked it: Samuel Beckett's Endgame.

PART IV

U N D I A L E C T I C A L C O N C L U S I O N S

Beckett and the Collapse of Subjectivity

> Sein Vermächtnis besteht in der Aufgabe, [...] das Intentionslose durch den Begriff einzuholen: der Nötigung, dialektisch zugleich und undialektisch zu denken.(1)

1. The View from the Flats

Beckett's Endgame (1957) starts and finishes with a 'brief tableau'.(2) A man, Clov, stands by the door of an almost empty room staring fixedly at an older man, Hamm, who is seated in the middle of the room with his face covered. Both the beginning and the close of the play present us with this image. However, the second image varies slightly from the first. Hamm's face is at the end no longer covered by a sheet, but by a blood-stained handkerchief. Clov is now dressed 'for the road. Panama hat, tweed coat, raincoat over his arm, umbrella, bag'(Endgame 51). Given these alterations, particularly the air of imminent departure which Clov's accessories convey, the tableaus could be thought to capture the minute but nevertheless important development which it has been the business of the play to record. Yet this is not the case. Though Clov stands poised by the door, we never see him leave. Though Hamm's face is now covered only by a handkerchief, we cannot say that this will noticeably alter the status quo. The

two tableaux, almost identical, yet modified nonetheless, hover indeterminately between two readings, signifying at once Clov's final break with Hamm, and his inability to do more than rehearse the gestures of rebellion: movement and stasis simultaneously.

This oscillation between movement and stasis - an oscillation of which it is hard to determine whether it is itself a form of change, or the purest form of stagnation - constitutes the play. Take for instance an exchange that arises when Hamm orders Clov, his minion, to 'bottle' Nagg, the character who seems to be Hamm's father and who, having lost his legs in a tandem accident in the Ardennes is now, like his wife Nell, confined to an ashbin at the front of the stage:

Hamm: Sit on him!
Clov: I can't sit.
Hamm: True. And I can't stand.
Clov: So it is.
Hamm: Every man his speciality. (Pause.) No phone calls? (Pause.) Don't we laugh?
Clov: (after reflection). I don't feel like it.
Hamm: (after reflection). Nor I. (Pause.) Clov!
Clov: Yes.
Hamm: Nature has forgotten us.
Clov: There's no more nature.
Hamm: No more nature! You exaggerate.
Clov: In the vicinity.
Hamm: But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!
Clov: Then she hasn't forgotten us.
Hamm: But you say there is none.
Clov: (sadly). No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we.
Hamm: We do what we can.
Clov: We shouldn't.
Pause.
Hamm: You're a bit of all right, aren't you?
Clov: A smithereen.
Pause.
Hamm: This is slow work. (Pause.) Is it not time for my pain-killer? (Endgame 16)

The passage reads as a tissue of withdrawals folded one on top of the other. The clearest withdrawal comes with Clov's declaration: 'There's no more nature'. The phrase echoes a pattern that occurs throughout the play, whereby Clov presents things to us through the act of taking them away. Bicycle wheels, pap, and pain killers all flash before us in the process - sometimes instantaneous, sometimes protracted - of their disappearance: 'There are no more bicycle wheels'; 'There is no more pap'(Endgame 15); 'There's no more pain-killer'(Endgame 46). In a topsy-turvy way, Clov could be said by this movement to furnish the bare interior with which we are confronted at the beginning of the play. He fixes it up with objects which it used to contain but which now have ceased to exist. He decorates it with absences.

In the negation of nature, this troubled relation to the world reaches its most extreme formulation. When Clov informs Hamm that there is no more nature, he suspends not just an individual object - pap, bicycle wheels, pain-killers - but natural life itself. Yet - as Hamm's response and the ensuing dialogue imply - this suspension itself remains uncertain. When Hamm tells Clov that he is exaggerating, Clov immediately qualifies his claim. He stops insisting the environment has disappeared altogether, and admits that nature endures its ghostly, negative existence only in the immediate vicinity of Hamm's bare interior. (This notion would seem confirmed later in the play when Hamm speculates: 'That here we're down in a

hole. (Pause.) But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it's still green. Eh? (Pause.) Flora! Pomona! (Ecstatically.) Ceres! (Pause.) Perhaps you won't need to go very far', Endgame 30.) However, even Hamm cannot be sure of the qualification. Just as Clov seems to be coming round to his way of thinking, Hamm recalls what Clov originally said, as if Clov should not really have changed his mind, saying: 'But you say there is none'. As the dialogue progresses, it apparently withdraws even the certainty of its withdrawal. Yet this second withdrawal does not magically reinstate the nature previously negated. It simply multiplies uncertainty, until Clov remarks '(sadly). No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we', and tells Hamm that the problem is not that they think badly, but that they think at all.

The dialogue would thus seem to consist in gestures of withdrawal which are themselves uncertainly withdrawn. If this is the case, one comment particularly seems to stand out as an anomaly which cannot be accommodated in the basic scheme: Hamm's inquiry whether there have been any phone calls. Far from withdrawing something from the theatrical world, this comment makes an unexpected addition. It informs us that Hamm's bare interior somewhere conceals a telephone, indeed it implies that this telephone has occasionally been used. The very form in which this addition is made, however, effects an undermining even more insidious than the substantial denials of bicycle wheels, pap or nature. The question 'No phone calls?' does not need to be taken back, for it is already empty small-talk,

continuing the patter of banalities initiated when Hamm crowned the discussion of Clov's inability to sit and his own inability to stand with the comment: 'Every man his speciality'. Like the common cliché 'each to his own', the inquiry about possible phone calls is a stock reaction, a routinized query: 'Nice day at the office, dear?' - 'Not too bad. Any phone calls?' It is a purely phatic formulation that has no content that one could empty out. This adds a further fold to the tissue of withdrawals. Where language has been thus reduced to ritual and cliché, it no longer has sufficient substance to furnish the theatre with absences. In this sense, Clov's unsettling negations must themselves be reinterpreted as empty gestures. 'Nature', 'pap' and 'bicycle wheels' lose the power of reference by which they imported objects negatively into the theatrical world. They become rituals which routine has so enfeebled that they cannot summon up even the ghosts of things. Hamm and Clov stand on an almost empty stage surrounded only by the vacuity of their small-talk.

Nevertheless, despite their emptiness, comments such as 'Every man his speciality' tell us something about the play and its construction. Hamm's crippled inability to leave his armchair and Clov's hobbling obedience to every order he receives are suddenly explained. The clichéd social expectation that each person should have their particular skill has been taken so literally that characters embody nothing but their one ability. Hamm, whose particular field is management, can do nothing but give orders. He thus does not need to stand. Clov

the underling, in contrast, can do nothing but carry Hamm's orders out. He thus has no need of sitting down. In Hamm and Clov, the empty forms, which briefly deprived the world of even negative substance, now themselves acquire an odd solidity. The two characters are walking rituals, pedestrian clichés. In one movement, the play makes withdrawal after withdrawal until nothing is left but empty form. In a second movement, however, it casts empty form itself as a form of content. Although the play we see is nothing more than the bare bones of theatre, its skeletal forms have been imbued with a haunting afterlife.

These two movements can be seen throughout the play. The set, for instance, has been drained of content until it is nothing more than the sum of its formal parts. A set needs an outside world or fictional 'beyond' onto which the aspirations of the characters can be projected. It also needs an extension to the inner world so as to generate surprise: props need to be brought on and off, costumes need occasionally to be changed. Consequently, the set for Endgame has two windows - one for land, one for water - to create the outside world against which the bare interior defines itself, and it has a door which leads to Clov's kitchen. It has nothing more: no spare windows, no unnecessary doubling of internal space. The character's world is reduced to a theatrical minimum. Similarly the dialogue - as the frequent self-referential comments by Hamm and Clov suggest - does nothing but trace the basic shape of a play. 'Something' takes its course (Endgame 17) until Hamm is ready to warm up for his final soliloquy (Endgame 49), and Clov is ready to make

an exit (Endgame 51). (This reflexive discussion of the course of the play can be found in the passage originally quoted, when Hamm states: 'This is slow work'. The comment functions in two ways. At a naturalistic level, it might prepare for Hamm's inquiry about his pain-killer, telling us how slowly the time passes between the brief periods of relief afforded by his medicine. At the same time, however, it complements the refrain 'We're getting on' (Endgame 15, 18, 30, 44) with which Hamm comments on the progress of the dialogue. Indeed, it makes the question about the pain-killer nothing but a marker for the abstract passage of theatrical time.) The environment and actions of the players are thus stripped down to the bare bones of theatrical structure. Yet the characters, despite themselves, scavenge something like a dramatic existence from this skeleton. As Hamm anxiously remarks, the bare forms topple dangerously on the brink of significance: 'Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough'(Endgame 27). Meaning has been cut away, but even this cutting down begins unsettlingly 'to... to... mean something'(Endgame 27).

In Endgame, content is pared down to form, but this form itself functions as a form of content. The play swings unceasingly between these two poles. We can never accept the sparse, formulaic figures as if they were realistic characters, never forget their theatricality. At the same time, this theatricality strikes us as real. The hackneyed phrases they

rehearse have been culled from the language in which we too describe our desires; the very standardization of their clownish routines seems to mirror a repetitive drudgery outside the theatre, though the play makes no direct reference to an outside world. This constant slippage from form to content, and from content back to form generates the oscillation between change and stagnation - most graphically captured in the two tableaux - which constitutes the play. In those moments where the text appears to consist solely in empty forms, we can have no notion of change. The play must then appear as an endless, circular repetition of formulae, one of which is the gesture of imminent departure which Clov rehearses at the end of the play. In other moments, we willingly accept the reduced forms as a form of content. The play seems then to sketch a limited development, to show how Clov finally breaks with his master. The deaths of Nagg and Nell would seem the strongest evidence of this development. They underscore a sense of decline, of alteration for the worse, first introduced into the play by Hamm's long narrative (Endgame 35-37), and the change of pace which this narrative brings about. It would be comforting to find in these deaths something which could not be reduced to a mere formula. Yet the very sense of an ending which they generate destroys any hope of closure. The very feeling of rounding-off unmasks Nell and Nagg's deaths as a dramatic effect, as yet another formal device which, like the final soliloquy, is infinitely repeatable. Nagg and Nell die two deaths simultaneously: one which genuinely closes off linear

action, and another, suspended death that reinforces the mere effect of change which propels Hamm and Clov emptily around their dramatic circles. Caught up in the play's unthinkable oscillations, even death hangs in a state of lifeless, zombie-like indeterminacy.(3)

Yet something happens nevertheless. Though Endgame so relentlessly hollows out its own dramatic materials that all that remains of a plot is an interminable oscillation, a play is still enacted, a performance still takes place. This inevitable performance has inspired much of the literary criticism about Beckett's play,(4) most famously some reflections by the nouveau romancier Alain Robbe-Grillet. Reading Waiting for Godot, Robbe-Grillet catalogues the various aspects of plot, character and development on which the play casts doubt, only to conclude that something nevertheless survives the dramatic scepticism: the two tramps themselves, Vladimir and Estragon. They have no script, no story and nothing to do, and yet they stand before us as an image of raw, unscripted existence. Robbe-Grillet reads the play as a Heideggerian parable, which demonstrates to us the incontrovertible fact of the two men's being there before us, their Dasein.(5) When he comes to read Endgame, however, this optimistic picture is revised. Robbe-Grillet takes up Hamm's confession that he was 'never there' and that 'it' all 'happened without him' (Endgame 47) and decides that not even the subject survives the undermining processes of the play. If

theatre was purported initially to reveal to us an irrefragable existential base, by the end of Robbe-Grillet's argument it demonstrates that 'no-one was ever there', that there is no stable existence.(6) Retrospectively, even the Godot tramps arouse his critical suspicion, as Robbe-Grillet grasps that they too were not raw subjects but a formalized role, clowns performing their circus routine. Even Vladimir 'was only an illusion'.(7)

If we follow Robbe-Grillet, we realize that Beckett's oscillations do not show us the subject in its irreducible being. But if we do not catch a glimpse of Dasein, what do we witness at a performance of Endgame? A clue is offered by the text itself which, on re-reading, contains at least one element which escapes the interminable self-undermining. The opening stage directions which list the windows, the door and the positions of the four characters, apparently do nothing more than catalogue the bare-bones set subsequently to be caught in the chiastic reversals between contentless form and formulaic content. But they also tell us that hanging near the door, with its face to the wall, is a picture (Endgame 11). The picture cannot be accounted for as part of the abstract idea of the set. It serves no direct function, as do the windows, Hamm's wheelchair or Nagg and Nell's ashbins. Nor is it commented on by any of the characters. Does it therefore escape the oscillations? That Beckett believes it does is briefly suggested by the split second during which, almost by accident, as Clov is searching for somewhere to put the alarm clock, it

enters the action: '(Clov sees the picture, takes it down, stands it on the floor with its face to wall, hangs up alarm clock in its place)'(Endgame 46). The significance of the alarm clock is clear enough. In one of their discussions of Clov's imminent but infinitely postponable departure, Hamm asks Clov how he would know that Clov had left him. How could he be sure, for instance, that Clov had not just died in the kitchen? Clov finds a solution in the clock: 'You whistle me. I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring. I'm dead'(Endgame 34). The alarm, if it ever rang, would announce that the play was over, that it never need be performed again. Clov would have left the bare interior. The alarm clock thus points beyond the oscillations to an outside world. In replacing the picture with the alarm clock, Clov establishes an indirect link between the two props, confirming that the picture equally eludes the zombie-like inversions.

How are we to understand this cryptic clue on Beckett's part? What survives the performance is not a Heideggerian Dasein, not raw subjectivity but something akin to the back of a picture, to the back of a work of art. What is the flipside of Beckett's Endgame? What would we see if we viewed the play 'from behind'? The most obvious answer - if we imagine ourselves backstage at a performance of the play - is the set. The inverted picture would seem to register that though Hamm's bare interior oscillates between form and content, it simultaneously escapes the oscillation. Though the dialogue sucks the set and props into Beckett's aesthetic maelstrom, the

audience will nevertheless be confronted with a backdrop, flats, costumes and physiognomies, all of which will have their own texture and immediacy. Robbe-Grillet made a similar argument, but where he hoped initially that this material backdrop would conjure an invigorating image of humanity, it would seem that, though we do see actors on stage, their faces and gestures are assimilated to the other props and furnishings. Like the flats and backdrop, they feature but as raw material, as the inert matter which underlies the performance. Like the wheelchair and windows, they are not human but part of the set.

Yet the set will vary from production to production. The painting with its face to the wall might gesture unobtrusively towards a materiality which escapes Beckett's unstable aporias, but this materiality seems itself to be elusive and ephemeral. Perhaps this ephemerality is the point of the play. In gesturing towards the set, the play could be said to draw attention to the different generations of commodities on which each performance depends - the wool, nylon or lycra of the costumes, the tungsten or halogen bulbs needed to create the stipulated grey light. Shimmering through the hermetic, self-regarding contradictions of the play would then be history itself, in the broad sense of the technologically manufactured, artificial space in which different periods experience their sense of exile or belonging. The director Herbert Blau seems to have come to this conclusion, when he writes of the set in Endgame that it should be a 'temporal landscape - a cultural

geography' with 'allusive, visual quotations from history',(8) though he implies that the set should actively refer to its historicity, rather than just being historical. The disadvantage with this emphatic interpretation of the set is that it leaves the forty pages of dialogue between the two tableaux unaccounted for. Whatever it is that appears despite Beckett's paradoxes and aporias cannot be fully explained by the fabric of the costumes or the technology of the lighting rig. To grasp the inverted picture more fully, we must return to the text.

Hamm and Clov's formulaic exchanges are subject to the same double movement as every other aspect of the play. If they undermine linguistic sense, they nevertheless incessantly generate meanings, but these meanings never combine to produce an overall message. What would it mean to view these exchanges 'from behind', to see them from 'backstage' and so catch a glimpse of something beyond oscillation? Two examples might help us understand. The one is a line from Nagg's joke about the tailor who takes an age to make a single pair of trousers: '(Pause. Raconteur's voice.) Well, to make it short, the bluebells are blowing and he ballockses the buttonholes'(Endgame 21). The other is the melancholy observation with which Clov closes his discussion of the disappearance of nature: 'No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we'(Endgame 16). What the two lines share is a shift of register, a slip from one linguistic ritual to another. With the word 'ballockses', Nagg transforms the tone

of the anecdote so far recounted, adding a colloquial note. In contrast, the rhythm and cadence of Clov's mournful reflection move the tone up a gear to a register that could be described as poetic. Both the colloquialism and the poeticism focus our attention briefly on the words themselves and produce a buzz of immediacy. Yet an audience which hears the shift and feels the buzz will have an ambivalent experience. On the one hand, they will have an inkling of what Habermas or Wellmer might call the intersubjective preconditions of communication. The move between registers, or between language games momentarily lays bare the shared conventions - of telling anecdotes, of reciting poetry - on which everyday interaction draws. On the other hand, the audience will realize that the buzz of immediacy arises independently of successful communication. Nagg's joke has no effect on Nell, for whom it was told (Endgame 22), and works on the audience only heartrendingly as a joke that fails. Clov's poetic epithet brings neither us nor the characters any closer to an understanding of nature's disappearance. Clov and Hamm's dialogue declines into another pause, out of which Hamm stirs with the perplexing non sequitur 'You're a bit of all right, aren't you?'(Endgame 16).

