

ART AND PHILOSOPHY IN ADORNO: THEIR DIFFERENCE AND INSEPARABILITY

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POZO, A. G.: Art and Philosophy in Adorno: Their Difference and Inseparability
FILOZOFIA 67, 2012, No 9, p. 819

Like the aesthetics of Hegel and Heidegger Adorno's aesthetics also affirms the philosophical relevance of art. But the peculiarity of the Adornian comprehension of aesthetics is in his defending the separation art and philosophy and at the same times their permanent relationship. They are different but inseparable. Art is relevant to philosophical reflection, while philosophy needs the dialectic discovered in the artistic mimesis.

Keywords: Adorno – Hegel – Heidegger – Art – Philosophy – Dialectics

I. Art and philosophy in Hegel and in Heidegger

Adorno's aesthetic theory understands the nature and the current philosophical status of aesthetics, beyond the aesthetic approaches of Hegel and of Heidegger. Nevertheless, Adorno's aesthetic theory joins in principle with the fundamental thesis of Hegel and of Heidegger in the sense of affirming the philosophical and ontological relevance of art, opposite to the other perspective that has largely configured the modern understanding of the aesthetics, the one that starting from Kant and that passing to Kierkegaard, culminates in the Positivism. Kant finally granted the rights of the knowledge and the truth to the science exclusively, affirming that the aesthetic judgement – the art – does not contribute any knowledge about their objects (Kant, 32). Art would rather have to do with the feeling of life. Kant inaugurated the understanding of art like game, gratuitous and disinterested activity, understanding that culminated in the positivism of Spencer and Taine, where art – already constituted in mere vital tonic, irrational matter left to the wild arbitrariness of the fantasy – becomes pure game, nothing serious, secondary activity opposite to science. For this reason it is not strange that the modern thought has mainly put to bed the philosophy on the side of the science (Descartes, Kant or Husserl), nor that when the inadequacy of the scientific/rational thought has been recognized philosophy had come closer to religion (Kierkegaard) than to art. What Adorno condemns is that when philosophy has come closer to art and not to religion it has made it in an inappropriate way, as if the art and the intuition possessed some preference type with regard to the science and to the concept, and therefore in detriment – as we will see – of philosophy like conceptual thought. As an expression of totality art claims “the dignity of the absolute”, and for this

reason has occasionally – like in the case of Schelling or Heidegger – led philosophy to rank it higher than conceptual knowledge.¹

Hegel and Heidegger – saving the enormous differences between one and other – reacted against this positivist understanding of art. Hegel affirms that art is worthy of philosophical treatment and, if it is so, it is due to that is not neither simple vital tonic, nor a pleasing play; the art is not the field of irrationality but rather, together with religion and philosophy, it is simply “one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interest of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit” (Hegel 1820, 14-16, 20-21). They are manifestations of the spirit, that is to say, ways of making conscious its supreme interests, and each one of them makes it according to their particular nature. In short, art (beautiful) is characterized for Hegel as “the pure appearance of the Idea to sense (*sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*)” (Hegel 1820, 151). Certainly Hegel, in contrast to Kant, when making of art an expression of the spirit, an spirit whose essence is the thought, he linked it to the knowledge and the truth, so that he perceived the philosophical relevance of aesthetics. On the other hand, for Heidegger the essential nature of art would then be this: “the setting-itself-to-work of the truth of beings (*sich-ins-Werk-Setzen der Wahrheit des Seienden*)” (Heidegger 1935, 25, 58, 64). The work of art is not the reproduction of an entity that happens to be present. It is the reproduction of the thing’s general essence. The nature of art is the truth of beings setting itself to work. For Heidegger, art is “the becoming and happening of truth”; and Heidegger adds that all art, as “the letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings, is in essence, poetry” (Heidegger 1935, 59, 64). The occurrence or happening of truth in a work is the creative bringing forth of a unique being – it occurs once and only once. Definitely Hegel and Heidegger reaffirm the seriousness of art, its epistemological and ontological reach. Adorno also sustains that art, far from being the place of the irrationality, it is rather a “complex nexus (*Komplexion*) of truth” (Adorno 1969, 391), and only for that reason he considers possible an ‘aesthetic theory’, a ‘theory’ (rational) on the aesthetic, what it would be impossible if art were an irrational field. Because art is essentially spiritual, Adorno says, it cannot be purely intuitive. It must also be thought: “art itself thinks”, art judges, says but “wordlessly (*wortlos*)”; its thought, its logic is neither conceptual nor judicative (Adorno 1969, 152, 162). Art is a non-conceptual, non-representative knowledge (Sherratt, 174). So that art is not mere vital or emotional stimulant, it not only makes us to laugh or to cry: above all, art makes us think. Now then, to this the resemblance of the Adorno’s aesthetics is limited with those of Hegel and Heidegger. The peculiarity of the Adornian understanding of aesthetics is beginning to take shape in the relationship between art and philosophy, a relationship that is the one that underlies to all truly philosophical understanding of aesthetics. The status and the nature of aesthetics are in fact elucidated to the edge of the

