

On the Redemptive Power of Art in Adorno and Schelling

In his essay, "A portrait of Walter Benjamin," Adorno cites Benjamin's words that "Nature is messianic in its eternal and total transience." Adorno construes this statement as expressing "the core of Benjamin's philosophy," namely "the idea of the salvation of the dead as the restitution of distorted life through the consummation of its own reification down to the inorganic level."¹ This normative, messianic idea of a "state of reconciliation," in which the extremes of inorganic and cognitive life are somehow reconciled, is of course an anticipatory notion of a reality "yet-to-come,"² whose "hidden contours" can only be sketched out by "revealing the chasm separating that day and life as it is."³ Consequently, the hope offered by Benjamin's vision can "appear only in fragmented form."

Not surprisingly, Adorno's characterization of the core of Benjamin's philosophy also describes the central concerns and contours of Adorno's own work. Both thinkers attempt to present a "utopia of knowledge" that has as its content what Benjamin called "the unreality of despair." Moreover, both thinkers firmly believe that such a utopia can only be presented in a secularized *via negativa*: a method of thought that protects itself "from the 'success' of unbroken cohesion by making the fragmentary its guiding principle."⁴ Echoing Kafka's remark that "there

¹ Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (MIT Press; 1994) p 241.

² Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1986) p 195. Due to the inferior quality of this translation, I sometimes cite directly from the German text. When I do so, this will be indicated merely by the addition of the umlaut notation *ÄT* as opposed to *AT* for the English version.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Prisms*, p 239.

is infinite hope except for us,” the works of both Benjamin and Adorno appear to orbit around the notion of *Trauer* "as the last self-negating, self-transcending allegory, that of Redemption.”⁵ However, whereas Benjamin could still call on the traditions of Jewish mystical thought to support his messianic hope for a state of future redemption, Adorno could not. Having outlived the holocaust, Adorno's finds his only hope for supporting his vision of utopia in a desacularized negative theology transposed into the realm of the aesthetic.

The closest substantive antecedent to Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is found in the early writings of Schelling on the philosophy of art. Both see the aesthetic as the only material medium for transcending the inherent limitations of subjective reflexive thought and attaining to a form of transsubjective truth. Their affinities run from their attitudes towards nature, the interplay of conscious and unconscious drives in the creation of the artwork, and their understanding of art as providing a sensuous anticipation of an historical time to come in which nature and humankind will somehow be reconciled. Yet as deep as these resemblances run, there are of course differences, the most significant being their respective conceptions of art's power of transformation: Schelling views the work of art as presenting a positive yet momentary glimpse of a future reign of Providence, whereas Adorno sees art as presenting a negative utopia of a "counterfactual yet-to-come.”⁶ Accordingly, Schelling's artwork is more symbolic, whereas Adorno's appears to be allegorical; the former is thus the image of organic wholeness whereas the latter is of particularity and fragmentation.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 231.

⁶ AT 196.

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In the *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno notes that "a philosophy of nature, as propagated for instance by Goethe and Schelling, a philosophy which interprets nature as intrinsically meaningful...has irretrievably gone by the board, along with the perception of nature which gave rise to it." ⁷ What Adorno refers to here is succinctly stated in Schelling's refusal to consider nature as Fichte did, that is, to consider nature merely as an aggregate of lifeless objects to be used as the subject sees fit:

In the last analysis what is the essence of his [Fichte's] whole opinion of nature? It is this: that nature should be used...and that it is there for nothing more than to be used; his principle, according to which he looks at nature, is the economic-teleological principle (I/7 p. 17).⁸

These words, written in 1799 when Schelling was but twenty-four years of age, illustrate how nature for him could not merely be the dead objectivity conjured up by the all-knowing I of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. For if this were the case then humanity itself, as a part of nature, could not be a living organism, but would then also have to be merely dead objectivity. Either one accepts Fichte's premise that the I is *not dependent* on nature, and that it must therefore relate to it as something other from itself -- an Other whose sole purpose is to be used by the I --, or one accepts that we *are dependent* on nature, and thereby concede that any affront we commit to

⁷ *AT*, p 106.

⁸ All citations of Schelling's works refer to the pagination of the *Sämmtliche Werke* (14 vols. Stuttgart and Augsburg: J.G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856-61) followed by the pages of the corresponding English translation (when available).

the integrity of nature is at the same time an assault on our own integrity. Schelling realized quite early on that if modernity were to be held back from devolving into an ideology guaranteeing the thinking subject's right to subjectify nature, a framework contrary to that of Fichte's must be created.

Schelling held that Kant's idea of beauty as 'purposiveness without purpose,' and its associated notion of a *disinterested* relation to an object, indicated something fundamental about our connection to nature. If the condition of possibility for beauty is that the subject find the object without purpose and interest, then there must be a way of conceiving of the subject's relation to the object, such that the latter is not necessarily subjected to the former: there must be an irreducible distance between the two that neither of the two alone can overcome. Thus whereas Fichte describes the self-positing of the I as the genesis of both the world of nature and that of the individual self, Schelling insists that this act has a *history*, because the world of external necessity is not produced by the '*Will*' of the subject but by its 'Nature.' To account for the disjunction between these two realms of the subject Schelling introduces the concepts of unconscious and conscious productivity. Of course, Fichte's introductory move is as unquestionable as Descartes is: "it is no doubt the case that the external world is only there for me in so far as I myself am there at the same time and am conscious of myself" (I/10 p. 93/509). From this, however, one cannot infer that it is the thinking subject that has brought the world into *existence*: "the *already conscious* I cannot in any way produce the world" (Ibid.). The reflexive I of the conscious thinking subject cannot account for the external world. Philosophy is thus for

Schelling an activity in which we retrace the historical process whereby we have attained to the reflection that this world feels both external to us, and we a part of it.