This ambivalent experience accounts for the play's senseless oscillations. As we consciously notice changes of register, we realize that language games, as Habermas and Wellmer describe them, continue to function. We discover that we still share enough of an interactive basis to recognize colloquialisms and poetry, that communication must still be

possible. Yet this comforting discovery is accompanied by the terrifying realization that smoothly functioning language games do not generate meaning. They provoke the feeling of understanding - the buzz of immediacy as we respond to the linguistic shift - but nothing is communicated beyond the empty, ritualized structure. The discussion of Habermas helps us explain why this is the case. In Beckett's play there is no meaning, because there is no strong, organic subject. The language games themselves still function. In the sentence 'No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we' we make sense of every word. Moreover, we recognize the poetic language game in which it counts as an appropriate move. To all extents and purposes, Clov communicates. But the subject who could round on this language game, order it alongside others, and mediate between conventions, is missing. Deprived of the mediating resilience of a strong subject, the play oscillates ceaselessly between meaning and meaninglessness.

If the experience accounts for the deconstruction of meaning, it equally tells us what we see nevertheless. Between, or behind the aporias, we intimate an absence. We intuit the lack of the individuality, personality, or subject needed to imbue the empty rituals with life. As Robbe-Grillet might put it, we realize that 'no-one was there'. Yet the intuition is not purely negative. We see simultaneously the rubble of self-propelled language games which used once to constitute subjectivity. Once again, the importance of Beckett's stage directions becomes clear. Characters' lines are very frequently

prefaced with a single adverb: '(elegiac.) Ah yesterday'(Endgame 18); '(after reflection.) Nor I.'(Endgame 16); '(Ecstatically.) Ceres!'(Endgame 30). Each direction points to a linguistic ritual which cuts across the character, but which the subject does not command. Each adverb reveals a fragment of the subjectivity to which the figures themselves no longer add up. Watching Endgame, we see language from behind. We see the raw material of language games and emotions which once might have constituted subjectivity, but which now lie in pieces on the stage: language without a subject, but still sentient, and still suffering.

This realization opens the way for a more detailed reading of the play, a reading which would sift through the shattered remains of subjectivity to see what constitutes the rubble, study the shards of regret, reflection and ecstasy, patiently cataloguing each specific fragment, piecing together the context and history to which they belong. But this reading, before it has begun, raises a methodological problem. Who - if not a subject - glimpses and catalogues the subject's disintegration? There are two ways of answering this question. We could optimistically insist that the discovery that subjectivity is shattered in the play need not convince us that real subjects are in equally bad shape. The demise of fictional individuals, we could argue, need not be fatal for the genuine item.(9) Alternatively, we could insist that we too are implicated in the collapse of subjectivity to which we, as

spectators, bear witness. Critics who opt for the second option put their reading on shaky ground, as we see in Georges Bataille's comparable reading of Molloy, the first novel in Beckett's trilogy. Readers of the novel, Bataille declares, experience the 'absence of humanity'.(10) Yet to articulate this idea, Bataille is forced to employ mutually conflicting arguments. Having asserted that the absence of humanity was what he experienced reading the book, he admits that he cannot say whether or not Beckett intended this experience.(11) Indeed, we realize that Beckett cannot have, since the absence of humanity is an abject state which abolishes subjective intention. To have articulated this state, the text must have been operating without the knowledge of its creator. Having thus unhooked the text from its author, however, Bataille further decides that the text itself must be damaged by the difficulty of the feat he has attributed to it. Intelligibly to portray Molloy's unintelligible 'absence of mind' is impossible. If the text has succeeded nevertheless, it can only have been by sleights of hand which the attentive reader could unmask,(12) sleights of hand perhaps one of which - Bataille is not explicit - is betrayed by a lapse of style, an exaggerated irony, which Bataille observes at a crucial point in the novel.(13)

The claim that Molloy portrays the collapse of the subject, in Bataille's essay, is thus accompanied not only by the admission that this image cannot have been intended by the author, but by the contrary assertion that the text fails to

articulate the ideas which Bataille attributes to it. Bataille makes the claim, but then himself withdraws it. Adorno, like Bataille, believes that the subject encountering Beckett's images of disintegration does not herself stand outside the fragmentation portrayed. How will he respond to the dilemmas this conviction produces? Will he adopt the same paradoxical strategies as Bataille? Will he second the Bataille who, over and above his self-conscious inconsistencies, rounds his essay off by ambivalently affirming the 'domain of delight, bravado and irrational audacity' to which Beckett's texts give us access.(14) To gauge Adorno's response to the collapse of subjectivity we must turn at last to his lengthy interpretation of Beckett's drama, to his 'Versuch, das Endspiel zu verstehen'.(15)

2. Beckett's Perfection

The first difficulty confronting Adorno's essay is the damage done by the play to the very medium in which interpretation could articulate its insights: critical, or philosophical language. The problem is not so much that philosophy is alien to Endgame. It is more that philosophy is all too familiar, all too hackneyed; another brand of cultural detritus for Beckett ironically to weave into his writing, like T. S. Eliot before him (NzL 281). Any interpretation, because it is inextricably tied to the critical language Beckett parodies, limps hopelessly behind the play. Yet the enigmatic character of the text constantly draws out interpretation (NzL 284). Adorno feels compelled to interpret the play, but he has no vocabulary with which to do so. How is he then to begin his reading?

His first gambit is not to interpret at all but to take the worst things the play says at face value, in the hope that this might give him a picture of the catastrophe which first caused critical language to lose its meaning. The key scene, for Adorno, is that in which Clov peers out of the window with his telescope and, when asked to describe the landscape in a single word, sums it up with the epithet 'corpsed'(Endgame 25). The world in which Hamm and Clov exist is one in which everything, even nature, has been destroyed. Any attempts to qualify the disaster, as when Hamm tells Clov that he is exaggerating, simply prolong the torture, needlessly postponing the final collapse (NzL 286). Beckett's virtue is then seen in

the resoluteness with which his play scorns comfort. Without taking sides, without even complaining, Endgame documents the pitiful condition to which the 'corpsing' of nature has reduced the individual. It is this record of the subject's decay which has such devastating consequences for critical vocabularies. For every language which could rightfully criticize, or complain of the disaster degenerates with the subjects who invented it. Hope, if it survives at all, survives only by the conspicuousness of its absence: 'Im Akt des Weglassens überlebt das Weggelassene als Vermiedenes wie in der atonalen Harmonik die Konsonanz'(NzL 289).

At the beginning of Adorno's reading the play's universe thus falls into two distinct spheres which would seem neatly to parallel the world view attributed to Adorno by the Habermasians. On one side there is the disaster-stricken domain of Hamm and Clov. On the other side, visible only in negative form, a redeemed world, uncontaminated by the suffering we see in the play. Having thus laid out the moral map of the universe, we could assume that Adorno's interpretation will criticize the fallen world from the perspective of the redemption invisibly outlined by Beckett's bleakness. Yet this assumption places Adorno himself on the wrong side of the moral divide. It assumes he has already traced the contours of Beckett's conspicuous absence before he begins interpreting, that he has already 'seen the light', and need in his reading only to match up Beckett's negatively portrayed redemption with his own positive knowledge. Adorno, however, like Hamm and

Clov, has no direct access to uncontaminated norms. He does not stand outside the degeneration of language, but is trapped inside it. He must thus adopt an alternative approach to interpretation. He must ascertain where Beckett himself is positioned that the useless vocabularies he employs leave even a negative imprint of hope. Explicitly to articulate Beckett's position is to come one step closer to articulating a new standpoint for philosophy. This way Beckett's disgusted rejection of philosophical language might gradually be turned to Adorno's advantage.

Establishing Beckett's position is a precarious undertaking. One moment he seems too easily to elude the catastrophe he portrays, the next, by Adorno's standards, to be too helplessly its victim. The first danger emerges when Adorno tries to place Beckett's writing in a general historical narrative. The narrative Adorno chooses is that of the relations between subject and object, and the bearing they have on aesthetic form. Art, for Adorno, is a form of discourse bound to the subject. Other, more scientific discourses may be able to cast aside elements of subjective distortion to attain objectivity, but art can never pretend to do this. In the early nineteenth century, the era of liberal capitalism, this need not have been a problem. For, whilst the iron-willed, self-controlling, entrepreneurial subject was unmistakably the product of alienation, elements of this subjectivity rebelled against the alienation which produced them (NzL 290). To write from the subject's perspective was to articulate these more

rebellious desires as much as it was to conform to the managerial pressures of the bourgeois individual. The collective catastrophe of fascism has eradicated the subject, and with it the hope which its contradictory constitution once permitted. The moment of freedom which bourgeois subjectivity ambivalently promised shrivels to the ideological delusion which, at some level, liberty in fact always was. As Adorno sarcastically puts it, it shrinks to the freedom of a concentration camp victim to resist mentally tortures her body will be forced to endure regardless (NzL 290).

The subject, however, survives its eradication; it lives on as a powerful fiction, though now deprived of the emancipatory purchase it once had on the world: the fiction of individuality. Works of art can mercilessly unmask this fabrication, represent it as the deluding prison it really is, but they cannot themselves escape the prison they demystify. In this, Adorno is strictly materialist: art, as a mere fragment of society, cannot hope of its own volition to overcome a situation which is socially determined. Instead, it must satisfy itself with finding images for the false solipsism to which society has condemned it: 'den Solipsismus [...] versinnlichen'(NzL 291). Finding images for this solipsism, however, is a delicate business. In a perfect world, art would be able to reconcile its necessarily subjective viewpoint with the objective world, to bring the two together in a language which denied the specificity and independence of neither. In a world in which the subject lives in solipsistic isolation no

such reconciliation can be achieved. Yet neither can art settle for either one of the two poles. It knows that any objective material it treats is not merely mirrored by aesthetic form but rather shaped and distorted by it. Yet it cannot salvage anything from these subjective distortions, for they are not the original creation of an individual untainted by ideology, but tired social reflexes devoid of truth: a mere sediment left behind by a falsifying society. When it turns to the object, art confronts only the most distorting aspects of the subject. When it settles instead for subjectivity, it finds only the ideological imprint of the object.

Beckett improbably makes a home in this contradiction, inhabiting what Adorno calls a zone of indifference between subject and object ('eine Zone der Indifferenz von innen und aussen...', NzL 292). Though both the subject matter of art, and the forms available to shape this material are inadequate, Beckett wrests substance from them. By stripping away all unnecessary trappings Beckett reduces the figures to abstract forms which gesture, by their very formality, allegorically beyond themselves, creating the impression of a significance over and beyond their emblematic vacancy (NzL 292). In thus allowing Beckett to tear meaning from the collapse of meaning, Adorno would seem to resolve the playwright's difficulties prematurely. Indeed, he would seem to be committing the sin he attributes to existentialists whereby the meaninglessness or 'absurdity' of existence is transfigured as 'the human condition', and the subject then supposed to discover meaning

in the spurious freedom which this absurdity confers on her. What emerges, as the analysis continues, is the contrary. The productive interference between form and content which Beckett is supposed to engineer from his 'zone of indifference' never settles into a meaning. For, in Beckett's writing, there is no position fixed enough to order absurdity as significance. There are no humans stable enough to have a condition.

This thought is difficult to grasp, and it emerges in Adorno's essay only gradually. The abstract form of the idea is easy enough. Existentialist philosophy protects the subject from the meaninglessness of the situations onto which she projects her self-made destiny. Beckett, in contrast, offers the subject no such security. In his plays, the individual is as fragmented as the situations are meaningless and incoherent (NzL 294). This is clear enough as an argument, but almost unthinkable when applied to Beckett's own position. The first tentative application comes in the analogy which Adorno uses to describe what it is, if it is not meaning, which emerges from Beckett's plays. The fragments which in their abstraction seem opaquely to signify cannot be subsumed under general concepts. The content which their emptiness paradoxically promises cannot be redeemed as the index of a larger symbolic category, such as meaninglessness or the absurd. 'Diese Schicht ist nicht symbolisch,' Adorno argues, 'sondern die des nachpsychologischen Standes wie bei alten Leuten und Gefolterten'(NzL 293). What emerges in a Beckett play is not symbolic meaning, however bleak, but random, terrifying and

painful flashes comparable only to the debris of a ruined psyche.

As long as it is grasped as the play's meaningless meaning this image of a tortured, or senile brain is disturbing but not threatening. The 'zone of indifference' on which Beckett has built his stage can still be thought to escape the ruin it so vividly portrays. But the next step in Adorno's argument is to make Beckett's own position that of a shattered mind. The anecdote which Hamm tells of a schizophrenic he used to visit then becomes an allegory of the play itself. Hamm tells of how he would take the madman to the window and show him the beauty of the world, but without success: 'He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes'(Endgame 32). For Adorno, this schizophrenic perspective, which sees ashes where others see beauty, is both Clov's perspective when he declares that the world is 'corpsed', and finally the text's too (NzL 297). If the zone of indifference could conjure a play from the very redundancy of aesthetic materials, it was not because the playwright has kept his head while the rest of the world lost its reason. Only by slipping out of an unreasonable reason, by adopting a position akin to madness can Beckett write his record of the subject's demise.

As Adorno develops this argument, a noticeable shift occurs. Previously, an alternative to the catastrophic world of Endgame had, if weakly, survived. Beckett's uncomplaining record of the subject's demise was said negatively to trace the contours of hope by the very ascetic rigour with which he

denied himself comfort. As Adorno describes Beckett's shattered perspective, however, these contours grow less and less distinct. The 'negation of negativity' which Beckett's play was supposed silently to announce resurfaces in the passages which present the schizoid perspective, but reduced to a mantra which a sleepwalker chants to herself as she wanders ('Mit nichts anderem bewegt sich das Endspiel weg vom Tiefpunkt, als dadurch, dass es sich wie einen Schlafwandler anruft: Negation der Negativität', NzL 297). Before Adorno had fully explored the schizophrenic perspective, it had seemed briefly that the collapse of identity should give us cause for hope. Indeed, it did not seem too sanguine to believe the collapse would positively liberate those impulses which an alienated subjectivity had previously repressed (NzL 294). Yet the loss of identity has no such happy effects. We do not subside into innocent heterogeneity ('die pure, unpolemische, unschuldige Vielfalt', NzL 300), we suffer at our incoherence. Positive plurality and negatively outlined redemption impinge as little on this disaster as sleep talk on the oblivious somnambulist.

In its most extreme forms, the subject's incoherence produces a sensation akin to hallucination as a single body is traversed by conflicting, fragmentary situations (NzL 300). It is this unsettling experience that for Adorno is captured in Clov's constant clowning, in his unmotivated forgetting of the ladder (Endgame 11), or his equally unmotivated dropping of the telescope (Endgame 25). But the clowning does not only typify the suffering of the figures on the stage, it is not merely the

moment at which an unaccountable impulse cuts across Clov's helpless body. The clowning takes away the last refuge of a coherent subjectivity: the audience. Just after he drops it, Clov turns the telescope on the auditorium and announces: 'I see... a multitude... in transports... of joy. (Pause.) That's what I call a magnifier. (He lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.) Well? Don't we laugh?'(Endgame 25). Laughter, to be happy laughter, needs security, needs a reconciled position ('ein Ort von Versöhnung, von dem aus sich lachen liesse...', NzL 300). Subjects sure of their own coherence could carelessly enjoy the tribulations of the clown, and would indeed be a multitude in transports of joy. In contrast, the audience which laughs when Clov, without joining in the laughter provoked by his overestimation, 'magnifies' its hilarity (Endgame 25), has, for Adorno, no such security. If it laughs, it does so because it is not in transports of joy. It laughs because it has no reason to laugh. Where Clov's turning of the telescope on the audience might seem to mark the spectator's distance from the battered figures on the stage, it in fact pulls her irresistibly into their shattered world. It suggests indirectly that the audience is as mercilessly stricken as Hamm or Clov.

Having claimed that Beckett improbably perches in a zone of indifference between a defunct subjectivity and the ruins of post-war society, Adorno's argument gradually undermines even this precarious standpoint. Not merely Beckett's characters, but the playwright and indeed his audience are denied the

security the zone of indifference tentatively offered. Once he has questioned the rationality of the spectators, Adorno would seem to have thought to its limit the fragmentation suffered by the subject. Yet the argument adds one final inflection. It is marked in the text by an increasingly experimental association of images and ideas, but given the idea the experiment articulates, clear style should have been yet more surprising. The change comes with the paragraphs which Adorno devotes to each of the four characters, but is particularly noticeable in those on Hamm and Clov. Having explored the resonances of Hamm's name and traced a line from Noah's son to the English notion of overacting or 'hamming it up', Adorno discusses the switches of role required of Hamm, such as the shift between 'normal' and 'narrative' tone which accompanies his story (Endgame 35-37). For Adorno, these shifting voices rob Hamm of a fixed identity, discrediting as a fiction the stable personality one might otherwise assume to survive between the changes of tone. Hamm's character emerges as nothing but the simian imitation ('äffische Nachahmung', NzL 312) of empty social roles. Disastrously, one of the roles is that of rational thought: Hamm at one point adopts the 'voice of [a] rational being' (Endgame 27), and it is occasionally, in the stage direction 'after reflection' (Endgame 16, 25), stipulated that Hamm and Clov should imitate ratiocination. If the bourgeois subject sprang from alienation and brutal repression, it could nevertheless think, and by such reflection turn against the very brutality in which it had its roots. The stage

directions which demand that Hamm and Clov act out the gestures of reflection suggest that the subject, in her collapse, has been deprived of even this last remnant of authenticity: 'Von dem aber, was der Wahrheitsgehalt des Subjekts war, vom Denken, wird nur noch die gestische Hülse konserviert'(NzL 312-313).