¹Another thing is represented by Hegel, whose valuation and recovery of the artistic thing have been done previous subordination to the philosophical thing, to the conceptual thing. Therefore Hegel has not been located very far from the predominant attitude in the modernity that favours the primacy of science (Adorno 1947, 36).

relationship between art and philosophy. In other words: all aesthetics contains like an essential feature a certain way to understand the relationship art-philosophy.

Hegel and Heidegger save art, they legitimate its seriousness, they underline its epistemological and ontological competence. But, according to Adorno, their proposals outline some inconveniences. Let us consider the Hegelian aesthetic program especially. Hegel esteems the art as much as less game and vital tonic, and the more knowledge and serious activity he believes that it is, paradoxically he considers it more inessential opposite to the philosophy, up to the point to finally dissolve it into philosophy, and to transform it into: “art is a thing of the past (*ein Vergangenes*)” (Hegel 1820, 25). But this paradox stops being if we bear in mind that Hegel, far from defending the peculiarity of the artistic knowledge in contrast to the philosophical one, he measures art from the pattern of the philosophy already configured in model of art. Hegel has so much put to bed art on the side of the philosophical and conceptual knowledge, and he has defended so little its specificity that the outcome could not be another than the overcoming of art (intuition) through philosophy (concept). Certainly, when the purpose is to manifest ideas and to express the spirit, that is to say, that the spirit takes self-conscience, when this is the fact, art – that truly represents another thing – is in disadvantage regarding the philosophical concept, because the form of artistic expression is sensitive and not all spiritual content can be sensibly expressed. The sensitive character of art forces it to be limited to manifest a certain stadium of the truth, of the self-conscience of the spirit. What art (sensible intuition) does – an expression of ideas – the philosophy (concept) – better, more appropriately – does too. Apart from that sensitive understanding of the truth, Hegel affirms the existence of a deeper understanding of the truth, the one of the reflexive thought, the philosophical one. For us, Hegel writes, “art counts no longer as the highest mode in which truth fashions an existence for itself”; for Hegel “it is just as necessary to remember that neither in content nor in form is art the highest and absolute mode of bringing to our minds the true interest of the spirit”: “The peculiar nature of artistic production and of works of art no longer fills our highest need” (Hegel 1820, 23-25, 140-141). Thought and reflection finally have spread their wings above fine art, and therefore the science of art has greater priority than does art itself. Art, then, turns to be something superfluous, unnecessary, being overcome by philosophy. Art, according to Hegel, dies for superfluity. From the moment philosophical that Hegel conceived the work of art *more* as symbol of an idea it was dictated its sentence of death. In definitive, Hegel saves the epistemological relevance of art transforming it into philosophy, in imitation of philosophical knowledge. The recovery of the epistemological value of art practiced by Hegel ends up in the statement that the aesthetics (science of art) is worth more than the own art. The Hegelian authentication of the seriousness of art through philosophy ends up costing to art its own life. The case of Hegel teaches to Adorno and in general to a contemporary aesthetics that the salvation of art cannot be made without the own art, that is to say, the salvation has to come from the statement of the peculiarity of its non-discursive knowledge and it cannot be imported from philosophy.

