

# THE DESTINIES OF THE WORK OF ART: Aesthetic Theories in Hölderlin and Adorno

by John Thomas Giordano  
5 December 1995



A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of Duquesne University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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For Hölderlin and Adorno, the power to transcend one's being-in-nature in order to capture nature in an image, is both the most dangerous and the most beautiful aspect of the human being. Hölderlin develops a model of reconciliation of man with nature where the transcendental power, as soon as it achieves a vision of nature, violates true nature by virtue of its finitude and so must pay for this "hybris" through self-sacrifice. Adorno appropriates this model for the work of art. Nature can never be captured directly, but only indirectly, by the attempt and failure to capture it directly. This is the role of the work of art. A good work of art is one which criticizes its own appearing quality. It recognizes its own hybris and "explodes" its appearance. In the afterglow of this explosion, *true* nature "expresses itself." Hölderlin limits this sacrificial model to Greek humanity. Modern humanity does not follow this negative dialectical model of reconciliation with nature. It conditions nature through its movement away from its source. The Modern poem also becomes a type of movement, a pathway involving an alternation of representations or tones. Each poetic "path" creates truth in the process of its own

movement. There is no longer any *true* nature to reconcile with, but nature is transformed by the particular path chosen and followed. In this way, each work of art creates its own destiny. Adorno misses this aspect of Hölderlin. Whereas Adorno needed the sacrificial dynamic to provide a place for philosophical reflection at a safe distance from the work of art, Hölderlin's Modern dynamic places any philosophical reflection within the material destiny of any individual work. It is Walter Benjamin who recognizes this Modern dynamic and his disagreements with Adorno are reflected in the difference between their interpretations of Hölderlin. What I hope to show most strikingly in this dissertation is the manner in which the work of art is a material thing, a direction, a process and a destiny, and how any engagement with the work operates along its destiny.

## PREFACE

A poem is not timeless. True, it claims infinity, it seeks to reach through time – through time, not over and above it. Since poetry is a form of language and since, therefore, it is essentially a dialogue, it can serve as a message in a bottle, cast on the waters in the belief (not always very hopeful) that it might somewhere, at some time, be washed on land, on a land of the heart perhaps. Thus poems are on the way – they move towards something. Towards what? Towards something that stands open, something that may be occupied, perhaps a ‘Thou’, or a reality, that may be addressed. (Paul Celan)

I might on one hand say that the theme of this dissertation is somewhat accidental, and then again, not accidental at all. Initially it was supposed to deal with Hölderlin and Schelling. I had obtained a teaching assignment in Tanzania and shipped my books there with the idea that they would arrive within six weeks, not knowing that it takes six months. I had a paper accepted at the “World Conference of Philosophy” in Nairobi which I had yet to write, and all I had to work with was what I had carried to Tanzania on my back: Hölderlin and Adorno.

In my research, I found a congruence between Hölderlin and Adorno concerning the sacrificial dynamic of the work of art. This was the theme of the paper I delivered in Nairobi. I decided to continue working on this theme for my dissertation. The course of the dissertations many turns proceeded from the investigation of this initial congruence.

I look back on its development as an organic process. I think that it represents a discourse primarily between Hölderlin and Adorno, but also including Rousseau, Schiller, Fichte, Lukacs, and Benjamin. As I did not initially have many secondary sources at my disposal, there was something very pure about the discourse between these writers.

And then again not pure at all. I have to confess that Adorno had colored my interpretations of Hölderlin as much as Hölderlin had colored my interpretations of Adorno. The same goes for the other writers. And so, through their tensions and congruences, a discourse was woven together until it became – a dissertation. I look at this dissertation, not from above, but somehow intertwined within its process. Apart from the normal reasons for feeling happy that it is all over, I feel happy that I can now allow myself to 'think beyond it'. Yet I wonder if such a thing is possible, or if I will always think in its shadow.

This brings up the question of my own voice with regard to dialogue of the dissertation's various participants. I found myself apologizing for my very passive voice throughout the work. It seemed quite strange for me, who normally has a very active voice in my writings. And yet the more I reflect upon this the more that I see that the passivity of my voice is connected to the theme of the dissertation. That is, my voice is the thread which gives the dialogue continuity, and enables it to have a destiny. I was encouraged by Benjamin's proud assertion, concerning his *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, that he had written a work composed almost entirely of quotes. Certainly all of the voices in this dissertation have been operating through my voice, their destinies are intertwined

within my destiny. My voice cannot detach itself from the theme of this dissertation.

Has this been an apology? I can't even say. An apology by whom, and to whom? The process of the work has taken its direction, it is finished, it sits before you, and it with good fortune will grow into its own destinies.

In terms of acknowledgments, I thank all who have participated in the development and destiny of the writing process. I thank my parents who have supported a quest which they did not always understand, which is the highest form of support. I thank my director Wilhelm Wurzer, for his philosophical inspiration over the years. I thank Andre Schuwer for his philosophical passion, and who unfortunately did not live to participate in my defense. I thank my readers Brent Peterson and Bob Madden, for setting aside time to come to my aid. I thank my fellow students and friends whom have shaped my thought and destiny Zeynep Direk, Tom Urban, Manomano Makunguruste, Azita Hariri, Bob Johnson, Hulya Guney and Claudia Drucker. My friends and fellow philosophers in Tanzania, Daniel Bouju, Jason Ishengoma, Brian Cronin, and Elfriede Steffens for helping with translations. In South Africa I thank Heinz Kukertz. I owe a great debt to my friends in Germany with whom I have discussed these ideas, Peter Ramers and Felix Porsch. I finally thank all of my students now scattered throughout Africa and India, who have inspired me philosophically. I finally acknowledge the various rivers along which I have reflected on this dissertation, and which continue to flow at this moment. The Monongahela and Clarion Rivers in Pennsylvania, the Kijenge River in Tanzania, the uMgeni river in South Africa, and the Rhein River in Germany.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Paradox .....	1
Hölderlin and Adorno ? .....	4
Dichtung .....	5
The Path of this Work.....	6
<b>CHAPTER 1 DISTANCE.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Distance and Deception .....	12
Distance and Fragmentation.....	17
The Inner and Outer Rift.....	24
<b>CHAPTER 2 HÖLDERLIN’S “GREEK” AESTHETIC THEORY .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Harmony and Dissonance.....	34
Empedocles : Fichte on Mt. Aetna .....	43
Hölderlin and Fichte.....	49
The Ground for Empedocles .....	51
Hybris and Temporality.....	59
Kant’s “Sacrificial” Sublime .....	63
Divine dis-integration.....	64
The Sacrificial Work.....	69
<b>CHAPTER 3 ADORNO’S AESTHETIC THEORY.....</b>	<b>74</b>
Unconscious Existence.....	74
Sacrifice.....	78
The Tragic Work of Art .....	82
a) Image .....	83
b) Hybris .....	88

c) Explosion .....	90
d) The Beauty of Nature .....	94
e) Reconciliation .....	101
Art and Philosophy .....	103

**CHAPTER 4 HÖLDERLIN'S MODERN  
("HESPERIAN") THEORY..... 107**

Greek or Modern.....	108
Processes .....	117
The Spirit of the Stream.....	131
The Place of Theory.....	152
Greek and Modern?.....	154

**CHAPTER 5 THE PATH AND THE ABYSS..... 155**

Parataxis .....	156
Poetry, Philosophy, and the Pure Outside .....	164
Ein Wandersmann geht zornig .....	166
Benjamin and Adorno.....	176

**CONCLUSION ..... 191**

**ENDNOTES ..... 197**

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 212**

We need a place to begin. The most honest place is to acknowledge the problematic which inspired not only this dissertation, but my passage toward philosophy in the first place. My interest has always been in the concepts Art and Nature, and the connection and distances between the two.

## Paradox

It seems that we have always navigated our way according to certain coordinates, certain distinctions. And while they don't seem to be purely justified, they nevertheless create the conflicts which allow reflection to take place. Art and nature are such coordinates. Their conjunction or disjunction creates certain philosophical effects.

For example: It would seem that now, in our age, we are beginning to recognize our *place* in nature. The development of the natural sciences have carried us along to the point where we understand how intertwined we are as organisms with our environment, how everything becomes reducible to genes, elements, atoms, forces, and cycles. We understand the continuity running through nature. Now more than any other time can we casually accept Spinoza's dictum that whatever is, is in nature, and nothing can be conceived outside of nature. We are nature.

Yet now, more than any other time, we recognize our disharmony with our environment, a *distance* between ourselves and nature, a *rift* between man and nature, the artificial and the natural. We are progressively destroying the earth, dominating nature, modifying our environment, creating a *new place* for ourselves in disharmony with our *natural place*.

These two recognitions – of our identity with and difference from nature – seem to be interconnected. As the images of nature become increasingly more vivid, we seem to be moving increasingly closer to self-destruction. We see nature more clearly by moving progressively away from it. The image of the earth from the moon, the advances of remote sensing technology, DNA analysis, atomic physics, are all intertwined with that movement of technology which is dominating and destroying the earth.

This leads us in a circle. As the dangerous distance between us and nature increases, the more clearly we see our place in it, and the more clearly we see our destruction of it. There seems to be something *apocalyptic* about our technological reflections.

It is also a paradox: How can humanity be at once a moment within nature, and at the same time transcend nature, to create an image of nature? This paradox is most beautifully expressed by Friedrich Schlegel who writes:

Man is a creative looking-back of nature upon itself. [Der Mensch ist ein schaffender Rückblick der Natur auf sich selbst.] (*Ideas*, fragment 28)

We can use Schlegel to start us on our way. We will begin with this paradox and its lively instability to animate our philosophical investigation.

Breaking our paradox down into its coordinates we find:

- a) The recognition that man is nature, a moment within nature.
- b) The recognition of a distance between man and nature.
- c) The idea that this distance is reflective, that through this distance nature somehow sees itself, creates and image of itself.

Our paradox involves the distinction between Man and Nature on one hand, and their identity on another. The rift which makes possible the paradox slices down through a long chain of accepted oppositions:

Man / nature  
culture / nature  
art / nature  
subject / object  
artificial / natural  
tekhne / physis  
logos / physis

To understand this paradox we must understand this rift. I do not wish here to *deconstruct* this rift, to show it to be some sort of erroneous presupposition of past thinkers, I merely wish to understand its dynamic, to see how it works and perpetuates itself.

We must also understand the manner in which man is the “creative looking-back of nature upon itself”. In other words, how the *subject* is related to the *image* and the *work of art*. How do the subject and the work mirror one another. This work will depend closely upon this connection between subject and work. But it is only in the course of its development that this connection can be shown. For now we must accept on faith that by focusing upon the art/nature rift, we are also explicating the very essence of the man/nature rift and all the rest of these rifts (and let us here retain the word *Man* for the time being until we have felt all the repercussions of this paradox).

We must also understand what it means to *create an image*. It can be said that there are various types of image-formation. The work of art is an image of nature. The philosophical work is also an image of nature. Finally science is the most powerful image of nature, since it is in the highest complicity with acting upon nature. But we can say that all of these types have one thing in common: the image itself must be unified in such a way that it can appear as an image. It must create a *world*, no matter how limited it is or takes itself to be. Each image is its own *world*, or a reflection upon the world. In this sense we can use the model of the work of art to stand in for both philosophy and science. Even though they

differ in terms of practice, in the most fundamental sense they share the same dynamic as world-formation, image-formation. This study will then focus on the work of art and its relationship to nature.

The work of art then is a world. A world within finite boundaries, an eternal image of the world within a finite moment of the world. And so we can re-word our paradox: ‘How can the work of art create an image of the world and yet be a moment within the world?’.

## Hölderlin and Adorno ?

It is difficult to know if what we are trying to understand and describe is something *actual*. Have we *actually* drifted from unity with nature?

But we know that such ideas have been expressed in the past. They operate as markers. We can never engage the problem purely, we are always operating with the coordinates which we have inherited from the past.

This study has reached into the past to choose Hölderlin and Adorno upon which to focus. But why are we bringing them into this discussion here and now? If we follow them, how do we know we can trust them? If we play them off one another, how are we to know which one is right? Why Hölderlin and Adorno?

It is my belief that it is in the work Hölderlin and Adorno where this paradox finds its most sophisticated treatment. It is the ideas developed by these two which set the stage for many of the later treatments of art and nature, including Heidegger and poststructuralism. It is the conflicts between the approaches in Hölderlin and Adorno which remain relevant today and allow us to untangle many of the controversies concerning art and nature in relation to the problematic of *postModernism*. Finally, by setting them against one another, we gain a deeper reflection on this paradox itself, not in a manner which eliminates it, but in a manner which *places* it.

Hölderlin struggles with our above paradox in his theoretical and poetic works. He develops two perspectives on this problem, each

representing a different dynamic between art and nature. The first is the “Greek” model which conceives of this dynamic in a “tragic” or “sacrificial” manner. The second is the “Modern” or “Hesperian” model which conceives of the work as a “searching for destiny”, and is also reflected in his poetry.

Adorno’s last major work *Aesthetic Theory* is indebted to Hölderlin’s “Greek” model of the work of art. Adorno’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s later hymns also follow a strategy of interpretation based on this “Greek” model. In other words, Adorno interprets Hölderlin’s “Modern” poetry in a “Greek” manner. Here is where the tension arises. And this becomes an excellent dissertation concept in the classic tradition: to expose both influences and mis-readings. Yet, I am less interested in exposing mis-takes than in exploiting the tensions created by playing the coordinates of art and nature off of one another. If this dissertation reads like a dissertation, I apologize.

## Dichtung

The German word for poetry – “Dichtung” – has connotations that the English word lacks. It conveys the sense of *condensing, focusing*. Poetry would then be the condensation of language and ideas. Saying much in a few words. It would be also a concentration of Nature in language.

This work deals with the place of aesthetic theory. Aesthetic theory sets itself apart from this condensation of language and ideas in order to say something about them. There is an irony in that aesthetic theory is almost opposed to poetry. Yet, Hölderlin found it necessary to write about the possibility of his own poetry, to write an aesthetic theory about his own “Dichtung”. Writers on Hölderlin often ignore Hölderlin’s theoretical writings or consider them far less sophisticated than the ideas he expresses in his poetry. Yet Hölderlin constantly struggled with the problem of the very possibility of his own poetry, both outside of it in his essays, and within his poems themselves.

Adorno too struggled with the very possibility of aesthetic theory. Not only as a critical theorist but also as a musician. It is not surprising that

the last years of his life was spent rewriting all of his philosophy within a work called *Aesthetic Theory*. It was never finished at the time of his death. This confronts us with the interesting dilemma of reconstructing Adorno's work – which questions the organic whole – as an organic whole in order to respond to it.

Not only an aesthetic theory, but the very possibility and place of an aesthetic theory captivated both of these thinkers.

Aesthetic theory would be then the after-image of the image of nature in the work of art, in the “Dichtung.” It must question the relationship between art and nature, whether the circle of art and nature can be closed, and finally, question its own place and possibility.

Hence the subtitle: “Aesthetic Theories in Hölderlin and Adorno”.

## The Path of this Work

The development of this work will follow what Hölderlin calls an “eccentric path”. That is it reflects its own crooked process of development. We begin by keeping in mind our paradox since this paradox has led to the choice of the theme of this work. We will keep encountering it in various guises along the way. Through following this eccentric path, we encounter particular vistas of various landscapes. This will allow us to try to *reach* a conclusion. The map of this path is as follows.

### Chapter 1 : Distance

To introduce the manner in which Hölderlin and Adorno contribute their own solutions to this paradox, we must examine its coordinates in more detail. How can we conceive of our inbeddedness within nature and our distance from nature simultaneously? The thinkers who directly inspired both Hölderlin and Adorno move towards a conception of the subject within nature which enables one to conceive of both sides of this paradox simultaneously.

On one hand we can appreciate the distance of man from nature as involving *deception*. This will be developed primarily by reference to Rousseau.



On the other hand we can appreciate the distance of man from nature as involving a fragmentation and imbalance of *powers within* the subject, the *nature in the subject*. The development of a philosophy of subjectivity beginning with Kant and Herder implicitly points towards these *dark powers*.

With Schiller's work *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* we have the synthesis of both of these elements. It is the imbalance of *drives* or *powers within* the subject which allow images of nature to appear, and to deceive.

## Chapter 2 : Hölderlin's "Greek" aesthetic theory

Hölderlin closely follows the aesthetic theory of Schiller in the writings connected to his novel *Hyperion*. Yet these writings move towards a rejection of Schiller's central idea of his aesthetics: the function of "play" and "beauty" as a means to reconcile the conflict of drives within the subject and the corresponding division of the subject (or art) and nature.

This leads him to his own solution for the reconciliation of this conflict which he finds in the idea of the "tragic". He develops this in his writings connected with his drama *The Death of Empedocles*. Here he comes to terms with the hybris of Fichtian subjectivity (or "interiority") which can also be seen to mirror the hybris of the work of art. This becomes Hölderlin's "Greek" model of the work of art.

## Chapter 3 : Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*

Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* follows Hölderlin's "Greek" model. The work of art is for Adorno, the work of the "spirit" striving to establish itself as a "second nature". This is its "illusory [Schein] quality". The deception becomes revealed in its conflict with "first nature". Within the work this takes the form of the resistance of its "material" or "heterogeneous elements" with its illusory quality. In other words, the work represents an interiority, a monad, which sets itself in the place of nature. This is the *hybris* of the work. Nature gains retribution in the form of an interior resistance within the work which leads it the dis-integration of its unity.

Adorno calls this the “explosion” of its monadic form. This results in a kind of reconciliation with nature. Nature appears negatively, expressed in the afterglow of the explosion of the work.

#### **Chapter 4 : Hölderlin’s Modern or “Hesperian” theory**

Hölderlin begins to contrast the “Greek” spirit from the Modern (or “Hesperian”) spirit, based upon Schiller’s distinction between “naive and sentimental poetry”. The Modern spirit is more “experienced” than the Greek and not secure in its “destiny”. It does not undergo the tragic moment which reconciles the Greek spirit with the divine. It seeks its own destiny. These considerations lead to a “Modern” model of the work where destinies have to be mastered and mapped out in the medium of language. This process of the realization of the spirit in the work is described in his essay “The Processes of the Poetic Spirit”.

Both models are put into perspective within a neoplatonic ontological scheme in his *Pindar Fragments*. Here the “Modern” model is compared with the geomorphic processes of the river. The river [Ström] will now represent the new directional dynamic between art (or subject) and nature.

Finally using Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Rhein”, we have an example of how the “Modern” model becomes expressed and continued in his late poetry. Here we have a vision of the subject and nature completely intertwined with regard to the searching for a destiny. A turn away from the attempt to directly capture the eternal image. A turn towards the pace of the processes of nature. Hölderlin’s poetry represents various destinies, and the attempts of the poet to chart and recover the extent of Modern man’s driftings from his unity with nature through “remembrance”; through the work of art as a “sanctuary for conflict”.

#### **Chapter 5 : Adorno’s reading of Hölderlin**

Turning now to Adorno’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s late hymns in his essay “Parataxis”, it becomes clear that Adorno interprets Hölderlin according to the strategy he adopts in *Aesthetic Theory* which in turn was

based on Hölderlin's "Greek" model. Adorno therefore misses the Modern or "Hesperian" element in Hölderlin's late poetry with its emphasis on destiny, movement, and the preservation of conflict. Reading Hölderlin's hymns as monadic wholes composed of fragmented materials arranged "paratactically", Adorno sees the poems as exercises in the deconstruction of the organic work, rather than moving destinies. This misreading can be explicated through Adorno's selective interpretation of the hymn "Mnemosyne".

We find that Adorno in a sense had to *mis-interpret* Hölderlin's Modern poetry, in order to distinguish poetry from philosophy and leave open a place, outside of the work of art, for philosophical criticism of the work of art (which is important for his critique of capitalist rationality). On the other hand, the Modern or "Hesperian" model puts the work in motion. There is no *outside* to the work. There is no established place in relation to the work from which to critique the work. Any critical interface with the work is already a part of the work's destiny.

A closer approximation of the "Modern" theory of the work developed in Hölderlin is to be found in Benjamin's early essay "Zwei Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin" and his book *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. In the former, Benjamin reads the caesuraed motion of the poetic work as a kind of "stepping", a process of "walking-onward" which creates its own destiny, as opposed to Adorno's reading where the caesuras are responsible for sacrificially paralyzing synthesis and motion. In the latter, Benjamin shows that baroque literature involves a shift from the sacrificial dynamic of the symbol associated with the "tragic", to an "allegorical" dynamic. Baroque literature for Benjamin also prefigures Modern literature, and he explicitly recognizes the late Hölderlin as inheriting this "allegorical" dynamic. Here again we find the differences we encountered in Adorno's relation to Hölderlin reflected in his disagreements with Benjamin. Particularly his problems with the concept of "allegory", and his rejection of Benjamin's treatment of the loss of "aura" in Modern art.

## Conclusion : Conflict and Directionality

The *blind spot* of contemporary treatments of the relation of the work to nature is that they have frozen the rift involved in our paradox. They have turned it into an error of past thinkers instead of something living, something self-perpetuating. They have tried to overcome the paradox, either dialectically in a positive way, dialectically in a negative way, or de(or un)constructively by leveling the values and coordinates which gave life to the paradox. They suspend judgment since all judgments ultimately lead to error.

Hölderlin's "Modern" model of the work of art, with its emphasis on destinies, remembrances, and the preservation of conflict shows us that any judgment concerning our age already involves our intertwinedness with nature within a destiny. There is no pure state of nature, neither to recover *sacrificially*, nor to protect from the contamination of synthetic judgment. Within the "directionality" of the destiny of the work both subject and nature are transformed in their movement. Judgments are necessary even though they ultimately lead to error. One must find a destiny and cut out a path. These ideas lead us beyond deconstructive and postmodern strategies.

In the end what is hopefully elucidated concerns the work of art and its reception seen as a *directional process*. A pathway or process which creates its *own destiny*, opens to its *own truths*. Or, how we move from a dynamic which sets the work of art against nature, to a dynamic where the work of art projects multiple *natures*. Hence the main title: "The Destinies of the Work of Art". What precisely this means can only be gained from following the process of *this* work through to the end.

