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ELECTIVE AFFINITIES: HEIDEGGER AND ADORNO

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Michael R. Kilivris

December 2010

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Michael R. Kilivris

2010

ELECTIVE AFFINITES: HEIDEGGER AND ADORNO

By

Michael R. Kilivris

Approved August 23, 2010.

Dr. James Swindal
Associate Professor and Chair,
Philosophy
(Committee Chair)

Dr. Lanei Rodemeyer
Associate Professor, Philosophy
(Committee Member)

Dr. Daniel Selcer
Associate Professor, Philosophy
(Committee Member)

Dr. James Swindal
Associate Professor and Chair,
Philosophy

Christopher M. Duncan
Dean, McNulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts

ABSTRACT

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES: HEIDEGGER AND ADORNO

By

Michael R. Kilivris

December 2010

Dissertation supervised by Dr. James Swindal.

In spite of their historical, geographical, and intellectual proximity, Heidegger and Adorno never entered into dialogue with one another. Heidegger claimed not to have read Adorno, while Adorno wrote only polemically on Heidegger. In the past thirty years, scholars have attempted to initiate communication between the two in a number of areas, from epistemology to ethics. The first and most comprehensive effort is Hermann Mörchen's *Heidegger and Adorno: Examination of a Refused Philosophical Communication* (1981). Unfortunately, Mörchen's text has still not been translated into English. This leaves the Anglophone world with preliminary studies such as Fred Dallmayr's *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology* (1991), wherein one (of eight) chapters pairs Heidegger and Adorno, and Iain Macdonald's and Krzysztof Ziarek's *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions* (2008), a short book of essays.

Thus this project is the first sustained comparison of Heidegger and Adorno in the English language. Just as important, it brings them together in an original way. In particular, it explores the similarities between their respective critiques of modernity, focusing on the areas of subjectivity, aesthetics, and environmental philosophy. My thesis is that while Heidegger and Adorno both valorize the self, art, and nature, seeing them as victims of as well as potential antidotes to modernity, they do so from fundamentally different perspectives. I attribute these differences to larger debates in twentieth-century Continental thought such as those between existentialism and critical theory, phenomenological ontology and dialectics, and anti-humanism and humanism. As these debates continue to offer productive ways of thinking about the self, art, and nature, understanding their frameworks, and Heidegger's and Adorno's places within them, leads to an enhanced comprehension of our own time.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to those who supported me throughout its development, especially my committee, family, and friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge my committee, particularly my director Dr. James Swindal, whose guidance was, and remains, invaluable. My readers, Dr. Daniel Selcer and Dr. Lanei Rodemeyer, also deserve recognition, as their questions and comments were indispensable and will continue to inform my research for years to come. In addition, a thank you is owed to Duquesne University in general and the Philosophy Department in particular for their intellectual and financial support over the past six years.

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Introduction:

Philosophical Chemistry

“...the differentiation of positions is the root of (common) philosophical labor.” – Heidegger

“...the decisive differences between philosophers are concealed in nuances.” – Adorno

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) were two of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century. Like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche before him, Heidegger was a prime mover of existentialism, which became quite popular in the postwar era, as well as the founder of “fundamental ontology,” or the philosophy of Being. In addition, Heidegger’s writings on language, after his so-called “turn” (*die Kehre*), were highly influential on postmodern figures such as Derrida, the originator of “deconstruction.” Adorno was one of the major members of the (first generation) Frankfurt School of critical theory, a group of Hegelian-Marxist thinkers who were among the first to bring philosophy to bear on popular culture. His and Max Horkheimer’s critique of what they called the “culture industry” remains essential reading today for those interested in the relationship between art and society. Adorno was also one of the most insightful and eloquent of twentieth-century progressive intellectuals; this is perhaps best expressed in his famous statement, “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.”

Philosophical and Political Differences

Yet, although Heidegger and Adorno lived and thought at approximately the same time (the 1930’s through the 1960’s), and in approximately the same place (Heidegger in

Freiburg, Germany, Adorno in Frankfurt, Germany), the two never entered into dialogue with one another. Apart from a “furtive meeting” in 1929, which “failed to generate discussion,”¹ communication between Heidegger and Adorno was either non-existent or one-sided and hostile, as Heidegger “never addressed a single word to Adorno in public,”² claiming to “have read nothing by him,”³ while Adorno wrote only polemically on Heidegger, most notably in *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964) and *Negative Dialectics* (1966). The reasons for this “refusal” of dialogue, as Hermann Mörchen refers to it, are both philosophical and political. Philosophically, Heidegger’s existentialism and Adorno’s critical theory are fundamentally at odds. Whereas the latter, inspired by Marx, is ethically normative, insofar as it ultimately seeks social justice, the former, inspired by Nietzsche, the “annihilator of morality,” is amoral, even immoral. To the extent that existentialism posits ideals, they are individualistic (i.e., Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*), and thus contrast with Marxism’s/critical theory’s social or collective ideals (i.e., Marx’s classless society).

As for Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, which better characterizes his thought, since existentialism was largely a detour for him, it too conflicts with Adorno’s critical theory. Heidegger’s interest in Being, the “is-ness” of all beings, obviously seems remote from sociopolitical concerns. While Heidegger at times used ontology to analyze society, as in his “The Question Concerning Technology” (1954), wherein he takes issue with the (mis)understanding of Being as “standing reserve,” fundamental ontology mostly had the air of a purely philosophical affair. To Adorno, for whom philosophy must always be *critical*, and critical of *society* in particular, Heidegger’s ontological perspective could thus only appear apolitical at best, and ideological at worst. In a discussion of

Heidegger's ontology in relation to his own dialectics, the method of critical theory, Adorno asserts, "The concept of critique, as far as I can see, has no place in Heidegger's philosophy."⁴

Of course, the main obstacle to communication between Heidegger and Adorno was not philosophical, but political.⁵ Infamously, Heidegger was a member of the National Socialist Party until its dissolution. What is worse, from 1933 until 1934 he was the Nazi-endorsed and Nazi-endorsing rector at the University of Freiburg. During this time, Heidegger made pro-Nazi speeches and led smear campaigns against Jewish colleagues. Worse still, though he lived another thirty years after the war, Heidegger offered neither a compelling explanation nor any apology for his involvement with National Socialism. The closest he came was in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1966 (published posthumously, in 1976, at Heidegger's request), in which he suggests that by taking up the rectorship, he was protecting the university. However, recent scholarship has raised serious questions about this and other claims, making an already unsatisfactory account all the more disappointing.

Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis was the ultimate betrayal for Adorno, whose father was Jewish.⁶ Because of this, Adorno was forced to flee Germany, which he did as early as 1934, when he emigrated to Oxford, England. In 1938, he emigrated again, to New York City, where the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research had temporarily relocated (at Columbia University) and where he worked on the Princeton Radio Project. In 1941, with Horkheimer, he relocated once more, to southern California, where he would stay until returning to Germany in 1949. Adorno was thus affected in the most personal way by National Socialism (as well, his close friend and literary critic,

Walter Benjamin, died escaping the Nazis). That Heidegger was associated with Nazism, even playing an active role in it, made him not just a theoretical, but also a practical enemy for Adorno. Adorno's many charges of fascism in Heidegger's thought must be read in, and justified by, this light.

Heidegger-Adorno Scholarship

In spite of these glaring, perhaps irreconcilable differences, however, Heidegger's and Adorno's respective philosophies have several affinities. In general, both can be said to take a critical stance toward (late) modernity, understood as industrial, capitalist, secular, scientific, and/or technological society.⁷ This shared position, furthermore, makes for more particular agreements. For instance, Heidegger and Adorno each challenge "scientism," the ideology that the scientific worldview is the only or best description of reality. For Heidegger, scientism is just another problematic (mis)interpretation of Being that turns beings into objects for manipulation. Likewise, for Adorno, scientism wrongfully reduces everything outside of the subject to "mere objectivity," the better to "dominate" it. As such, scientism is an example of what Heidegger calls "calculative thinking" or "representational thinking," and Adorno calls "instrumental reason" or "identity-thinking" (or "identitarian thinking") another area where the two approximate each other.

While Heidegger and Adorno themselves never noticed these similarities, or at least never explicitly acknowledged them, others have.⁸ Hermann Mörchen was the first to explore them, in *Macht und Herrschaft im Denken von Heidegger und Adorno* (1980), and then more thoroughly in *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchung einer*

philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung (1981). A student of Heidegger who also lived for many years in Frankfurt, Mörchen holds that there are a number of “convergences” in the thinking of Heidegger and Adorno, owing to mutual “underlying or motivating experiences,” by which he means the problems of modernity enumerated above. In the latter text, which has not been translated into English (the former has not been translated either), Mörchen pairs Heidegger and Adorno under six “examples” (*Beispiele*): 1) world (*Welt*); 2) science (*Wissenschaft*); 3) system (*System*); 4) clarity (*Klarheit*); 5) picture (*Bild*); 6) language (*Sprache*).

Taking after Mörchen, Fred Dallmayr, in *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology* (1991),⁹ argues that Heidegger and Adorno begin from “common concerns and shared agonies,” which lead them to “moments of rapprochement and latent affinity... a subterranean linkage.”¹⁰ Their common concerns and shared agonies, Dallmayr contends, stem from the “dilemmas of late modernity, that is, the predicaments engendered by the sway of modern science and technology.”¹¹ The moments of rapprochement and latent affinity, or “incipient modes of dialogue... covert liaison... involuntary complicity,”¹² according to Dallmayr, revolve around the issues of science and language, as Mörchen points out, as well as time and temporality, which Dallmayr claims is the “the deepest, but also the most hidden (and overtly controverted) liaison between the two thinkers,”¹³ and the “correlation and mutual dependence of irrationalism and rationalism, especially where the latter stands as synonym for an instrumental or calculating rationality.”¹⁴

With the exception of a brief discussion of Heidegger and Adorno by Rüdiger Safranski, in his biography of Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*

(1998), wherein he too notices a “dangerous philosophical affinity” in their “similar diagnosis of the modern age,”¹⁵ scholarship on the Heidegger-Adorno connection fell silent after Dallmayr’s book until Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek revived it in 2004, by holding a three-day conference on the topic at the University of Montréal. Some of the papers presented there have since been assembled into a book, *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, published in 2008. In their introduction, Macdonald and Ziarek, proceeding from the “openness to dialogue” of Mörchen and Dallmayr, state that “there are undeniable points of proximity between Adorno and Heidegger,” especially where “technology, positivism, and the vapidness of contemporary social existence” are concerned.¹⁶ Other “parallels,” which Macdonald and Ziarek are careful to distinguish from Mörchen’s preferred term, convergences (so as “not to dismiss as unfounded the oppositional character of the [Heidegger-Adorno] dispute”¹⁷), include such “areas of tension” as aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, nature, and modernity.

Thesis

These attempts at pairing Heidegger and Adorno are legitimate and promising. However, they cannot be the final word on this topic. For one thing, the only sustained treatment of Heidegger and Adorno, Mörchen’s *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchung einer philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung*, is inaccessible to the Anglophone world; although both in English, Dallmayr’s discussion is limited to one chapter (of eight), and Macdonald’s and Ziarek’s text comprises short, preliminary essays. For another, the arguments made in these texts do not exhaust the range of possibilities

afforded by a comparison of Heidegger and Adorno. While all of the efforts thus far tend to agree that Heidegger and Adorno can be read as having compatible critiques of modernity, each takes a relatively unique position as to *what* exactly they critique, and *why* and *how* they do so.

This project, then, seeks to fill the void of thorough analyses of affinities between Heidegger and Adorno in the English language (indeed, it will be the first of its kind in this regard), as well as to propose an original viewpoint, distinguished from Mörchen's and (especially) Dallmayr's in general, and several of Macdonald's and Ziarek's commentators in particular. Overall, it aims to challenge Dallmayr's thesis that Heidegger and Adorno "start from similar predicaments, but proceed to set diverse accents."¹⁸ Somewhat to the contrary, it will be argued that while, or precisely because, Heidegger and Adorno start from similar predicaments, this leads them to set *similar*, not diverse, accents. These accents, I will show, pertain to the three areas of subjectivity, aesthetics, and environmental philosophy. For in their respective critiques of modernity, Heidegger and Adorno are both concerned with the fate of the self, art, and nature, each of which, it will also be proposed, they (re)affirm as potential antidotes to modernity.

Form and Content

Thus, it will be advanced in the following that Heidegger and Adorno are aligned negatively and positively in their assessments of modernity, or that both their diagnoses of and prescriptions for modernity have commonalities. On the negative or diagnostic side, Heidegger and Adorno each identify and express misgivings about the "levelling" (Heidegger) and "liquidation" (Adorno, although he also uses the term levelling) of the

self, particularly at the hands of “the they” (Heidegger) and late capitalism (Adorno); the degradation of art by an “equipmental” ontology (Heidegger) and “culture industry” (Adorno); and the “enframing” (Heidegger) and “domination” or “exploitation” (Adorno) of nature due to a calculating (Heidegger) and instrumental (Adorno) rationality. On the positive or prescriptive side, Heidegger and Adorno both (re)affirm an “authentic” (Heidegger) and “autonomous” (Adorno) self, “great” (Heidegger) and “autonomous” (Adorno) art, and the “not-forgetting of Being” (Heidegger) and “remembrance of nature” (Adorno).

Each one of these areas will be given its own chapter. Chapter I, “The Self: Authenticity and Autonomy,” will compare Heidegger’s anxiety over the levelling of the self, as well as his “destruction” of the modern (Cartesian) subject, to Adorno’s worry about the liquidation of the subject, in addition to his critique of the modern (Baconian and Kantian) subject. This will give way to a consideration of the possible connections between Heidegger’s idea(l) of authentic selfhood and Adorno’s concept of the autonomous subject. Chapter II, “Art: Strife and Semblance,” will pair Heidegger’s destruction of the equipmental view of artworks and his (re)construction of great art as a site of truth (*aletheia*) and a “new beginning,” with Adorno’s critique of the culture industry and (re)affirmation of autonomous art for its “truth content” and transformative capacity. Chapter III: “Nature: Enframing and Exploitation,” will bring Heidegger’s questioning of the enframing of nature, regarded as *physis*, together with Adorno’s challenging of instrumental reason’s domination of nature, conceived of as the “non-identical.”

The foregoing will also be distinguished within the Heidegger-Adorno scholarship, moreover, in making a connection between Heidegger and Adorno and the (early) German Romantic tradition. This link will be justified by showing how in critiquing modernity generally, and focusing on the self, art, and nature specifically, Heidegger and Adorno echo the Romantics' critique of modernity, or the Enlightenment, as "alienating" or "dividing" the self from itself, others, and nature, to which they countered the "fundamental values" of *Bildung*, or self-realization, aesthetic education, and the re-mystification of nature.¹⁹ Thus, each chapter closes with a "Romantic Coda," wherein these Romantic values are elaborated and related to Heidegger's and Adorno's views of the self, art, and nature. However, these sections will be more like afterthoughts than essential parts of the main argument; their purpose is simply to suggest tenuous correspondences to be more rigorously addressed elsewhere.²⁰

Combining Heidegger and Adorno in these ways, of course, does not mean that their differences will be explained away or ignored. To the contrary, the recurring conclusion will be that while in certain, highly qualified ways, Heidegger and Adorno resemble each other in both their problems with and solutions for modernity, these resemblances hold only at the level of *spirit*, as opposed to letter, or *form*, as opposed to content. When turning to the latter – that is, the actual letter or content of each figure's thought – it becomes clear that Heidegger and Adorno are finally separated by an unbridgeable abyss. This is due, with some variation depending upon the topic, primarily to the distinctions mentioned above between their basic standpoints. Whether it is the existentialist Heidegger and the critical theorist Adorno, or the ontological Heidegger and

the dialectical Adorno, these standpoints cannot be reconciled, not without doing injustice to one and thereby both.

In general, though, the fundamental differences between Heidegger and Adorno can be attributed to the *ontological* perspective of Heidegger and the *sociopolitical* perspective of Adorno. This disconnect plays itself out in each of the three areas under investigation here. In Chapter II, for example, Heidegger's aesthetics are shown to be inseparable from his ontological viewpoint. He sees modernity's degradation of art as symptomatic of a wider (mis)understanding of *Being*, which interprets all beings, including works of art, as "useful." His (re)affirmation of art is thus made in hopes of correcting this misunderstanding, or initiating a *new relation to Being*.²¹ By contrast, Adorno relates modernity's degradation of art to the culture industry of *late capitalism*, which views everything in terms of "exchange value." His reaffirmation of autonomous art is therefore not simply an affront to "low" or "mass" art, but also an overture to a *transfigured society*, wherein the "exchange principle" is no longer dominant.

Objectives

These differences are formidable, yet they do not and should not make dialogue between Heidegger and Adorno impossible or unfruitful. As contrary as their outlooks can be, they can also overlap in surprising and interesting ways. In Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, it is proposed that "antithetical qualities make possible a closer and more intimate union."²² This is a theory about chemicals, to be sure, but it is also an attempt to account for "affinity of mind." As such, it suggests that in spite of, indeed because of, their differences, Heidegger's and Adorno's thinking could combine to form a "higher

determination.” Perhaps this would be a deeper, more critical, understanding of modernity than either offers by itself.

No less promising is the very process of bringing Heidegger and Adorno together. As Mörchen holds, the “first precondition of understanding” is “solidarity with the ‘agony’ of the contestants,” a “willingness to ‘suffer’ one another – and to learn from suffering.”²³ Heidegger and Adorno themselves seem to believe this. According to Heidegger, “...the differentiation of positions is the root of (common) philosophical labor.”²⁴ For Adorno, “...the decisive differences between philosophers are concealed in nuances,”²⁵ a claim inviting communication, however painstaking. While any dialogue, especially between thinkers as distinct as these, can lead to standstill or worse, they can just as often broaden and deepen the positions of each participant. At the very least, communication requires and encourages *openness*, a subjective quality that Heidegger and Adorno both esteemed.

Finally, focusing on the self, art, and nature was not only necessitated by Heidegger’s and Adorno’s own emphases, but also inspired by the sense that these things remain endangered by modernity (despite Heidegger’s and Adorno’s warnings), and that a rethinking and reaffirmation of them is crucial to alleviating modernity’s flaws. The arrogant modern subject, whether Cartesian, Baconian or Kantian, that Heidegger and Adorno each critique, along with the conformist contemporary self, have depleted subjectivity as well as art and nature. What is needed today is thus an alternative ideal of subjectivity, along the lines of Heidegger’s authentic self and Adorno’s autonomous subject, both of which stress a balancing of consciousness and being, ego and id, in addition to social non-conformity. The reigning subjectivity has also seriously damaged

the arts and humanities, which are now seen as “wastes of time” in the ceaseless pursuit of wealth. Against this tendency, the arts and humanities must be re-seen, as Heidegger and Adorno suggest, as sites of truth and transformation. Nature has also been a victim of the current mode of subjectivity. Viewed as dead matter for human consumption for centuries, nature is now nearing a point at which it will become uninhabitable for humanity. To stop this from occurring, Heidegger’s not-forgetting of Being and Adorno’s remembrance of nature should become guiding ideas. In short, what is essential now is a redefinition of the concept of *growth*, *development*, or *progress*, so that the self and society can be enriched, the arts and humanities restored, and nature saved. It was one of the primary motives for this project that Heidegger and Adorno be seen as figures whose thought furthers these ends.

Notes

¹ Fred Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 45.

² Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. Ewald Osers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 416.

³ Nicholas Walker, "Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, ed. Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 87.

⁴ Quoted in Krzysztof Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 111.

⁵ This is my contention. Mörchen, for instance, argues otherwise, pointing out that many of Adorno's criticisms of Heidegger "were formulated prior to Heidegger's overt political involvement" (Quoted in Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 54).

⁶ Adorno's original surname, his father's, was Wiesengrund. He took his mother's surname, Adorno (really Calvelli-Adorno, an Italian name), when he established citizenship in the United States, in the late 1930's.

⁷ In seeing Heidegger as taking a critical stance towards modernity, I am of course departing from Adorno's view that critique has no place in Heidegger's thinking. While Adorno is right that Heidegger's thought is (mostly) apolitical, this does not mean that it is thereby uncritical. A distinction can, and should in this case, be made between sociopolitical critique and other forms of critique. As Krzysztof Ziarek argues, Heidegger's thought can be seen as "critical otherwise." (Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, ed. Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008)).

⁸ There is some evidence, however, that Adorno, if not Heidegger, noticed similarities. Reportedly, after reading Heidegger's *Holzwege*, in 1949, Adorno wrote to Horkheimer that Heidegger was "in a way... not all that different from us." (Quoted in Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, 413).

⁹ Between Mörchen's *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchung einer philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung* and Dallmayr's *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, there was Wilhelm Wurzer's *Filming and Judgment: Between Heidegger and Adorno* (1990). Since this text deals exclusively with Heidegger's and Adorno's aesthetic theories in relation to film, it has been left out of this discussion, which pertains to general attempts to compare Heidegger and Adorno.

¹⁰ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 44-45.

¹¹ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 47.

¹² Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 45.

¹³ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 51.

¹⁴ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 60.

¹⁵ See "Adorno and Heidegger: From the Jargon of Authenticity to the Authentic Jargon of the 1960's," in Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, pp. 407-425.

¹⁶ Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek, "Introduction," in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, ed. Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁷ Macdonald and Ziarek, *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, 4.

¹⁸ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 46.

¹⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁰ Only Jusuf Früchtl has made the connection between Heidegger, Adorno and the Romantics, in "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Adorno and Heidegger on Modernity," in Macdonald's and Ziarek's *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*. However, as noted in Chapter I, whereas Früchtl focuses on the Storm and Stress Romantics, I will focus on the early Romantics (*Führromantik*). Others have linked Heidegger and Adorno separately to the Romantic tradition. Andrew Bowie, in *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, traces a direct line from F. Schlegel through Heidegger to Adorno. In *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, edited by Laurence Coupe, Heidegger's and Adorno's writings on nature appear alongside those of the English Romantics.

²¹ However, it will also be suggested in Chapter II that Heidegger's hopes for art bore some relation to his involvement with National Socialism, and thus were perhaps not entirely apolitical.

²² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 53.

²³ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 45.

²⁴ Quoted in Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 53.

²⁵ Quoted in Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 53.

I.

The Self: Authenticity and Autonomy

Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. – Heidegger, *Being and Time*

Odysseus loses himself in order to find himself. – Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

The self is not what it used to be. Long gone are the days of Romantic *Bildung* (self-realization), when people were inspired to develop both their human (intellect and sensibility) and individual (talents and passions) capacities. Even existentialist self-invention, which held sway in the postwar era, is nowhere to be found, as consciousness of personal freedom has somehow led only to mass conformity. To the extent that the ideals of self-realization and self-creation exist at all today, it is as generally practical, and particularly economic, forms of subjectivity. This has been a triumph for those on the Right, who endorse a kind of entrepreneurial self, one which actualizes its potential by maximizing its profits. Meanwhile, the Left has been unwilling or unable to assert a rival subjectivity, viewing the self as either necessarily bourgeois (Marxists/critical theorists) or else a metaphysical fantasy (postmodernists). Indeed, the latter's theory of the self, that it is in fact nothing but a multiplicity of selves, has arguably aided and abetted the Right's economic individualism. Hence Žižek's scene of a "yuppie" identifying with the "exploding of self-contained subjectivity" recommended by Deleuze, who Žižek thus suggests calling, in true contrarian fashion, the "ideologist of late capitalism."¹

Of course, postmodernism's pronouncement of the "death of the subject" (a decidedly un-Nietzschean echo of Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God) was

simply the logical conclusion of what other theorists had been proposing decades earlier. Both Heidegger and Adorno, admittedly, were foremost among such thinkers. In his “Letter on Humanism” (1946), Heidegger asserts that “Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one.”² What is implied here is that any attempt to assert the human subject (as a “rational animal,” “child of God,” or “thinking thing”) is always already an act of metaphysics, which presumptuously transcends the self’s basic “ek-sistence,” or its “standing in the clearing of Being.” Derrida’s deconstruction of the “metaphysics of Subjectivity” can obviously be traced back to this claim by Heidegger. For Adorno’s part, his observation of the “liquidation of the subject,” by which he meant the loss of individual autonomy in late capitalist society, anticipated Foucault’s outlook that the self is threatened from all sides by so many points of “power.” Likewise, Foucault’s theory that the self is thoroughly constructed, even *created*, by a given “knowledge-power regime” (e.g., schools, prisons, hospitals, workplaces) radicalizes Adorno’s view that the subject is *constituted* (by society) as much as, and perhaps more so, than it constitutes itself.

Thus, it is best to place Heidegger and Adorno somewhere in the middle of the continuum running from modernity to post-modernity when it comes to the self. As each figure developed his thinking in the *late* modern period, it makes sense that both challenged, and gestured beyond, some of modernity’s central concepts, of which the constitutive subject was one of the most important. However, it is precisely this in-between position that also precluded Heidegger and Adorno from letting go of the self altogether. Hence the early Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1927), simultaneously “destroys” the modern notion of subjectivity and provides an idea(l) of another kind of

self— “authentic” *Dasein*, the idea for which Heidegger is perhaps still most famous. Authentic *Dasein* (“being there”), in effect, is everything that the modern subject is not; that is a *being*, no less than a consciousness, that is aware of its *temporality*, as opposed to immortality. Somewhat similarly, for all of Adorno’s talk of the liquidation of the self, he at the same time urges an alternative sort of subjectivity, primarily one that is *strong* (in the Freudian sense) as well as *critical* or *resistant* to what he calls the “false totality,” even as he holds that such a stance is reserved for a lucky few.

It is this at once negative (destructive/critical) and positive (constructive/affirmative) relation to the self that will be explored in this chapter as a possible affinity between Heidegger and Adorno. For just as Heidegger rejects the conception of subjectivity handed down by modernity (especially by Descartes), and offers up authentic *Dasein* as a substitute, so Adorno takes issue with the modern view of the self (particularly that of Bacon and Kant), and seeks to supplant it with a strong and critical, or (semi-)“autonomous,” self. Thus, Heidegger and Adorno will be read as aligned in the project of critiquing the modern subject, as well as in the effort to replace it with something else, rather than disposing of it completely *à la* postmodernism. In this way, moreover, Heidegger and Adorno will each be seen as trying to keep an *alternative* mode of subjectivity alive; Heidegger inasmuch as authenticity entails throwing off the yoke of the “they” to discover one’s “ownmost possibilities,”³ and Adorno insofar as he more or less advocates rebellion against late capitalism. Yet, while these prescriptions for the self are equally subversive, they will be shown to diverge in two significantly different directions, ones which point up a fundamental difference between Heidegger and Adorno; this difference will be discussed in terms of the larger debate between

existentialism and critical theory, as well as eudaimonistic ethics and deontological morality.

But before making these matters clearer, a consideration of the Heidegger-Adorno scholarship is necessary in order to orient and distinguish this viewpoint. The structure of this chapter will thus be as follows: after examining the work of Hermann Mörchen, Fred Dallmayr, David Sherman, and Jusuf Früchtel, Heidegger's destruction of the Cartesian subject will be explained, followed by a rehearsal of his notion of authenticity. Next, a brief sketch of Adorno's critique of Heidegger's concept of authenticity will ensue, followed by an exploration of Adorno's critique of the modern subject, and thereafter, a look at his concept of the autonomous subject. Finally, in concluding, deeper differences between Heidegger and Adorno on the topic of the self will be discussed.

1. Heidegger-Adorno Scholarship

To pair Heidegger and Adorno where the self is concerned is counter-intuitive for obvious reasons. For one thing, Adorno ferociously rejected Heidegger's notion of authenticity, above all in *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964), wherein he accuses it of, among other things, "provincialism," "noble philistinism," "a cover for arbitrariness," "a prudish metaphysics," "flowering nonsense," and of course, "petit-bourgeois ideology."⁴ This alone perhaps explains why so few have ventured such an endeavor. Indeed, to date there are only a handful of attempts to bring Heidegger and Adorno together on this topic. Hermann Mörchen's *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchung einer philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung* only briefly discusses Heidegger and Adorno in

connection with the self, as Mörchen is more concerned with the issues of value, science, system, clarity, picture, and language. The same can be said of Fred Dallmayr's *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, insofar as it too takes a general look at the similarities between Heidegger and Adorno.