Deprived of the subject who was once its vehicle, reflection becomes, in Endgame, a hollow reflex, becomes the arbitrary citation of rational discourses rather than conscious cogitation. Having once started to interrogate the category of subjectivity, Beckett appears to Adorno to be remorseless. Yet Adorno himself is no less unflinching. Having qualified his first faith in negation, and tempered his hope that the Beckettian landscape should negatively signify redemption with the sobering suggestion that negation is but the mantra chanted by an oblivious sleep walker, Adorno now withdraws any prospect of dialectical reversal. This withdrawal occurs in the section devoted to Clov, the most freely essayistic of the whole text. The argument lurches vertiginously from Clov's clowning, to a picture which Picasso drew for the cover of Stravinsky's ragtime travesties - the picture showed two vagabonds drawn with a single line - to the master-slave dialectic. Beckett's Hamm and Clov, it emerges, are a parody of Hegel's dialectical duo.(16) In the Phänomenologie des Geistes, the master depends on the vanquished, hard-working slave for recognition (though the status of the recognition conferred by a vanquished slave is problematic), and for a stable relationship to an otherwise troubling reality. The slave's labour mediates between the

master and the real world, giving the master all that is pleasant in real objects whilst nevertheless protecting him from their perturbing ephemerality. The slave meanwhile depends on the master, since the master was kind enough to spare his life. This relation of dependence initially deprives the slave of self-awareness. However, by objectifying himself in the products of his labour, he gradually achieves a sense of self so strong that he comes finally to overthrow his conqueror.(17) Hamm and Clov similarly depend on each other. Only Hamm, who cannot stand, knows the combination to the larder (Endgame 15), but he would be lost without Clov, who cannot sit, to carry out his orders. Yet their dependence has none of the unstable dynamism of the Hegelian pair. The biggest threat to Hamm is not that Clov, like the Hegelian slave, might some day rebel, but that he might never: that the two characters might stay locked forever in pitiful symbiosis, unable even to die. When Clov does finally gather up his belongings to walk out on his master, even this feeble gesture of rebellion is denied him. He puts on his Panama hat and tweed coat but he never makes his exit. The final tableau leaves the master-slave dialectic hanging in the balance: 'Kein Zuschauer und kein Philosoph wüsste zu sagen, ob es nicht wieder von vorn beginnt. Dialektik pendelt aus'(NzL 315).

Adorno's text shows two parallel movements. Having attributed to Beckett a fragile vantage point from which to turn the rubble of subjectivity against itself, the essay

steadily undermines this perspective, progressing relentlessly from the debility of the subjects on stage, to the schizophrenia of the writing subject, the disintegration of the audience's position and finally to the demise of coherent reflection itself. As the rational subject disintegrates, so too, in the other movement, the probability of dialectical negation grows more and more remote until, in the discussion of Hamm and Clov's crippled symbiosis, negation fails altogether: 'Dialektik pendelt aus'. Though the essay's approach differs from that of the texts on pop culture - here Adorno analyses a work of high culture, focussing on the issue of the subject; there he investigated products of the culture industry concentrating on the abstract processes of commodification or mechanical reproduction - the conclusion he draws is similar: dialectical oppositions, drained of tension and conflict, freeze into immobility. Yet, of the two approaches, the treatment of Beckett is in one respect more uncompromising. The essay on Endgame explores to its limit the idea, implicit in the polemics against Hollywood and popular music, that there is no escape from the disintegration analysed. Not only do the characters themselves cease to generate conflict, but the metaperspective from which, in a moment of dialectical bravado, this very collapse could be read as a cipher of deliverance, fades to the point that Adorno can chillingly declare: 'Kein Zuschauer und kein Philosoph wüsste zu sagen, ob es nicht wieder von vorn beginnt'.

How does Adorno respond to this unwelcome realization?

Apparently, his dialectical spirit is too resilient to be daunted by even Beckettian rigour, for his conscious reaction is to save negation nevertheless. The insight that dialectical movement has petered out emerges, in the course of the essay, as but one side of a double perspective, but one side of an argument which, at its other extreme, maintains that negation survives against all odds, survives, if need be, in a form inconceivable to the enfeebled subject. ('Der immanente Widerspruch des Absurden, der Unsinn, in dem Vernunft terminiert,' Adorno at one point argues, 'öffnet emphatisch die Möglichkeit eines Wahren, das nicht einmal mehr gedacht werden kann', NzL 319.) Yet Adorno's faith in a positive dialectical counterpart to the gloom of Beckettian absurdity remains vulnerable. The final section of the essay bravely deploys the Hegelian term of art determinate negation ('bestimmte Negation') as though dialectical movement had successfully been salvaged (NzL 320). Yet the negation Adorno then describes generates not dynamism so much as irresolvable ambiguity, not movement so much as an oscillation that Adorno explicitly gives the Benjaminian title: dialectics at a standstill (NzL 320). A striking example of this undecidability is to be found in Clov's meditations on order. 'I love order,' Clov states. 'It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust'(Endgame 39). To Adorno, this dream is first and foremost an image of death or damnation. Yet, if the image describes a hell in which the subject's dominion over the world has abolished both change and

time ('silent and still and each thing in its last place'), it similarly describes a state of grace in which, with each thing allocated a final resting place, the specificity of each object is at last respected: 'Das letzte Absurde ist, dass die Ruhe des Nichts und die von Versöhnung nicht auseinander sich kennen lassen'(NzL 321).

Adorno longs to restart dialectical movement, but he gives the last word to a stagnant ambivalence akin to the deadlock he discerned between Hamm and his minion. In thus opting, however reluctantly, for undecidability, he draws the very conclusion that my deconstruction of Philosophie der neuen Musik found hidden in the metaphors of sightless surrender. He replaces dialectics with paradox. Intriguingly, however, the text on Beckett simultaneously undermines this conscious conclusion. Despite the intractable problems confronting the playwright, Adorno constantly reminds us of Beckett's success. At those moments when the playwright's position becomes particularly uncertain, when the subject's powers are all but extinguished, analogies from the realm of music describe how he flourishes nonetheless. Take for instance the very nadir of the essay where Clov's futile attempts to break with his master are interpreted as a failure of the whole project of dialectical thought. The final tableau which underscores this futility is said to create the powerful effect of a musical finale (NzL 314). Then, extending this musical metaphor, Adorno explains how Beckett lends form to even the static oscillations of Hamm and Clov's relationship, saying that he fashions it as a double

fugue (NzL 315-316). Although the relationship would seem to preclude form, or development, Beckett musically interweaves the two main themes of stagnation and futile rebellion to construct a fugal structure.

Another image underscores this impression that it is Beckett's musical talents which help him wrest aesthetic form from the collapse of subjectivity. Accompanying the disintegration of the subject Adorno finds an analogous collapse of language. Conventions, such as the play of question and answer, which previously bound exchanges in some semblance of fluid conversation lose their force, and speech degenerates into a mess of unrelated fragments. To attempt to write dramatic dialogue at so advanced a stage of linguistic decay would seem foolhardy. Yet Endgame conjures up exchanges regardless, miraculously bridging pauses that should otherwise usher in an unbreakable silence. Its model in this process is the atonal composer who improvises melody and form without the guidelines of tonality. Writing Beckettian dialogue becomes, for Adorno, a type of listening: 'ein Aushören, verwandt dem von Musik, die von den vorgegebenen Typen sich emanzipiert. Das Drama lauscht, was nach einem Satz wohl für ein anderer kommt'(NzL 308).

How are we to understand this association of music and mastery? The essayistic speculations on Clov's name are once again instructive, betraying the inspiration which lies for Adorno behind Beckett's musicianship:

Beckett trifft sich mit jüngsten Tendenzen der Musik nicht

> zuletzt darin, dass er [...] Züge aus Strawinskys radikaler Vergangenheit, die beklemmende Statik der zerfällten Kontinuität, mit avancierten expressiven und konstruktiven Mitteln aus der Schönbergschule amalgamiert. (NzL 313)

Beckett unites the best of both Schönberg and Stravinsky. Indeed, if we take seriously another analogy earlier in the text, he shares also the talents of the serialist composers of the generation after Schönberg (NzL 303). To understand the significance of Schönberg and Stravinsky to Adorno, we need look no further than the first page of Philosophie der neuen Musik. There he tells us that Schönberg and Stravinsky represent two poles, two extremes, the study of which offers the key to musical developments in the twentieth century.(18) Neither of the two composers is perfect, both schools of music are racked by the contradictions of the society they lived in. Even the early, expressionist Schönberg who comes closest to perfection is flawed, placing too naive a faith in musical expression. Between them, however, in their grandiose failure, Schönberg and Stravinsky represent the torn but irreconcilable halves of modern music. Beckett dramatically reunites these torn halves. More strikingly, where Adorno's writings on music find fault with both Stravinsky and Schönberg, the essay on Endgame has no single reservation about Beckett's play. Beckett's musical mastery transcends the contradictions which warped the music of both Stravinsky and Schönberg. The playwright moves, for Adorno, in a sphere beyond dialectics. It is this post-dialectical perfection which lets him conjure

form, dramaturgy and significance from the wreckage of post-war culture.

At an explicit level, Adorno's essay develops the now familiar double perspective. He traces the decline of subjectivity and the associated failure of negation, whilst maintaining simultaneously that negation is to be rescued from stagnation. In this respect the text adopts the same strategy as the analyses of Schönberg and Stravinsky, and of pop culture. Yet where those analyses upheld an emphatic division between the two sides of their double perspective, the Beckett text doubts the success of its dialectical virtuosity. In the final paragraph, an ambivalence is articulated, a standstill which qualifies Adorno's dialectical faith, replacing the movement of negation with an insuperable ambiguity, dialectics with paradox. This substitution would appear to be the lesson Adorno draws from his reflections on the collapse of subjectivity. At a metaphorical level, however, the text paints a different picture. It portrays neither the impossible dialectics of the double perspective, nor the static ambiguities towards which Adorno's arguments unwillingly incline. It portrays a state beyond contradiction. How are we to interpret this divergence?

One explanation is that Adorno draws a line between the fictional world of the play and its author. Though he presents a universe of despair, Beckett himself is exempted from the disaster he portrays. How could he be otherwise and still write

such masterful literature? This explanation assumes that the form of Endgame vouches for subjective control, that structure acts as an implicit guarantee of Beckett's rationality. But who is to say that aesthetic form is not itself a discursive fragment which arbitrarily traverses the ruins of the individual psyche? Who is to call formal closure healthy rather than neurotic? In Adorno's account, at any rate, Beckett's perspicacity arises paradoxically because he abandons reason, because he surrenders to the insane vision of the schizophrenic who, in Hamm's account, saw nothing in the world but ashes. If we are to explain the diverging accounts of Beckett's position it cannot be that Adorno consciously distinguishes between the author's security and the madness of the text. It seems instead that Adorno sees two things at once. He explicitly analyses the decline of subjectivity and the dialectical stagnation brought about by this decline. But what flashes up despite this analytic rigour is an image beyond contradiction, an image whose unblemished uniformity Adorno can describe only as the resolution of the conflicts he assumed to be determining for art. Where a play articulates the individual's disintegration, how can interpretation glimpse amidst this wreckage an image of perfection?

The play itself portrays an identical double consciousness in the character Clov. Having contrived to mislay the ladder despite the fact the stage space is both limited and almost bare, Clov comments: 'Sometimes I wonder if I'm in my right mind. Then it passes over and I'm as lucid as before' (Endgame

46-47). The remark appears to describe a brief lapse of reason, at the end of which Clov returns to sanity. Seven lines later, however, Clov makes another mistake, confusing the window which looks out on the sea with the one which commands a view of the land. 'What a mug I am!' he cries, then continues: 'Sometimes I wonder if I'm in my right senses. Then it passes off and I'm as intelligent as ever'(Endgame 47). The repetition of the phrase so soon after it was first spoken wipes away the first declaration as though it was never uttered. It erases the initial affirmation of lucidity. This inadvertent erasure stands the declarations on their head. We see not a stable subject who suffers occasional blackouts, but a subject whose blackouts consist in repeated, unrelated moments of insight. Clov's disintegration manifests itself in his cheery inability to grasp his own ruin.

Yet the moments of insight are not wholly unrelated. Clov carefully changes key words in the second declaration, so as not to repeat himself. 'My right senses' replaces 'my right mind'; intelligence lucidity. Clov is not a goldfish who every seven seconds innocently rediscovers the edge of his goldfish bowl. A sense of continuity remains, marking the space where personality used to be. But this substitute subjectivity has condensed into the desire to avoid repeating oneself, a desire which unwittingly highlights the similarity between the two events Clov hoped to distinguish. These useless changes, this indifferent difference which can barely be distinguished from identity, is all that is left, for Clov, of dialectics.

Clov's troubled lucidity offers a key to Adorno's reading of the play, to his schizophrenic assertion that Beckett is at once crippled by paradox and the embodiment of perfection. Faced with an image of collapse, the subject understands that she sees ruin and disaster, briefly believes indeed that she has lost her senses. But the fit passes, and she realizes she is as lucid as before. The logical reason for this disturbing structure is clear. The subject cannot reflect conceptually on her inability conceptually to reflect. She cannot <u>think</u> about the end of thought. The devastating irony of this paradox is that the disintegrating individual does not therefore decline into confusion, she does not stop conceptual reflection. Her thought instead acquires an eerie clairvoyance, an acuity which cannot grasp that this apparent stability is what most betrays her disintegration.

If it explains how thought emptily outlives the thinker, Clov's lucidity equally throws light on the post-dialectical perfection which Adorno unaccountably attributes to Beckett. Clov cannot reflect on the similarities, or for that matter on the differences between his fits of sanity. He can neither affirm or deny that he is repeating himself. Each fit remains uncomfortably isolated, remains unsettlingly self-contained. The Beckett that appears to Adorno is similarly self-contained, similarly unique. Adorno audaciously, or perhaps in horror and perplexity, interprets this self-containment as a transcendence of dialectics. To a reader schooled by the texts of the succeeding generation, the self-containment presages not so

much the transcendence as the demise of dialectics. Beckett's perfection prefigures the immaculacy of the Habermasian lifeworld, or the vacuous self-containment of Bohrer's aesthetic subjectivity. Adorno has become like his successors.

3. Conclusion

Adorno, bolstered by the conviction that concepts are not purely instrumental, turns an ambivalent reason against itself. He criticizes fallen concepts with the very rationality he rejects. Habermas, however, sees in negative dialectics nothing but a philosophy which, having undermined the grounds of its own critique, must turn to art to supply the norms it has unnecessarily denied itself. Where concepts, for Adorno, are at once instrumental and redemptive, at once manipulative and true, for Habermas they must be one or the other, a systemic incursion, or a prefiguring of ideal speech. They cannot be both. Habermas explains these differences by suggesting that negative dialectics erroneously privileges one of the three specific logics of modernity. Adorno, in Habermas's account, subjects the autonomous spheres of science and morality to the particular logic of modern art. It is this predisposition for the aesthetic which makes him so oversensitive to traces of abstraction in rational discourse. It is this predisposition which leads him eventually to replace philosophical argument with a form of aesthetic self-undermining. Yet Habermas's explanation misrecognizes Adorno's philosophy, judging it by a model of critique to which Adorno does not subscribe. It attributes to Adorno a search for sure-fire norms, despite the fact that his vertiginous brand of critique rejects such norms from the outset. The most telling evidence of this misrecognition is Habermas's inability to explain why Adorno questions the very logic he is said to privilege, to explain

why Adorno on occasions so mercilessly criticizes art.

Behind this misrecognition is a changed attitude to contradiction. Where, for Adorno, the ambivalences traced in theoretical speculations are the index of real aporias, for Habermas such ambivalences are at best the expression of an aesthetic idiosyncrasy, at worst philosophical inconsistency. Contradictions, for Habermas, have lost their social substance. One possible response to this development would be to rebuke Habermas for ignoring real conflicts - for underestimating, for instance, the ambiguities of his own communicative norms - and urge instead a return to Adorno's more paradoxical style.(19) But what if Habermas's aversion to contradiction itself represents an historical shift? What if his perplexity at negative dialectics itself points back to the society he no longer discerns in Adorno's aporias?(20) Rather than returning to Adorno, it would in this case seem more productive critically to reconstruct the figure of thought which has succeeded Adorno's dialectics, and to account, at some level, for the change of theoretical paradigm. This reconstruction and explanation have been the aim of my argument.

