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ADORNO AND HEIDEGGER
IN-/OUTSIDE POSTMODERN CULTURE

ABSTRACT

None of the notions at heart of the postmodern—differend, simulacrum, irony, pastiche, multiple coding, the sublime, ambiguity—derive from Heidegger or Adorno. Both stamped, however, postmodern culture. Heidegger and Adorno give access to environmental aesthetics. Both stained critical regionalism as defensible posture in architecture theory. Heidegger inspired the concept of a weak Being (Vattimo) supporting an aesthetics of oscillation. Although we may not subsume Adorno under an aesthetics of the sublime, Lyotard, yet rearticulates a stance close to Adorno: both conceive art in terms of alluding to something absolute. Heidegger's and Adorno's relevance today consists in a remapping of postmodernity. Being not completely absorbed in it they allow us to look at it from some distance. As thinker of facticity, of the thrown-ness of *Dasein* and of atmospheric tuning, Heidegger backs an aesthetics of performance which is based on a full notion of event. Adorno reinforces Lyotard's split between a slackened and a justifiable version of postmodernity along lines separating pure entertainment and culture industry from art. Its end is an ethics of authenticity.

Key words: authenticity; functionalism; globalization; multiculturalism; postmodernity.

At the beginning of the 21st century controversial debates on whether or not we live in the postmodern era, on whether or not the project of modernity should be continued, on whether or not the avant-garde is a concept of the past have lost their sharp edges. It is as if the battlefield for such debates has been left. Nevertheless a remapping of the postmodern seems to be still urgent. Today, we are asked upon to find an answer to the question of which the *main features of contemporary cultures* are.

If I can trust in my own sensibility then I would say that the currency of these days consists in keynotions, such as *globalization* vs. *glocality*[1] or *inter-*

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[1] Edward W. Soja: *Postmetropolis. Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Oxford UK, Malden Mass.: Blackwell 2000). Compare: Edward W. Soja: *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London and New York: Verso 1989).

culturality vs. *multiculturalism*. All these concepts deriving from divergent theorizings have in common that they try to define the now-ness of the contemporary in terms of *culture*. It depends on from which field of theoretical work one looks at culture. Glocality derives from cultural geography and promises to combine the global with the local, in order to resist untempered capitalistic globalization. Interculturality applies to philosophy in general and aims at overcoming Euro-centric notions of philosophy by pointing to the fact that each version of philosophy is bound to a specific culture which shapes the style of posing questions. Multiculturalism is issued from political theory and attempts to analyze, determine and justify the coexistence of diverse cultures in one and the same society or state.[2] It could be shown that each of these keynotions by which we grasp the features of truly contemporary culture are basically derivative from the modern-postmodern culture debate. Here, then, I have reached at my starting point. It is a remapping of the postmodern culture.

I would like to show that Adorno and Heidegger allow *us* to look at postmodern culture from a distance. Let me begin with asking about Adorno and Heidegger *inside* postmodern culture.

I

Adorno and Heidegger were present in postmodern discussions on *architecture*. Whereas Hegel in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* had attributed to architecture the lowest rank in the system of the fine arts on the grounds that architecture prepares only the external surrounding for the appearance of the human spirit, it was precisely the topic of architecture postmodern discussions began with. Here Charles Jencks comes into mind with his influential theory that postmodern architecture is characterized by a *double coding*. One code speaks the language of popularity. Another one addresses all the refined ironic allusions to and quotes from historical styles. This code is for the cultivated happy few acquainted with all the ramifications of architectural history.[3] Indeed, historicity, eclecticism, narrativity were to become the hallmarks of postmodern architecture.

II

Although Adorno in his essay "Functionalism Today" (1965) does not at all debunk functionalism, which was and still is postmodern usage, there are striking points of contact on a second level. Concentrating on Adolf Loos' critic of

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[2] See my essay: "Kulturelle Differenz und Multikulturalität. Ein Kernproblem der Kulturphilosophie", *JTLA* (Journal of the Faculty of Letters, The University of Tokyo, Aesthetics), vol. 22, 1997, pp. 43–60.