Recently, more concentrated efforts have been undertaken. However, what they make up for in depth they lack in duration. David Sherman, in *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity* (2007), devotes his second chapter (of eight) primarily to Heidegger and Adorno in connection with the self, but his broader agenda (namely, that of repudiating Mörchen's and Dallmayr's very project of "rapprochement") ultimately takes precedence. Josef Früchtel's "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Adorno and Heidegger on Modernity," in Macdonald's and Ziarek's *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, is slightly better in this regard, inasmuch as he deals exclusively with the topic of subjectivity. Yet, overall it reads in a preliminary manner, as it is only a brief treatment, and one which Früchtel admits is a "new" project; in his first endnote, he relates that "The part on Heidegger is completely new."⁵

Mörchen and Dallmayr

According to Mörchen and Dallmayr, Heidegger and Adorno each call for a "departure (or turning away) from metaphysical foundationalism, particularly from modern metaphysics rooted in the category of subjectivity."⁶ This explains Heidegger's stance against humanism which, as noted above, he sees as a result of metaphysics, and Adorno's critique of both the Baconian and Kantian subjects, which he holds are

themselves metaphysical concepts. While these are doubtlessly distinctive viewpoints, there appears to be some agreement between Heidegger and Adorno that modernity has overestimated the subject, and/or refused to recognize its relation to Being (Heidegger) or objectivity (Adorno). Thus, both suggest a more modest self, one that is “open” to Being (Heidegger) or prepared to “lose itself” in the “non-identical” other (Adorno). Mörchen and Dallmayr take this call for openness to be the other point of contact between Heidegger and Adorno in relation to the self. Dallmayr’s statement of it is worth quoting at some length:

For both thinkers, the central task of thought and experience was to venture beyond givenness or beyond the range of the familiar and safely appropriated into an uncharted terrain which Heidegger thematized in terms of ‘openness’ and Adorno under the rubrics of “otherness” and non-identity. Ever since *Being and Time*, Heidegger conceived human existence literally as ek-sistence or as standing out or ekstasis – namely, a standing out into the domain of ‘being’ where every form of self-possession or appropriation simultaneously implies an expropriation (*Enteignung*). Similarly Adorno castigated as ideological the modern infatuation with selfhood and self-possession, and particularly the presumed centrality of self-preservation – applauding instead the readiness for dispossession or the willingness to ‘lose oneself’ in the experience of strangeness (*schöne Fremde*). For both thinkers, the critique of egocentrism (and anthropocentrism) implied a distancing from modern “individualism” – to the extent that the latter amounts to a compact, ideological doctrine; in Mörchen’s words, “both concur tacitly or implicitly in refusing to acknowledge the primacy of the individual and treating it instead as a ‘historical category.’”⁷

Sherman

Apart from these two quotations, there is very little in Mörchen’s and Dallmayr’s texts that addresses the issue of the self. Because of this, Sherman’s *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity* is a more helpful resource on this topic. In leading up to

his central discussion of Sartre's and Adorno's respective conceptions of subjectivity, Sherman considers the relation of Heidegger and Adorno to the self. Herein he submits, contra Mörchen and Dallmayr, the general thesis that "despite superficial similarities, the differences between [Heidegger and Adorno] are deep and irreconcilable,"⁸ and the specific argument that Heidegger and Adorno in fact hold antithetical positions vis-à-vis the self. While Sherman concedes on several occasions Mörchen's and Dallmayr's claim that Heidegger and Adorno converge in discrediting the modern notion of subjectivity, he argues that upon closer scrutiny there are in fact significant, unbridgeable disagreements even in this area.

Since he is mainly concerned with and partial to Adorno, much of Sherman's discussion consists of distinguishing Adorno's view of the self from that of Heidegger, rather than the other way around. However, the points that he enumerates in doing so are nevertheless helpful for highlighting key distinctions. Beginning from the premise that "Although Adorno and Heidegger both reject what Adorno refers to as the 'constituting subjectivity' of metaphysics, after this initial accord they rigorously part company,"⁹ Sherman proceeds to qualify this accord, contending that whereas Heidegger rejects subjectivity as such, Adorno takes issue with this particular view of subjectivity, thus allowing for alternative conceptions. Hence, Sherman contends that "Adorno does not just hold on to a notion of subjectivity in his philosophy, but that the notion of subjectivity is, arguably, at the heart of his philosophy."¹⁰ Sherman supports this claim in three ways. First, he argues that "Adorno tenaciously holds on to the subject-object paradigm... while Adorno rejects the notion of a 'constituting subjectivity' because it

cannot open itself up to the object, which he privileges, Adorno is, for the most part, motivated in this regard by the desire to free up subjectivity itself.”¹¹ Second, he points out that “much of Adorno’s critique of Heidegger in *Negative Dialectics* is principally directed against Heidegger’s rejection of subjectivity.”¹² Third, he reminds us that “Adorno (qualifiedly) holds on to a number of enlightenment concepts that are tied up with subjectivity, including ‘humanism’ and ‘responsibility’.”¹³

Früchtl

Sherman concludes his refutation of Mörchen and Dallmayr by exposing a fundamental difference between Heidegger and Adorno where the self is concerned:

As to seeing “the primacy of the individual” as a “historical category,” Mörchen is surely right, but the point is that Heidegger and Adorno value this “historical category” in diametrically opposed ways. While for Heidegger the primacy of the individual arises from the philosophical tradition’s wrong turn into metaphysics, for Adorno the primacy of the individual is the promise of the enlightenment, a promise to which Adorno remains firmly committed.¹⁴

Yet, as Früchtl shows, in “The Struggle of the Self against Itself: Adorno and Heidegger on Modernity,” while Sherman’s conclusion is ultimately correct, matters are not so simple. For one thing, only the *later* Heidegger is dismissive of subjectivity; the *early* Heidegger, by contrast, advocates authentic selfhood. For another, Adorno was indeed loyal to the Enlightenment, however he was also critical of it, as well as mostly pessimistic about its realization. For these reasons, Früchtl argues that although Adorno ultimately sides with the Enlightenment, whereas Heidegger remains opposed or

indifferent to it, they overlap momentarily due to a similar “*Romantic-agonistic* style of thought.”¹⁵

Früchtel makes a distinction between the Enlightenment, or “expanded-classical,” and the Romantic, or “agonistic” (*agon* meaning “struggle” in ancient Greek) conceptions of modernity in general, and subjectivity in particular. The former, he explains, emphasizes reconciliation *à la* Hegel, whereas the latter dwells on the “ineliminable moment of conflict.”¹⁶ He then reveals the Romantic “style of thinking” in both Heidegger and Adorno such that each appears to view the self as agonistic. As per Heidegger, this can be seen in either his early interest in “heroic nihilism” (inspired by Nietzsche), which champions a creative/destructive self, or his later embrace of “releasement” (*Gelassenheit*), or letting-be, which involves “a simultaneous posture of yes and no with regard to the world of technicity.”¹⁷ Similarly, Adorno’s thesis, from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1943), that self-preservation is self-destruction shows the subject to be essentially at odds with itself. As Früchtel elaborates, for Adorno “The birth of the individual is only possible through the concomitant mortification of that individual as a sensuous and hedonistic being. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* this specific process is captured in the pregnant formula: “self-preservation through self-destruction.”¹⁸

However, while Heidegger and Adorno both discern an irreparable split at the heart of the self, Früchtel argues that they arrive at, and depart from, this insight in different ways; Heidegger having also a “hybridistic concept of the self,” and Adorno maintaining an Enlightenment, or “classically Hegelian,” perspective. Thus, Früchtel concludes that “Whereas *Adorno* [strikes] a certain balance between a more *classically*

Hegelian and a *Romantic-agonistic* style of thought, *Heidegger* operates in a space between an *agonistic* and what I called a ‘*hybrid*’ style of thinking.”¹⁹ This means that while Adorno holds out hope for eventual harmony of the self (with society and thus itself), Heidegger advocates a “hybridistic” self, that is a self that is literally hubristic, or self-exalting. Another way of framing this difference is to say that Adorno awaits (real/true) *autonomy*, or self-determination, whereas Heidegger urges *authenticity*, or self-realization. Früchtel clarifies this distinction aptly:

the dimension of self-determination is fractured by an inner conflict, namely, that between autonomy and authenticity, between (deontological) morality and (eudaimonistic) ethics, between self-determination in the strict sense and self-realization in general. “Enlightenment” in the properly Kantian sense is directed essentially toward the first alternative in each case, toward autonomy and morality, while the Romantic approach is primarily concerned with the second, with the self-realization, self-creation, and self-expression of concrete individuality.²⁰

Assessing the Heidegger-Adorno Scholarship

This last point by Früchtel – that Heidegger’s notion of authenticity belongs to the tradition of eudaimonistic ethics, while Adorno’s concept of autonomy belongs to that of deontological morality – will provide the basis for my own conclusion that, as Sherman claims, Heidegger and Adorno are finally irreconcilable when it comes to the issue of the self. However, in arriving at this position, Mörchen’s and Dallmayr’s observation of “latent affinity” between Heidegger and Adorno with regard to the self will be accepted, inasmuch as each endeavors to destroy/critique the modern view of subjectivity. Thus, the first affinity to be explored in the following will be the parallel between Heidegger’s destruction of the modern (Cartesian) subject, and Adorno’s critique of the modern

(Baconian and Kantian) subject. Furthermore, and here I will depart from the Heidegger-Adorno scholarship, it will also be shown how in negating the subject of modernity, Heidegger and Adorno both affirm alternative selves that not only improve upon the shortcomings of the former, but also stand as ideals. Hence, the second affinity herein will be the similarly subversive tendencies of Heidegger's authentic self and Adorno's autonomous subject. Thus, while I will start from the same place as Mörchen and Dallmayr, and end up in the same place as Sherman and Früchtel, I will offer an original path between these two points.

2. Heidegger's *Destruktion* of the Modern Subject

Heidegger and Being

Heidegger's *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927), his first major work and the one he remains best known for, is at bottom an attempt to reveal the "meaning of Being" as such. According to Heidegger, the meaning of Being was approximated by some of the pre-Socratic philosophers, but then quickly eclipsed by Plato's and Aristotle's (mis)understanding of Being, a wrong turn that he claims has persisted through the medieval era (from Plotinus to Aquinas) and the modern period (from Descartes to Hegel) to the very writing of *Being and Time*. The principle problem with the reigning conception of Being, for Heidegger, is that it rightly associates Being with time, but wrongly confines it to only one "mode of time"; namely the "present":

it will be manifest that the ancient way of interpreting the Being of entities is oriented towards the "world" or "Nature" in the widest sense, and that it is indeed in terms of 'time' that its understanding of Being is obtained...

Entities are grasped in their Being as “presence”; this means that they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time—the “Present.”²¹

This interpretation of Being can be seen in Book VII of Plato’s *Republic*, also known as the “Allegory of the Cave,” wherein Socrates pits against the “world of becoming and perishing” (signified by the cave), against the “world of being,” characterized as eternal and unchanging. Hence for Plato, Being is a kind of permanent presence, time without past or future; the entities that comprise the world of being, or that *have* being, the Forms/Ideas (i.e., the Good, the Beautiful), neither begin (become) nor end (perish), but exist forever in the same way, which is to say are invariably *present*.

Heidegger and Human Being

To “overcome” this interpretation of Being, which in part entails a recovery of the “primordial,” pre-Socratic conception of Being, necessitates passage through *human* being or *Dasein*, in Heidegger’s view, a detour that ends up lasting the entirety of *Being and Time*. Heidegger operates on this methodological impulse for two reasons. First, only *Dasein*, he points out, can be “interrogated” about the meaning of Being, because only *Dasein* is “ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it... *Dasein* is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological”;²² thus, in Heidegger’s breakdown of the “formal structure of the Question of Being,” which guides his inquiry, the part of *Befragtes*, or “that which is interrogated,” goes to *Dasein*, which in turn will “ask about” Being (*Gefragtes*) in order to “find out” the meaning of Being (*Erfragte*). Second, the very “structure” of *Dasein*, which Heidegger will ultimately call “care,” exhibits the basic *temporality* of Being (the driving thesis of *Being and Time*), for

Dasein's being cannot be understood as being *qua* presence, but only as being *qua* the threefold past, present, and future. Hence "the being of *Dasein*," that is its "structural whole," in Heidegger's terminology, must be formulated as Being "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)," whereby "Being-already-in-the-world," refers to *Dasein*'s past, "Being-alongside" refers to *Dasein*'s present, and "Being-ahead-of-itself" refers to *Dasein*'s future.²³

Thus, Heidegger is very much concerned with the self in *Being and Time*, although he soon after dispenses with it in full pursuit of the meaning of Being, a move that he begins to make in the "Letter on Humanism," and which he increasingly carries out in his later writings. Of course, even as early as *Being and Time*, Heidegger is already radically distancing himself from the problem of subjectivity. He does so in part because, again, his central concern here is the meaning of Being itself, rather than any particular being, human being included. Additionally, the conception of subjectivity handed down by the philosophical tradition, ultimately from Plato in his estimation, but more directly from Descartes, is just as tainted by "ancient ontology" for him as is the dominant interpretation of Being. Thus, Heidegger sets up in *Being and Time* not only to rewrite the meaning of Being, but also to reinterpret the subject in light of this new meaning. We could do worse, then, than read Heidegger's efforts with respect to the self in *Being and Time* as both negative and positive; the former because he indeed looks to destroy the traditional view of the self and the latter because he posits an alternative view of the self intended to take its place; that is, authentic *Dasein*.

Heidegger's "Destruktion" of the Cartesian Subject

In a key section of the introduction to *Being and Time*, entitled “the task of destroying the history of ontology,” in which he makes his case for freeing the meaning of Being from the fetters of post-Socratic philosophy, Heidegger also traces the effects of this ontology on the history of ideas relating to the subject. Saying nothing about Plato’s tripartite soul or Augustine’s free will, his discussion focuses primarily on the modern period, and above all on Descartes. Heidegger’s argument runs backward and forward here, to the extent that it locates the roots of Descartes’ conception of subjectivity in ancient ontology, by way of “medieval scholasticism,” as well as tracks its influence on German Idealism’s notion of the subject. The problem with Descartes’ understanding of the subject, for Heidegger, is that while purporting to restart philosophy on a “new and firm footing,” it unwittingly falls back on a “baleful prejudice, which has kept later generations from making any thematic ontological analytic of the ‘mind’ [*Gemütes*] such as would take the question of Being as a clue and would at the same time come to grips critically with the traditional ancient ontology.”²⁴

In *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes arrives at his “first principle” – the famous formulation *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) – which leads him to define the “I” as a *res cogitans*, or “thinking thing.” However, in the third meditation, when inquiring into the origin of his existence (an exercise that founds his “second principle,” the existence of God), he asserts that God is his creator, or that he is a creature of God. The *res cogitans* thereby suddenly becomes, in addition, an *ens*

creatum, or created thing. Thus, what began as radically new, or “modern,” in Cartesian thought ends up back in the paradigm of medieval ontology, precisely the tradition Descartes sought to displace. What is worse, Heidegger points out, is that the medieval concepts of *ens infinitum* and *ens increatum* are themselves a relapse; namely, into ancient ontology, which also viewed beings as created, or produced (hence the central ancient Greek notion of *poiēsis*, or “bringing-forth”). Thus, Descartes not only fails to escape medievalism, but also fails to escape the ontology of Western philosophy at large.

As Heidegger explains:

[Descartes] regarded this entity as a *fundamentum inconcussum*, and applied the medieval ontology to it through the fundamental considerations of his *Meditationes*. He defined the *res cogitans* ontologically as an *ens*; and in the medieval ontology the meaning of Being for such an *ens* had been fixed by understanding it as an *ens creatum*. God, as *ens infinitum*, was the *ens increatum*. But createdness [*Geschaffenheit*] in the widest sense of something’s having been produced [*Hergestelltheit*], was an essential item in the structure of the ancient conception of Being.²⁵

Yet, it is not just Descartes’ recapitulation of medieval and thus ancient ontology, but also his unawareness of having done so, with which Heidegger takes issue. For Descartes’ very negligence of the significance of Being is just what allows him to think of the subject as essentially a *thinking* thing, or mind, as opposed to an “extended thing” (*res extensa*), or body. Descartes is thus guilty of the transgression, so criminal for Heidegger, of both *forgetting* Being, and of forgetting this forgetting itself. As he asserts, in measuring the impact of Descartes’ disregard of Being on that of Kant:

In taking over Descartes’ ontological position Kant made an essential omission: he failed to provide an ontology of Dasein. This omission was a decisive one in the spirit [im Sinne] of Descartes’ ownmost tendencies. With the “*cogito sum*” Descartes had claimed that he was putting

philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined when he began in this “radical” way, was the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or – more precisely – the *meaning of the Being of the “sum.”*²⁶

Dasein v. the Cartesian Subject

It is Descartes’ forgetfulness of the being of the subject, a negligence that endures through Kant and Hegel, which arguably motivates Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. If we consider for a moment the very term *Dasein*, which literally means “being there” or “being here,” we at once notice that the emphasis is plainly on the *being* of the self, instead of its *consciousness*. And when Heidegger begins to unpack the fundamental traits, or “existentialia,” of *Dasein*, this accent becomes even more pronounced; the definition of *Dasein* is further refined to “Being-in-the-world,” which can be reduced in turn to “Being-in” and “Being-with.” “Being-in,” moreover, includes “Being-alongside,” as in *Dasein* is “such that it is always ‘outside’ alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered.”²⁷ This is what it means to refer to *Dasein*, in the simplest sense, as *ek-sistence*, or “standing out toward” other beings.

Thus even in “knowing” the world, *Dasein*, since it is at bottom a “Being-outside” amidst other beings, does not encounter it simply as a consciousness, which is to say something “inside,” but necessarily as an inside that is always already outside. In a direct attack on Cartesian epistemology, which is inextricably bound up with the Cartesian view of the subject, Heidegger claims that “the perceiving of what is known is not a process of returning with one’s booty to the ‘cabinet’ of consciousness after one has gone out and

grasped it; even in perceiving, retaining, and preserving, the Dasein which knows *remains outside*, and it does so *as Dasein*.”²⁸ Hence solipsism, which haunted Descartes in the first two of his *Meditations*, does not present a problem for Heidegger, as being cannot be siphoned off of consciousness, since for Heidegger being is the very ground of consciousness.

3. Heidegger’s (Re)construction of the Self: Authentic *Dasein*

We have now considered the negative project of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* vis-à-vis the modern, Cartesian subject. This has yielded two major insights: first, Heidegger rejects the Cartesian subject on the basis that it reasserts medieval, and even ancient, ontology, which provide a faulty account of both human being and Being as such; second, Heidegger traces this reversion to Descartes’ negligence of the importance of Being, a tendency that itself goes unacknowledged by him. These problems with Descartes’ treatment of the subject thus lay the groundwork for Heidegger’s positive or (re)constructive account of the self. More specifically, Heidegger’s misgivings about the Cartesian subject are precisely what move him to anchor his own notion of *Dasein* firmly in a carefully worked out ontological standpoint. Hence the terms *Dasein*, “being-in-the-world,” and *ek-sistence*, all of which underscore the *being* of human being, unlike Descartes’ preferred terms *cogito* and *res cogitans*, which privilege consciousness.

Yet the positive task of *Being and Time* with respect to the self goes well beyond the simple inversion of the being/consciousness binary. For the question remains *what*, or rather “who,” in particular, is this *Dasein* with which Heidegger seeks to replace the

Cartesian subject? Further, and more important perhaps, in what sense does Heidegger conceive of *Dasein* beyond the bounds of the old ontology that has hitherto ensnared the entire philosophical enterprise, in his view? In other words, if the problem with Descartes is that he unconsciously fell back on an ill-conceived ontology due to a general forgetfulness of Being, how will Heidegger, in “not-forgetting” Being (the ancient Greek word for this term, which Heidegger invokes in nearly all of his writings, is *alētheia*), provide an account of *Dasein* that corrects the Cartesian conception? In order to venture answers to these questions, we must as a matter of course turn to Heidegger’s concept of authenticity.

The Origin of Heidegger’s Critique of “the They”: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

First, however, the “authentic self” must be differentiated from what Heidegger calls the “they-self.” The they-self is simply “average everyday *Dasein*,” the self that exists in a largely practical fashion, viewing other beings as “ready-to-hand” or as possible sites of “equipment” with which it can accomplish its various projects. As a they-self, *Dasein* goes about its day-to-day life – commuting to and from work, checking in from time to time with mass media – in an “ontic” or “pre-ontological” manner, which is to say in a “public environment” that is far removed, in Heidegger’s opinion, from consideration of the meaning of Being, including the meaning of one’s own being. This is less a condemnation on Heidegger’s part, it must be stated, than a *description* of *Dasein* as it exists most of the time; the they-self, he holds, is a “structural,” or permanent, feature of human being and not something that can be simply cast off once

and for all, even if *Dasein* so wished. Hence Heidegger writes, “The ‘they’ is an existentiale; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to *Dasein*’s positive constitution.”²⁹

However, Heidegger’s dispassionate “analytic” of the they-self occasionally takes on a more critical tone. Echoing the spirit, and to some degree the letter, of Kierkegaard’s assault on “the crowd,” which he branded “the untruth,” as well as Nietzsche’s many swipes at “the herd,” Heidegger attacks “the they” (*das Man*, which can also mean “the one”), from which the they-self derives. Heidegger’s hostility to the they must in part be read in light of the uneasiness over the supposed loss of individuality wrought by so-called mass society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a pressing threat to existentialists from Dostoevsky to Sartre. For Kierkegaard, what was above all at stake was saving the Protestant individual from an increasingly “spiritless” Christendom. Nietzsche, by contrast, saw the individual as threatened by the very Christianity, and its hold on the “rabble,” that Kierkegaard took pains to resurrect. Whatever their motives, however, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger share a sense that the absorption of individuality in the crowd/herd/they is categorically troubling. Hence Nietzsche’s lament, “No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse,”³⁰ and Kierkegaard’s complaint that “in the world a self is what one least asks after, and the thing it is most dangerous of all to show signs of having. The biggest danger, that of losing oneself, can pass off in the world as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. is bound to be noticed.”³¹

If Heidegger's *Being and Time* contains any such phrase, it is the briefer and less shrill, but certainly similar, "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself."³² This claim emerges in the context of Heidegger's portrayal of the they as a "dictatorship" that colonizes *Dasein*, "covering up" or "dispersing" its "mineness" such that the self is "levelled down" or made "average." Again, the influence of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche here is palpable. In *The Present Age* (1846), Kierkegaard's scathing reproach of nineteenth-century European society, he asserts that "levelling is *eo ipso* the destruction of the individual,"³³ and even goes so far as to predict that "No single individual (I mean no outstanding individual – in the sense of leadership and conceived according to the dialectical category 'fate') will be able to arrest the abstract process of levelling, for it is negatively something higher, and the age of chivalry is gone."³⁴ Nietzsche likewise bemoaned the effects of levelling, particularly its role in the alleged decline of "European man." Thus, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) he writes:

For this is how things stand: the withering and levelling of European man constitutes our greatest danger, because it is a wearying sight... Today we see nothing with any desire to become greater, we sense that everything is going increasingly downhill, downhill, thinning out, getting more good-natured, cleverer, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian— man, there is no doubt, is "improving" all the time... This and nothing else is the fate of Europe— along with our fear of man we have also forfeited our love, respect, and hope for him, even the will to him. The sight of man is now a wearying sight— what is nihilism today, if not this?... We are weary of man...³⁵

The following passage from *Being and Time* virtually expresses the same concern, albeit via Heidegger's less passionate discourse:

Thus the "they" maintains itself factically in the averageness of that which belongs to it, of that to which it grants success and that to which it denies it. In this averageness with which it prescribes what can and may be

ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force. This care of averageness reveals in turn an essential tendency of *Dasein* which we call the “levelling down” [*Einebnung*] of all possibilities of Being.³⁶

Fallenness, Anxiety, and Authenticity

Of course, the difference between Heidegger on the one hand, and Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on the other hand, is that the former sees the levelling of the self as an “essential tendency of *Dasein*,” which is to say that the individual, for Heidegger, cannot entirely escape the they, but is in fact continually “tempted” to “fall” into it. One gets the sense when reading Kierkegaard and Nietzsche that the self can eventually, with enough passion or will power respectively, successfully liberate itself from the crowd/herd; and arguably Kierkegaard and Nietzsche each proved this in their own lives, notwithstanding the tragic endings for both. With Heidegger, however, this not the case, since the they-self is an “exisientiale” of *Dasein*, meaning a kind of default mode, and because the they has the pleasant effect of “disburdening” *Dasein*, or of making things “easy” for it.

In this way, though not a psychoanalytic thinker (the analytic of *Dasein*, we are told in the introduction to *Being and Time*, is not that of psychology), Heidegger addresses a significant cause of *Dasein*’s preference for remaining in the mode of the they-self. In his phenomenology of “fallenness” (*Verfallen*) which, he claims, is not to be confused with the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin, but rather designates *Dasein*’s

“Being-lost in the publicness of the ‘they,’” Heidegger underscores the “constant temptation” offered by the “tranquility” of fallenness, a tranquility that assures *Dasein* that “everything is ‘in the best of order’ and all doors are open.”³⁷ While this seduction also brings about “uninhibited ‘hustle’” and “exaggerated ‘self-dissection,’” it nevertheless holds at bay the much more unsettling mood of “anxiety,” which runs directly counter to tranquility. Yet, so long as *Dasein* is a they-self, which is to say “lost” or “fallen” or “tranquillized,” it is thereby missing something; hence Heidegger’s claim, “*This very state of Being, in its everyday kind of Being, is what proximally misses itself and covers itself up.*”³⁸

Anxiety (*Angst*), then, is what commences the shift from the they-self to the authentic self. If *Dasein qua* they-self is tranquil, then anxiety induces the shock that jolts it from its fallenness, thereby furnishing it with the possibility of authentic selfhood. Thus Heidegger contends that anxiety “individualizes” *Dasein*, catapulting it out the they and back onto its “mineness,” or “ownmost potentiality-for-Being.” In a time when moods, especially of the “darker” variety, are swiftly dismissed as illnesses of the mind that can and should be eliminated by modern medicine, it may be hard to fully appreciate Heidegger’s point here; for rather than confronting anxiety as something like an obstacle, he sees it as precisely what allows *Dasein* to get a hold of itself, as it were. Of course, by anxiety Heidegger does not mean anything like depression or irrational fear. Rather, he suggests that whereas those moods are *of something*, anxiety is *of nothing*, which is to say the “nullity” or nothingness at the very core of *Dasein*.

Heidegger's contention that *Dasein* is permeated by nothingness, is not a claim about the insignificance of the individual, but instead that the self has no essence besides its existence. For Heidegger, the human being's essence *is* existence. This means that the self is never a settled thing like a table or horse, but always fundamentally a "*Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself.*"³⁹ As the they-self, *Dasein* does not notice this "Being-free," much less act on it. However, when anxiety strikes (and this can "arise in the most innocuous Situations"⁴⁰), *Dasein* is suddenly brought face-to-face with its freedom. Now recognizing itself as a "*solus ipse*" (hence "existential solipsism," not to be confused with Cartesian, *epistemological* solipsism), *Dasein* experiences the feeling of "uncanniness" or "not-being-at-home." This, in turn, places *Dasein* squarely before its "structural whole," the "care" structure mentioned earlier, which refers to the basic temporal character of *Dasein*; thus, the *being* of *Dasein* is comprised of the threefold past, present, and future.

The most important of these three modes of time, according to Heidegger, is the future. Since the past is already fixed, and the present is always slipping into the past, *Dasein* must project itself into the future. Yet, in doing so *Dasein* realizes that its future does not extend out into the distance indefinitely, but must at some point come to a halt. In this way, anxiety communicates to *Dasein* that it is a finite, or mortal, being whose possibilities will one day cease. What is worse, ceasing to be, or death, can occur at any moment, making *Dasein*'s anxiety all the more acute: "As soon as a man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die."⁴¹ There is no way out of this decidedly dis-eased state for Heidegger other than "impassioned freedom towards death," which is to say *authenticity*

(*Eigentlichkeit*).⁴² Of course, *Dasein* can just as easily, and often does, slip back into being a they-self; as *Dasein* is essentially a Being-free, existing authentically or “inauthentically” is a matter of choice, one which only *Dasein* itself can make:

...anxiety individualizes. This individualization brings *Dasein* back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. These basic possibilities of *Dasein* (and *Dasein* is in each case mine) show themselves in anxiety as they are in themselves—undisguised by entities within-the-world, to which, proximally and for the most part *Dasein* clings.⁴³

The Meaning of Authenticity

But what is authenticity more precisely, or to take Heidegger’s cue in his own questioning of Being, what is the *meaning* of authenticity? That is, what does it mean to be authentic? Right at the outset of *Being and Time*, Heidegger implies that authenticity does not connote a “greater” or “higher” kind of *Dasein*: “the inauthenticity of *Dasein* does not signify any ‘less’ Being or any ‘lower’ degree of Being.”⁴⁴ Elsewhere, he asserts, “*Authentic-Being-one’s-Self* does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject.”⁴⁵ To help explain these quotations it must be stressed, once more, that for Heidegger, *Dasein* – even so-called great *Dasein*’s – exist inauthentically the majority of the time, as everyone can be said to function primarily in the mode of the they-self. An additional point that is useful in this connection is that the methodology of *Being and Time* is that of phenomenology, which seeks to be *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. Hence, when it comes to examining *Dasein*, Heidegger wishes only to show, or let it be shown, how *Dasein is* rather than how *Dasein ought to be*.

Nevertheless, it is hard to resist the sense that Heidegger's description of authenticity is not entirely value-free. As Taylor Carman argues, "notwithstanding Heidegger's frequent protestations to the contrary, 'authenticity' also obviously functions as an evaluative term describing a desirable or choice-worthy mode of existence; it is something *good*."⁴⁶ Charles Guignon concurs here, even going so far as to use the term "higher" in relation to authenticity: "Heidegger's concept of 'authenticity' is supposed to point to a way of life that is higher than that of average everydayness."⁴⁷ Michael Zimmerman also looks upon authenticity as something of an ideal, in his case of "integrity;" in surveying the status of authentic selfhood in the context of post-modernity, which both accepts and lauds the disintegration of the individual, he proposes: "Arguably... early Heidegger's concept of authentic selfhood as anxious being-towards-death retains considerable force today, when millions of technologically advanced people report being plagued by anxiety, panic attacks, and other 'disorders' linked to perceived threats to egoic subjectivity."⁴⁸

Assuming contemporary scholarship is right in this regard, we still need to be clear about, for our purposes, just how authenticity serves as an *ideal*. If we recall Heidegger's destruction of the Cartesian subject, the exact problem there was that in ignoring the being of the *cogito*, Descartes was forced to recycle traditional ontology. Since Heidegger assures us that he will not be making such mistakes in *Being and Time*, with respect to Being or the self, we must now ask how precisely he accomplishes this vis-à-vis *Dasein*. We already know that for one thing, Heidegger makes being just as important, more so perhaps, than consciousness in his very formulation of *Dasein* as a

being-in-the-world. We have also noted, by way of exploring Heidegger's concept of anxiety, that anxiety reveals the kind of being that *Dasein* truly is, namely a "Being-toward-death." In these two moves, Heidegger overturns the Cartesian subject, supplanting it with his own view of the self; again, as a *being* (and not just a consciousness), and a *temporal* (as opposed to an eternal) one at that.