Schelling must then account for an activity of nature whereby we become capable of having consciousness. To do this, he argues that consciousness itself involves both unconscious intuiting and conscious reflection. This strategy *decenters* the authority of the subject and forces it to *remember* what occurs beyond its sphere of lucidity, both historically in its development and continuously in its reflective activity. Consciousness is always subject to a division or tension within itself whereby it is never capable of being fully present to itself. This incapacity for self-transparency is an irreducible aspect of what it means to be human:

However, the subject can never possess itself *as* what it is, for precisely as it addresses itself it *becomes* another, this is the basic contradiction, the misfortune in all being (I/10, 101/517).⁹

The moment one looks into a mirror one begins to think differently about oneself. While this contradiction is for Schelling the "dynamic principle of all living nature (I/4 p. 90/22), it also points to the fact that reflective activity will never grant us insight into how we are, but will

⁹ Adorno voices a similar critique in his essay on Beckett's 'Endgame,' when he writes how "Ketzerisch fusioniert sich die Erbsünde mit der Schöpfung," and connects this with the proposition that "Subjektivität selbst ist die Schuld; daß man überhaupt ist" (GS 11, 317). Adorno presents a similar position in his essay "Zum Gedächtnis Eichendorfs," in which he writes of how the subject could deal with the *Schuld* of its own *Dasein*. Comparing Eichendorfs poetic voice with Schumann, Adorno notes that "Hier zuinnerst ist er Schumanns Wahlverwandter, gewährend und vornehm genug, noch das eigene Daseinsrecht zu verschmähen: so verströmt die Ekstase des dritten Satzes von Schumanns Klavierphantasie ins Meer. Todverfallen ist diese Liebe und selbstvergessen. In ihr verhärtet das Ich nicht länger sich in sich selber. Es möchte etwas gutmachen von dem alten Unrecht, Ich überhaupt zu sein" (GS 11, 78). Compare Paul's Letter to the Romans, 8:18, in which Paul writes of an estrangement that separates both man and nature from their true essence, thereby implying that, in Adorno's words, "nature is not yet what it appears to be" (AT 97).

instead only ever show us how we appear to be. Consequently, if the goal is to know thyself, Schelling contends that we must look for insight in the creative activity of art.

First proposed in outline form as early as 1997, it wasn't until his *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800 that he presented a more complete understanding of how such insight occurs. Given Schelling's postulate that nature is but unconscious spirit, while spirit is nature become conscious of itself, it follows that the human will is in a very fundamental sense *originally identical* with the productivity of nature. Because of this isomorphism, the objects of the natural world "will have to appear as products of an activity that is both *conscious and unconscious*" (I/3 p. 249/417). The conscious strata emerges in the organic forms of life whose power of self-organization illustrates a rudimentary form of self-determination indicative of both freedom and purpose, whereas the unconscious strata operates as a blind mechanism guided by a strict necessity easily determined by the categories of the understanding. In this way Schelling offers up an alternative theoretical explanation for Kant's position that nature is "*purposeful without being explicable in terms of purposes*" (ibid.). Nature exhibits purpose to the extent that its self-organizing activity is perceptible, yet below this threshold of complexity deterministic operations of mechanistic regularity render purpose a powerless *explanans*. The simultaneity of the organic's reciprocal and thus non-linear causality remains inaccessible to the linear time sequence required by discursive or reflective thought, while conversely the constant, predictable cycles of nature's intricate mechanism operate outside the range of intuition's vision. The human activity that best articulates nature's own productivity, since it integrates both conscious intent

and unconscious action, is the aesthetic activity of creation. In a reflexive thinking about thinking, philosophy's conscious productivity is directed inwards, but due to its exclusive reliance on reflection, the intellect can only take itself as its object, thereby excluding the possibility of objective content. "Production in art," however, "is directed outward, in order to reflect the unconscious through products" (I/3 p. 351/419). This follows from Schelling's contention that whereas conscious activity comprehends itself in the interiority of noetic operation, unconscious activity only allows itself to be comprehended when it is objectified in material form, which is precisely the activity of aesthetic productivity. It is in this sense that aesthetic activity integrates and completes the conscious activity of practical philosophy with the unconscious operations of theoretical philosophy. Art thus becomes the "document" and "organ" of philosophy, since it discloses otherwise unknowable processes in its material creations, be they of the visual or musical arts.

Because of this attempt to incorporate the other of conceptual analysis – the unconscious – into a philosophical system, Schelling's attempt in the *System* to provide a history for which there can be no empirical evidence has often been judged highly problematic. The history of consciousness he offers includes what has transpired *before consciousness*. A good century before Freud, Schelling utilizes a model of the self that incorporates both conscious and unconscious elements, employs 'drives' or 'activities' that are limited or 'repressed' (*verdrängt* is Schelling's term of choice). The development of the conscious mind is driven by repression that divides and alienates the self, explaining the root of humanity's inability to satisfy its curiosity

about itself, since it can never have direct access to its own history. Applying the challenge of all historians to the even more removed and elusive past of the self, Schelling contends that the self "only finds in its consciousness the monuments, the memorials of that path, not the path itself" (I/10 p. 94/510). The task of Schelling's "science" is thus an *anamnesis* of what lies beyond the limits of reflective discursivity. And whereas Freud would later confine his science to the individual history of neurotic people, Schelling understood this *anamnesis* as a challenge for every person who sought to overcome the inherent alienation of human consciousness from both nature and self. It was the purpose of art to provide the fleeting experience of what could be if one were able to overcome such alienation.

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To better appreciate this dimension of Schelling's understanding of art, we must briefly consider his analysis of human autonomy. For as we will see, the former becomes a concrete symbol for the possibility of the latter. In accordance to his understanding of nature, Schelling links the self-determination of a natural organism to our capacity for self-determination. There is a major difference, however: "Every plant is completely what it should be, what is free in it is necessary and what is necessary is free. Man is eternally a fragment" (I/3 p. 608/676). We are determined by our inner division: our consciousness cannot ground what motivates that consciousness itself because the motivation derives from the absolute 'I.' In our conscious reflection this 'I' "is to become aware of itself as producing unconsciously. This is impossible and only for this reason does the world appear to it as...present without its action" (I/3 p. 537/605), as

the thing-in-itself. We are, though, able to change the object world and ourselves through the actions of our will. Schelling links the 'absolute will' of the 'I' with our freedom. There can, however, be no *proof* of our freedom, apart from our ability for self-determination. If there could be a proof one would be able to determine freedom, which would be self-refuting: "What the self-determination is, nobody can explain who does not know it via their own intuition" (I/3 p. 533/601).

The implications are central to Schelling's thought and to understanding its difference from that of Hegel. Hegel's dialectic of recognition accounts for the intersubjective process whereby I reflect my freedom in the consciousness of another person via our mutual acknowledgement of the other as subject, yet it does not, despite Hegel's claims, tell me what freedom is. If another person demands that I *should* do something, she gives me the choice of fulfilling the demand or not. This way the "action is *explained* if it happens, without its *having* to take place" (I/3 p. 542/610). While our *consciousness* of having a will does require the other person, this does not *explain* our will.