Habermas substitutes for negative dialectics a double strategy. Whilst tracking the growth of economic and political systems out of the communicative structures of the lifeworld, he insists, in a contrary movement, that communication is never implicated in the destructive effects of the systems it unleashes. The lifeworld is at once coupled to and uncoupled from the system. The problem with this double vision is not so

much the logical difficulty Habermas has defending his second movement. It is not the metaphors of bodily coherence and spatial separation by which he cuts communicative rationality off from the system even before he has proved language's normative purity. The problem is more a divergence between appearance and reality, between the air of theoretical sovereignty conveyed by the vocabulary of tactics and choices, and the inability, on closer reading, of Habermas, or of his close associate Wellmer, to control the double logic they adopt. The principle of division which shields language from systemic distortions develops a momentum of its own, effectively reversing the image which Habermas presents of his own undertaking. Where he claims to map out the connections, interrelations and affinities between social spheres whilst simultaneously respecting the differences between the varying logics, where he claims theoretically to bind together society in a qualitatively new, open-ended model of totality, what we see instead is an accelerating process of distinction and separation, an explosion of differentiations which he is unable to rearticulate. Rather than producing a coherent, critical totality, the double logic generates a potentially limitless plethora of divisions, between spheres and subsystems, but also within individual logics and discourses, a spread of categorical distinctions which Habermas and Wellmer can bind together only rhetorically. The double strategy turns out to be lopsided, to be a mechanical compulsion to divide which the theoretical subject is, despite herself, unable to contain. Is

this theoretical schizophrenia the figure of thought which replaces negative dialectics?

Habermas's theory is not the only position disrupted by a double consciousness. At the opposite end of the theoretical spectrum, Karl Heinz Bohrer betrays similarly divided allegiances. He wishes to write a theory of non-identity, a philosophy which stays true to the heterogeneity and irreducible contingency of objects themselves. But he is at the same time incapable of conceiving this radical difference as anything other than an empty space. The theoretical reason for this double consciousness is Bohrer's horror of mediation. Where, for Benjamin or Adorno, objects appear as both quotidian and epiphanic, both socially determined and laden with messianic hope, they cannot appear to Bohrer even slightly contaminated by society without being drained of their emancipatory potential. Phenomena which seem briefly to presage a new reason, be they surreal bric-a-brac, works of art or unexplored corners of subjectivity, are, the moment they show the merest trace of external determination, transformed into the abstract imprints of an alienated and alienating society. All that is then left of the non-identity which Bohrer craves is an empty space, and Bohrer's frustration that he is unable to fill out this ineffable blank.

Where Habermas compulsively divides, despite his desire for rearticulation, Bohrer compulsively drains his epiphany of content despite his desire for non-identity. Bohrer's double consciousness, and his apparent unwillingness to admit

contradiction into his theory, have their roots in an inability to mediate. The same inability explains Habermas's dilemmas. Though Habermas can distinguish between categories and concepts, he cannot bind together the terms differentiated. Terms, once divided, can only be further analysed, further distinguished until they are as drained of substance as Bohrer's temporal revelation, or his aesthetic subjectivity. Having thus isolated the failing which unites the two theorists, it is tempting to suppose that a judicious dose of mediation would clear up the difficulties of either theory. Dialectically reinvigorated, Habermas's approach would successfully recombine the proliferating fragments of modern society, Bohrer's would regain access to the heterogeneity that so consistently eludes it. Yet the very frequency with which theories are unable to mediate between their terms - Habermas and Bohrer are but two looming examples - suggests that more is at stake than theoretical error. A change has apparently occurred which imposes on Adorno's successors a subjectivity fractured and frustrated by its inability to conceptualize contradiction. How are we to understand this new subjectivity?

Adorno's essay on the essay offers a first clue by clarifying the relations between mediation and the subject. Though the contradictions and ambivalences of an object might appear to be qualities which the individual passively registers, Adorno questions any such clear division between subject and object to insist that things acquire heterogeneity and complexity only through the culture that mediates,

fragments and destroys them. Society's interaction with objects unpacks their non-identity, bestowing on them a history and scattered identity that, spared this disruption, they would never have enjoyed. This social mediation is carried out by individual subjects. But the individual's relation to the history of which she is the inevitable agent, changes as society grows more complex. Whilst in a small organic society it seems plausible to suppose subjects aware of the patterns they weave with individual objects, in more sprawling societies, such as the Germany of the early twentieth century in which Adorno and Benjamin grew up, the subject's contact with the larger patterns of non-identity is reduced to the isolated punctual epiphanies that Benjamin so eloquently describes in his essay on surrealism. In the face of this attenuation, however, Benjamin and Adorno maintain that the subject can reconstruct the history of which she is the unwitting agent, can retrace the constellation she, in her momentary revelation, but dimly intuits. Her guide in this reconstructive labour is language itself, which contains, for Adorno, a hidden record of heterogeneity, a record waiting to be pieced together by attentive and imaginative analysis. Non-identity is the process whereby the essay-writer retrieves the hidden history to which she constantly contributes, recovers the interconnections and conflicts in and between objects, reconstructs the larger picture in which alone a thing attains its contradictory identity.

Habermas and Bohrer apparently have no inkling of this larger picture. They live - if the evidence of their texts is to be believed - in a society in which objects, to the subjects who explore them, bear no trace of the contradictory constellations in which they are nevertheless embedded; in which insight, if it arrives, remains luminously vacant. They inhabit a world which appears, from the subject's point of view, devoid of mediation. This loss of mediation changes the subject's attitude to contradiction. Where society no longer appears as a weave of ambiguous, conflictual phenomena, a theory which itself consists in nothing but conflict and ambiguity will seem either wilful or, which is much the same thing, a work of art. More importantly, the loss of mediation transforms subjectivity itself. When she loses contact with the broader process of history, with the larger movement of society, the subject loses contact with herself.

This idea seems counterintuitive. What have the private events which make up the subject's inner colloquies to do with the larger movement of her social environment? What has self-reflexion to do with the subject's relation to society? Manfred Frank, a stalwart defender of subjectivity in the face of postmodern declarations of its demise, himself explains the connection, though without drawing my gloomy conclusions, in a long essay entitled Die Unhintergehbarkeit der Individualität.(21) It is worth briefly surveying his argument so as more exactly to delineate what the subject's collapse entails. Frank starts out from the assumption that accompanying

all consciousness is an element of self-consciousness - the awareness that these thoughts are my thoughts, are the irreducibly particular response to my personal situation. He then asks how we can describe this self-consciousness without assimilating it to general categories, to abstract concepts such as subjectivity, or indeed self-consciousness, which deny the specificity of the experience. How can we respect the individuality of the thinker rounding on her own thoughts? One possibility, following analytic philosophy, is to tie self-awareness to the particular body which is its vehicle in time and space. But this link between consciousness and an individual person, for Frank, mistakes thought's defining characteristic. It ignores the fact that no description of damage done to my leg, no catalogue, however exhaustive, of the swelling, the fracture, the bleeding, can capture the consciousness of pain I experience when wounded. No record of physical distress can properly include the psychic event of my agony. Mental events enjoy in this respect, if not autonomy from the body, an element of excess. They are a supplement which no merely somatic account exhausts.(22) Most importantly, they are a supplement which is by no means stable. The states of anguish, depression, love or hilarity which Frank refuses to equate with bodies, even the most individual, are not fixed units of mental behaviour. They are not experiences we could capture in semantically predefined categories (a pregiven state called 'pain', a pregiven state called 'amusement'). They are as particular, idiosyncratic and variable as the individuals

who experience them.(23)

The subjective consciousness which Frank hopes to redeem is thus a self-awareness neither reducible to physiological descriptions, nor divided into pre-established emotional units. This idiosyncratic lucidity appears to scorn not just philosophical explanation but all intelligible expression. It seems as stubbornly ineffable as Bohrer's aesthetic subject. Yet Frank insists that his subjective states are mediated by, are indeed inseparable from language, and, borrowing from Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, he sketches a theory of communication to match.(24) Rejecting the notion that the meanings of words are fixed by grammar and dictionaries, Frank argues instead that the connotations of terms are established in the process of conversation, in explorative exchanges between subjects who come to understand what they experience only by talking to their fellow individuals. In these conversations, idiosyncratic redefinitions of terms, twists of meaning to suit the particular situation, far outweigh the codified elements of meaning. Individual creativity far outweighs convention. Yet an understanding, a shared articulation is reached nevertheless. By a process of mutual interpretation, partners in dialogue achieve a provisional consensus about their idiosyncratic mental states.

The subjectivity which Frank explores and defends is thus not, as the subject is often assumed to be, a unified or unifying principle: 'was immer 'Individualität' noch meinen mag, sie ist jedenfalls als der direkte Widersacher des

Gedankens der Einheit und Abgeschlossenheit der Struktur [...] zu denken'.(25) It consists instead in punctual moments of lucidity whose texture and specificity the subject comes to grasp in the process of dialogue. Despite this punctuality, however, Frank insists that subjectivity does not degenerate into a series of unrelated epiphanies of the sort enjoyed, or endured, by Clov. Though the meanings established in each conversation are unique, their uniqueness can be perceived only against a background of conventional definitions. (Of course, this background equally does not exist independently of individual exchanges, but is something interlocutors must together posit as the foil for their self-explorations.) If the semantic content of each conversation is measured up against existing language, so too each new moment of subjectivity, each mental state is grasped only against the background of existing accounts of that subject's individual odyssey, understood only as it is contrasted with versions of the subject's life whether individually remembered or presented to her by the expectations and presuppositions of her interlocutors. Significantly, it is having only tantalizingly gestured towards this hermeneutic self-creation, having but briefly referred to the process by which isolated instants of self-awareness would be bound together to form an identity that Frank's argument breaks off, finishing up with a self-deprecating quotation from Hume to the effect that to give an account of this interpretative self-fashioning would be a difficulty 'too hard for [his] understanding'.(26) Frank thus suggests that to have a

continuous, self-conscious identity, the subject must piece together the records of past actions, of past encounters in the field of her social interaction. He presents self-reflexion as an event which depends, despite its privacy, on its social environment, on interlocutors, past roles and former conversations. The subject comes to recognize her own individuality, in his account, only through society. At the same time, his final hesitancy betrays that this regrouping, this synthesizing endeavour, is now barely conceivable, prompting the question what happens to the subject once she can no longer piece together her identity. Habermas's and Bohrer's texts give the answer. The subject disintegrates into fragments, into moments of experience which cannot be brought to bear on each other - into a desire to reintegrate which jostles indifferently alongside the compulsion to divide; into a longing for alterity which uselessly accompanies the inability to perceive anything but pre-fixed categories and abstract nouns. Self-awareness itself shatters into particles as isolated and eerily univocal, despite their multiplicity, as the objects, language games and myriad different images the subject encounters in society.(27)

But what has thus divided subjectivity? What has broken the links that bound consciousness not just to itself but to larger social patterns of non-identity and contradiction? The answer is: an explosion of the social totality, the logic, if not the causes of which Adorno's texts on pop culture explore in their analyses of mechanical reproduction. Like the radio

symphony, society must now be grasped as an ever-expanding, untotalizable array of fragments that, in their shattering of totality, cease to conflict or compete with each other, which indeed cease in any emphatic sense to relate to each other at all.(28) It is this shattering, a shattering which Adorno observes at every level of the culture industry, which so fatally fissures the subject's self-consciousness, drawing the hapless, dissolving individual into a scramble of sound-bytes and simulacra that ceaselessly promise a heightened veracity they simultaneously shamelessly debunk.

If Adorno's texts analyse this loss of contradiction, if they explore and denounce this loss of identity, they simultaneously exemplify it. Adorno hopes to outwit the destructive logic of pop culture with a double perspective that defends art as a realm apart from the neutralized oppositions of the culture industry even as it concedes that high culture has been fully subjected to the logic of Hollywood and television. This double vision is but the most extreme form of a figure of thought to be found throughout Adorno's texts, a figure which stretches dialectics almost to the point of paradox, whilst nevertheless maintaining that one side of the aporia retains the upper hand. This coexistence of irreconcilable terms, however, this arranging side-by-side of mutually excluding states of affairs uncannily resembles the disintegrating logic Adorno abhors in pop culture. Far from wrong-footing jazz and film, Adorno's analyses of high and mass culture reproduce the very structure by which the culture

industry hollows out dynamic contradictions and neutralizes authentic art. His philosophy embodies the same mechanism as Hollywood and jazz.

This covert affinity leaves its scar on his theory. The oppositions he hopes to maintain over and above his paradoxes, the distinction between art and its commodified antithesis, the qualitative difference between Schönberg and Stravinsky, fold in on themselves. What this collapse gives rise to, however, is not an overt paradoxology of the sort with which Adorno occasionally toys. The emphatic oppositions do not give way to a permanent ambivalence, to the undecidable simultaneity of irreconcilables, but to isolated, undialectical images that baffle by their very perfection. The essay on Beckett is an unwitting first example of this new figure of thought, as well as an attempt to reflect on its causes. In my reconstructive narrative, the essay is the bridge between the dialectical arguments of Adorno's generation, and the non-dialectical alternatives of his successors. The non-dialectical structure arises because the metaperspective from which ambivalences could be ordered and perceived disappears with the totality that once bound terms together in relations of conflict. The coherent subject who could grasp the paradoxes is herself the correlate of the patterns of difference and non-identity she attempts to retrieve. Her coherence diminishes as the patterns she confronts grow dimmer. Though Adorno's essay reflects on the subject's fragility, though it outrageously contends that rational thought has degenerated into a routinized reflex, that

dialectics themselves have ground to a halt, it does not consciously grasp the fuller implications of its argument. Only its metaphors register that the subject - in this case, Adorno himself - does not encounter an undecidable paradox (for example, the genius of Schönberg unthinkably combined with the authoritarian stasis, with the downside of Stravinsky). He sees instead a state beyond contradiction, a miraculous unity of a Schönberg and a Stravinsky who have both transcended their necessary failings, a post-dialectical perfection.

This post-dialectical perfection transforms our understanding of Habermas and Bohrer. They appeared on first reading merely insensitive to the contradictions and ambivalences which are the defining attribute, the motivation and the goal of texts by Adorno or Benjamin. Now, however, their imperviousness to contradiction appears an unsuspected index of truth. Their impatience of ambivalence, and their failure to mediate between conflicting terms both register - however unconsciously - a movement beyond dialectics unwillingly initiated by Adorno's own texts, a movement beyond dialectics which is the trace left in philosophical discourse by the pristine, self-contained, unthinkable blocks in which a fragmented society is experienced. Though Habermas's rejection of negative dialectics travesties Adorno, it must unfortunately be grasped as inevitable and true.

For all their surprising veracity, however, the figures of thought sketched by Habermas and Bohrer - the fractured consciousness, the empty epiphany, the compulsive

differentiation - do not yet seem adequate responses to the loss of contradiction they typify. What thought, what theory could more convincingly engage with the logic of simulation? One solution is a narrative inured to the paradoxes of its own position, oblivious to the accusation that it cannot know what it claims to know, which soberly retraces thought's dissolution, ironically trusting in the ability of language games to play themselves out without a self-reflexive subject to command and control them; a Borgesian, or Foucauldian narrative that creates itself out of its own inexorable, if self-destructive logic; a sardonic self-indictment for which my argument has been perhaps the tentative preparation. Alternatively, thought could consciously affirm the isolated, post-dialectical fragments, if not as Bataille's 'domain of delight, bravado and irrational audacity', then as experiences of seductive intensity. This approach would surrender to individual images, foregoing the desire to draw connections which it could not substantiate, yield to the luminosity of each experience, endeavouring in its surrender to articulate the experience in all its splendid isolation. Perhaps the very excess of the perfection thus recorded could silently pay tribute to the contradictions and complexities, to the patterns of conflict and non-identity that the subject can no longer imagine - as a photorealist painting, or the incandescent images of advertising and film, seem to question the reality of the objects they so faithfully represent. Perhaps this

abandoning of dialectics could redeem the heterogeneity each sound-byte at once intensifies and betrays.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialektik der Aufklärung (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1969), p.126.
2. The best introductory texts on Adorno and the Frankfurt School are by Martin Jay, his Adorno (London: Fontana, 1984) and his The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950 (London: Heinemann, 1973). Rolf Wiggershaus, Die Frankfurter Schule: Geschichte, Theoretische Entwicklung, Politische Bedeutung (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1986) is more detailed than Jay and covers the ground up to Adorno's death in 1969. It is an excellent reference book, but given the very wealth of material, not so compelling a read as Jay's elegant summaries.
3. Dialektik der Aufklärung, p.12.
4. In the preface to Dialektik der Aufklärung, the authors declare: 'Wir hegen keinen Zweifel - und darin liegt unsere petitio principii -, dass die Freiheit in der Gesellschaft vom aufklärenden Denken unabtrennbar ist'(p.3).
5. cf. Schönberg's letter of 5.12.49 to Hans Heinz Stückenschmidt, quoted in Walter Levin, 'Adornos Zwei Stücke für Streichquartett op.2', Musik-Konzepte 63/64 (Theodor W. Adorno: Der Komponist) January 1989, pp.76-77. Adorno's treatment of Schönberg is discussed in Part III.
6. Theodor W. Adorno, Versuch über Wagner, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 13 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), p.25.
7. Theodor W. Adorno, Ästhetische Theorie (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp.346-347.
8. cf. Hartmut Scheible, 'Krise des Scheins: Theodor W. Adorno', Wahrheit und Subjekt: Ästhetik im bürgerlichen Zeitalter (Bern: Francke, 1984), pp.444-504.
9. Habermas construes mimesis as Adorno's unambiguous alternative to a reified reason, ironing out the ambiguities of the concept in a footnote, cf. Jürgen Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns Vol.1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.512.
10. cf. Peter Bürger, 'Das Altern der Moderne' in Ludwig von Friedeburg und Jürgen Habermas, eds., Adorno-Konferenz 1983 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.177-197.
11. Karl Marcus Michel, 'Versuch die "Ästhetische Theorie" zu verstehen' in Burkhardt Lindner und W. Martin Lüdke, eds., Materialien zur ästhetischen Theorie Th. W. Adornos: Konstruktion der Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp.41-107.
12. Dialektik der Aufklärung, p.143.
13. Norbert Rath, Adornos kritische Theorie (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1982); Lambert Zuidervaart, Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991).
14. Comments on de Sade in Dialektik der Aufklärung give an idea of the effect Adorno and Horkheimer intend by their own dark inversions. De Sade is praised for having written: 'die Geschichte des Denkens als Organs der Herrschaft'. The authors then comment: 'Indem [das Denken] nun im eigenen Spiegel vor

sich selbst erschrickt, eröffnet es den Blick auf das, was über es hinaus liegt,' adding: 'nur die Übertreibung ist wahr'(p.126).

15. Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia, Gesammelte Schriften Vol.4 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.281.

16. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 6 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.30, where Adorno comments on the way unambiguous conclusions cannot help but draw our attention to the arguments they hope to exclude, adding: 'Urteil und Schluss, die Denkformen, deren auch Kritik des Denkens nicht entraten kann, enthalten in sich kritische Keime...'.

17. Theodor W. Adorno, Philosophie der neuen Musik, Gesammelte Schriften Vol.12 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), p.163; cf. also Peter Bürger, Zur Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.132-133; David Roberts, Art and Enlightenment: Aesthetic Theory after Adorno (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

18. Peter Osbourne, 'Torn Halves: The Dialectics of a Cultural Dichotomy', News from Nowhere No.7 (Winter 1989), pp.49-63; Sigrid Weigel, '"Leib und Bildraum"(Benjamin) - Zur Problematik und Darstellbarkeit einer weiblichen Dialektik der Aufklärung' in Marlis Krüger, ed., Was heisst hier eigentlich feministisch? Zur theoretischen Diskussion in den Geisteswissenschaften (Bremen: Donat, 1993), pp.229-250; Andrew Hewitt, 'A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment? Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited', New German Critique 56 (Summer 1992), pp.143-170.

19. Gillian Rose, 'From Speculative to Dialectical Thinking - Hegel and Adorno', Judaism and Modernity (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp.53-63.

20. For an excellent example of an analysis which focuses on the figures of a philosopher's thought cf. Peter Bürger, 'Heidegger: Das Denken und der Tod', Das Denken des Herrn: Bataille zwischen Hegel und dem Surrealismus (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp.156-164.

21. G. W. F. Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke Vol.3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.36.

22. William James, A Pluralistic Universe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp.14-15. The passage is quoted in Richard Bernstein, 'An Allegory of Modernity/Postmodernity: Habermas and Derrida', The New Constellation (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp.199-229. Bernstein refreshingly reads Habermas and Derrida not merely as the exponents of competing philosophical positions, but as authors who both capture something of the society they inhabit. He reads their positions symptomatically. Peter Bürger, in his Denken des Herrn: Bataille zwischen Hegel und dem Surrealismus (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), equally looks for an approach to postmodern texts which does not find logical faults in their argument and swiftly move on, but which takes seriously their attempt to break with dialectical patterns of thought. Bürger's ingenious strategy is to read postmodern texts as an expression of dialectics as they appear to the master of Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, once the slave

has lost the dynamism attributed to him by Hegel, Marx and Kojève. He thereby insists on poststructuralism's necessary if negative relation to dialectical thought whilst offering a metaphor with which to articulate their undeniable difference. Bernstein and Bürger's arguments could be taken to be the inspiration for my own.

23. For good overviews of arguments about postmodernity see Mike Featherstone, Consumer Culture and Postmodernism (London: Sage, 1991), pp.1-12; David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp.10-65; Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991), pp.1-66. Peter Bürger suggests we view the debates over postmodernity as 'ein verändertes Selbstverständnis [der Moderne], das sich noch nicht begriffen hat', Peter Bürger, Prosa der Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), p.7.

24. Jürgen Habermas, Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), p.130. Habermas's insistence that Dialektik der Aufklärung must be read as the reaction to a context which we do not share draws on Helmut Dubiel's study Wissenschaftsorganisation und politische Erfahrung: Studien zur frühen kritischen Theorie (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), which traces the influence of the political climate of the 1930s on the development of Adorno and Horkheimer's thought.

25. Fredric Jameson, Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic (London: Verso, 1990), p.11-12. This pessimistic grasp of society does not differ as greatly as one would expect from more optimistic theories of pop culture. Michel de Certeau, whose The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) David Harvey enlists in support of a more flexible view of day-to-day practice (The Condition of Postmodernity, pp.213-214) himself posits a society at once all-embracing and immutable. Culture becomes in his arguments a second nature which the subject can momentarily outwit. But though each of her actions is subversive and free, each victory is ephemeral and ineffectual. Whatever she wins, she does not keep.(p.xix) Each idiosyncratic, personal interpretation, each improvised urban cartography leaves society exactly as it was. Each day, the subject starts again from scratch. And culture remains unchanged.

26. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, p.x. Jameson is actually talking about Benjamin and the aestheticization of politics, but the phrase neatly characterizes the shift from Adorno's theory to the more insouciant tone of postmodern discussions of pop culture.

27. The crucial question of which subject survives sufficiently in tact to write - or even to read - a dialectical theory of society is mooted by Jameson, but not answered, Late Marxism, p.66. This unanswered question potentially undermines his attempt to resuscitate Adorno's dialectics. For a searing critique of Jameson's book, cf. Peter Osbourne, 'A Marxism for the Postmodern: Jameson's Adorno', New German Critique No.56

(Spring-Summer 1992), pp.171-192.
28. cf. Peter Dews, Logics of Disintegration: Poststructuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory (London: Verso, 1987), p.234, where Dews interprets the arguments of Derrida and Lyotard, but not those of Habermas, as 'a shattered mirror of the logic of disintegration' endemic in the culture industry.
29. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 6 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp.16-18.
30. Adorno's concept of the culture industry, and the criticisms it has provoked are discussed at length in Part III.
31. cf. Peter Dews, Logics of Disintegration: Poststructuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory (London: Verso, 1987), in which Dews uses Adorno's theory as a yardstick against which to measure the undialectical, and for Dews incoherent arguments of Lyotard and Derrida, whilst at the same time criticizing negative dialectics from a Habermasian perspective.

Part I: Aesthetic Appearances

1. Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable in The Beckett Trilogy (London: Pan Books, 1979), p.267.
2. Jürgen Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, 2 volumes (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), Volume 1, p.518. Future references to this text will be given in the notes using the abbreviation ThKH. The volume number will be given in roman numerals, the page number in arabic, eg. ThKH I 518. For further overviews of Habermas's critique of Adorno cf. Axel Honneth, 'Communication and Reconciliation: Habermas's Critique of Adorno', Telos 39 (Spring 1979), pp.45-61; Peter U. Hohendahl, 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas's Critique of the Frankfurt School', New German Critique 35 (Spring/Summer 1985), pp.3-26.
3. Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 6 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.27.
4. Jürgen Habermas, 'Ein philosophierender Intellektueller', Philosophisch-politische Profile, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.165.
5. Jürgen Habermas, 'Urgeschichte der Subjektivität und verwildete Selbstbehauptung', Philosophisch-politische Profile, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.176.
6. 'Urgeschichte...' p.177.
7. cf. also Hartmut Scheible, Wahrheit und Subjekt: Ästhetik im bürgerlichen Zeitalter (Bern: Francke, 1984), pp.482-483; and in a slightly different vein, Jean-Francois Lyotard, 'Adorno as the Devil', Telos 19 (Spring 1974), pp.127-137.
8. Albrecht Wellmer, Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne: Vernunftkritik nach Adorno (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), p.19. Further references will be given using the abbreviation Moderne und Postmoderne.
9. Moderne und Postmoderne 87.
10. 'Gepflogenheiten'; 'die gemeinsame menschliche Handlungsweise' in Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, Werkausgabe Vol. I (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), p.344; p.346.
11. Moderne und Postmoderne 112.
12. Axel Honneth, Kritik der Macht: Reflexionsstufen einer kritischen Gesellschaftstheorie (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp.63-66.
13. The Habermasians are in no doubt as to Adorno's philosophical abilities. As Habermas comments in an interview: 'Adorno war ein Genie, ich sage das ohne alle Zweischneidigkeit'. Josef Früchtl and Maria Calloni, eds., Geist gegen den Zeitgeist: Erinnern an Adorno (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), p.51.
14. Thomas Baumeister und Jens Kulenkampf, 'Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik: zu Adornos "Ästhetische Theorie"' in neue hefte für philosophie No. 5 (1973), p.96.
15. cf. Rüdiger Bubner, 'Kann Theorie ästhetisch werden?', Ästhetische Erfahrung (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp.70-98.

16. ThKH I 512-515, see also Axel Honneth, Kritik der Macht, p.82.
17. Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Verschlingung von Mythos und Aufklärung: Horkheimer und Adorno', Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp.130-157.
18. Jürgen Habermas, Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), p.136. Future references to this text will be given in the notes using the abbreviation PhDM.
19. PhDM 155.
20. Jürgen Habermas, Philosophische-politische Profile, pp.160-161.
21. cf. Axel Honneth, Kritik der Macht, p.56, where Honneth explicitly comments on Adorno's aesthetic notion of subjectivity.
22. cf. Friedemann Grenz, 'Zur architektonischen Stellung der Ästhetik in der Philosophie Adornos' in Heinz Ludwig Arnold, ed., Text und Kritik Sonderband: Theodor W. Adorno (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1977), pp. 119-129; Jay Bernstein, 'Art against Enlightenment: Adorno's Critique of Habermas' in Andrew Benjamin, ed., The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.49-66; but also Hent de Vries, Theologie im Pianissimo und Zwischen Rationalität und Dekonstruktion: Die Aktualität der Denkfiguren Adornos und Levinas (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989), and Robert Hullot-Kentor, 'Back to Adorno', Telos 81 (Fall 1989), pp.5-29 - all of whom challenge the role attributed to art by Baumeister and Kulenkampf, and by Habermas.
23. Habermas acknowledges that mimesis, as it is described in Dialektik der Aufklärung, is ambivalent, but he hopes in a footnote to distinguish a pure, utopian mimesis from a counterpart entangled with, and compromised by terror. The purer state exists, if nowhere else, in memory, cf. ThKH I 512.
24. Adorno's method of immanent critique is defended against Habermasian reinterpretation by James Schmidt in his article 'Offensive Critical Theory? Reply to Honneth', Telos 39 (Spring 1979), pp.62-70.
25. cf. ThkH I 512, note 111; Moderne und Postmoderne 113, note 77. The ostensible difference between the positions of Habermas and Honneth on one side, and Wellmer on the other is that Wellmer is less keen to blame art for the self-undermining of negative dialectics, preferring the earlier suggestion that Adorno illicitly retains theological categories. The difference between aesthetic and theological explanations of Adorno's quandary is not so large as it might seem. Both ideas presume that Adorno requires a sure-fire norm. Both ideas attribute to Adorno a model of critique that he would not recognize.
26. Negative Dialektik p.144.
27. Negative Dialektik p.144.
28. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialektik der Aufklärung (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1969), p.46. Further references will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation DdA.
29. Adorno, Drei Studien zu Hegel, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 5

(Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.257.
30. In one of the records of the discussions held between Adorno and Horkheimer in Californian exile it is reported of Horkheimer: 'er möchte [die Positivisten] retten; wenn sie wüssten, was sie alles zerstört haben, müssten sie furchtbar erschrecken, und dann wäre die Sache in Ordnung', cf. Max Horkheimer, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 12, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1985), pp.447-448.
31. ThKH II 185-189.
32. cf. Charles Taylor, Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2 (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1985), p.141. Habermas gives few concrete examples, other than the extended discussion of the building site. The examples I give in the following pages are my own.
33. ThKH II 220.
34. ibid.
35. Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt', Kleine politische Schriften I-IV (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp.444-464.
36. PhDM 405.
37. ThKH II 268-274.
38. PhDM 405.
39. ThKH II 258-259.
40. ThKH II 264-266.
41. ThKH II 232.
42. ThKH II 278.
43. ThKH II 285.
44. ThKH II 282.
45. ThKH II 522.
46. PhDM 400.
47. ThKH II 293.
48. ThKH II 278.
49. cf. eg. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, Werkausgabe Vol. I (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp.254-257.
50. Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony and Solidarity (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1989), p.8; p.21.
51. ThKH II 192.
52. ThKH II 258.
53. ThKH II 522.
54. PhDM 423.
55. PhDM 422.
56. ThKH II 277.
57. ThKH II 278, 293.
58. ThKH II 233-246.
59. ThKH II 275.
60. PhDM 405.
61. This is the kind of theory of language proposed by Rorty in the first chapter of his Contingency, Irony, Solidarity, as well as in the essay 'Unfamiliar Noises: Hesse and Davidson on metaphor' in his Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1 (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1991), pp.162-172.
62. PhDM 376-379.

63. ThKH II 222.
64. ThKH I 517-518.
65. Max Horkheimer, 'Die gegenwärtige Lage der Sozialphilosophie und die Aufgaben eines Instituts für Sozialforschung' in his Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 3, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1988), pp.20-35.
66. cf. Max Horkheimer, 'Materialismus und Moral', Gesammelte Schriften Vol.3, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 1988), pp.111-149.
67. For a survey of this period of Frankfurt School thought, which draws particularly on Max Horkheimer's 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 4, ed. Alfred Schmidt and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1988), pp.162-216, cf. Richard Wolin, 'Critical Theory and the Dialectic of Rationalism', New German Critique 41 (Spring-Summer 1987), pp.23-52.
68. For a history of this political disillusion see Helmut Dubiel, Wissenschaftsorganisation und politische Erfahrung: Studien zur frühen kritischen Theorie (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1978).
69. cf. Allen W. Wood, 'Habermas's Defence of Rationalism', New German Critique 35 (Spring/Summer 1985), p.162; and Jonathan Culler, Framing the Sign: Criticism and its Institutions (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.194-195: 'The more one reads Habermas, the more circular his foundational project appears. The ideal speech situation, the model for an ideal society said to be inescapably presupposed in communicative action itself, emerges as the result of a series of exclusions of those communicative activities that do not seem to presuppose these norms...'
70. cf. J. M. Bernstein, The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p.247. Bernstein observes, in a similar vein, that, by refusing to 'recognize itself in its non-identical other', by drawing, that is, so rigid a line between itself and reified systems, Habermas's communication betrays in the form of its arguments the non-identity it wants in its content to promote.
71. cf. the first section of Jacques Derrida, Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre (Paris: Galilée, 1984).
72. Richard Rorty actively urges Habermas to abandon attempts theoretically to legitimate his critical strategies in his article 'Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity' in Richard Bernstein, ed., Habermas and Modernity (Cambridge: Polity, 1985), pp.161-175.
73. Nancy Fraser, 'What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender', Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp.113-143; cf. also Seyla Benhabib, Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory (New York: Columbia U. P., 1986), pp.251-252.
74. Joel Whitebrook, 'The Problem of Nature in Habermas', Telos 40 (Summer 1979), p.51.
75. Martin Jay, 'Habermas and Modernity', Fin-de-Siècle

Socialism and Other Essays (London: Routledge, 1988), p.129.
76. David Ingram, 'Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment', New German Critique 51 (Spring/Summer 1991), pp.67-103.
77. Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt', Kleine Politische Schriften I-IV (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp.444-464.
78. Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt', Kleine Politische Schriften I-IV (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.454. Further references will be given in the notes using the abbreviation 'Die Moderne'.
79. 'Die Moderne' p.461.
80. Peter Bürger, 'The Significance of the Avant-garde for Contemporary Aesthetics: A Reply to Jürgen Habermas', New German Critique 22 (Winter 1981), p.21.
81. Peter Bürger, 'Über die Wirklichkeit der Kunst: Zur Ästhetik in der "Ästhetik des Widerstands"' in Alexander Stephan, ed., Die Ästhetik des Widerstands (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.285-295. Bürger shows how certain narrative devices - Weiss's unusual attribution of authorial objectivity to a first person narrator; his presentation of works of art in the novel as open-ended processes rather than self-contained structures - question traditional aesthetic categories, blurring the divisions between art and everyday interaction. The guarantor of this new aesthetic practice is not, as in the Habermas essay, the individual reader, but rather the author himself, Peter Weiss, whose personal integrity forges new links between art, ethical discussions and politics. Not every subject but perhaps some exemplary individuals are in this account strong enough to break down the barriers of autonomy.
82. 'Die Moderne' p.456.
83. Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp.33-84.
84. 'Die Moderne' pp.450-451.
85. 'Die Moderne' p.447.
86. Peter U. Hohendahl, 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas's Critique of the Frankfurt School', New German Critique 35 (Spring/Summer 1985), p.23.
87. Both of these arguments find exemplary expression in the chapter entitled 'Gesellschaft' in Theodor W. Adorno, Ästhetische Theorie, Gesammelte Schriften Vol.7 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp.334-387.
88. PhDM 400-401.
89. Martin Jay, 'Habermas and Postmodernism', Fin-de-Siècle Socialism and Other Essays, pp.137-148; see also Martin Jay, Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), pp.462-509, where Jay gives a more critical account of the decentred, open-ended totality towards which Habermas strives.
90. Jean-François Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism', The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Manchester: M.U.P., 1984), p.72.
91. Jonathan Culler, Framing the Sign: Criticism and its Institutions, pp.190-200; George A. Trey. 'The Philosophical