Thus, at the center of Heidegger's notion of authenticity arguably lies the injunction for *Dasein* itself to recognize these insights, and more importantly, to actually incorporate them in an existential, or "existentiell," way; that is, to *live* the individualized, temporalized being that *Dasein* is. For this reason, such Romantic phrases as "being oneself" or "being true to oneself" often come up in discussions of Heidegger's concept of authenticity. Of course, *what* one *is* exactly has always been the hardest part to figure out when attempting to make these sayings concrete. (Apparently, Heidegger's students used to joke that they were "resolute," or authentic, though they knew not what for.) Hence Heidegger's concept of authenticity has been accused of "formalism," insofar as it offers really nothing in the way of content; it begs the question, what must one *do* to be authentic? As Rüdiger Safranski, one of Heidegger's biographers, notes, "Authenticity discovers no new areas of *Dasein*. Everything can, and probably will, remain as it was; only our attitude to it changes... Authenticity is intensity, nothing less."⁴⁹ But the charge of formalism is perhaps somewhat amiss. For to be authentic, according to Heidegger, means concretely to exist as a being-here, which is also a being that will not be here for very long.

4. Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity*

As mentioned above, to even suggest similarity between Heidegger's and Adorno's conceptions of the self is a kind of betrayal of Adorno himself, who goes to great lengths to repudiate Heidegger's notion of authenticity. He does so throughout his corpus, from some of his earliest writings to *Negative Dialectics*, in which he spends all of Part One (of three) on distancing his thought from that of Heidegger where subjectivity, as well as other issues, is concerned. Of course, it is in *The Jargon of Authenticity* (*Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*) that Adorno launches his most direct attack on Heidegger's view of the self. In general, this text reads as a standard critical theorist's critique of existentialism, of which there were several, such as Marcuse's review of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.⁵⁰ As in that essay, which accuses the early Sartre's emphasis on the subject's "radical freedom" of masking and thereby reinforcing the glaring "unfreedom" of the early 1940's, the *Jargon of Authenticity* aims to shatter the aura shrouding Heidegger's call to authenticity by exposing it as equally ideological. Since Adorno's argument here is fairly straightforward, however complex its presentation, I will characterize it briefly and in rough outline.

While he levels a number of different criticisms at Heidegger, Adorno's basic concern can be characterized as follows. Just as Hegel took issue with Kant's view of the subject for being "transcendental," so Adorno regards Heidegger's account of *Dasein*, what with its ontological "structures," as "[historically oblivious]" at best, and ideological at worst. Take anxiety, for example. According to Heidegger, anxiety is a mood that must sooner or later be confronted, whether *Dasein* is a Roman gladiator,

medieval monk, or twenty-first century Swiss banker; in other words, anxiety is a feature of the human being *as such*. In Adorno's view, however, anxiety is not something built into the subject to last for all time, but is rather a response to a particular socio-historical condition; namely that of what he elsewhere calls the "administered world":

Angst, busily distinguished from inner-worldly, empirical fear, need by no means be an existential value. Since it is historical, it appears in fact that those who are yoked into a society which is societalized, but contradictory to the deepest core, constantly feel threatened by what sustains them. They feel threatened without ever being able in specific instances to concretize this threat from the whole of society.⁵¹

Adorno likewise critiques Heidegger's other central ideas, which at the time Adorno was writing *The Jargon of Authenticity* had become staples of existentialist discourse. Hence the following passage on "powerlessness and nothingness":

In the jargon, however, the word "Man" no longer relies on human dignity as idealism, in spite of the cult of historical figures and of greatness in itself. Instead, man is to have his powerlessness and nothingness as his substance; this becomes a theme in the philosophers in question. This powerlessness and nothingness of man is coming close to its realization in present society. Such a historical state of affairs is then transposed into the pure essence of Man. It becomes affirmed and eternalized at the same time.⁵²

The problem, then, for Adorno, is not so much that existential philosophy expresses the mood of impotence so (understandably) common in the first half of the twentieth century (if this were all that Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and those who followed in its footsteps, deigned to do, then Adorno would probably have greeted it as he did modernist literature; that is, with great interest). But this is not, as Adorno points out, what Heidegger and his adherents were up to; for instead of seeing anxiety, powerlessness, and nothingness as

symptomatic of their historical milieu, these symptoms were “ontologized,” which is to say turned into the “essential structures” of *Dasein*, or the *universal* “human condition.”

The true peril, then, of Heidegger’s ontology of *Dasein*, in Adorno’s view, is that it ultimately encourages surrender: “As it runs in the jargon: suffering, evil, and death are to be accepted, not to be changed.”⁵³ This is precisely what makes it *ideological*, since by turning anxiety into an ahistorical attribute of the self, Heidegger ends up leaving the “true” or “real” source of anxiety – society, for Adorno – intact. The only antidote Heidegger prescribes for anxiety is authenticity. But authenticity, Adorno argues, is not intended to address, let alone change, the social conditions from which anxiety ultimately emerges. Yet this is the only way to be finally rid of anxiety, according to Adorno. For, “the only help lies in changing the conditions which brought the state of affairs to this point.”⁵⁴ Only then, Adorno suggests, can there be improvement in “the psychology of real individuals which is dependent on that society.”⁵⁵

5. Adorno’s Critique of the Modern Subject

Dialectic of Enlightenment

In order to fully grasp Adorno’s critique of the modern subject we must look first at *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (*Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 1947). Co-authored with his friend and philosophical mentor Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written during the early 1940’s while the two were in exile in Southern California from Nazi Germany, seeks to take stock of the Enlightenment, which in the beginning made the promise of universal liberation, but during the first half of the twentieth-century was

headed toward total destruction. The first two lines of the book aptly capture this reversal: “In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.”⁵⁶ Contra the postmodernist reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as an indictment of the Enlightenment wholesale, an interpretation that even later critical theorists such as Habermas endorse, however, Adorno and Horkheimer are not criticizing the Enlightenment as such, but rather the betrayal of the ends of the Enlightenment by its own means.

One such end was autonomy (*Autonomie*), or freedom. Indeed, the birth of the Enlightenment marked a transition from authority to autonomy at several levels. In the realm of epistemology, for example, the Cartesian Method of hyperbolic doubt encouraged individuals to think for themselves, an injunction echoed by Kant’s slogan *sapere aude*, or “dare to know.” Yet, what began as a “disenchantment” of authority ended up establishing another, no less authoritarian regime; that is, one in which not God, the Church, or monarchies and aristocracies reigned, but instead the very rationalism that was called upon to dethrone them. In the language of Adorno and Horkheimer, Enlightenment reason, which sought to overcome mythology, had itself become mythological. Hence they write, “enlightenment with every step becomes more deeply engulfed in mythology.”⁵⁷ More specifically, this mythology, which is not at all recognized as such, involves the unthinking worship of “instrumental reason” which, while rightly dispelling certain superstitions, endangers everything from nature to society to the self.

Adorno's Critique of the Baconian Subject

Unlike Heidegger, who considers Descartes to be the founder of the Enlightenment (or modernity), Adorno and Horkheimer attribute this role to Francis Bacon (1561-1626). Yet, while there are important differences between Descartes and Bacon, Adorno's and Horkheimer's critique of the latter is similar to Heidegger's destruction of the former. The most obvious parallel is that just as Heidegger faults Descartes for his forgetfulness of Being in general, and of the subject's being in particular, so Adorno and Horkheimer reproach Bacon's disregard not only of "first" or "external" nature (nature in the conventional sense), but also of "internal" nature (understood in Freudian terms as the id). Thus, when Adorno and Horkheimer recommend the "remembrance of nature in the subject"⁵⁸ as a remedy to Enlightenment rationalism, they mean a remembrance of the nature without *and* within. The proximity here to Heidegger's "not-forgetting of Being" has not gone unnoticed. According to Habermas, it is "shockingly close":

as opposed as the intentions behind their respective philosophies of history are, Adorno is in the end very similar to Heidegger as regards his position on the theoretical claims of objectivating thought on reflection: The mindfulness of nature comes shockingly close to the recollection of being.⁵⁹

However, there is another parallel between Adorno's critique of the Baconian subject and Heidegger's destruction of the Cartesian subject. In the same way that Descartes' forgetfulness of Being causes him to view the self as primarily a *thinking* thing according to Heidegger, so Bacon's negligence of the subject's internal nature leads

him to see the self as mainly a “systematic spirit,” which thus has dominion over external nature. Quoting Bacon in the opening pages of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, whereby we hear him claim that “now we govern nature in opinions, but we are thrall unto her in necessity: but if we could be led by her in invention, we should command her in action,”⁶⁰ Adorno and Horkheimer demonstrate the extent to which Bacon equates the subject with instrumental reason, which stands over against nature as the Other. The Baconian subject thereby becomes a kind of god, even a replacement for God: “The creative god and the systematic spirit are alike as rulers of nature. Man’s likeness to God consists in sovereignty over existence, in the countenance of the lord and master, and in command.”⁶¹ Yet, as Adorno and Horkheimer point out, Bacon’s conflation of the subject with instrumental reason, and the attendant conversion of nature into “mere objectivity,” was a tragic mistake, inasmuch as today “nature is broken,” both internally and externally.

Adorno, Heidegger, and the Kantian Subject

Adorno’s critique of German Idealism’s, especially Kant’s, concept of the subject likewise bears some resemblance to that of Heidegger, though here deeper differences begin to emerge. With regard to Kant, Heidegger argues that he “took over Descartes’ position quite dogmatically” insofar as he failed to “give a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject,” which left the “*connection between time and the ‘I think’*... shrouded in utter darkness.”⁶² In *Negative Dialectics* (*Negative Dialektik*) Adorno also takes issue with Kant’s negligence of ontology, suggesting that “An

ontological moment is needed in so far as ontology will critically strip the subject of its cogently constitutive role without substituting it through the object, in a kind of second immediacy.”⁶³ Obviously, these are distinctive claims— Heidegger wishes Kant had noticed the subject’s basic temporality, while Adorno wishes Kant had noticed the socially constituted character of the subject. Still, there is at least a formal agreement that Kant’s thought is missing an “ontological moment.”

Of course, this moment is all Adorno will allow for ontology. For whereas Heidegger’s basic perspective is that of fundamental ontology, Adorno’s is “dialectical thinking,” which holds that just as the subject is mediated by objectivity, so objectivity is mediated by the subject (conceptually and materially). While Heidegger appears to concede the former, it is not clear that he grants the latter. But what, Adorno asks, is Being if not, at least in part, a human concept; that is, something *mediated* by the subject? Although Heidegger shows signs of thinking of Being as mediated by *Dasein* – why else would he have written *Being and Time*, which aims to correct the misunderstanding (false mediation) of Being? – from Adorno’s perspective, he only ends up “hypostatizing” or “reifying” Being once more, turning it into a *facta bruta*. As such, Heidegger’s theory of Being violates Adorno’s principle of “non-identity,” which states that objects always elude concepts. Hence Adorno accuses Heidegger of trying to “express the inexpressible”:

Heidegger gets as far as the borderline of dialectical insight into the nonidentity in identity. But he does not carry through the contradiction in the concept of Being. He suppresses it. What can somehow be conceived as Being mocks the notion of an identity between the concept and that which it means; but Heidegger treats it as an identity, as pure Being itself,

devoid of its otherness. The nonidentity in absolute identity is covered up like a skeleton in the family closet.⁶⁴

Yet, even on the issue of the subject's mediation by objectivity, Heidegger and Adorno are largely at odds. The difference lies precisely in how the two conceptualize objectivity. For Heidegger, objectivity is ultimately reducible to Being. In Adorno's view, by contrast, to claim that Being pure and simple is what mediates the self is an abstraction, since the subject does not merely exist in the midst of Being, but amongst beings that are themselves mediated—in economic, social, political, cultural, and linguistic ways. Thus, in short, objectivity for Adorno refers in the main to society. To say that the subject is mediated by objectivity means, then, for Adorno, that *society* constitutes the self.

It is this latter point that Adorno brings to bear on Kant's concept of the subject. In splitting the self into two halves, one of which is "transcendental" (the faculty of concepts), the other "empirical" (the faculty of intuitions), Adorno contends that Kant (unknowingly) projects the class structure of bourgeois society, whereby one class performs intellectual labor and the other manual labor, onto the subject: "the transcendental subject can be deciphered as a society unaware of itself."⁶⁵ This is ironic, since Kant was the first to propose, in his Copernican turn, that objects conform to concepts, or that the self shapes reality. According to Adorno, however, the concepts with which the subject mediates objectivity are simultaneously mediated *by* objectivity. Thus Kant's own concepts, which he took to be *a priori*, or independent of experience, were in fact thoroughly *a posteriori*, or dependent on experience; that is, the experience of early capitalist society. In this way, Adorno follows Hegel, for whom "society comes

before the individual consciousness and before all its experience.”⁶⁶ However, as we will now see, Adorno refuses Hegel’s call – “like a father chiding his son,”⁶⁷ – for the self to thereby surrender to society.

6. Adorno’s Concept of Autonomy: Strong, Critical Subjectivity

Adorno, Marxism, and Postmodernism

That Adorno holds on to the subject rather than encouraging its absorption into society is decidedly surprising, and not just because of his commitment to Hegel. As mentioned above, Marxist theory, to which Adorno was even more partial, sees the self as a product of capitalism that should and will be overcome by the classless society. Hence in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer locate the origin of the self in bourgeois society: “The social work of every individual in bourgeois society is mediated through the principle of the self.”⁶⁸ In their view, capitalism enacts a process of “individuation,” which in effect creates subjects, as (especially) self-interested, competitive, etc. In this way, Adorno can also be said to anticipate the postmodern idea of “subjectivization,” which views the self as “invented” by society, if not capitalist society *per se*. Thus Foucault suggests, albeit more in the spirit of Nietzsche’s “God is dead,” that “man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end... like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.”⁶⁹

But whereas Marxists and Postmodernists alike tend, for these reasons, to dismiss the subject altogether, Adorno occupies more of a middle ground concerning the self.⁷⁰ For one thing, the problem with individuation in his view is not so much that it gives rise

to fictional subjects, as that it constitutes individuals in a *certain way*, one which undermines their fundamental individuality: “Men were given their individuality as unique in each case, different to all others, so that it might all the more surely be made the same as any other.”⁷¹ In other words, there is a kind of Faustian bargain between the self and society, according to Adorno; the former denies a part of itself in order to ensure its survival in the latter: “But the more the process of self-preservation is effected by the bourgeois division of labor, the more it requires the self-alienation of the individuals who must model their body and soul according to the technical apparatus.”⁷² For another, Adorno rejects the Hegelian-Marxist call to sacrifice the self to society, since the latter, in his view, is “false,” “bad,” or “wrong.” For the individual to conform or “join,” then, even to a revolutionary group, would only end up strengthening “wrong life,” as Adorno held that political activity is often co-opted by the very system it opposes. Thus the subject has a kind of duty to “resist,” at least as long as society withholds true autonomy from it.

Strong Subjectivity

While Adorno holds that late capitalist society affords at most semi-autonomy for a minority of individuals, he does imply what greater autonomy would look like. Given the right social conditions, he suggests, the subject would be able to “strengthen” itself. By strength Adorno does not mean anything Nietzschean; rather, he is referring to a balance of the id, motivated by the pleasure principle, and the ego, governed by the reality principle. Thus Freud is most influential on Adorno here. In *Dialectic of*

Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer show how Odysseus' renounces pleasure for the sake of self-preservation. The best example of this, they contend, is when he ties himself to the mast of his ship so that he can hear, but not succumb to, the music of the Sirens. Since Odysseus is the "prototype of the bourgeois individual," they are suggesting that today's society demands the same of nearly everyone. That is to say, the vast majority of people under late capitalism must, like Odysseus, forgo pleasure in order to simply survive. Of course, in repressing the id half of the self is lost, Adorno and Horkheimer point out. Hence their thesis that self-preservation is self-destructive.

Yet, on the rare occasions that Odysseus "loses himself," or gives in to pleasure, he also "finds himself," or (re)discovers his *whole* self. What happens at such moments is that the subject opens itself to objectivity, achieving what Yvonne Sherratt calls "absorptive unity."⁷³ The result is not a dissolution of self, however, but instead an enhancement of it. As Sherratt explains, what before was "low subjectivity" becomes, after the loss of self, "strong Subjectivity," the "capacity of the self to preserve itself which includes the idea of both physical and psychological survival."⁷⁴ Thus, to reach strong subjectivity the self must remember nature. That is, the subject must continually lose the ego in internal nature (and external nature), if it wants its *entire* self to survive. If the individual can do this, moreover, it will not only free itself, but also gain the strength to struggle for autonomy for all. As Sherratt writes,

In Adorno's positive dialectic we see how the enlightenment sense of self can be strengthened so that Subjects do survive, that they are strong enough to reach the goals of enlightenment and furthermore, that they are enriched in and of themselves. For Odysseus to reach Ithaca, for the enlightenment Subject to achieve his aims, each must drown in their

respective song. As Adorno puts it, quoting Hölderlin: “where there is danger, there salvation grows too.”⁷⁵

We find a similar view in Sherman:

As I interpret Adorno, the chief utopian particular that has been buried underneath the particular reason of the universal is the sensuous, self-determining individual—that is, the individual with ‘a certain degree of ego firmness,’ whose autonomy resides in the self-conscious recognition of his own heteronomy, and whose aim is a world in which he can afford to be heteronomous.⁷⁶

Critical Subjectivity

Yet, Adorno’s suggestion of absorptive unity should not be seen as a relapse into identity-thinking, as if subjectivity and objectivity could be “one.” Rather, as Susan Buck-Morss reminds us, Adorno was no less interested in “critical subjectivity” than strong subjectivity; indeed, as suggested by Sherratt and Sherman, the latter serves the former. Thus, in explicating his notion of “exact fantasy,” Buck-Morss shows how the loss of self in the object must be coupled with a certain distance:

Instead of simply taking in reality as it was immediately given (and being taken in by it), the subject’s “fantasy” actively arranged its elements, bringing them into various relationships until they crystallized in a way which made them cognitively accessible. Even as the subject “entered into” the object, then, it was not swallowed up but maintained the distance necessary for critical activity... As *critical* configurations, the constructs of Adorno’s exact fantasy were polemical: they were meant to break the spell of second nature and to liquidate reified consciousness.⁷⁷

This helps to open up the other part of Adorno’s concept of autonomy. In addition to the *psychologically free* self, then, Adorno prescribed the *intellectually free* self; hence he encouraged “intellectual nonconformity,” the “individual’s capacity for refusing to

identify with the status quo,” or “the individual subject’s *nonidentity* with the world.”⁷⁸

As Buck-Morss also points out,

Not accidentally, Adorno’s intellectual heroes were “outsiders,” men like Shoenberg, Freud, Benjamin, Kafka, Trakl, who dared single-handedly to defy the traditions of their trades. None, of course, were from working-class backgrounds, none except Benjamin were even armchair Marxists.⁷⁹

This emphasis on critical subjectivity has a practical dimension for Adorno as well. In his lecture series entitled *Problems of Moral Philosophy* (published in 1996) Adorno advocates what Espen Hammer calls an “ethics of resistance.” Claiming that “The only thing that can perhaps be said is that the good life today would consist in resistance to the forms of the bad life that have been seen through and critically dissected by the most progressive minds,”⁸⁰ Adorno warns against joining or conforming, even going so far as to urge restraint from movie-going:

I would even go so far as to say that even the apparently harmless visit to the cinema to which we condemn ourselves should really be accompanied by the realization that such visits are actually a betrayal of the insights we have acquired and that they will probably entangle us – admittedly only to an infinitesimal degree, but assuredly with cumulative effect – in the processes that will transform us into what we are supposed to become and what we are making ourselves into in order to enable us to survive, and to ensure that we conform.⁸¹

Since the realm of culture is complicit in wrong life, according to Adorno, the subject must keep a critical distance from certain movies, television shows, music, and books; in short, from the products of what he called the “culture industry.” Other than critique, however, Adorno saw few possibilities for resistance, with the exception of “autonomous art.” Hence his ethics of resistance is “negative,” insofar as it prescribes what *not* to do, rather than proposing any particular course of action: “We are incessantly urged to join

in, and for goodness' sake do not imagine that I am being even the least bit pharisaical in proclaiming that you should refrain from joining in.”⁸²

7. Conclusion: Existentialism v. Critical Theory, Ethics v. Morality

We have seen how both Heidegger and Adorno critique the modern subject, as well as provide their own ideals of subjectivity. More specifically, we have seen how their respective criticisms of the modern subject are similar, insofar as each takes issue with the forgetting of Being (Heidegger) and the forgetting of nature and constitutive subjectivity (Adorno). Likewise, we have seen how their positive accounts of the individual are somewhat aligned, inasmuch as both point to a decidedly subversive self. However, it is in this latter parallel where the fundamental differences between Heidegger's and Adorno's views of the self begin to emerge. For, as Früchtel points out, Heidegger's authentic self belongs to the tradition of eudaimonistic ethics, which stresses personal happiness, while Adorno's autonomous subject belongs to the school of deontological morality, which emphasizes duty to others. Another way of framing this distinction would be to say, on the one hand, that Heidegger's authentic self is *self-realizing*, while on the other hand, Adorno's autonomous subject is *self-determining*, and *ought to be* so. Or, more simply still, that Heidegger's is an *apolitical* self, whereas Adorno's is a *sociopolitical* self.

Again, Heidegger and Adorno are both being subversive here, insofar as each is promoting non-conformity. However, *what* exactly the individual is to rebel against differs, depending on the figure. We know that for Adorno, the subject should resist the

“false whole,” meaning late capitalist society. For Heidegger, by contrast, it is the they from which *Dasein* must liberate itself. While the they can be the bourgeoisie, it can also be anyone, including those who oppose bourgeois society. Thus, Heidegger’s authentic *Dasein* has no (essential) sociopolitical commitment; its loyalty is only to itself. As Safranski elaborates,

Dasein is authentic when it has the courage to base itself on itself and not to rely on Hegel’s so-called substantial morality of state, society, or public morals; when it can dispense with the unburdening offers on the part of the world of They; when it finds the strength to bring itself back from ‘being lost’; when it no longer toys with the thousand possibilities existing but instead seizes the possibility that one is oneself... What matters in Heidegger’s authenticity is not primarily good or ethically correct action but the opening up of opportunities for great moments, the intensification of *Dasein*. Insofar as ethical aspects are concerned at all, Heidegger’s ideas in *Being and Time* can be summed up in one sentence: Do whatever you like, but make your own decision and do not let anyone relieve you of the decision and hence the responsibility.⁸³

Lambert Zuidervaart concurs with this point, concluding, after showing how Heidegger and Adorno “touch” in their views of the self, that Heidegger’s is a “nonpublic or antipublic self,” while Adorno’s is faithful to societal principles such as solidarity and justice.⁸⁴

Of course, perhaps the best explanation for this difference, and one mostly in keeping with the eudaimonistic ethics/deontological morality framework, is that Heidegger is finally Nietzschean, whereas Adorno is in the end Marxist. While there is a Nietzschean moment in Adorno’s thinking – in *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, he confesses that he “[owes] him by far the greatest debt – more even than to Hegel,”⁸⁵ Adorno ultimately faults Nietzsche for being “in thrall to existing social conditions”: “he was able to get to the bottom of what people had become, but was not able to get to the

bottom of the society that made them what they were.”⁸⁶ This criticism obviously reflects Adorno’s fundamental partiality to Marxism which, as Sherman argues, he saw as “the highest achievement of the philosophical tradition... Adorno is neither a ‘post-Marxist’ nor a ‘postmodernist’ *avant la lettre*.”⁸⁷ Heidegger, by comparison, largely accepted Nietzsche’s insights, especially his revelation of nihilism, whereby all morals are rendered groundless. Indeed, it was this discovery that led Nietzsche to dismiss not only Christian morality, but also Marxism, which he regarded as merely secularized Christian morality. Hence the *Übermensch*, or superman, would become such precisely by going over, or “beyond,” conventional accounts of good and evil. It is not hard to see a version of the superman in Heidegger’s notion of authentic *Dasein*. Although the latter is not as driven by the “will to power” as the former, it is not thereby any less nihilistic.

Romantic Coda

The convergence of Heidegger and Adorno, then, in connection with the self, is in conclusion only a *formal* one. For as we have seen, upon closer inspection, both the negative and positive aspects of their thinking on this topic vary considerably. While there are other points of contact – Heidegger’s insistence on *Dasein*’s openness to Being and Adorno’s call to lose oneself – there are also other instances of disagreement – Heidegger seems to valorize self-possession, the reclaiming of oneself from the they, whereas Adorno recommends (occasional) self-abandonment. Hence their respective views of the individual diverged as soon as we looked at their actual *content*.

Yet, this formal affinity is not insignificant. That Heidegger and Adorno both worried over the decline of individuality – whether due to the they or late capitalist society – as well as reaffirmed the importance of the self – whether in and of itself or for the sake of collective autonomy – makes them congruous in *spirit*, if not in letter. This spirit, as we proposed in the introduction, is decidedly quasi-Romantic or neo-Romantic, since the Romantics too lamented the loss of individuality (in *early* modernity), and likewise sought to reassert it. Their remedy for this was *Bildung*, or self-realization, understood in both the holistic and individualistic senses. Thus, according to the Romantics, for the self to recover from the alienation of modernity, which divided the self against itself, it had to rediscover its entire self, in addition to its individuality.

Romanticism

But before we foist the label of quasi-Romanticism or neo-Romanticism onto Heidegger and Adorno, a decidedly problematic move, especially as regards the latter, we must first try to articulate the concept, or core, of Romanticism, if only briefly and simplistically. Even this is no small feat, however, since Romanticism was a multifarious phenomenon that defies facile definitions. Part of the difficulty is that Romanticism was not a monolithic movement that can be limited to any particular place. Hence there was English Romanticism, French Romanticism, German Romanticism, and American Romanticism. As William Barrett asserts, “The Romantic movement was not confined to one country, but passed like a great spasm of energy and enthusiasm over the whole of Europe—England, France, Germany, Italy—finding different national expressions in

each country...”⁸⁸ Nor was Romanticism confined to any particular time. For example, in the case of German Romanticism, Storm and Stress (*Sturm und Drang*) spanned the late 1760’s to the early 1780’s, while early German Romanticism (*Führomantik*), which followed Storm and Stress, lasted from about 1796 until 1802. Discerning the figures of Romanticism can be just as complicated. Hence Goethe is sometimes considered a Romantic, insofar as his early writings such as *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) epitomize Storm and Stress, yet he is also associated with Classicism (*Klassik*), which turned against Romanticism, as seen in *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795/6) wherein the title character outgrows the passion and attendant despair of young Werther on a longer journey of self-discovery.

For all of these variations, however, Romanticism does have central themes. As Barrett argues, while Romanticism found differing national expressions, it “always [preserved] the same inner characteristics.”⁸⁹ These characteristics are somewhat well-known, as most descriptions of Romanticism highlight at one point or another its exaltation of desire/feeling over reason, the individual over the collective, art over philosophy, and nature over modern society. Barrett, for instance, portrays it thus: “as a protest of the individual against the universal laws of classicism, or as the protest of feeling against reason, or again as the protest on behalf of nature against the encroachment of industrial society.”⁹⁰ According to Beiser, the three “fundamental values” of Romanticism were *Bildung*, “cultural renewal,” and “remystification of the world.”

These values were affirmed in the face of modernity, or the Enlightenment, which the Romantics blamed, in Beiser's words, for "three forms of alienation": 1) "the division within the self," which took "two forms"—the clash between reason and sensibility (emotions and desires), especially in social life, and the specialization of one part of the self at the expense of all of the others, demanded by economic life; 2) "the division between the self and others," which led to "anomie or atomism," and "arose from the decline of the traditional community—the guilds, corporations, and family—and the rise of the competitive marketplace, where each individual sought his self-interest at the expense of others"; 3) "the division between the self and nature," which came from two sources—modern technology and mechanical physics, both of which "made nature into an object of mere use, having no magic, mystery, or beauty."⁹¹

Romantic Bildung

In his *Ideas (Ideen)*, F. Schlegel writes, articulating the ethos of Romanticism at large, "The highest good, and the source of everything useful, is *Bildung*."⁹² For the Romantics, *Bildung* was taken to be the antidote to the ailments wrought by modernity in general, and not just to the alienation of the self. Thus it was intended to heal the divisions within the human realm (the ethical and political spheres) in addition to those between the human and non-human worlds. But in order to understand these broader consequences, it is important to first establish what *Bildung* meant for the Romantics at the level of the self. This requires underscoring the *holistic* and *individualistic* dimensions of *Bildung*.