# DISTANCE

Before we engage the ideas of Hölderlin and Adorno, we must understand the form in which they have inherited this paradox. One might call this the *Ironic model* of the relationship between man and nature. Simply stated, it expresses the idea that as man moves farther from unity with nature, a corresponding division takes place within him. The conflict occasioned by this division reflects a dangerous or degenerate condition, but at the same time – and here is the irony – it is also the condition for us to develop our knowledge, to create an image of nature. Our first task will be to understand the dynamics and development of this model more closely. This is crucial if we are to understand Hölderlin and Adorno. To do this we will break our model down into its coordinates.

**a) *Distance and Deception.*** If we acknowledge that somehow a distance exists between ourselves and nature, how are we to understand this in light of the recognition that we are always already *in* nature? The first section in this chapter will examine how this distance manifests itself as a kind of *deception*. To analyze this we can enlist the aid of Rousseau and Spinoza.

**b) *Distance and Fragmentation.*** I have already claimed that it is not the intention of this work to deconstruct the rift between man and nature. Divisions and distinctions are necessary to reflection. The next section examines the philosophies of subjectivity which divide nature from the purity of the subject. This exclusion creates some interesting

effects. Within the development of the philosophy of the subject, in Kant, Herder, and German Idealism, *distance from nature* becomes expressed as a *fragmentation of forces* within the subject. So with each division, a new re-balance occurs, nature excluded, returns again through the back door of the subject, as *dark powers*.

c) ***The Inner and Outer Cleft***. The final section deals with Hölderlin's most powerful influence: Friedrich Schiller. In Schiller's approach to the problem of *distance*, we find a combination of both *deception* and *fragmentation*. Schiller recognizes that the deception of the intellect, of the image, is connected to the conflict of forces within the subject. We begin to recognize our paradox here; that the image of nature becomes more vivid the more we move away from it. It is this model which Hölderlin will continue to develop so it merits special attention here. It is also the coordinates of Schiller's model which will enable us to assess the tensions between Hölderlin, Adorno, German Romanticism, and German Idealism.

## Distance and Deception

In the work of Rousseau we encounter the most classic and persuasive expression of this *distance*. Somehow the condition of humanity has become distanced from its natural state. The condition of man in Modern culture is corrupt. In the preface to the *Discourse on Inequality* we read of the "grotesque contrast of a passion which thinks it reasons and an understanding in a state of delirium" (BPW, p. 32). We can say that for Rousseau, what is corrupt about Modern man is that he is *deceived*. The essence of this distance from the natural state is one of deception.

The function of keeping the natural state in mind is to overcome this deception by being aware of it. Again in the preface he writes:

For it is no light undertaking to separate what is original from what is artificial in the present nature of man, and to have a proper understanding of a state which no longer

exists, which perhaps never existed, which probably never will exist, and yet about which it is necessary to have accurate notions in order to judge properly our own present state. (BPW, p. 34)

How does man cleave away from nature in the first place? Rousseau points out that while the animal always remains in its natural state, the human being is able to “deviate from the rule of nature” (p. 44). That which distinguishes man from the animals and allows him to deviate from the rule of nature is that man possesses the capacity for “self-perfection”. It is “a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances successively develops all the others, and resides among us as much in the species as in the individual”. (p. 45). This is the faculty which creates all the artificial needs, desires, and ideas which Rousseau sees as vices. It also makes man “a tyrant over himself and nature” (p. 45). Self-perfection is the motive force behind this distancing.

Self-perfection is the ability of man to create a new rule for himself which deviates from the rule of nature. The mind of the primitive man is one with the rule of nature. The primitive man has no need for an excess in imagination, knowledge or curiosity. Because of his unity with nature he does not marvel at it. It does not yet become an object for him.

The distancing of mind from nature in the form of deception is also based upon the parallel change of environmental “circumstances”. Rousseau writes:

The progress of the mind is directly proportionate to the needs received by peoples from nature or to those needs to which circumstances have subjected them. (BPW, p. 46)

The mind of Modern man is no longer shaped by the needs dictated by the rule of nature, it is now shaped by the artificial needs and desires of Modern culture. This is a reciprocal movement. Mind is conditioned and developed by the change in environmental circumstances, and at the same

time, modifies those circumstances. The motive force is again the faculty of “self-perfection”.

The development of mind is also the development of language. The development of language reflects the movement away from nature and towards the artificiality of Modern culture. Language becomes increasingly concerned with general figurative concepts and ideas, at the expense of its expressive musical quality. Language for Modern man is the vehicle of deception. Rousseau will criticize “general” and “abstract ideas” as suppressing differences on one hand and creating artificial distinctions on the other. And so with the development of mind, knowledge, language, the arts and sciences, Modern man is blinded by deception.

Thus we find here all our faculties developed, memory and imagination in play, egocentrism looking out for its interests, reason rendered active, and the mind having nearly reached the limit of the perfection of which it is capable. We find here all the natural qualities put into action, the rank and fate of each man established not only on the basis of the quantity of goods and the power to serve or harm, but also on the basis of mind, beauty, strength or skill, on the basis of merit or talents. And since these qualities were the only ones that could attract consideration, he was soon forced to have them or affect them, It was necessary, for his advantage, to show himself to be something other than what he in fact was. (BPW, p. 67)

The development of mind with its built-in element of deception, precludes the power of the Modern arts and sciences to be able to reach back to the original state of nature. Rousseau writes in the preface:

What is even more cruel is that, since all the progress of the human species continually moves away from its primitive state, the more we accumulate new knowledge, the more we deprive ourselves of the means of acquiring the most



important knowledge of all. Thus, in a sense, it is by dint of studying man that we have rendered ourselves incapable of knowing him. (BPW, p. 33)

The more we feel we are conceptually progressing in our understanding of nature, the further we are becoming estranged from nature.<sup>1</sup>

In a way which foreshadows Schiller and Hölderlin, Rousseau identifies primitive man with the child. He writes that in the state of nature...

Art perished with its inventor. There was neither education nor progress; generations were multiplied to no purpose. Since each one always began from the same point, centuries went by with all the crudeness of the first ages; the species was already old, and man remained ever a child. (BPW, p. 57)

Conversely, the child, still uncorrupted by Modern culture, possesses the virtues of the primitive man. In his later work *Emile*, Rousseau will develop an idea of education in which these virtues naturally present in the child are cultivated while preparing the child to function in Modern culture. In a sense it becomes a matter of functioning without being deceived.

This excursus on Rousseau also highlights the idea of a deception built into our reflections on origins. Because of the very nature of Modern man and Modern thought, our own natural state is inaccessible to us. The distance of man from nature does not provide a reflective distance which allows the objective mirroring of nature. The distance from nature has the effect of distorting nature. This distortion and deception makes any pure return or recovery impossible. The possibility of reconciliation will not depend on the image.

There is a tradition of negative theology which goes back to Philo of Alexandria and Pseudo-Dionysius. Based upon a Neoplatonic

foundation, all names are ultimately inappropriate to God since God is “The One”, completely transcendental and uncontaminated by any divisions or distinctions which a name would engender. This negative theology surfaces again in Nicholas of Cusa’s *On Learned Ignorance*. Cusa points out that names are unable to capture the divine, that the divine is more closely approached through mathematics and music.<sup>2</sup> We find here a taboo against image and representation which continues in Spinoza.

Spinoza’s negative evaluation of the imagination is similar to Rousseau’s. The imagination deceives. Spinoza will distinguish between the “image” on one hand and the “true idea” on another. Ideas are not “mute pictures on a panel”, ...

... an idea (since it is a mode of thinking) consists neither in the image of anything, nor in words. For the essence of words and of images is constituted only by corporeal motions, which do not involve the concept of thought. (*Ethics*, bk. II, P49, p. 486)

Not that images are always in error, but that images taken as ideas are deceptions.

... the mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea that excludes the existence of those things that it imagines to be present to it. (*Ethics*, bk. II, P17, p. 465)

That is, the mind becomes deceived that something is present which does not exist. An image is a picture, a schematized order, superimposed upon the more complex order of nature, whose eternity and infinitude surpasses any schematized representation of it. This is very similar to Rousseau’s criticism of “general ideas”. The true idea *is* the order of nature (in a particular sense), not an image of it. Here is where we can find the concept of distance in Spinoza’s philosophy of immanence. It is implied in the deceiving image.

## Distance and Fragmentation

In observing this distance of man from nature we might be tempted to consider like many these days that the turn toward a philosophy of subjectivity in Descartes and Kant is a symptom of a decadent condition. To isolate the subject from nature is a sign of man's domination of nature. We are tempted to perhaps *deconstruct* this priority given to the subject and *be done with it*, so to speak.

But we need to look at this more closely. What is the most fascinating aspect of the philosophy of subjectivity and that which is also important for our appreciation of both Hölderlin and Adorno is that, in isolating the subject from nature, nature reappears within the subject. We can trace this in that intense *subjective* movement in German philosophy beginning with Kant and culminating in Fichte.

The tradition of faculty psychology is known to go back to the scholasticism of Wolff. But in the hands of Kant and his followers who are concerned with showing how the intellect conditions our knowledge, and concerned with repositioning everything so that it can be analyzed within the calculus of subjectivity, a certain transformation of the concept of "faculties" [Vermögen] takes place. They become "powers" [Krafte].

Sensibility, now disengaged from nature and within the space of subjectivity, becomes a faculty, a capacity [Vermögen]. We can recall that Condillac, defending himself from the charge of idealism, used the sense of touch as the internal sign of an external world.<sup>3</sup>

Here again with Kant's "Copernican revolution" the external world reappears within the subject as a faculty which can interact with other faculties according to certain principles which together constitute the condition of the possibility of all knowledge. So not only sensibility but the understanding and reason become faculties or capacities which *interact* to create knowledge.

This is certainly a difficult theme and a problematic thesis which deserves a close reading within the first critique. But allow me to leap to the third critique to give an example of the *interaction* of these faculties. In the third critique, which literally translated reads *The Critique of the*

*[Power] of Judgment* [Urteilkraft], Kant describes “the beautiful” and “the sublime” in terms of the dynamic interaction of faculties. Here in this later work the concept of “Vermögen” is already taking a more dynamic turn. “Vermögen” becomes “Kraft”. Kant writes in the preface:

Our ability to cognize from a priori principles may be called *pure reason*, and the general inquiry into the possibility and bounds of such cognition may be called critique of pure reason. These terms are appropriate even if, as I did in my *Critique of Pure Reason*, we mean by this power [Vermögen] only reason in its theoretical use, without yet seeking to investigate what ability [Vermögen] and what special principles it may have as practical reason... The understanding is singled out in this way because, as that critique discovers, it is the only one among the cognitive powers capable of providing principles of cognition that are constitutive [rather than merely regulative] a priori, The critique [discovers this as it] inspects every one of our cognitive powers to decide what each has [in fact] contributed to it. (CJ, p. 167)

These *powers* are analyzed insofar as they are constitutive of knowledge. The *Critique of Pure Reason* turns out to be an investigation into the proper domain of the *power* of the understanding. The *Critique of Practical Reason* does the same for the domain of reason and desire. And finally the *Critique of the [Power] of Judgment* deals with the domain of the imagination and judgment.

The *Critique of the [Power] of Judgment* deals not only with these powers but also the dynamic through which they interact to create judgments of taste. The beautiful involves a “harmony” between the power of imagination and the power of understanding or reason.

Hence the liking is connected with the mere exhibition or power of exhibition, i.e., the imagination, with the result

that we regard this power, when an intuition is given us, as harmonizing with the *power of concepts*, i.e., the understanding or reason, this harmony furthering [the aims of] these. (CJ, p. 244)

The “sublime” [Erhabenen] on the other hand involves a “motion” [Bewegung] between the power of imagination and the power of reason.

In presenting the sublime in nature the mind feels *moved*, while in an aesthetic judgment about the beautiful in nature it is in *restful* [ruhiger] contemplation. This motion (above all at its inception) can be compared with a vibration [Erschütterung], i.e., with a rapid alternation [schellwechselnden] of repulsion from, and attraction to, one and the same object. (CJ, p. 258)<sup>4</sup>

We will see how important this model of the sublime becomes for Hölderlin and Adorno, but what is important here is that the descriptions of these powers and their interaction is in mechanical terms; “harmony” and “vibration”. The mechanical dynamics of “Vermögen” in Kant precedes the unity of the subject. They are powers which precede the subject. They are, in a way which will be developed by Herder and Schiller, and further by Hölderlin and Adorno, the “non-subjective in the subject”.

Kant recognized that the ability to create a work of art is not a mere imitation of the *image* of nature. We imitate nature by imitating its *creative power*. The ability to create something law-like. He recognizes that this power within the subject which he calls “genius” is something non-subjective. He calls it “nature in the subject”.

Hence the subjective standard for that aesthetic but unconditioned purposiveness in fine art that is to lay rightful claim to everyone’s necessary liking cannot be supplied by any rule or precept, but can be supplied only by that which is merely nature in the subject [bloss Natur im Subjecte]

but which cannot be encompassed by rules or concepts – namely, the supersensible substrate (unattainable by any concept of the understanding) of all his powers: and hence the mentioned standard can be supplied only by [means of] that by reference to which we are to make all our cognitive powers harmonize. (CJ, p. 344)

Even with Kant, as we proceed deeper *within* the subject, we see that which is *outside* of the subject as its very core – nature.

Karl Leonard Reinhold attempted to cleanse Kant’s philosophy by unifying it according to Kant’s own idea of an “architectonic of pure reason”. He attempts to make Kant’s philosophy into a system. This involves giving it a “Grundsatz” through which the rest of the system can be deduced. It also involves intensifying the subjective integrity of Kant’s philosophy by ridding it of the “thing-in-itself”. This leads Reinhold to also intensify the significance of “Vermögen” so that his entire project becomes of philosophy of the “faculty of representation”.

Both Locke and Hume criticized those who abuse the concept of “faculty” as divisions within the intellect or what Hume will call “occult qualities”.<sup>5</sup>

The German skeptic, Gottlob Ernst Schulze, levels this same criticism against Reinhold. He claimed that by endowing the concept of “Vermögen” with the properties of “causality” and “actuality” Reinhold violates the principles of critical philosophy. Schulze writes:

How can one possibly hope to discover, therefore, the characteristics of the faculty of representation, even if it were proved that any such faculty actually exists, by an extrapolation of the characteristics of representation? Would not this practice, moreover, consist in the transposition of the characteristics of a thing to something entirely different from it? The definition of the faculty of representation laid down in the *Philosophy of the Elements* [Elementarphilosophie] is in fact nothing more than a

definition of the characteristics of the very representation which is supposed to be the effect of the defined faculty, adorned however with the entirely empty title of *power* or *faculty*.<sup>6</sup>

The definition of power always remains circular, a blind spot in our conceptualizations. While this criticism begins to unravel a *pure* transcendental philosophy, we need not see this merely in a negative light. We can appreciate that in any philosophy of subjectivity, nature appears as dark spots, powers. Not “occult properties” but *nature* expressing itself as gaps *within* the subject. It is something which animates reason yet remains inaccessible to reason. Nietzsche in *Daybreak* expresses this idea the most beautifully.

Forgetting. – It has not yet been proved that there is any such thing as forgetting; all we know is that the act of recollection does not lie within our power. We have provisionally set into this gap in our power that word *forgetting*, as if it were one more addition to our faculties. But what, after all, does lie within our power? – if that word stands in a gap in our power, ought the other words not to stand in a gap in our *knowledge of our power?* (*Daybreak*, #126)

Fichte followed both Kant and Reinhold. Although we will investigate him in more detail in the first chapter on Hölderlin, it must be pointed out here that Fichte so intensifies the philosophy of subjectivity, that he goes beyond the subject. We find the unity of the subject is animated by a conflict of non-subjective forces. The conflict between the “Ich” and the “Nicht Ich”. These terms first make their appearance with the mystic Jacob Böhme. Fichte continues to develop them in such a manner that he prompts Novalis to remark in his *Fichte Studies* that “The I has a hieroglyphic power.”<sup>7</sup>

That is, the I operates as a “symbol” in a mystical sense. Subjectivity is animated by mysterious non-subjective powers. The “Ich” in Fichte

is deceptive since it is not the subject itself but an impersonal power prior to the subject. In Fichte we are looking through a window opening to the opposite side of the subject. Fichte of course pulls back from the radical implications of this by positing an “Absolute Ich” to recapture these forces within the calculus of subjectivity. Schelling, Novalis, and Hölderlin however begin to recognize them as forces of nature.

Contrary to the intentions of the philosophers of subjectivity, we see that the philosophy of subjectivity leads to the recognition of the non-subjective in the subject. How a conflict of forces, faculties, powers animates the unity of the subject. The philosophers who develop this idea in all its implications are Herder and Schiller. Both these writers were strongly influenced by both Spinoza and Rousseau, so they return us to our initial paradox.

Following Rousseau, Herder also recognized a distancing of man from nature. Modern culture represents a degenerate state. In such works as *Essay on the Origin of Language* and *Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples*, he charts, as did Rousseau, the loss of music and expression in human language in general and the inferiority of conceptual language. Herder sees Greek culture as the ideal of a culture in balance with nature. In his essay on Shakespeare, concerning the genesis of Greek drama he writes:

*...the artificiality of their rules was – not artifice at all! It was Nature! Unity of plot was unity of the action before them which, according to the circumstances simple.*<sup>8</sup>

This is the ideology of German “Classicism” developed by Winkelmann which casts a long shadow over German philosophy and literature. Greek man represents the ideal. His laws are the laws of nature, and he is a unity within nature. This unity is precisely what Modern man has lost.

Herder’s psychology like Kant’s involves an analysis of the powers of the intellect. But with Herder, following biological models, these faculties now become mental energies, living forces.<sup>9</sup>



Herder will emphasize that these forces constitute a unity. Just as in Rousseau, Modern man is, through his own arts and sciences, given a distorted view of the natural state, so too in Herder it is the philosophical analysis of the subject which divides what is actually a unity.

I know of no philosophy which explains what power [Kraft] is, whether it makes itself felt in one or two entities [Wesen]. What philosophy does, is observe power, impulse, and effect, and order and explain them among themselves after they have always already been presupposed. Whoever tells me what powers are in [their] soul and how they operate within them, to them I will explain in return, how they are also outside [their soul], how they operate on other souls and other bodies, and that perhaps they are divided not through such partitions of the soul as they are divided in the chambers of our metaphysics. Overall nothing in nature is divided, all flows through imperceptible transitions on and in one another; and certainly, what life is in creation, is in all its shapes, forms, and channels, only one in spirit, one flame.<sup>10</sup>

The inner man with all his dark powers, stimuli, and drives [Krafte, Reizen, und Trieben], is only one.<sup>11</sup>

The division of powers in Modern man is not only a metaphysical illusion but is also the condition of Modernity and distance from nature. There is a reciprocal relation between the fragmentation of Modern life and the fragmentation of the subject.

Since with classes, ranks, and occupations, the human abilities [Fähigkeiten] also, alas, have been divided... since the one [type of man] only thinks, he doesn't see, search, feel, or act, he always merely calls out like that caged bird who knew nothing else to squawk: I think. The other is

supposed to, without using his head, act and plan: no single member partakes in the whole any more.<sup>12</sup>

Herder in emphasizing the unity of the “dark powers” which comprise the subject, has also brought into relief the fragmentation of these forces in Modern man. The most glaring division will be the rift inherited from Kant; between “sense” and “reason”, between “feeling” and “intellect”.

Here we see the beginning of a possible solution to the problem: what is *distance*? On one hand man is identical with nature. That is, the powers which constitute the subject are identical with the living forces which constitute nature. On the other hand, these forces can be in a state of imbalance, fragmentation. The distance of man from nature is reflected in the fragmentation of the forces in the subject. The *outer* rift becomes an *inner* rift. Classicism, the projection of a pure state back to the Greek humanity (for Rousseau, a state which may have never existed), highlights the fragmentation of the Modern state of man.

## The Inner and Outer Rift

In the Hegel’s *Introduction to the Lectures on Aesthetics*, we read,

It is Schiller who must be given credit for breaking through the Kantian subjectivity and abstraction of thinking and for venturing on an attempt to get beyond this by intellectually grasping the unity and reconciliation as the truth and by actualizing them in artistic production.<sup>13</sup>

There is a sense in which this is accurate, yet we must not be blinded by the reading of Schiller that Hegel inaugurates and still continues today. Schiller’s is not simply a philosophy of unity and reconciliation. We must also appreciate Schiller as the one who most vividly expresses the dynamic of nature in the subject and the *fragmentation* of Modern man. We must read Schiller carefully since he more than any other writer

inspires Hölderlin, even as Hölderlin surpasses Schiller's solutions to his problems.

For Schiller, the opposition between man and nature can also be formulated as the difference between "culture" and "nature". This opposition, this distance that man has drifted from unity with nature has its negative aspects, but it is also the precondition for man to reflect back upon nature, to create an image of nature.

So long as man in his first physical condition accepts the world of sense merely passively, merely perceives, he is still identified with it. And just because he himself is simply world, there is no world yet for him. Not until he sets it outside himself or contemplates it, in his aesthetic status, does his personality become distinct from it, and a world appears to him because he has ceased to identify himself with it. (AEM, p. 119)

As man separates from his unity with nature a corresponding division of forces also takes place *within* him. Schiller calls these "drives" [Triebe].

To the fulfillment of this twofold task, of bringing what is necessary within us to reality, and subjecting what is real outside us to the law of necessity, we are urged by two contrary forces, which, because they drive [antrieben] us to realize their object, are very properly called drives [Triebe]. (AEM, p. 64)

Schiller initially names two drives, corresponding to the division of nature and man. The first is the "sensuous drive" [sinnliche Trieb] which represents man's identity with nature.

The sensuous proceeds from the physical existence of man or from his sensuous nature, and is concerned with setting

him within the bounds of time and turning him into matter [Materie]... By matter I here mean nothing but alternation [Veränderung] or reality [Realität], that time should have content. This condition of merely occupied time is called sensation [Empfindung], and it is this alone through which physical existence proclaims itself. (AEM, p. 64)

Notice here how this identity is expressed with regard to *temporality*, the sensuous drive is man's being *in time*, man's being *as nature*. The second drive is called the "form-drive" [Formtrieb] and represents that part of man which is able to transcend time, or transcend nature.