[3] Compare: Charles Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (London: Academy Press 1977).

the ornament, Adorno stresses this critique's being rooted in the culture of Vienna, connecting Loos with Arnold Schönberg and Karl Kraus. The common denominator of their cultural critic was that the ornamental is all that which has lost its functional and symbolic significance.[4] On Adorno's account, Loos withdrew architecture from Arts and Crafts movement's concern with *delicate design* and craftsmanship as well as from the stress on the *qualities of materials*, as in *Werkbund*. Loos, on the contrary, intended to reveal the internal logic of architecture as something which is not absorbed in the societal realm. Retreating from craftsmanship does, however, not imply to subscribe to the view that architecture is based on mere fantasy and the self expression of the architect. Architectural imagination remains related to purposes. Adequately understood it is the "ability to articulate space purposefully. It permits purposes to become space. It constructs forms according to purposes".[5]

The *central question* which *functionalism* has posed concerns architecture's usefulness in the broader societal realm.[6] Adorno marshals his own answer to this question in two directions.

(1) As an art, architecture remains subordinated to the requirement of "purposiveness without a purpose" which paradoxical formula goes back to Kantian aesthetics.[7] Adorno rephrases it as meaning that architecture is not absorbed by the societal totality. Only to the degree that it transcends the universe of established societal purposes art gains its *critical potential*.

(2) Functionalism draws on a *utopian outlook on usefulness*, one which reconciles humans with the objects and things they are utilizing in their everyday life. It amounts to transcending the rationale of commodity society. It would add up to a "fortunate use", a "contact with things beyond the antithesis between use and uselessness".[8]

It is important to keep this *social criticism* in Adorno's philosophy in mind. It is obvious that among the postmodern thinkers foremost Lyotard, Spivak and, say, Zygmunt Bauman hold to this social criticism.

Among postmodern architects, however, it was Aldo Rossi who came the closest to Adorno's outlook on functionalism. In his *L'Architettura della città* (1966) which book has to be paralleled with Roberto Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), Rossi's critical point was that the basic presuppositions of orthodox functionalism had to be revised. It is not true that architectural form derives from function. An architectural building is not com-

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[4] Theodor W. Adorno: "Funktionalismus heute", in *Ohne Leitbild. Parva Aesthetica*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1968), pp. 104–127. English trans. by Jane D. Newman and John H. Smith as "Functionalism Today", *Oppositions*, no. 17 (Summer 1979), pp. 31–41, here: p. 32.

[5] Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today", op. cit., p. 37. "Vermögen, durch die Zwecke den Raum zu artikulieren, sie Raum werden zu lassen; Formen nach Zwecken zu errichten"; "Funktionalismus heute", op. cit., p. 119.

[6] Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today", op. cit., p. 39.

[7] Ibid., p. 31, pp. 38–39.

[8] Ibid., p. 40.

pletely determined by its social function—Adorno's universe of societal purposes. An excellent architectural *form* can go along with *different functions*, as historical examples, like the amphitheatre of Arles and the Colosseum in Rome, give striking evidence of. Rossi translates, as it were, Adorno's critical aesthetic reflections to architectural practice in as much as he demands from the architect to construct aesthetic forms which allow to be matched by different functions.[9] Rossi's approach is mirrored in Adorno's statement that architecture has to mediate the two extremes: "formal construction" and "function". If this balance is missed architecture results in pure "filmsets", that is the exclusively "scenic" prevails.[10]

III

Whereas Adorno reexamines functionalism from the viewpoint of "aesthetic reflection",[11] Heidegger in "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951) approaches architecture from ontology. The failure of metaphysics urges philosophy to concentrate on everyday life. Rethinking architecture requires to take *dwelling* as the adequate starting point. My argument is that later Heidegger's thinking nurtures a viable postmodern stance if it is appropriated via the concept of *Critical Regionalism*, as outlined by Kenneth Frampton.

Heidegger's train of thoughts is as follows. *Metaphysical thinking* enshrines the relationship between building and dwelling in such a way that building becomes a means for dwelling. To break through the restrictions of the metaphysical narrative amounts to rephrase building and dwelling from the viewpoint of man's Being. Such a shift in paradigm presupposes the claim that language is the "house of Being". The oblivion of Being is to be overcome only to the degree that one subscribes to the "linguistic turn" of philosophy which had been advocated first by Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt and renewed by Wittgenstein, Cassirer and Heidegger. They all worked out what Charles Taylor has called the "expressive constitutive paradigm" of language.[12]

As to Heidegger, for him the recourse to ancient layers of language reveals that building originally signified both, building as "preserving" and "caring" nature (Latin *colere*, *cultura*) and building as the "raising" of "edifices" (Latin *aedificare*). Very ancient strata of language disclose, furthermore, that Being, building and dwelling belonged to one common semantic field. The changes of linguistic semantics mirror the history of the oblivion of Being. In that we call to mind the original meaning of linguistic structures we dispose of the means in

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[9] Compare: Heinrich Klotz, *Moderne und Postmoderne. Architektur der Gegenwart. 1960–1980*. 2nd ed. (Braunschweig Wiesbaden: Vieweg 1985), pp. 262–264.

