

**53rd Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 22st August 2013**  
**FACTS ARE NOTHING BUT FACTS**  
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1. Adorno considers the work of art to be the scene of a conflictual mediation between society and art, or between immanence and transcendence.
2. Art can only surpass its own limits by entering into itself. In its interior, it encounters “its latent social contents.” To “go within itself in order to transcend itself” is, or should be, the achievement of art.<sup>1</sup>
3. This can mean, first of all, to encounter within immanence a transcendence which is implicit in it; and secondly, to sense the originary impact of social externality in the pure, supposedly untouched internality which indicates an intrinsic transcendence, an interiority which is detached from the world.
4. The difference between immanence and transcendence may also be observed in the contrast between nature and culture and in the tension between natural beauty and artistic beauty.
5. Whoever begins to dissolve this tension in favor of one of its poles betrays them both, for they are only what they are through and in this tension.
6. Enlightened thought begins with a refusal to flee before the irreducible conflict between nature and culture, between primary and secondary.
7. Primary nature and secondary nature are in themselves illusory. To replace the phantasm of unmediated nature with the ideology of consistent culture can only be an expression of a refusal to think.
8. In a text from 1968, Adorno addressed this refusal under the name of a secondary naiveté: “Today there exists among artists a sort of secondary naiveté, not only the primary and unjustifiably renowned instinctiveness, but also one suggesting to the artist that the reified, commodifying operation to which he is bound is divinely mandated, is absolute in its nature. This is the naiveté of the individual who, without giving the matter much thought, behaves in accordance with the dictates of the culture industry.”<sup>2</sup>
9. Transcendence can be a synonym for resistance!
10. Instead of submitting to the structured immanence which constitutes established reality, of succumbing to the universe of factuality, to the industry of factuality, art implies resistance to the given, the issuance of an appeal to the unconceived.
11. At least two ideologies must be disarmed: on the one hand, the naturalistic ideology, the phantasm of authenticity and purity which is attached to the cult of immediacy and the belief in the unmediated; on the other hand, the submissive masochism of factuality.
12. The masochist of factuality is a subject corresponding to Nietzsche's ultimate human

being; his disappointment is absolute, it serves him as religion after the demise of religion, as a libidinally suffused substitute for faith.

13. Adorno's conceptual gesture is always this double one which rejects simple realism and simple idealism in favor of a respectively expanded concept of realism and idealism in the name of that which he considers to be implicit incommensurability, in favor of an existing entity "which is not absorbed by existence, by empiricism."
14. For here is "what is essential about art, what is not the case with it, what is incommensurable with the empirical measure of all things," because it indicates the introjection of the new into the familiar, as invention amid the already extant, in a creative mode: "Art is actually the world once again, both identical and non-identical with it."<sup>3</sup>
15. The work of art belongs to the empirical-social sphere, inasmuch as it marks out a separation from it.
16. Evidently belonging to it is a critical distance from the world of options, evidences, and valences.
17. Art maintains a critical perspective toward the social-symbolical reality of facts without contesting its facticity.
18. The work of art participates in this reality by withdrawing from it to the extent of an infinitesimal quantum.
19. It must maintain an opposition in order to remain art, but it is not allowed to deny its fusion with social-empirical realities in order to indulge in an idealistic abandonment of the world.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, Gesammelte Schriften 7, Frankfurt am Main. 1970, p. 386.
- 2 Theodor W. Adorno, "Musik im Fernsehen ist Brimborium"[1968], in *ibid.*, *Musikalische Schriften VI*, Gesammelte Schriften 19, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, p. 567.
- 3 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, loc. cit., p. 499.
- 4 Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie. Zwölf theoretische Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p. 146 ff. "The deficient relationship of an art to what is outside it, to that which lies within it but is not itself art, threatens it in its inner constitution, whereas the social will which claims to heal it thereof inevitably damages what is best about it: autonomy, consistency, integrity."