The form-drive proceeds from man's absolute existence [absoluten Dasein] or from his rational nature [vernünftigen Natur], and strives to set him a liberty, to bring harmony into the diversity of his manifestations [Erscheinens], and to maintain his person throughout every change of circumstance... it decides forever as it decides for the moment, and requires for the moment what it requires forever. Consequently it embraces the whole time series which is as much as to say: it annuls [aufheben] time and change; it wishes the actual to be necessary and eternal, and the eternal and necessary to be actual; in other words, it aims at truth and right. (AEM, pp. 65-66)

Schiller will go on to claim that the sensuous drive gives "cases" [Fälle], while the form-drive gives "laws" [Gesetze]. They are related to one another as content and form, and so we now see how this initial division of man from nature, manifests itself within the subject as the division which allows the possibility of all thought, the possibility of the image. Notice also that these drives, apart from being defined with regard to the distinction of time and eternity, can also be defined with regard to the division of particular and universal, and necessity and freedom. Kant's

division of sensibility from understanding and reason have evolved into two separate powers, the interaction and conflict of which allows for the possibility of knowledge.

Again, this opposition of drives is necessary for man's personality to distinguish itself from the world and for the world to appear to man. The ideal situation according to Schiller is for these drives to be in balance or harmony with one another. In a way which reminds us of Herder, Schiller shows how a lack of balance can lead to two degenerate situations depending upon which drive is given predominance over the other. This is again developed with regard to temporality.

If the sensuous drive becomes the determining one, if sense is the law-giver, and the world suppresses the personality, the latter loses as object in proportion as it gains as power. As soon as man is only a content of time, he is no longer, and consequently he has no content either. His condition is annulled [aufgehoben] with his personality, because both are correlative concepts [Wechselbegriffe] – because change [Veränderung] requires something that persists, and finite reality requires an infinite reality. If the form-drive becomes receptive that is, if the power of thought [Denkkraft] anticipates sensation and the person is substituted for the world, it loses as subject and autonomous power in proportion as it usurps the place of the object, since permanence implies change and absolute reality some limits for its manifestation. As soon as man is only form, he has no form, and his person is extinguished with his condition. In a word, only insofar as he is self-dependent is reality outside him, is he receptive; only insofar as he is receptive is reality within him, is he a thinking power [denkende Kraft]. (AEM, p. 71)

This imbalance of drives is not completely negative. It creates a state of “conflict”, an “antagonism of powers” through which man can

develop his capacities. Here we recognize Rousseau's idea of the power of "self-perfection".

There was no other way of developing the manifold capacities [Anlagen] of man than by placing them in opposition to each other. This antagonism of powers [Krafte] is the great instrument of culture, but it is only the instrument; for as long as it persists, we are only on the way towards culture. Only by individual powers in man becoming isolated and arrogating to themselves an exclusive right of legislation do they come into conflict with the truth of things and compel popular opinion, which ordinarily rests with indolent satisfaction upon outward appearance, to penetrate the depth of objects... Partiality in the exercise of powers, it is true, inevitably leads the individual into error, but [leads] the race [Gattung] towards truth. Only by concentrating the whole energy of our spirit in one single focus, and drawing together our whole being into one single power, do we attach wings, so to speak, to this individual power and lead it artificially beyond the bounds which nature seems to have imposed upon it. (AEM, pp. 43-44)

The condition of opposition and conflict and the antagonism of powers, is necessary for the development of man, but as Schiller points out, if it does not lead to a balanced state – a state of culture – then it is a degenerate condition. This is the present – Modern – condition of man according to Schiller. This imbalance results in two extremes: "savagery" [Verwilderung] and "complacency" [Erschlaffung].

Man is fragmented; he lacks the unity of his personality and the balance of his drives. Schiller proposes a re-balance of these drives which would return man to harmony with nature. These two drives cannot simply be synthesized into a unity however. Because the tension inherent in separation and opposition is required for truth and the creation of the image

of nature, simple unity would represent a regression to the unconscious state of nature. This is as impossible as it is undesirable. This state of reconciliation and balance takes place only through the preservation of a controlled state of conflict, a maintenance of a harmonious opposition of drives through a third drive: the “play-drive” [Spieltrieb].

The sensuous drive requires change, requires time to have a content; the form-drive requires the extinction of time, and no change. Therefore the drive in which both are combined, this play-drive, would aim at the extinction of time in time and the reconciliation of becoming with absolute being, of change with identity. (AEM, p. 74)

The play-drive mediates matter and form in the same way as the creative activity of the artist. Therefore this new state of the harmonious opposition of the drives through play is the state of “beauty”.

Beauty, it is said, links together [verknüpft] two conditions which are opposed to each other and can never become one... Secondly it is said that beauty combines [verbindet] those two opposite conditions, and thus cancels [hebt..auf] the opposition. But since both conditions remain eternally opposed to one another, they can be combined in no other way, than becoming canceled [aufgehoben]. (AEM, p. 88)

The opposition of the sensual and form drives can never be synthesized. The opposition can only be raised from the level where it is a dissonant one, to a higher level where this dissonance is a harmony. As we will see in Hölderlin, every dissonance is a part of a higher harmony. The opposition is preserved in this higher level but now it is harmonized within this state of beauty. It is annulled and at the same time preserved in the new state – in the sense of the term “Aufheben” which Schiller introduces into philosophical discourse for the first time, and which Hegel will make central to his philosophy. The state of beauty is not a

state where elements are suppressed in order to achieve some sense of harmony, but a state where all forces exist in their fullest expression, yet in harmony with each other.

Beauty is not lawlessness but harmony of laws, not arbitrariness but the utmost inner necessity; the latter do not reflect that the definiteness which they equally rightly demand of Beauty consists not in the *exclusion of certain realities* but in the *absolute inclusion of them all*, so that it therefore not restriction but infinity. (AEM, p. 90)

Beauty, is the appearance [Schein] which arises through the unity of conflict. This becomes very important for both Hölderlin and Adorno.

We can paint this in yet broader strokes. Man, as a part of his *nature*, possesses a division within him, which corresponds to his division and distance from nature. On one side is that aspect of man which is in time, in nature, his sensual drive. On the other side is that aspect of man which transcends time, which forms and dominates nature, his form-drive. Man is at once *in* nature and transcends nature based upon these two forces within him. Both are *natural* aspects. The “conflict” between these aspects within man is also natural. The resistance of the sensual to the formal presses the formal to correct itself to increasingly higher manifestations. The resistance of the formal to the sensual lifts man out of his animal condition. So this conflict, while able to lead us into corrupt conditions is also necessary. It must be put into a state of harmony, but cannot be simply canceled. It must be lifted to a new level where the conflict is preserved yet ceases to be disruptive. This “aufheben” for Schiller is achieved through “beauty”.

According to Schiller, the ancient Greeks reached this state of beauty in a manner which cannot be surpassed.



The phenomenon of Greek humanity was undoubtedly a maximum which could neither be maintained at that pitch nor be surpassed. Not maintained because the intellect was inevitably bound to be compelled by the store which it already possessed to dissociate itself from sensation and contemplation, and to strive after clearness of knowledge; and also not surpassed, because only to a certain degree is clarity compatible with fullness and warmth. This is the degree the Greeks had attained, and if they wanted to advance to a higher state of development they were, like ourselves, obliged to surrender the wholeness of their being and pursue truth along separate roads. (AEM, p. 43)

The condition of the Greeks will become the ideal model for this state of beauty. For fragmented Modern man to attain this state, Schiller proposes an “aesthetic education”; that is a kind of reeducation of Modern man in such a way that the play-drive is exercised in order to bring the unbalanced drives into harmony, an education through beauty.

So our distance from nature is manifested by the fragmentation and conflict of forces *within* us. It is this conflict which heightens our powers, which allows for self-perfection, which allows us to transcend nature and ourselves to create an image of nature and ourselves. The element of *deception* is connected to the elements of *fragmentation* and *conflict*. Yet this excess and distance is also a *dangerous* condition and must somehow be contained.

In the end, man is not returned to nature by a regression to a primitive pre-cultural state. And not by an elimination of the conflict of forces within him. But by the “aufheben” and harmonization of this conflict through “play.”

In summary we can say that it is conflict which is central. Conflict is that which allows us to project an origin. It allows us to place identity and unity on one hand, and difference and multiplicity on the other. It becomes that which leads to a degenerate state on one hand, and self-perfection, development and creativity on the other. Nature is the sum

total of all conflicting forces, so conflict is an expression of nature. Any reconciliation with nature will involve the preservation of conflict. We will see in the following chapters the various means in which Hölderlin and Adorno preserve conflict within the work of art.

# HÖLDERLIN'S “GREEK” AESTHETIC THEORY

In this chapter I wish to introduce the thought of Hölderlin by orienting him with respect to Schiller and Fichte. The first section will concern itself with the writings connected to Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*, and the theoretical problems they attempt to address. These writings follow the problematic which we saw developed by Schiller in the last chapter. That is, the idea that the gap between man and nature becomes expressed in the conflict of drives within him. And that this conflict can be a dangerous condition if it remains unbalanced, or can be the condition which develops the capacities of man if it is balanced. For Schiller, this balance was achieved through “play”. Hölderlin does not accept “play” as the means to a state of balance. He instead develops a two-fold solution. One for the “Greek” poetic spirit, and one for the “Modern” poetic spirit. The remaining sections of this chapter develop the Greek aesthetic model, that is the achievement of balance through a “self-sacrificial”, “tragic” dynamic related to the Kantian sublime. This solution is developed in the writings connected to his drama *The Death of Empedocles*. This Greek model also represents Hölderlin's engagement with Fichte's philosophy. The Modern aesthetic theory will be examined in chapter 4.

## Harmony and Dissonance

In 1797 Hölderlin wrote to Schiller:

But believe me ... it is not possible for me to be near you. Actually, you stimulate me too much, when I am around you. I still remember so well how your presence always used to ignite me, so that the whole of the next day I was unable to think. So long as I was with you my heart was almost too small, and after I had left you, I could no longer hold it together. In your presence I am like a plant which has only just been put into the soil. One must shelter it at noon. You may laugh at me; but I speak truly. (W, II, s. 740)

The theoretical elements in Hölderlin's writings are the record of a constant struggle with Schiller's influence. It is only with the utmost care that we can disentangle Hölderlin's thought from Schiller's, and show in what manner Hölderlin *surpasses* him.

Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* brought to light a problem which Hölderlin put much effort into trying to solve: how to overcome the fragmentation and imbalance of the forces in Modern man. Schiller, recognizing that Greek humanity was the highest condition ever achieved, described the ideal situation:

No doubt the artist is the child of his time; but woe to him if he is also its disciple. or even its favorite. Let some beneficent deity snatch the infant betimes from his mother's breast, let it nourish him with the milk of a better age and suffer him to grow up to full maturity beneath the distant skies of Greece. Then when he has become a man, let him return to his century as an alien figure; but not in order to gladden it by his appearance, rather, terrible like Agamemnon's son, to cleanse it. He will indeed take his subject matter from the present age, but his form he will borrow from a nobler time – nay, from beyond all time,

from the absolute unchangeable unity of his being. Here, from the pure aether of his daemonic nature, flows forth the well-spring of Beauty, uncorrupted by the generations and ages which wallow in the dark eddies below it. (AEM, p. 51)

This prescription will become the prototype for Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion* and the fragmentary versions leading up to it. Hölderlin's theoretical constructions here follow Schiller's quite closely. Initially, he was even going to entitle the work: "New Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man".

There are several incomplete versions leading up to the final version: *The Thalia Fragment*, *The Metrical Version*, *Hyperion's Youth*, and *The Next-to-Last [Vorletzte] Version*. In these versions, Hölderlin is engaged with the separation of man from nature, both the necessity and danger of this resulting division, and the possibility of a re-harmonization through "love", and "beauty".

In the first version called *The Thalia Fragment*, because it was published in Schiller's journal of that name, we find that the forces which comprise culture are the same forces which comprise nature in its pure state. We distinguish ourselves from nature by organizing the forces of nature.

There are two ideals of our existence: a condition of the highest simplicity, where our desires are reciprocally harmonized with themselves, with our powers and with everything with which we stand in association, *though the organization of nature alone*, without our assistance, and a condition of the highest form, where the same thing occurs but with infinite duplication and strengthened desires and powers, *through the organization which we ourselves are in the position to give*. (W, I, s. 483)

Here, as in Schiller, man transcends nature through his ability to condition nature, Hölderlin continues,

Man likes to be *in* all and *over* all, and the sentence in the epitaph of Loyola: “*non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo*”, can likewise signify the all-desiring, all-subjugating, dangerous side of man [alles unterjochende gefährliche Seite des Menschen], as the highest and most beautiful condition reachable by him. (W, I, s. 483)<sup>14</sup>

As in Schiller, the antagonism of man and nature has the ambiguity of being both positive and negative. The ability of man to transcend nature and give it form is both his most beautiful and dangerous condition. This ambiguity is also expressed in the preface to the *Metrical Version*.

I know it is only a need which presses us to give the relationship of nature with the immortal within us, and to believe in a spirit within matter, but I know that this need also gives us rights. I know that we – there, where the beautiful forms of nature proclaims to us the presence of the divine – with *our* souls animate the world [die Welt mit unserer Seele beseelen], but then what is, which not through us would be as it is? (W, I, s. 509)

This dangerous condition is that which allows man to give form over nature, it is also the condition for the world to appear at all. (This is the *irony* which situates Hölderlin close to Romanticism, although we shall also see in what manner he stands outside of Romanticism).

This state of excess subjectivity (what he will later name “excess interiority”) also results in a “tyranny over nature” which in the end results in the “poverty of nature”.

Easily satisfied is the spirit without deficiency, in its eternal fullness, and in its perfection there is no interaction. [But] Man is never easily satisfied, for he desires the riches of a deity, and its cost is the poverty of nature. (W, I, s. 527)

In violating nature, in violating totality, we are violating the divine, because the divine is only to be found in the totality of things, in both its harmonies and its dissonances. In the *Metrical Version* we find:

The high primal-image [Urbild] of all unity,  
It appears to us again in the friendly  
Beating of the hearts, and represents itself here  
In the faces of these children. –  
And don't the melodies of destiny  
Rustle near you? Don't you understand them? The same  
Meaning are [in] its dissonances too. (W, I, s. 514)

Every dissonance for Hölderlin is a part of a higher harmony. Truth and beauty are to be found in the totality of the forces of nature. The isolation of the forming, organizing subject, violates this truth of the whole, but at the same time, it is only through the finitude of our subjectivity that nature, beauty, and truth can appear at all. As he writes, “The poverty of finitude is inseparably united in us with the abundance of divinity” (W, I, s. 522).

The unifying, balancing force in both of these versions is “Love”. The centrality of “love” as a unifying force seems to be influenced by the Dutch philosopher Hemsterhuis, particularly his *Lettre sur les Desirs*.<sup>15</sup>

In the philosophical forward to *The Next-to-Last Version*, the most highly developed philosophical statement in his Hyperion project, we again find this dynamic. Here Hölderlin develops it in detail.

The blessed union, Being, in the singular sense of the term, is lost for us. And we must to have lost it if we strive after it, so to obtain it. We tear ourselves loose from the peaceful *en kai pan* of the world in order to produce it through ourselves. We have fallen away from nature and what once was *one* (as one can believe), now conflicts with itself, and mastery and slavery interact on both sides. Often it seems to us as if the world is *everything* and we are *nothing*, but often also as if we are *everything* and the world is *nothing*.

(W, I, s. 558)

Again, we tear ourselves away from the unity of nature in order to produce it through ourselves. We are a moment within nature and at the same time, nature becomes a moment within us. In the earlier versions we reunite with the unity of nature through the unifying power of “love”, But now Hölderlin will stress the impossibility of a reunification or a synthesis.

For the eternal conflict between ourselves and the world to end, the peace of all peace, this is the highest, for all reason, the bringing-back-to a unity of ourselves with nature to *one* infinite whole, that is the goal of all of our striving, whether we are aware of it or not. But neither in our knowledge nor in our action do we arrive at some period of existence where all conflict ceases, where *all is one*; the determined line unites with the undetermined line only in infinite convergence.

We would experience no revenge from that eternal peace, from that Being, in the singular sense of the word, we would not strive to unite ourselves with nature, we would not think nor act, it [union, Being], would be nothing at all (for us), we would be nothing at all (for us), unless the former infinite union, the former Being in the singular sense of the word, were present at hand. It would be present at hand as Beauty; it is waiting to be spoken through Hyperion, a new kingdom upon us where beauty is king. (W, I, s. 558-559)

Conflict is inescapable. What has been separated cannot be reunited. But the very presence of conflict and strife belies the presence of beauty, that is, the presence of Being or nature in its pure state, for us. Beauty now has the power of harmonizing this opposition which can never be unified or synthesized. Beauty is the source of harmonious opposition. It will now achieve the Schillerian “Aufhebung”.



Notice the manner in which the circle between man and nature is to be closed. It is no longer a question of man's distance from nature putting him in an objective position to capture nature directly through the image, to mirror the truth of nature. It is not a matter of mimesis in the traditional sense of the word. Instead, man finds reconciliation with nature by the harmonization of those elements which have been separated and fragmented within him. Internal re-harmonization of the drives through beauty corresponds to the re-harmonization of man with nature.

In these earlier versions it is mentioned several times that Hyperion will follow an "eccentric path". Hyperion, throughout the work, strives to find the proper balance by which the divine will be appropriated. This leads him to many errors and dead ends.

Also one will find many misunderstandings, half-truths, and wrongs in these letters. One will perhaps become offended with this Hyperion, with his contradictions, his aberrations, with his strengths as well as his weaknesses, with his anger as well as his love. But there must inevitably be offense. We travel down an eccentric path but there is no other possible way from childhood to perfection. (W, I, s. 558)

Hyperion falls into the two excesses: where he is everything and the world is nothing, and where the world is everything and he is nothing. These are the excesses of Schiller's form and sensual drives. Hyperion's "eccentric path" through the final version of the novel will be an attempt at a harmonization of the drives within him, and the harmonization of that outside of him. The goal is the recovery of this state of beauty within culture, the glory of what was once Greece, so he can bring it back to his people – the Germans – who live in the Modern state of degeneracy. But all of his efforts to find beauty within himself and outside of himself fail.

In the first book he tries to achieve a spiritual recovery following the partiality towards the form-drive. But the outer world never lives up to the intensity of his poetic ideals, his alliances and friendships collapse,

and except for his beloved “Diotima”, he is left isolated.

In the second book he attempts to achieve this recovery through action, following a partiality towards the sensual drive. Again this is doomed to failure as his armies fall into savagery. With the death of his “Diotima” he is left completely isolated. He then returns to his homeland, and here he finds his people completely unreceptive to aesthetic education. At the end of the book, he returns alone to the beauty of nature.

What is significant here is that Hölderlin does not follow Schiller’s last step, that is, the mediating “play-drive” finds no place in his novel. This is where he departs from Schiller, he does not accept play in the recovery of beauty, nor within the aesthetic in general. In a letter to his brother he is very clear about this issue. Allow me to quote the letter at length.

Much has already been said about the influence of the beautiful arts on the aesthetic education of man, yet it was always expressed as though nobody was serious about it, and that was natural, for they did not consider what art, and particularly poetry, are according to their nature. They only referred to its unassuming exterior appearance, which of course is freely separable from its essence, yet which constitutes nothing less than the whole character of art; one took it as play because it appears in the modest figure [Gestalt] of play, and hence it reasonably could not produce a different effect [Wirkung] than that of play, namely diversion [Zerstreuung], almost the complete opposite of what it effects were it present in its true nature. For then man collects himself with it, it affords him a repose [Ruhe], not the empty, but the living repose where all powers are active and only because of their intimate [innigen] harmony are not perceived as active. It nourishes people, and unites them not like play where they are united only insofar as everyone forgets himself and the living peculiarities of noone are brought to light ... I said that poetry unites man

not like play; it unites them namely if it is genuine [echt] and works genuinely, with all the manifold suffering, fortune, striving, hoping, and fearing, with all their opinions and mistakes, all their virtues and ideas, with everything major and minor which exists among them, [unites them] more and more into a living, a thousand times divided, inward [innigen] whole, for precisely this shall be poetry itself; and like the cause, so the effect. (Letter #172, W, II, s. 799-800, ELT, 138-139))

The inner essence of art is conflict. Beauty occurs not through the elimination of certain realities (and conflicts) but the preservation of all realities in such a way that they constitute a whole. In this sense the forces which constitute beauty are a reflection of the forces which constitute nature, with all its harmonies as well as its dissonances. Schiller also recognized this. He writes:

[the freedom connected with the essence of beauty] is not lawlessness but the harmony of laws, not arbitrariness but the utmost inner necessity. [its definiteness] consists not in the *exclusion of certain realities* but in the absolute *inclusion of them all*, so that it is not restriction but infinity. (AEM, p. 90)

But while Schiller saw “play” as something that does not violate this dynamic, Hölderlin did. For Hölderlin play mollifies conflict by eliminating the individuality and particularity of its conflicting forces, and any resolution must preserve conflict. So “play” cannot provide the resolution to Hyperion’s quest.

So from the perspective of the framework which has its roots in Schiller, *Hyperion* seems to be a failure. The novel lacks any resolution. The glory of Greece remains un-regained. The drives of Modern humanity remain unbalanced by any mediating drive.

But there are two forms of resolution which are implicit here which Hölderlin will develop in his later work. One is Hyperion's return at the end of the novel to the "beauty of nature" in the manner of Rousseau. We will encounter this resolution again when we reach Hölderlin's "Modern" or "Hesperian" aesthetic theory. But at the beginning of book two he hints at another resolution when he quotes from a passage in Sophocles.

Not to be born is, past all prizing, best; but, when a man has seen the light, this is the next best by far, that with all speed he should go thither, whence he had come. (H, p. 133)

At the end of the novel, speaking to nature, Hyperion writes:

Men fall from you like rotten fruits, oh, let them perish, for thus they return to your root; so may I, too, oh tree of life, that I may grow green again with you and breathe your crown about me with all your budding twigs! peacefully and devoutly, for we are all sprung from the same golden seed... Like lover's quarrels are the dissonances of the world. Reconciliation is there, even in the midst of strife, and all things that are parted find one another again. The arteries separate and return to the heart and all is one eternal glowing life. (H, p. 133)<sup>16</sup>

All dissonances are a part of a greater harmony. Such a harmony can therefore be approached through the death of the individual, through sacrifice. Hölderlin will therefore replace Schiller's resolution through play with the idea of the *Tragic*; a *sacrificial* model of the dynamic between art and nature. In a Kantian sense this would represent a shift from beauty to the sublime as a means to reconciliation. He will develop this in his next project: *The Death of Empedocles* and the theoretical writings connected with this work.