Discourse of Modernity: Habermas's Postmodern Adventure', Diacritics Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 1989), pp.67-79.
92. Martin Jay, in contrast, in his article 'The Debate over Performative Contradiction: Habermas vs. the Poststructuralists' in Axel Honneth, et al., eds., Zwischenbetrachtungen: Im Prozess der Aufklärung (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp.171-189, praises Habermas for what he calls the 'performative consistency' of his texts - the perfect match between Habermas's communicative ideals and the texts in which these ideals are conveyed and defended (p.171). However, Jay equally points out an inconsistency in Habermas's approach, commenting that Habermas criticizes subject-centred philosophies whilst himself implicitly depending on a sovereign subject (p.188).
93. Moderne und Postmoderne 27, 103, 163.
94. Wellmer attributes to Adorno what he calls 'eine eigentümliche Verengung des Blicks', Moderne und Postmoderne 103, 163.
95. Moderne und Postmoderne 68-69.
96. Moderne und Postmoderne 163, 28, 104.
97. Moderne und Postmoderne 7.
98. Moderne und Postmoderne 34.
99. Moderne und Postmoderne 35.
100. Moderne und Postmoderne 35.
101. Moderne und Postmoderne 35. Lambert Zuidervaart also takes issue with this distinction in his discussion of Wellmer in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1991), pp.288-296.
102. Moderne und Postmoderne 33-34.
103. Moderne und Postmoderne 126.
104. Moderne und Postmoderne 100.
105. Moderne und Postmoderne 129.
106. cf. the essay 'Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne: Vernunftkritik nach Adorno', Moderne und Postmoderne 48-114. For a comparison of Wellmer's and Adorno's accounts of subjectivity cf. Joel Whitebrook, 'From Schoenberg to Odysseus: Aesthetic, Psychic and Social Synthesis in Adorno and Wellmer', New German Critique 58 (Winter 93), pp.45-64.
107. Moderne und Postmoderne 70-77.
108. Manfred Frank complains of this Habermasian propensity to exempt the subjects of the ideal speech situation from analytic scrutiny in his essay Die Unhintergehbarkeit der Individualität (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), p.12.
109. In a more recent essay, Wellmer argues that Adorno's discussion of the sublime contains in embryonic form an upbeat view of subjectivity and modernity of the sort proposed by Habermas. Modernist works of art, in this account of Adorno, break away from traditional forms to improvise their own contingent structures. These structures in their turn foster individuals that, like the artefacts, have renounced traditional forms and metaphysical guarantees, that embrace their own contingency, whilst simultaneously celebrating their ability to wrest human meanings from an indifferent and meaningless environment (Albrecht Wellmer, 'Adorno, die Moderne

und das Erhabene' in his Endspiele: Die unversöhnliche Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp.178-203). Wellmer overcomes the problems which his and Habermas's theory have over the issues of differentiation and subjectivity by assuming that post-traditional forms of discourse bring forth, of their own accord and without adverse side-effects, subjects strong enough to control them (p.189). The evidence of his, and of Habermas's own texts speaks against this comforting parallel.
110. Seyla Benhabib, 'Modernity and the Aporias of Critical Theory', Telos 49 (Fall 1981), pp.39-59. See also David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp.374-378.
111. Seyla Benhabib, 'The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics', New German Critique 35 (Spring/Summer 1985), pp.88-89; see also her Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory (New York: Columbia U. P., 1986), pp.327-343.
112. Benhabib, 'The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics', p.96.
113. PhDM 219-247.
114. PhDM 366.
115. PhDM 366.
116. This is roughly speaking the position defended by Jay Bernstein in his article 'Art against Enlightenment: Adorno's Critique of Habermas' in Andrew Benjamin, ed., The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.49-66, and at greater length in his book The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).

Part II: The Shock of Recognition

1. Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable in The Beckett Trilogy (London: Pan Books, 1979), p.267.
2. Karl Heinz Bohrer, 'Nach der Natur' in his Nach der Natur: Über Politik und Ästhetik (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1988), pp.209-229.
3. Nach der Natur p.229.
4. cf. Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt' (1980) in his Kleine politische Schriften I-IV (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp.444-464
5. Nach der Natur p.213: 'Das moderne reflexive Subjekt erlaubt sich nicht mehr, sich selbst in der Natur wiederzuerkennen'.
6. Nach der Natur p.217.
7. Nach der Natur p.221-222.
8. cf. Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt', p.457. Habermas describes the modernist consciousness of which ennui is a facet in fact not only as a reaction to the pace and alienation of modern society (pp.447 and 457), but also as a form of independent subjectivity freed from the constraints of everyday life (p.456). As I argue in Part I, however, the relations between these two sides of his modernist consciousness are not wholly clear.
9. Nach der Natur p.222.
10. Nach der Natur p.226.
11. Nach der Natur contains an approving discussion of Sartre's La nausée entitled: 'Imagination des Imaginären', pp.182-208.
12. Nach der Natur p.223.
13. Nach der Natur p.226.
14. Karl Heinz Bohrer, Der Lauf des Freitag: Die lädierte Utopie und die Dichter. Eine Analyse (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1973), p.8.
15. Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Manchester: M.U.P, 1984), p.41.
16. Der Lauf des Freitag pp.74-79.
17. From Der Lauf des Freitag (1973), with its subtitle of 'Die lädierte Utopie und die Dichter' right through to the final essay of Plötzlichkeit: zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), entitled 'Utopie des Augenblicks und Fiktionalität', Bohrer could be said to be writing a theory of utopia. By 1981, however, utopia has shrunk to a fraction of a second, to an instantaneous interruption in our normal conception of time.
18. Der Lauf des Freitag p.76
19. Max Horkheimer, 'Bemerkungen über Wissenschaft und Krise' in Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 3, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1988), p.43, where Horkheimer argues that a theory of society must stop merely collating facts and devote itself to a less stable enterprise: 'die theoretische Abbildung radikal umgestaltender, alle kulturellen Verhältnisse umwälzender Verläufe'.
20. Der Lauf des Freitag p.78. In his essay on Surrealism, Benjamin praises Breton's ability to look at old-fashioned, or out-dated objects with what he calls a political eye. This

political perspective allows Breton to wrest from the very outdatedness of the objects an image of disappointed desires, cf. Walter Benjamin, 'Der Sürrealismus: Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz', in his Gesammelte Schriften Vol. II.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp.299-300.

21. Karl Heinz Bohrer, Plötzlichkeit: Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981). All further references to this book will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation Plötz.

22. Bohrer is here drawing explicitly on an essay by the young Lukács, 'Die Kunst als "Ausdruck" und die Mitteilungsformen der Erlebniswirklichkeit' in Georg Lukács, Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst (1912-1914), Werke Vol. 16, ed. György Márkus and Frank Benseler (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1974), pp.7-41.

23. Bohrer's 'Datenkatalog' bears similarities to Hans Robert Jauss's 'Erwartungshorizont', which equally suggests a form of aesthetic know-how (cf. Hans Robert Jauss, 'Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft' in his Literaturgeschichte als Provokation (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp.144-207). Bohrer's avant-garde consciousness, however, appears as the torn halves of the two movements Jauss hopes more cautiously to unite in literary experience. For Jauss, high art disrupts our horizon of expectation (in contrast to low art which merely reaffirms given aesthetic norms, p.178). But this defamiliarizing or questioning never entails a total rupture with the past. The innovations remain mediated with the styles and expectations they negate (p.191). Literary experience entails both rupture and continuity. At the beginning of Bohrer's arguments, in contrast, the avant-garde artefact blends seamlessly into the counter-tradition of which it is a further instantiation. But this apparent continuity is then abruptly denied. The avant-garde artefact is said to have nothing to do with even avant-garde consciousness. It is tempting to prefer Jauss's more balanced account over Bohrer's oscillations. But does the theoretical claim that literary experience involves 'a bit of both' - both a break with and a continuation of the past - tell us more about the encounter with a work of art than the difficulty Bohrer has retracing the balance between the two sides? I think Bohrer's broken dialectic, his lurching between incompatible states, is closer to the texture of contemporary aesthetic experience than Jauss's soothing but no less abstract mediation.

24. cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Kafka: Für eine kleine Literatur (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1976).

25. Having realized that his avant-garde is faced with the challenge of realizing the potential of aesthetic devices without the help of aesthetic guidelines to assist it in its choice of techniques, Bohrer announces: 'Aktualisierung aber war - daran muss erinnert werden -, was im Begriff der "Antizipation" vorgeschlagen worden ist. Die Intention des soeben beschriebenen modernen Bewusstseins-Subjekts antizipiert nämlich seine eigene Spontaneität und Tendenz im Werk. Analog hierzu - nunmehr auf der Ebene des geschichtlichen Augenblicks

- funktioniert ein Stück zeitgenössischer Literatur als Ganzes gegenüber der sich noch ereignenden Zukunft'(Plötz 39).
26. In the essay 'Solidarity or Objectivity?', Rorty writes: 'Relativism [...] is merely a red herring. The realist is, once again, projecting his own habits of thought upon the pragmatist when he charges him with relativism'. cf. Richard Rorty, Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers Vol. 1 (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1991), p.30.
27. The other three essays confront the similar problems. 'Zur Vorgeschichte des Plötzlichen: Die Generation des "gefährlichen Augenblicks"', for instance, adds to the history of the avant-garde, discussing authors as diverse as Heidegger, Ernst Jünger and Virginia Woolf. Jünger's texts are preferred to Woolf's because his 'dangerous moments' engage intuitively with society - Bohrer talks of 'Epoche-Ahnung' (Plötz 67). Yet, at the same time, his texts are supposed to surpass Heidegger's in philosophical rigour because of their slippery emptiness, a vacuity which Bohrer is determined to interpret positively (Plötz 53).
28. cf. Peter Bürger, Zur Kritik idealistischen Ästhetik (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.72-77.
29. Bohrer claims that the Dionysian impulses which Nietzsche says burst through the layers of Apollonian appearance are themselves only appearance, thus opening up an infinite regress of fictionality, which never comes to rest on a firm reality.
30. 'Die objektive Realität wird nicht mehr als eine utopisch veränderbare gedacht, die futuristische Antizipation fällt überhaupt weg, und die utopische Phantasie verlagert sich in die Innenseite des Subjekts'(Plötz 186).
31. cf. Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. I.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), p.704.
32. Karl Heinz Bohrer, Der romantische Brief: Die Entstehung ästhetischer Subjektivität (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1987), p.236.
33. Der romantische Brief p.217.
34. Der romantische Brief p.246-247.
35. Christa Bürger criticizes Bohrer from a feminist perspective, complaining that the aestheticizing interpretation which Bohrer offers of Brentano's letters edits out the actual suffering which Brentano's self-creation inflicted on his partner, Sophie Mereau. Christa Bürger, Leben Schreiben: Die Klassik, die Romantik und der Ort der Frauen (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1990), pp.182-183.
36. Karl Heinz Bohrer, Die Ästhetik des Schreckens: Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1978), pp.455-469; cf. also Ernst Jünger, 'Über den Schmerz' in his Betrachtungen zur Zeit, Sämtliche Werke Vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp.143-191, particularly Sections 13 to 15 where Jünger explores the qualitatively new subjectivity he believes to be brought into existence by technological and social innovations as diverse as the car, photography and sport.
37. Karl Heinz Bohrer, 'Das Böse - eine ästhetische Kategorie', Nach der Natur pp.110-132; 'Die permanente Theodizee', Nach der

Natur pp.133-161.
38. Martin Seel, Die Kunst der Entzweiung: Zum Begriff der ästhetischen Rationalität (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp.55-66, 246-249 and 327-330. Hauke Brunkhorst also comments on Bohrer's treatment of epistemology. He does not accuse Bohrer of reifying philosophical concepts, but rather of aestheticizing them. Knowledge, in Bohrer's work, has no substance. It has only sublime form (cf. Hauke Brunkhorst, Der entzauberte Intellektuelle (Hamburg: Sammlung Junius, 1990), pp.90-91).
39. Wellmer suggests that Bohrer's empty aesthetic appearance can be refilled if it is uncoupled from an Adorno-type pessimism, in Albrecht Wellmer, Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp.25-27.
40. Peter Bürger, Zur Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), p.76.
41. For Bürger's analysis of Dada and Surrealism, and their significance for twentieth-century art, cf. Peter Bürger, Theorie der Avantgarde (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974).
42. Zur Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik p.77.
43. Der romantische Brief p.268.
44. For an excellent account of the two impulses Benjamin hoped to unite in his epiphany, cf. Peter Osbourne, 'Small-Scale Victories, Large-Scale Defeats: Walter Benjamin's Politics of Time' in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osbourne, eds., Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.59-109.
45. Walter Benjamin, 'Der Sürrealismus: Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz' in his Gesammelte Schriften Vol. II.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.307. Future references will be given in the notes using the abbreviation 'Sürrealismus'.
46. Benjamin describes surrealist activities ironically as: 'eine zwischen Übung und Vorfeier schwankende Praxis', 'Sürrealismus' p.307.
47. 'Sürrealismus' p.307.
48. 'Sürrealismus' p.299
49. 'Sürrealismus' p.300.
50. 'Sürrealismus' p.299.
51. 'Sürrealismus' p.299.
52. Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte' in his Gesammelte Schriften Vol. I.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), p.693. Future references will be given in the notes using the abbreviation 'Geschichte'.
53. 'Geschichte' p.694.
54. 'Geschichte' p.694.
55. 'Geschichte' p.697.
56. 'Geschichte' p.696.
57. 'Geschichte' p.704.
58. 'Geschichte' p.703.
59. 'Geschichte' p.696.
60. 'Geschichte' p.701.

61. cf. Richard Wolin, Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp.263-265.
62. 'Geschichte' p.695. Benjamin also defends '[ein] Begriff der Gegenwart als der "Jetztzeit", in welcher Splitter der messianischen eingesprengt sind' ('Geschichte' p.704).
63. 'Sürrealismus' p.300.
64. 'Geschichte' p.693 and p.694 respectively.
65. cf. Julian Roberts, Walter Benjamin (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp.196-225.
66. G. W. F. Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke Vol. 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.36. Rolf Tiedemann has similarly argued that the esoteric vocabulary of the aphorisms on history should be read as part of Benjamin's materialist project (cf. Rolf Tiedemann, 'Historischer Materialismus oder politischer Messianismus?' in his Dialektik im Stillstand: Versuche zum Spätwerk Walter Benjamins (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.99-142). In Tiedemann's reading, Benjamin turns, if unsuccessfully, to theology to rethink and reorientate a Marxism betrayed in the 1930s by its political leaders.
67. cf. Peter Bürger, 'Benjamins "rettende Kritik". Vorüberlegungen zum Entwurf einer kritischen Hermeneutik', in his Vermittlung - Rezeption - Funktion: Ästhetische Theorie und Methodologie der Literaturwissenschaft (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1979), p.167-168: 'Rettende Kritik spannt Gegensätze zusammen: Als Kritik ist sie auf eine Destruktion dessen aus, was sie kritisiert, als rettende aber sucht sie das positive Moment im kritisierten Gegenstand zu bewahren'.
68. As well as defending theological metaphors, Bohrer shows a further superficial parallel with Benjamin: in his discussion of Proust he introduces the idea of a two-step epiphany (Plötz 188-192). Yet, unlike Benjamin, he does not present a moment of astonishment closely followed by a phase of dialectical unpacking. He juxtaposes two moments of shock which, when they shoot together, fall emptily outside of time: 'Die Deckung zweier gleicher, nicht gleichzeitiger 'Jetzt'-Punkte schafft im Augenblick des zweiten jenes Unbewusstheits-Glück, in dem man schon früh eine Aufhebung der Zeit erkannt hat. Und dieses Auslöschen von Vergangenheit und Zukunft im Moment einer objektiven Ekstase des 'Augenblicks' ist als die Zeit-Struktur des utopischen Glücks bei Proust [...] zu erkennen'(Plötz 192).
69. 'Sürrealismus' p.297.
70. Bohrer has recently criticized attempts to tamper with aesthetic autonomy in Karl Heinz Bohrer, 'Die Grenzen des Ästhetischen', Die Zeit No.37, 4.9.1992, pp.56-57.
71. cf. Albrecht Wellmer, Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp.28, 104 and 164. I discuss the contradictions in Wellmer's position at greater length in Part I.
72. cf. Sections 9 and 10 in Immanuel Kant, Kritik der Urteilskraft (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp.131-135.
73. cf. Rüdiger Bubner, 'Über einige Bedingungen gegenwärtiger Ästhetik' reprinted in his Ästhetische Erfahrung (Frankfurt a.