If in Hegel the philosophy finally substituted art overcoming it, in Heidegger it is art

which ‘overcomes’ the philosophy. In the Heideggerian thought, according to Adorno, philosophy finishes constituting on the pattern of art. After the crisis of reason and of the scientific/rational culture, that is to say, after the crisis of the metaphysical/humanist culture, Adorno thinks that the Heidegger’s philosophy does not find another possible way of survival but to imitate art, already transformed into model of the philosophy. The rational or conceptual knowledge of philosophy is abandoned by the poetic knowledge of art previously dehumanized and conceived as the being’s word. Philosophy, conceptualizing thought, in opinion of Heidegger, is the “enemy of thinking” (Heidegger 1947, 79), of the poetic thinking of art still hidden but that it will finish supplanting the objectifying thought of the concept. Heidegger opposes art and philosophy (as discursive knowledge), and that is the way how grants ontological and epistemological relevance to art. This is the reason of the Heideggerian sentence of aesthetics, since this consists for Heidegger on the impossible desire of thinking art conceptually, a desire that represents one more form of the humanist/metaphysical thought for him. Aesthetics is the humanist/metaphysical way of treating the phenomenon of art, that is to say, a humanization of a proper ontological phenomenon as art that it is a poem written by the being. The aesthetics of Hegel is its last and more accomplished exponent (Heidegger 1935, 68-69). However, Adorno sustains in favour of the maintenance of the separation of spheres, that art is not – neither it can be, nor it should be – “model of philosophy (*philosophisches Maß*)” (Adorno 1962–1964, 167). Adorno thinks that “a philosophy that tried to imitate art, that would turn itself into a work of art, would be expunging itself” (Adorno 1966, 27). Its affinity to art does not entitle it to borrow from art, least of all by virtue of the intuitions. The concept is the organon of philosophical thinking. Philosophy cannot survive outside of the circles of the concept. The case of Heidegger teaches to a modernized aesthetics – Adorno’s negative aesthetics – that it is not enough to affirm the peculiarity of the artistic knowledge in contrast to the conceptual one, but rather it is also necessary to avoid that the statement takes with itself the suppression of the discursive knowledge of philosophy.² Definitively,

² But this interpretation that Adorno makes of Heidegger’s thought is, in my opinion, wrong. Heidegger really does not eliminate philosophy (conceptual thinking) to force it to imitate art. He rather pretends achieving a new – and poetical- philosophy that does not imply the annihilation of the rational and conceptual thinking, but rather its replacement or rooting in its originary womb: the *logos mitopoietico*. Only the pattern of rationality ‘modern’ and the philosophy and the technique that accompany it, that have forgotten their *poiético* origin, that is to say, that they have forgotten that they are functions of the *aletheia*, of the revealing of the being, they are only the enemies of thinking. Then it is not to suppress them, but of returning them to their original source. The Heideggerian proposal supposes the suppression of the division between art and philosophy, and its result is the poetic thinking, a thinking where reason and poetry would reach a peaceful coexistence. This interpretation of Heidegger nevertheless would collide again head-on with the position of Adorno, for whom the separation between art and philosophy – something irreversible – bases on the same structure of the conscience, divided in two different and irreducible dimensions: a mimetic/expressive, ‘artistic’ one, and another conceptual one, ‘philosophical’. From there that Adorno underrates in principle any philosophical project that is sustained about the hope of finding in the conscience hidden sources that liberate us of the objectifying or conceptualizing thinking, and that they open the possibility of a new and different thinking for us

according to Adorno, Hegel overvalued the rational or conceptual knowledge in detriment of the epistemological particularity of art; Heidegger does the same thing with the poetic knowledge in detriment of the philosophical/discursive one. What both, Hegel and Heidegger, teach to aesthetics is that this has to be mounted on the base of the avoidance of the confusion of spheres between art and philosophy, of the reduction or absorption of one for another. This is the direction that Adorno follows. Therefore, the elements of departure of the Adornian foundation of aesthetics are the following. First, art has epistemological relevance, it is a knowledge linked to the truth; second, it is a peculiar knowledge, not discursive; and in third place, that knowledge exists beside the philosophical knowledge. In Adorno's thought, the determination of the status of aesthetics is forged on the explanation of this last element, the relationship between art and philosophy.