The problem again is the problem of reflection that Fichte had first articulated. I must *already* be aware in a non-defined way (the definition requires the other) of what it is to exercise my freedom, otherwise there would be no way of *understanding* another person's demand that I exercise my freedom in relation to the other's appeal to my capacity for decision. Nothing guarantees that this can be the case: freedom involves an irreducible indeterminacy, but this is precisely its price. Hegel sees the truth of freedom in its articulation via reflection in the other;

Schelling emphasizes the way in which the highest principles in philosophy are not conceptually knowable. There is an excess in the subject's self that philosophy is incapable of grasping.

In the *System* Schelling seeks to develop a view of nature in which our free actions can be in accordance with what happens in both external and internal nature. He uses the model of the plant, which is what it is without the need to postulate some higher purpose or design to make it what it is, as a way of suggesting the unity of subject and object, freedom and necessity. The plant is self-sufficient and perfectly satisfies its nature exactly as it is. Any reflection upon it, for example in scientific analysis, involves an unconscious foundation that motivates the reflection. Reflection can inherently never be in unity with itself: its very essence is its difference from, and dependence on, the object, which it tries to overcome by grasping it in the concept. No conceptual analysis can exhaust the organism, as science constantly reveals: there is always another way of looking at it. Furthermore, in the case of organic life, analysis will destroy it. The plant is self-determining: it forms itself as that particular organism. The *process* of that formation cannot be an object of analysis.

The basis of Idealist philosophy is implicit in the metaphor: one can differentiate the process of the organism into an infinity of different moments, but the crucial fact is their ultimate identity within the organism. The single moment is inherently dependent upon all the others. In his *Naturphilosophie* of 1799, Schelling posits "as the absolutely non-objective postulate" of nature "the original productivity of nature" itself (I/3 p. 284/352). In his *System* of 1800, he wants to find how the "last foundation of the harmony of subjective and objective can become

objective to *the I itself*" (I/3 p. 610/678). Here he seeks a way of recognizing, beyond the self-determination to be observed in natural organisms, how our individual productivity -- including reflective consciousness -- can be revealed as being part of the same process as these organisms. The work of art is of course that in which the concord of the productivity of both man and nature finds its manifestation. As such, the work of art is the ideal instantiation of organic unity and cohesion: in the fragmented and compartmentalized world of reflexive thought as instrumental reason, only the work of art can provide an instance of integration and reconciliation. And as such, Schelling's conception of an artwork is symbolic: its individual moments point beyond themselves so that their totality coalesces into meaning.

The work of art is the medium in which the unity of the theoretical and practical can be *shown*. The medium is not itself a self-transparent philosophy: art cannot provide an articulated 'proof' of such unity, as science cannot ever conceptually grasp the life of an organism. Nature as blind purposiveness, the plant growing into its particular form, is, in the terms of the *System*, the unity of conscious and unconscious activity. The 'productivity' involved in the growth of the plant does not lead to a random product. At the same time, there is nothing in the plant or our cognitive accounts of what the plant is that would explain why the plant takes that particular form. To go beyond this: One must therefore be able to show an intuition in the intelligence via which in *one and the same* appearance the I is at the same time conscious and unconscious *for itself* (I/3 p. 610/678). In the actions of my will I have awareness for myself of free activity but this cannot be demonstrated objectively: freedom cannot be objectified. The medium in which

philosophy is able to show what otherwise would not be available to it has to include both the reflexive level of our consciousness and its basis in what can never be available to reflection.

Cognitive science for Schelling is an infinite task. Art, on the other hand, *already* shows how the two productivities coincide: the conscious intention of the artist coincides with the unconscious compulsion of the artist's genius. It need, therefore, have no purpose beyond this because the finite human product embodies a purpose that cannot be known, but only intuited, like that of the organism. While Schelling attributes a hyperbolic role to art, his reasons for doing so remain significant for philosophy and aesthetic theory even now.

In the *System*, intellectual intuition can only be postulated: philosophy's highest point cannot be articulated in concepts. The role of intellectual intuition is to unify subject and object in order not to fall prey to Kant's antinomies. The question for Schelling becomes how one is to make any *sense* of this unification from our perspective as finite, striving, divided individuals: our thinking cannot articulate a way of overcoming division because division is the very condition for and nature of reflection. Previous philosophy had answered such questions in terms of dogmatic theology.

Schelling of course wishes to avoid theological solutions, and to find a means of making sense in a way that is accessible to people's everyday views of their existence. Art is "the generally acknowledged and undeniable objectivity of intellectual intuition. For aesthetic intuition is intellectual intuition become objective" (I/3 p. 626/694). Art "always and continually documents anew what philosophy cannot represent externally, namely the unconscious in action

and production and its original identity with consciousness" (I/3 p. 627/695)? What is separate in nature (unconscious) and history (conscious) is united in art. The process of nature in the *System* begins in a non-reflexive way but develops towards our conscious reflection. Schelling sees art as a reversal of this: art begins in the artist's reflection about what is to be produced, but it ends unconsciously because what is produced cannot be made identical with the techniques and thoughts that were required to produce it. As such it can present the Absolute, as the "sole true and eternal organ and at the same time document of philosophy" (I/3 p. 627/695). To reach its highest point, then, pure thought requires a means of presentation that avoids the divisions of cognitive thinking.

Schelling's account of the role which unconscious nature plays in the production of art implies that there lies in this process an act of grace on the part of the Absolute that makes the artist's efforts into art and elevates the productive subject to the status of genius. The following passage clarifies his position in this regard:

This unknown, however, whereby the objective and the conscious activities are here brought into unexpected harmony, is none other than that absolute¹⁰, which contains the common ground of the preestablished harmony between the conscious, and unconscious. Hence, if this absolute is reflected out of the product, it will appear to the intelligence as something lying above that latter, and which, in contrast to freedom, brings an element of the unintended to that which was begun with consciousness and intention" (I/3 p. 613).

¹⁰ Schelling adds in a footnote to this: "das Urselbst."