M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp.9-51, here pp.35-36.
74. 'Über einige Bedingungen...' p.36.
75. 'Über einige Bedingungen...' p.41.
76. cf. Jean-Francois Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' in Andrew Benjamin, ed., The Lyotard Reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp.196-211, here p.197.
77. 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' p.198.
78. Like Bohrer, Lyotard depends on the concept of aesthetic autonomy to guarantee that this emptiness remain adequately vacant. He depends on the assumption that: 'Art does not imitate nature, it creates a world apart, eine Zwischenwelt, as Paul Klee will say, eine Nebenwelt, one might say, in which the monstrous and the formless have their rights because they can be sublime'('The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' p.202).
79. Christoph Menke-Eggers, in his study Die Souveränität der Kunst: Ästhetische Erfahrung nach Adorno und Derrida (Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum, 1988), develops an intriguing double strategy to cope with the ineffability of art. In one movement, he plays up the absolute alterity of aesthetic experience. Drawing on Derridean arguments, he characterizes art as a discourse in which the very possibility of meaning is subverted, in which though the semantic range is infinitely expanded, works of art can never be pinned down, their content never brought back into the fold of stable significance (p.119). This incessant semantic drift, like Bohrer's aesthetic subject, will never acquire specific content. It will always remain empty. Rather than hoping to fill out the vacancy, however, Menke-Eggers's tactic is to bracket it off from normal interaction. This is his second movement. The looming, ineffable experience of non-identity is acknowledged to be not merely vacant, but threateningly so. At the same time, however, it is confined to an autonomous realm in society, from the vantage point of which it cannot damage everyday discourse. Menke-Eggers gives up the quest for a more concrete heterogeneity, and instead accepts, indeed celebrates the emptiness of non-identity, whilst at the same time needing to contain the vacuity. This strategy suggests a new agenda. Aesthetic theory no longer wishes to recapture alterity in all its immediacy and specificity. It registers instead an experiential void whose debilitating influence it hopes simultaneously to circumscribe.
80. Der Lauf des Freitag p.78.
81. Nach der Natur p.129.
82. Karl Heinz Bohrer, 'Krieg! England mobilisiert archaische Gefühle', Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung No.81, 6.4.1982, p.25.
83. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Der Essay als Form' in his Noten zur Literatur, Gesammelte Schriften Vol.11, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp.9-33, especially p.15 where Adorno criticizes the claim 'dass alle Erkenntnis potentiell in Wissenschaft sich umsetzen lasse'. Further references will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation NzL.
84. Norbert Rath is an example of an astute reader of Adorno, who nevertheless tends to underplay the subject's constitutive role in non-identity. Over and beyond the contradictions and

negations, non-identity remains in his account an attribute of things themselves. cf. Norbert Rath, Adornos Kritische Theorie (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1982) esp. the chapter entitled 'Kritik als Negation', pp.108-127.
85. cf. A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1971), p.8.
86. cf. also Fredric Jameson, Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic (London: Verso, 1990), pp.212-219.
87. This is the point at which my account of non-identity differs from Anke Thyen's excellent discussion in her Negative Dialektik und Erfahrung: Zur Rationalität des Nichtidentischen bei Adorno (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1989). She represents non-identity as an experience in which the subject rounds on her impressions of the object in a continuous, open-ended investigation, thus acknowledging the subject's active role in the process of non-identity, without ever claiming that the subject's knowledge could be complete. 'Negative Dialektik,' she states, summing up her argument, 'beinhaltet unter dem Vorrang des Objekts ein Moment von Erfahrung, das den konkreten Stand des Möglichen, das faktisch Mögliche transzendiert; sie ist die Erinnerung an Nicht-identisches als dem "Ineffabile der Utopie"'(p.266). This process of recollection requires a subject strong enough to reflect on her own exclusions - as Thyen herself insists. Non-identical experience achieves, for her, an undistorted view of its object: 'doch setzt diese Freiheit zum Objekt die in ihrer Reflexion autonomen Individuen voraus'(p.220). It is this strong subject that I want to question by asking whether the society with which the subject is confronted is any longer intelligible, coherent or organized enough to foster the necessary degree of self-awareness.
88. Fredric Jameson, 'The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', in his Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991), p.25. Where Jameson hopes, towards the end of the essay, for a 'cognitive map' of the empty space, for a guide - to be supplied by as yet unwritten works of art - to the vacancy left behind by postmodern distension, I want to characterize the way subjects think who lack this cognitive map.
89. cf. eg. David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) who investigates the way changes in the organization of society have transformed the individual's experience of time and space.
90. cf. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, p.26-27, where Jameson gives a sketch of a similarly fragmented subject.
91. The classic example of the way, for Derrida, everything promiscuously harbours traces of non-identity is his witty analysis, in Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), of Nietzsche's delphic note 'I have forgotten my umbrella'.
92. The same unwillingness to engage with self-conscious paradox marks Habermas's essay on Benjamin 'Bewusstmachende oder rettende Kritik' (Philosophisch-politische Profile, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp.336-376). The second step of Benjamin's epiphany, in which a world is uncovered at

once reified and redeemed, restricting and ambivalent, does not feature in the argument. The two sides of the revelation, in Habermas's account, instead irreconcilably diverge. Unable to bring his mystic insights back down to earth, Benjamin is said to abandon the attempt altogether, and switch, in 'Der Autor als Produzent' to a politicizing account of art which though it binds arts back to everyday practice, has nothing to do with the more theological epiphany. Benjamin's ambivalences reappear in Habermas's essay uncoupled, as empty mysticism on the one hand, and a bald instrumentalization of art on the other.

Part III: A Blind Bit of Difference

1. Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia, Gesammelte Schriften Vol.4, (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), p.82.
2. Minima Moralia p.26.
3. 'Das Wort Kulturindustrie dürfte zum ersten Mal in dem Buch 'Dialektik der Aufklärung' verwendet worden sein, das Horkheimer und ich 1947 in Amsterdam veröffentlichten. In unseren Entwürfen war von Massenkultur die Rede. Wir ersetzten den Ausdruck durch "Kulturindustrie", um von vornherein die Deutung auszuschalten, die den Anwälten der Sache genehm ist: dass es sich um etwas wie spontan aus den Massen selbst aufsteigende Kultur handele, um die gegenwärtige Gestalt von Volkskunst.' T. W. Adorno, 'Résumé über Kulturindustrie', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.337. The sociologist Gillian Rose finds the industry part of the term sloppy. For her, the phrase 'culture industry' 'refers, in an overly compromised way, to production, reproduction and distribution but not at all to an industry', Gillian Rose, The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.186. A more damning criticism might seem to be, not that the term is sociologically fuzzy, but that the term industry itself helpfully serves another part of pop culture's ideology, namely the open admission that it is nothing more than a business. Adorno and Horkheimer are however well aware of this problem (cf. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Dialektik der Aufklärung (Frankfurt a. M.: Fisher, 1969), p.129).
4. Minima Moralia p.27.
5. Minima Moralia p.28.
6. cf. Thomas Baumeister and Jens Kulenkampf, 'Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik: zu Adornos "Ästhetische Theorie"' in neue hefte für philosophie No. 5 (1973), pp.74-104; Rüdiger Bubner, 'Kann Theorie ästhetisch werden?', pp.70-98 in his Ästhetische Erfahrung (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1989); Jürgen Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns Vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp.514-515. The Habermasian critique of Adorno is discussed in Part I.
7. Theodor W. Adorno, Ästhetische Theorie, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 7, (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.33-34.
8. Ästhetische Theorie p.34.
9. Asthetische Theorie p.32.
10. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Zeitlose Mode. Zum Jazz', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.131.
11. Ulrich Schönherr, in his article 'Adorno and Jazz: Reflections on a Failed Encounter', Telos 87 (Spring 1991), pp.85-96, attempts to save jazz from Adorno's attack by highlighting the parallels between more recent developments in jazz, and the atonal music Adorno championed in early Schönberg.
12. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialektik der Aufklärung (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1969), p.6. Further

references will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation DdA.
13. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik und die Regression des Hörens' in his Dissonanzen: Musik in der verwalteten Welt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), p.15. Further references will be given in the notes using the abbreviation 'Fetischcharakter'.
14. 'Der einzigartige Wert des "echten" Kunstwerks hat seine Fundierung im Ritual, in dem es seinen originären und ersten Gebrauchswert hatte. Diese mag so vermittelt sein wie sie will, sie ist auch noch in den profansten Formen des Schönheitsdienstes als säkularisiertes Ritual erkennbar.' Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' Gesammelte Schriften Vol I.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp.480-481.
15. 'Beide tragen die Wundmale des Kapitalismus, beide enthalten Elemente der Veränderung (freilich nie und nimmer das Mittlere zwischen Schönberg und dem amerikanischen Film); beide sind die auseinandergerissenen Hälften der ganzen Freiheit, die doch aus ihnen nicht sich zusammenaddieren lässt...' Letter of 18.3.1936 reprinted in Theodor W. Adorno, Über Walter Benjamin, 2nd Ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1990), p.146. Christa Bürger discusses this passage in her introduction to Christa Bürger, ed., Zur Dichotomisierung von hoher und niederer Literatur (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp.13-15. She maintains that Adorno, though he grasps the importance of the dichotomy between high art and mass culture, always analyses the opposition from the perspective of high art. This bias condemns him in the end to endorsing the dichotomy even as he criticizes it. My position, in contrast, is that Adorno does theorize the dichotomy from both angles. This chapter explores the consequences of this double perspective. What neither Christa Bürger nor I investigate is the culture that falls between Schönberg and Hollywood, and which is excluded from Adorno's dialectic of extremes. Perhaps even more challenging than the attempt to redeem pop culture would be the attempt dialectically to redeem the middle ground, in all its unpalatable pseudo-seriousness.
16. Theodor W. Adorno, Über Walter Benjamin, p.148.
17. Peter Kemper's '"Der Rock ist ein Gebrauchswert": Warum Adorno die Beatles verschmähte', Merkur Vol. 45 (1991), pp.890-902, is a recent example of this common argument. Kemper, however, takes issue with Adorno for his supposed marginalization of the culture industry. More often, German critics silently exacerbate the misreading by discussing Adorno's aesthetics as if they had nothing to do with pop culture. Hauke Brunkhorst, in his Theodor W. Adorno: Dialektik der Moderne (Munich: Piper, 1990), straightforwardly contrasts 'die manipulative Gewalt der Kulturindustrie' (p.126) with 'die in der kulturellen Moderne auch schon verwirklichte Vernunft' (pp.126-127). Art in his account is entirely uncompromised by the culture industry. Similarly, for Wolfgang Welsch who redescribes Adorno's Ästhetische Theorie as a postmodern theory of the sublime avant la lettre, our overwhelming by the sublime

is miraculously emptied of any authoritarian overtones, cf. Wolfgang Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizierte Ästhetik des Erhabenen' in his Ästhetisches Denken (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990). I think Adorno's texts are valuable precisely because they undermine oppositions between nice sublime art and nasty authoritarian pop culture (Welsch and Brunkhorst's position), or between nasty authoritarian art and nice pop culture (Kemper's position).

18. This is roughly the position adopted by Martin Jay who argues that though Adorno sees some serious music such as Wagner's or Stravinsky's commingling with its commodified counterpart, other music avoids being compromised. For Jay, Adorno sets up 'the twentieth century's modernist avant-garde' as a 'counter-conception to the culture industry' which avoids contamination, cf. Martin Jay, Adorno (London: Fontana, 1984), pp.128-129. See also Martin Seel, 'Dialektik des Erhabenen: Kommentar zur "ästhetischen Barbarei heute"', in Willem van Reijen and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, eds., Vierzig Jahre Flaschenpost: 'Dialektik der Aufklärung' 1947 bis 1987 (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1987), pp.11-40.

19. cf. G. W. F. Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke Vol. 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 77 where Hegel insists that we simply watch the development of consciousness, and p.79 where we are required to relate the changes in the object back to changes in consciousness, therefore adding our own touch to what was previously conceived as pure observation.

20. Minima Moralia p.82.

21. Jameson uses the phrase 'to bet on all sides' when he is describing the ambivalence Adorno sees in Schönberg's music, which is at once the antidote to commodification and commodified to the core, in Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1971), p.34.

22. For an excellent account of Adorno's double dialectic see Peter Osbourne, 'Torn Halves: The Dialectics of a Cultural Dichotomy', News from Nowhere 7 (Winter 1989), pp.49-63; cf. also Peter Osbourne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: the Problem of a "Postmodern" Art' in Andrew Benjamin, ed., The Problems of Modernity (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.23-48, though this second article is more interested in preserving a notion of authentic art to pit against postmodern epigones than in exploring the entwinement of art and pop culture.

23. 'Der Pseudorealismus, den das Schema vorsieht, erfüllt das empirische Leben mit einem falschen Sinn, dessen Trug der Zuschauer schwer durchschauen kann, weil das Nachtlokal genauso aussieht wie das dem Zuschauer bekannte.' Theodor W. Adorno, 'Fernsehen als Ideologie', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.522.

24. 'Das Gebilde wird für ein Stück Realität, eine Art Wohnungs-Zubehör genommen, das man mit dem Apparat sich gekauft hat, dessen Besitz ohnehin unter Kindern das Prestige erhöht. Schwerlich ist es zu weit hergeholt, dass umgekehrt die Realität durch die Fernsehbrille angeschaut, dass der unterschobene Sinn des Alltags auf diesen zurückgespiegelt wird.' Theodor W. Adorno, 'Prolog zum Fernsehen', Gesammelte

Schriften Vol. 10.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.511.
25. Martin Jay documents the beginning of this optimistic reception, which he hails as a 'more nuanced' view of the culture industry, in his paper 'Adorno in America' in Martin Jay, Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp.120-137.
26. cf. Andreas Huyssen, 'Introduction to Adorno', New German Critique 6 (Fall 1975), p.10 and p.8.
27. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Freizeit', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp.654-655. Adorno makes a similar point in 'Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen in Amerika', when he is discussing what empirical research gains and loses by its concentration on audience reaction, as opposed to the products themselves: 'Die von der musikalischen Kulturindustrie ausgestrahlte Ideologie muss nicht notwendig die ihrer Hörer sein', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 718.
28. cf. Diane Waldman, 'Critical Theory and Film: Adorno and "The Culture Industry" Revisited', New German Critique 12 (Fall 1977). Waldman thinks Adorno unfairly homogenizes the culture industry, but qualifies her argument towards the end of the article where she approvingly cites Huyssen's approving citation of Adorno's essay on leisure time, hoping that this might point a way beyond the homogenization. See also Douglas Kellner, 'From "Authentic Art" to the Culture Industries' in his Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp.121-145, esp.pp.142-143: 'Adorno's model of the culture industry does not allow for the heterogeneity of popular culture and contradictory effects'.
29. cf. Miriam B. Hansen, 'Introduction to Adorno, "Transparencies on Film"(1966)', New German Critique 24-25 (Fall/Winter 1981-82), p.193. In a later article, Hansen uses elements of Adorno's texts on film, but also borrowings from Derrida and Kracauer to develop a theory of filmic writing which she hopes will be 'both receptive and critical, non-elitist and yet, not simply popular', cf. Miriam Hansen, 'Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer', New German Critique 56 (Spring/Summer 1992), pp.43-73, esp. p.58. The article stresses the active role of a cinema audience in deciphering filmic hieroglyphs.
30. At one point in 'Schema der Massenkultur', Adorno argues that the very fact that the culture industry has constantly to renew its reification of human subjects suggests something in those subjects that will not be reified: 'die hoffnungslose Mühe ihrer [reification's] Wiederholung ist die einzige Spur der Hoffnung, dass die Wiederholung vergeblich, dass die Menschen doch nicht zu erfassen seien', T. W. Adorno, 'Schema der Massenkultur', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.331.
31. cf. Andreas Huyssen, 'Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner', After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism (London: Macmillan, 1988), p.27.
32. cf. Fredric Jameson, 'Pleasure: A Political Issue', The