II. Artistic mimesis as dialectics

Hegel has understood the essence (dialectical) of the aesthetic, but far from developing it and from displaying his aesthetics and his philosophy all in agreement with it, he has drowned it and betrayed it with another philosophical impulse of a contrary nature (the principle of identity), leaving it as something only initiated, a tendency, that certainly Adorno recovers and that he takes as central element of his philosophic thought (Wellmer, 138-176). The phenomenology of art that Hegel practiced, and that it had served him as base to develop a truly dialectical thought, it was subjected at the philosophical principle of the identity, and so what miscarried that dialectical possibility denaturalising it in a positive dialectics, being founded on the principle of identity, just the opposite to the dialectic. A dialectics founded about the identity is not dialectical. Indeed, Hegel has conceived art, religion and philosophy, above all, as three positions, or attitudes, of thought with relation to objectivity (*Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*) (Hegel 1817, § 2-4, 25-26, 74).³ In short, art and artworks (the aesthetic moment of the conscience), by springing from and being created by the spirit, are themselves of a spiritual kind. In the products of art, the spirit has to do solely with its own. For Hegel thinking (Concept) is what constitutes the inmost essential nature of spirit. But, Hegel writes, "works of art are not thought or the Concept, but a development of the Concept out of itself, a shift of the Concept from its own ground to that of sense (*Entfremdung zum Sinnlichen*)" (Hegel 1820, 28). The art is born of the spirit and it is of spiritual nature, but in the work of art the spirit reaches the non-spiritual, the sensible/material. Hegel affirms that the essence of the spirit is the thought. So, we can assure that in the aesthetic experience the thought thinks what is not thought, the reality *other*. The aesthetic experience is dialectical, in it the spirit comes out of itself and finds its other one, it penetrates in the matter. Adorno thinks also that dialectics does not give any instructions for the treatment of art, but inheres in it (Adorno 1969, 211). What is immanent to art, therefore, dialectics, it is but the

(Adorno 1962-64, 81; 1966, 26).

³Adorno will later insist on the same thing, he will say that "the aesthetics is not a theory of art, but, in words of Hegel, a certain position of the thought before objectivity" (Adorno 1931, 262).

statement of the permanent tension between subject and object, spirit and matter, thought and real thing, irreducible one to other, but also inseparable, existing in constant reciprocal reference. Neither dualism nor absorption or identification: dialectics.

The dialectics as long as opposed principle to the identity – that does not leave from itself –, and as statement of the other thing, it is what allows philosophy to truly be philosophy, that is, thought of the concrete, of the thing itself, phenomenology. Here it is pointed the philosophical transcendency of the aesthetics discovered by Adorno: aesthetics is the characteristic field of the dialecticity. Therefore, in art the spirit exists in permanent excursion toward what is not itself. Adorno has referred to this dialectical activity that characterizes art under the name of ‘mimesis’.⁴ Adorno writes that “the spiritual element of art is not what idealist aesthetics calls spirit; rather, it is the mimetic impulse (*mimetische Impuls*) fixated as totality” (Adorno 1969, 139). The spirit of artworks is their objectivated mimetic comportment. The aesthetic spirit is not basically a constructive principle, but the mimesis that allows the work of art to be the language of the historical reality that speaks in the former. Art thinks as writing of history. Everything that talks in the work of art is said by the historical-social context. The work of art says, it is certainly a text, a language, writing, but not in idealistic key: it is the historical-social reality the one who writes, because the work of art itself is deposited history. What art says it does not say for itself, but because it tells about a *blackened* reality, damaged. According to the aesthetic principle that constitutes the work of art as such – that is to say, the spirit understood as mimesis –, this one, the work of art, is writing of a *blackened* historical reality. This is the way art ‘thinks’, mimetically or immediately, and not by means of the concept. It does not think using words but with mimesis, without mediations. For this reason Adorno sustains that “the element that in art resembles language (*Sprachähnliche Moment*) is its mimetic element (*Mimetisches*)” (Adorno 1969, 305); it only becomes universally eloquent in the specific impulse, by its opposition to the universal.

Hegel denies this mimetic/dialectical character of the spirit, and with it he suspends the dialectical possibility for the philosophy discovered by himself in the aesthetic experience. In the philosophy of Hegel it weighs more the imperative of identity than the dialectical principle. Hegel has recognized, moved by a phenomenological impulse that the characteristic of the aesthetic experience consists in that in it the spirit reaches and penetrates in the other, in what is not spirit. But this dialectical moment of aesthetics – centre of interest for Adorno – is disconnected by Hegel himself when sustaining that “the power of the thinking spirit lies in being able not only to grasp itself in its proper form as thinking, but to know itself again just as much when it has surrendered its proper form to feeling and sense, to comprehend itself in its opposite, because it changes into thoughts what has been estranged and so reverts to itself” (Hegel 1820, 28). Hegel annuls dialectics in which the spirit (subject, thought) recognized the other sensible/material (object, rea-