While the ideal of *Bildung* can be traced back all the way to Platonism, in the Romantic tradition it takes a novel shape. Coterminous with “acculturation,” “development,” or “formation,” *Bildung* generally denotes education; hence the link to Plato, whose “Allegory of the Cave” depicts the transformative process of education, or the elevation of the mind/soul (*pysche*) from opinion (*doxa*) to wisdom (*sophia*). For the Romantics, however, as Beiser stresses, *Bildung* indicates something more like *self-realization*, or *self-actualization*. Although this connotation can also be found in ancient Greek thought, in Aristotle as well as Plato, insofar as both figures urge us to become *most* human (indeed, this makes for happiness, or the “good life,” according to each), Romanticism turns self-realization into a more holistic project. By holistic self-realization, the Romantics essentially meant the development of the *entire* person, such that not only the *intellect* and *character* would be perfected (as Plato and Aristotle, in addition to Enlightenment thinkers like Kant, advocated), but also the *sensibility*, the faculty of sensation, desire, and feeling/emotion. As Beiser states, “True to such holism, the romantics insisted that we should educate not only reason but also sensibility, not only the intellect but also feeling and sensation. They argued that sensibility—the power to sense, feel, and desire— is no less human than reason itself.”⁹³

Yet the cultivation of the whole person, conceived of as both reason and sensibility, was still too abstract, or *universal*, for the Romantics. Thus, in conjunction with calling for the holistic enhancement of the self, Romanticism also advanced an “ethic of individuality,” which encouraged the self to actualize its own *particular* potentialities. In other words, although ultimately working in tandem, the holistic aspect

of *Bildung* stressed the development of all of our “characteristic human powers” (i.e., reason and sensibility), while the individualistic aspect of *Bildung* stressed the development of our “distinctive individual powers.”⁹⁴ Beiser notes this distinction, and explains the significance of the latter, in the following:

Bildung should consist in the development of not only our characteristic human powers, which we all share as human beings, but also our distinctive human powers, which are unique to each of us. The romantics stressed that each individual had to realize his human powers in his own unique and individual fashion. No two persons were ever alike; each had characteristics that distinguished him from everyone else; complete self-realization demanded actualizing these distinctive characteristics no less than our universal ones.⁹⁵

It is in this way, of course, that Romanticism revised, or updated, the notion of *Bildung* held by Plato and Aristotle, for whom self-realization was a general more so than a specific process, since both stressed the development of our universal rather than particular potentialities. Having accepted the importance of individual freedom illuminated by the Enlightenment (especially Kant), the Romantics sought to modernize the classical conception of *Bildung*, by making it applicable to the newly emergent autonomous subject. However, unlike Kant, who tended to see autonomy in mostly moral terms, the Romantics attended more to “personal decision, individual choice.” As Beiser points out, the Romantics saw autonomy as the freedom to choose in accordance with one’s values, as opposed to supposedly universal laws:

[The romantics] interpreted autonomy not only in moral but also in personal terms. Their emphasis on the value of individuality means that sometimes decisions are right not because they fall under some universal law but simply because they are individual. They sought to determine a realm of ethics that does not fall under general moral laws but that concerns the ultimate values by which a person leads his life. They will

be good or bad, right or wrong, simply because I have chosen them, with no expectation that anyone else will follow.⁹⁶

Romanticism did not aim to completely undermine ethics, however. To the contrary, the holistic side of *Bildung* was intended precisely for the formation of what Schiller called “the beautiful soul” (*die schöne Seele*). The logic here was that, by simultaneously developing reason and sensibility, the individual would act not solely “from duty,” as Kantian ethics demands, but from duty *and* desire. As Beiser explains: “In a graceful action, then, our desires and feelings are neither repressed according to reason, nor indulged according to sensibility, but refined and ennobled, or, to use a modern term, ‘sublimated’.”⁹⁷ Equally dissatisfied by the moral stoicism of Kant’s ethics, particularly his categorical imperative, as well as by the cult of desire and emotion worshiped by the Storm and Stress movement, Romanticism attempted to find a *via media* between these two alternatives. However naively (it is no coincidence that today the term romantic is all but synonymous with naiveté), the Romantics thought it possible and of course desirable, that the individual, by harmonizing his/her reason and sensibility, become akin to a beautiful work of art, which similarly harmonizes form and content, respectively.

Yet here too the Romantics were also interested in the concrete individual, not just the self in the abstract. Thus, in drawing a parallel between the individual and the artwork, Romanticism saw a possible correlation between not only the latter’s form and content and the former’s reason and sensibility, but also the freedom of the subject and the autonomous work of art. In Beiser’s words, to the Romantics “both the self-realized individual and the work of art exhibit freedom, the absence of constraint or outside

interference, since both appear to follow their own internal laws, their own inner dynamic, independent of external forces.”⁹⁸ Kant is again influential in this instance, insofar as his aesthetics highlighted the “purposiveness without purpose” of the artwork, which is to say its freedom to follow to its own rules. However, contra Kant, who never made such autonomy (completely) allowable for human beings, to the extent that for him subjects must act in accordance with the moral law, the Romantics held that the individual is, and should be, no less free than the artwork.

From Romanticism to Heidegger and Adorno

Given what we have learned of their own solutions to the problems of late modernity in relation to the self, both Heidegger and Adorno appear to distantly echo this ideal of *Bildung*. We have already seen how both encourage individualistic *Bildung*, albeit to different ends (authenticity and autonomy). As for the holistic dimension of *Bildung*, there is some justification for finding continuity here as well. For, just as the Romantics strove for *balance* between reason and sensibility, so Heidegger recommended balance between consciousness and being (hence the not-forgetting of Being), and so Adorno called for a balance between the ego and the id (hence the remembrance of nature). While these are three distinctive visions, to be sure, they all tend to exalt the individual who is *whole*, as opposed to one-sided.

Yet, the difference between the Romantics, on the one hand, and Heidegger and Adorno, on the other hand, is that the latter bore witness to *late* modernity, when Romantic *Bildung* seemed either obsolete or well-nigh impossible to attain. For one

thing, the metaphysical underpinnings of *Bildung* had been undermined by this time, a “fact” that both Heidegger and Adorno accepted. For another, the rise of scientism, industrialism, capitalism and mass society, which began in early modernity, was in full swing by the twentieth century. For Adorno especially, this rapid growth of the “whole” or the “totality” rendered the individual all but helpless. For Heidegger, the dominance of the “press,” with its anonymous public audience, was one of the main reasons for *Dasein*’s fallenness in the they. Thus, although Heidegger and Adorno each, in their own way, articulated the dangers of these conditions, and even pointed to potential ways out, they simply lacked the hope that the Romantics possessed. Hence Heidegger’s famous phrase, “Only a God can save us,” and Adorno’s “wrong life cannot be lived rightly.”

Notes

¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 184.

² Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993) 225/Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'," in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), Band 9, 321.

³ In viewing Heidegger as affirmative of the individual, no less than critical of it, we will confine ourselves to the *early* Heidegger, that is the Heidegger of *Being and Time* in particular since, as indicated above, the *later* Heidegger becomes increasingly suspicious of the subject.

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973)/Theodor W. Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), Band 6.

⁵ Josef Früchtel, "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Heidegger and Adorno on Modernity," in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, ed. Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 202.

⁶ Fred Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 47.

⁷ Dallmayr, *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*, 47-48.

⁸ David Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 37.

⁹ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 53.

¹⁰ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 54.

¹¹ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 54.

¹² Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 54.

¹³ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 54.

¹⁴ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 55.

¹⁵ In characterizing the Romantic perspective as "agonistic," Früchtel is equating Romanticism with the Storm and Stress movement, which saw reason and emotion, for example, as opposed. Thus, Früchtel's discernment of Romanticism in Heidegger and Adorno differs from my own, as I wish to show how Heidegger and Adorno echo the *early* Romantics.

¹⁶ Früchtel, "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Heidegger and Adorno on Modernity," 140-141.

¹⁷ Früchtel, "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Heidegger and Adorno on Modernity," 153.

¹⁸ Früchtel, "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Heidegger and Adorno on Modernity," 146.

¹⁹ Früchtel, "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Heidegger and Adorno on Modernity," 149.

²⁰ Früchtel, "The Struggle of the Self Against Itself: Heidegger and Adorno on Modernity," 140.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962), 47/Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), Band 2, 34.

²² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 16.

²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 237/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 256.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 46/ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 33.

²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 46/ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 33.

²⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 46/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 32-33.

²⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 89/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 83.

²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 89/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 83-84.

²⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 167/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 172.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 46.

³¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 63.

³² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 165/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 170.

- ³³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 54.
- ³⁴ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 55.
- ³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28.
- ³⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 165/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 169.
- ³⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 222/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 236.
- ³⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 168; Heidegger's italics/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 173.
- ³⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232; Heidegger's italics/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 249-250.
- ⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 234/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 251.
- ⁴¹ Quoted by Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 289/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 326.
- ⁴² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 311/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 353.
- ⁴³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 235/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 253.
- ⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 57.
- ⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 168/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 173.
- ⁴⁶ Taylor Carman, "Authenticity," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 286.
- ⁴⁷ Charles B. Guignon, "Authenticity, moral values and psychotherapy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 228.
- ⁴⁸ Michael E. Zimmerman, "The End of Authentic Selfhood in the Postmodern Age?" in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 125.
- ⁴⁹ Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. Ewald Osers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 163; 170.
- ⁵⁰ See Marcuse, "Sartre's Existentialism" (1948).
- ⁵¹ Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, 34-35/Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 436.
- ⁵² Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, 65/Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 456.
- ⁵³ Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, 65/Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 456.
- ⁵⁴ Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, 68/Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 458.
- ⁵⁵ Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, 69/Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 459.
- ⁵⁶ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 3/Max Horkheimer und Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 3, 19.
- ⁵⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 11-12/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 28.
- ⁵⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 40/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 58.
- ⁵⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume One*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 385.
- ⁶⁰ Quoted in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 20.
- ⁶¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 9/ Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 25.
- ⁶² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 45/Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 32.
- ⁶³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 2007), 185/Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 6, 186.
- ⁶⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 104/Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 110-111.
- ⁶⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 177/Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 179.
- ⁶⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 181/Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 182.
- ⁶⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 329/Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 323.
- ⁶⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 29/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 46.

- ⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 387.
- ⁷⁰ As Espen Hammer notes, “Unlike Althusser and Foucault, however, Adorno importantly resists the reduction of the concept of subjectivity, or rather the concept of the autonomous subject, to the effect of ideology alone” (Espen Hammer, *Adorno and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 80.).
- ⁷¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 13/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 29.
- ⁷² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 29-30/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 47.
- ⁷³ Yvonne Sherratt, *Adorno’s Positive Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- ⁷⁴ Sherratt, *Adorno’s Positive Dialectic*, 220.
- ⁷⁵ Sherratt, *Adorno’s Positive Dialectic*, 231-232.
- ⁷⁶ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 267.
- ⁷⁷ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 86.
- ⁷⁸ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute*, 84; Buck-Morss’s italics.
- ⁷⁹ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute*, 84.
- ⁸⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Schroder, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 167.
- ⁸¹ Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 168.
- ⁸² Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 168.
- ⁸³ Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, 165-166.
- ⁸⁴ Lambert Zuidervaart, *Social Philosophy After Adorno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87.
- ⁸⁵ Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 172.
- ⁸⁶ Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 174.
- ⁸⁷ Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: Dialectics of Subjectivity*, 237.
- ⁸⁸ William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 124.
- ⁸⁹ Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, 124.
- ⁹⁰ Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, 123.
- ⁹¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 31.
- ⁹² Quoted in Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 26.
- ⁹³ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 27.
- ⁹⁴ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 27.
- ⁹⁵ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 27.
- ⁹⁶ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 30.
- ⁹⁷ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 97.
- ⁹⁸ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 28.

II.

Art: Strife and Semblance

Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the instigation of the strife in which the unconcealment of beings as a whole, or truth, is won. – Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”

Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless. – Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

The so-called high arts, along with the humanities, have been in decline for decades. In our postmodern world, high art does not possess the aura it once did, having come to be seen as equal parts irrelevant, obscure, and unsatisfying. The reasons for this are manifold. For one thing, technology has brought about different aesthetic techniques, forms, and media, which have made high art seem outdated, even obsolete. For another, the rise of the marketplace has transformed art into a commodity that must meet mass demand; the resultant surplus of low art has necessarily made high art appear enigmatic and intimidating by comparison. Finally, high art, as well as the humanities, are generally regarded today as important, but not enjoyable. Thus, listening to Mozart or looking at Monet is done dutifully for the most part, which is to say without desire or passion. Arguably, this antipathy towards high art stems from the dominance today of economic individualism mentioned in the previous chapter. In this context, the high arts and humanities are no longer seen as catalysts for personal growth, but to the contrary, obstructions to the growth of one’s wealth.

When these changes were beginning to take hold, in the early to mid-twentieth century, Heidegger and Adorno were two of the most prominent figures to defend high art. Hence the former sought to protect “great art” from the ever-encroaching “art

industry,” and more importantly, an ontology that reduced artworks to “mere things”;¹ thus for Heidegger, the task was to re-see great art as a site of revelation and even a “new beginning.” The latter likewise warned against the expansion of what he called the “culture industry” (indeed, much more so than Heidegger), viewing it as destructive not only of “autonomous art,” but also of society as a whole; for Adorno, then, the central challenge was to (re)discover the critical and utopian powers of autonomous art. Thus, just as Heidegger and Adorno each valorized the self, even as they acknowledged its levelling/liquidation by late modernity, so both valorized art, even as they recognized that it too was endangered late modernity.

Hence, the second affinity between Heidegger and Adorno, to be explored in this chapter, parallels the first. For, in what follows it will be shown how Heidegger and Adorno appear to be aligned in that they have comparable negative and positive agendas vis-à-vis art; on the one hand, both wish to rescue art from a degrading ontology (Heidegger) and culture industry (Adorno), and on the other hand, each seeks to reaffirm the value of great art (Heidegger) and autonomous art (Adorno). Furthermore, both seem to valorize great art and autonomous art for similar reasons, to the extent that each regards such art as a source of *truth* as well as *transformation*. Of course, as in Chapter I, a closer look at this decidedly *formal* congruity will eventually give way to starker differences at the level of *content*. For here again, Heidegger and Adorno could not be more at odds when it comes to the sociopolitical dimensions of their aesthetic theories.

In navigating these convergences and divergences, I will first discuss some of the most recent scholarship on Heidegger and Adorno in connection with art. Then, I will

examine Heidegger's aesthetics, both its destructive and (re)constructive aspects, as presented in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Next, I will rehearse Adorno's critique of the culture industry, as given in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, followed by a summary of his theory of autonomous art as found in *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the fundamental differences between Heidegger and Adorno where art, in addition to the sociopolitical dimensions of their thinking, is concerned.

1. Heidegger-Adorno Scholarship

Because there is more scholarship on Heidegger and Adorno in relation to art than to the self, in this chapter only the most relevant research, which also happens to be the most recent, will be discussed. Thus I will address two essays, from Macdonald's and Ziarek's *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, which not only support my position, but also constitute the leading edge commentary on this topic.

Nicholas Walker's "Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?"

Walker's essay is a modest endeavor to highlight moments of proximity between Heidegger and Adorno in their respective responses to Hegel's aesthetics. The qualifier modest is necessary here because Walker's text brings Heidegger and Adorno together only in the final pages, and there in a very preliminary way. Nevertheless, some of the discoveries made over the course of his study are compelling in their own right, and apropos of the concerns of this chapter. These include, for example, the several ways in

which Heidegger and Adorno each differ from Hegel on the subject of art; Adorno, insofar as he returns to the concept of *mimesis*, or imitation, which Hegel had rejected in favor of viewing art as expression, and Heidegger, to the extent that he elevates the role of “earth,” that which the artwork “sets forth,” in “contrast to any idealist approach that would ‘demote’ (*herabsetzen*, as Hegel often puts it) the sensible material of art as a ‘means’ of expressing a higher content.”²

More important, however, are the similarities Walker highlights between the aesthetics of Heidegger, Adorno, and Hegel. Not quite willing to go as far as Joseph Kockelmans, who claims that Heidegger’s theory of art should be read “as an attempt to retrieve the metaphysical aesthetics of Hegel,”³ Walker asserts that Heidegger at times “seems deliberately to echo, and profoundly transform and intensify Hegel’s” aesthetics,⁴ inasmuch as he views art as playing an essential role in society; that is, as we will see, by “setting up a world” in which a “historical people” finds meaning. As for Adorno, Walker contends that he “repeats, in a self-consciously critical and transformed key, Hegel’s insight that for us, in modernity, reflection has already penetrated the domain of art itself,” although unlike Hegel, who assumed that this meant the “death of art,” Adorno maintains that the artwork “represents a kind of persisting ‘enigma,’ or *Ratsel*, and calls for critical commentary to let it speak.”⁵ Hence Adorno’s claim in *Aesthetic Theory*, “By demanding its solution, the enigma points to its truth content. It can only be achieved by philosophical reflection. This alone is the justification of aesthetics.”⁶

Of course, where Heidegger and Adorno both come closest to Hegel, and thus to each other, Walker argues, is in seeing art as a “distinctive way of disclosing truth,” and

furthermore, “not of informative but of transformative ‘truth’.”⁷ Thus, as I will show below, Heidegger claims that truth “happens” in the artwork, and that this truth is that of the “unconcealment” of beings, while Adorno holds that there is a “truth content” in works of art that exposes social conditions for what they really are. It is for this reason, despite Hegel’s own subordination of art to philosophy, that Heidegger and Adorno cling to this moment in Hegel’s dialectic, sometimes even seeming to grant equal status to art and philosophy. Hence Adorno is often charged “with an ‘idealist’ and anachronistic over-valuation of art and the aesthetic,”⁸ while in Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “the ‘great’ art whose death Hegel allegedly analyzes, confirms, and accepts is reclaimed here at least as an imminent possibility of the present.”⁹

Krzysztof Ziarek’s “Beyond Critique? Art and Power”

Ziarek focuses more on art’s critical capacity than its role as a site of truth and transformation in the aesthetic theories of Heidegger and Adorno. More specifically, Ziarek explores the idea that for both Heidegger and Adorno, art is not so much critical in the overt sense as it is critical of traditional modes of critique, which therefore makes it more or most critical. Hence the “peculiar paradox” of art in Heidegger and Adorno, whereby “art is to be a critique, and, at the same time, in order to function as such, it needs to undermine the very parameters that make critique possible.”¹⁰ In the case of Adorno, Ziarek shows how autonomous art is simultaneously critical and beyond critique:

For Adorno, critiques, no matter how negative or revolutionary, are necessarily fashioned within the categorial determinations available within

the social sphere, and as such they cannot, despite their critical force, undermine the very praxis from which they issue and within which they operate. Art, on the other hand, by virtue of its autonomy, can negate society in a more radical manner. What this capacity to negate or denounce figured as art's form implies is that art has the specific force to call into question the forms of critique available in the social sphere.¹¹

Ziarek argues similarly of Heidegger, although this seems counter-intuitive. For, as Adorno suggests, "the concept of critique... has no place in Heidegger's philosophy."¹² Ziarek replies to Adorno's charge by suggesting that Heidegger's thought in general, and theory of art in particular, is "critical *otherwise*." Thus in redefining art as *poiēsis*, which "lets be," as opposed to *technē*, which renders useful, Ziarek views Heidegger as implicitly questioning the "techno-metaphysics of power and of production" of modernity, and thereby pointing towards a paradigm that would be "released from power and production."¹³ Hence Ziarek asserts the following with respect to the critical potential of Heidegger's notion of *poiēsis*:

the artistic force of *poiēsis* eschews and empties power: instead of rendering available, it 'lets be,' as Heidegger puts it. It lets be in the specific sense in which it releases what is from the technicity characteristic of modern power, which produces and creates by putting in place and enforcing availability and machination.¹⁴

Assessing Walker and Ziarek

For the purposes of the foregoing, Walker's insights will be most useful, particularly his observation that both Heidegger and Adorno view art as a source of truth and transformation. In exploring the positive dimensions of their aesthetic theories, I will show how Heidegger associates great art with the ancient Greek word for truth, *alētheia*, meaning un-concealment, and Adorno holds that autonomous artworks have truth

content. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how these both Heidegger and Adorno connect these notions of aesthetic truth with the possibility of transformation; specifically, a new relation to Being for Heidegger, and social transfiguration for Adorno. Of course, Ziarek's claims will also be borne out, especially when it comes to explaining how for Adorno, the autonomous artwork critiques its social conditions. Even in Heidegger's aesthetics, particularly his rejection of the "equipmental" concept of art, the critique of power and production that Ziarek detects in Heidegger's thinking will become readily apparent.

2. Heidegger's Destruction of the Thing-Concept of Artworks

Like *Being and Time*, wherein Heidegger seeks to overcome the entire ontological tradition, however much he does this more so for *human* being than Being in general, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*) also strives to displace the prevailing ontology, only this time in the service of art. Originally a lecture delivered first in 1935 in Freiburg, then in Zurich in 1936, and finally as a three-part series in Frankfurt in late 1936 (Adorno could not have been in attendance, as he fled Germany in 1934), Heidegger's text must have struck its listeners as both in keeping with his earlier thinking and divergent from it. The former because, again, the destruction of ontology so integral to *Being and Time* is no less a part of this work, and the latter because herein Heidegger moves beyond *Being and Time*'s preoccupation with "equipmental" beings by engaging works of art. Indeed, in "The Origin of the Work of Art" it is precisely the conception of beings *qua* equipment from which Heidegger wishes to liberate art, since

art is surely, like equipment, a human-made thing, but also above all a “work” that is irreducible to equipment.

The Three Thing-Concepts

That the artwork is both a thing, like equipment as well as “mere things” (“lifeless” natural beings), and something more, is Heidegger’s basic starting point in “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Yet whereas the “thing-being,” or “thingly element,” of the work of art has historically been privileged, Heidegger sets out to explore its “work-being,” or “workly element.” Thus, the first part of his essay is devoted to identifying and debunking three “thing-concepts,” all of which have misinterpreted beings in general, and one of which has misunderstood artworks in particular. In doing so, Heidegger is not dismissing the thing-being of works of art; indeed, this remains a pressing concern throughout the text. However, it is only by relinquishing the three thing-concepts, specifically the *hylomorphic* (formed matter) thing-concept, Heidegger proposes, that the “essence” of the work of art can be unveiled.

The first thing-concept he examines, attributable to Aristotle, views beings in terms of “substance” and “accidents,” as, for example, in the conception of a tall man as a man (substance) who, among other things, happens to be tall (accident). In typical fashion, Heidegger traces the etymological development of these terms from their “primordial” source in ancient Greek (*to hypokeimenon* for substance and *ta symbebekota* for accidents), through their respective Latin “translation” into *subjectum*, or *substantia*, and *accidens*, up to our own tendency to structure language, as well as thought itself, in

terms of subjects and predicates. By doing so, Heidegger is not simply showing how different cultures give similar or different names to the same things, but rather how in the very naming or re-naming of something, the “Being of that being” is revealed in a certain way, and thus also partly concealed. Hence he contends, and this can be read as a kind of apology for Heidegger’s methodology as such, “What seems natural to us is probably just something familiar in a long tradition that has forgotten the unfamiliar source from which it arose. And yet this unfamiliar source once struck man as strange and caused him to think and to wonder.”¹⁵ In the case of the substance/accidents thing-concept, Heidegger claims that “it does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it.”¹⁶

The second thing-concept that he criticizes is similarly obstructive, if for the opposite reason. Thus Heidegger writes, “Whereas the first interpretation keeps the thing at arm’s length from us, as it were, and sets it too far off, the second makes it press too physically upon us.”¹⁷ Kant, rather than Aristotle, is at issue here, as the former expressly defines a thing as “the unity of a manifold of what is given in the senses.”¹⁸ The problem with this thing-concept is that while the first arbitrarily foists itself on a given being, the second errs in taking it to be the sum of sensory impressions, which are supposedly first received by the faculty of sensation, and then organized into a whole by the faculty of understanding. Yet as Heidegger argues, we never actually experience things in this manner, as if, say, music were initially a barrage of chaotic sounds that only later take on a more orderly structure. Hence he states that “Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear

acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly.”¹⁹ By breaking down the thing into its sensible components, then, we lose sight of the very thing that we were trying to capture, according to Heidegger. It is for this reason that he asserts, “The thing itself must be allowed to remain in its self-containment. It must be accepted in its own steadfastness.”²⁰

The third thing-concept interprets beings as “formed matter,” coming from the ancient Greek words *morphē* and *hyle* respectively. According to Heidegger, the hylomorphic theory is applied to all beings, whether natural or equipmental (human-made); in the *Physics*, for example, Aristotle sees both natural beings and artifacts as formed matter. Thus this thing-concept is also used to define works of art, as when the artwork is thought of as material (i.e., tone, color) given, by the artist, form (i.e., music, painting). Yet the hylomorphic view is not simply one of many aesthetic concepts, Heidegger points out, but the dominant thing-concept in this area, persisting from Greek antiquity to our own time. As Heidegger notes, “The distinction of matter and form is *the conceptual schema which is used, in the greatest variety of ways, quite generally for all art theory and aesthetics.*”²¹ The task, then, for Heidegger, is to release the work of art as well as natural beings from this “conceptual machinery,” by showing how the hylomorphic theory belongs not to artworks, nor natural beings, but rather only to equipment.

He does this by suggesting that form implies not only shape, but also purpose, or “usefulness.” Thus, while a natural being’s form is a “consequence” of its matter, the

form of equipment “determines” both the shape of its material and the kind of material chosen: “The form, on the contrary, determines the arrangement of the matter. Even more, it prescribes in each case the kind and selection of the matter— impermeable for a jug, sufficiently hard for an ax, firm yet flexible for shoes.”²² Such determination and prescription is done with an eye toward the ultimate usefulness of the equipment: “The interfusion of form and matter prevailing here is, moreover, controlled beforehand by the purposes served by jug, ax, shoes.”²³ Thus, shoes are neither shaped like hands nor made of paper, as this would render such equipment useless, and therefore not equipment. As Heidegger explains,

Usefulness is the basic feature from which this being regards us, that is, flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this being. Both the formative act and the choice of material—a choice given with the act—and therewith the dominance of the conjunction of matter and form, are all grounded in such usefulness. A being that falls under usefulness is always the product of a process of making. It is made as a piece of equipment for something. As determinations of beings, accordingly, *matter and form have their proper place in the essential nature of equipment*. This name designates what is produced expressly for employment and use. Matter and form are in no case original determinations of the thingness of the mere thing.²⁴

But if the hylomorphic thing-concept is ultimately grounded in equipment, then how has it come to have a “special dominance” in relation to artworks as well as to natural beings? Heidegger ventures that it is equipment’s “intermediate place” between natural beings and works of art:

The matter-form structure, however, by which the Being of a piece of equipment is first determined, readily presents itself as the immediately intelligible constitution of every being, because here man himself as maker participates in the way in which the piece of equipment comes into being. Because equipment takes an intermediate place between mere thing and work, the suggestion is that nonequipmental beings—things and

works and ultimately all beings—are to be comprehended with the help of the Being of equipment (the matter-form structure).²⁵

Heidegger also proposes that the lingering influence of medieval ontology, which takes beings (*ens creatum*) to be a unity of *materia* and *forma*, contributes to the omnipresence of this thing-concept. While he notes that medieval ontology has since lost its authority, Heidegger points out how it continues to shape our interpretation of beings, informing the “metaphysics of the modern period”: “The idea of creation, grounded in faith, can lose its guiding power for knowledge of beings as a whole. But the theological interpretation of all beings, the view of the world in terms of matter and form borrowed from an alien philosophy, having once been instituted, can still remain a force.”²⁶

Of course, whatever the reason for the hylomorphic theory’s prevalence, Heidegger is convinced that it, along with the other two thing-concepts, “[shackle] reflection on the Being of any given being,”²⁵ or “fail to grasp the essence of the thing.”²⁸ This holds for beings in general and artworks in particular. For the three-concepts can capture neither the thingly element of the former nor that of the latter: “the dominant thing-concepts are inadequate as means of grasping the thingly aspect of the work.”²⁹ As regards artworks more specifically, since the hylomorphic theory is limited to equipment, it cannot articulate the work of art’s thing-being. What is worse, when it comes to the workly aspect of works of art, the three thing-concepts are even more inadequate. Thus, Heidegger concludes that both the thing-being and the work-being of artworks cannot be known by way of this thing-concept. The only way to understand either, he surmises, is to reverse the process of inquiry; rather than begin with the thingly aspect of the work of

art, its workly aspect must be the starting point: “the road toward the determination of the thingly reality of the work leads not from thing to work but from work to thing.”³⁰

2. Heidegger’s (Re)construction of the Aesthetic

Art and Philosophy

In characterizing its work-being, Heidegger gives the work of art a privileged connection to *alētheia*, the ancient Greek word for truth, meaning literally unconcealment, as opposed to something like accuracy, correctness, or correspondence. In this way, Heidegger at once distances art from the three thing-concepts and questions the conventional correlation of art with beauty. The following passage illustrates this move:

The essence of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work. But until now art presumably has had to do with the beautiful and beauty, and not with truth. The arts that produce such works are called the fine arts, in contrast with the applied or industrial arts that manufacture equipment. In fine art the art itself is not beautiful, but is called so because it produces the beautiful. Truth, in contrast, belongs to logic. Beauty, however, is reserved for aesthetics.³¹

Yet, to assert that art has truth or is truthful is certainly no insignificant claim, especially in the context of philosophy. From its beginning, philosophy has greeted art with suspicion, and even defined itself in terms diametrically opposed to art. Thus in Plato’s thought, philosophy, which literally means “love of wisdom,” with wisdom denoting knowledge of truth or reality, is set over against art, which is viewed as only a “copy of a copy” of truth/reality. The idea here is simply that whereas philosophy corresponds to the Forms (*eidos*) (i.e., the Good, the Beautiful), or the “really real” (*ta ontos onta*), art only corresponds to mere imitations of the participants in these Forms. For example, a

painting of a beautiful landscape is ultimately just a representation of a “real” beautiful landscape, which in turn is the representation of the “really real” Form of the Beautiful. The implication is that art is twice removed from truth/reality, whereas philosophy has full access to it. Hence Socrates exiles art from the Republic insofar as it “an inferior thing cohabitating with an inferior and engendering inferior offspring.”³²

Of course, before Heidegger Hegel had discerned an element of truth in art, arguing that in works of art, as in the products of labor, “spirit” (*Geist*) comes to understand itself, or discover the truth about itself; namely, its freedom. However, for Hegel this truth was better expressed by philosophy than art, or religion for that matter, since only the former, he held, can conceptualize what the latter indicate through symbols, metaphors, images, etc. Heidegger thus differs from Hegel insofar as, for one thing, his notion of truth does not designate the self-unfolding freedom of spirit, but rather the un-concealment of Being, and for another, he resists Hegel’s subordination of art to philosophy. As Hubert Dreyfus asserts,

Heidegger is the first to have defined art in terms of its function of articulating the understanding of being in the practices and to have worked out the ontological implications. Thus, Heidegger... could deny Hegel’s claim that philosophy was superior to art, since what art showed symbolically, philosophy could rationalize and so make explicit.³³

Art and Truth

Heidegger claims that in works of art, the truth “happens,” or “sets itself to work.” This means, again, that the artwork un-conceals, or reveals, beings. However, there is more to Heidegger’s theory than simple un-concealment. In his phenomenology of Van

Gogh's painting of a pair of "peasant" shoes, he proposes that "earth" (*Erde*) and "world" (*Welt*) are revealed.³⁴ Heidegger's notions of earth and world are not to be mistaken as covert substitutes for matter and form respectively; by earth, Heidegger does not mean the material out of which artworks are made (color in this case), nor does he mean by world the form given to that material (the shoes). Instead, in this case Heidegger associates earth with the land that the peasant works, and world with her daily life. As he describes,

In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman.³⁵

Heidegger elaborates these terms in his discussion of an ancient Greek temple, built for the pagan god Poseidon, in Paestum. The temple, he claims, "sets forth" the earth and "sets up" a world. Here, Heidegger relates earth to the ancient Greek concept of *physis*, or "arising." Earth thus connotes that out of which and to which beings arise and return. It is helpful to quote Heidegger directly:

Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and all things *physis*. It illuminates also that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*. What the word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises as such. In the things that arise, earth occurs essentially as the sheltering agent.³⁶

Yet earth cannot be properly understood without reference to world. If earth is the “ground” of arising, then world is that which rests on this ground, “gathering” and “shaping” the arising. It is thus what “first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves.”³⁷ In honoring Poseidon, then, the temple “erects” a world whereby all things are given meaning:

It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for the human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people.³⁸

World is thus neither a set of beings nor a “framework” in which those beings exist. The “world worlds,” Heidegger claims, recalling his discussion of “worldhood” in *Being and Time*. As in the latter, world here is described as the “ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being.”³⁹ More simply, world is an “open region,” which is “held open” or “made space for” by the work of art. Earth, then, is that which is set forth, as well as “set back,” by world in artworks. Since the world is an open region, the work “moves the earth itself into the open region of world and keeps it there.”⁴⁰ Yet, in bringing earth into the open region, earth is shown to be what it “essentially” is— “undiscosable” and “self-secluding.” Hence, to “set forth the earth means to bring it into the open region as the self-secluding.”⁴¹ So while the artwork can never expose earth entirely, since earth “shatters every attempt to penetrate it,” it at least shows earth for what it is: “*The work lets the earth be an earth.*”⁴² Indeed, the work of art, in letting earth be, is precisely what makes us realize earth’s self-secluding nature, or that it can never be fully known.