Ideologies of Theory, Vol.2: The Syntax of History (London: Routledge, 1988), p.73.
33. 'Pleasure: A Political Issue' p.73
34. 'Pleasure: A Political Issue' pp.73-74.
35. That we need not take the claim to go beyond Adorno too seriously emerges in the essay 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture' from 1979. Here, Jameson argues that whilst the 'early' Adorno of Philosophie der neuen Musik cannily acknowledges the entwinement of high art with its commodified counterparts, 'late' Adorno retreats from this insight to equate mass culture wholly and simply with manipulation. Jameson undermines his argument with a revealing slip when he comes to list the canon of uncontaminated art which Adorno is supposed to pit against the depravity of the culture industry. Supplementing the predictable invocation of Schönberg and Beckett is the name Brecht, a figure whom Adorno can never be accused of idealizing as the antidote to the iniquities of post-war society (cf. Fredric Jameson, 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture', Signatures of the Visible (London: Routledge, 1990), p.14). The slip suggests that Jameson is killing two birds with one stone. While distancing himself from general attempts to establish a left-wing literary canon, he simultaneously brands this position with the name Adorno so as to slip out from under his shadow. He can then elaborate a position all the more Adorno-esque for its denying the figure to whom it is indebted. That this interpretation is not too far-fetched is confirmed by Jameson's return in the 1990s to Adorno's Marxism and 'its unique capacities within our own equally unique "late" or third stage of capitalism', capacities Jameson explicitly associates with Adorno's dialectical method, cf. Fredric Jameson, Late Marxism, or, Adorno and the Persistence of the Dialectic (London: Verso, 1990), p.12.
36. The essay 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture' is a clear example of this double movement. Analysing Jaws and The Godfather, Jameson is keen to show how the films both kindle utopian hopes and frustrate them. The Godfather II, however, stands miraculously outside this ambivalence. Far from compromising its collective impulses with premature and illusory images of reconciliation, the film criticizes the very mechanisms of such complicity. cf. Fredric Jameson, Signatures of the Visible, pp.9-34, esp. pp.33-34.
37. Eugene Lunn, in his otherwise differentiated account of the paradoxes of high art thinks that Adorno's texts on the culture industry never progress beyond outright condemnation of pop culture. Lunn explains this rejection by attributing to Adorno 'the ethnocentric provincialism of one reared within the traditions of European high culture and unable to see much beyond it', Eugene Lunn, Marxism and Modernism (London: Verso, 1985), p.158. Robert Hullot-Kentor actively embraces what he perceives to be Adorno's all-out condemnation of pop culture, writing a scathing demystification of the Beatles 'I feel fine' in Robert Hullot-Kentor, 'The Impossibility of Music: Adorno, Popular and Other Music', Telos 87 (Spring 1991), pp.97-117. See also Russell A. Berman's denunciation of the culture

industry in his 'Modern Art and Desublimation', Telos (Winter 1984-85), pp.31-57, esp. p.48: 'the purported discovery of utopian elements in the manipulative aestheticization of social activity represents little more than a capitulation before the force of commodification'.
38. For an excellent account of the exaggeration, irony and playful inversions with which Adorno formulates his self-consciously impossible position, see the chapter entitled 'The Search for Style' in Gillian Rose, The Melancholy Science (London: Macmillan, 1978).
39. 'Fetischcharakter' p.44.
40. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Filmtransparente', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.718.
41. 'Filmtransparente' pp.360-361.
42. cf. 'Zeitlose Mode. Zum Jazz', p.135; DdA 176; Theodor W. Adorno, 'Kulturindustrie. Ein Résumé', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.342.
43. For more pessimistic accounts of the culture industry, and its ability to accommodate and neutralize resistance cf. Richard Wolin, 'Modernism vs. Postmodernism', Telos 62 (Winter 1984-85), pp.9-29; Stefan Breuer, 'Adorno's Anthropology', Telos 64 (Summer 1985), pp.15-31.
44. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Stars Down to Earth', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 9.2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.109.
45. 'Fetischcharakter' p.33.
46. 'Schema der Massenkultur' p.317.
47. J. M. Bernstein comments on this double consciousness in his introduction to Theodor W. Adorno, The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture (London: Routledge, 1991), p.17. He does not, however, make the connection between doublethink and Adorno's own method.
48. The material was originally published in English as T. W. Adorno, 'The Radio Symphony. An Experiment in Theory' in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, eds., Radio Research 1941 (New York, 1941). Adorno reworked the material for the German version which appears in T. W. Adorno, Der getreue Korrepetitor, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 15 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp.369-401. References to the German version of the essay will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation Radio.
49. Adorno makes a similar criticism of the stage-managed aspect of the temporal standstill generated by the symphony in his 'Schema der Massenkultur', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 3, pp.314-315.
50. In Seduction, Baudrillard defines pornography primarily as a quest for the real. It is the thirst for reality which leads pornography to cut the body into smaller and smaller pieces. cf. Jean Baudrillard, Seduction, trans. Brian Singer (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.28-36.
51. Seduction p.35. In Seduction, Baudrillard exactly describes the way musical technology calls into question the very authentic reproduction towards which it constantly strives, arguing that technology in this sense 'digs its own grave'(p.30). He then hopes to escape the double movement of

simulation by affirming the pure artifice that he discovers in the trompe l'oeil. When a trompe l'oeil calls reality into question, it manages to break with that reality rather than embark on a new search for the real.

52. Benjamin astutely rejects the idea that mechanical reproduction merely clarifies indistinct aspects of the old reality, and insists instead that we see something we have never seen before (Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. I.2, p.500). Moreover, with his metaphor of the surgical camera, he captures the way mechanical reproduction dissects the original perspective from which we viewed reality (pp.495-496). However, as Adorno points out in his letter, Benjamin is so keen to present filmic techniques in an umambiguously positive light that his argument shies away from the ambivalence of mechanical reproduction. He generally disputes the idea that mechanical reproduction endows its objects with a new aura, claiming that the new level to which simulations penetrate is reality itself, drained of all auratic vestiges. Nevertheless, in one intermediary section of his argument (Section VI) he fleetingly considers the camera's ability to capture the aura of people we loved (p.485). This section opens the way for a more ambiguous interpretation of mechanical reproduction, such as mine, for which the simulacra discredit the old aura, but simultaneously heighten our desire for a more auratic, 'genuine' reality which forever eludes us.

53. 'Fetischcharakter' p.16-18.

54. 'Fetischcharakter' p.22.

55. 'Fetischcharakter' p.18.

56. 'Fetischcharakter' p.28.

57. 'Fetischcharakter' p.28.

58. 'Fetischcharakter' p.18; Theodor W. Adorno, Einleitung in die Soziologie (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp.51-78.

59. 'Fetischcharakter' p.19; DdA 168.

60. 'Fetischcharakter' p.37.

61. 'Fetischcharakter' p.20.

62. Minima Moralia p.28.

63. cf. Rainer Hoffmann, Figuren des Scheins: Studien zum Sprachbild und zur Denkform Theodor W. Adornos (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984). In his excellently detailed critique of Adorno's style ('Verfall eines Idioms', pp.13-112), Hoffmann shows how Adorno, in aspects of style such as a 'Darum' which generates the effect of logical progression without filling out the argument itself, argues like a subject of the culture industry.(p.87) He replicates the 'ticket mentality' - the tendency to accept and propagate slogans without thinking a position through - that he and Horkheimer lambast in Dialektik der Aufklärung. Moreover, in his interpretations, he often reproduces another characteristic of weakened subjects, the ability to see no more in a work of art than the reflection of their own consciousness, a failure most strikingly illustrated for Hoffmann by a reading, in Minima Moralia, of Snow White, which hears in the fairy tale only the melancholy which it wants to extract.(pp.101-102) Though he demonstrates how Adorno, even as he brilliantly unmasks pop culture, reproduces its structures,

Hoffmann never fully explores the parallel. He does not argue that Adorno, in the very figures of his thought, is the product of the double vision he excoriates. He only highlights the similarities.

64. Theodor W, Adorno, Philosophie der neuen Musik, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 12 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.34. Further references to the book will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation PhnM.

65. This answers David Held's objection that the standards by which Adorno's immanent critique judges an object are arbitrarily imposed, David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p.382.

66. Schönberg imposes inhuman constraints on himself as a way of achieving freedom. Nietzsche seems to have a similarly paradoxical grasp of freedom in Also Sprach Zarathustra: 'Frei nennst du dich? Deinen herrschenden Gedanken will ich hören und nicht, dass du einem Joche entronnen bist./ Bist du ein solcher, der einem Joche entrinnen durfte? Es gibt manchen, der seinen letzten Wert wegwarf, als er seine Dienstbarkeit wegwarf./ Frei wovon? Was schiert das Zarathustra? Hell aber soll mir dein Auge künden: frei wozu?/ Kannst du dir selber dein Böses und dein Gutes geben und deinen Willen über dich aufhängen wie ein Gesetz? Kannst du dir selber Richter sein und Rächer deines Gesetzes?' (Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Vom Wege des Schaffenden' in Also Sprach Zarathustra, Kritische Studienausgabe Vol. 4, ed. Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (Munich: DTV, 1980), p.81.). Nietzsche describes a strong subject whose strength stems precisely from her talent for strategic forgetting in the essay 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie fürs Leben', Kritische Studienausgabe Vol. 2, p.251-252. The thought returns in Zur Genealogie der Moral, Kritische Studienausgabe Vol. 5, pp.291-292. For a discussion of Adorno and Horkheimer's debt to Nietzsche see Norbert Rath, 'Zur Nietzsche-Rezeption Horkheimers und Adornos', in Willem van Reijen and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, eds., Vierzig Jahre Flaschenpost: 'Dialektik der Aufklärung' 1947-1987 (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1987), pp.73-110.

67. Peter Bürger comments on the way Adorno's musicological analyses equivocate over the question of subjectivity in his essay 'Das Altern der Moderne', in Ludwig v. Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas, eds., Adorno-Konferenz 1983 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.177-197. But rather than arguing that the equivocation is an intended attribute of Adorno's method in Philosophie der neuen Musik, Bürger explains the changes biographically, saying that where the Adorno of Philosophie der neuen Musik praises Webern for confronting the demise of subjectivity, it is only in the later text 'Das Altern der neuen Musik' (Dissonanzen, pp.136-159) that Adorno speaks up for the subject.

68. That Stravinsky should be credited with the critical insights of the Dialektik der Aufklärung is not surprising. Adorno saw his Philosophie der neuen Musik as an extended appendix to the book he wrote with Horkheimer (PhnM 11). The

two books were written in parallel during the Frankfurt School's Californian exile.

69. It is with this clear-cut distinction that Peter Bürger and David Roberts both take issue in Peter Bürger, 'Das Altern der Moderne', Ludwig v. Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas, eds., Adorno-Konferenz 1983 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983); Peter Bürger, Zur Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp.132-133; David Roberts, Art and Enlightenment: Aesthetic Theory after Adorno (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). Though they are undoubtedly correct to say that Adorno distinguishes qualitatively between Schönberg and Stravinsky, they both overlook the degree to which Adorno's own method itself undermines his stark conclusions. Neither register the degree to which Adorno both praises Stravinsky and criticizes Schönberg.

70. Ästhetische Theorie p.38.

71. Asthetische Theorie p.175.

72. Asthetische Theorie p.475.

73. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Résumé über Kulturindustrie', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 10.1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.342.

74. A last glimmer of hope could be found in the fact that Schönberg and his authentic colleagues are considered to bind their own eyes, to volunteer to be sightless. The difference between authentic and inauthentic artists would then be that where the former consciously submits the latter surrender helplessly. This faint reassurance disappears when we remember the mechanism which underpins the hegemony of the culture industry: the mimetic surrender to a deception the subject nevertheless sees through. The conscious submission of authenticity then appears little different from the enlightened if compulsive surrender of the film-watcher, radio-builder or jazz fanatic.

75. Each tone row exists in four versions: forwards, backwards ('retrograde') and then in versions which give the mirror image of the intervals of the forwards version ('inversion'; 'retrograde inversion'). Each of these four versions can be transposed to begin on any one of the twelve tones in the scale. The result is forty-eight versions none of which can claim to be the original.

76. In a letter of 5.12.49, Schönberg writes to Hans Heinz Stückenschmidt: 'Die Neue Musik hat also eine Philosophie - es würde genügen, wenn sie einen Philosophen hätte. Er attackiert mich darin ganz vehement. Wieder ein Abtrünniger [...]. Aber ich habe den Menschen nie leiden können...' In a letter to Josef Rufer of the same day he writes: 'Das Buch ist sehr schwer zu lesen, denn es verwendet diesen quasi-philosophischen Jargon, in dem die heutigen Philosophie-Professoren die Abwesenheit eines Gedankens verbergen. Sie glauben es ist tief, wenn sie mit undefinierten neuen Ausdrücken Unklarheit hervorbringen.' Both letters are quoted in Walter Levin, 'Adornos Zwei Stücke für Streichquartett op.2', Musik-Konzepte 63/64 (Theodor W. Adorno: Der Komponist) January 1989, pp.76-

77.

77. Susan Buck-Morss's study of Adorno - The Origin of Negative Dialectics (Hassocks: Harvester, 1977) - draws a similar analogy between Adorno's method and the twelve-tone system, but to different ends. Having used Schönberg's technique wittily to elucidate the inversions and paradoxes of Adorno's negative dialectics (p.129), she turns Adorno's criticisms of twelve-tone stagnation against his own method, complaining that Adorno takes philosophy into a dead end (p.190). The position from which she launches this objection becomes clear in an explanation she gives of Schönberg's musical failure. Schönberg's music cannot succeed because he undertakes a 'revolution in the superstructure alone' (p.188). With the parallel between Adorno and Schönberg, Buck-Morss hopes eventually to persuade us to abandon Adorno for thinkers less obsessed with the superstructure.

78. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Schema der Massenkultur', Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), p.328.

79. Theodor W. Adorno, Versuch über Wagner, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 13 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), p.60, p.143.

Part IV: Undialectical Conclusions

1. Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 4 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), p.171. The epigraph is taken from an aphorism on Benjamin entitled 'Vermächtnis'.
2. Samuel Beckett, Endgame (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p.11 and p.53. All further references to the play will be given in the text.
3. For a discussion of the way death is suspended in the play, cf. Tyrus Miller, 'Dismantling Authenticity: Beckett, Adorno and the "Post-War"', Textual Practice Vol.8, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp.43-57.
4. Steven Connor gives a brief survey of this critical topos in his book Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.115-118.
5. cf. Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Samuel Beckett, or "Presence" in the Theatre' in Martin Esslin, ed., Samuel Beckett (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p.108.
6. Robbe-Grillet, p.115.
7. Robbe-Grillet, p.115.
8. cf. Herbert Blau, 'Notes from the Underground: Waiting for Godot and Endgame' in S. E. Gontarski, ed., On Beckett: Essays and Criticism (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1986), p.275.
9. Peter Bürger's reading of Beckett - in his Prosa der Moderne (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp.327-343 - takes this path. Having tracked the gradual disintegration of meaning to be traced in Beckett's novels from Murphy to The Unnamable, Bürger insists that Beckett, the subject writing, is nevertheless exempted from the destruction of meaning he presents to his readers. 'Indem Beckett die Zurechnungsfähigkeit des Ich-Erzählers und die innerfiktionale Realität in Frage stellt,' Bürger argues, 'zerstört er die Bedingung literarischer Kommunikation. Aber gerade dieser Akt teilt etwas mit. Er praktiziert den Sinn-Entzug.'(p.336) However impotent the subject he portrays, Beckett himself still manages, by the sheer virtuosity of his literary clowning, to lend the babble of his characters a critical edge, to present the collapse of meaning in such a way that the novels do not subside into meaninglessness so much as intentionally ridicule accepted concepts and institutions.
10. cf. Georges Bataille, 'Molloy's Silence' in S. E. Gontarski, ed., On Beckett: Essays and Criticism (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1986), p.138.
11. Bataille, p.132.
12. Bataille, p.138.
13. Bataille, p.136.
14. Bataille, p.139.
15. cf. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Versuch, das Endspiel zu verstehen', Noten zur Literatur, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 11 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974). References to this essay will be given parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation NzL.
16. Günther Anders draws a parallel between the Hegelian master and slave and the characters Pozzo and Lucky from Waiting for

Godot in his essay 'Being without Time: On Beckett's Play "Waiting for Godot"' in Martin Esslin, ed., Samuel Beckett (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), pp.140-151.

17. cf. G. W. F. Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke Vol. 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp.150-155.

18. Theodor W. Adorno, Philosophie der neuen Musik, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 12 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.13. I discuss the arguments of Philosophie der neuen Musik at greater length in Part III.

19. This is the position of J. M. Bernstein in his The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), though Bernstein is equivocal as to whether we still have access to the non-identity required if the contradictions embraced by negative dialectics are to be more than empty flights of fancy. He generally maintains that it is through art that we glimpse the otherwise elusive heterogeneity. But he also twice questions whether art can still be thought to play this emphatic role.(p.189, p.262)

20. cf. Martin Lüdke, Anmerkungen zu einer 'Logik des Zerfalls' - Adorno: Beckett (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981). Lüdke repeats the argument made by Baumeister and Kulenkampf, Habermas, and Bubner that Adorno's negative dialectics are forced by their own self-undermining momentum to turn to art for a normative foundation. What is remarkable about the book, however, is that Lüdke specifically links this view of Adorno's theory to the experience of a generation.(p.8) To the generation after Adorno, the aporias of negative dialectics can appear only as social theory incomprehensibly aestheticized.

21. Manfred Frank, Die Unhintergehbarkeit der Individualität (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1986).

22. Die Unhintergehbarkeit... p.94.

23. Die Unhintergehbarkeit... p.100-103.

24. For a fuller account of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, cf. Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche (Manchester: M. U. P., 1990), pp.146-175.

25. Die Unhintergehbarkeit... p.123.

26. Die Unhintergehbarkeit... p.131.

27. Daniel Dennett's Consciousness Explained (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1991), which draws on recent work in cognitive sciences, neurology and analytic philosophy of mind to construct what he calls a 'multiple drafts' model of consciousness, could be read as the empirical theory of this fragmented subject.

28. Baudrillard writes of 'a system where linear continuity and dialectical polarity no longer exist' - a system 'unhinged by simulation' - in which all determination evaporates, in Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', Selected Writings, ed. Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), p.174.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

B i b l i o g r a p h y

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