The idea that opposed to the freedom of the productive subject, there exists an essential element of unintentionality bestowed in that subject's product by the Absolute, requires us to recall what Schelling has said regarding historical action: if in the sphere of history something good results from evil intentions, then Providence must have had a hand in it (I/3 p. 595). This position enables Schelling to attribute every success in history to Providence, while according everything unsuccessful to the power of fate. However, he does not speak of these two forces as equals standing in a balanced relation of power, but rather assumes that Providence has but a slight advantage in the course of history. This slight yet crucial predominance of Providence is sharply qualified however by Schelling's epochal understanding of history: the historical epoch in which history will be governed by Providence has not only not yet begun, but "When this period will begin, we are unable to tell. But whenever it comes into existence, God will also then *exist*" (I/3 p. 605). If we interpret the above passage through this last idea, we could then suggest that in the creation of art, the moment when this work becomes objective as art is a moment in which Providence is now effective, that is, the work of art momentarily reveals or manifests the Absolute. But there is no such thing as art in general, there are but individual works of art and these are but the splinters or fragments of the Absolute. In this way, Schelling advances art as a piece of sensuous anticipation of an historical time of the reign of Providence.

The investment of Schelling's *System* in the aesthetic becomes apparent when the development of history is seen in the same terms. The results of our conscious actions are never exactly what we intended. The overall process of history is conceived of teleologically. History

is not a random movement because its ground is productivity, which is the attempt of the 'I' to grasp itself. At the same time, it is clear that reflection cannot tell us where the process is leading. Schelling links the notion of genius to the notion of destiny. In the way that "the power, which, via our free activity without our knowledge and even against our will, realizes purposes which have not been imagined is called destiny" (I/3 p. 616/684), the inexplicable side of apparently free, self-determining aesthetic production that adds an 'objective (in the sense of unconscious and unintended) aspect to the product is 'genius.'

Clearly, this is an attempt to skirt the consequences of removing *divine* Providence from history. If one can find a domain of human existence where the apparently inexplicable effects of our activity appear to make perfect sense, then the potential for making history more than random contingency is not renounced: if history is to be the fulfillment of our "species being," then the goal will have to be achieved with powers given to us by our nature. We cannot yet fully grasp these powers because their potential has not been fully revealed. The notion of genius can therefore be seen as a somewhat mystified version of the attempts of post-theological philosophies of history to make history intelligible.

All the same, the role of the genius in the argument is obviously problematic. It is a way of looking at that level of aesthetic production that can never be reduced to the results of techniques, which points to a level of productivity in excess of what could ever be learnt. Such ideas can be and evidently are ideologically abused and do not stand up well to methodological scrutiny. The argument should, however, be seen historically: such views of art only became

possible in the philosophical climate we are concerned with here. This climate is determined by two factors of modernity that are highlighted by aesthetic theory. The liberation from theological constraint releases hitherto unknown capacities in the subject, which give rise to a sense of limitless potential. At the same time, this is combined with an awareness of the subject's inability to be wholly transparent to itself. Schelling's idea of the genius combines these two factors. Schelling insists that art is the *unity* of conscious and unconscious activity, as part of the attempt to make philosophy confront aspects of self-consciousness which philosophers like Kant can only put into a realm to which philosophy has no access. Schelling is convinced that these aspects are accessible, and faces the philosophical consequences of showing how this is the case.

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What is new in Adorno's conception of nature emerges from unavoidable fact that mankind's technical prowess has now pulled nature itself into our dynamic of civilized destruction, proving nature to be a fragile, perishable structure in need of rescue. As the millennium approaches, it is not only the masses that stand oppressed by late capitalism, but it is the environment too that cries out for liberation. And it is this fact that Adorno takes as legitimating the "direction of aesthetic theory to the beauty of nature" (AT 92).

In the path of the dominant *Zweckrationalität* of the contemporary world, "*im Bann der universalen Identität*," Adorno finds in the beauty of nature "*die Spur des Nichtidentischen an den Dingen*" (AT 114). This means that nature represents a dimension that lays *jenseits* of all human functionality and beyond all material application. Viewed historically, we can see that

when humanity was still absolutely dependent on nature, the subject could not perceive or enjoy nature as beautiful. The independence of man, the *Fürsichsein* in the Hegelian sense, is the condition of the possibility of enjoying nature: only with the possibility of separation is the feeling of intimacy possible (AT 103). The course of this historical process follows the dynamic of Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment: the domination of nature over man prohibits the perception of nature's beauty; the temporary liberation of man from nature ensued with the advent of technology as the medium of subjective domination; technical dominance ultimately leads to abstract rationality's control over the subject. Out of this historical process, Adorno designates the beauty of nature as the 'Spur des Nichtidentischen,' as a modality of nature appearing that represents for the world of production an irreducible other. To say that instrumental reason has taken over complete domination of man is to assert that we can no longer imagine an alternative and ecological technology, but are rather seduced by the myth of control into exercising the superstition of believing that our salvation can only be found a more potent and advanced form of our current technology. Adorno of course has a different opinion on this point:

Technology is said to have ravished nature -- a turn of phrase that derives essentially from bourgeois sexual morality. In a framework of different productive relations, the same technology might be able not to violate, but to help nature realize some of its aims (*wohin sie vielleicht möchte*) right here on this old earth (AT 100).

The idea that it is only through a determinate mode of human dealings, through a *Technik* aptly

suited to the other of nature, that nature can and must be "helped" to arrive at where it '*vielleicht möchte*,' implies that nature is in itself needy of somehow being saved, and that it itself does not have the power to achieve this redemption. But Adorno is hardly the first to suggest such a saving *Technik*. Schiller, in his *Kalliasbriefe* of 1793, wrote of a Technik adequate to nature long before the effects of our current technology had become visible:

Die Technik muß...durch die Natur des Dinges bestimmt erscheinen, welches man den freiwilligen Konsens des Dinges zu seiner Technik nennen könnte.... Die Technik ist überall etwas Fremdes, wo sie nicht aus dem Dinge selbst entsteht, nicht mit der ganzen Existenz desselben eins ist, nicht von innen heraus, sondern von außen hineinkommt, nicht dem Dinge notwendig und angeboren, sondern ihm gegeben und zufällig ist.¹¹