Thus the relationship between earth and world is one of “strife” (*Streit*). In setting forth the earth and setting up a world, Heidegger claims, the work of art “instigates strife.” However, strife is not to be understood as “discord and dispute,” “disorder and destruction,” but rather as a complementary dynamic such that earth and world “raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures” while “[letting] themselves go into the intimacy of simple belonging to one another.”⁴³ Since earth is essentially a “concealing” and world is essentially a “clearing,” their strife consists in the latter’s striving for openness and the former’s tendency to be “closed up.” But without one another, neither could be what it is: “The earth cannot dispense with the open region of the world if it itself is to appear as earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion. The world in turn cannot soar out of the earth’s sight if, as the governing breadth and path of all essentially destiny, it is to ground itself on something decisive.”⁴⁴ Hence strife is the “intimacy with which opponents belong to each other.”⁴⁵

This strife of earth and world, Heidegger claims, is the “essence of truth.” Again, for Heidegger truth is not (only) propositional, that is a matter of making “correct” claims about the world. Instead, according to Heidegger, truth *is* the un-concealing of beings, or the un-concealing of beings *is* truth. This is not so much a displacement of the correspondence theory of truth, as an attempt to go deeper than it. For Heidegger’s point is that without truth in the sense of un-concealment, there can be no truth in the sense of correct propositions:

With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealment of beings had already

exposed us to, placed us in that cleared realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws.⁴⁶

If the work of art, then, in instigating the strife of earth and world, “figures” (*Gestalt*) the interplay of clearing and concealing, it follows that truth happens there: “Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the instigation of the strife in which the unconcealment of beings as a whole, or truth, is won.”⁴⁷

The artwork therefore has a unique relation to truth, for Heidegger. It is a place where truth, in the sense of un-concealment, occurs. This could only be discovered, moreover, by examining the work-being of the work of art. Since the three thing-concepts, especially the hylomorphic theory, captured neither the thingly element nor the workly element of the artwork, it was necessary to explore the latter. This led to the discernment of “two essential features in the work-being of the work”—the setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth. As we now know, this setting up of a world and setting forth of earth figures a strife that embodies truth, inasmuch as in the work of art, the world brings earth into un-concealment, albeit as the essentially self-secluding.

Art and Transformation

It is the happening of truth in the artwork that gives it, additionally, a social role. Of course, Heidegger has in mind here exclusively “great art” (*großen Kunst*): “only such art is under consideration here.”⁴⁸ For only great art, he claims, sets up a world that bestows meaning on a “historical people.” In this way, Heidegger echoes Hegel, according to whom great art has a special place in society. As Kockelmans notes, Heidegger “accepts from Hegel that ‘great art’ is art that has as essential function in the

life of a people.”⁴⁹ This essential function, for Heidegger, is not only to provide a kind of organizing principle for society, but also, as Hubert Dreyfus suggests, to reflect it in a “glamorized exemplar”: “the special function of art is precisely to let each group of historical people see the style of their own culture by showing it in a glamorized exemplar... such a function is an ontological necessity.”⁵⁰ Hence Heidegger also refers to the setting up of a world as a “consecrating-praising erection.”

Whether Heidegger thinks that art still has this place in society, or whether, as Hegel does, he holds that the time for great art has passed, is difficult to tell. On the one hand, that his main example of great art is an *ancient* Greek temple, which has since suffered “world-withdrawal and world-decay,” implies the latter. It is perhaps for this reason that Kockelmans sees Heidegger as conceding Hegel’s thesis of the “death of art”:

Heidegger does not subscribe to Hegel’s conception of the Absolute and the Absolute’s function in Hegel’s “science”. Yet for him, too, “great art” is and remains something past in the sense that according to the spirit of the modern era, art is no longer essential to understand the life of a people. Today we understand Western man from the perspective of science and technology, which as such are totally alien to art.⁵¹

Yet, on the other hand, while Heidegger certainly acknowledges the sway of science and technology here and elsewhere, he also seems, as Walker suggests, to view great art as an “imminent possibility.” His very discussion of the painting by Van Gogh, a *modern* artist, suggests as much; as does his reference to C. F. Meyer, a nineteenth-century Swiss poet.

Of course, the best evidence for maintaining that Heidegger regards art as still relevant lies in the final pages of “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Therein, he argues that art is a “founding in the triple sense of bestowing, grounding, and beginning.”⁵² By

this, Heidegger means that art effects history such that “Whenever art happens—that is, whenever there is a beginning—a thrust enters history; history either begins or starts over again.”⁵³ Having just shown how each historical age (ancient, medieval, and modern) has a (somewhat) different relation to Being, Heidegger seems to be insinuating that art could still commence a new era, one in which beings are no longer interpreted as “objects that [can] be controlled and penetrated by calculation.”⁵⁴ However, it must not be forgotten that Heidegger wrote this text in the mid-1930’s, during which time he was an official member of the Nazi Party. Thus, when he states that “History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entry into that people’s endowment,”⁵⁵ as well as when he closes with a quote from Hölderlin whose work, he asserts, “still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood,”⁵⁶ Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism seems to have had a direct connection with his aesthetics.

3. Adorno’s Critique of the Culture Industry

Although there is some mention in “The Origin of the Work of Art” of the “art industry,” by which Heidegger primarily means the “preservers” of art (i.e., museums, collectors, and connoisseurs), this discussion lasts all of one and a half paragraphs, since for Heidegger the “art business” is not ultimately to blame for the decline of great art. Even though he grants that many such artworks have been “torn out of their own native sphere” by the art industry, Heidegger holds that this generally takes place well after the world of the work of art has already lost its influence. Hence he highlights how for artworks like the ancient Greek temple, which remains firmly entrenched in its native

sphere, world-withdrawal or world-decay runs its course without any intervention by the art business: “when, for instance, we visit the temple in Paestum at its own site or the Bamberg cathedral on its own square—the world of the work that stands there has perished.”⁵⁷ Thus, Heidegger’s usage of the term art industry bears only nominal resemblance to Adorno’s concept of the culture industry, which refers specifically to art in the context of late capitalist society.

While Adorno wrote prolifically on autonomous art, as in his studies of Mozart, Beethoven, Mahler, and Schoenberg, he also composed an equally voluminous body of work on what he variously referred to as “low,” “popular,” “light,” or “mass,” art. Some of his more well-known treatments of the latter, especially to American readers, include his several essays on jazz, namely “On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening” (also a reply to Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”). Of course, none of these is as familiar, or as comprehensive, as the chapter in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* entitled “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” For herein, Adorno along with Horkheimer famously argue that the culture industry, or “entertainment industry” as it is now called, as such is destructive not only of autonomous art, but also of society as a whole.

Hence, Adorno’s appraisal of the culture industry is not simply a reflection of his personal aesthetic taste, which is generally regarded as “elitist” or “mandarin.” Rather, it is just as, even more so, grounded in a sociopolitical standpoint from which the culture industry appears complicit in the domination wrought by late capitalism. In order to fully understand Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s critique of the culture industry, then, it is

important to grasp both its *aesthetic* and *sociopolitical* dimensions. To this end, I will proceed largely according to the position of Lambert Zuidervaart, who holds that Adorno implicates the culture industry for undermining “three types of autonomy”: art’s “societal” autonomy, the “internal” autonomy of the artwork, and “personal” autonomy.⁵⁸

Zuidervaart offers a brief explanation of these distinctions in the following:

the internal and self-critical independence of authentic artworks, the relative independence of (some of) high culture from the political and economic system, and the autonomy of political and moral agents. I shall label these three forms “internal,” “societal,” and “personal” autonomy, respectively.⁵⁹

I will focus first on the societal and internal autonomy of art, and then on personal autonomy, showing how Adorno and Horkheimer view the loss of the former as ultimately detrimental to the latter.

The Culture Industry and Art’s Internal and Societal Autonomy

As will be shown below, the autonomy of art for Adorno refers to both its inner freedom and its (relative) freedom from society. More specifically, societal autonomy denotes art’s independence from the marketplace, while internal autonomy denotes its dialectic of form and content which, in Zuidervaart’s words, simultaneously expresses and challenges the social conditions beyond the artwork.⁶⁰ Upon the rise of the culture industry, or “the monopoly of culture,” however, art lost its societal autonomy, according to Adorno and Horkheimer.⁶¹ In mass producing art for mass consumption, the culture industry turned artworks – both “high” and “low” – into so many “industrial cultural products.” In other words, art became, under the culture industry, primarily a *commodity*,

answerable to the demands of the marketplace as opposed to those of art itself. While Adorno and Horkheimer concede that works of art had always been commodities (Beethoven, he notes, “proved a most experienced and stubborn businessman in disposing of the last quartets”⁶²), they contend that in late capitalist society they do not even pretend to be otherwise: “What is new is not that it is a commodity, but that today it deliberately admits that it is one; that art renounces its own autonomy and proudly takes its place among consumption goods constitutes the charm of novelty.”⁶³

Art’s loss of societal autonomy thus also meant a loss of its internal autonomy. Since the artwork was now first and foremost a commodity, it could no longer be free to follow its own “inherent laws.” Hence Adorno and Horkheimer claim that whereas art was once, in Kant’s terms, “purposive without a purpose,” it is now “[purposeless] for the purposes declared by the market.”⁶⁴ This is, in part, a claim about art produced *within* or *by* the culture industry, more so than art appropriated by it (as when a “Tolstoy novel is garbled in a film script”). For in order to meet the demands of the “deceived masses” and therefore generate profit, artists became or were replaced by “aesthetic experts,” who design so many “ready-made clichés” or “copies” with “assembly-line character.” The result has been, in Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s view, a “constant reproduction of the same thing,” a “universal imposition” of “cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types.” Whatever variation exists, moreover, they see as mere “pseudo individuality,” “from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality.”⁶⁵ Thus, while there appears to be “competition and range of choice,” Adorno and Horkheimer argue that this is only a

“semblance,” behind which lies “constant sameness” and “ruthless unity.” As Espen Hammer notes, Adorno’s “claim about standardization... does allow for a great deal of surface plurality.”⁶⁶

Of course, Adorno and Horkheimer are also interested in the consumption or reception of art under the culture industry. Their discussion of the “shift in the internal structure” of artworks is therefore additionally a commentary on how subjects’ relation to art has changed. Drawing on Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism, Adorno and Horkheimer claim that the “use value” (or aesthetic value) of art has come to be secondary to its “exchange value” (or market value). Instead of enjoying a work of art in itself, then, subjects fetishize its “social rating.” As Adorno and Horkheimer write,

What might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value... One simply “has to” have seen *Mrs. Miniver*, just as one “has to” subscribe to *Life* and *Time*. Everything is looked at from only one aspect: that it can be used for something else, however vague the notion of this use may be. No object has an inherent value; it is valuable only to the extent that it can be exchanged. The use value of art, its mode of being, is treated as a fetish; and the fetish, the work’s social rating (misinterpreted as its artistic status) becomes its use value—the only quality which is enjoyed.⁶⁷

This can happen not just with the art produced by the culture industry, moreover, but also with otherwise autonomous art. As Hammer points out, “In Adorno’s view, the experience of someone attending an opera tends to be no less commodified than that of the consumer of soap-operas on television. Or rather: there is nothing intrinsic to the opera, at least not in its traditional guises, that safeguards it from co-optation by the culture industry.”⁶⁸

The Culture Industry and Personal Autonomy

If the culture industry undermines art's societal autonomy and thereby its internal autonomy, then it follows that it also undermines the autonomy of subjects, or personal autonomy. I have just shown how for Adorno and Horkheimer, in commodifying art the culture industry not only produces (aesthetically) purposeless artworks, but also alters the reception of art such that exchange value displaces use value. Already, then, we can see the negative consequences of the culture industry for subjectivity. Yet, this is not all that Adorno and Horkheimer argue in this connection. In regarding the culture industry as an "iron system" with "absolute power" and "central control," they contend that it both "produces" and "controls" subjects. This is less a proto-Foucauldian claim about the constitution and disciplining of subjectivity (although it can be construed as such), than it is a theory that the culture industry "manufactures" and "manipulates" subjects, particularly their "needs," so as to maximize profit. This, of course, diminishes personal autonomy, not only when it comes to *choice*, but also when it comes to *resistance*.

Because the culture industry is or has a monopoly, in Adorno's and Horkheimer's view, it must constantly fabricate new, "false" needs in order to sustain itself. It does this, in part, by "classifying, organizing, and labeling" subjects or "consumers" such that "something is provided for all so that none may escape."⁶⁹ Thus, "consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided up by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda."⁷⁰ For each group or "type" a different "category of mass product [is] turned out." Adorno and

Horkheimer therefore dismiss the argument that the culture industry simply supplies demand; hence their claim, mentioned above, that it serves the *deceived* masses. Instead, they see demand as created *by* the culture industry, which it then attempts to satisfy. In this way, personal autonomy in the sense of the freedom to choose is always already manipulated or *mediated*, according to Adorno and Horkheimer. Thus it is not just that choice is a semblance, or illusion, or that it is the “freedom to choose what is always the same,” but also that demands, needs, and desires are themselves unfree.

The culture industry reinforces this “circle of manipulation and retroactive need,” furthermore, by offering products that are “fun” and “amusing”; hence Adorno and Horkheimer also call the culture industry the “pleasure industry” or a “bloated pleasure apparatus.” While they do not oppose aesthetic pleasure – as noted, they hold that art is to be enjoyed, not fetishized – Adorno and Horkheimer see the culture industry as providing pleasure that is ultimately repressive, especially of resistance. Thus, in functioning as a “medicinal bath” or “an escape from the mechanized work process,” the culture industry ensures its own continuation as well as that of the societal status quo, by allowing subjects to “recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again.”⁷¹ In other words, “The paradise offered by the culture industry is the same old drudgery. Both escape and elopement are pre-designed to lead back to the starting point. Pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help to forget.”⁷² Since “to be pleased means to say Yes,” more specifically, the culture industry effects the “breaking down of all individual resistance,” thus meeting its ideological objective: “to defend society.”

However, just how little personal autonomy there is under the culture industry for Adorno and Horkheimer is finally unclear. Whereas on the one hand they asserts that subjects can “see through” its products, being “too sharp” to identify with them, on the other hand they claim that subjects are already “defeated,” having come to “insist on the very ideology that enslaves them.” This equivocation can perhaps be explained by Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s tendency to view the culture industry in totalizing terms even as they remained committed to the concept of the autonomous subject. This account is upheld by Hammer, who holds that Adorno “all too often reverts to a rather crude version of manipulation modeled on his perception of fascist political propaganda,” while discerning “cracks and fissures” in the culture industry whereby “there is some room for the exercise of autonomy.”⁷³

4. Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory

In contrast to the products of the culture industry, autonomous art is (more) societally free, which allows it to be internally free, and potentially contributory to personal freedom.⁷⁴ In this section, I will focus primarily on the internal autonomy of the autonomous or “authentic” work of art, particularly as it relates to Adorno’s notions of form and “truth content.” Of course, in doing so, I will also discuss the important role autonomous art might play in promoting personal autonomy and even social transformation, for Adorno. Here again I will take after Zuidervaat, who holds that Adorno’s aesthetic theory synthesizes the “Kantian emphasis on form with Hegel’s emphasis on intellectual import (*geistiger Gehalt*) and Marx’s emphasis on art’s

embeddedness in society as a whole.”⁷⁵ This constellation makes for a philosophy of art as a social “monad” which, in its autonomy, or *semblance* of autonomy, is able to express, critique, and point beyond its social conditions.

Art and Form

Adorno follows Kant in identifying art with formal autonomy, or purposiveness without purpose. As Zuidervaart writes, “Adorno retains from Kant the notion that art proper (“fine art” or “beautiful art” – *schöne Kunst* – in Kant’s vocabulary) is characterized by formal autonomy.”⁷⁶ Thus in *Aesthetic Theory* (*Ästhetische Theorie*), Adorno asserts that “As little as art is to be defined by any other element, it is simply identical with form.”⁷⁷ That form is or should be autonomous, however, was a controversial position for Adorno to take, given his Marxist orientation. Since Marxist aesthetic criticism had traditionally, owing to Lukács, been opposed to formalism, which it saw as *l’art pour l’art*, it tended to favor “committed” art *à la* Brecht’s plays and the later Sartre’s literature. Such works, it was argued, while exercising some formal autonomy (i.e., Brecht’s “alienation effect”), were clearly engaged in society. By contrast, the modernist art that Adorno endorsed – Schoenberg’s atonal music, Kafka’s fantastic novels, Beckett’s absurdist plays – were far removed from, and thus seemed unconcerned with, class struggle. Hence Brecht’s caricatures of Adorno as politically detached.

Yet Adorno was not a formalist in the conventional sense. As Lydia Goehr points out, Adorno’s formalism was “critical” or “dialectical,” as opposed to “traditional.”

Thus, she contends that formal autonomy for Adorno “is not a naïve assertion of aesthetic or artistic freedom. On the contrary, resistant works at most show that there exist oppositional elements (spaces, fractures, or gaps) within administered society that might give listeners the opportunity to tear the ideological web.”⁷⁸ To charge Adorno with traditional formalism, then, is to misunderstand that for him (formally or internally) autonomous artworks can be *more* critical than committed or “didactic” artworks. This is the case because, as Goehr indicates, Adorno sees certain forms as exposing society more clearly. In his essay on Beckett’s *Endgame*, for example, Adorno claims that precisely by abandoning the conventional dramatic form – plot, character development, etc. – in favor of something decidedly more dissonant, *Endgame* is most reflective, and therefore most critical, of late capitalist, post-Auschwitz society. As Brian O’Connor explains,

Endgame, Adorno proposes, is a play about meaninglessness. However, it cannot name meaninglessness, as such. Nor, importantly, does the play itself fall into meaninglessness in the sense that it says nothing at all. We understand *Endgame*, he claims, when we recognize its incomprehensibility without making that incomprehensibility equivalent to meaninglessness. But what, we might ask, is socially revealing about incomprehensibility? Adorno connects the process of understanding *Endgame* – that it is unintelligible though formally coherent – with the idea that bourgeois society resists intelligibility.⁷⁹

Art and “Truth Content”

Adorno posits a direct relationship between formal autonomy and truth content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*), not to be confused with content (*Inhalt*), such that the greater the former, the greater the latter. In *Aesthetic Theory* he writes, “thoroughly formed artworks that are criticized as formalistic are the most realistic works insofar as they are realized in

themselves and solely by means of this realization achieve their truth content, which is spiritual in them, rather than signifying content.”⁸⁰ Thus by truth content Adorno means neither the subjective idea of the artist, nor some objective idea that the artwork supposedly exemplifies such as “the tragic or the conflict of the finite and the infinite.”⁸¹ Rather, truth content refers to the “breath” that surrounds the work of art which, as Hammer elucidates, tells the truth about *society*: “What Adorno calls the spiritual dimension of the work of art is its capacity to negate empirical reality. It negates it not by leaving it behind, but by allowing empirical reality to appear as unreconciled and scarred—that is, *as what empirical reality really is*.”⁸² Hence Hammer notes how the late Schubert’s works, for example, “pronounce truth directly and non-discursively,” insofar as “the coldness of their autonomously chosen principles” (form) expresses the violence of the “universal” (society).

Adorno’s notion of truth content therefore involves a unique conception of truth. As Zuidervaart states, in order to understand the idea of truth content, “one must temporarily suspend standard theories about the nature of truth (whether as correspondence, coherence, or pragmatic success), and allow for artistic truth to be dialectical, disclosive, and nonpropositional.”⁸³ Zuidervaart continues thus:

Such truth content is not a metaphysical idea or essence hovering outside the artwork. But neither is it a merely human construct. It is historical but not arbitrary; non propositional, yet calling for propositional claims to be made about it; utopian in its reach, yet firmly tied to specific societal conditions.⁸⁴

Hence Adorno’s concept of truth content contains Hegel’s notion of import (*Gehalt*), by which the artwork is seen as the incarnation of spirit (“the truth” for Hegel) in matter or

nature, but coupled with the Marxist insight that works of art bear the truth of society's material no less than its intellectual dimension. Adorno's "monadological" theory of art demonstrates this standpoint, insofar as it interprets artworks as social monads which, while "closed to one another, blind," and hermetic, "represent what is external."⁸⁵

Art and Transformation

Even more essential to the Marxist aspect of Adorno's aesthetics is the view of art as possibly transformative of social conditions. We have already seen how, through its formal autonomy and truth content, the artwork negates or critiques society; that is, by showing it as it truly is. Thus, as the "social antithesis of society,"⁸⁶ or the "negative sublime" in Hammer's words, art can perhaps, like critical theory and resistant subjectivity, effect social transformation. This is so, more specifically, because in negating society, art necessarily makes *une promesse du bonheur*. The happiness promised is not the "childish" kind offered by the culture industry, however, but that of "illusionless actuality." Adorno explains in the following passage:

Art that forswears the happy brilliance that reality withholds from men and women and thus refuses every sensual trace of meaning, is spiritualized art; it is, in its unrelenting renunciation of childish happiness, the allegory of the illusionless actuality of happiness while bearing the fatal proviso of the chimerical: that this happiness does not exist.⁸⁷

In other words, art is the "negative appearance of utopia."⁸⁸

Hence art is a semblance (*Schein*) for Adorno, though not in the deceptive sense discussed above in connection with the culture industry. Rather, as Zuidervaat asserts, it is a "necessary illusion, a societally unavoidable and instructive semblance."⁸⁹ The

necessity of art for Adorno is similar to the necessity of religion for Marx, who viewed religion as the “heart of a heartless world, the spirit of spiritless conditions.” In this way, art points beyond semblance, or “has truth as the semblance of the illusionless,” according to Adorno.⁹⁰ The illusionless would be utopia, a society of true/real happiness, autonomy, etc. Thus the autonomy of the artwork, itself a semblance, since the artwork’s very existence depends on the unfree division of labor, signals the possibility of real autonomy for society. The hope, then, is for society to take after the autonomous work of art as much as the latter takes after the former. As Adorno writes, “Ultimately, the doctrine of imitation should be reversed; in a sublimated sense, reality should imitate the artworks. However, the fact that artworks exist signals the possibility of the nonexistent. The reality of artworks testifies to the possibility of the possible.”⁹¹

5. Conclusion: Ontology v. Critical Theory, Nazism v. Marxism

In outlining both the negative and positive dimensions of their aesthetic theories, I have shown several affinities between Heidegger and Adorno. In terms of their negative tasks, we saw how each seeks to protect art from certain aspects of late modernity; an equipmental ontology that conceals artwork’s thing-being and work-being for Heidegger, and a culture industry that turns artworks into amusing commodities for Adorno. As for their positive projects, we found that both valorize great art and autonomous art, and further that they view such art as a source of (disclosive) truth as well as of (social) transformation. Hence Heidegger claims that the work of art has or is truth insofar as it un-conceals beings, and thus figures the strife of earth and world, a

strife that could begin a new relation to Being. And hence Adorno argues that the work of art contains a truth content that exhibits society as it really is, thus negating it and gesturing towards utopia. Of course, there are other affinities that I did not address, such as each figure's focus on the artwork itself, as opposed to its creation and/or reception by subjects. In this way, both Heidegger and Adorno turn away from subjectivist aesthetics dominant from Kant to Nietzsche.

Yet, whatever similarities exist between Heidegger and Adorno in connection with art are, in the final analysis, only *formal* ones. For in examining the content of their aesthetic theories we learned, as we did in the case of their positions on the self, that each thinker's deeper commitments preclude any full agreement. Since for Heidegger ontology is foremost, his aesthetics center on the *being* of artworks, as well as artworks' relation to Being. Thus the negative part of his aesthetics warns against seeing the being of the artwork as formed matter, as this thing-concept belongs to equipment, while the positive part corrects this view by (re)interpreting artworks as primarily *works*, which figure the strife of un-concealing concealed Being. By contrast, because society is most fundamental for Adorno, his aesthetic theory focuses on art's social "mediatedness," in addition to its potential for social transfiguration. Hence the negative side of Adorno's aesthetic theory attends to the loss of autonomy of art (societal, internal, and personal) under the culture industry, while the positive side looks to art that remains (somewhat) autonomous for a critique of society, and thus the semblance of utopia.

However, to explain the differences between Heidegger's and Adorno's theories of art simply in terms of the ontology/critical theory distinction is not sufficient. The

main problem with this is that, unlike his view of the self, which appears to be apolitical, Heidegger's aesthetics, as given in "The Origin of the Work of Art," has a sociopolitical component. This is partly because Heidegger, following Hegel, regards great art as providing meaning to society as a whole, a role that he sees, unlike Hegel, as "at least as an imminent possibility of the present."⁹² Hence as mentioned above, in the closing pages of "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger seems to be hoping for a great artwork to come along that would initiate a new relation to Being. An echo of this can be heard in his later essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," in which he invokes art, because of its "poetic revealing," as the antidote (or "saving power," in Hölderlin's words) to the "challenging revealing" of modern technology.

But unlike the technology essay, composed in the late 1940's, early 1950's, "The Origin of the Work of Art" was written in the mid-1930's, when Heidegger was an official member of the Nazi Party. For this reason, his allusions to "a people's... appointed task," and more significantly his calling upon "the Germans" directly in the final line, must be regarded with suspicion. While some claim that by 1935 Heidegger's Nazism had subsided, as he had resigned from the Nazi-appointed rectorship at the University of Freiburg in May of 1934, others hold that it persisted into "The Origin of the Work of Art" and beyond. Emmanuel Faye, who takes the latter position, argues that "the German people are explicitly at issue" in "The Origin of the Work of Art," and even that Heidegger's reference to the ancient Greek temple was far from innocent. As Faye points out, two months prior to Heidegger's first public presentation of "The Origin of the Work of Art" (on November 13, 1935), the congress of the National Socialist Party

convened in Nuremberg, where an atmosphere inspired by the ancient Greek Pergamon Altar had been recreated for Hitler's speech. To refer to an ancient Greek temple in his lecture, then, was "the way chosen by Heidegger to celebrate the congress of Nuremberg of September 1935," the very congress that enacted the "law for the protection of German blood and honor."⁹³

Needless to say, if Faye is correct, and his case is compelling, then the transformative role that Heidegger gives to art in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is diametrically opposed to the utopian capacity discerned in art by Adorno. For Adorno's sociopolitical standpoint is inextricably bound up with the Enlightenment values of freedom and equality, specifically those of Marxist humanism, ideals which Nazism rejected in both theory and practice. Of course, even if by transformation Heidegger meant something more ontological, that is a new, less controlling relationship between humans and Being, his vision would still be at odds with that of Adorno. For again, Adorno's hope is for a particular *society*, namely one in which the values promised by the Enlightenment are realized.