[10] Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today", op. cit., p. 39.

[11] Ibid., p. 40.

[12] Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge Mass., London England: Harvard University Press 1997), pp. 101, 109–112, 116, 118.

order to *think* the relational texture of building, dwelling and Being properly.[13] It's again language that can teach us to understand human dwelling as a way of remaining at peace, of free and persistent stay on earth.[14]

Human beings are bound to the conditions of natural life on earth. Human life is subject to the rhythms of time, day and night, spring, summer, autumn and winter. Part and parcel of human life is the reference to the superhuman sphere, traditionally the divine. As finite mortal beings humans have a constitutive attitude to their own death. I rephrase Heidegger's talking about the *four-fold*, the gathering of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, as the ontological trial to encircle the lifeworldly conditions of the human existence.

Heidegger analyzed the peculiarities of the dwelling on earth in view of two buildings which are interwoven with practical life. Through a bridge a relationship between the two banks of a river becomes established. A landscape is originating, pointing to the sky above while based on the earth. The bridge commands the ways of humans. Insofar as bridges work out well they transcend the continuity of the empirical being (*Seiendes*). They articulate the difference between the ontic being (*Seiendes*) and the ontological Being (*Sein*).

The phenomenology of the lifeworld reveals that a bridge constitutes the nearby and the faraway of locales. Locales are sites in the space among which specific distances are established. They shape the room of action for human agency. One can determine these spaces according to metric and numerical scales. In such a case, however, one leaves the space as it is experienced by the actors in the lifeworld. It is only here that space is disclosed in the perspective of dwelling. Heidegger's sentence: "The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, thought essentially"[15] loses its obscurity if it is illuminated by phenomenological analyzes by authors ranging from Gaston Bachelard to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Charles Taylor.

Building as a mode of dwelling constitutes patterns of sites. It discloses spaces, building as a way of "founding" and "joining" spaces.[16] The architectural process of constructing buildings makes use of homogenizing structurations of space which are scientifically stylized in geometry. Building, however, as the way of constituting locales and by that shaping the lifeworld transcends the homogenizing structurations. Building is neither only architecture (as an art) nor engineering construction. It is no combination of the two either.[17] Architecture finds its base in dwelling. It is not true that there is firstly building to which man secondly has to adapt subsequently. On the contrary, dwelling as man's

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[13] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking", in *Basic Writings from 'Being and Time' (1927) to 'The Task of Thinking' (1964)*, revised and expanded edition, with introductions by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), pp. 347–363, here: pp. 349–350.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking", op. cit., pp. 350–351.

[15] Ibid., p. 359.

[16] Ibid., p. 359.

[17] Ibid., p. 361.

true being-in-the-world has to be the starting point: "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build."[18]

The ambiguities which characterize Heidegger's second analysis of a building, the notorious *Black Forest farm*,[19] are set aside if we translate his thinking into Frampton's concept of *Critical Regionalism*. This translation is, however, necessary. The deep rooted ambiguities in later Heidegger's, if not in whole his work concerns the concept of *human agency*. On one hand we find the idea that Being as a fate is imposed on humans. Humans remain subordinated to destiny. On the other hand humans are isolated and atomized individuals confronted with their own mortality desperately contriving their individual authentic being. There must, however, be a middle ground between these extremes, that is to say between premodern fateful destiny and modernist self-empowering. Heidegger's active participation in the totalitarian movement of Nationalsozialismus is an indicator of the fact that he was imprisoned in these ambiguities. The middle ground between premodern individuals overpowering destiny on one hand and modernist individualistic self-empowering on the other has been worked out by authors who put the necessary stress on individual and collective human agency and moral responsibility without neglecting an individual's embeddedness in the world which includes nature as well as the intersubjective community of the others. I am thinking of Merleau-Ponty, Hannah Arendt,[20] Emmanuel Lévinas, Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor. Their completely divergent stances since they have in common both, the opposition to premodern destiny as well as to the modernist self-empowering of isolated individuals, I would like to label as reflected postmodern.