⁴ For Adorno, mimesis is the key term according to which he comes to understand the dialectical relations between subjectivity and objects, and, more importantly, between art, philosophy and reality (Huhn 2004, 8).

lity) to exist in constant and irreducible tension, and he transmutes dialectics in identity: “The subject-object of Hegel, Adorno affirms, is a subject” (Adorno 1956, 261).⁵ For Hegel, the alienation is only a moment overcome by the impulse of self-acknowledgement characteristic of the spirit (*Versöhnung*). The spirit that Adorno has discovered in the art is mimesis, alienation, dialectics; the Hegelian spirit is self-conscience, and it tends to be recognized itself in the seemingly other thing, annihilating the strangeness of the world with respect to it, which reveals like only appearance. The final relationship between the spirit and the world is not of strangeness but of familiarity. The Hegelian spirit feels everywhere like at home. And so Hegel *overcomes* the injustices to which it seems to be subjected the world of the concrete reality. Elaborated from the point of view of the reason (spirit or thought), substance of the reality, the philosophy, Hegel wrote, is not really a means of consolation, but “it is more than that, for it transfigures reality with all its apparent injustices (*das Unrecht scheint*) and reconciles (*versöhnt*) it with the rational” (Hegel 1822, 78). The rational spirit, that legitimates all the reality when understanding it like an external reality of itself, does not deny – logically – the pain nor the blood; what it denies is that they are unjust. They will be able to be from the individual's point of view, but not certainly *sub specie aeternitatis*. From the point of view of the reason – no of the understanding – everything is like it should be: “All that is real (*wirklich*) is rational, and all that is rational (*vernünftig*) is real” (Hegel 1821, 24).

In principle, the Hegelian aesthetic is phenomenological: open to art, liberated to the aesthetic experience, it discovers the alienation, the dialectics that constitutes it essentially. But then it turns its back on this artistic peculiarity, it stops to meditate assisting to the own aesthetic experience, and it finds in it what it has already established *a priori*, in a purely conceptual way: that the aesthetic experience is pure manifestation of the spirit, so that in it the spirit does not really reach the other thing, it does not alienate, but rather it recognizes itself in the other thing, it alienates for self-recognising. It is the systematic moment of the Hegelian aesthetics, the one that finishes determining it. For this reason it can be said that the aesthetics of Hegel is made from outside of the own art, without meditating about the same aesthetic experience, turned its back on the dialectical specificity that this last one represents, to the alienation of the spirit toward the other that happens in it, and it is so in spite of ‘having seen it’. Such is the force of the imperative of Hegelian identity. Logically, if what is about in art is of symbolizing ideas, that is to say, that the spirit is to be recognized itself and not to be alienated, and philosophy does it in a more appropriate way, then Hegel can consider the question ‘for what art’. The crash of the dialectical peculiarity of the art before the principle of identity transforms art into some-

⁵ For that reason, the idealistic philosophy of Hegel, centred in the “identity thinking (*Identitätsdenken*)” (Adorno 1962, 506), represents for Adorno the highest philosophical expression of the domination. Adorno writes that “Heidegger gets as far as the borderline of dialectical insight into the non-identity within identity (...) Whatever can be thought of under the concept of Being mocks the identity of a concept and the object ‘meant’ by it; but Heidegger treats it as identity, as pure Being itself, devoid of its otherness” (Adorno 1966, 110). For Adorno, Heidegger also is centred in the ‘thought of the identity’ (Macdonald 2007, 6-21).