Romantic Coda

Thus, the affinities between Heidegger's and Adorno's aesthetic theories posited in this chapter hold only at the level of form or spirit. This spirit, as I suggested in the introduction, is decidedly quasi-Romantic or neo-Romantic. That Heidegger and Adorno each sought to defend art from late modernity, exalting it as a source of truth and transformation, recalls the Romantic concern about the fate of art in early modernity, as

well as its belief that art was the solution to the problems caused by modernity. Indeed, the transformative potential of art acknowledged by both Heidegger and Adorno resembles the Romantic hope that art could overcome alienation in modern society.

Romantic Aesthetics

In noting the aesthetic dimension of Romanticism's ideal of *Bildung* – that is, that self-realization involves making oneself, like the work of art, a harmonious, autonomous whole – the importance of art for the Romantics has already been implied. For it is by striving to be like the beautiful work of art, the Romantics proposed, that holistic and individualistic *Bildung* can be achieved, and thus the first form of alienation (the division within the self) can be overcome. It remains to be explained, however, what art meant more specifically for the Romantics as well as how it would address the second and even the third forms of alienation (the division between self and others and the division between the self and nature, respectively).

It is well-known that whereas the Enlightenment prioritized reason, Romanticism privileged art. Hence F. Schlegel's "romantic imperative" (*der romantische Imperativ*), which commanded aestheticization of all things (the self, social relations, the state, nature, etc.). Less well-known, however, are the reasons for this exaltation of art, or what Schiller called "aesthetic education." These have to do less with Romanticism's philosophical differences with the Enlightenment than with its disillusionment with the Enlightenment's political events; namely the French Revolution, which had infamously given way to the Reign of Terror. For in diagnosing the problem of the French

Revolution, the Romantics concluded that the Enlightenment had rightly elucidated the *rationality* of it, but failed to prepare the *sensibility* for it; hence, once the revolution had ended, its ideals were quickly undermined by discordant desires and passions. As Beiser writes, for Schiller and the Romantics,

The lesson to be learned from the failure of the Enlightenment and the chaos of the revolution, Schiller argued, is that it is not sufficient to educate the understanding alone. It is also necessary to cultivate feelings and desires, to develop a person's sensibility so that he or she are *inclined* to act according to the principles of reason. In other words, it was also essential *to inspire* the people, to touch their hearts and to arouse their imaginations, to get them to live by higher ideals.⁹⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapter, part of Romanticism's faith in *Bildung* was that it would bridge the divide between reason and sensibility, making for a more ethical self—one that *wanted* to do his/her duty. Thus there were sociopolitical implications of *Bildung* as well, since insofar as each individual struck a balance between reason and sensibility, so would there emerge a kind of collective harmony, or *Bildungsanstalt*. Indeed, this is what was envisioned by Schiller in his model of an "aesthetic state" (*ästhetischen Staat*), which the early Romantics reaffirmed as in the case of Novalis' "poetic state."⁹⁵

That the Romantics chose art as the means to this end, as opposed to philosophy, of course, is what makes this vision all the more unique. Dissatisfied by what they considered to be the shortcomings of the Enlightenment – again, that it fostered reason at the expense of sensibility – the Romantics regarded philosophy as commensurate with the Enlightenment, and thus something of which to be skeptical. Yet, for all of their nostalgia for the medieval era, the Romantics did not thereby attempt to resurrect

religion. Rather, they accepted the critique of religion (as superstition, myth) leveled by the Enlightenment, while simultaneously seeking to restore the passion religion inspired. The result was a turn to art, which appeared to promise the best of both worlds, as it were. Beiser explains this position in the following:

Art became so important for Schiller and the romantics because they saw it as the only means to resolve this crisis. They argued that while philosophy cannot stimulate action nor religion convince reason, art has the power to inspire us to act according to reason. Because it appeals so strongly to the imagination, and because it so deeply effects our feelings, art can move people to live by the high moral ideals of a republic.⁹⁶

Lest this seem hopelessly idealistic, it is important to clarify that what is meant here is not that reading literature and/or listening to music morally improves the reader and/or listener, but that, once more, in aspiring to become like a beautiful work of art himself/herself, the individual harmonizes his reason and sensibility, which is precisely what ethical and political life require.

But what is art more precisely according to the Romantics? The conventional wisdom holds that art was synonymous with *expression* for the Romantics, and that furthermore, expression designates something *subjective* and *emotional*. Counter to the mimetic theory of art, which defines art as *imitation*, and specifically imitation of *objective* reality, the Romantic conception of art is thus typically seen as marking a radical break from traditional aesthetics, dominant since ancient Greece. While there is doubtlessly truth to this position, the Romantic idea of art was in actuality, as Beiser argues, a “*synthesis* of the doctrines of imitation and expression.”⁹⁷ In defending this thesis, Beiser points out that the standard interpretation of Romantic aesthetics stems from relating the equation of art and expression to Kant’s “Copernican revolution,”

which replaced the theory of truth *qua* correspondence with the theory of truth *qua* construction. On this reading, the Romantic artist simply does, albeit consciously, what the Kantian subject does as a matter of course; that is, construct truth/reality. The problem with this view, however, is that in fixating on the *epistemological* origins of Romantic aesthetics, its no less crucial *metaphysical* sources are eclipsed. For unlike Kant, for whom the Absolute was necessarily inaccessible, the Romantics believed not only that the absolute could be experienced, but also that art in particular facilitated such encounters.

Beiser argues that by “the absolute” the Romantics did not mean anything otherworldly, but rather the natural world as such. Hence he claims that “in the end, romantic aesthetics was little more than the capstone of its *Naturphilosophie*.”⁹⁸ Of course, *Naturphilosophie*, and more precisely the “organic theory of nature,” at this time was a far-reaching worldview, as it aspired to account for nature as a whole or, as we might put it today, the universe. Indeed, it is this tendency to see nature as a whole or an organism that informs the central tenets of Romantic aesthetics. In addition to the general stance that “the creativity of the artist is nothing less than the *self*-realization and *self*-manifestation of the powers in nature; in other words, what the artist creates is what all of nature creates through him,”⁹⁹ Beiser underscores three supporting claims: 1) since nature as a whole is comprised of parts, each of which reflects the whole, it follows that the artist’s work, also a part of nature, reflects nature as a whole (or as Novalis contends, the work of art is a “microcosm” of the cosmos); 2) as human activity is the “highest” expression of nature, it stands to reason that the artist’s creativity is the “climax of all the

powers inherent in nature itself;”¹⁰⁰ 3) insofar as the artist’s activity forms matter, or actualizes its potential, it will “embody, express, and develop all the natural forces acting upon it.”¹⁰¹ Thus, it is not that the Romantic artist expresses his/her subjective feelings, but rather that s/he expresses nature itself or “co-produces” with it; which is to say, in *expressing* nature, Romantic art also *imitates* it.

From Romanticism to Heidegger and Adorno

There are important distinctions to be made between the Romantic conception of art on the one hand, and Heidegger’s and Adorno’s respective theories of art on the other hand. The major difference is that the Romantics’ expressivist view of art, both its subjective and objective sides, were suspect to Heidegger and Adorno. The former because Heidegger and Adorno each attempt to theorize the artwork without reference to the artist or the viewer/listener. For Heidegger, the origin of the work of art is not the artist but art itself, in the sense of *poiēsis*, or “bringing-forth.” For Adorno, as noted above, artworks are irreducible to the artist’s subjective intentions. Heidegger and Adorno also reject the objective side of Romantic aesthetics, rooted as it is in a metaphysics of (subject/object) identity. While opposed to subject/object dualism, Heidegger saw the very concepts of “subject” and “object” as owing to a misunderstanding of Being. According to his theory of “negative dialectics,” Adorno explicitly endorses a philosophy of *non*-identity between subject and object.

Still, there is continuity among the Romantics, Heidegger, and Adorno to the extent that all affirm art, if for different reasons. Hence Heidegger’s elevation of great art

and, to quote Walker's claim again, Adorno's "'idealist' and anachronistic over-valuation of art and the aesthetic"¹⁰² each in their own way approximate the Romantics' valorization of art. Yet, as in the case of their views of the self, both Heidegger and Adorno are much less sanguine than the Romantics about the actual prospects for art. Whereas the Romantics thought that art would heal the divisions within the self, between the self and others, and between humans and nature, Heidegger and Adorno strain to give it even one of these roles. The reason for this, as suggested in the first chapter, is that in the context of late modernity, Heidegger and Adorno simply could not be so optimistic. Thus, for Heidegger the possibility of great art is increasingly endangered by a reductive ontology, while for Adorno the promise of autonomous art is threatened by an ever-expanding culture industry.

Notes

- ¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993)/Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in *Gesamtausgabe*, (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klosterman, 1977), Band 5.
- ² Nicholas Walker, "Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 101.
- ³ Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Boston: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 78.
- ⁴ Walker, Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 102.
- ⁵ Walker, Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 93-94.
- ⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 128/Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 7, 194.
- ⁷ Walker, Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 97-98.
- ⁸ Walker, Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 98.
- ⁹ Walker, Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 102.
- ¹⁰ Krzysztof Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 106.
- ¹¹ Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," 109.
- ¹² Quoted by Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," 111.
- ¹³ Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," 114.
- ¹⁴ Ziarek, "Beyond Critique? Art and Power," 113.
- ¹⁵ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 150/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 9.
- ¹⁶ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 151/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 10.
- ¹⁷ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 152/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 11.
- ¹⁸ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 151/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 10.
- ¹⁹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 152/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 10-11.
- ²⁰ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 152/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 11.
- ²¹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 153; Heidegger's italics/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 12.
- ²² Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 154/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 13.
- ²³ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 154/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 13.
- ²⁴ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 154; italics mine/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 13.
- ²⁵ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 155/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 14.
- ²⁶ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 155/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 15.
- ²⁵ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 156/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 16.
- ²⁸ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 163/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 23.
- ²⁹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 164/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 24.
- ³⁰ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 165/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 25.
- ³¹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 162/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 21-22.
- ³² Plato, "The Republic," trans. Paul Shorey, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 828/603b.
- ³³ Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Ontology of Art," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 411.
- ³⁴ Heidegger assumes that the shoes belong to a "peasant woman," however it is now known that Van Gogh was simply painting his own shoes. Some commentators take the position that Heidegger's mistake here is of little consequence; that regardless of whose shoes they were, Heidegger's analysis is insightful. While this standpoint is fair, it also has problems, since Heidegger's (mis)interpretation undercuts his claim that he does not "project" anything into the painting: "It would be the worst self-deception to think that our description, as a subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into the painting" (Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 161). But is this not, given that the shoes were really Van Gogh's, precisely what he does? And if so, how does this compromise his broader claims about letting

beings show themselves as they are? For some discussion of this matter, see Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*.

³⁵ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 159-160/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 19.

³⁶ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 168/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 28.

³⁷ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 168/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 29.

³⁸ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 167/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 27-28.

³⁹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 170/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 30-31.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 172/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 32.

⁴¹ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 173/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 33.

⁴² Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 172; Heidegger's italics/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 32.

⁴³ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 174/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 35.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 174/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 35-36.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 188/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 51.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 177/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 39.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 180/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 42.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 166/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 26.

⁴⁹ Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works*, 140.

⁵⁰ Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Ontology of Art," 413.

⁵¹ Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works*, 141.

⁵² Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 202/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 65.

⁵³ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 201/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 65.

⁵⁴ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 201/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 65.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 202/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 65.

⁵⁶ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 203/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 66.

⁵⁷ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 166/Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 26.

⁵⁸ Lambert Zuidervaart, *Social Philosophy After Adorno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 137.

⁵⁹ Zuidervaart, *Social Philosophy After Adorno*, 137.

⁶⁰ Zuidervaart, *Social Philosophy After Adorno*, 138.

⁶¹ Espen Hammer argues that for Adorno, the culture industry in particular, and late capitalism in general, begins towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the last three decades or so.

⁶² Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 157/Max Horkheimer und Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 3, 181.

⁶³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 157/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 180.

⁶⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 158/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 181.

⁶⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 154/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 177.

⁶⁶ Espen Hammer, *Adorno and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 76.

⁶⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 158/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 181.

⁶⁸ Hammer, *Adorno and the Political*, 76.

⁶⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 123/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 144.

⁷⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 123/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 144.

⁷¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 137/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 158.

⁷² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 142/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 164.

- ⁷³ Hammer, *Adorno and the Political*, 81-82.
- ⁷⁴ The question of course arises, given Adorno's view of the culture industry, whether autonomous art is any longer possible. For if the culture industry is indeed a monopoly, then societal autonomy does not exist, which means internal autonomy cannot exist, which in turn threatens personal autonomy. While this is an important problem, we will largely sidestep it, assuming that Adorno's claims about modernist music and literature suggest that he held out hope, however minimal, for the autonomy of art in late capitalist society.
- ⁷⁵ Zuidervaat, *Social Philosophy After Adorno*, 192.
- ⁷⁶ Zuidervaat, *Social Philosophy After Adorno*, 192.
- ⁷⁷ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 140/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 211.
- ⁷⁸ Lydia Goehr, "Dissonant Works and the Listening Public," in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241.
- ⁷⁹ Brian O'Connor, *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 320.
- ⁸⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 129/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 196.
- ⁸¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 128/ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 194.
- ⁸² Hammer, *Adorno and the Political*, 136; Hammer's italics.
- ⁸³ Zuidervaat, *Social Philosophy After Adorno*, 194.
- ⁸⁴ Zuidervaat, *Social Philosophy After Adorno*, 195.
- ⁸⁵ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 179/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 268.
- ⁸⁶ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 8/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 19.
- ⁸⁷ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 130/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 197.
- ⁸⁸ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 130/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 196.
- ⁸⁹ Lambert Zuidervaat, "Introduction," in *Semblance and Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaat (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 9.
- ⁹⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 132/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 199.
- ⁹¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 132/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 199-200.
- ⁹² Walker, "Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 102.
- ⁹³ Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism Into Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 239.
- ⁹⁴ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 94.
- ⁹⁵ What this political system would look like, in particular, is unfortunately something that cannot be explored here. It will be sufficient to note that in aiming to reconcile the democratic ideal of the French Revolution with the political status quo in Germany at the time (monarchy), the Romantics rallied for a "mixed constitution, a synthesis of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy" (Beiser).
- ⁹⁶ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 95.
- ⁹⁷ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 75-76.
- ⁹⁸ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 87.
- ⁹⁹ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 86.
- ¹⁰⁰ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 86.
- ¹⁰¹ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 86.
- ¹⁰² Walker, "Adorno and Heidegger on the Question of Art: Countering Hegel?" 98.

III.

Nature: Enframing and Exploitation

“Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry.” – Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*

“The earth radiates disaster triumphant... nature is broken.” – Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Nature as a whole is increasingly endangered today. It used to be that we worried about endangered species, whether of the animal or plant variety. Now, however, each part of nature including ourselves is in question. Thus, at every level there is a crisis. When it comes to the air, there is global warming and/or climate change, due to the use of fossil fuels like oil, gas, and coal, to generate energy. When it comes to the soil, there is erosion/contamination, due to the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture. When it comes to the water, there is pollution, due to spills and dumps by fossil fuel and chemical companies. When it comes to the flora and fauna, there is deforestation and a general loss of biodiversity, due to the demands for food and shelter by an exponentially growing, and consumptive, human population. These problems are mutually reinforcing, moreover. For example, the agricultural practice of spraying synthetic pesticides on plants contaminates not only the surrounding soil, but also the supporting ground water, thus additionally posing a threat to the ecosystems of nearby streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans, as well as to drinking water supplies for humans. Hence the health and even survival of the human species itself also hangs in the balance. For in doing so much harm to nature, we put ourselves, who are wholly dependent on nature, in harm's way.

How did we get to this point? There are competing answers to this question. Among the most compelling are those that have drawn on the thought of both Heidegger and Adorno. Thus one explanation, offered by “deep ecologists,” some of whom claim Heidegger as an influence, is that our ecological problems can be traced back to a particular (mis)relation to nature, rooted primarily in “anthropocentrism,” or human-centrism, and its attendant subject/object dualism, whereby the human and non-human are seen as (categorically) different and independent. In this way, deep ecology shares the ontological perspective of Heidegger, according to which our (mis)understanding of Being is fundamental. Another account, proposed by “social ecologists,” for whom Adorno is important, is that our ecological crises have to do not so much with our *ideas* about nature as our *actual interaction* with it, which in our time is largely in service of (economic) “development,” “growth,” or “progress.” Hence social ecology takes the materialist position of Adorno insofar as it regards society, especially its economic dimension, as foundational.

That deep ecologists and social ecologists, along with “ecofeminists,” have looked to Heidegger and Adorno for theories about our maltreatment of nature is not surprising. Particularly in his later writings, Heidegger challenged modernity’s “calculative” view of nature as “standing reserve” for human use. Hence in *Discourse on Thinking* (1959) he questions how nature “now appears as an object open to the attacks of calculative thought,” which is to say “a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry.”¹ Similarly, throughout his works Adorno critiqued the “instrumental” or “identitarian” concept of nature, both “internal” (in the Freudian sense

of human nature) and “external” (in the conventional sense of non-human nature), which sees nature as the absolute Other. Thus in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, for instance, Adorno argues that Enlightenment reason has come to “dominate” nature such that “the earth radiates disaster triumphant” or “nature is broken.”

Also of help to contemporary ecological theory are Heidegger’s and Adorno’s respective solutions to our calculative and instrumental relations to nature, which in Chapter I, following Habermas, we discussed in relation to their prescriptions for subjectivity. Yet here too Heidegger’s call for the not-forgetting of Being and Adorno’s appeal for the remembrance of nature not only have something in common, but also suggest new ways of thinking about and acting towards nature. For Heidegger, not-forgetting Being would entail, beyond simple remembrance or awareness, an ethic of “releasement,” or “letting be.” This ethic is perhaps best implied by Heidegger’s claim, in “Letter on Humanism,” that “Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being.”² For Adorno, the remembrance of nature, in terms of external or “first” nature, would mean a more “mimetic” or open approach to nature, which might re-enchant its “disenchantment.” This would require the loss of self discussed in the first chapter, only in this context specifically a loss of self in the non-identical Other *qua* nature.

Thus it is evident that Heidegger and Adorno both have much to offer ecology, and therefore can be said to approximate each other, as they do in the cases of the self and art, when it comes to the topic of nature. What follows will continue to explore this affinity, the third and final, between Heidegger’s theory of the calculative view, or “enframing,” of nature, and Adorno’s concept of the domination, or “exploitation,” of

nature by “instrumental reason.” However, unlike the previous chapters, which dealt exclusively with Heidegger and Adorno, this one will go beyond them in examining the appropriations of their theories by deep ecology and social ecology, respectively. Hence the structure of the foregoing is different insofar as I will first outline Heidegger’s idea of enframing, as presented in “The Question Concerning Technology,” and next discuss deep ecology’s linkages to Heidegger, before turning to a summation of Adorno’s concept of the domination of nature, as given in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and finally to a look at social ecology’s connections to Adorno. This discussion is also unique in that it lacks a section on the Heidegger-Adorno scholarship, since as of now there is none on the issue of nature.³ Of course, this chapter does resemble the first two inasmuch as it advances a similar thesis; that is, that while Heidegger and Adorno appear to have similar concerns for the status of nature in late modernity, as they do for the self and art, these concerns stem from irreconcilable perspectives.

1. Heidegger’s Destruction of the Enframing of Nature

Around the same time that he formulated the notion of calculative thinking, which he introduced in 1955, Heidegger was also working on the related idea of enframing. Initially outlined in one of four lectures given in late 1949 under the general heading, “Insight into What Is” (the particular talks bore their own titles: “The Thing,” “The Enframing,” “The Danger,” and “The Turning”), Heidegger overhauled the second part, in 1953, and renamed it “The Question Concerning Technology” (*Die Frage nach der Technik*). This essay, which seems to have incorporated all four of the topics engaged in

the 1949 lectures, deals with the impact of modern technology, conceived of as enframing, on Being in general and nature in particular.⁴

Being and Nature

Being and nature are not synonymous for Heidegger, as Being encompasses all beings, whether natural or unnatural (i.e., human-made objects, psychological states), since every being has Being. Thus the basic difference between Being on the one hand, and nature on the other hand is that the former refers to the very “is-ness” (*to onta* in ancient Greek, *entia* in Latin) of beings, while the latter designates a particular realm of beings (e.g., plants, animals, mountain ranges, clouds, etc.) which, while having Being, are not Being itself. Hence today the natural sciences focus on certain kinds of beings – astronomy on celestial beings (e.g., stars, planets, black holes, etc.), chemistry on chemical beings (e.g., oxygen, helium, nitrogen, etc.) – without attending to the question of the Being of these beings.

Yet, Heidegger holds that Being and nature have not always been regarded as separate. In ancient Greek thought, he points out, the term for nature, *physis*, had a special relation to the then-prevailing understanding of Being. Indeed, Heidegger argues that it was this understanding of Being, as “arising,” that informed the ancient Greek view of nature. As he writes in *An Introduction to Metaphysics (Einführung in die Metaphysik, 1953)*, “The Greeks did not learn what *physis* is through natural phenomena, but the other way around: it was through a fundamental poetic and intellectual experience of being that they discovered what they had to call *physis*.”⁵ Thus the ancient Greek

experience of Being as *physis*, which he also denotes as “self-blossoming emergence,” “opening up,” “unfolding,” and “the power to emerge and endure,” applied not just to nature, but also to “human history, as a work of men and the gods,” as well as to “the gods themselves as subordinated to destiny.” “*Physis* is being itself,” Heidegger states, “by virtue of which [beings] become and remain observable.”⁶

However, at a certain point, namely the translation of ancient Greek into Latin, *physis* came to be associated exclusively with nature, as in the modern term “physics,” which is taken to be a *natural* science. The result of this “narrowing of *physis* in the direction of ‘physics’,”⁷ according to Heidegger, has been a “deformation” of the ancient Greek understanding of both Being and nature. In the former’s case, Being is no longer thought of as *physis*, if it is thought of at all, but instead as “inert duration.” In the latter’s case, the original meaning of *physis* as arising has been replaced by the conception of nature as “physical” or “material.” Thus the “nature” that physicists study is that of *physical* particles— atoms, electrons, quarks, etc. Yet as Heidegger asserts, while “We oppose the psychic, the animated, the living, to the ‘physical’... for the Greeks all this belonged to *physis*...”⁸

Physis and Poiēsis

In “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger seeks to reconnect our contemporary view of nature with the ancient Greek idea of *physis*. As he defines it here, *physis* refers to “the arising of something from out of itself.”⁹ To elaborate this definition, he invokes the related ancient Greek concept of *poiēsis*. *Poiēsis*, Heidegger

notes, simply means “bringing-forth.” Because there are several kinds of bringing-forth, he distinguishes the bringing-forth of *technē*, or artistic creation, from the bringing-forth of *physis*, the “bursting open” of nature. Since the former bringing-forth requires “another” (the artist), while the latter brings-forth “in itself,” Heidegger claims that *physis*, not *technē*, is “*poiesis* in the highest sense.” He clarifies this distinction in the following passage, wherein he echoes Aristotle’s contrast of natural beings, which have an “internal principle of change,” with artifacts, which have an “external principle of change”:

Physis is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoi*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth not in itself, but in another (*en alloi*), in the craftsman or artist.¹⁰

Enframing

The “essence” of modern technology, Heidegger proposes, is “nothing technological.” It is neither a means to an end as the “instrumental” view of technology suggests, nor a human activity as the “anthropological” view suggests. Nor is it a set of “machine-powered” entities that developed as a consequence of modern physical science. Rather, the essence of modern technology, according to Heidegger, is a certain way of bringing-forth, or “revealing” (*das Entbergen*): “technology is a mode of revealing.”¹¹ The mode of revealing central to modern technology, Heidegger calls enframing (*Ge-stell*). Enframing is not the same revealing, however, as *physis*. Rather, enframing is a “challenging” (*Herausfordern*) revealing, a revealing that “sets upon” (*stellen*) while

“presenting” (*Dar-stellen*). And what it sets upon, or “orders,” is precisely nature. The fundamental way that enframing reveals, or “challenges-forth” nature is as “standing-reserve” (*Bestand*). Hence Heidegger writes, “Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.”¹²

In enframing nature as standing-reserve, modern technology challenges/reveals nature as always on “stand by.” “Everywhere,” Heidegger contends, “everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.”¹³ He gives several examples of this such as a factory, for which coal and in turn the sun are “on call,” a hydroelectric plant, for which a river becomes a “water power supplier,” and the lumber and media industries, for which the forests are “available on demand.” Thus standing-reserve, Heidegger claims, is not to be conflated with mere “stock.” For there is a fundamental difference between, he argues in another example, the stockpiling of a farmer who “does not challenge the soil of the field,” but “places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase,” and the standing-reserves of the “mechanized food industry.”¹⁴ Indeed, we can observe this today in our own industrial food system, which sees in nature so many standing-reserves of (especially) corn, which it “processes” into cereals, condiments, and sodas, as well as “livestock,” which “supply” fast food chains, restaurants, and supermarkets.

The Origin and Fate of Enframing

Heidegger holds, counter-intuitively, that modern technology *qua* enframing preceded – “historically,” not “chronologically” – modern technology understood in the conventional sense (as a set of human-made things possible only through modern science): “Chronologically speaking, modern physical science begins in the seventeenth century. In contrast, machine-power technology develops only in the second half of the eighteenth century. But modern technology, which for chronological reckoning is the later, is, from the point of view of the essence holding sway within it, the historically earlier.”¹⁵ This leads to the question, if enframing came before machine-power technology and even modern physical science, then why or how did enframing come about? Heidegger’s answer to this question is also counter-intuitive, inasmuch as he locates enframing’s origin outside of “human doing” and “human willing.” Enframing, the challenging revealing of nature as standing-reserve, Heidegger claims, does not “happen exclusively *in* man, or decisively *through* man.”¹⁶ Rather, it is a “destining” (*Geschick*) that “holds complete sway over man.”¹⁷

Yet, if enframing occurs beyond human “freedom,” then what can be done – by humans – about it? While Heidegger regards enframing as the “supreme danger” and a “threat to man,” he holds that there can be no “mastering” it, as “Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it.”¹⁸ The implication here is that humanity must simply wait for a new, and hopefully better, “destining of revealing.” However, citing Hölderlin’s couplet “But where danger is, grows/The saving power also” (also quoted by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of*

Enlightenment), Heidegger suggests that the way out of enframing perhaps lies in enframing itself. For if we “pay heed to” and “reflect on” the revealing of modern technology, then we might recall the revealing of art (*technē*) which, rather than simultaneously “blocking” or “concealing,” “brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing.”¹⁹ Thus Heidegger closes “The Question Concerning Technology” by invoking art as the saving power of enframing: “Could it be that revealing lays claim to the arts most primally, so that they for their part may expressly foster the growth of the saving, may awaken and found anew our look into that which grants and our trust in it?”²⁰

2. Heidegger and Deep Ecology

In the early 1970’s, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1912-2009) coined the term “deep ecology” to describe his own ecological theory, which he also came to call Ecosophy T (the “T” standing for Tvergastein, the name of Naess’ mountain hut in Norway), in opposition to mainstream environmentalism, or “shallow ecology.” The basic distinction between deep ecology and shallow ecology, according to Naess, is that while the latter tends to offer reformist prescriptions such as recycling and resource conservation, the former attempts to delve *deeper* not only where prescriptions are concerned, but also in offering diagnoses like anthropocentrism and subject/object dualism.

Hence Naess’, and other deep ecologist’s, interest in Heidegger, whose critiques of humanism and (Cartesian) dualism could provide what Naess calls “ultimate premises”

for deep ecology. Of course, Naess drew on a number of philosophers and religious thinkers, especially Spinoza, Gandhi, and Zen Buddhists. Nor was Naess unaware of Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis which, as I will address, bears some relation to the ecological aspects of his thought. Thus the connections between Naess, the deep ecology movement, and Heidegger are complicated at best. In order to navigate them, I will first explore some of the main tenets of Naess' deep ecology, and then consider what in Heidegger's thinking is relevant to these ideas.

Naess' Deep Ecology, or Ecosophy T

In the founding document of the deep ecology movement, a lecture delivered to the third World Future Research Conference in Bucharest, Romania in 1972, entitled "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," Naess distinguishes deep from shallow ecology by enumerating the former's "deeper concerns." Whereas shallow ecology is characterized by the "Fight against pollution and resource depletion" with the "central objective" of "the health and affluence of people in the developed countries,"²¹ deep ecology proceeds from the following "norms and tendencies": 1) a "*relational, total-field image*" that rejects what he calls the "human-in-environment"/"thing-in-milieu" concept, or subject/object dualism; 2) "*Biospherical egalitarianism*," as opposed to anthropocentrism; 3) "*Principles of diversity and symbiosis*," according to the ethic of "live and let live"; 4) an "*Anti-class posture*," especially where so-called developed and developing nations are concerned; 5) the "Fight against *pollution and resource depletion*," though not exclusively; 6) "*Complexity, not*

complication,” since complication lacks the “Gestalt or unifying principles” of complexity; 7) “*Local autonomy and decentralization*,” or self-sufficiency when it comes to, for example, energy and food.