One could read Schiller's words here as projection of the idealist's notion of the autonomy of the subjects -- to accept nothing as true save what one has himself seen as true -- to the realm of nature. Just as the subject should not submit to any norm or law imposed on him from without, so too should nature refuse to allow herself to be raped by an imposed Technik. Yet Schiller does not write of autonomy, but of "*Heautonomie*," a concept through which he seeks to negate the moment of human *Willkür*. Consequently he goes on to write of the "*innere Notwendigkeit der Form*" of a thing. He continues: "Die Form muß im eigentlichsten Sinne zugleich selbstbestimmend und selbstbestimmt sein; nicht bloße Autonomie, sondern Heautonomie muß da sein... Was ist also Natur in der Kunstmäßigkeit? Autonomie der Technik? Sie ist die reine *Zusammenstimmung des inneren Wesens mit der Form, eine Regel, die von dem Dinge selbst*

¹¹ Friedrich Schiller, Briefwechsel, Munich 1957, 23.2.1793, S. 367. Cited in Dieter Jähnig, Schelling. Die Kunst in der Philosophie, Vol. 1, Schellings Begründung von Natur und Geschichte, Pfullingen 1966, p. 233.

zugleich befolgt und gegeben ist." And when it comes time for Schiller to provide an example of this Heautonomie, he of course turns to the aesthetic realm, insisting that only art represents the ideal blend of orderly form and sensuous appearance. This designation of art as the exemplar of Heautonomie implies that what Schiller is here talking about is not merely the organic power of nature for self-creation through its own inner laws and order. For this reason he writes:

Aus diesem Grunde ist in der Sinnenwelt nur das Schöne ein Symbol des in sich Vollendeten oder das Vollkommen, weil es nicht wie das Zweckmäßige auf etwas außer sich braucht bezogen zu werden, sondern sich selbst zugleich gebietet und gehorcht und sein eigenes Gesetz vollbringt."¹²

¹² Ibid., s. 368f.

The most important aspect of what Schiller has to say to concerns the idea of a utopia of consummate harmony, which also manifests itself in Schelling's philosophy of art: art represents as it were the liberation of nature through a Technik, which would also be the most appropriate determination of nature itself. Because nature cannot step outside of itself of its own accord -- it follows its own laws unconsciously --, this Technik can only be the product of human knowledge, a knowledge that knows what the inner essence of a thing is, in order that it finds an adequate form for it. These ideas of Schiller, Adorno and Schelling are expressions of a need for harmony or of a longing for redemption, which has as its content the central thought that nature shall be liberated from its ambiguity through a Technik, which, as the medium of liberation, is itself already free of ambiguity.¹³

The same longing for redemption emerges from Adorno's specific analysis of the phenomenality of the beauty of nature. Such beauty only exists for Adorno to the *degree* which "something non-artefactual has the capacity to speak" (AT 104) to us from out of nature, and he calls this speaking of nature its *Ausdrück*.¹⁴ The idea of speech and expression of course

¹³ This is yet another essential correspondence between Adorno and Schelling regarding what makes both the subjective activity and the product of this activity art. For the latter the decisive characteristic of a work of art is that although it is created with conscious activity, it becomes more than merely derivative of that intentional action. The unconscious joins in with subjective activity and combines with it to form an indissoluble unity. That which Schelling denotes with the concepts of the 'conscious' and the 'unconscious' Adorno indicates with the Greek terms for humanly reasoned positing (thesis) and natural conception (physis): "Thoroughly *thesei* and human, the work of art is the representative of what is *physei*, what is more than mere subjectivity, a thing in itself in the Kantian sense" (AT 93). Adorno here provides material for a direct comparison with Schelling, by specifying an unconscious force of nature active in the creation of an artwork. In Greek *physei* means: naturally, from and of nature, while *ta physei* denotes a product of nature. From this we can see that for both Adorno and Schelling the essence of art lies in its antsubjective origin, that is, its essence lies in its natural component. In artifacts art represents but the 'first nature,' but in the achievement of artistic mediation -- in contrast to that of philosophy -- the artwork attains to 'second nature,' so that the latter becomes the potentate of the former. And this second nature only comes to be when in the process of artistic creation the subjective intentions of the artist are transcended.

¹⁴ Once again, the translation fails to capture Adorno's words in German: "ein nicht von Menschen Gemachtes

necessitates a subject to whom such communication is directed; it would seem to presuppose a dialogical relation between nature and its other in which such communication could take place. Adorno however appears to contradict this when, in distinguishing his notion of phenomenality from that of Hegel's, he quotes Hegel's contention that: "The beauty of nature is beautiful only for another, i.e., for *us*, for the mind which apprehends beauty" (AT 110), only to reply that "This already misses the essence of natural beauty, which is the anamnesis of something that is more than just *für Anderes*" (AT 110). In other words, Adorno ascribes to the dignity of the beauty of nature the status of an *Ansichseiendes*, which "presents itself independently of the subject as something which is in no way made by that subject (AT 111). Taken at face value, one could dismiss Adorno's contention as the restatement of the truism that nature is not the product of human activity; for if nature *an sich* is not the product of human activity, and the *beauty* of nature is also not the product of man, then how does one distinguish between the two levels of fundament and expression, between nature and its beauty?

Adorno never adequately provides such an explanation or a criterion to distinguish between these two dimensions. Instead, he provides more of an historical account of how, in light of our changed relation to nature, we have now come to see what Hegel could not have. Analogous to the Copernican Revolution, perhaps the beauty of nature has always been an *Ansichseiendes*, yet due to mankind's limited understanding of nature, we have failed to perceive it as such; that only with the distancing from nature brought on by the ever increasing rationalization of the world are we now in the position to see the beauty of nature for what it has

spricht" (AT 111).

always been. But more important is that in claiming that the beauty of Nature is an *Ansichseiende*, Adorno lifts himself out of the realm of relativity and posits an absolute point of reference around which his *aesthetic theory* revolves. And it is from this point of reference that we are to understand the beauty of nature as a "zwingend Verbindliches" and as an "Unverständliches, das seine Auflösung fragend erwartet" (AT 111). And once again, we encounter the rhetoric of salvation and redemption.