thing superfluous. After the overcoming – death – of art it is found the philosophy of the identity. What Adorno underlines is that Hegel himself, in the dialectical essence of the aesthetics, had discovered the antidote against this philosophy of the identity. In the work of art the spirit is mimesis. Adorno thinks that in artworks, “spirit has become their principle of construction; although it fulfills its telos only when it emerges from what is to be constructed, from the mimetic impulses”, by shaping itself to them rather than allowing itself to be imposed on them by sovereign rule: “The rationality of artworks becomes spirit only when it is immersed in its polar opposite” (Adorno 1969, 180). This mimetic/dialectical spirit, instead of overcoming the other, the pain of the reality that screams in silence, it is undergone to that silent reality to give him the word. It only, only this spiritual mimesis, prevents the false Hegelian reconciliation of the real pain that transmutes it by means of the magic of the philosophy of the identity in rational justice; it only prevents the dissolution of the blood that does not cease flowing of the individual in ideal intelligibility. And it is necessary that we experience that the alive individual really continues bleeding and suffering, because this alive conscience is the only hope that we have left in the universe of the totalizing identity. Without that conscience, the pain – real – will be buried. But this movement is the one that the idealism began, especially the Hegelian philosophy: to transform the pain into concept, to identify it, as Adorno sustains, it supposes to remain it mute and inconsequential. In front of this legitimization of the pain characteristic of the philosophy of the identity by means of the silence and the oblivion, Adorno finds in the mimetic/dialectical spirit of art the opportunity to give it the word. For Adorno, to affirm that art thinks or that tells the truth, means to affirm that it is the “language of suffering (*Sprache des Leidens*)”, “unconscious writing of history (*bewußtlose Geschichtsschreibung*)” (Adorno 1969, 35, 286, 387). Mimesis is the condition of possibility of a negative dialectics. To be the voice of the pain is what, in opinion of Adorno, also explains the in intelligibility and enigmaticalness (*Rätselcharakter*) of art. All artworks – and art altogether – are enigmas (Adorno 1969, 179-182). If the work of art could be fully understood and translated to concepts, it would be also the concrete reality that designates, but this is in fact what philosophy of the identity does to exorcise the negativity of such reality. The work of art completes its dialectical function giving the word to the real pain in all its negative power, indissoluble to all interpretation.

III. Philosophical reflection and artistic mimesis

The aesthetics of Hegel is philosophical in the sense that it is an aesthetics made from outside of the properly aesthetic, from an established philosophy *a priori*: the philosophy of identity. The Hegelian aesthetics is philosophical because it is philosophy applied to art. However, it is so in the price of extirpating the specificity of the artistic – the dialectics, the alienation of the spirit toward the another – applying from outside a philosophy that is strange for it. The aesthetics of Hegel is not but applied philosophy, a philosophy elaborated to the margin of the aesthetic. From this philosophy of identity the art is interpreted and, when making it, it prevents the unfolding of the nature of the aesthetic that Hegel himself had suggested. The Hegelian aesthetics gives up before the

philosophical imperative of the identity and surrenders to it, abolishing the dialectical imperative properly aesthetic. The opposition of Adorno to this idealistic understanding of the aesthetics is radical: “Aesthetics is, however, not applied philosophy but rather in itself philosophical (*philosophisch an sich*)” (Adorno 1969, 140). Instead of applying it a philosophy of contrary sign, the philosophy of the identity, Adorno finds in the aesthetic reality the essence of philosophy: the dialectics. Dialectical philosophy is immanent to the aesthetic experience. In fact, only because in the aesthetic he discovers the philosophical one, only for this reason, it can be the aesthetics, the aesthetic theory, philosophical in itself. The aesthetics is not philosophical because it is applied to it a certain philosophy; it is philosophical because the topic of the aesthetics, the aesthetic, that is to say, the dialectical position of the thought in the face of the objectivity, is philosophical. The aesthetics of Adorno, far from being carried out from outside of the art by virtue of a strange philosophy applied to art, it is directed by the phenomenological principle of attention to the artistic phenomenon. Adorno has denied the possibility that the aesthetic object is known – legislated – from outside and demands “an understanding of artworks that would be knowledge determined strictly through their objectivity” (Adorno 1969, 513).



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lag behind art than behind philosophy” (Adorno 1969, 510). However, the philosophy for Adorno does not intervene in art nor to the Hegelian idealistic way, from outside, legislating the truth of the artistic, and as in Heidegger either, where the philosophy imitates to the

But aesthetic theory is not mere theory (positive) of the art either. For Adorno, the belief put about by aesthetic theorist that “a work of art is to be understood as an object of immediate contemplation, purely on its own terms, is unsound” (Adorno 1944, 253). Art is not certainly understood from a philosophy already done, in a Hegelian way; but it cannot only be understood from itself either. Even where there are no such difficulties, Adorno says that “the work of art demands more than that one should merely abandon oneself to it” (Adorno 1944, 253). For the content of art cannot simply be art, and therefore “contemplation that limits itself to the artwork fails it. Its inner construction requires, in however mediated a fashion, what is itself not art” (Adorno 1969, 518). It claims the philosophy. Adorno concludes: “Aesthetics must no more