This position of postmodern resistance against the high modernist bias of international style and aesthetically unreflected functionalism in architecture is the core of Kenneth Frampton's concept of Critical Regionalism. It marked out a veritable stance in postmodern discourse in that it did not negate neither modern technologies, such as prefab constructions, nor the universal values linked with modernity, like individual freedom, constitutional liberal state, collective associations and so forth. Nevertheless, Critical Regionalism's main concern is the rearticulation of regionally bound ideas of architectural forms without neglecting the modernized world around. Frampton alludes to valuable architectural practices, ranging from Jörn Utzon via Dutch structuralism (Aldo van Eyck, Herman Hertzberger, Lucien Lafour, Piet Blom) to Siza Vieira, Mario Botta, Tadao Ando and Alva Aalto.[21]

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[18] Ibid., p. 361.

[19] Ibid., pp. 361–362.

[20] Compare my essay: "Die Bedeutung von Kants Dritter Kritik für die Politische Philosophie in der Postmoderne. Zu Hannah Arendts Lektüre der "Kritik der Urteilskraft" als Kants Politische Philosophie", in *Kants Schlüssel zur Kritik des Geschmacks. Sonderheft des Jahrgangs 2000 der Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Ursula Franke, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000), pp. 189–208.

[21] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture. A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson 1985, revised and enlarged edition), pp. 313–327. Compare the analysis in my book: *Profile der*

IV

Heidegger was inside postmodern culture via Gianni Vattimo's brilliant aesthetics of *oscillation*. Such an aesthetics can take on the challenges of a postmodern society as a society of mass media and communication. Vattimo's aesthetics of oscillation is the result of reading two texts together which were published in 1936: Walter Benjamin's celebrated the *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and Heidegger's the *Origin of the Work of Art.*[22]

Both these texts outline an understanding of art which goes far beyond the framework of metaphysics. Metaphysical aesthetics had captured art under the headings of harmony and perfection.[23] In opposition to this tradition, Benjamin relates the experience of art in the media-society to the experience of a *shock*, while Heidegger makes us of the term *Stoss* (blow).[24] Benjamin's concern is film experience as one which challenges the visual perception in that the images rapidly and frequently are changed. No sooner have we formed the one image in our mind, it is already being replaced by the following one, to which our eyes and our mind must readapt. Benjamin relates film to modern metropolitan life and concludes that film is the art "that is in keeping with the increased threat to life which modern man has to face".[25] The Heideggerian *Stoss* has a more existentialist colouring. Anxiety is the basic mood of *Dasein*. It comes to the fore once we want to grasp the world as a whole. We are facing the failure to place things in a purely logical order. We experience the lack of sufficient significance or meaning.

Precisely here we find common ground between Benjamin's and Heidegger's aesthetics. Both conceptualize art as leading to disorientation. The pre-established networks of significance fall apart. This aspect comes to the fore if we put stress on Heidegger's "setting forth (*Herstellung*)" of the earth, as the *Origin of the Work of Art* suggests.[26] The other aspect of Heidegger's concept of art, the one pointing to the "founding a world" has its analogy in Benjaminian stress on the necessity to create new meanings by producing allegorical signs. After Fall, Benjamin says, man is condemned to invent new signs again and again since the true symbolic meaning of things has been lost. The metaphor of

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Ästhetik. Der Status von Kunst und Architektur in der Postmoderne (Vienna: Passagen 1990), pp. 167–170 and my essay: "Architektur und Urbanität. Umrisse einer kritischen Philosophie der Stadt", *JTLA*, vol. 14, 1989, pp. 43–63; here: pp. 55–61.

[22] I am following the outline of Vattimo's aesthetics which I gave in my book: *The Discourse of the Postmodern and the Discourse of the Avant-Garde* (Maastricht, The Netherlands: Jan Van Eyck Akademie 1994), pp. 38–48.

[23] Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. by David Webb (Cambridge UK, Oxford UK: Polity Press 1992), p. 46.

[24] Ibid., p. 47.

[25] Ibid., p. 49.

[26] Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art", in *Basic Writings. . .*, op. cit., pp. 143–203, here: pp. 188–189.

the earth in Heidegger incorporates connotations such as the "inexhaustible" potential of interpretation, the unfolded significance, the obscurity. Whereas the world signifies the openness, the earth on the contrary points to the "nothing", the "general gratuitness" and the "insignificance".[27]

Both, Heidegger and Benjamin alike, break with traditional aesthetics from Aristotle through Kant to Hegel. Here art was again and again thought of in terms of *Geborgenheit* ("security"), of "orientation" and "reorientation". Aesthetics assured that man is fitting into the world (Kant), that man should become familiar (*heimisch*) with the world (Hegel). Benjamin and Heidegger, on the contrary, while stressing shock and *Stoss* look at art as a means for causing disorientation and oscillation.