Adorno describes in how one perceives and comes to terms with the beauty of nature in his typically paradoxical manner, which in essence echoes the epistemological dynamic laid out by Schelling, in that one must unconsciously lose oneself in nature, while simultaneously not surrendering the exertion of thinking: "Unconscious apperception knows nature's beauty better than does the ever-ready verbal ecstasy. It is the continuity of unconscious apperception that makes these, at times sudden, glimpses into nature possible. The more intensely you behold nature, the less conscious you are of its beauty except if you had already grasped that beauty by some intuitive means" (AT 102). But of course, receptivity is itself dumb if it is purely involuntary. Adorno accordingly qualifies his position by emphasizing the need for a countervailing thrust of directed thought:

"Kann man aber Nature gleichsam nur blind sehen, so sin bewußtlose Wahrnehmung und Erinnerung, ästhetisch unabdingbar, zugleich archaische Rudimente, unvereinbar mit steigender Mündigkeit. Pure Unmittelbarkeit reicht zur ästhetischen Erfahrung nicht aus. Sie bedarf neben dem Unwillkürlichen auch Willkür, Konzentration des Bewußtseins; der Widerspruch ist nicht fortzuschaffen. Konsequent fortschreitend erschließt alles Schöne

sich der Analyse, die es wiederum der Unwillkürlichkeit zubringt, und die vergebens wäre, wohnte ihr nicht versteckt das Moment des Unwillkürlichen inne...Analyse terminiert in einem Schönen, so wie es der vollkommenen und selbstvergessenen bewußtlosen Wahrnehmung erscheinen müßte" (AT 108f).¹⁵

The entire chapter on the beauty of nature explores and confronts this irreducible contradiction inherent in our thought processes. Adorno's skepticism is almost total regarding the ability of the concept to objectively express what Adorno passionately believes needs to be expressed, namely the truth: "Die Hegelsche Bewegung des Begriffs sucht das unmittelbar nicht aussprechbare Wahre in der Benennung des Partikularen, Begrenzten: des Toten und Falschen" (AT 116). If one can only speak of that which allows itself to be objectified, and if one can objectify only that which exists, then given the inadequacy of the relation of the concept to the beauty of nature, Adorno must look for a different medium of objectification.

In this sense, Adorno's philosophy presents a spirit of inquiry that, directly opposed to Wittgenstein's prohibition, feels compelled or driven *zu sagen, was sich nicht sagen läßt*. The

¹⁵ Adorno repeats this same point in a different guise when he argues that art must present more than merely the sensible translation of a thought or idea: "Wie wenig der Wahrheitsgehalt mit der subjektiven Idee, der Intention des Künstlers zusammenfällt, zeigt die einfachste Überlegung. Kunstwerke existieren, in denen der Künstler, was er wollte, rein und schlackenlos herausbrachte,...[so daß] das Resultat zu mehr nicht geriet als zum Zeichen dessen, was er sagen wollte, und dadurch verarmt zur verschlüsselten Allegorie. Sie stirbt ab, sobald Philologen aus ihr wieder herausgepumpt haben, was die Künstler hineinpumpten, ein tautologisches Spiel..." (AT 195). Following the immanent logic of this excerpt, we need only add that works of art which are simply products of thought do not for this very reason exist as art. Nonetheless there are people who, precisely because they are uncertain as to what art is, are able to describe themselves as artists, and indeed through the fact that they explain their work to be art. This unfortunate phenomenon is most clearly evidenced in what has come to be known as 'conceptual art' which consists 90% of explanation and justification and of at best 3% material -- the rest is vacuous silence. Kafka persuasively presents and satirizes the self-appointment of the subject as artist in his tale of "*Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse*": Nüsse knacken als kunst.

expression of nature's beauty is indeed speechless, yet nonetheless articulate in the same sense that our eyes speak of joy or longing. Thus can Adorno write of the *Wanderers Nachtlied*, that "seine Sprache das Unsagbare der Sprache von Natur imitiert" (AT 114). The expression of what is beautiful in nature escapes every attempt by the concept to imprison it; and it is precisely this characteristic of nature's beauty to elude its imprisonment that defines the essence of Adorno's *Naturschönheit* as a regulative norm: "Wie in Musik blitzt, was schön ist, an der Natur auf, um sogleich zu verschwinden vor dem Versuch, es dingfest zu machen" (AT 113). This quality of the beauty of nature is best summed up by the following subheading in the *Aesthetic Theory*: "die bestimmten Unbestimmbarkeit." And Adorno does not restrict this constitutive quality of beauty to nature alone, but states that it applies to all "ästhetik insgesamt" (AT 113), for its "Gegenstand bestimmt sich als unbestimmbar, negativ. Deshalb bedarf Kunst der Philosophie, die sie interpretiert, um zu sagen, was sie nicht sagen kann, während es doch nur von Kunst gesagt werden kann, indem sie es nicht sagt" (AT 113). The paradoxical formulation is unavoidable: the difference between the speechless saying of the beautiful and the explicit talk of the concept cannot be bridged.

Yet this irreducible difference is not a justification for ignorance; it is a prodding to realize a learned ignorance. To know that something is incapable of being positively determined is quite different from simply not knowing anything about it. Someone who seeks to comprehend the autonomy of linguistic expression, must, like Wittgenstein, be thoroughly knowledgeable of the quality of conceptual, discursive speech. Adorno's linguistic efforts in this sense betray the

dynamic of drawing a boundary. But to know where a boundary is does not mean that this border is automatically crossed, and nor does it present a limit from which one must turn away from in resignation. Like Moses's relation to the Promised Land, Adorno knows where that limit is which he will never be able to cross, yet nonetheless he is capable of seeing beyond it.

Adorno's contention that art alone is capable of expressing the truth that we will never be able to say shows perhaps most clearly the metaphysical dimension of his aesthetic theory: metaphysics characterized by the notion of immanent transcendence. Works of art do not merely represent the *Ansichsein* of nature via the one-to-one modes of correspondence utilized by science, but rather make use of a *mimesis* whose dynamic emerges from the integration of the *physei* and *thesei* effected by the artist in the act of creation: "Je mehr Kunst als Objekt des Subjekts durchgebildet und dessen bloßen Intentionen entäußert wird, desto artikulierter spricht sie nach dem Modell einer nicht begrifflichen, nicht dingfest signifikativen Sprache" (AT 105). The moments of mediation and rationality are immanent and necessary components of Adorno's account of the creation of a work of art. Yet this mediation and rationality betray a fundamentally different character than they do in the realm of instrumental reason. Whereas Adorno denies these principles of subjective reason any possibility of redeeming value in the realm of technology, he asserts that only in work of art are they *aufgehoben* into a transformed *zweiten Natur* (AT 100). This figure of the 'radikalen Durchbildung des Werks durch das Subjekt' (the only positive redescription of the rational subject in Adorno's entire *Ästhetische Theorie*), permeates his theory, and presents a Hegelian picture of an *Aufhebung* in which in