## Empedocles : Fichte on Mt. Aetna

Now that I have given wings to that beautiful desire  
the more I see the air under my feet  
the more do I set my speedy feathers to the wind  
and, disdaining the world, move toward the heavens.

Nor does the cruel end of the son of Deadalus  
induce me to come down; in fact, I climb higher.  
I know full well that I shall fall dead to the earth.  
But what is life compared to this death.

I hear the voice of my heart in the air.  
Where are you taking me, temerious one? Bow,  
for great ardor rarely is not accompanied by pain.

Fear not exalted ruin I answer,  
Cleave with certainty the clouds, and die content.  
If heaven destines such illustrious death for us.

(Giordano Bruno, *Degli eroici furori*)<sup>17</sup>

We see in the passage from Bruno, a version of the myth of Prometheus. On one hand an ethical imperative for the finite subject to assimilate infinite nature within itself, and on the other hand, the inevitable punishment which results. It is this same dynamic which Hölderlin will use to ground his *Greek* aesthetic theory.

But how is the infinite image of nature be captured within the finite? For Hölderlin, art and the artist will act as the medium through which this takes place. The artist is the locus of conflict, both the conflict of impulses and the conflict between art and nature. Empedocles will be the model of the artist-subject which has recreated infinite nature within himself.

Once again we find the prototype of this movement within the writings of Schiller. We return to a passage by Schiller quoted above which is decisive for Hölderlin's theoretical development.

Partiality in the exercise of powers, it is true, inevitably leads the individual into error, but the race [Gattung] to truth. Only by concentrating the whole energy of our spirit in one single focus, and drawing together our whole being into one single power, do we attach wings, so to say, to this individual power and lead it artificially beyond the bounds which nature seems to have imposed upon it. (AEM, p. 44)

Within this partiality, this unbalance towards the formal impulse or the intellect (what Hölderlin will now call the "excess of interiority" [Innigkeit]), the highest conflict and opposition occurs, and this conflict and opposition in turn artificially lifts man's capacities. Though intensifying man's nature, it lifts man beyond nature. But nature will also exact its revenge. Schiller writes:

Nature here sets, even to the universal genius, a limit which it cannot pass, and truth will make martyrs so long as philosophy still holds it to be her principal business to provide against error. (AEM, p. 44)

Empedocles will become the ideal artist. Like Hyperion he is a son of the "tremendous oppositions of nature and art through which the world appeared before his eyes". His excess of interiority or partiality towards the formal impulse, and the consequent conflict of powers are the prerequisite for him to surpass nature and create an infinite image of nature and destiny – and truth – for which he will in the end become a martyr.

Here, Hölderlin was also influenced by his struggles with Fichte's philosophy. Fichte will represent for Hölderlin the manner in which the infinite image of nature becomes constructed within the finite, the construction of the subjective or aesthetic monad. Here again, conflict is

important. In Fichte it takes the form of the dialectic of the “I” and the “not I”.

The Fichtian project has its genesis in Kantian critical philosophy. It follows the interiority and subjective limitation generated by its concentration on *a priori* knowledge. This gives rise to the idea of “system” which Kant was not to go on to develop but which Reinhold and Fichte take as the central element in their philosophies. Kant, near the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in a section entitled “The Architectonic of Pure Reason”, describes the characteristics of a system in the following way:

In accordance with reason’s legislative prescriptions, our diverse modes of knowledge must not be permitted to be a mere rhapsody, but must form a system. Only so can they further the essential ends of reason. By a system I understand the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea. This idea is the concept provided by reason – of the form of a whole – in so far as the concept determines a priori not only the scope of the manifold content, but also the positions which the parts occupy relative to one another. (CPR, A 832)

Each part of the system gains its legitimacy relative to the whole and its connectedness with the other parts. Kant goes on to show in his *Critique of the [Power] of Judgement* that it is the imagination which provides this idea of the whole.<sup>18</sup> In Reinhold’s and Fichte’s development of the idea of system however it is the idea of an unconditioned foundation for the system – a “Grundsatz” – which holds the most importance. The system, they believed, needs a single unconditioned foundation which is self-evident and which radiates its truth through the connectedness of the entire network of the system. This also has the virtue of eliminating the Kantian “thing-in-itself” which they felt violated the integrity of the system. Reinhold’s “principle of consciousness” developed in his

*Elementarphilosophie* was to serve as his solution to this self-evident foundation. It reads:

In consciousness the subject distinguishes the representation from both the subject and the object and relates it to them both. (Beytrage, I: 267)

While this eliminates the “thing-in-itself”, it has the effect of placing the idea of the system firmly within the subject. The system now in effect *becomes* the subject.<sup>19</sup>

Schulze’s attack on Reinhold’s first principle, as found in his skeptical tract *Aenesidemus*, led Fichte to try to offer his own solution. The “Grundsatz” was now to take the form of a pure activity which creates its own facticity. Fichte coins his own term for this, he calls it “Tathandlung”. It is the self-identity of this pure act which will become his first unconditioned “Grundsatz”. And this in turn will serve to ground his version of the system; his “Wissenschaftslehre”. It will radiate its self-certainty to the rest of the system.

[This principle] therefore must surely be certain: certain in itself, through itself, and for its own sake. All other propositions will be certain because they can be shown to be in some respect equivalent to this first principle. But this principle has to be certain merely because it is equivalent with itself. All other propositions will possess only an indirect certainty derived from the first principle; the first principle has to be immediately certain. All other knowledge is based on this principle, and apart from it no knowledge at all would be possible. (CCW, I: 48)

This first principle can be seen, according to Fichte, in the identity expressed in the proposition “A = A”. He will go on to show that since this identity is located *within* the I, this first principle can also be expressed in the proposition “I am I”. The ground of the system is therefore a pure,



free, unlimited activity, which on one hand is prior to the construction of the subject, and on the other is identified with the subject. The system will be constructed outward from this center. The construction takes the form of a dialectic; the opposition between the “I” and the “not I”. Early in this construction, these opposed poles are mutually exclusive and in their opposition we find the basis of other principles [Grundsatz]. While the first principle ( $A = A$ , or I am I) is the basis for the principle of identity, the second principle (not A is not equal to A) expresses the essence of opposition and is the basis of the principle of non-contradiction, and the third principle expresses that both of the opposed must find a synthesis in some third thing and this is the basis of the principle of sufficient reason. So we proceed from thesis to antithesis. The antithesis “nullifies itself” (Fichte will say it is valid insofar as it nullifies itself) and this leads us finally to the synthesis. The first unconditioned “Grundsatz” or the pure activity of the subject, and the oppositions of the subject, are the basis for the reconstruction of all knowledge, the Kantian categories, and the reconstruction of the subject. Opposition is crucial to the mechanism of Fichte’s dialectic and is the basis of the very possibility of the subject. The idea that dominates the first part of the section in the “Grundlage” called “The Foundation of Theoretical Knowledge”, expresses an absolute opposition. “The I positions itself as determined by the not-I.” This is prior to the synthesis mentioned above. Before the synthesis, the opposition of the I and the not-I are mutually exclusive and yet determine one another in their opposition. The synthesis itself becomes a unification of opposites which cannot be unified.

It is the office of the synthesizing faculty to unite opposites, to think of them as one (for the demand is addressed initially, just as it always had been, to the power of thought). Now this it cannot do; yet the requirement is there; and hence there arises a conflict between the incapacity and the demand. The mind lingers in this conflict and wavers between the two – wavers between the requirement and

the impossibility of carrying it out. And in this condition, but only therein, it lays hold on both at once, or, what comes to the same thing, makes them such that they can simultaneously be grasped and held firm; in touching them, and being repulsed, and touching them again, it gives them, in the relation to itself, a certain content and a certain extension (which will reveal itself in due course as a manifold in time and space). This condition is called the state of intuition. The power active therein has already been denominated earlier the productive imagination. (GW, I:225, SK, p. 201)

Fichte will point out that “the circumstances which threatened to destroy the possibility of a theory of human cognition becomes the sole condition under which such a theory can be established”. This is an important element in Fichte’s irony which would go on to influence the Romanticism of F. Schlegel and Novalis. Fichte continues:

We saw no prospect of ever being able to unite what was absolutely opposed; we now see that an account of the events in our mind would be simply out of the question without absolute opposites; for the productive imagination, the power on which all these occurrences depend, would be utterly impossible, if absolute opposites, irreconcilables totally unfitted to the self’s apprehension, did not enter the scene. (I:226, p. 201)

The whole possibility of the construction of the subject into a unity depends upon the conflict of opposites. The construction of the I depends upon the positioning [Setzung] of the not-I. Unity is created through conflict.

The imagination confers reality upon these opposites and they then become intuitable. Reality is derived from intuition and is something merely ideal. All reality is a product of the productive imagination, this

leads Fichte to ask if one can call this a “deception” [Tauschung] on the part of the imagination. But he points out that “to every deception a truth must be opposed, and there must be a means of escaping it”. But since the imagination is the sole source of our life, our consciousness and our existence for ourselves, there is no way to escape it unless we were to abstract from the self, and “it is impossible that what does the abstracting should abstract from itself.” Therefore according to Fichte, “the act is not a deception but gives us truth and the only possible truth” (I:227, p. 202). Reality, as system and subject, is a product of the imagination, but because there is nothing outside of system and subject in Fichte’s philosophy, it constitutes the truth and not a deception. As we will see, this is the point where Hölderlin’s philosophy departs from Fichte.

## Hölderlin and Fichte

The unity, integrity, and universality of the Fichtian subject, represented by the idea of system, is the product of conflict and opposition. Hölderlin’s interest in Fichte is based upon this ironic dynamic (as were the Romantics). But while for Fichte, the stability of this construction is insured by the self-evidence of its first completely unconditioned “Grundsatz”, Hölderlin rejects the priority of this “Grundsatz”, thus disengaging the entire system from its foundation. According to Hölderlin in his early essay “Judgement and Being”, the identity expressed in the judgment  $A = A$ , or I am I, already presupposes an *arche-separation* already implicit in the very word for: “Ur-teil”. In other words, nothing can be synthesized, including the identity of  $A = A$ , unless it has first been separated. Being, for Hölderlin, is the connection of subject and object where this connection is such that no separation can take place without violating the essence of what is to be separated.

Yet this being must not be confused with identity. If I say: I am I, the subject (“I”) and the object (“I”) are not united in such a way that no separation can be performed without violation the essence of what is to be separated;

on the contrary, the I is only possible by means of this separation of the I from the I. How can I say: “I”! without self-consciousness? Yet how is self-consciousness possible? In opposing myself to myself, separating myself from myself, yet in recognizing myself as the same in the opposed regardless of this separation. Yet to what extent as the same? I can, I must ask in this manner; for in another respect it (the “I”) is opposed to itself. Hence identity is not the union of object and subject which simply occurred, hence identity is not = absolute Being. (W, I, s. 840-841, ELT, p. 38)

Fichte never claims that this pure identity is equal to Being. It has no *ontological* aspirations. It is merely a logical “Grundsatz” upon which to build his *transcendental* system. To the contrary, Being for Fichte emerges in the construction of the system, so Hölderlin’s criticisms are off the mark. However this passage of Hölderlin demonstrates his interpretation of Being in relation to the organic system. Being for Hölderlin is a pure state which is unrecoverable as we have seen in his Hyperion project. Reflection and self-consciousness represent a state which is always already separated from Being. Hölderlin appropriates Fichte’s construction of the subject through conflict and opposition, yet he removes its ground and replaces it with a groundlessness; the arche-separation, the distance of man from nature, that unbridgeable distance which is always already there as soon as or reflection occurs.<sup>20</sup> By placing Fichte over the abyss, the system, the monadic “Wissenschaftslehre”, can no longer expand indefinitely. At some point the monad has to collapse in upon itself because it no longer possesses the truth of the “Grundsatz” to provide its turgidity. It has to pay for its own hybris and this is what we find developed in Hölderlin’s drama *The Death of Empedocles*, and its accompanying essay “The Ground for Empedocles”.

## The Ground for Empedocles

Hölderlin will describe the process of monadic construction, or what he calls “interiority” [Innigkeit], with reference to two concepts: the “organic”, and the “aorgic”. In their most simple interpretation, they refer respectively to Art and Nature. They follow the Fichte’s opposition of the “I” and the “not-I”, and they correspond most closely to Schiller’s distinction between the “form-drive” and the “sensual drive”, possessing the same temporal references as we shall see. But we must above all understand the “organic” and the “aorgic” with reference to the idea of “system”. The essence of the organic follows the idea of system. Heidegger can help us here when he defines the essence of system as follows:

The inner jointure of what is comprehensible itself, its founding development and ordering. Even more, system is a conscious joining of the jointure and coherence of Being itself. (*Schelling’s Treatise*, p. 28)

Heidegger was writing of Schelling but the same idea holds true for Hölderlin’s concept of the organic. The organic is the forming, ordering, connecting faculty, which strives to create a conscious image of Being or Nature itself. It participates in the construction of the monadic system, in the construction of the interiority of the subject.

The aorgic is the opposite of the organic. It is the not-I or nature. The unformed, unconnected, that which exceeds the organic, systematic, monadic, subjective construction. It is chaos. This is not to say that Hölderlin, like Fichte, sees nature as merely the not-I or as external resistance, but in relation to the finitude of the organic or systematic, it appears in this form. It is that which escapes the forming, imaging capacity of man. In itself nature is the “pure” or “beauty”, a perfect order which forever exceeds the order of the subject and so appears as chaos. As Being it is that realm towards which we strive but never achieve. The aorgic is temporality, while the organic is that which tries to transcend temporality.

The organic is a finite part of the infinite order of nature, and strives to represent that infinite order. This organic drive, or “excess of interiority”, is the condition of the artist or poet, and the condition of Empedocles.

... such a man can only grow out of the highest opposition of nature and art, and as, the [ideal] excess of interiority, emerges out of interiority, so *this real excess of interiority* emerges from hostility and the highest antagonism where the aorgic takes on the moderate configuration [Gestalt] of the particular and appears [scheint] to reconcile with the super-organic [Uberorganischen], where the organic in turn takes on the moderate configuration of the universal and appears to be reconciled with the super-aorgic, super-animated, [Uberaorgischen Uberlebendigen] because both interpenetrate and meet each other most intensely at their highest extreme and thus have to take on in their outer form [Form] the configuration [Gestalt], the appearance [Schein] of opposition. (W, II, s. 119-120, ELT, p. 55)<sup>21</sup>

There is a tension here, a conflict. The particular organic order found in the subject is on one hand a particular part of the universal order, and on the other hand, desires to be *the* universal order. The more intensely the particular subject constructs an image of nature, the more excessive the interiority, and the more intense the subject is opposed to nature. The further man is from nature, the more brightly the light of nature’s image shines within him. Notice the Cartesian model of the relationship between subject and object begins to break down. It is not a relationship between two spheres related by perception, but as we have seen, distance is proportional to conflict, and conflict leads to the image. Now both interpenetrate: the aorgic within the subject becomes conditioned by the organic to form and infinite image of nature – the “super-organic” – and the organic becomes universal and attempts to correspond to infinite nature – the “super-aorgic”. Hölderlin also describes it as follows:

The more organic artistic man is the blossom of nature. The more aorgic nature when it becomes purely felt by the purely organized, purely and uniquely formed man, gives him the feeling of perfection. But this life is only at hand for feeling and not for knowledge. If it is to be known, it must present itself through itself in the excess of interiority, where the opposition gets mixed up [verwecheln], separates itself, so that the organic which surrendered itself too much to nature, and which forgot its essence and consciousness, goes over into the extreme of self-activity, art, and reflection, nature on the other hand, at least in its effects on reflective man, goes over into the extreme of the aorgic, the incomprehensible, the unfeeling, the unlimited, until through the progression of the reciprocal activity of opposition, both the originally united meet as in the beginning, only now nature is more organic through forming, cultivating man [bildenden, kultivierenden Menschen], through the forming/imaging drive [Bildungstriebe], and the forming/imaging power [Bildungskräfte], while on the other hand man has become more aorgic, universal, and infinite. (W, II, s. 117, ELT, p. 53)

For this life to be merely felt, then the opposites merely join in an idealistic mixture, where organic man forgets his subjectivity and becomes like aorgic nature and aorgic nature takes on the organic configuration. Man and Nature merely move toward one another. However for knowledge – or art – the opposites move away from one another and unity is achieved through conflict.

We can understand this through Fichte's account of opposition in the "Grundlage". The I and the not-I position [setzen] one another. They position one another through op-position [entgegengesetzen], literally, through positioning-against-one-another. By limiting one another they give each other their respective identities. One example Fichte gives is

the “finite” and the “infinite”. The infinite is infinite only in relation to the finite and vice versa. The opposition determines the identity of each. The higher the hostility, the sharper the limits are. And once there are limits, then there is a region where the opposed meet (Fichte calls this a “Zusammentreffen”) and so opposition becomes the basis for union.

Heidegger also describes this process of unity through opposition in his work “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Concerning the conflict of “Earth” and “World”, he writes:

The conflict is not a rift [Riss] as a mere cleft is ripped open; rather, it is the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other. This rift carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their common ground... This rift does not let the opponents break apart; it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline. (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 63)

So in Hölderlin, this conflict within the excess of interiority, sharpens the identity of the opponents. “The organic... goes over into the extreme of self-activity, art, and reflection, ... and nature goes over into the extreme of the aorgic, the incomprehensible, the unfeeling, the unlimited”. We must remember that both of these movements are taking place simultaneously *within* the “excess of interiority”. Within the subject. Such an intensification of opposites now causes them to condition one another through the “reciprocal activity of opposition”. This organic conditioning, “Forming, cultivating man through his forming/imaging drive [Bildungstriebe] and forming/imaging power [Bildungskräfte]”, since it is simultaneous and coexistent with the aorgic, conditions the aorgic so that “nature becomes more organic”, and conversely, “man has become more aorgic, universal, infinite”. On one hand, we are a finite part of infinite nature, and we participate in the forces of the aorgic. Yet on the other hand, we are a special part of the aorgic which has the power of organic-formation. So we are simultaneously aorgic and organic, and the



organic within us conditions the aorgic within us and the aorgic conditions the organic. So conflict results in the intensification of the opposed identities which in turn condition one another in their intensification. And this all takes place in the “excess of interiority” of the subject where the opposites are at their highest hostility.<sup>22</sup>

Through this unifying moment which results from this conflict and reciprocal conditioning of the organic and aorgic, man creates a universal image of nature, the “poet is able to view a totality”, infinite eternal nature appears within the finite subject. But, since this unifying moment is only the result of conflict, it shows itself to be a deception.

*... in this birth of the highest hostility, reconciliation appears to be actual. But the individuality of this moment is only a product of the highest strife, and the organic and the aorgic only in their respective manners work upon this moment, so based on the impression of the organic, the aorgically-arising individuality which is contained in the moment becomes again aorgic, based upon the impression of the aorgic, the organically-arising universality becomes again particular, so that the uniting moment like a deceptive image [Trugbild], dis-integrates [Auflöst] more and more, thereby, that it aorgically reacts against the organic, distancing itself from it more and more, but thereby and through its death the contending extremes from which it emerges, are more beautifully reconciled and united than in its life. (W, II, s. 118, ELT, p. 54)*

Reconciliation here only “appears” [scheint] to be “actual” [wirklich]. As we move away from nature we only *appear* to gain a clearer reflection upon it. But this apparent reconciliation is not the *true* reconciliation. This is well expressed by Kierkegaard. In Kierkegaard’s early work *The Concept of Irony*, he writes:

If we ask what poetry is, we may say in general that it is victory over the world; it is through a negation of the imperfect actuality that poetry opens up a higher actuality, expands and transfigures the imperfect into the perfect and thereby assuages the deep pain that wants to make everything dark. To that extent poetry is a kind of reconciliation, for it does not reconcile me with the actuality in which I am living; no transubstantiation of the given actuality takes place by virtue of this reconciliation, but it reconciles me with the given actuality by giving me another, a higher and more perfect actuality. The greater the contrast, the less perfect the actual reconciliation, so that when all is said and done there is often no reconciliation but rather an enmity. Therefore only the religious is able to bring about the true reconciliation, because it infinitizes actuality for me. (*The Concept of Irony*, p. 297)

*True* reconciliation can only come about by escaping the poetic monad (the *apparent* reconciliation), and opening up oneself to the infinite actuality outside of oneself. Hölderlin's reconciliation is brought about in a way which is continuous with the subjective-poetic monad. The hybris of this monad brings about its own sacrifice.<sup>23</sup>

The union arises only out of the conflict and the individuality of the opponents. There is nothing else to ground it. So just as conflict creates the integrity of the image of nature within man, it also causes it to dis-integrate as the organic and the aorgic again return to themselves. The unity of the image is now exposed as a deception.

For Fichte, this unity could not be a deception because it was a product of the imagination and there was nothing outside of the imagination; all reality was a product of the imagination. Now for Hölderlin, unlike Fichte, there is now something outside of the system in relation to which the image now becomes deceptive. As we saw earlier Hölderlin removes the self-certainty and the unconditionality of the Fichtian first principle and replaces it with an always inaccessible pure

state of Being. Pure Being, or the Beauty of Nature, is what we strive to attain but which remains inaccessible to us, outside of the image, the system, the work, the subject. Every attempt to capture this purity shows itself to be a deception.

The result is expressed in Empedocles self-sacrifice. He must undergo this sacrifice as the result of the “hybris” of achieving an infinite image of nature, a vision of the destiny of his age. This image is shown to be a deception because it is one-sided. Art has the power to “speak” but not to “act”. The pure idealistic union was too one-sided so it required an “idealistic act”, to achieve re-balance. It required a tragic self-sacrifice.