Vattimo's postmodern reading together of Heidegger and Benjamin offers a suggestive interpretation of their common ground regarding the question of technology. Heidegger puts technology under the category of the *Gestell* (enframing). Technology is a "setting up". Man sets things up as objects of manipulation. But in turn man is called upon to meet new demands deriving from manipulation. For Heidegger technology is extremely ambivalent. On one hand it completes metaphysics. It expresses the highest point of the oblivion of Being. But on the other hand, the "Ge-stell" is, as Vattimo quotes, "a first, oppressing flash of *Ereignis*", that is of the event of Being.[28]

For Heidegger as well as for Benjamin the essence of technology remains the manipulation of all things. Technology expresses at the same moment the completion and the end of metaphysics. The dichotomies implied in metaphysics—nature as the place of necessary vs. human freedom as the complementary to nature—lose their significance. As result, the experience of inconstancy and superficiality become prevalent. This is precisely what the postmodern media society is about. It leads to a "weakening" of the very notion of reality as a stable entity. Just as the society of the spectacle, the situationists have spoken about, is not a society of pure appearance manipulated by power but a society in which reality presents itself as softer and more fluid, the aesthetics of oscillation advocated by Benjamin and Heidegger alike puts stress on "disorientation" and "play", on a *"weak" Being*.[29]

V

This is the adequate place for a consideration in between. Vattimo absorbed Heidegger in postmodern culture, but he could only succeed—brilliantly as it was done—by skipping a notion which was central to Heidegger: *Truth*. Here, however, rests a serious problem. For aestheticians it might be fine if truth is

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[27] Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, op. cit., p. 53.
[28] Ibid., p. 56.
[29] Ibid., p. 59.

attributed to the world disclosing capacities of artworks. Heidegger, however, doesn't stop here. What is mostly overlooked is that in his the *Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger applies the concept of truth besides to art to the "act that founds a political state", to the "essential sacrifices", to the "thinking of Being". He explicitly withdraws truth from science.[30]

No ramification whatsoever can take away that these reflections since they are without further qualification are untrue. Postmodern thinking was caused by the insight that modernity has a double face. On one hand modernity fosters the establishment of the constitutional liberal state guaranteeing that human beings are not deprived of their dignity, their individual freedom as well as their well being. On the other hand, however, modernity resulted in fatal disasters indicated in the totalitarianism of Hitler's Holocaust and Stalin's Gulag Archipelago. This disclosure of modernity's internal tensions and contradictions belongs to the valuable postmodernism, advocated by Zygmunt Bauman, François Lyotard among others, continuing Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947).

Heidegger obviously did neglect the preparation of the Holocaust which was set into work immediately around him. What is even worse, he willingly lent his hands to help dismiss philosopher Richard Hönigswald from his position as full professor at University of Munich 1933 on grounds of his Jewishness.[31] This personal failure of a great thinker can never be excused.

Instead of deploring the moral corruption of a great thinker I draw the following conclusion. A defensible position informed by postmodern thinking must presuppose a concept of culture which puts stress on the plurality of "symbolic forms" in Cassirer's sense. Each of them has a world disclosing capacity. They all taken together might add up to something like truth. Myth, art, religion, science, politics, technology, morality, law, history, language are the various threads of human culture which allow human beings to withdraw from obscurity and liberate themselves. But at the same time modern culture is endangered by falling prey to fatal disasters indicated in the modern totalitarian state, modern religious fundamentalism and structural misconceptions of other cultures as cultural scholarship ranging from Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to Valentine Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988) among others has revealed.

Given the fact that human culture is composed of the variety of symbolic forms it seems to be the most reasonable stance to argue along with Richard Rorty and Nelson Goodman that truth should be dethroned from its formerly privileged position. Pragmatic "rightness" seems more adequate. This concept

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[30] Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art", op. cit., pp. 186–187.

[31] For an analysis compare: Tom Rockmore, "Philosophie oder Weltanschauung? Über Heideggers Stellungnahme zu Hönigswald", in *Erkennen Monas Sprache. Internationales Richard-Hönigswald-Symposion Kassel 1995*, ed. Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 1997), pp. 171–179.

does not deny that one component of truth is saved in each of the symbolic forms which Goodman rephrased as "ways of worldmaking".