In “The Apron Diagram,” another seminal text by Naess, he discusses these seven points, or “platform principles,” in the context of the “total view” of deep ecology. Naess provides an image of intersecting “levels” that together resemble an apron. The platform principles comprise Level 2, below which are levels 3 and 4, designating “general views (not concrete)” regarding “policy and lifestyle,” and “practical/concrete decisions,” respectively. Above Level 2 are the ultimate premises, which “ground” deep ecology’s platform principles, and thereby the other levels. Level 1 consists of “verbalized fundamental philosophical and religious ideas and intuitions.”²² Naess suggests several possible philosophical and religious ideas for this level, such as those found in Spinoza’s philosophy, Christianity, and Buddhism, which he also proposes combining, as “One must avoid looking for one definite philosophy or religion among the supporters of the deep ecology movement.”²³ For example, both Christian and Buddhist ideas may help to support the platform principle of biospherical egalitarianism, insofar as the former sees all beings as “good” (and thus worthy of respect) while the latter sees all beings as “interdependent.” While Naess does not mention Heidegger here as a potential source of such ultimate premises, he does elsewhere: “Academic philosophers are increasingly reflecting the ecological crisis in their writings. The sources of philosophic inspirations are many: the works of Aristotle, Spinoza, Bergson, Heidegger, Whitehead, to name a few.”²⁴

Yet, although Naess references Heidegger explicitly in the title of his 1987 paper “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World,” another of his key writings, in the text itself Naess states that Heidegger was “amateurish—to say the least—in his political behavior,”²⁵ before going on to develop a theory of self-realization owing more to Ghandi. Thus, in departing from Western individualism, which he views as so many “ego-trips,” Naess seeks to “broaden and deepen” the “narrow ego” to an “ecological self” that develops through “identification with others,” both human and non-human. In doing so, he looks to Ghandi’s concept of *atman*, or “the supreme or universal Self,” as opposed to *jiva*, or the “‘narrow’ self,” as well as the related notion of *advaita*, which posits an “essential unity” between humans and nature. Of course, Naess also talks herein of phenomenology and “environmental ontology,” implying some influence by Heidegger. However, in the latter case, Naess is not so much alluding to the Being of nature as he is providing further backing for his ideal of self-realization. For rather than making the ethical argument that we *should* or *ought* to realize ourselves through all beings, Naess holds that we already do and must, since “Self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered.”²⁶

(Deep) Ecological Aspects of Heidegger’s Thought

While Naess himself downplayed any direct relation to Heidegger, there are moments of overlap nevertheless. Michael Zimmerman has pointed out a connection between their views of the self, for example. In “Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology,” Zimmerman parallels Naess’ notion of (ego) “insubstantiality,” Heidegger’s

theory of *Dasein* as an openness/clearing, and Buddhism's idea of *anatma*, or selflessness. This leads him to the conclusion that "Buddhism, Heidegger, and Naess all assign to human existence the special role of apprehending the groundless, empty play of phenomena. Humans exist most appropriately when their luminous openness is unconstricted by dualistic ego-consciousness."²⁵ Such openness, moreover, if adopted widely, might curtail humanity's quest for "total control" of nature, argues Zimmerman: "Buddhism, Heidegger, and Naess argue that puncturing the illusion of permanent selfhood would alleviate the infliction of such suffering by freeing one from the illusory quest for total control."²⁸ Zimmerman has also pointed out that Naess and Heidegger share what he calls an "ontological phenomenalism," the doctrine "that for something 'to be' means for it to be present or manifest."²⁹

Yet it is Heidegger's anti-dualism and anti-humanism that most relate to Naess's thought, particularly the latter's principles of the relational, total-field image and biospherical egalitarianism, respectively. Heidegger's anti-dualism amounts to a rejection of (especially) the Cartesian distinction between the subject on the one hand, and the object on the other hand, as a false problem. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger shows how in our "average everydayness," we relate to other beings in a mostly fluid way, as "ready-to-hand." Thus the Cartesian dilemma, whereby the self (subject) stands over against everything else (objectivity) rarely emerges. It is only, Heidegger points out, in exceptional cases, such as when things break down ("conspicuousness"), go missing ("obtrusiveness"), or stand in our way ("obstinacy"), that we become "ontological," or begin to view (as if subjects) beings as "present-at-hand" (as if objects). Yet, even in

these situations, the self remains for Heidegger a being amongst other beings, that is a being-in-the-world.

While Heidegger's criticism here of subject/object dualism obviously does not address the humanity/nature binary, we can see how it might serve as an ultimate premise for deep ecology's platform principle of a relational, total-field image. Naess describes this principle, and how it differs from the dualism of the human-in-environment/thing-in-milieu image, thus:

Rejection of the human-in-environment image in favor of the *relational, total-field image*. Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two things *A* and *B* is such that the relations belong to the definitions or basic constitutions of *A* and *B*, so that without the relation, *A* and *B* are no longer the same things. The total-field model dissolves not only the human-in-environment concept, but every compact thing-in-milieu concept—except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication.³⁰

Of course, by challenging the human-in-environment/thing-in-milieu concept, Naess seems to be taking issue with Heidegger's very notion of being-in-the-world. But by calling *Dasein* a being-in-the-world, it must be emphasized, Heidegger is opposing precisely those theories that see the self as an independent entity.

Like his anti-dualism, Heidegger's anti-humanism also coincides with Naess' deep ecology, namely its principle of biospherical egalitarianism. In his "Letter on Humanism" (*Brief über den "Humanismus"*), Heidegger critiques humanism (whether Greek, Roman, Christian, Marxist, or Existentialist) for misunderstanding the "essence of man." According to ancient Greek humanism, for example, the human being is a "rational animal." The problem with this humanism, according to Heidegger, is that it rests, like the others, on a metaphysics which, he holds, "does not ask about the truth of

Being itself.”³¹ Yet “Being is the nearest,”³² Heidegger contends: “It is the self-giving into the open, along with the open region itself.”³³ Thus any account of human being must consider its relation to Being. For Heidegger, then, the essence or “substance” of human being lies in its *ek-sistence*, or its “ecstatic dwelling in the nearness of Being.” This dwelling in the nearness of Being, furthermore, entails “guardianship,” “care,” or “letting be” of Being. Hence, “Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being.”³⁴

While Heidegger’s anti-humanism does not explicitly endorse Naess’ biospherical egalitarianism, it could provide an ultimate premise for it. In discussing biospherical egalitarianism, Naess criticizes anthropocentrism, the view that humans are the superior species, as detrimental not only to nature, but also to human beings themselves:

The ecological field-worker acquires a deep-seated respect, or even veneration, for ways and forms of life. He reaches an understanding from within, a kind of respect that others reserve for fellow humans and for a narrow section of ways and forms of life. To the ecological field-worker, the *equal right to live and blossom* is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom. Its restriction to humans is an anthropocentrism with detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves. This quality depends in part upon the deep pleasure and satisfaction we receive from close partnership with other forms of life. The attempt to ignore our dependence and to establish a master-slave role has contributed to the alienation of humans from themselves.³⁵

Here, Naess argues that anthropocentrism depends on a negligence of nature, just as Heidegger argues that humanism depends on a negligence of Being, while calling for an ethic of human stewardship of nature, much like Heidegger’s call for human beings to guard or shepherd Being.

One of the problems, of course, with anti-anthropocentrism, is that it risks being inhumane. Thus Naess', and other deep ecologists', concerns about human "levels of crowding" or overpopulation, as being harmful to nature, have been interpreted as "Malthusian" or in keeping with the ideas of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834). A British political economist, Malthus held that human population increases exponentially, whereas natural resources increase arithmetically, meaning that "The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for men."³⁶ This led him to accept "positive checks" to the human population such as famine, disease, and war. While there is arguably a mild Malthusian dimension in Naess' thinking, as when he argues that "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease,"³⁷ other deep ecologists, like David Foreman, are more extreme. In an interview with George Sessions, another deep ecologist, Foreman states the following:

When I tell people [that] the worst thing we could do in Ethiopia is to give aid—the best thing would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve—they think this is monstrous. . . . Likewise, letting the USA be an overflow valve for problems in Latin America is not solving a thing. It's just putting more pressure on the resources we have in the USA.³⁸

Such views have understandably invited the criticism of deep ecology as "eco-fascism." That Heidegger, who was involved with the fascism of National Socialism, is associated with deep ecology, has given more weight to this criticism. The social ecologist Murray Bookchin, who will be discussed below, notes a direct connection between deep ecology's appropriation of Heidegger, "a former member of the Nazi Party in spirit as well as ideological affiliation,"³⁹ and its "neo-Malthusianism." This raises the

question of the relation between Heidegger's Nazism and the ecological aspects of his thought. Zimmerman has argued that in one sense, the two are compatible, insofar as Heidegger's critiques of humanism and modern technology converge with the Nazi critique of modernity as "rootless, cosmopolitan, urban, materialistic, and rationalistic (i.e, according to the Nazis, altogether *Jewish*)."⁴⁰ Yet in another sense, Zimmerman sees a distinction between what he calls the Nazi's "racist naturalism" and Heidegger's "antinaturalistic ontology." The former, he claims, by defining humans as animals, leads to "biological racism," while the latter, by defining humans as distinct from animals, leads away from such a view. Thus Zimmerman concludes, "Heidegger abjured all forms of "naturalism"... Heidegger's antinaturalism had the virtue of leading him to reject Nazism's biological racism."⁴¹

Whether Heidegger's anti-naturalism undercuts his anti-humanism, moreover, remains an open question. For as Zimmerman points out,

Heidegger's antinaturalistic attitude was so pronounced that one of his former students, Karl Löwith, accused him of perpetuating the anthropocentrism and dualism so characteristic of the metaphysical and theological traditions which he purported to overcome! Another former student, Hans Jonas, charged that Heidegger held the Gnostic view that humanity is radically different from the natural world.⁴²

If there is a way to reconcile these two positions, it would have to stress that while Heidegger indeed views humans as *different* from animals, as well as all other beings (primarily due to our capacity for language), he does not thereby view humanity as the *master* of beings. As Zimmerman claims, in refusing to see the human being as a "voracious, self-assertive, clever animal," Heidegger was not elevating humans above

beings, but instead suggesting that “human existence is not the master of entities, but rather is in the service of the self-disclosure of entities.”⁴³

3. Adorno’s Critique of the Domination of Nature

From his early essay, “The Idea of Natural-History” (1932) to his unfinished, posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno took great interest in the concept of nature. In the former, he defines nature dialectically, as the counterpart to history, while in the latter he focuses on “natural beauty.” Adorno also appreciated the object of nature, or actual nature. “A man of the mountains” as he reputedly called himself, Adorno often visited a village in Visp, Switzerland, which overlooked his beloved Matterhorn. Apparently, it was here that he spent his last days. It seems that Adorno never lost the love of nature that he described in a “school-leaving examination,” wherein he writes that whoever goes into nature,

must have keen eyes and ears: but then he will encounter, quietly and wide-eyed, all the secret things that had slipped through the fine mesh of his net of ideas. That is why nature is loved by all those people who go out in search of secret things much as the gypsies go out stealing – poets and musicians and good-for-nothings, but also those who wrestle with the ultimate and most secret truths with the wakeful courage of bold ideas; they all loved nature, Goethe and Hölderlin, Schubert and Mahler, Eichendorff and Nietzsche and Maupassant; all these dissimilar human beings lost themselves in order to find themselves, they found their souls, they were raised to their homeland.⁴⁴

In this section, I will explore the later expressions of this love of nature found in the young Adorno; that is, his critique of instrumental reason, which he holds dominates external or first nature, as well as his view of natural beauty as, like autonomous art, a semblance promising transfiguration. To this end, I will first outline Adorno’s and

Horkheimer's theory of instrumental reason's domination of nature, as given in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This will, in addition, require a consideration of Steven Vogel's problematization of Adorno's idea of domination, whereby it becomes uncertain whether Adorno thinks that we dominate nature too much or not enough. Next, I will turn to *Aesthetic Theory*, in which Adorno comes closest to articulating a concept of nature in his discussion of natural beauty. Finally, I will present a characterization of social ecology, particularly that of Murray Bookchin, who uses aspects of Adorno's thought in developing his own theory of the domination of nature.

Fear of Nature

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer trace the origin of the Enlightenment back to a "mythic fear" of nature "turned radical." In the struggle for self-preservation, nature has always confronted humanity as alien and hostile. "Men have always had to choose," Adorno and Horkheimer write, "between their subjection to nature and the subjection of nature to the Self."⁴⁵ Yet, whereas in the so-called mythological era humans attempted to subdue nature through *mimesis* – that is, by imitating nature in magic and ritual – in the Enlightenment period, human subjugation of nature "was made the absolute purpose of life within and without."⁴⁶ Hence it was at this time, Adorno and Horkheimer argue, that humanity "disenchanted nature," stripping it of its heretofore mythological character and turning it into "mere objectivity." (They cite, as the battle cry of disenchantment, Bacon's claim that "now we govern nature in opinions, but we are thrall unto her in necessity: but if we would be led by her in

invention, we should command her by action.”⁴⁷). With this, humanity, now conceived of as the “subject” standing over against nature *qua* “meaningless object,” had overcome or *thought* it had overcome its fear of nature, as “Man imagines himself free from fear when there is no longer anything unknown.”⁴⁸

However, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, “enlightenment returns to mythology, which it never really knew how to elude.”⁴⁹ This means that despite its claim to have mastered nature, the Enlightenment remains fearful of it. Hence behind its conception of nature as controllable, through primarily science and technology, lies “human fear”: “both myth and science,” Adorno and Horkheimer assert, “[originate] in human fear.”⁵⁰ As Deborah Cook explains, in discussing Adorno’s analysis of nature as a “fearsome object,” “Throughout most of our history, nature has been seen as so overwhelmingly powerful that it is life-threatening. Even today, our attempts to subsume nature under concepts for the purpose of controlling, manipulating and exploiting it, reveal that nature continues to inspire fear, dread, even terror.”⁵¹ The implication here is that the fear of nature accounts for the very existence of concepts since, like the magic and rituals of the mythological epoch, concepts help humanity (attempt to) subjugate nature. “Power and knowledge are synonymous,”⁵² state Adorno and Horkheimer, citing Bacon.

Instrumental Reason and the Domination of Nature

Indeed, Adorno holds that the human mind itself developed out of the fear of nature. In *Minima Moralia* (1951), he writes, “Mind arose out of existence, as an organ

for keeping alive.”⁵³ Thus, mind, or *reason*, for Adorno, has always been “instrumental,” insofar as reason has been the principle instrument or tool by which humanity has preserved itself. Yet in the Enlightenment, instrumental or “calculating,” reason becomes something altogether different. Rather than serving as a basic survival mechanism, it *dominates* and/or “exploits” nature both within and without. In the former case, instrumental reason dominates what Adorno and Horkheimer call internal nature, which they define in Freudian terms as instincts, particularly for pleasure. In the latter case, instrumental reason dominates what they refer to as external, or first nature (“second nature” meaning culture or society), which they see as the (alleged) absolute Other. As Cook writes, in describing Adorno’s theory of external nature *qua* Other,

Nature is usually always conceived in opposition to culture; it is matter as opposed to mind, animal (even bestial) as opposed to human, irrational and instinctual, determined rather than free, unconscious rather than conscious. Whatever nature is said to be, we have almost invariably defined ourselves in opposition to it.⁵⁴

Instrumental reason dominates external nature, or *facilitates* this domination, more specifically, by disenchanting it, which Adorno and Horkheimer theorize as a process of abstraction, “the tool of enlightenment.” In rejecting “animism,” or the notion that nature is imbued with spirit, as an “anthropomorphism,” or a projection of the human onto the non-human, the Enlightenment redefined nature as a “disqualified” object of “computation and utility.” In so doing, it paved the way for domination: “What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order to wholly dominate it and other men.”⁵⁵ As Kevin Deluca argues, in “Rethinking Critical Theory: Instrumental Reason, Judgment, and the Environmental Crisis,” instrumental reason for Adorno and

Horkheimer is at once “epistemology and practice.”⁵⁶ Epistemologically, Deluca claims, instrumental reason is a “formalism” which, “characterized by abstraction,” leads to “universalization and systematization,” or the “mathematization of nature.” A “manifestation” of this, “technique,” the practical dimension of instrumental reason, connects formalism to the “life world.” For example, Deluca notes how “Formalism is deployed to invent techniques for increasing food production—tractors, pesticides, fertilizers, biogenetics, and so on.”⁵⁷

Instrumental reason proceeds in this fashion, furthermore, without reflecting on itself, according to Adorno and Horkheimer: “On the way from mythology to logistics, thought has lost the element of self-reflection.”⁵⁸ Focused strictly on *means*, instrumental reason neglects *ends*, such as autonomy and happiness, with the obvious exception of that of self-preservation. And because it is the prevailing form of reason, in Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s view, it “eclipses” other forms that would attend to such ends; for instance, what Horkheimer calls “objective reason,” which does “not focus on the co-ordination of behavior and aim, but on concepts... on the idea of the greatest good, on the problem of human destiny, and on the way of realization of ultimate goals.”⁵⁹ It is for this reason that Adorno and Horkheimer recommend the remembrance of nature. As an antidote to instrumental reason and its domination of nature, the remembrance of nature would achieve “reconciliation” between humanity and nature, both internal and external.

Vogel's Problematization of Adorno's Theory of the Domination of Nature

According to Steven Vogel, however, Adorno's and Horkheimer's positive construal of nature is complicated by negative claims elsewhere. For, Vogel argues, the "natural" also signifies for Adorno and Horkheimer that which (wrongfully) takes precedence in the Enlightenment. In enumerating the "three dialectics of enlightenment" (in epistemology, ethics, and politics) examined in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Vogel writes, "Science, in disenchanting nature, ends up disenchanting any human values beyond the 'natural' one of self-preservation; ethics too cannot find an argument against the expression of sadistic 'natural' impulses; political theory can do no more than defend the 'second nature' of the status quo."⁶⁰ Hence Vogel asserts that nature is identified by Adorno and Horkheimer "at various points both with fascist terror *and* with that upon which that terror is exercised."⁶¹ This "significant ambivalence about nature" leads him to question whether by the phrase "domination of nature" Adorno and Horkheimer mean the domination *of/over* nature (*by* the subject) or the domination *by* nature (*of/over* the subject). Thus Vogel asks, "What conclusion should we draw... that contemporary society dominates nature and should not, or that it (so to speak) unfortunately doesn't dominate it *enough* because nature in fact always returns to outwit us and take its revenge?"⁶²

To account for, if not solve, this difficulty requires first emphasizing the distinction Adorno and Horkheimer make between internal and external nature.⁶³ The former refers to the nature *within the subject*, with which Adorno and Horkheimer associate, as Vogel points out, self-preservation and sadistic impulses, as well as the

Freudian instinct for pleasure. The latter refers to the nature *outside of the subject*, or first nature, by which Adorno and Horkheimer simply mean nature in the conventional sense. Since he singles out “self-preservation” and “sadistic (natural) impulses” (aspects of internal nature), Vogel’s charge *does not concern external nature*. Thus we must assume that he accepts as unambiguous Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s theory that “contemporary society dominates nature and should not,” if by nature here we mean *external* nature. However, if by nature we mean *internal* nature, then Vogel is correct to wonder if Adorno and Horkheimer hold that we do not “dominate it *enough*.” For while on the one hand they oppose the domination of internal nature, for being “repressive” (of pleasure), on the other hand they seem to promote the domination of internal nature when it comes to self-preservation and (especially) sadistic impulses.

This ambivalence can be further explained by Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s appropriation of Freudian theory. For Freud, the subject is comprised of, or driven by, two forces that together form the *id*, or unconscious: the life drive (*Eros*), which Freud largely correlates with sex, and the death drive (*Thanatos*), which he mostly identifies with aggression (sadistic impulses). Operating according to “the pleasure principle,” the *id* comes into conflict with the *ego*, which operates according to “the reality principle” (self-preservation), along with the *superego*, or conscience. Thus, Freud’s idea of *repression* is that the *ego*, as well as the *superego*, represses the *id*, both its sexual and aggressive aspects, particularly in the context of civilization. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the domination of internal nature is simply, in Freudian terms, the repression *of* the *id* *by* the *ego*; that is, the domination of one part of internal nature by

another part of internal nature. This domination is *too much*, in their view, when the ego represses the id *qua Eros*; hence Adorno and Horkheimer *critique* Odysseus for subordinating (sexual) “pleasure” and “desire” to self-preservation. However, this domination is *not enough*, they hold, when the ego fails to repress the id *qua Thanatos* (sadistic impulses); hence their critique of fascist terror. In direct response to Vogel, then, Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s apparent equivocation vis-à-vis the domination of nature stems from their conception of internal nature as both creative and destructive. The domination of the former they see as repressive; the domination of the latter they see as necessary.

Adorno’s Concepts of Nature and Natural Beauty

While Adorno’s concept of internal nature is clear, his concept of external nature is more obscure. Of course, we have noted his claim that external nature signifies the absolute Other (of instrumental reason, humanity, freedom, consciousness, etc.). However, this conception is not Adorno’s, but the one that he (critically) ascribes to the Enlightenment. Thus in order to grasp what Adorno himself means by external nature, we must consider his epistemology, according to which the *object* of external nature is thoroughly mediated by *concepts* as well as *society*, in addition to his aesthetic theory, which sees external nature, particularly the *beauty* of external nature as, like the autonomous work of art, “the cipher of the not-yet-existing, the possible.”⁶⁴

Adorno’s epistemology is equal parts Kantian, Hegelian, and Marxian. Like Kant, Adorno argues that objects are not fully grasped by concepts. Like Hegel, Adorno

holds that objects are always mediated by concepts, which change over history. Like Marx, Adorno contends that the objects of our concepts are also always socially, or materially, mediated; that is, altered by human labor. Given these positions, Adorno views the object of external nature as the Kantian thing-in-itself, though not because, as Kant believed, objects are necessarily “noumena,” but rather since, as Hegel and Marx argue, objects are always already conceptually and socially mediated, respectively. As Cook writes, “Nature is accessible to human beings only in mediated forms; it can be grasped only indirectly or obliquely. Maintaining that nature remains fundamentally distinct from its mediated forms, Adorno emphatically rejects the identification of nature with the concepts and practices that we use to apprehend it.”⁶⁵

Thus the object of external nature, for Adorno, is objectively given, but cannot be known *in itself* due to its “total mediatedness.” Hence he claims that nature is the “mediated plenipotentary of immediacy.”⁶⁶ This does not mean that the object of external nature is the same as other objects for Adorno, even as he regards objects in general as non-identical (to their concepts). As Cook explains, contra Fredric Jameson, who “conflates nature and the nonidentical,” Adorno makes a distinction between objects and *natural* objects: “For Adorno, *all* objects are nonidentical with respect to our concepts of them. The definition of nature as the nonidentical therefore fails to capture what specifically characterizes natural objects.”⁶⁷ Yet what specifically characterizes natural objects according to Adorno remains in question. As Cook states, “when Adorno writes that there are times when we come close to the objects we are trying to think, it is unlikely that he considers nature to be among these objects.”⁶⁸

However, in *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno's discussion of natural beauty (*Naturschönheit*) seems to justify Jameson's thesis. While conceding that the concept of external nature as *beautiful* arose historically, as a consequence of humanity's having "mastered" it, and while he admits that natural beauty today is an "ideology," serving to "disguise mediatedness for immediacy,"⁶⁹ Adorno nevertheless views natural beauty as holding "promise." Seeing it as, following Karl Kraus, "what capitalism has oppressed: animal, landscape, woman,"⁷⁰ Adorno asserts that natural beauty is the "trace of the nonidentical in things under the spell of universal identity."⁷¹ As the non-identical, natural beauty points both backward, to the "freedom" of earlier humanity, and forward, since that old freedom was in fact "unfreedom." In this way, natural beauty resembles the autonomous work of art, which signals freedom (the "illusionless") as semblance. Hence Adorno also describes natural beauty as an "image," or "cipher of the not-yet-existing, the possible,"⁷² and an "allegory of [the] beyond."⁷³ As Hammer writes, in discussing natural beauty as a "*semblance* of alterity," "natural beauty can only appear as long as nature is being dominated. That is how its ambiguous and distant beauty is made possible. Natural beauty is thus 'an image' (*ein Bild*). It shares with images our essential absence from the object of that image."⁷⁴

4. Adorno and Social Ecology

While Adorno's thought lends itself to some aspects of deep ecology,⁷⁵ it is to social ecology that it most appropriately belongs. For unlike deep ecologists, who see philosophical and religious ideas as the cause of as well as the potential solution to our

ecological crises, social ecologists suggest that it is society, particularly its economic dimension, with which these crises rise and fall. In the following section, I will discuss this and other connections between social ecology and Adorno's thinking. First, however, I will explain Murray Bookchin's (1921-2006) distinction between social ecology and deep ecology, in addition to the central tenets of his version of social ecology.

Social Ecology v. Deep Ecology

Emerging at roughly the same time (social ecology in the 1960's and deep ecology in the early 1970's), these two movements each sought to go beyond mainstream environmentalism where diagnoses as well as prescriptions were concerned. As noted above, deep ecology began as a challenge to shallow ecology, which it saw as lacking in explanations for our ecological problems, and as failing to offer solutions other than slight reforms in policy and lifestyle. Somewhat similarly, social ecology started as a critique of mainstream environmentalism's negligence of the socioeconomic forces behind our environmental ills, and its refusal to propose alternatives to those forces. Thus, deep ecology and social ecology are alike insofar as they offer more insightful accounts of our ecological crises than mainstream environmentalism (anthropocentrism and dualism for deep ecology, socioeconomic conditions for social ecology), and more far-reaching suggestions (biospherical egalitarianism for deep ecology, and non-hierarchical societies for social ecology).

However, these similarities also point to the fundamental differences between deep ecology and social ecology. For as Bookchin points out, in “Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement,” deep ecology tends to see humanity’s maltreatment of nature as stemming from a “spiritual” source (philosophically and religiously sanctioned anthropocentrism and dualism), whereas social ecology looks to the material realm for the cause of this maltreatment. As he (polemically) writes:

Deep ecology has parachuted into our midst quite recently from the Sunbelt's bizarre mix of Hollywood and Disneyland, spiced with homilies from Taoism, Buddhism, spiritualism, reborn Christianity, and in some cases eco-fascism, while social ecology draws its inspiration from such outstanding radical decentralist thinkers as Peter Kropotkin, William Morris, and Paul Goodman, among many others who have advanced a serious challenge to the present society with its vast hierarchical, sexist, class-ruled, statist apparatus and militaristic history.⁷⁶

Bookchin likewise takes issue with the prescriptions of deep ecology, particularly the notions of biospherical egalitarianism and self-realization. Biospherical egalitarianism, he argues, is a “Malthusian doctrine.” Citing Foreman’s comment, quoted above, that starvation must be permitted so as to “let nature seek its own balance,” Bookchin shows how overpopulation, the alleged cause of starvation, is the direct result of social conditions, and thus can be addressed without Malthus’ so-called positive checks. It is worth quoting Bookchin at length here:

demography is a highly ambiguous and ideologically charged social discipline that cannot be reduced to a mere numbers game in biological reproduction. Human beings are not fruit flies (the species of choice that the neo-Malthusians love to cite). Their reproductive behavior is profoundly conditioned by cultural values, standards of living, social traditions, the status of women, religious beliefs, socio-political conflicts, and various socio-political expectations. Smash up a stable precapitalist

culture and throw its people off the land into city slums, and due ironically to demoralization, population may soar rather than decline. As Gandhi told the British, imperialism left India's wretched poor and homeless with little more in life than the immediate gratification provided by sex and an understandably numbed sense of personal, much less social, responsibility. Reduce women to mere reproductive factories, and population rates will explode.⁷⁷

Deep ecology's ideal of self-realization, taken from Naess, is also highly suspect for Bookchin. Calling it a "spirituality that emphasizes self-effacement," he contends that self-realization ultimately leads to "deindividuation" inasmuch as, according to the ethic of "live and let live!" it promotes passivity. This passivity, according to Bookchin, would be beneficial if taken up by "giant corporations and State leaders who are plundering not only the planet but also women, people of color, and the underprivileged,"⁷⁸ but for everyone else it is self-defeating. Passive individuals, he contends, become vulnerable to "political and economic manipulation," and could thus surrender to "the security afforded by corporations, centralized government, and the military."⁷⁹ What is needed, then, Bookchin claims, is not de-individuation, but rather "reindividuation":

It is not deindividuation that the oppressed of the world require, much less passive personalities that readily surrender themselves to the cosmic forces---the "Self" that buffet them around, but reindividuation that will render them active agents in remaking society and arresting the growing totalitarianism that threatens to homogenize us all as part of a Western version of the "Great Connected Whole."⁸⁰

Bookchin's Social Ecology

In contrast to deep ecology, Bookchin defines social ecology as "dialectical naturalism." This means that it sees "first nature" as giving rise to "second nature,"

which then reacts back upon first nature in an ongoing evolutionary process from simplicity to complexity. Bookchin thus distinguishes “ecology” from “environmentalism,” which he argues tends to view nature statically and anthropocentrically, as so many “resources” for human use. He is also careful to make a distinction between *social* ecology and *natural* ecology. Natural ecology, as its name suggests, attends to “natural” or non-human eco-systems, as if the human and non-human had little to do with one another. Social ecology, by contrast, attempts to incorporate human society (second nature) into natural ecology. Hence Bookchin stresses that human society emerged from nature, which continues to exist within it, and from which it can never be totally autonomous. And thus second nature has a “moral responsibility” to respect first nature, and even “function creatively in the unfolding of [its] evolution.”⁸¹

Unfortunately, second nature has become increasingly destructive (of itself and first nature) throughout its own evolution. Bookchin attributes this to the various ways in which human societies form “hierarchies,” whether along gender, race, class, or national lines, as hierarchies promote domination of certain individuals and groups (women, workers), and thus encourage the domination of nature. Contrary to conventional wisdom, moreover, such hierarchies are *not* natural, according to Bookchin. It is often argued that hierarchical human societies are analogous to (supposedly) hierarchical natural ecosystems, like beehives (with their “queen” bees and “worker” bees), or baboon communities (with their “alpha” males). Bookchin objects that such descriptions of nature are anthropomorphic, mere projections that reveal more about second nature than first nature. He also notes that much closer to humans than bees or baboons are the

gibbons, which “have no apparent ‘ranking’ system at all.”⁸² To the extent that there are hierarchies in nature, Bookchin contends, they are fluid. Human hierarchies, by contrast, are *institutional* or *structural*, and thus have no correlate in (nor justification by) nature.