... it demanded a *sacrifice* [Opfer] where the whole man becomes actual and visible [wirklich und sichtbar] wherein the destiny of his epoch appears to be solved [aufzulösen scheint], where the extremes appear to unite actually and visibly *in one*, but are therefore too intimately [innig] united, and in an idealistic act the individual therefore perishes [untergeht] and must perish, because he showed the premature, sensuous unity, which emerged from necessity and antagonism, in which the problem of destiny was to be solved [auflöste], but which can never visibly and individually be solved [auflösen], because otherwise the universal would lose itself in the individual ... and the life of the world would expire in an isolated individual [Einzelnheit]. (W, II, s. 121, ELT, p. 56)

Hölderlin states above that through the death of the uniting moment, “the battling extremes from which it emerges, are more beautifully reconciled and united than in its life” (s. 119, p. 54). And concerning Empedocles he says “his destiny is represented in him in a momentary union which must dis-integrate, in order to become [something] more.” [Sein Schicksal stellt sich in ihm dar als in einer augenblicklichen Vereinigung, die aber sich auflösen muss, um mehr zu werden.] (s. 120, p. 55). Although the image is shown to be a deception, and the universal

and pure fail to become grasped, and although as a result the individual must be sacrificed for this hybris, this is not the end. This striving for the pure image and its failure is a *necessary step* to achieve a higher state. As in Schiller, this partiality and imbalance develops us and “gives us wings”. The excess of interiority which is the condition of the artist, had to dis-integrate in order to allow this new state to appear.

This sacrificial dynamic is also present in Romanticism, although it is not as developed as it is in Hölderlin. Novalis writes in his *Miscellaneous Writings* [Vermischte Bemerkungen]:

Death is an overcoming of the self, and like all self-conquest creates a new, and lighter, existence.<sup>24</sup>

Novalis will also claim that “We are closest to wakefulness when we dream that we are dreaming.” Here again we have an example of illusion recognizing itself as illusion, before reconciling with true reality.

Friedrich Schlegel expresses the same thing in his *Ideas*. I quote #131 in full.

The hidden meaning of sacrifice is the annihilation of the finite because it is finite. In order to demonstrate that this is its only justification, one must choose to sacrifice whatever is most noble and most beautiful: but particularly man, the flower of the earth. Human sacrifices are the most natural sacrifices. But man is more than the flower of the earth; he is reasonable, and reason is free and in itself nothing but an eternal self-destination into the infinite. Hence man can only sacrifice himself, and he does so in an omnipresent sanctity the mob knows nothing of. All artists are Decians, and to become an artist means nothing but consecrating oneself to the gods of the underworld. In the enthusiasm of annihilation, the meaning of the divine creation is revealed for the first time. Only in the midst of death does the lightning bolt of eternal life explode.<sup>25</sup>

But it is Karl Solger who had developed romantic irony most closely toward the mechanism of self-sacrifice with his concept of the “destruction of illusion” [Illusionstörung]. In his *Vorlesungen Über Aesthetik*, he writes:

The other side of the spiritual activity of the artist is that where it terminates, in that actuality dis-integrates therein. The artist must destroy the actual world [die wirkliche Welt vernichten], not merely insofar as it is appearance [Schein], but insofar as it is the expression of the idea [Ausdruck der Idee]. This mood [Stimmung] of the artist whereby he grasps the actual world as the genuine [Richtige], we call artistic irony. No artwork can come into being without this irony, which, with inspiration [Begeisterung], constitutes the middlepoint of artistic activity. It is the mood whereby we observe, that the actuality unfolding of the idea, but to and for itself is void [nichtig] and once again becomes truth, if it dis-integrates [auflöst] in the idea.<sup>26</sup>

The idea which has placed itself in the place of the actual world must dis-integrate to allow the actual world to reassert itself. This follows for Solger from a religious dynamic. God sacrifices himself in revealing himself, in becoming finite. He becomes nothing. The death of finitude is a double negation, it is the annihilation of God’s nothingness, and so it is a returning of God to himself. The idea of sacrifice is the means to reconcile the finite and infinite without a mollification of the conflict which makes art and subjectivity possible.

## Hybris and Temporality

Before we discuss this new state however, we must understand the hybris of the image and the process of dis-integration. These can be best understood in terms of temporality.

We saw that Schiller distinguished his “drives” with regard to the opposition of the temporal and the eternal. The sensual drive is man as

he exists *in time* and the form-drive is man's ability to *transcend time*. The predominance of the form-drive is the prototype of the excess of interiority and of the uniting moment in the artistic man. Schiller writes:

When therefore the formal impulse holds sway, and the pure object acts within us, there is the highest expansion of Being, all barriers disappear, and from Being the unit of magnitude to which the needy sense confined him, Man has risen to a unit of idea embracing the whole realm of phenomena. By this operation we are no longer in time, but time, with its complete and infinite succession, is in us. (AEM, p. 67)

Man is rooted in time, in becoming, while simultaneously transcending it and containing it. Schiller continues:

The necessity of nature which governed him with undivided power in the condition of mere sensation, abandons him when reflection begins; an instantaneous calm ensues in the senses; time itself, the eternally moving, stands still while the dispersed rays of consciousness are gathered together, and 'form', an image of the infinite, is reflected upon the transient foundation. As soon as it becomes light within man, there is also no longer any night outside him; as soon as it is calm within him, the storm of the universe is also lulled, and the contending forces of nature find rest between abiding boundaries. No wonder therefore that ancient poetry tells of this great occurrence in the inner man as of a revolution in the world outside him, and embodies the thought which triumphs over the laws of time in the figure of Zeus who brings the reign of Saturn to an end. (AEM, p. 120)

Notice that we have here a false image of the eternal grounded in the temporal flow of time. This constitutes a kind of infidelity of the image

of the eternal towards the true eternal. Schiller's reference to Zeus and Saturn are mirrored in Hölderlin's use of Jupiter and Saturn in his ode: "Nature and Art".<sup>27</sup>

**Nature and Art**  
**or**  
**Saturn and Jupiter**

You rule at the height of day and it blooms your  
Laws, You maintain the way, Saturn's son!  
And divide the lots, and joyfully rest in the  
Glory of the immortal act of ruling.

Yet into the abyss the singers say,  
You have the holy father, your own, once  
Exiled to misery below,  
Where the Wild have gone rightly before.

Guiltless the God of golden time, long ago;  
Once untroubled and greater than you, although,  
He issued no commands and  
Mortals never named his name.

Down then! or be not ashamed of gratitude!  
And if you wish to stay, serve your elder,  
And do not envy him, that it is him, before all,  
Gods and Men, the singers name.

For, as from a cloud comes your lightning, so comes  
From him, what you are, see! So generate from him,  
what you command, and from Saturn's  
Peace, every power is awakened.

And only when I have in my heart what belongs to life  
Felt and dawned what you had formed,  
And while in her cradle for me, in  
Bliss, changing time was lulled to sleep,

Then I know you Kronion, then I hear you,  
The wise master, which, like us, a Son of  
Time, gives laws and, what the  
Holy dawn shelters, proclaims.<sup>28</sup>

Saturn is the true eternal, the dark source which is prior to all time, differentiation, opposition, law, or representation; the “light of day” which characterizes the rule of his son Jupiter. Jupiter is this realm of law, the creative, forming deity who creates the world within time. Saturn is nature and Jupiter is art. Jupiter here usurps the place of his father exiling him into the abyss, into oblivion. The temporal image of the eternal displaces the true eternal. Art displaces nature. This is the essence of “hybris” as it is committed by the unifying moment in the “Ground to Empedocles”. It now allows us to understand what Hölderlin means when he there writes of “destiny” [Schicksal].

So Empedocles was supposed to become a sacrifice [Opfer] of his time. *The problem of destiny [Probleme des Schicksels], in which he matured, was to be apparently solved [scheinbar lösen] in him, and this solution was to be presented apparently and temporally, as is the case with more or less all tragic individuals, who in their characters and utterances are all more or less attempts, to solve the problem of destiny, and all are canceled [aufheben] insofar and to the degree that, they are not universally valid, [or] if nothing else, their role, their character and its utterances present themselves as something transient and momentary, so that the one who apparently solves destiny most completely, also represents himself most clearly in his*



transitoriness and, in the advancement of his attempts, most conspicuously as sacrifice. (W, II, s. 121-122, ELT, p. 57)

The clearer the image of the eternal in the temporal, the more necessary its dis-integration. The more clearly the problem of destiny appears to be solved within the individual tragic hero, the more necessary his ruin.

## Kant's "Sacrificial" Sublime

With this in mind we can reread Kant's concept of the "sublime" from a new and interesting perspective. Certainly Kant's sublime is always in the background wherever we read of "conflict" in Fichte, Schiller, and Hölderlin. But let us ignore any idea of influence and instead project back what we have seen here upon Kant, particularly, the following passage:

... a liking for the sublime in nature is only *negative* (whereas a liking for the beautiful is *positive*): it is a feeling that the imagination by its own action is depriving itself of its freedom, in being determined purposively according to a law different from that of its empirical use. The imagination thereby acquires an expansion and a might that surpasses the one it sacrifices [aufopfert]; but the basis of this might is concealed from it; instead the imagination *feels* the sacrifice [Aufopferung] or deprivation and at the same time the cause to which it is being subjugated. (CJ, p. 129)

This passage has caught the attention of Lyotard, who reads this "sacrifice" as the sacrifice of nature. But we can see through our reading of Hölderlin that this sacrifice is that of the subject's infinite image of nature. That part of the subject's power which oversteps its finitude and deceives itself to believe that it is nature. Against Lyotard's reading we can say that nature itself can never be sacrificed. The subject always sacrifices its own power. By sacrificing its own power it recognizes its power and its true limits, in such a way – as we will see shortly – which sets it in harmonious opposition to the idea of the whole.<sup>29</sup>

## Divine dis-integration

In Hölderlin's notes to his translations of Sophocles he defines the essence of the tragic.

The representation of the Tragic rests especially upon the monstrous [Ungeheure], as God and Man pair with each other [sicht paart], and without limits, the power of nature becomes one with the most interior of man in rage [Zorn]. (NO, p. 237)<sup>30</sup>

This results in this process comprehending itself, and the infinite union purifying itself through infinite separation. He then goes on to explain the necessity of the moment of hybris; the necessity of infidelity.

God and Man communicate in the all-forgetting form of unfaithfulness [Untreue], so that no gap [Lücke] occurs in the course of the world [Weltlauf], and so that the memory of the heavenly ones does not come to an end [ausgehet], for godly unfaithfulness is remembered best of all.

In such moments man forgets both himself and God and, freely in a holy manner, like a traitor, turns himself around. – For at the most outer limit of suffering there exists namely, nothing more besides the conditions of time and space.

In this [way] Man forgets himself, because he is wholly in the moment; and God, because he is nothing else than time; and both are unfaithful, time because in such a moment it reverses categorically – beginning and end quite simply do not allow themselves to be reconciled; and Man, because at this moment he must follow the categorical reversal, and therefore quite simply cannot be the same in the following as he was in the beginning. (NO, p. 237)

Temporal man becomes eternal and eternal God becomes temporal. If there was no infidelity, man would not *re-member* the divine. Notice that man

and God commute while remaining separate. They are unified through their conflict. This is a reversal which resonates through every level of the event of hybris and disintegration. In Fichte, this mutual positioning took place through the “zusammentreffen” of conflicting forces. In Kant, the imagination’s hyperbolic extension and sacrifice allowed the subject to discover its own limits and power. Here however, the positioning takes place through complete reversal. This underlines the necessity of hybris.

Dis-integration is also connected to this temporal infidelity. In his essay “Becoming in Passing Away” [Werden im Vergehen], Hölderlin expresses one of the key ideas of his theoretical writings.

For the world of all worlds, the all in all which always *is, represents itself* [stellt sich ... dar] only in all time – or in the under-going, the moment, or more genetically in the becoming of moments and the beginning of time and world, and this under-going and beginning is like language, expression, sign, and representation, a living but particular whole. (W, I, s. 900, ELT, p. 96)

The eternal is only expressed truly in the totality of time and becoming or in dis-integration and change; or in a “perishing” or “under-going” [untergehen]. Therefore dis-integration is not a negative process but a “living but particular whole”. Dis-integration opens up into “possibility”.

*This under-going, or transition of the fatherland* (in this sense) is felt in the linkages of the present world so that at precisely that moment and to precisely that degree which the present dis-integrates, the newly-emerging, youthful, and possible is felt. (W, I, s. 900, ELT, p. 96)

“Auflösung” is being used here not only as a dis-integration, and “solution”, but also as a “loosening” of “linkages” [Gliedern]. To that extent where the integration of the monadic whole is loosened, possibility and novelty emerges. New linkages are able to form.

The hybris of the image involved the temporal paradox of being an *ideal* monadic image of eternity within *real* flowing time. So too dis-integration will involve the elements of this temporal paradox. The process of dis-integration will be able to be seen from the perspective of the ideal image and the real flow of time. So there are also two types of dis-integration. “Real” dis-integration is the process by which the real temporal flow of time unravels the ideal monadic moment. The “idealistic” dis-integration is the “recollection” [Erinnerung] of the process of this real dis-integration and what forms it into a living but particular whole.

In the perspective of ideal recollection, then, dis-integration as a necessity becomes as such the ideal object of the newly developed life, a glance back on the way that had to be traveled, from the beginning of (real) dis-integration up to the point, where out from the new life, there can occur a recollection of the dis-integrated and from this, as explanation and union of the gap and the contrast, between present and past, the recollection of dis-integration can follow. (W, I, s. 902, ELT, p. 96)

Central to the process here is “recollection”. Dis-integration itself becomes the object of this ideal recollection. The “ideal individual” or the monadic moment becomes *real* in “real dis-integration”, and the “infinite real” or the process of “real dis-integration” becomes *ideal* in the act of “recollection”. While the ideal monadic image dis-integrates within the real movement of time, the recollection of this real dis-integration creates a new ideal image. The breakdown of organic structure allows for the expression of what has been dominated or concealed by organic structure. Therefore the dis-integration of the ideal individual, or the monad, “appears not as a weakening and death, but as a reviving, as growth”. This idea reemerges in both Heidegger’s and Walter Benjamin’s concept of “Origin” [Ursprung].<sup>31</sup>

We encounter another expression of this reversal in Heidegger's lecture course on Hölderlin's "Der Rhein". Heidegger writes:

For the common understanding, its palpable everydayness is the present-at-hand, i.e. beings, the actual. In contrast poetry is just the poeticized [Gedichtetes], the invented [Erdichtetes], the non-actual. But for knowledge and true action it is turned around. Poetry as founded is the actual, and the so-named actual is the continually dis-integrating [zerfallende] non-actual.<sup>32</sup>

The work of art involves an infidelity to nature. It puts itself in the place of nature. It is the *ideal* eternal image of nature within *real* changing nature. But this infidelity is the only manner in which nature can express itself. This is because this infidelity involves a reversal. The *ideal* eternal image becomes *sacrificially dis-integrated* by *real* changing nature, and as a result, becomes *real*. And the *real* process of this disintegration becomes lifted up to an *ideal* image through recollection.

Of course this is also the mechanism behind deconstruction. It is through the self-dis-integration of the philosophical illusion which opens the way to possibility. Deconstruction follows the same *sacrificial* logic which we see here in Hölderlin's Greek theory.<sup>33</sup>

The recollection of this real dis-integration also represents a kind of "second reflection" of the monad which leads to a new and divine state. This is also developed by Karl Solger who will develop the idea of a "stepping back" out of the event of the "destruction of illusion" [Illusionstörung]. We will see how this "second reflection" becomes central in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, which also follows this *sacrificial* logic.

It is through this reversal, that the image opens to the divine state. The state of beauty and harmony which Schiller previously approached through "play". Hölderlin writes:

In the state [Zustande] between Being and not-Being, however, everywhere the possible becomes real and the actual becomes ideal, and this is in the free imitation of art [Kunstnachahmung], a fearful but godly dream [ein furchbarer, aber göttlicher Traum]. (W, I, s. 900, ELT, p. 97)

And here we re-encounter our initial paradox. The ability of the real to become ideal and the ideal real, through the artistic image, is a “fearful and godly dream”. It is through domination and the dangerous quality of man that what is dominated is eventually able to express itself.

Returning now to the essay “Ground for Empedocles”, Hölderlin points out that the organic, in the dis-integration of the uniting moment, is raised to a higher universality.

... the happy deceit [Betrug] of the union ceases precisely to the degree that it was too close and unique [innig und einzig], so that both extremes, whereof the one, the organic, must be frightened back [zurückgeschreckt] by the passing moment and thereby raised to a purer universality, the aorgic, insofar as it transcends [übergeht] the former, must become an object of calmer contemplation for the organic, and the interiority of the past moment emerges in a now more universal, controlled, differentiating, and clearer manner. (W, II, s. 118, ELT, p. 54)

The “passing moment” [vergehenden Moment], that is the *real* passage of time, dis-integrates the monad in its particularity but raises its form, its organic nature, to a more pure universality, to a higher level which allows a truer perspective on the aorgic, or Nature; the true eternal. The subjective excess of interiority is raised to a truer, more universal interiority.

... the original excess of interiority, the cause of all discord [Zwists] is canceled [aufhob], so that the power of inward excess is actually lost [sich wirklich verliert] and a more

mature, truthful, pure, universal [reifere, wahrhafte, reine, allgemeine] interiority remains. (W, II, s. 121, ELT, p. 57)

If we read this along with the element of “reversal” which we previously discussed, we can say that the new *ideal* image which resulted from reflection upon the disintegration of the subjective monad corresponds to aorgic nature. The subjective now recognizes itself as just a unity within this larger unity. Just as in Kant’s sublime, through the imagination’s self-sacrifice, the subject feels its own power and limits. Hölderlin elsewhere will emphasize the “harmonious opposition” between the subject and nature, between a limited unity and a larger unity. Here he uses the phrase “more mature, truthful, pure, universal interiority”. Notice here that the only way for the Greek, who as we saw is child-like, to achieve this more “mature” state is to achieve it sacrificially. It is the naiveté of the Greek which is connected to the tragic process. We also saw this in Kant’s sacrificial conception of the sublime. The imagination achieves a power that surpasses the power it sacrifices, “but the basis of this power is concealed from it”. The concepts of “Infidelity”, “reversal”, “sacrifice”, and “naiveté” characterize Hölderlin’s Greek aesthetic theory, but as we shall see, we will no longer find them in his Modern “Hesperian” Theory.

In summary, the distance of man from nature results in the conflict of impulses within man. The partiality towards the forming-imagining impulse within the individual, the state of excess interiority, is the condition of the poet. In this state the impulses are at their highest hostility, and through this conflict, the closest union seems to result – the image of the eternal within the temporal. But this image shows itself to be a deception and must pay for its hybris through its dis-integration. This dis-integration in turn, is not an end to the process but a passage to a new and purer state where the true forces of nature express themselves.

## **The Sacrificial Work**

The language Hölderlin uses is often ambiguous. In most places he can be talking about the excess interiority of the subject, the image,

or the work. But we find more theoretical grounds for a connection in his essays.

There are two “grounds” explicitly described in Hölderlin’s “The Ground to Empedocles”. The subsection “Ground to Empedocles” describes this process as it is in itself and how it is represented in the character of Empedocles. The “General Ground” describes the process as it is represented in the work – the “tragic ode”. Both Schiller and Fichte conceive of the subject as self-grounding. In Fichte we find the formulation: “The I positions itself *because* it positions itself”. And in Schiller we find “The person must therefore be its own ground, for the enduring cannot issue from alteration” (AEM, p. 61). So in Hölderlin we also find this self-grounding process in-itself, as represented by a tragic character, and as represented in a tragic poem. But there is implicitly an even more general ground, that is, this process can also represent the work of art. The whole Empedocles project can be seen as the representation of the process of the work of art within the work of art.

The model of the system, and the subject, and their self-grounding is also the model of the work of art. The work creates a monad, an excess of interiority. Within this interiority there is a conflict between the organic and the aorgic. Within the work this takes the form of the conflict between the Image and its materiality. The immaterial image requires the materiality of the work in order to be expressed. In Hölderlin’s letter to Neuffer he writes:

The pure can only be depicted in the impure... because the noble itself as it comes towards expression bears the color of the destinies under which it originated, because the beautiful insofar as it is depicted in actuality from the circumstances under which it emerged, necessarily assumes a form that is not natural to it, and that only therethrough it moves towards natural form, and that it even takes *in addition* the circumstances that this form necessarily gives to it... without commonness nobility cannot be depicted;...



you need it as necessarily as the potter needs clay.<sup>34</sup>

The image is always in conflict with its medium, and this conflict is necessary for the image to emerge. Yet the image also shows itself to be a deception. When it appears, nature herself is eclipsed, and when it disintegrates as a result of its hybris, nature reasserts herself as expression. This reciprocal relationship is described by Hölderlin in a fragment called “The Significance of Tragedies”, it reads as follows:

The significance of tragedies can be most easily grasped by way of paradox. For everything original [Ursprungliche], because all capacities are divided justly and equally, appears not in original strength but, in fact, in its weakness, so that quite properly the light of life and the appearing of weakness belong to every whole. Now in the tragic, the sign is insignificant in itself, without effect, but the original is completely exposed [gerade heraus]. Properly speaking, the original can only appear in its weakness, however, to the extent that the sign becomes positioned as insignificant = 0, the original, the concealed ground of any nature, represents itself. If nature properly represents itself in its weakest offering [Gabe], so the sign is, when it represents itself in its most powerful offering, = 0. (W, I, s. 899-900, ELT, p. 89)

The sign is an expression of nature, but it is a particular and focused expression of nature, so as the sign is expressed the remainder of nature is eclipsed and concealed, and as the sign becomes insignificant, or disintegrates, nature becomes unconcealed and expresses itself.

Here we must mention Schelling’s distinctions in his *Philosophy of Art*, since it will help us appreciate the shift involved in Hölderlin’s Modern aesthetic theory. Schelling writes:

That representation in which the universal means the particular or in which the particular is intuited through the universal is *schematism*. That representation, however, in which the particular means the universal or in which the universal is intuited through the particular is *allegory*. The synthesis of these two ... where both are absolutely one, is the *symbolic*. (PA, p. 46)

“Schematism”, following Kant, would be the universal expressing itself in particular configurations. In this sense “language is perpetual schematism”, as would be thinking. One can also conceive of the individual subject as an organic schematism of aorgic nature. This resonates with Hölderlin’s line in his late hymn “Mnemosyne”: “A sign are we, meaningless / painless are we and have almost / lost our language in foreign lands.”