VI

Now I have to touch upon rather than to analyze to full extent the intricate question of *truth* with Adorno. From the outset it has to be underlined that Adorno's concept has two components, a social critical and an epistemic component. It is introduced negatively. Works of art reveal the untruth of the existing society and only by doing so they point to a truth which, however, has to be saved as their "truth content" (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) by philosophical interpretation.[32] Rescuing the truth content of artworks is equaled by Adorno with solving the *enigma* each work is posing. To approach the enigmaticalness of artworks implies to reveal their internal logicality.[33]

The internal logicality of artworks becomes graspable for philosophical thought in that the artwork's dialectic of mimesis and construction is disentangled. Then it could be shown that works of art rescue the unidentical, meaning: (1) the epistemic particular as opposed to the universal,[34] (2) the societally repressed otherness,[35] (3) the heterogeneous and not already formed.[36] It goes without saying that my suggestion to rephrase truth in art as its world-disclosing capacity and to reframe truth as pragmatic rightness with one truth component applies not only to Heidegger but to Adorno as well.

VII

Instead of proceeding in the discussion of keynotions in Adorno's aesthetics, such as form, technique, style, I shall in the following sections of my discourse bring to the fore three areas of postmodern thought which were in one way or the other stamped by Adorno's ideas. Among postmodern philosophers especially Lyotard in his philosophy of art took on and carried out Adorno's inspira-

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[32] Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory* (ed. by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, 1970). Newly translated, edited, and with a translator's introduction by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: the Athlone Press 1999, paperback edition), pp. 127–127; pp. 236–237.

[33] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, op. cit., p. 136.

[34] "The truth of artworks depends on whether they succeed at absorbing...what is not identical with the concept, what is according to that concept accidental." Ibid., p. 101.

[35] "Aesthetic identity seeks to aid the nonidentical, which in reality is repressed by reality's compulsion to identity." Ibid., p. 4.

[36] "Artworks synthesize ununifiable, nonidentical elements that grind away at each other; they truly seek the identity of the identical and the nonidentical processually because even their unity is only an element and not the magical formula of the whole. The processual quality of artworks is constituted in such a fashion that as artifacts, as something humanly made, they have their place a priori in the 'native realm of spirit' but are, in order to become self-identical, in need of what is nonidentical, heterogeneous, and not already formed." Ibid, p. 176.

tions. Then I shall address very briefly Adorno's impact on environmental aesthetics. Eventually I will turn to postmodern discussions about culture industry.

VIII

Lyotard's aesthetics is mostly labeled as an aesthetics of the *sublime*. It is, at any rate, an aesthetics of the avant-garde. Although Lyotard draws only occasionally on Heidegger—the focal concept here is the "event",[37] Lyotard is indebted a lot especially to Adorno. Lyotard rephrases the artistic avant-garde project as one of continuous *experimentation*, of *contestation* against the established codes of visual culture and of *problematizing* the *internal logicality* of the arts.[38] All this testifies Adorno's legacy.

But that is by far not all. Lyotard picks up Adorno's concept of "micrologies" by which concept Adorno in his *Negative Dialectics* (1966) tried to find his way in thinking and writing at the moment that "metaphysics" has to be recollected in its "fall". This, one will recall, is Adorno's way of working through the fatal disaster of modernity, indicated in Auschwitz.[39] Lyotard rephrases as follows. Just as the "great" philosophical thought, the "grand narrative", at its decline left over something unthought that remains to be thought, the avant-gardist attempt inscribes the "occurrence of a sensory now" as what cannot be "presented" and which remains to be presented at the "decline of great representational painting". Both moves, the philosophical as well as the aesthetic, are not concerned with what happens to the aesthetic or social subjectivity but rather with "privation". With art the central question is: "Does it happen?" Artworks testify the "event". Lyotard agrees with Adorno that only "truly great art" could be equaled with the making of "fireworks".[40]

Eventually, Lyotard defends Adorno (and Benjamin) against Habermasian charges put on them because of their questioning the project of Enlightenment.[41] In a word, Lyotard picks up and continues Adorno's view that modern art is threatened by the powers that be, industry, advanced capitalism, mainstream conformism with its demand on art's communicability. However, in order to withdraw aesthetics from Hegelian idealism and nostalgic romanticism Lyotard radicalizes Benjamin's and Adorno's thought. The experimental spirit of art

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[37] Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde" (1984), in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin (Oxford Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell 1989), pp. 196–211; here: p. 197.

[38] Jean-François Lyotard, "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity", in *The Lyotard Reader*, op. cit., pp. 181–195.

[39] Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", op. cit., p. 208.

[40] Jean-François Lyotard, "Acinema" (1978), in *The Lyotard Reader*, op. cit., pp. 169–180; here: p. 171.