order to transcend its current condition, the subject must drive itself to the most extreme limit of its condition: only in the *Durchbildung* to its outermost extremity does the individual work of art, as a product of the subject, approach the *Naturehaften an*.¹⁶ Adorno parts ways with the Hegelian schema however in that the ideal subjectification can only occur in the work of art, and not in the absolute concept. And this is the Schellingian turn of Adorno against Hegel: the work of art represents not only the perfected second nature and consummated subjectivity, but it does so only as something that has been discharged from the subject, and has therewith become an object that exists in its own right independent of the artist. Art is in this sense "die einzige Figur, in der etwas wie Sprache der Schöpfung widerscheint, mit der Paradoxie der Verstelltheit des Widerscheinenden" (AT 121). Both creation and nature are not the products of human production, but "Kunst möchte mit menschlichen Mitteln das Sprechen des nicht menschlichen realisieren" (AT 121). In the same way that Adorno speaks of a *Technik* appropriate to nature, -- a *Technik* that would help it to attain *wohin sie vielleicht möchte* --, he here refers the mute language of nature, and the ineffability of its beauty, to art, so that the latter can bring the former to expression.

¹⁶ AT 104,120,121,122,135,155 etc., etc.

Yet throughout his *Ästhetische Theorie* Adorno never fully accounts for how art and nature (or the objective and the subjective, freedom and necessity, intent etc.) *come together*, or, and this amounts to the same thing, what mechanism mediates between these two sets of opposed forces. Traditionally one has called upon the notion of the genius to account for and explain how the forces of these two realms are mediated. Yet Adorno never clearly states his position on this key explanatory concept. At times he suggests that the emergence of the term genius in philosophies of art relates to Schelling's and Hölderlin's call for a "new mythology" and aesthetic autonomy; the tension between art being a synthesis, which includes philosophy, of all the means of articulation of a community, and art saying what no other means of articulation can say. Adorno sees the notion of genius as becoming important at the moment when

The character of the authentic and the obligatory, and the freedom of the emancipated individual move apart from each other. The concept of genius is the attempt to bring the two together by a piece of magic (*AT* p. 253).

On this reading Adorno construes genius as a false reconciliation of the general and the individual. The 'authentic and the obligatory' corresponds to the new mythology, in that it suggests that the products of the genius point to a collectively binding sense of the value in the work of art of the kind seen in a theological culture. Thus, the 'emancipated individual' must be an illusion: the attempt to reconcile individual and general in modernity can only end in the suppression of the individual. Adorno must then force art to retreat into *autonomy* in order to resist such a false reconciliation and to preserve that which has been repressed in the enforced

reconciliation from being forgotten. The "genius is supposed to be the individual whose spontaneity coincides with the deed of the absolute subject" (*AT* 255), thereby, as it does in Schelling's *System*, playing the role of fulfilling the Idealist project.

The 'untruth' of the notion of genius also lies for Adorno in the way that it ignores that works of art are not living organisms: art is *Schein*, appearance, not a real reconciliation of self and nature. Furthermore, the technical side of aesthetic production depends upon the preceding *social* labor of others who establish the forms within which the supposedly authentic and autonomous artist works.

Adorno, however, is also aware of that side of the notion of genius which is important for his theory of aesthetics: "Despite all misuse...the concept of genius reminds one that the subject in the work of art is not wholly reducible to the objectification [i.e. the work of art itself]" (*ibid.*). Adorno retains from the Idealist position the vestiges of a conception of the reconciliation of nature and consciousness. The ambiguity inherent in Adorno's position comes out in the following passage, which questions the use of the term genius by insisting upon the prior material and technical basis of artistic production: "The whole *Appassionata* lies in the keyboard of every piano, the composer only has to get it out, and for that one admittedly needs Beethoven" (*AT* p. 403). Adorno's failure to give an adequate account of what he means by the 'Beethoven' required to get the *Appassionata* out of the piano suggests why the notion of genius should not be dismissed too lightly. It may not deserve the dignity Schelling affords it, but it does point, as Adorno seems aware, to one of the ways in which aesthetics is irreducible to conceptual

articulation, and is thus able to suggest that what is beyond conceptuality may not be inaccessible.

A further problem Adorno expresses in relation to Schelling's program in the *System of 1800* is that it views the work of art produced by the genius in terms of organic unity and self-containment: it is an image of the aims of Idealist philosophy. From our contemporary perspective, it seems clear that the Idealist version of aesthetics makes less sense than some of the ideas of the Romantics Novalis and Schlegel. The romantic conception of the unrepresentability of the Absolute led to the idea that the work of art always pointed to its own incompleteness, while also suggesting what is beyond it. This opens up the characteristic sense in modernist art of a continual striving for something which is never really achieved, but which is the motor of aesthetic production. In the *System of 1800*, we have obvious problems with the description of an art in which "Every drive to produce stops with the completion of the product, all contradictions are negated, all puzzles solved" (I/3 p. 615/683). The description sounds exactly like a description of ideology, the reconciliation of contradiction in an illusory form, or like the 'imaginary' in the sense which Hölderlin describes how the I regressively ignores the necessity really to engage with the otherness of the object.

The issue is, though, more complex than this: Hölderlin himself, of course, saw a way *out* of the imaginary in art. In considering the organic view of the work of art, it is important to remember that Schelling does not attribute a functional role to the aesthetic. This leads him in the direction of aesthetic autonomy. Like Kant, who insisted it be without 'interest,' Schelling

regards the demand that art be useful as "only possible in an age which locates the highest efforts of the human spirit in economic discoveries" (I/3 p. 622/690). As Kant did in the third *Critique*, Schelling shows a prophetic awareness of the dangers of modern rationalization. This becomes a central concern of Marxist theorists who, like Adorno, see the importance of Marx's critique of commodity exchange, the valuation of everything in terms of its equivalence to something else, as the vital issue in aesthetic theory. Schelling is, as Adorno will be, concerned to preserve a sphere of meaning that cannot be subsumed into the demands of scientific or economic rationality. In the *System of 1800*, the work of art's self-contained organic status means that its purpose lies within it and need not be sought elsewhere. As such, the organic is vital to sustaining the aesthetic as a sphere whose value lies within itself. One should not, for example, underestimate the importance of some notion of organic coherence in musical works, which, because they do not function in terms of representation, cannot derive their logic from outside themselves.