“Allegory” is the “reverse” of “schematism”. Allegory “means or signifies the universal”, but is not identical with it. So the universal is present in allegory only as a “possibility”.

In the “Symbolic” however, both universal and particular are synthesized. They are interchangeable. This allows the dynamic which Hölderlin describes: where nature disappears in the symbol and the symbol disappears in nature.

Schelling distinguishes the above from the “image”.

The image is always concrete, purely particular, and is determined from all sides such that only the definite factor of space occupied by the original object prevents it from being identical with the object itself. (PA, p. 46)

Both Schelling (and Solger after him), identify the work of art with the symbol. For Schelling the work of art constitutes a pure synthesis of universal and particular. Schelling does not follow Hölderlin’s sacrificial dynamic. There is no moment of hybris. The tragic is conceived in such

a way that it exposes the infinity of subjectivity, not its impotence: its illusion of infinity. But for Hölderlin, we might say that the symbol has something of the image in it. At first it seems to lead us into a synthesis, it seems to achieve reconciliation, but then exposes itself as a deception, a finite image, and achieves reconciliation not through synthesis but through dis-integration.

In chapter 5 we shall see how Hölderlin in his “Modern” or “Hesperian” theory moves from the concept of the symbol to the concept of allegory and the manner in which this influences Walter Benjamin. The whole tragic-sacrificial process which we found developed in Empedocles – the ideal artist – is also applicable to the work of art. The work is a “symbol” of the eternal. But this symbol is expressed through a finite, material form and so exposed as a deceptive image. Because of its hybris, the unity of the eternal image dis-integrates. This dis-integration opens up to an intuition of the divine, where the true order of nature rushes back into the resulting vacuum to retake its rightful place. We can call this particular aesthetic theory implicit in Hölderlin’s writings the *Greek model* of the work of art. As we will see, it will become central in Adorno’s aesthetic theory.

# ADORNO'S AESTHETIC THEORY

For at the most outer limit of suffering there exists namely, nothing more besides the conditions of time and space. (Hölderlin, "Notes on the Oedipus", p. 237)

In introducing Adorno it would be most typical to discuss the tradition of critical theory from which he emerges. One can begin with the determination of Adorno as a social philosopher and branch out to his interests in music and literature. But here I wish to assert that to appreciate Adorno's philosophy one must appreciate his concern with nature. It is nature which is the foundation of his social philosophy and aesthetics. The early writings of the other critical theorists whom Adorno followed – Lukacs and Benjamin – also were inspired by German romanticism for whom the relationship between art and nature was central. By this focus we can see how Adorno attempts to develop the ideas we saw expressed in Hölderlin's aesthetic writings.

## Unconscious Existence

We can begin with a very early essay written by Adorno when he was 18 years old entitled: "Die Natur: eine Quelle der Erhebung, Belehrung und Erholung". He provides a definition of nature in the first sentence of the essay.

Das Wort “Natur” bedeutet in seinem allgemeinsten Sinne die Gesamtheit des unbewußten Daseins schlechthin. (DN, s. 729)

Nature is the whole of unconscious or unknown existence. In Hölderlin’s fashion he describes the drifting of Western [abendlandische] culture from this source in unknown existence.

Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der letzten Jahrhunderte hat den Menschen dem unbewußten Dasein immer mehr entfremdet. Als die abendlandische Kultur zur Civilisation geworden war, entfloh das Unbewußte und ließ den Menschen einsam die Verzweiflung seiner ganz wissenden Seele tragen. (DN, s. 729)

We become estranged from our source and carry our rational nature like a burden. Nature now becomes unknown existence only in opposition to what is known by scientific rationality.

We notice here that for Western culture, nature always remains to the outside of reason. This is much the same as Hölderlin’s Greek model where true nature always exceeds its rational domination and returns to inflict punishment for such hybris. Likewise for Adorno this opposition of Modern Western culture to nature is a source of danger but also provides a means of reconciliation. It is still possible for us to achieve a “turning back”.

Das unbewußte Dasein ist die Mutter alles Daseins überhaupt: aus dem Unbewußten wächst alles Bewußte hervor. Und gütig wie eine Mutter ist das Unbewußte, kehren wir zu ihm zurück, so empfangen wir die verlorene Stärke zurück, die uns das Um-Alles-Wissen, das ein Um-Alles-Kämpfen bedeutet, vordem geraubt hat. (DN, s. 730)

The danger arises when human knowledge tries to embrace the unknown existence according to its own nature, yet this dangerous human trait is also necessary and the whole possibility for redemption.

Das war notwendig, aber gefährlich: notwendig, weil nur im Menschen das Unbewußte Gestalt finden kann, gefährlich, weil es drohte, den Menschen zum Maß aller Dinge werden zu lassen und ihn unehrfürchtig zu machen. Dieser Gefahr entgeht, wenn er in seinem Streben nach Erkenntnis zum unbewußten Dasein zurückkehrt, zur Natur. (DN, s. 731)

It is only by striving to embrace the whole of nature with our rationality do we come to face with the fact that nature always resists our advances, that true nature is unknown nature. It is only now that we can decide to turn back to this unknown nature. Danger and reconciliation occur side by side, and here again we recognize the line from Hölderlin's "Patmos" that Heidegger is so fond of.

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst  
Das Rettende auch.

The mechanism of turning back is to sacrifice oneself by losing oneself. To lose oneself is to relinquish our power of domination over nature, to relinquish our subjectivity. And when we lose ourselves, we find ourselves in nature, our limited existence opens to an awe [ehrfurcht] of the unlimited.

Der Mensch, der in seinem Eigenleben immer wieder die Tagik des Gebundenseins im Endlichen erleben muß, darf in der Natur die Unendlichkeit erleben, das unendlich Große ebenso wie das unendlich Kleine. Die gleiche Fülle der Welt, der er seine göltigsten Erfahrungen dankt, führt ihn über das Begreifbare hinaus zum Unbegreifbaren und zwingt ihn zur Ehrfurcht. (DN, s. 732)

The ultimate goal of this turning back is the same as in Hölderlin and the same as found in the Kantian sublime: one finds oneself and one's powers as a limited unity within a larger unity. One recognizes a world beyond one's subjectivity. Nature according to Adorno now becomes one's "home".

There is also a transformation regarding the place of the unknown and the irrational.

Und noch eines erhebt ihn, ein Wiederfinden: er, der die  
Seele im Bewußten verlor, findet sie wieder im Unbewußten,  
Das Irrationale hat er aus seinem Berich verdrangt: nun sieht  
er es im Baum und hort es im Bach. (DN, s. 732)

Far from being a negative concept, the irrational becomes the means by which nature acts as a corrective to the domination by the rational. The exile of the irrational (in the manner of Saturn's exile by Jupiter) is negated, and we once again are able to experience and appreciate nature as unknown existence. The great poets and composers are those who have lost themselves in order to find themselves in unknown nature and who allow us to see and hear this expression of the irrationality and unknowability of nature. And here (along with Goethe, Schubert, Mahler, Eichendorff, Nietzsche and Maupassant) Adorno names Hölderlin, as one who had the courage to lose himself and to become lifted into this new home. The irrational is no longer the outside of rationality.

We see the young Adorno developing a concept of nature which we found in Hölderlin: nature as that which exceeds the powers of rationality, and a sacrificial model of reconciliation. This concept of nature and reconciliation will be found as the foundation of all of Adorno's writings from social philosophy to musical analysis. But this mechanism is seen in its purest sense with respect to the work of art. We find him embracing the same paradox as Hölderlin. The work of art is a reflection of man's domination over nature, and at the same time, reflects the possibility of

man's reconciliation with nature. The model Adorno develops closely matches Hölderlin's "Greek" aesthetic model.<sup>35</sup>

## Sacrifice

Adorno's first published work was his *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*. Here, as in his early essay, we see Adorno's rebellion against the unity of the subject, the corresponding homogeneity of rationality and the resulting domination of nature. And here he finds an antidote in the concept of "sacrifice".

Kierkegaard tried to escape the immanence of the Hegelian system by turning to subjectivity. His equation of truth with subjectivity is reflected in his concept of "interiority", which we saw already developed by Hölderlin.

Adorno is interested in Kierkegaard's attempts to escape this Hegelian immanence and the immanence of his own subjectivity. This escape would also involve the liberation of nature from its entrapment in the idealistic dialectic and within the interiority of pure subjectivity. Adorno sees Kierkegaard's philosophy as a kind of "inversion" and "interiorization" of Hegel's dialectic. What results is an "isolated subjectivity surrounded by dark otherness" (K, p. 29). Yet this movement towards pure subjectivity creates its own immanence. Kierkegaard recognized this and tried to escape this immanence through the concept of sacrifice. Consciousness, and idealism itself, must be sacrificed to achieve the catharsis which allows true reconciliation with nature. Adorno writes:

For Kierkegaard, consciousness must have pulled itself free from all external being by a movement of "infinite regression"; through choice and decisiveness, it must have freely posited every content in order finally, in the face of the semblance of its own omnipotence, to surrender its omnipotence and, foundering, to purify itself of the guilt it acquired in having supposed itself autonomous. (K, p. 107)



This “hybris” of the subject and consciousness is also the hybris of the system in general.

The sacrifice of consciousness, however, is the innermost model of every sacrifice which occurs in his philosophy... with the greatest tension of which system-building idealism was still capable, he carried out this sacrifice both for the system as a whole, and in all phenomena that fall within the system. (K, p. 107)

Therefore the sacrifice of consciousness becomes the model for a sacrifice of idealism in general, rationality in general, a sacrifice through which the domination of nature is canceled and true reconciliation with nature occurs.

Idealism, however, is ultimately revealed as mythical in that although it indeed transcends itself, it is unable to immanently fulfill the claim to reconciliation that it announces. Nature, withdrawn into human spirit, hardens itself in idealism and usurps the power of creation. While the ruin that idealism brings upon itself is therefore able to free it from the semblance of autonomy, reconciliation as catharsis cannot be vouchsafed for a fully collapsing idealism. (K, p. 108)

Nature can never truly appear in the “system” where it is dominated by rationality. Nature cannot be captured directly. It can only appear negatively in relationship to this domination. Therefore it can only appear with the sacrifice of the system, the sacrifice of consciousness and interiority.

But notice that Adorno is here also critical of Kierkegaard’s concept of sacrifice. This *total* sacrifice, this *total* inversion of the Hegelian system, cannot achieve reconciliation, in Adorno’s view since it is still operating on the level of the whole and not the particular. It is a dialectic still glued to totality. Also, according to Adorno, Kierkegaard still wants

to maintain control over what is outside of the system which he sacrifices. He determines it in religious language and does not leave it as unknown existence. This is similar to Adorno's criticism of Wagner's sacrifices as well. But Adorno will not reject sacrifice as the basis for reconciliation. Instead he will attempt to repeat it on the level of the particular, and allow it to open into nature. Throughout his mature works he attempts to rehabilitate sacrifice, to radicalize it in various guises.

This will also be the strategy of Adorno's most famous work *Negative Dialectics*. The usurping of the domination of consciousness, interiority, and system through sacrifice is here broadened to include an attack on "totality", "infinity", "identity", and "the unity of the concept". The culprit here is capitalist instrumental reason from whose domination we need to escape. The solution is again found in sacrifice. This takes the form of a dialectics no longer "glued" to identity and totality. In other words a "negative dialectics".

For Adorno, identity is tied to a kind of "barter system" of the concept under the direction of capitalism. Capitalism reduces everything to identity. And identity dominates its object. This is again conceived tragically...

That identity is the correspondence of the thing-in-itself to its concept is hybris. [Hybris ist, daß identität sei, daß die Sache an sich ihrem Begriff entspreche.] (ND, p. 149)

So Adorno develops a kind of controlled intentional sacrifice tied to "suffering". Suffering is the heterogeneous within the concept which is able to subvert the identity of the concept and lead to sacrifice. To subvert the concept is to subvert the image. The image, as in Spinoza, is essentially deceptive. The image represents identity and reification. So "negative dialectics" becomes a kind of "imageless materialism".

It is only without images [bilderlos] that the full object can be thought. Such imagelessness [Bilderlosigkeit]

converges with the theological ban on images. Materialism is secular in that it is not permitted to picture [auszumalen] utopia positively. That is the substance of its negativity. [So] it converges with theology there, where it is most materialistic. Its longing would be the resurrection of the flesh, and to idealism, to the reign of absolute spirit, this is completely foreign. (ND, s. 207, p. 207)

We have here a blind thinking which subverts the image and the identity of the concept to allow the redemption of repressed nature. At the end of the work, Adorno describes this in terms which foreshadow his approach in *Aesthetic Theory*.

Yet what the need in thinking wants, is what becomes thought [Das Bedürfnis im Denken will aber, daß gedacht werde.]. It demands its negation through thinking, must dissolve in thinking if it is to be really satisfied, and in this negation it survives. Represented in the innermost cell of thinking is what is unlike thinking. The smallest inter-worldly traits would have relevance for the absolute, for the micrological view cracks the shells of, according to its measure, the subsuming cover-concept's helpless isolation, and explodes its identity, the deception [Trug] that it were a mere specimen. Such thinking is solidly united with metaphysics at the moment of its fall. (ND, s. 399-400, p. 408)

The explosion of the identity of the concept, by that which is unlike the concept, within the concept, this will be the model which Adorno will carry over into the work of art.

Here in this work, the destruction of the comfort of the concept to allow for suffering is prescriptive. Such a negative strategy, in the manner in which it is developed here, is doubtless hard to maintain. It is too much to ask a culture to reject comfort and pleasure and to embrace suffering

as the means for reconciliation with nature. It comes as no surprise then that Adorno moves towards a more positive strategy in his later work. One that still contains the essence of negative dialectics and the logic of sacrifice within it. He finds this in the work of art and develops this in his last unfinished work *Aesthetic Theory*. The deception of the image is not simply rejected but used. Here he finds a mechanism already at work which satisfies the goals of negative dialectics. The work of art is the locus of both pleasure and suffering, the image and its other, and so Adorno can move beyond the impossible prescriptions of his *Negative Dialectics*.

## The Tragic Work of Art

*Aesthetic Theory*, following Schiller and Hölderlin, will be based upon the art/nature distinction. Here again, as in Schiller and Hölderlin, there is a dynamic of transcendence and “domination” [Herrschaft]. What Hölderlin has called the “most dangerous and most beautiful side of man”.

Dialectically, the transition from natural beauty to artistic beauty is one of domination. Artistic beauty is the objective domination by the image, which in its objectivity, is able to transcend domination. The work of art escapes from this by transferring the aesthetic behavior, which is granted to natural beauty, into a productive work that has its model in material work ... [Works of art] expand the range of domination by man to the extreme, not literally, but in positioning a sphere for itself, that through its positioned immanence, differs from real domination and thereby negates it in its heteronomy. (s. 120, p. 113)

Man’s domination of nature is reflected in the work of art, where the danger of real domination becomes negated insofar as the area of this play of domination is limited within the sphere of the particular art work. The work of art is an *image* of domination. Therefore the reconciliation of man and nature achieved by the work does not take place through a type of mediation to a higher sphere, but domination within the safe locus

of the work of art, exposes the truth of that which is dominated. As in Hölderlin, reconciliation takes place through conflict and opposition. It follows the sacrificial model we found developed in Hölderlin's Greek aesthetic theory.

We will encounter the same mechanism:

- a) the monadic creation of the *image* through the conflict.
- b) the *hybris* of that image, its exposure as a deception.
- c) the sacrificial *explosion* of the image.
- d) the re-expression of nature as the *beauty of nature*.
- e) the resulting negative *reconciliation* with nature.

### a) Image

Hölderlin pointed out in the *Thalia Fragment*, that the forces within the work of art are the forces of nature intensified. Likewise, Adorno will point out that the beauty of nature consists in its “appearing to say more than it is”. This he calls its “plus” [Mehr] value. Art tries to appropriate this “plus” from its contingent setting in nature and make it determinate. This “plus” is its transcendent quality. The ability of art to transcend nature is therefore its ability to exploit the appearance of nature. Or in other words, to imbue appearance with reality.

This “plus” or transcendent quality is what Adorno calls “spirit” [Geist].

Whereby works of art, in becoming appearances [Erscheinung], become more than they are, that is their spirit [Geist]. (s. 134, p. 128)

We must recall Kant's concept of “spirit” from the third critique. There, “spirit” was the “animating principle of the mind” (313). It is the “what imparts to the mental powers a purposive momentum”, a “self-sustaining” play of the imagination. It is that which has its ground in nature, and yet at the same time transcends nature.

For the imagination ([in its role] as a productive cognitive power) is very mighty when it creates, as it were, another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it... In this process we feel our freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical use of the imagination); for although it is under that law that nature lends us material, yet we can process that material into something quite different, namely, into something that surpasses nature. (314)

“Spirit” is “second nature”, and this accords with Adorno’s concept of “plus”. For Kant “spirit” occupied the tension between, on one hand, the lawful aspect of art (its “mechanism”), and on the other hand, “mere play” (304). In Hölderlin, world formation, was the product of “conflict”. Here too for Adorno, this “spirit” aspect of art – its extension beyond its materiality – is the product of a tension or conflict.

On one hand this transcendental emergence of spirit depends upon the unity of the material content of the work.

[Spirit] makes the work of art, thing among things, into something other than a thing [Dinglichem], while it is still only as a thing, that they are able to reach that end. It is not through their localization in space and time but through their immanent process of reification [Verdinglichung] that they are the same as themselves, are made identical [with themselves]. (s. 134, p. 128)

On the other hand the material content resists this framed unity, this reification.

Heterogeneity is immanent [in the work of art]: within it is what both strives against its unity and is required for its unity, so it is more than just a Pyrrhic victory over an unresisting opponent. That the spirit of the work of art cannot simply be equated with its immanent connectedness

[Zusammenhang], the complex of its sensual moments, is confirmed within the work, in that they in no way form that seamless unity, that manner of configuration [Gestalt], to which aesthetic reflection would style as right. They are, in their own particular structure, not organisms; their finest products refract against their organic aspect as being illusions [illusionären] and affirmations. (s. 138, p. 132)

Spirit arises out of the resulting “tension [Spannung] between the elements of the work”. Here, as in Hölderlin, the *significance* of the work arises out of this conflict.

And here we find the *play of domination*. Real nature – whose essence is aorgic as we saw in Hölderlin – becomes manipulated into an organic form. The work of art is the mirror of the domination of nature by rationality, technology, and the organic aspects of exchange value in capitalism.

In Hölderlin this moment of world formation was the moment of *apparent reconciliation*. *Apparent* because the same conflict which allowed the work to emerge also exposed it as a deception. Likewise here, the same conflict between unity and heterogeneity which allows for the “spirit” aspect of the work, exposes this “spirit” aspect as *Schein*. Against the tradition of Plato, Aristotle and Hegel, who situate *Schein* and the sensual world on one side, and pure spirit and true being on the other, Adorno will show how *Schein* emerges out of its spiritual essence:

The *Schein* of the work of art arises from its spiritual essence. The spirit itself, as one separated from its other, has inherent in its *Schein*-quality a self-standing against its opposite, and as such, has an intangible being-in-itself; all spirit, apart from its bodily quality, has in it the aspect of a abstract not-being raised toward a being [Seinenden]... Art puts to the test the *Schein*-quality of spirit as an essence sui generis, in that the spirit’s claim to be a being is taken at its word and is placed before the eyes as a being.

(s. 165, p. 158)

In other words, the *Schein* quality of the work of art, in presenting itself as something possessing a being-in-itself, would be the moment of *apparent reconciliation* with nature.

“Mimesis”, for Adorno, will be this power of the work to create a unified whole, to create this power of *Schein*.

The mimetic behavior does not imitate according to something but makes itself the same as itself [macht sich selbst gleich], so the work of art takes it upon itself to perform just that. (s. 169, p. 162)

Adorno will also say that the “mimesis of works of art is their resemblance [Ähnlichkeit] to themselves”.(s. 159, p. 153) In other words, the work of art is not trying to imitate something in the *external world*, its mimesis is its ability to create its *own world*, or in Hölderlin’s language “a world within a world”. It is the ability to create the *Schein* of a being-in-itself. And as in Kant, art most closely approximates nature, not by imitating nature as an *appearing quality*, but by imitating this *creative* dynamic of nature – its independent quality. Art imitates nature by *moving away* from nature, since in it’s creative dynamic, nature is in a sense moving away from itself.

Only through such a degree of polar opposition, and not through a pseudo-metamorphosis of art and nature, are both mediated with one another, and the more successfully [art] approximates nature. Aesthetic objectivity, the reflection of the being-in-itself of nature, carries out the subjective teleological moment of unity, only in this manner does the work become an imitation of nature. (s. 120, p. 114)

So just as we saw in Hölderlin, at the moment of highest opposition a world is formed. But this world, this moment of apparent reconciliation



is also the moment of deception, of *Schein* as illusion.

What exposes this deception is a recognition that spirit is only able to show itself out of the conflict of the material elements. The same conflict which allows the spirit to appear also unravels its sense of unity and being-in-itself.

The amorphous alone enables the work of art to carry out its integration. Through [the work's] completion, and its distance from unformed nature, the still unformed, unarticulated natural moment returns. The glance [Blick] upon the work of art from the nearest proximity changes the most objective creations [Gebilde] into a swarming mass [Giwimmel], it changes texts into words. When one believes they hold the details of the work of art immediately in their hand, they melt away into the indeterminate and undifferentiated: that is how much [works of art] are mediated. This is the manifestation of aesthetic *Schein* in the structure of the work of art. (s. 155, p. 149)

There is a contradiction between what the work of art pretends to be and what it is. It pretends to be a unity where all of its material elements lose themselves in an organic unified form. Its spirit pretends to be a being. It is actually a series of heterogeneous material elements which do not belong to any unity.

No work of art has an unimpaired [ungeschmälerte] unity, yet each one must deceive [vorgaukeln] that it does, and thereby collides with itself. Confronted with an antagonistic reality, the aesthetic unity which opposes that reality becomes *Schein*, [and becomes] also immanent. The composing of a work of art terminates in its *Schein*, and its life becomes one with the life of its moments, yet these moments also carry the heterogeneous into them, and its *Schein* becomes false [der *Schein* wird zum Falschen]

(s. 160, p. 154)

Spirit consists however not only its appearing as *Schein*, but also presents itself as something able to question its own appearing, expose its own deception, since this appearing is actually a false being-in-itself.