[41] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, foreword by Fredric Jameson (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1991), pp. 72–74, 76.

may not find any restriction, it be from a full notion of experience as opposed to information (Benjamin's case) nor from "seriousness" (Adorno's demand).[42]

Although Lyotard's postmodernism keeps in line with many of Adorno's concerns what separates them is that Lyotard made the "linguistic turn" of philosophy operative which turn transforms Adorno's Hegelian Marxism. Lyotard utilizes late Wittgenstein's theory of language games in order to rearticulate philosophy in terms of cultural and political struggle, of conflict, of dissent. From this perspective Lyotard in his *The Differend* (1983) rephrases Adorno's *Meditations on Metaphysics* and *After Auschwitz* wherein Adorno moved towards postmodern thinking.[43] I have, however, my doubts about Lyotard's undertaking for that matter. His argument is stringent. Auschwitz, Lyotard says, is without Hegelian *Resultat* ("result"). It causes only silences: "These silences interrupt the chain that goes from them, the deported, and from them, the SS, to we who speak about them".[44] I would favor a line suggested and worked out by Hannah Arendt and by Zygmunt Bauman. Their's is to analyze totalitarianism as the dark backside of modernity in order to understand it empirically and, as Arendt continued, to engage in the faculty of judgment which is an important ingredient of political action.

I have further doubts with regards to Lyotard's giving preeminence to the *sublime* as the definitive aesthetics of postmodernity. I dispute that.[45] To be sure, Barnett Newman, Malevitch, Mondrian, Beckett back up such an aesthetics. But what about Willem de Kooning, Henri Matisse, Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kossuth, Cindy Sherman? They all fulfill Lyotard's criteria—investigation of the artistic means, experimentality, questioning of the established visual culture—but it would be hard to subsume their works under the heading of the sublime. Lyotard is too hastily. He draws from the correct observation that the centrality of beauty has lost its credits in modern and postmodern art the inconsiderate conclusion that the sublime takes over.

Adorno's aesthetic theory is not an implicit aesthetics of the sublime, as Wolfgang Welsch claims.[46] It has to be conceded that Adorno's stress on negativity is adjacent to the sublime. There is, indeed, a rather extended passage in the *Aesthetic Theory* dealing with the sublime.[47] Welsch goes astray in that he

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[42] Jean-François Lyotard, "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation . . ", op. cit., pp. 191–192.

[43] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*, trans. by Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 86–106.

[44] Ibid, p. 106.

[45] I dealt in more details with Lyotard's postmodernism in my book: *The Discourse of the Postmodern and the Discourse of the Avant-Garde*, op. cit., pp. 14–30, and pp. 82–92.

[46] Wolfgang Welsch, "Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen" [Adorno's Aesthetics: An Implicit Aesthetics of the Sublime], in *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahn*, ed. by Christine Pries (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora 1989), pp. 185–213.

[47] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, op. cit., pp. 194–199.

makes of the aesthetics of the sublime a *prima philosophia*, a First Philosophy.[48] This is completely incompatible with postmodern anti-foundationalism, stressed by Lyotard, Rorty and many others, and of course against Adorno's critic on *Ursprungsphilosophie*, on origins and first principles.[49]

IX

To withdraw Adorno from being hastily subsumed under an aesthetics of the sublime opens the eyes that his aesthetic theory contributed to an issue which marked postmodern culture: the *aesthetics of nature* or *environmental aesthetics*. Regarding the German discussion lots of overlaps between Adorno and contemporary writers are obvious. Gernot Böhme's stress on the bodily ingredients of any aesthetic experience of nature mirrors Adorno's concern with the somatic. Martin Seel's contemplative attitude indicating the breakdown of entrenched articulations of the world carries out Adorno's reflection that the "beautiful" in nature is the "trace of the nonidentical in things".[50] Aesthetic experiences of nature stimulate our imagination, Seel says, in that we perceive a landscape according to paints by a William Turner or a Caspar David Friedrich. In this case our imaginative capacity is not only stimulated by models in art but extremely intensified. Böhme makes the point that aesthetic experiences of nature address the atmospheric, the tuning of an environment. Here, of course, Heidegger as the thinker of the facticity of the *Dasein* and its atmospheric tuning (*Stimmung*) is involved. An aesthetics of nature leads to a revision of the concept of aesthetic semblance. Semblance is no longer to be understood as exposing an underlying idea as Hegel thought but it points to the ephemeral as a positive value.