art: it is selfeliminated as conceptual thought and it becomes poetic thinking. Hegel and Heidegger have understood philosophically the art in exchange of absorbing or reducing one to the other, that is to say, in exchange for sacrificing the peculiarity of one of the spheres to the other one. In front of both, Adorno defends the irreversibility of the separation between art and philosophy. Adorno defends the irreducible peculiarity of art and of philosophy. Neither the philosophy overcomes art because this decreases to that one (Hegel), nor the art becomes model of the philosophy (Heidegger). But the maintenance of the difference between the philosophical and artistic spheres does not mean for Adorno to deny the existence of relationships between them. On the contrary: art and philosophy are different, but in permanent relationship, in constant tension. An appropriate philosophical understanding of art according to Adorno can consist neither in its reduction to philosophy nor in its elevation to pattern of the philosophy, it is only possible on the base of incorporating the philosophy in art.

The discovery of the philosophy in art is what makes possible that relation of tension between art and philosophy. That incorporation forces art and philosophy to converge, to be needed mutually. The convergence between art and philosophy that Adorno sustains responds to the same dialectics that impregnates all its thought. Art and philosophy maintain the same dialectical relationship that subject and object, or thought and reality: they are different but inseparable. Let us analyse this convergence. It will be necessary to clarify in what sense Adorno incorporates the philosophy in art. The philosophy discovered in art is not a philosophy already done; art is not philosophy, it is not symbol of an idea, as Hegel sustained. For Adorno, art is rather a demand of philosophy; the philosophy that is discovered in art is a demand of reflection, a truth thought not discursively, and that philosophy will have to perform developing it conceptually. In art, as long as it is dialectics, mimesis, there is an immediate presence of the things, there is truth. The alienation of the spirit that takes place in art allows it once a leap, without mediations, to install in the things in their truth. Adorno suggests us that art is a proximity experience to the things, and that contrasts with the distance that establishes the philosophical experience – conceptual – between us and things. The proximity that characterizes to the aesthetic experience has a price. The art thinks, it judges, but it does it without words, not discursively; but it is precisely for it that it also has to be thought. The knowledge that is art, has truth, but as “something incommensurable with art” (Adorno 1969, 191). That is the ‘philosophy’ which exists in art. Implicitly lodged in artistic experience is the “consciousness of art, that is, philosophy”, and for that reason, Adorno says that “art awaits its own explanation”, that is to say, it is hoping its thought to be thought conceptually (Adorno 1969, 524). Adorno affirms therefore that “aesthetic experience is not genuine experience unless it becomes philosophy” (Adorno 1969, 197). For this same reason aesthetics is philosophical in itself. Art demands philosophy, it needs of the discursive reflection.

But also, secondly, philosophy, the conceptual speech, needs of art. Adorno understands philosophy as dialectics, as thought of the concrete, that is, true phenomenology. Only as dialectics – as rupture of the imposition of the identity – it is possible phenomenology. Besides, the philosophy according to Adorno can only be verified as such phe-

nomenology/dialectics by means of the concept. Indeed, the concept is the organon of philosophy, but Adorno also recognizes that it is a wall that makes impossible his dialectical intellectual project because the concept itself distances the thought from that which it thinks (Adorno 1966, 27; 1956, 284). This is the paradox in which the philosophy moves: its natural environment, the concept, it is the same one that prevents it to be what it is, phenomenology. Adorno rejects the (idealistic) illusion that earlier philosophical enterprises began with: “that the power of thought is sufficient to grasp (*ergreifen*) the totality of the real”; so that his philosophy is defined by the “conscience of the non-identity” between the thought and the thing, philosophy that in virtue of this critic conscience of the idealistic illusion is denominated by Adorno as *essayistic* (Adorno 1954, 17). The essay is not then a mere form of philosophy, but rather the form of dialectical philosophy: “The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder” (Adorno 1966, 17). Adorno has sustained the “primacy (*Vorrang*) of the object” (Adorno 1966, 184-186; 1969, 384), but not for dissolving the thought but for forcing it – against all idealism – to assist to the other thing, to the real and concrete, to what is not thought. The primacy of the object is a call to the ‘negative dialectics’, a dialectics that does not finalise in identity, opposite to the ‘Hegelian positive dialectics’, idealistic, that finishes overcoming the difference between thought/thing in identity, in false reconciliation. That philosophy of negative dialectics lives in the conscience of the non-identity between thought and reality, what above all supposes to affirm that philosophy is to think (with the concept) the other thing, what is not to think, what is not concept. However, this same concept makes impossible to think the other or concrete, what is not thought. Adorno says: “To think is to identify (*Denken heißt identifizieren*)”, so that the concepts – when thinking – they cannot say but what they put themselves” (Adorno 1966, 17). Adorno is here tracking the resilience not only of identity thinking and the ideology of the concept, “but more emphatically the logical root of the belief that the world is always our world” (Bernstein, 346). Philosophy thinks by means of concepts, but these concepts themselves are those that separate it of what it thinks. This is the distance in what the philosophy moves, and the cause of the distance regarding the things that we experience in it. Philosophy, discursive knowledge, lacks appearance of the things, it lacks truth. Certainly, in exchange for it, it gives us clarity and distinction, rigor and precision, but it lacks the truth, the proximity of the things. The truth of discursive knowledge (philosophy) is unshrouded, and thus discursive knowledge does not have it (Adorno 1969, 191). The understanding of the concept like wall that distances is equal to the crash of the idealistic dream, but Adorno does not deduce from there the rejection of the discursive knowledge and the opening for the philosophy of another road of knowledge: “Concepts alone can achieve what the concept prevents” (Adorno 1966, 62).