... Yet spirit is not only *Schein* but also truth, it is not only the deception [Trug] of a being-in-itself but equally the negation of all false being-in-itself. The moment of its not-being and its negativity enter into the work of art, in that the spirit is not immediately and sensibly apprehended, but only becomes spirit through the relationship of its sensual elements to one another. Therefore the *Schein*-character of art is the same as its methexis in truth. (s. 165, p. 158)

All art is bound to this play of spirit. Adorno will take great pains to show that all art, including Modern art which rebels against *Schein* and subjective expression are inescapably bound to this dynamic, even in the process of criticizing it. He will say that “the critique of *Schein* has its place in the work”. (s. 156, p. 149) The extent to which the work of art accomplishes its own self-critique of its *Schein* quality will be the basis for the distinction between a good and bad, or progressive and reactionary work of art.

## **b) Hybris**

The world of the work remains an image of domination. As a finite world, it has its existence in violation of the real infinite world: Nature.

There are precedents for this view. For Spinoza, the image is always a schematized, simplified, economized, vision of the infinite order of nature. The image leads us astray because in forming an economized connections it blinds us to the *true* order of connections. The elements of the image do not belong together and so the image (of nature) is a violation of the natural order. In Hölderlin too, the image is an eternal

image of nature and yet at the same time a finite moment within nature (one world within the “world of all worlds”) and so its very existence is a violation of nature.

And yet the moment of hybris is essential. We need to be deceived. Reconciliation with nature can occur in no other manner than through this indirect manner. We also find this dynamic in Lukacs. In his essay, “Art and Objective Truth”, Lukacs writes:

Thus every significant work of art creates its “own world”. Characters, situations, actions, etc., in each have a unique quality unlike that in any other work of art and entirely distinct from anything in everyday reality. The greater the artist, the more intensely his creative power permeates all the aspects of his work of art and the more pregnantly his fictional “world” emerges through all the details of the work. (WC, p. 35)

Lukacs also recognizes the illusory quality of this world. Illusion arises in art in relation to the “objective reality”. Yet illusion is “essential and intrinsic to art”.

The effect of art, the immersion of the receptant in the action of the work of art, his complete penetration into the special “world” of the work of art, results from the fact that the work by its very nature offers a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality than the receptant otherwise possesses, that it conducts him on the basis of his own experiences and on the basis of the organization and generalization of his previous reproduction of reality beyond the bounds of his experiences toward a more concrete insight into reality. (WC, p. 36)

Our general experiences of objective reality are not enough. We need to be lifted from the particularity and fragmentation of our

experiences to a new level where we begin to create a more total and unified vision of reality. Art provides this form but not the content. We need to be *fooled* by the illusion of the work of art in order to be “broadened and deepened by the fiction of the work of art”. (WC, p. 37) And so artistic illusion is necessary, it is a dialectical stage for Lukacs in the process of the movement of consciousness toward objective reality.<sup>36</sup>

Lukacs follows a Hegelian concept of *Bildung* here. But Adorno does not want to follow this Hegelian *Aufhebung* to a higher level (which would be a higher illusion). While he accepts the *need* of deception, he follows the sacrificial resolution of Hölderlin (and Solger) where the *Schein* or illusion of the work constitutes a hybris and leads to the tragic moment and dis-integration of the image.

That through which art becomes an unfolding of the truth, is also its cardinal sin, from which art cannot absolve itself. It drags this sin along, behaving as if it had been granted absolution. (s. 159, p. 164)

So the *Schein* or illusory aspect of art, is the creation of a world, an apparent “truth”, and this constitutes a hybris or sin.

### c) Explosion

The work must ultimately pay for its hybris. Adorno will say that art becomes a “sacrifice [Opfer] of those very moments it wishes to suppress”. (s. 164, p. 157). The *Schein* of the work of art now dis-integrates.

Yet the evaporation of aesthetic transcendence becomes aesthetic; so mythically are works of art chained to their antithesis. In burning appearance [Erscheinung] they depart in a glare from the empirical, becoming a counter-instance of what lives there. (s. 131, p. 125)

Adorno calls this dis-integration of the unity of the work “explosion” [Explosion].

The moment [Augenblick] at which the image [Bild] becomes, at which its insides become its outsides, the outside shell which surrounds the insides blows up [sprengt]; its apparition which produces the image, also always destroys its image essence [Bildwesen]. (s. 131, p. 126)

This hybris and dis-integration will be characterized just as in Hölderlin: as a violation involving time. In Hölderlin, the image of the world was the construction of the image of eternity within the flow of time, and so, was in violation of the true eternal. Adorno characterizes this dynamic in the same way.

Aesthetic time is in a certain extent indifferent to empirical time which it neutralizes. (s. 163, p. 157)

The explosion of the appearance of the work of art is essentially historical. What appears [in the work] is its inner time, and the explosion of appearance blows up this continuity. It is mediated toward real history through its monadological core. History may be called the content of the work of art. Analyzing them is the same as becoming conscious of the immanent history stored up in them. (s. 132, p. 126)

The beautiful in nature is adjourned history pausing in its becoming. [Naturschönes is sistierte Geschichte, innehaltendes Werden]. (s. 136, p. 131)

The conflict between the world of the particular work and the world of all worlds in Hölderlin, now becomes the conflict between the inner time of the work and history in Adorno.

It is the dis-integration or “explosion” of the unifying moment which is responsible for the impact of the work of art. It is here that the

truth of illusion is exposed.

According to their constitution, works of art are supposed to dissolve all that is heterogeneous to form, while [in fact] they are only form in relationship to that which they wish to make dissolve [verschwinden]. What wants to appear in them they hinder through their own a priori. (s. 167, p. 160)

The conflict of form and content in the work is also a conflict of harmony and dissonance. The harmony of the work emerges only in relation to dissonance. Adorno calls dissonance “the truth of harmony” (Notice that this is an interesting reversal of Hölderlin’s idea that all dissonance is a part of a higher harmony, here for Adorno, all harmony is a part of a higher dissonance). In the artistic monad, dissonance and harmony seem to be reconciled to the point where they are indistinguishable. But in the dis-integration or “explosion” of the monad, dissonance now emerges as the truth of harmony. We also recognize here Hölderlin’s idea of the organic and the aorgic returning to their respective poles in the process of dis-integration.

For Adorno, “expression” occurs negatively through the dissonance resulting from the dis-integration of the harmonious work.

Dissonance is so much like expression; whereas consonance and harmony seek to gently remove it. Expression and Schein are primarily in antithesis. Expression allows itself to be represented in no other way than by suffering. (s. 168-169, p. 161)

This “expression” is the expression of nature.

Expression is that by which nature infiltrates art most deeply, it is as well plainly the non-literal, a memento of what expression itself is not, and yet which cannot concretize itself in any other way than through that process

[Wie]. (s. 173, p. 166)

Adorno also calls expression “the non-subjective in the subject” (p. 165). Notice that with the rejection of the power of the subjective intention to recover nature, that it is nature which *asserts itself* through expression, at the collapse of subjective intention. We do not reach out to nature, we *let* it reach out to us. In a way Adorno here converges with Meister Eckhart and Heidegger’s concept of *Gelassenheit*.

We again recognize Hölderlin’s formula that the “world of all worlds appears only in dis-integration...” But notice where Adorno parts from Hölderlin. In Hölderlin the dis-integration of the unifying moment leads to a more balanced state of “harmonious opposition” (between harmony and dissonance, identity and non-identity, unity and heterogeneity, the I and the not I, etc.) Adorno on the other hand rejects any final state of harmony or balance. He emphasizes instead the expression of nature as dissonance and suffering. This is how he was able to salvage the essence of negative dialectics within a more positive framework – the dialectic of the work of art.

In summary, there is a tension or conflict in the work of art. “Spirit” organizes the work “from above”. It unifies, and harmonizes the heterogeneous “material elements”. The tension then is here, between form and content, unity and heterogeneity, the organic and the aorgic. This tension gives the work a life of its own, a transcendental power. The work’s resemblance to itself, its ability to create its own monadic world is its “mimesis”. The resulting interiority of the work, the monadic world which is formed is an “illusion”. And this *Schein* quality is its “sin” or “hybris”. As this deception is exposed, the monadic unity of the work dis-integrates or “explodes”. “Dissonance” and suffering are now exposed as the truth of the harmony and unity which gave the work its transcendence. This “expression” is the expression of “nature”.

#### d) The Beauty of Nature

Nature's negative expression takes of form of the "beauty of nature" [Das Naturschöne]. We must now examine this manner of nature's re-expression.

Adorno's strategy in *Aesthetic Theory*, is to recover repressed nature by setting its mode of appearance – "the beauty of nature" – back into a dialectic with "artistic beauty". In this dialectic, nature never appears as it is *in itself*. Its expression is always *mediated* through art.

Art is not, as idealism would like us to believe, nature, but wants to redeem what nature promises. It is capable of this only insofar as it breaks this promise, in withdrawing back upon itself. Nature, so long as it is only defined through its antithesis in society, is still not what it appears. What nature wants in vain, is accomplished by the work of art: it opens nature's eyes ... art stands in for nature by abolishing it in effigy. (s. 103-104, p. 97)

And here, following the concept of mimesis as self-sameness, we find art operating as a vehicle for nature's expression, not by mimicking nature, by moving away from it into itself. To attempt to create a direct image of the beauty of nature is to violate it.

Nature, as beauty, does not let itself be copied [abbilden]. For the beauty of nature, as something appearing, is itself an image. Its replication [Abbildung] is tautological, in that by objectifying its appearing [Erscheinendes] it also eliminates it. (s. 105, p. 99)

What appears in nature, becomes through its duplication [Verdopplung] in art, stripped even of that being-in-itself by which the experience of nature is satisfied. (s. 106, p. 100)



This accords with Hölderlin's observation in his *Perspective* essay when he claims that the "living power" is lost in reproduction.

This was the mistake of Wagner according to Adorno. Wagner wished to sacrifice bourgeois subjectivity to return to a primitive state of nature. This sacrifice ultimately does not succeed from Adorno's perspective because instead of allowing nature to emerge within the negativity of sacrifice, Wagner tries to directly express this primitive state in his music – something Adorno calls "gesture". Wagner makes the mistake of trying to express something directly within his art which can only be expressed indirectly. Notice that this is close to his criticism of Kierkegaard who tries to sacrifice the subject and idealism only to try to directly express – in Christian religious language – what is outside of the subject and idealism.

An example of art which is successful at allowing nature to speak indirectly through it (besides the Adorno's example of Hölderlin, to which we will return) would be the music of Adorno's musical mentors of the second Viennese school: Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern. Spirit's own self-critique reaches its highest form in the serialism of these composers.

Nature cannot be captured directly but only negatively as we have seen. It depends upon the dynamic we saw developed in both Hölderlin and Adorno: the monadic work's striving for unity and self-identity, and the failure of this striving. Art must look away from nature – *into itself* – for nature to express itself through art.

Nature then always will appear, not as it is in itself, but as mediated through the artefactual as the beauty of nature. The non-subjective appears through the subjective.

One qualitative characteristic of the beauty of nature is, how something, to the degree that it is not man-made, speaks, [that is] its expression. Beauty is with regard to nature, that which appears to be more than what it literally is on the spot [denn was es buchstäblich an Ort und Stelle ist]. Without receptivity there would be no such objective

expression, but it does not reduce itself to the subject; the beauty of nature points to the priority of the object in subjective experience. (s. 111, p. 104)

Nature can only be recovered through the reconstitution of this negative dialectic. This involves placing the beauty of nature back into a dialectic with artistic beauty. According to Adorno, the history of aesthetics since Kant's third critique shows an emphasis upon the concept of "artistic beauty" and a repression of the concept of the beauty of nature. As a result, we have forgotten the dependency of artistic beauty upon the beauty of nature, and the play of domination which makes artistic beauty possible.

Why was natural beauty dropped from the agenda of aesthetics? ... The concept of the beauty of nature touches a wound, that one thinks together with it the violence [Gewalt] that the work of art as pure artefact, inflicts upon naturalness [Naturwüchsigen]. Completely man-made, its appearance [Anschein] stands against the not-made, nature. But as a pure antithesis both are [dependent] upon one another; nature upon the experience of a mediated object-world [vergegenständlichten Welt], and the work of art upon nature, the mediated governor of immediacy. Therefore reflections upon the beauty of nature by art theory [Kunsttheorie] are absolutely necessary. (s. 98, p. 91)

We find again as in Hölderlin the connection between beauty and danger. Art becomes the "playground of the true, the beautiful, and the good." only at the expense of a violence committed against nature. Yet it forgets this violence and domination. It forgets and obscures Kant's concept of the "fallibility of making." This is the problem with contemporary aesthetic theory according to Adorno. It forgets art's *indebtedness* to nature.

Adorno sees Hegel as one of the promoters of the subordination of the beauty of nature to artistic beauty. For Hegel, the beauty of nature would be indeterminate with respect to the determinacy of artistic beauty.

It would be devoid of spirit (spirit in its otherness), with respect to the subjective spirit of artistic beauty. Hegel therefore sees the beauty of nature as deficient and quickly leaves it behind.

However, what Hegel had reckoned to be a deficiency of the beauty of nature – that it escapes the firm concept [das dem festen Begriff sich Entziehende] – is the substance of beauty itself. (s. 118, p. 112)

Adorno believes then, that he is recovering the beauty of nature in the Hegelian sense and returning it to its true place: into a dialectic with the determinacy of artistic beauty. He is showing their interdependence. Yet the matter is much more complex than Adorno supposes. I wish to contend that Adorno is not rescuing Hegel's concept of the beauty of nature, but completely reversing it. To understand this reversal is to understand Adorno's very peculiar version of this concept.

For Hegel, the beauty of nature expresses the actuality of the concept, the correspondence of the concept with existence. This is just a way of expressing the Kantian idea that the beauty of the natural object expresses a purposiveness, a certain lawfulness. For Hegel the level of natural beauty can be gauged by how completely and lawfully the parts are integrated within the whole. The *existence* of the natural object *expresses itself* according to the degree that this integration occurs.

Inorganic nature would exist at a lower level of beauty and objectivity. Organic nature would exist at a higher level. Hegel builds up a hierarchy of natural beauty. Since "life" represents the heightened integration of parts with the whole, of multiplicity within unity, then "life" becomes the standard of the beauty of nature. Likewise "illness" will represent a lack of integration. That life which has achieved "self-relation" and "self-recognition" of its own unity stands as the highest stage.

Beauty is also related to appearance. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel writes:

The reality which the Idea gains as natural life is on this account an appearing reality [erscheinende Realität]. Appearance means nothing else but that a reality exists [eine Realität existiert], which instead of having its being [Sein] immediately in itself [an ihr selbst], but is negatively positioned in its existence [Dasein] at the same time. But the negating of the immediately outer existing [daseynenden] members [Glieder] is not just a negative relation, like the activity of idealization, but affirmative being for self [Fürsichsein] is present in this negation at the same time. (LA, s. 171, p. 121)

When something appears, that from which it appears, its immediate existence, is negated. We have seen this in Adorno. The material elements are subsumed into a unity, a *Schein*. The parts lose themselves in the whole. For Hegel this is an outer expression of what is inner. The natural body expresses its concept, its essence, by effacing its immediate existence in its act of appearing. The concept gains a life. The living being shows its soul. This is the beauty of subjectivity. Hegel goes on to say:

Life alone has found this negative point of unity: the point is negative because subjective being for itself [Fürsichsein] can only emerge through the ideal-positioning [Ideellsetzen] the real differences a merely real [nur realer], but therewith at the same time the subjective unity of being for itself is linked. To emphasize this aspect of subjectivity is of great importance. Life is only now actual as individual living subject. (LA, s. 174, p. 122)

Subjectivity is aesthetic *Schein* and represents the highest instance of the beauty of nature. As we follow this trajectory it is not surprising that for Hegel, artistic beauty will be superior to the beauty of nature. Artistic beauty represents a “self-conscious unity”. Natural beauty on the other hand, depends upon the consciousness of the observer.

When we experience the beauty of nature in general, we are merely “foreshadowing” [Ahnung] its correspondance with the concept. Hegel writes:

Consequently, to sum up, nature in general, as displaying to sense the concrete concept and the idea, is to be called beautiful; this is because when we look at natural forms that accord with the concept, such a correspondence with the concept is foreshadowed [geahnt]; and when they are examined more sensually by the senses, the inner necessity and the harmony [Zusammenstimmen] of the total arrangement [Gleiderung] is revealed at the same time. (LA, s. 183, p. 130)

Within our limited perspective and the particularity of our sensing of nature, we gain an intimation of a higher unity and harmony even though we do not sense it directly. The total arrangement [Gleiderung] is sensed through the individual members [Gleider]. The beauty of nature is never dissonance and indeterminacy, but the expression and foreshadowing of a higher unity.

We now see some important differences between Hegel and Adorno. For Hegel, beauty is always harmony, unity, *Schein*, second nature. Contrary to Adorno’s reading, Hegel is careful to point out that the beauty of nature as spirit is continuous. The beauty of nature is *not* indeterminacy but the manner in which nature shows its essence from itself. This showing is always something determinate and so participates in the hierarchy of beauty. The beauty of nature is only indeterminate *relative* to artistic beauty (which has achieved self-relation), and this is why artistic beauty is greater than natural beauty.

For Adorno it is the opposite. The beauty of nature is complete indeterminacy. It is the expression of nature at the collapse of the mechanisms of its domination: harmony, unity, *Schein*, and second nature. There is a sense in which Hegel comes close when he speaks of

a foreshadowing of unity, yet in Adorno this is not a direct or continuous foreshadowing of unity. It is the attempt and failure to completely foreshadow nature's unity. The passage from consciousness to the unconscious cannot be conscious. It is closer to the mechanism of the sublime. In essence, what Adorno has done (and in a sense Hölderlin and Schelling before him) is to collapse the Kantian distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. This also means a collapse of the distinction between beautiful object and sublime experience. The beauty of nature now becomes the sublime. It is the sense which we perceive when nature speaks to us in suffering and dissonance. Adorno writes in his early essay on Nature:

Wäre die Natur sinnlos – dann freilich müsste sie das Ich zerschmettern. Aber die Erkenntniss hat sie als sinnvoll erwiesen. Und der ehrfürchtige Mensch kann in der Natur den Geist finden, weil er den Sinn finden muss. Der Geist ist in der Natur als Gesetz gestaltet: und so erlebt der Mensch das Gesetz, gegen das er in seinen Lebenskreisen stündlich sich auflehnen möchte, in Unbewussten wirkend, und eine Ahnung fällt in ihn, dass dies grosse Gesetz, auch seiner Seele die Bahnen vorschreibt wie den Sternen. Dann weiss er sich eins mit den Sternin und allen unbewussten Dingen um ihn, die alle vom Geist-Gesetz voll sind und schwer wie Früchte an dem Baum: Gott. (DN, s. 732)

Certainly Adorno intensifies the dissonant aspect of the beauty of nature in his mature thought. But what we see even in this early essay is the manner in which when confronted by the dissonant expression of the sublime, we find sense even in this dissonance. We find ourselves a part of a higher unity which we cannot conceptualize and cannot completely dominate.

So here would be the difference between Hegel and Adorno: for Hegel, the beauty of nature is its *Schein*, for Adorno, nature is most beautiful at that moment when *Schein* fails.

## e) Reconciliation

It is only by moving away from nature that art acts as a vehicle for nature's expression. It is only by creating a world of its own that art mimics the true world of nature. It is only by art's hybris that the truth of illusion emerges as natural beauty. And it is only by mimicking the real domination of nature within its secure sanctuary, that art acts as a means to counter the real domination of nature, that art becomes a means of reconciliation. The expression of nature in the *after-image* of the work – the beauty of nature – is this reconciliation. We must now examine how this reconciliation takes place.

Adorno claims that the perception of nature is “historically deformed”, therefore the beauty of nature will always appear negatively in relation to culture and technology.

For in each experience of nature the whole of society is actually contained. Not only as it stands with respect to the schema of perception, but also in establishing from the beginning, through contrast and resemblance, what is ordinarily called nature. Natural experience [Naturerfahrung] becomes co-constituted through the capacity of determinate negation. With the expansion of technology, and more importantly, with the totality of the principle of exchange [Tauschprincipis], the beauty of nature takes on an increasingly contrasting function, [which becomes] easily integrated within the reifying essence. (s. 107, p. 101)

Adorno calls the beauty of nature the “allegory of a beyond of cultural relations”. *Nature* as it expresses itself negatively through art, challenges *culture* which has suppressed it. This allows the possibility for a *true reconciliation* with nature.

The beauty in nature is contrary to the dominating principle as it is contrary to the other [of this principle], a diffuse

separation, it most resembles reconciliation. (s. 115, p. 101)

Adorno's strategy in *Aesthetic Theory* represents an improvement over the more polemical *Negative Dialectics* with its prescription of suffering as an antidote to rationality's domination over nature. Instead of having to intentionally explode the reified concept, in the work of art we now have a reification which explodes itself, a more positive natural process which accomplishes the same thing. Through the vehicle of art, its antithesis nature is redeemed. Art counters rationality's domination of nature by liberating the irrational, the unconscious of rationality.

The deepness of the process which every work of art represents, is dug out of the irreconcilable of each moment; this must be kept in mind when one thinks of the idea of art as an image of reconciliation. Only because emphatically no work of art can succeed, is its power freed; and only thereby does it allow a glimpse of reconciliation [blickt sie auf Versöhnung]. (s. 87, p. 81)

This reconciliation takes place in two ways, both based upon the shift in the concept of the irrational which we saw in Adorno's early essay. The first is by a kind of "recollection" [Erinnerung] of nature as "sedimented" experiences. We saw that the time of the work is "sedimented" history. Expression therefore liberates natural, historical structures which have been *buried* by domination of culture.