My point is that much in the recent approaches to environmental aesthetics can be appreciated as refinements, as transformations and as necessary differentiations of Adorno's thought. However, I have a strong reason why we should go back to Adorno. The value of his approach is that it does not separate aesthetics in the sense of philosophy of art and aesthetics as aesthetics of nature. Adorno questions modern aesthetics' move towards exclusive concentration on the philosophy of art. This shift was introduced by Schelling and Hegel and maintained by Lyotard. Now we can see why the aesthetics of the sublime falls short. It is not at all the representative aesthetics of postmodernity since it misses to find access to the aesthetics of nature. Precisely here are its limits. Adorno's aesthetic theory has a strong voice in postmodern debates about environmental aesthetics because it does not urge us to choose between either for philosophy of art or for aesthetics of

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[48] Wolfgang Welsch, "Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen", op. cit., pp. 212–213.

[49] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, op. cit., pp. 2–3.

[50] Ibid., p. 73.

nature. On the contrary, the office of aesthetics is to link both these branches without playing off the one against the other.[51]

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There remains one short final point before I conclude. With his theory of *culture industry* Adorno was at the same time *inside* and *outside* postmodern thought. For many (postmodern) authors this theory was a target of critic. Some said that it did not address the emancipatory potential implied in Jazz.[52] Others argued that technological developments in recent times, especially connected to music, make Adorno's theoretical distinctions pointless.[53]

Adorno's culture industry concept remained inside/outside postmodern thought because in postmodern culture the presumed distinction between high culture and mass culture has been blurred. On this view, Pop Art was the last avant-garde and at the same time the endgame of any avant-garde approach. Postmodern culture is beyond the "great divide" which separated high and mass culture.[54]

My position in this matter is that we need a however refined distinction between art proper and culture industry. It might be difficult to draw a line of separation today. I follow Lambert Zuidervaart in suggesting a third field between art, culture industry and a newly emerging democratic artistic public culture. In our days art falls more and more prey to the globalized market economy.[55] Acquaintance with the contemporary art world can back the view that criteria of artistic quality still exist but the fusion of capital forces and state no longer guarantee that the quality comes to the public. One can observe a continuity between those artists exhibited in famous galleries and international shows and those whose quality of work is not worse but who hardly have a chance to succeed in the market race.

This argument, yet, presupposes the distinction between the artistic experimentation proper and the culture industry products. It is in line with Lyotard's separating an authentic postmodernism from a "slackened" version of it.[56] On

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[51] I dealt in more details with Adorno's relevance for contemporary environmental aesthetics in my essay: "Adorno's Notion of Natural Beauty: A Reconsideration", in *The Semblance of Subjectivity. Essay in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart (Cambridge Mass. London, England: The MIT Press 1997), pp. 213–235.

[52] J. Bradford Robinson, "The Jazz Essays of Adorno: Some Thoughts on Jazz Reception in Weimar Germany", in *Popular Music*, vol. 13 (January 1994), pp. 1–25.

[53] Roger Behrens, *Pop, Kultur, Industrie. Zur Philosophie der populären Musik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 1996).

[54] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Macmillan 1993).

[55] Lambert Zuidervaart, "Autonomy, Negativity, and Illusory Transgression Menke's Deconstruction of Adorno's Aesthetics", in *Philosophy Today*, 1999, pp. 154–168.

[56] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, op. cit., pp. 71, 76.

one hand we find a postmodern culture as a culture of dispute, of dissent and of struggle. On the other hand the repressive tolerance, that is the acceptance of all meanings and opinions without any discussion is the menace of a slackened, an affirmative postmodernity. It is the postmodernity of anything goes.

XI

None of the notions at the heart of postmodern culture—differend, simulacrum, irony, pastiche, multiple coding, the sublime, ambiguity—derive from Heidegger or Adorno. Both stamped, however, postmodern culture. Heidegger and Adorno give access to environmental aesthetics. Heidegger informed critical regionalism as defensible position in postmodern architecture theory. Heidegger inspired the concept of a weak Being supporting an aesthetics of oscillation. Although we may not subsume Adorno under an aesthetics of the sublime, Lyotard, yet, rearticulates a stance close to Adorno: both conceive of art as alluding to something outside societal immanence. Heidegger's and Adorno's relevance today consists in assisting a remapping of postmodernity. Being not completely absorbed in it they allow *us* to look at it from some distance. Adorno helps to reinforce Lyotard's split between a *slackened* and a *justifiable* version of postmodernity along lines separating the pure entertainment of *culture industry* from *art*. The end of a remapping of postmodern culture could be circumscribed as the search of an *ethics of authenticity*.