The misuse of organic conceptions of art to legitimate reactionary political views of course, has been a constant factor in political life since this period. The reactionary notion of organicism subordinates urgent political and social conflicts that are directly or indirectly apparent in aesthetic works to the demand that we should contemplate the unity the human spirit is capable of in artistic production. All critical and analytical approaches to art come to be seen as infringing on the integrity of the artistic totality, which thereby takes on the status of a quasi-ritual object. More recently, Brecht and others have rightly questioned the organic view of the

work of art. There is, though, another dimension to the argument, which can be illustrated by considering a long passage from a letter of Hölderlin's to his brother in 1799, not long before the appearance of Schelling's *System*. In this letter, Hölderlin points to a view of aesthetics that is often underestimated in reflections on aesthetics and politics, particularly by those who see art almost exclusively through the lens of ideology. This again involves the tension between the desire for the "new mythology" and the emergence of aesthetic autonomy.

Hölderlin's letter is a critique of German society, pointing to its narrow-mindedness and lack of awareness of the need for a community if individuals are to flourish. Hölderlin sees some hope in the liberation suggested in Kantian philosophy, and in the growth of interest in the political concerns of the community. This is, though, not enough. He goes on to attack the way the importance of art in public life is underestimated, which he sees as evident in the view of art as play or game:

one took [art] as a game because it appears in the modest form of the game, and so also, reasonably enough, no other effect could result from it than that of the game, i.e. *Zerstreuung*, almost the exact opposite of its effect when it is present in its true nature. For then people compose themselves in it and it gives them peace, not empty but living peace, where all powers are alert and are only not recognized as active because of their inner harmony. It draws people closer and brings them together, not in the manner of the game, where they are only unified by the fact that they forget themselves and nobody's

living particularity is able to appear.¹⁷

Whereas philosophical-political education can unify people in the recognition of duty and the law, far more is needed if a harmonious community is to be established.

A sense of what this might be is present in the organic unity of the work of art. Hölderlin concludes his letter with a passionate political affirmation, which clearly relates to the nature of his own poetry, of the need to

Bring every human in us and others into ever freer and profounder connection, be it in aesthetic representation or in the real world, and if the realm of darkness should break in with *violence*, then we will throw the pen under the table and go in God's name to where the need is greatest, and where we are most needed.¹⁸

While one is again confronted with the hyperbolic construal of the aesthetic, the essential point is political.

The political potential of the semantic resources which Hölderlin sees in art's ability to achieve organic cohesion are those which Ernst Bloch, himself profoundly influenced by Schelling, saw as lacking in the Left's armory in the fight against Fascism. It is, therefore, not always clear that the organic implications of the aesthetic theory present in Schelling's *System* are politically reactionary. Bloch's argument was that if the Nazis, however temporarily and deceptively, fulfilled real needs, there is no point in trying to conjure these needs away. Modernity inherently produces a need to unify the results of the essentially random proliferation

¹⁷ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke Briefe Dokumente*, Munich 1963, p. 755. Cited in Dieter Jähmig, *Schelling. Die Kunst in der Philosophie*, Vol. 1, *Schellings Begründung von Natur und Geschichte*, Pfullingen 1966, p. 233.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

of reflexive knowledge with the texts of meaning of everyday life and the unfulfilled hopes and desires of that life. Art is one of the areas in which such unification can be felt.

The question is whether this is just a retreat into the imaginary. The stringency of Adorno is based upon his sense, in the light of his experience of historical catastrophe, that such a unification is always a deception. This leads him to the insistence upon aesthetic autonomy, in order to preserve a sphere of meaning which cannot be subsumed into any other. Within that sphere it is, though, noticeable that he uses attenuated notions of organic coherence: without any sense of possible unity the very possibility of meaning disappears for Adorno. In the Germany of the time of Schelling's *System*, organic notions have the character of a utopian hope rather than of self-deception.

It remains to be seen whether Schelling or Adorno's approach to art is better suited to account for how we *do* and *should* relate to art. I would contend that Adorno's zeal to inoculate thought from the totalizing and idolatrous effects of organic wholeness actually aids the totalizing forces of society, in so far as Adorno's negative theology of meaning creates a *vacuum of meaning* which the reactionary forces of the Right welcome with all too open arms. The issue is one of human need: do we require a way of integrating and making whole the disparate waves of information forced upon us in today's Information Age? Or can we live as a Beckett or Adorno in a state of hyper-lucidity that sees through what they contend is the illusive promise of coherence? Which course of action is the most successful in the political arena and which course of action has been the most successful in terms of providing a means for liberation in this

century? It is obvious that those leaders who have been capable of providing a coherent framework for meaning have been the most successful, and this includes both Hitler and Gandhi, Mao and Martin Luther King. Success does not determine what is right or wrong. Rather it shows which approach satisfies or fulfills a real human need that can only be denied at the cost of making oneself politically and socially ineffectual, and thus irrelevant.

Adorno's aesthetic theory is a *negative* theology of a desecularized Utopia. As such, it fails to provide, as Schelling's philosophy of art did, any *positive* account of art's power to liberate and transform our reality. Instead, art for Adorno exists merely to critique and expose illusory conceptions and provide a negative account of what our reality should not be. But whereas the *via negativa* of the Western mystical traditions always had a *positive* experiential content to fall back on, i.e., their vision of the way things should be was *too wonderful* to be adequately described, Adorno fails to provide any positive account that might offer grounds for hope. Consider a Martin Luther King who, even as a victim of America's system of apartheid, -- and thus quite familiar with historical catastrophe --, was still capable of expressing his dream of how reality should be transformed in terms positive enough to unite and motivate one of the more effective and liberating mass movements of this century. And yes, Mr. King made use of "totalizing images" from the archaic and mythical Bible. But did he not employ these images to critique and transform the way we understand and perceive justice, and indeed, perhaps in a manner true to the spirit of their author's intent? Or consider King's predecessor and model, Mahatma Gandhi, and his use of the traditional vocabularies of his subcontinent's religions to

unite and mobilize his people in their peaceful efforts to win their right to self-determination. The point is a truism: the use of such traditional and coherent frameworks of meaning can be either used properly or misused. Hitler and Goebbels misused them, King and Gandhi did not. But what is unavoidable is that the risk must be taken to try to use them properly to *transform our reality*. This was obviously a risk, however, that Adorno was never willing to take, as the experience of his last years in Germany shows in practice, and as his aesthetics justifies in theory.