Bookchin maintains that hierarchies have characterized second nature for much of human history, beginning with patriarchal communities wherein men dominated women and children. What is different today is that in addition to patriarchy, there are now several other kinds of hierarchy, the most entrenched and widespread being those of capitalism and, in its service, the nation-state. A class system, wherein one (smaller) class exploits the labor of another (larger) class, capitalism is by definition hierarchical as well as domineering. What is worse, it operates, as Bookchin puts it, according to the (il)logic of “grow or die.” This makes for the exploitation not only of an entire class of human beings, but also of natural beings (i.e., “fossil fuels” for energy, flora and fauna for food and shelter, etc.), as it is ultimately nature that must satisfy the demands of the ever-expanding marketplace. The nation-state, argues Bookchin, is complicit in all of this. Following Marx, he sees the state, or the “political elites,” as serving the (more powerful) “economic elites.” Thus the activities of the nation-state (e.g., trade, alliances, war) are also beholden to the logic of grow or die, and therefore also pose a grave threat to nature.

The practical dimension of Bookchin’s social ecology, then, is to replace the global capitalist economy and its nation-states with a “decentralized” network of local, largely independent (economically and politically) communities. Alternately called “bioregionalism” or “libertarian municipalism,” this society would halt globalization, and

thereby its destructive effects on second nature and first nature, and restore democracy by substituting “direct democracy” for “representative democracy.” Simply stated, such communities would be small enough to produce for and govern themselves. As Janet Biehl explains,

Ultimately the decentralized city or town would... see the development of local economic production. Green spaces could be created, where residents could cultivate food in local gardens... the new and smaller municipalities would also be undergoing a process of democratization. This process of democratization, in fact, would be inseparable from decentralization. Here the new, smaller municipalities would become the sites of direct democracies.⁸³

Equally important, communities on this scale would not, unlike nation-states, endanger nature.

Social Ecology and Adorno

While he would later criticize Adorno, for his “enormous pessimism about reason and its destiny,”⁸⁴ elsewhere Bookchin lists the “famous Frankfurt School” as one of social ecology’s major influences, along with Heraclitus, Aristotle, and Hegel. Indeed, throughout his work, Bookchin uses a number of concepts found in Adorno’s work, particularly first nature, second nature, and domination. As discussed, Bookchin, like Adorno, sees second nature, presently late (state) capitalist society, as dominating first nature.

Again, for Adorno first nature is synonymous with external nature, while second nature refers to culture or society. Adorno holds that first nature is mediated by second nature. This is less an epistemological claim than a theory about second nature’s literal

domination of first nature. In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno asserts that human “progress, deformed by utilitarianism, does violence to the surface of the earth.”⁸⁵ Bookchin argues similarly, viewing second nature and first nature dialectically. While “Human society, in fact, constitutes a ‘second nature,’ a cultural artifact, out of ‘first nature,’ or primeval nonhuman nature,”⁸⁶ second nature has the “capacity to intervene” in first nature, whether in the “best ecological sense or destructively in the worst ecological sense.”⁸⁷ Yet while Bookchin sees humanity as a “product of a significant evolutionary trend toward intellectuality, self-awareness, will, intentionality, and expressiveness,”⁸⁸ he points out that second nature is currently “in danger of tearing down” first nature:

Second nature, far from marking the fulfillment of human potentialities, is riddled by contradictions, antagonisms, and conflicting interests that have distorted humanity's unique capacities for development. It contains both the danger of tearing down the biosphere and, given a further development of humanity toward an ecological society, the capacity to provide an entirely new ecological dispensation.⁸⁹

Of course, unlike Adorno, Bookchin contends that the domination of first nature is rooted in the domination of humans by humans: “We must emphasize, here, that the idea of dominating nature has its primary source in the domination of human by human.”⁹⁰ Whereas once “people existed in a complementary relationship with one another,”⁹¹ and thus with first nature, Bookchin suggests that as soon as social hierarchies came about humanity began to view first nature as something that is also “hierarchically organized and can be dominated.”⁹² However, in his discussion of the hierarchy established by capitalism, Bookchin’s theory of the domination of first nature coincides again with Adorno’s. In transforming exchange from a “means to provide modest needs” to the “procreator of needs” and an “explosive impetus to consumption and technology,”

Bookchin claims that capitalism has had a “devastating ecological impact.” This recalls Adorno’s critique of exchange society as creating false needs, while doing “violence to the surface of the earth.” Moreover, Bookchin regards capitalism as a “thoroughly impersonal, self-operating mechanism,” proceeding by the logic of grow or die, and thus as “structurally amoral and hence impervious to any moral appeals;”⁹³ hence his claim that it cannot be stopped by “moral and spiritual change,” but rather by social change such as decentralization. This too relates to Adorno’s thought, inasmuch as Adorno sees self-preservation as the only uncontested ethic in late capitalist society, one which stands impervious to all other ethics.

5. Conclusion: Ontology v. Dialectics, Anti-Humanism v. Humanism

In outlining Heidegger’s idea of the enframing of nature, and Adorno’s theory of the domination of nature, I have posited the third and final affinity between Heidegger and Adorno. For Heidegger’s view that modernity enframes nature as standing-reserve, and Adorno’s critique of the Enlightenment as dominating or exploiting external nature, resemble each other in spirit and even, at times, letter. Hammer has noted this convergence, claiming that Adorno’s concept of domination “[echoes] Heidegger’s notion of enframing,” insofar as both show how, in “enlightened modernity,” “nature becomes a resource to be exploited by humans; thus nothing – no animal, no environment, no eco-system – counts as intrinsically valuable or worthy of protection.”⁹⁴

Moreover, Heidegger’s and Adorno’s similar criticisms of enframing and domination seem to follow from a shared concern for nature. While having distinct

concepts of nature – Heidegger seeing it as *physis*, or self-blossoming emergence, Adorno theorizing it as mediated immediacy pointing to the possible or beyond – both affirm nature, as they do the self and art. Hence Heidegger calls for an ethic of letting be or releasement, which would save nature from the enframing of modern technology, while Adorno suggests the remembrance of nature, which would counter the domination of nature, both internal (*qua Eros*) and external (*qua* natural beauty).

However, in discussing deep ecology and social ecology, other aspects of Heidegger's and Adorno's thinking about nature emerged that reveal fundamental differences. Thus the basic distinction between deep ecology and social ecology, namely that the former views *ideas* as the source of and solution to our ecological crises, whereas the latter gives this role to *society*, points to the basic distinction between Heidegger's ontological perspective, which prioritizes Being, and Adorno's materialist standpoint, which underscores social conditions. More significantly, by examining deep ecologists', particularly Naess', relation to Heidegger, it was shown how Heidegger's anti-humanism and anti-dualism makes him a potential theoretical source for deep ecology, especially its principles of biospherical egalitarianism and the relational, total-field image. Yet, as Bookchin and others have pointed out, Heidegger's anti-humanism and deep ecology's anti-anthropocentrism risk being Malthusian, which is to say inhumane. While Zimmerman argues that Heidegger's anti-humanism is anti-naturalistic, meaning that Heidegger views humans as distinct from, not superior to, animals, we have seen how deep ecologists like David Foreman can turn anti-anthropocentrism into neo-Malthusianism or eco-fascism.

Adorno, of course, diametrically opposed such anti-humanism. While he takes issue with the humanism of German Idealism (constitutive subjectivity), for example, he does not thereby reject humanism as such. Indeed, as underscored in the previous two chapters, Adorno remained committed to the central values of the Enlightenment, of which humanism was the most important. Thus, the affinities between Heidegger and Adorno on the topic of nature are finally, as in the cases of the self and art, only *formal* ones. At the level of content, it is clear that Heidegger's idea of enframing stems from his ontological viewpoint, which is at odds with that of Adorno, whose critical theory aims to expose the domination of nature not for the sake of a new relation to Being, but rather for the sake of nature *and* humanity.

Romantic Coda

Yet the very fact that Heidegger and Adorno both affirm nature suggests a quasi-Romantic or neo-Romantic moment in their thinking. For just as Heidegger and Adorno each critique the enframing and domination of nature in late modernity, so the Romantics contested the destruction of nature in early modernity. In particular, the Romantics expressed concerns about industrial society's encroachment on nature, and the growth of modern technology and mechanical physics, which "made nature into an object of mere use, having no magic, mystery, or beauty."⁹⁵ Thus, they proposed a re-mystification of nature that would overcome humanity's alienation from it.

Romanticism and Nature

In the previous chapter it was noted that according to the Romantics, the artist both expresses and imitates nature, co-producing with it. This view, part of Romanticism's larger metaphysics of identity, was also intended to alleviate the alienation of humanity from nature. For if nature is seen as realizing itself through human beings, then the two can no longer be thought of as divided. Of course, this notion that nature is active, not to mention the claim that humanity is nature's "highest" expression, is hardly self-evident. Thus, in order to understand this idea, as well as the Romantic theory of nature in general, it is necessary to grasp the basic idea of Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, particularly that of Schelling, who held that subjectivity, or mind, and objectivity, or matter, were two parts of a larger whole, the former giving rise to and developing out of the latter.

But before further characterizing Schelling's philosophy of nature, it is worth noting another way in which "aesthetic experience" (not necessarily the experience of art proper) was thought to overcome the alienation of self from nature, according to the Romantics. Schiller's ideal of aesthetic education, which the early Romantics elaborated, was intended not only for ethical and political reunification, but also for the re-mystification of nature. Since the sensibility was the faculty of desire and emotion as well as *perception*, its cultivation additionally meant reawakening or "romanticizing" the senses. For Novalis, who urged the development of both internal and external sensitivity (the former to know one's inner depths), awakening the senses was meant, as Beiser paraphrases, "to make us aware of the magic, mystery, and wonder of the world; it is to

educate the senses to see the ordinary as extraordinary, the familiar as strange, the mundane as sacred, the finite as infinite.”⁹⁶ Becoming thus attuned, the Romantics claimed, would restore humanity’s “lost unity” or “primal harmony” with nature, which civilization in general, and science in particular, had disrupted, by “making [nature] into an object to be dominated and controlled for human benefit.”⁹⁷

Of course, another way to regain unity with nature is to see it not as alien to humanity, but rather as humanity’s origin and essence. It was to this end that Schelling devoted his philosophy of nature. Challenging modernity’s general conception of nature, which began with Bacon’s and Descartes’ subject/object dualism, but specifically that of Kant, Schelling proposed a natural philosophy of *subject/object identity*. On this view, subjectivity and objectivity (the mental and the physical, or the ideal and the real), were seen as two parts of a larger, organic whole, and thus *interdependent*, as opposed to independent. As Beiser explains:

If nature is an organism, then it follows that there is no distinction in kind but only one of degree between the mental and the physical, the subject and objective, the ideal and the real. They are simply different degrees of organization and development of a single living force, which is found everywhere within nature. These apparent opposites can then be viewed as interdependent. The mental is simply the highest degree of organization and development of the living powers of the body; and the body is only the lowest degree of organization and development of the living powers of the mind.⁹⁸

Thus contra Descartes, for example, according to whom subjects (“thinking things”) and objects (“extended things”) are mutually exclusive, Schelling proposes that each is dependent on the other; without objectivity, subjectivity could not be, and without subjectivity (as its *telos*, or goal), objectivity could not be.

To be sure, Kant, if not Descartes, allowed for such an organic theory of nature (that is, the view that there is purposiveness or teleology in nature),⁹⁹ however only as a “regulative,” rather than a “constitutive,” idea. Given the rules of his transcendental idealism, which made concepts like purposiveness applicable to *phenomena* (appearances), but not (without uncertainty) to *noumena* (things-in-themselves), Kant held that while nature in itself might indeed be purposive, we can only speculate on this, never know it for certain. To claim the latter, he argued, would be to fall into metaphysical dogmatism, which was precisely what his critical philosophy was intended to disturb. Thus, according to Kant, we may think and act *as if* nature is purposive, and he demands that we should, for the sake of morality as well as science, but we can never be sure if our *idea* of nature corresponds to the *reality* of nature.

For the Romantics, particularly Schelling (along with the young Hegel), Kant’s position left something to be desired, since it did away with dogmatic metaphysics only to make room for an unsatisfying skepticism. The way out of this impasse, in his estimation, was to make the purposiveness of nature a *constitutive* idea. As Beiser argues, by suggesting that the purposiveness of nature is the condition of possible experience, Schelling not only turned Kant’s thought against itself (insofar as he used Kant’s “transcendental deduction” to arrive at this conclusion), but more importantly offered a solution to the problem of Kant’s *phenomena/noumena* dualism. Of course, whether Kant or Schelling ultimately has the correct understanding of nature is a question that remains to be answered. As Beiser frames it, for now the choice is a matter of taste,

between “Kantian modesty versus post-Kantian curiosity, Kantian skepticism versus post-Kantian speculation.”¹⁰⁰

From Romanticism to Heidegger and Adorno

There is much in the Romantic philosophy of nature that differs from both Heidegger’s and Adorno’s theories of nature. Again, neither Heidegger nor Adorno endorse the doctrine of subject/object identity. Nor do they see nature as an organic whole. For Heidegger, nature is *physis* or self-blossoming. For Adorno, nature is the trace of the non-identical. Of course, there is some parity between the Romantics’, Heidegger’s, and Adorno’s concerns about modernity’s impact on nature, to the extent that all lament modernity’s disenchantment of nature, as well as reaffirm nature as something positive. Yet, for Adorno especially, Romanticism’s exaltation of nature depended on its domination, for originally humanity lived in fear of nature. Thus the nostalgia for nature in Romantic thought is misplaced, in Adorno’s view, as there was never a time when humanity lived in harmony with nature. While Adorno himself affirms natural beauty, he sees it as existing in the *future* rather than the past: “nature, as it stirs mortally and tenderly in its beauty, does not yet exist.”¹⁰¹ However, given his view of late modernity as totally domineering, Adorno’s hope in such a future is minimal. Even for Heidegger, whose critique of modern technology suggests that, like the Romantics, he believed in a primal unity of humanity and nature, such an ideal is difficult to maintain in the context of late modernity. Given his sense that modern technology has

become all but inescapable, it is difficult to attribute to Heidegger the idealism of the Romantics. Hence the modesty of his appeal to art as the saving power of enframing.

Notes

¹ Martin Heidegger, "Memorial Address," in *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 50/Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1960), 19-20.

² Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (San Francisco: HaperCollins, 1993), 245/Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus,'" in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), Band 9, 342.

³ A possible exception is Ute Guzzoni's "'Were speculation on the state of reconciliation permissible...': Reflections on the Relation Between Human Beings and Things in Adorno and Heidegger," in Macdonald's and Ziarek's *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*. However, as its title suggests, this essay addresses things in general, rather than *natural* things in particular.

⁴ For the purposes of this chapter, I will more or less take Heidegger's and Adorno's usages of the term "nature" for granted, concentrating more so on their ideas about *what is being done to* nature, and *why*. In other words, my primary interest here will be less *what* nature is for each thinker than *that* both figures see the enframing/exploitation of nature as problematic. Of course, in order to fully appreciate their critiques of the enframing/exploitation of nature, there must be some mention of what nature means for each. Hence there are brief summaries of their concepts of nature in the appropriate sections.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 14/Martin Heidegger, "Einführung in die Metaphysik," in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), Band 40, 17.

⁶ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 14/Heidegger, "Einführung in die Metaphysik," 17.

⁷ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 16/Heidegger, "Einführung in die Metaphysik," 18.

⁸ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 16/Heidegger, "Einführung in die Metaphysik," 18.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 10/Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), Band 7, 12.

¹⁰ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 10/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 12-13.

¹¹ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 13/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 14.

¹² Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 20/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 21.

¹³ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 17/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 17.

¹⁴ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 15/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 16.

¹⁵ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 22/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 23.

¹⁶ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 24/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 24.

¹⁷ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 25/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 25.

¹⁸ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 33/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 35.

¹⁹ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 34/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 35.

²⁰ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 35/Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," 36.

²¹ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 3.

²² Arne Naess, "The Apron Diagram," in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 11.

²³ Naess, "The Apron Diagram," 11.

²⁴ Arne Naess, "Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement," in *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 234.

²⁵ Arne Naess, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World," in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 13.

²⁶ Naess, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World," 14.

²⁷ Michael E. Zimmerman, "Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 262.

- ²⁸ Zimmerman, "Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology," 264.
- ²⁹ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 122.
- ³⁰ Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," 3-4.
- ³¹ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 226/Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'," 322.
- ³² Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 234/Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'," 331.
- ³³ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 238/Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'," 334.
- ³⁴ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 245/Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'," 342.
- ³⁵ Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," 4.
- ³⁶ Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.
- ³⁷ Arne Naess, "Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement," in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 49.
- ³⁸ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/soccecovdeepeco.html.
- ³⁹ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/soccecovdeepeco.html.
- ⁴⁰ Michael E. Zimmerman, "Martin Heidegger: Antinaturalistic Critic of Technological Modernity," in *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology*, ed. David Macauley (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 62.
- ⁴¹ Zimmerman, "Martin Heidegger: Antinaturalistic Critic of Technological Modernity," 60.
- ⁴² Zimmerman, "Martin Heidegger: Antinaturalistic Critic of Technological Modernity," 72.
- ⁴³ Zimmerman, "Martin Heidegger: Antinaturalistic Critic of Technological Modernity," 71.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Lorenz Jäger, *Adorno: A Political Biography*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 213.
- ⁴⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 32/Max Horkheimer und Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in *Theodor W. Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 3, 49.
- ⁴⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 32/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 49.
- ⁴⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 20.
- ⁴⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 16/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 32.
- ⁴⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 27/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 44.
- ⁵⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 15/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 31.
- ⁵¹ Deborah Cook, "Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 40, no. 1 (2007): 49-72; 57-58.
- ⁵² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 20.
- ⁵³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (New York: Verso, 2005), 243/Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 4, 276.
- ⁵⁴ Cook, "Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw," 58.
- ⁵⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 4/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 20.
- ⁵⁶ Kevin DeLuca, "Rethinking Critical Theory: Instrumental Reason, Judgment, and the Environmental Crisis," *Environmental Ethics*, 23, no 3 (2001): 307-326.
- ⁵⁷ DeLuca, "Rethinking Critical Theory: Instrumental Reason, Judgment, and the Environmental Crisis," 319.
- ⁵⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 37/Horkheimer und Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 55.

- ⁵⁹ Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), 4.
- ⁶⁰ Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 61.
- ⁶¹ Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, 63.
- ⁶² Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, 62.
- ⁶³ We will not address the notion of second nature, as second nature is not nature, but culture or society, for Adorno and Horkheimer. Thus, Vogel's interest in the relationship between domination and second nature ultimately concerns the relationship between domination and society.
- ⁶⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 73/Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, in *Theodor W. Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 7, 115.
- ⁶⁵ Cook "Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw," 50.
- ⁶⁶ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 62/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 98.
- ⁶⁷ Cook, "Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw," 57; Cook's italics.
- ⁶⁸ Cook, "Nature, Red in Tooth and Claw," 58.
- ⁶⁹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 68/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 107.
- ⁷⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 63/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 99.
- ⁷¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 73/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 114.
- ⁷² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 73/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 115.
- ⁷³ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 69/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 108.
- ⁷⁴ Espen Hammer, *Adorno and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 141.
- ⁷⁵ Hammer, for instance, links Adorno to deep ecology rather than social ecology.
- ⁷⁶ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html.
- ⁷⁷ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html.
- ⁷⁸ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html.
- ⁷⁹ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html.
- ⁸⁰ "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/socecovdeepeco.html.
- ⁸¹ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁸² Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Palo Alto: Cheshire Books, 1982), 28.
- ⁸³ Janet Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1998), 55-57.
- ⁸⁴ Murray Bookchin, *Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism* (Buffalo: Black Rose Books, 1996), ix. The full quote reads "Like Leszek Kolakowski, I have come to regard much of Adorno's work as intellectually irresponsible, wayward, and poorly theorized, despite the brilliance of his style [at times] and his often insightful epigrams. This is not to reject his defense of speculative reason against positivism—which was what initially attracted me to his work and to the Frankfurt School—even as his writings exude enormous pessimism about reason and its destiny."
- ⁸⁵ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 64/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 102.
- ⁸⁶ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁸⁷ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁸⁸ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁸⁹ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁹⁰ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁹¹ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁹² "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁹³ "What is Social Ecology?" http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sococol.html
- ⁹⁴ Hammer, *Adorno and the Political*, 172.

⁹⁵ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 31.

⁹⁶ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 101.

⁹⁷ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 102.

⁹⁸ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 168.

⁹⁹ The Romantic position that nature has a purpose, or that purposiveness can be found in nature, is not to be confused with the metaphysical/theological doctrine of providence, which regards the universe as created and conducted by a supreme being. Rather, it is better to think of the former as exhibiting, to borrow Kant's description of art, purposiveness without purpose, meaning nature can be said to unfold according to certain laws, but not to serve some metaphysical/theological objective.

¹⁰⁰ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, 169.

¹⁰¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 74/Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 115.

Conclusion

In experimenting with Heidegger and Adorno, three affinities were discovered. First, it was found that both not only destroy/critique the modern notion of the subject, but also offer the alternative ideals of authenticity/autonomy, which each have subversive status as well as neo-Romantic holistic and individualistic dimensions. Second, it was seen that both take issue with modernity's degradation of art by way of its equipmental ontology/culture industry, to which each responds with an affirmation of great art/autonomous art that have a special relation to truth and transformation, *à la* Romantic aesthetics. Third and finally, it was observed how both challenge modernity's enframing/exploitation of nature, and thus call for a quasi-Romantic not-forgetting of Being/remembrance of nature. In these three instances, then, Heidegger and Adorno exhibit elective affinities when brought together, like certain chemicals or the characters in Goethe's novel.

Of course, these affinities were also *imposed* by the experiment. For it is not as if Heidegger and Adorno were simply put together and left to intermingle on their own. Rather they were urged, perhaps even forced, to interact, and to do so in circumscribed ways. Hence in each case it was essential to emphasize larger differences looming in the background. These larger differences, it was argued, generally stem from the fundamental distinction between Heidegger's *ontological* perspective on the one hand, and Adorno's *critical theory* standpoint on the other hand. Thus, when it came to the self, it was stressed that Heidegger rejects the modern (Cartesian) subject on the grounds

that it forgets *Being*, and that his notion of authenticity, insofar as it serves to replace Cartesian subjectivity, entails an awareness of one's (temporal) *being-there*. By contrast, Adorno's critique of the modern (Baconian and Kantian) subject was shown to highlight the *social* constitution of the self, while his concept of autonomy was seen as advocating *sociopolitical* resistance. Vis-à-vis art, it was demonstrated how Heidegger blames modern *ontology* for misunderstanding art, and how according to his (re)interpretation great art could begin a *new relation to Being*, one which, however, might have coincided with the program of National Socialism. Adversely, Adorno was shown to implicate the *culture industry* for undermining autonomous art, which he regards as a possible source of *social transfiguration* in the name of Enlightenment or Marxist humanism. Lastly, it was established that for Heidegger the enframing of nature comes from a *challenging revealing of Being*, whereas for Adorno the exploitation of nature is due to *instrumental reason* which, while rooted in a mythic fear of nature, now dominates external/first nature, internal nature, and second nature.

All three affinities, then, hold only at the level of *form*, or *spirit*, as opposed to *content*, or *letter*. In other words, although Heidegger and Adorno each (re)affirm the self, art, and nature, they do so from contrasting, even contrary, positions. Thus, in concluding this comparison of Heidegger and Adorno, their deeper divergences must be maintained, even as several compelling convergences have been exposed. This does not mean that these findings are negligible, however. For in conducting this experiment it has been demonstrated *that* and *how* two antithetical thinkers can come together, if minimally and momentarily. Nor in combining Heidegger and Adorno have the

progressive ideals of Adorno been compromised, as Sherman suggests.¹ While this project has been more open to dialogue and communication than others might allow, it has also been careful to identify and condemn Heidegger's regressive tendencies, and to keep them far from Adorno's much more preferable sociopolitical position.

Indeed, the focus here on the self, art, and nature was not only necessitated by the concerns of Heidegger and Adorno themselves, or the connection to those of Romanticism, but also inspired by the sense that these values continue to hold promise today. For our own time is just as, arguably more so, in need of them as that of the Romantics and that of Heidegger and Adorno. The reason being that the negative effects of modernity, in spite of the warnings of these figures, have persisted unabated, even worsened. We see this now most acutely in the various crises threatening our ecosystem, and thus our very survival. Yet in the other areas too – subjectivity and the arts and humanities – we also face grave challenges. What is worse, these dilemmas are mutually reinforcing, such that solving any requires addressing the others.

The problem with subjectivity today is that it is conceived of in almost exclusively economic terms. Thus self-realization or self-development is equated with material acquisition, and self-expression with the display of consumer goods. More alarming still is the way potentially rival forms of subjectivity often capitulate to economic individualism. Hence Andrew Potter argues, in *The Authenticity Hoax: How*

We Get Lost Finding Ourselves, that so-called authentic subjectivity, in spite of opposing “hollow individualism,” usually involves little more than expressing “individuality through the consumption of products.”² The trouble here is not just that “conspicuous authenticity,” as Potter calls it, makes a mockery of *true* authenticity (or *authentic* authenticity perhaps), which for Heidegger at least means an acceptance of one’s finitude, but also that it demonstrates just how deeply entrenched economic individualism is; it is the center around which all other kinds of subjectivity orbit.

This entrenchment has also been detrimental to the arts and humanities. Since personal growth is inextricably hitched to “growing one’s business” or “growing one’s wealth,” the arts and humanities can only appear as obstacles. This explains, in part, the decades-long decline in the arts and humanities at colleges and universities in the United States. In *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given up on the Meaning of Life*, Anthony Kronman attributes the “collapse of the authority” of the humanities in particular to “careerism,” along with the uncontested hegemony of the natural and social sciences.³ Kronman contests that between the assumption that “a fulfilling life can be lived only within the channels of a career, which defines a pathway with more or less fixed expectations and rewards,”⁴ and the natural and social sciences’ (alleged) ability to satisfy the desire for understanding, many in higher education (students, teachers, and administrators alike) have abandoned the humanities.⁵ This is tragic, Kronman holds, since only the humanities can address our current “spiritual crisis.”

This spiritual crisis, in turn, relates to our environmental crisis. According to Kronman, our spiritual crisis, or “spiritual emptiness,” emanates from an increasingly technological world that renders us “forgetful” of mortality, which Kronman claims (like Heidegger) is the very ground of meaning. Indeed, our technology is now so advanced that we can drill for oil miles below the earth’s surface. The danger of this technology is thus not only that it eclipses our mortality, which is to say our own *naturalness*, but also that it alters nature in ways that are already making it inhospitable to humans as well as other forms of life. In his new book, *Eaarth*, Bill McKibben argues that contrary to popular belief, which holds that global warming or climate change will be an issue for future generations, “the earth has changed in profound ways, ways that have already taken us out of the sweet spot where humans so long thrived... It’s a different place. A different planet. It needs a new name. *Eaarth*.”⁶ It seems, then, that in forgetting our mortality or naturalness we created a world in which we will be constantly reminded of it.

Hence the importance of the topics examined herein. For in exploring alternative forms of subjectivity, the truthfulness and transformative capacity of art, and the importance of remembering nature both within and without, possible responses to the destructive aspects of modernity have been highlighted. These responses are philosophically and literally romantic, in the sense of being idealistic or impractical; indeed, they offer no concrete steps forward. However, pragmatism has always needed

idealism as its inspiration and guide. Thus, what is needed now, in addition to practical solutions, is *new ideals*. These ideals, if anything concrete can be suggested, would revolve around a reinterpretation of *growth*, *development*, or *progress*. If we could re-imagine personal and social development, then we would at once enrich the self and society, restore the arts and humanities, and save nature.

Notes

¹ Sherman argues that the “move toward rapprochement is a sign of the political times,” by which he means the rightward movement of leftist politics. David Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 55.

² Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 121.

³ Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴ Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*, 256.

⁵ Neil Postman makes a stronger statement of the effect of careerism or, as he calls it, the “god of Economic Utility,” on education: “Its driving idea is that the purpose of schooling is to prepare children for competent entry into the economic life of a community. It follows from this any school activity not designed to further this end is seen as a frill or an ornament--which is to say, a waste of valuable time.” Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 27-28.

⁶ Bill McKibbin, *Eaarth* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 2.

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—— and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989). Original: *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. In Adorno, Theodor W. *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Band 3.

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