The concept is the organon of philosophy. Adorno does not reject the concept but rather he corrects it and enlarges it with the incorporation of another element: the dialectical mimesis of the aesthetic. Adorno affirms the philosophy like will of telling conceptually what is not concept. In philosophy the concepts have to stop to only be just them to go to their other one and to think about it, they have to penetrate in what is not conceptual

without absorbing it, without identifying it with themselves, without accommodating that which is not conceptual to the concepts. The (dialectical) concept can transcend the concept, and can thus reach the nonconceptual. For Adorno the “cognitive utopia would be to use concepts to unseal the nonconceptual with concepts without making it their equal” (Adorno 1966, 21, 159; 1962-64, 56). Dialectics means to break the compulsion to achieve identity. As the concept is experienced as nonidentical, it is no longer purely itself; it leads to its otherness without absorbing that otherness. Concepts have to be alienated, but this excursion toward the other thing is the characteristic dialectics of art. Dialectics means to break the compulsion to achieve identity. Therefore, so that the philosophy, the conceptual thinking, can overcome its natural idealistic tendency – identifier – and can think the other thing, the concrete thing, the concept has to incorporate in its own conduct – without stopping to be concept – the activity characteristic of art, the alienation, the excursion toward the other thing, the mimesis. This is the one that contributes to philosophy the presence, the truth. To represent the mimesis, the concept has no other way than to adopt something mimetic in its own conduct, without abandoning itself. Philosophy has to appropriate in its conduct of the aesthetic alienation, but being philosophy, conceptual/reflexive thought. For Adorno, philosophy is an attempt to save the mimetic element by means of the concept (Adorno 1956, 354; 1962-64, 81; 1966, 26). The ‘new Adornian concept’ is a concept of nonidentity; in general, Adorno’s philosophy represents an ethic of nonidentity (Bernstein, 330-370). Philosophy can only be carried out as phenomenology – dialectics – by means of the artistic mimesis. Without mimesis there is no dialectics. The concept supplanted the mimesis; now it has to reproduce that mimetic conduct in its own conduct. The mimesis on which art consists like opening to the other thing, to what is not thought, is in fact what Adorno uses for extending/correcting the philosophical concept so that it can tell what the concept cannot say: what is not conceptual (Adorno 1962-64, 81-88), i. e., pain, and in this way it overcomes its positive dialectical and identifier tendency. The incorporation of art – the mimetic reason – in the concept is exactly what allows Adorno to correct philosophy – misinterpreted by idealism – so that it can spread as authentic dialectics, as negative and material dialectics, the only one able to think the non-identical. Those two sides different from the conscience converge this way. Art needs the philosophical reflection to deploy its truth, the truth that reaches in its mimesis but in dark, incommensurable way; philosophy needs of the artistic mimesis to correct the identifying tyranny of the philosophical reason, to overcome its idealistic limit and to be able to think the things, the other thing of the thought, the truth. The immediacy of the aesthetic proximity needs the conceptual distance of the philosophy to be able to think what it has so next that it cannot think it; the conceptual mediation of the philosophical distance needs the mimetic proximity of art to be able to have the truth of the thing that that distance could never achieve.

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