

56th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 25th August 2013
EXCESS AS DECONSTRUCTION
Marcus Steinweg

1. In the opening to where it has long since already been admitted, the dimension of constituted certainties and valencies, art is pushed to the limit not only of the space of facts but also of its concept and its form of appearance hitherto.
2. It is an excess marking its unbounding from its border, its openness to formlessness, whose bearer it remains.
3. Art is an assertion of form generating itself in an opening to formlessness.¹
4. No matter whether this formlessness be society as an overly complex, intracontradictory space of facts (the zone of sociohistorico-symbolic evidence), or whether it be the point of inconsistency within this domain, the incommensurability commensurable with formlessness.
5. Art is not an escape from it; it formulates its claim to autonomy in the midst of the world of determinants in order, in an opening to heteronomy, to escape this world's phantasmagoric mistaking of itself.
6. Just as there is freedom only under conditions of factual unfreedom, sovereign independence only under conditions of its absence, autonomy becomes a demand and necessity only in the field of factual heteronomy.
7. Theodor W. Adorno never ceases to plead for the possibility of aesthetic autonomy in its opening to its impossibility.
8. Thus he becomes the advocate of a possible impossibility.
9. Art's "inescapable affirmative essence"² must turn against its distorted image, against the idealist temptation to locate art somewhere beyond the world of facts.
10. Affirmation is not naïveté or approval.
11. Affirmation is invention and construction.
12. The artwork's affirmative intensity implies a double gesture comprising the acknowledgment of its historicity as well as the courage not to enclose itself smugly within the critical, reflexive reassurance of its resultant status, which demands its opening up to the inconsistency of the web of determinants.
13. Facts are nothing but facts: art knows that knowledge is not everything, that the artist's responsibility begins with building up an affirmative resistance against all kinds of vulgar materialism and positivism, at the same time suspending all kinds of idealism, promising it a reality beyond this single, unique reality, in order finally to dehistoricize it completely.
14. Realism and idealism are pseudoalternatives for the history of philosophy, for philosophical aesthetics, for art.

1 Cf. Marcus Steinweg, *Behauptungsphilosophie* (Berlin: Merve, 2006).

2 Adorno, "Art, Society, Aesthetics," in *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 2.