A better model for expression is one based upon extra-artistic [ausserkünstlerischen] things and situations, rather than upon [subjective] feeling [Gefühlte]. In [the work of art], historical processes and functions have already sedimented themselves, and speak out from them. Only this becomes doubly puzzling, because this sedimented, expressed sense, once more is senseless, a natural history, over which nothing leads out, and is just powerless enough,



to have the capacity to express itself. (s. 170, p. 163)

The other way reconciliation takes place is through a kind of *resistance* to the entrenched cultural rationalities. Art has an “enigmatic quality”. It is this enigmatic quality which allows the work to “instill wonder”. What makes the work enigmatic is that they possess their *own logic*. They themselves represent a kind of rationality. But because of the dynamics of expression – its irrationality and powers of distortion – this rationality of the work appears as enigmatic. It transforms the world which it assimilates into itself and provides alternative images of rationality which provides resistance against the entrenched cultural rationality.

The rationality of the work of art aims at its resistance [Widerstand] against empirical existence [Dasein]: works of art, as far as one can tell, rationally shape [Gestalt], what they consequently form in and throughout themselves. This then contrasts them to their outsides [Auswendigen], the place of nature-dominating ratio, contrasts them to their aesthetic descendance, and [allows them to] become a for-themselves. (s. 430, p. 403)

By liberating this play of domination from empirical reality and placing it in a safe monadic, transcendental sphere, we are in a sense able to recognize rationality and domination for what it is. We also recognize in this an idea of Hölderlin’s which we will investigate more closely in the next chapter, the idea of art as a kind of “sanctuary”.

For Adorno, all the strategies of art’s power to reconcile us with nature are founded upon the sacrificial model of the work of art. The same model we found developed in Hölderlin’s Greek aesthetic theory.

## **Art and Philosophy**

Adorno’s aesthetics is partly constructed to insure that a place remains open for philosophy outside of the work of art. The roots of this

attitude are found at the source of critical theory with Lukacs. Lukacs maintains the divisions between “writer” and “critic”, “healthy” and “sick” art. Art is related to objective truth. But access to this relationship is beyond the work itself, it requires the philosopher-critic to recover it. In his essay “Art and Objective Truth” he writes:

It becomes the responsibility of a Marxist aesthetic in developing the concept of form as a mode of reflection to demonstrate how this objectivity emerges in the creative process as objectivity, as truth independent of the artist’s consciousness. (WC, p. 53)

Since the objective truth is beyond the consciousness of the artist, it is therefore the task of the philosopher to interpret art with reference to society, to interpret its objective truth, to show whether it is “progressive” or “reactionary”, “healthy” or “sick”. Adorno’s work is still animated by these divisions. As a critical theorist, he still requires an ideal position from which to judge art, outside of the work of art. Primarily to judge whether the work is so in control of its own sacrificial process that it can open itself to its *other*: natural beauty, whether it leads to reconciliation, and whether it challenges nature-dominating reason, harmony, unity, and identity, or passively perpetuates them. So Adorno throughout his work must keep poetry separate from philosophy.

In his work on Kierkegaard he stresses this very point. While Kierkegaard’s philosophy moves away from the idea of totality which is found in Hegel, this philosophy of the particular should not be interpreted as poetry. The dialectical rigor and stability of philosophy must be recognized as such so its subversive elements can retain their power.

As soon as this type of philosophy is tolerantly accepted as poetry, the strangeness of its ideas, in which its power over reality manifests itself, is neutralized along with the seriousness of its claim. Its dialectical concepts then

serve as metaphorical decorative additions that may be arbitrarily dismissed by scientific rigor. Philosophy is thereby depreciated: poetry in philosophy means everything that is not strictly relevant... This praise dishonors the poetry as well as the philosophy... the first concern of the construction of the aesthetic in Kierkegaard's philosophy is to distinguish it from poetry. (K, pp. 4-5)

Within Kierkegaard's philosophy of subjectivity, the distinction between philosophy and art becomes confused and as a result both lose their power. Adorno is critical of how all of Kierkegaard's thought remains in the sphere of interiority. By eliminating the outside, by eliminating the objective, Kierkegaard eliminates the possibility for a true aesthetics.<sup>37</sup>

In *Aesthetic Theory*, the sacrificial mechanism of the work of art requires a separate space for philosophy. Since, in relation to the work of art, nature's expression occurs only negatively and indirectly, this negative expression calls for a *positive* interpretation. Natural beauty calls for "analysis".

Consequently all beauty proceeds to open itself to analysis. Analysis feeds anew beauty's involuntariness [Unwillkürlichkeit] and beauty would slip away where the moment of the involuntary not inherent within analysis. Faced with the beautiful, analytic reflection manufactures the *temps duree'* again through its antithesis. Analysis terminates in something beautiful insofar as in its perfect and self-forgetting unconsciousness, expression must appear. Therefore the subjective [analysis] retraces the path, which is objectively traced in the work of art. (s. 109, p. 103)

When the artistic monad "explodes" we are in a sense forced back out of the "gaze" or "aura" of the work – its "first reflection" – to a standpoint of "second reflection". The non-subjective speaking through the subject now calls for interpretation. Art here passes over into philosophical criticism.

[Like the beauty of nature, the object of aesthetics] determines itself as undetermined, negative. Therefore art needs philosophy to interpret it, in order to say what it cannot say, while it is nevertheless only by art that it can come to say it, by not saying it [itself] [während es doch nur von Kunst gesagt werden kann, indem sie es nicht sagt]. (s. 113, p. 107)

Genuine aesthetic experience must become philosophy or else it will not be genuine at all. (s. 197, p. 190)

We can say that it is this philosophical second reflection which allows the beauty of nature to fully express itself. Not merely negatively in the negative after-image of explosion, but reconstructed positively in the sphere of analysis. This is why art must be kept separate from philosophy; they are complimentary. If the work achieves reconciliation through its self-sacrifice, then philosophy must stand outside this process to pick up the pieces, to capture the moment of reconciliation, and to judge good from bad art. There is a prototype for this idea in the writings of the German Romantic philosopher Karl Solger. He speaks of a “step back” outside of the “destruction of illusion” [Illusionstörung] in order to appreciate the resulting reconciliation.

For Adorno, philosophy is always distinguished from art. Art is always distinguished from nature. It is these distinctions which make his aesthetic theory possible. And it is these distinctions which Hölderlin’s later Modern or “Hesperian” approach will begin to subvert.

# HÖLDERLIN'S MODERN ("HESPERIAN") THEORY

Rivers are the eyes of a landscape.  
(Novalis)<sup>38</sup>

Thus, water is the gaze of the earth, its instrument for  
looking at time.  
(Paul Claudel)<sup>39</sup>

I now wish to show how Hölderlin develops a separate aesthetic theory applicable specifically to Modern man, in his essays and in his poetry. Hölderlin will demonstrate that Modern ("Hesperian") man, unlike the Greek, lives accustomed to the medium of representation. It ceases to be a problem for him and so ceases to be tragic. But living within this medium creates new effects. The most important is the place of nature. Departing from a sacrificial or *circular* dynamic of man and nature, we progress towards a *linear* or what we might call *directional* dynamic. We do not return to the same *nature* after each cyclic transgression and sacrifice, but we now branch off into many possible *natures*. The action of striving onward of the poet, philosopher or scientist, conditions nature as it interprets nature. The Modern dynamic then is one of *movement* and not one of *paralysis* as many commentators on Hölderlin – including Adorno – wish to show.

## Greek or Modern

We have already encountered the Classicism of Rousseau, Herder, and Schiller in their regard of Greek civilization as the highest state reachable by humanity, the state where civilization is in a state of balance with Nature, where the transcendental element is in balance with the sensual element of man. Hölderlin follows them in their elevation of Greek culture, even though his “Greek” aesthetic model departs from what has been traditionally conceived as Classicism. He took great pains to examine the mechanism of checks and balances which kept Greek humanity reconciled with Nature. As we have seen, he carefully developed an aesthetic theory to take into account this mechanism. Yet Hölderlin had always recognized a distance between the Greek state of humanity and the Modern state. Hyperion represented the Modern quest to balance the impulses within the Modern human subject; which would amount to a return to Greece. As we have already observed, this quest ended in failure. Although Hölderlin develops what can be called a *Greek* aesthetic theory, it remains as an ideal, inaccessible to the Modern poet, something he can only learn from, something against which he defines his own condition. The Modern poet has his own character different from the Greek character. And since poetry is partly an expression of the dynamic of impulses within ones character, the Modern poet will have his own principles which animate his poetic expression. Hölderlin’s most famous statement concerning the distinction between the *Greek* and *Modern* (or what he sometimes calls “Hesperian”) is to be found in his first letter to Böhlendorff.

We learn nothing more difficult than the free use of the national. And as I believe, it is precisely the clarity of representation that is originally as natural to us as the fire from heaven to the Greeks. For just this reason they will be more readily surpassed in beautiful passion... than in that Homeric presence of mind and gift of representation... in the progress of culture, the properly national will become

ever more the lesser virtue. For this reason the Greeks are less masters of sacred pathos, since it was inborn in them; on the other hand, they excel in the gift of representation from Homer onward, because this extraordinary man was spirited enough to capture the Occidental *Junonian sobriety* for his Apollonian realm, and thus truly to appropriate what is foreign. With us it is the reverse. For this reason it is also so dangerous to abstract the rules of art for oneself simply and solely from Greek excellence. I have long suffered from this and now know that except for that which must be the highest for the Greeks and us – namely, the living relationship and skill –, we should not even have anything the *same* as them. But that which is properly one's own must be learned just as well as that which is foreign. For this reason the Greeks are indispensable for us. But we will not approach them precisely in that which is our own, proper national element because, as has been said, the *free* use of *that which is one's own* is the hardest part. (HOC, p. 251)

Here again Hölderlin owes a great debt to Schiller. This time to his work: *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*.<sup>40</sup> To understand Hölderlin's distinction one must first understand this essay which has had such a great influence on German romanticism.

In this essay Schiller characterizes two states of the human subject and their corresponding poetics: the “naive” and the “sentimental”. These correspond to Greek and Modern culture respectively. The basis for this division is the poet's relationship to nature.

The naive poet is at unity with nature, with its laws, and as we saw earlier in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, there is a unity of the internal impulses. In this case “feeling” and “intellect”. The differing poetic expression of the naive and sentimental poets is based upon this difference in their *relationship to nature*. In the state of naiveté we find:

As long as man dwells in a state of pure nature (I mean pure and not coarse nature), all his being acts as once like a simple sensuous unity, like a harmonious whole. The senses and reason, the receptive faculty and the spontaneously active faculty, have not been as yet separated in their respective functions; *a fortiori* they are not yet in contradiction with each other. Then the feelings of man are not the formless play of chance; nor are his thoughts an empty play of the imagination, without and value. His feelings proceed from the law of necessity; his thoughts from reality. (NSP, p. 285)

This is also the state of Greek civilization.

Civilization [for the Greeks] did not degenerate, nor was it carried to such an excess that it was necessary to break with nature. The entire structure of their social life reposed on feelings, and not on a factitious conception, on a work of art. (NSP, p. 279)

The Greek naive poet lives in conformity with nature because *feeling* is what is predominant in his character. Feeling provides a direct connection with both intellect and reality and so his intellect is in direct conformity with reality. Naive poetry therefore expresses itself in the representation of the natural object.

... in the state of natural naiveté, when all the faculties of man are exerted together, his being still manifests itself in a harmonious unity, where, consequently, the *totality* of his nature expresses itself in reality itself, the part of the *poet* is necessarily to imitate the real as completely as possible. (NSP, p. 286)



The Modern-sentimental poet on the other hand is not in unity with nature. He is distanced from nature and therefore nature itself emerges as an object; an *ideal object*.

As soon as nature gradually vanishes from human life – that is, in proportion as it ceases to be *experienced as a subject* (active and passive) – we see it dawn and increase in the poetical world in the guise of an *idea* and as an *object*. (NSP, p. 280)

In the state of naiveté nature was not objectified, to do so would imply a reflective distance and a disunity. What was represented was the immediate objects within nature. In the Modern state of distance from nature, poetry excels in a sentimental directedness towards nature as an ideal lost object.

Why is it that being, for all that relates to nature, incomparably below the ancients, we are superior to them precisely on this point, that we render a more complete homage to nature; that we have a closer attachment to it; and that we are capable of embracing even the inanimate world with the most ardent sensibility. It is because nature, in our own time, is no longer in man, and that we no longer encounter it in its primitive truth except out of humanity, in the inanimate world. It is not because we are more *conformable to nature* – quite the contrary; it is because in our social relations, in our mode of existence, in our manners, we are in *opposition to nature*. (NSP, p. 278)

This condition brought about by distance can only be reconciled by that element which distance makes possible: the representation of the ideal.

In the state of civilization, on the contrary, when this harmonious competition of the whole of human nature is no longer anything but an idea, the part of the poet is

necessarily to raise reality to the ideal or, what amounts to the same thing, *to represent the ideal*... The path followed by Modern poets is moreover that necessarily followed by man generally, individuals as well as the species. Nature reconciles man with himself; art divides and disunites him; the ideal brings him back to unity. (NSP, p. 286)

Schiller is quick to point out that this return to pure unity is an unattainable goal. The various types of sentimental poetry represent various reactions to this lost unity and take the form of various modes of feeling. Schiller classifies these as the “satirical” (comic and tragic), the “elegiac”, and the “idyllic”. Peter Szondi points out that there is a sense in Schiller’s work where the naive *is* the sentimental; the ideal naive Greek condition is merely a projection of the Modern sentimental condition. This brings up some interesting questions concerning the philosophical appropriation of this classical model. Idealism in particular, and much of philosophy in general can in this sense be said to be a projection of a pure, naive relationship to nature as a pure lost object.

What this expresses most dramatically is that representation always implies a certain reflective distance from pure nature. Nature can only be constructed as an object from this reflective distance. This becomes a powerful theme in Schelling’s philosophy. In the Introduction to his *Ideas Concerning the Philosophy of Nature*, he points out that reflection is a disease, but it is only through reflection that the disease of reflection can be cured.

This idea of reflection as involving distance from nature was the basis of hybris and sacrificial dis-integration in the Greek model. Here for the sentimental poet it reflects a more permanent state, even to the extent where the ideal of Greece itself remains something which cannot be re appropriated.

Anticipating our return to the Böhlendorff letter we can say that, based upon the Greek unity with nature, “feeling” is what is natural to the Greeks, and the “representation” of the immediate natural object is

that which they mastered. Because of the Modern disunity with nature, representation is what is natural to us since we live always in the artificial, and feeling will be the foreign element we master in order to bridge this distance from nature.

We can now better understand the Böhlendorff letter. For Hölderlin, what is *natural* to the Greeks is the “fire from heaven”, the “sacred pathos”. This is none other than Schiller’s concept of “feeling”, or the “sensual impulse”, which involves a unity with nature. The Greeks in turn acquire mastery over their *foreign* element, “clarity of representation”, or “Juonian sobriety”. With us it is the reverse. What is *natural* to us Moderns is that which we have “inherited” from the Greeks, that is, the power of representation. Nature itself becomes an object, something *represented*. Just as the Greeks lived in a state of feeling because of their unity with nature, we live in a state characterized by representation because of our opposition to nature. That which is *foreign* to us, which we acquire and master, is that which was *natural* for the Greeks; the feeling element which for us is the attempt to recover a unity with idealized nature. The Modern poet does this by trying to master various “modes” or “tones” of feeling, alternating them within the poetic work.

We can also rewrite this in terms of the Empedocles essay. What is *natural* to the Greeks is the “sensual-aorgic impulse” and the *foreign* element they have mastered is the “formal-organic impulse”. The sensual-aorgic is defined in relation to temporality and destiny, as we have seen. So what is *natural* to the Greeks is their *being within time* or *having a destiny* and the tragic occurs as a result of their mastery of the *foreign* element of representation, the hybris of their vision of their own destiny. This is the hybris which results from the reversal of temporality and eternity. With us it will be the reverse. Hölderlin writes in his notes to his translation of Sophocles *Antigone*:

... the Greek ideas change for us, insofar as the Greek’s aim was to grasp themselves, since this was their weakness, whereas the main aim in the modes of understanding for

our own age, is to hit upon something successfully, to have a fate, since fatelessness [dysmoron], is our weakness. (W, band II, s. 456, ELT, p. 113)

Destiny is *natural* to the Greeks, and the representation of this destiny is the *foreign* element mastered by the Greeks. This is the source of the *Tragic*. Representation is *natural* to us, and what we must master is precisely to have a destiny.

The distinction between the Greek and the Modern introduces for Hölderlin the important concept of temporality and destiny. Already Rousseau, Herder and Schiller characterized the distinction between the naive and the sentimental as mirroring the distinction between the child and the adult. The child in his naiveté and innocence is in unity with nature, and emerges as a object, or emblem of this state of unity for the adult. Schiller writes:

In the child, all is *disposition* and *destination* [Anlage und Bestimmung]; in us, all is in the state of a *completed, finished* [Erfüllung] thing, and the completion always remains infinitely below the destination. It follows that the child is to us like a representation of the ideal; not, indeed, of the ideal as we have realized it, but such as our destination admitted; and, consequently, it is not at all the idea of its indigence, of its hindrances, that makes us experience emotion in the child's presence; it is, on the contrary, the idea of its pure and free force, of the integrity, the infinity of its being. This is the reason why, in the sight of every moral and sensible man, the child will always be a *sacred* thing; I mean an object which, by the grandeur of an idea, reduces to nothingness all grandeur realized by experience; an object which, in spite of all it may lose in the judgment of the understanding, regains largely the advantage before the judgment of reason. (NSP, p. 266)

The Greek then is the child (First pointed out by Plato in the *Timaeus*) who is admired by the Modern or experienced adult for his purity and unity with nature. The Greek, like the child, has a destiny, a future, a potential, whereas the Modern, like the adult, is in a “completed state”.

Also, to be in a state of unity with nature, following Schiller’s definition of nature, is to be subject to the necessity of natural law. So the child and the Greek live in a state of necessity. The adult and the Modern, on the other hand, has “free choice”, yet we yearn for the state of innocence and necessity. Schiller writes:

... it happens in *us*, at least in certain moral dispositions, to curse our prerogative, this free will, which exposes us to so many combats with ourselves, to so many anxieties an errors, and to wish to exchange it for the condition of beings destitute of reason, for that fatal existence that no longer admits of any choice, but which is so calm in its uniformity; – while we do this, the Greeks, on the contrary, only have their imagination occupied in retracing human nature in the inanimate world, and in giving to the will an influence where blind necessity rules. (NSP, p. 268)

Our free choice is a result of our opposition to nature and is in a sense, a *fallen state*. It also complicates our search for a destiny, since “fatelessness [dysmoron], is our weakness”.

Because the Greeks naturally have a destiny, the process of their poetic spirit can proceed *tragically*. The tragic emerges of the hybris of the Greeks representing their own destiny. The monadic representation disintegrates but the process is not derailed for again the Greeks are grounded in time and destiny. The Greeks can *close their eyes* for a moment because they are assured of their destiny. We Moderns do not have this luxury. What is natural to us is representation. We must master feeling, time, destiny. We cannot close our eyes even for a moment. There is no destiny to carry us along. We must struggle forward, finding our own way.

The process of our poetic spirit then is tied together by “consciousness”. Notice that this would also suggest that the Kantian *sacrificial sublime* is no longer possible, for us.<sup>41</sup> We can summarize these distinctions with the following table.

	<b>GREEK (naive) (child)</b>	<b>MODERN - HESPERIAN (sentimental) (experienced adult)</b>
Natural (inherited)	“fire from heaven” “destiny” sensual / aorgic	“Juonian sobriety” “representation” formal / organic
Foreign (mastered)	"representation" vision of own destiny formal / organic	"destiny" sensual / aorgic "balance of tones"
resolution through:	tragic-sacrificial moment	"free choice

Our place in distinction to the Greeks, gives us certain responsibilities. In his essay entitled “The Perspective from which we have to look at Antiquity”, Hölderlin points out that what we have inherited from our forefathers, the Greeks, is what is characteristic of us Moderns; our “formative drive”. The aim is knowing how to control it. Hölderlin writes:

*It is namely a difference, whether that imaging/forming-drive [Bildungstrieb] works blindly or with consciousness, whether it knows wherefrom it emerged and whereto it strives, for this is the only mistake of man, that his imaging/forming drive goes astray, takes an unworthy, altogether false direction or, at least, misses its proper place or, if it has found it, remains standing half way, with the means which should lead him to his goal [Zwecke].. [We must] position-forward [vorsetzen] our own direction which*

becomes determined by the fore-going [vorhergegangen] pure and impure directions that we, by inspection, do not repeat. (W, s. 846, ELT, p. 40)

In other words, in the language of the Böhlendorff letter, we must learn what is our own – the “formative drive” – in order to control it and give it direction, to “give ourselves our own direction”, to create our own destiny. This requires “experience”, “consciousness”, and “free choice”, and so requires a “memory” of “pure and impure directions”, or paths taken.

Hölderlin characterizes the two poetic processes in his *Pindar Fragments*. He writes that we grasp the “character of the fate of the fatherland”...

*...more usurpatorially, as with the Greek sons of nature, or with more experience, as with men of learning.*

Experience, consciousness, and free choice will then characterize the processes of the Modern – or “Hesperian” – poetic spirit. This is what we find developed in Hölderlin’s longest theoretical essay, “On the Processes of the Poetic Spirit”.

This distinction, which begins in Schiller and is developed by Hölderlin, is also the basis for the distinction between the “Apollinian” and “Dionysian” in Schelling’s *Philosophy der Offenbarung* and Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*.<sup>42</sup>

## Processes

The essay, “On the Processes of the Poetic Spirit”, represents Hölderlin’s attempt to develop a Modern, “Hesperian”, aesthetic theory, just as “The Ground for Empedocles”, was his attempt to develop a Greek aesthetic theory. Again he deals with the dynamic and conflict of drives which is the ground for poetic expression. What will remain the same as the Greeks will be the central function of “conflict”. What will be different is the resolution of conflict. Unlike the Greek poetic spirit, the Modern

spirit cannot approach the divine blindly through excess and self-sacrifice. It must from the very beginning be in “control” of that balance which is an expression of the divine. This is what is explained in the very difficult opening of the essay.<sup>43</sup>

With the Greeks, it was formal-organic which was taken to its extreme in the form of excess interiority, hence the conflict and opposition took place with respect to “form” while “content” [Stoff] or the aorgic-sensual remained constant. Now with the Modern spirit, being as we have seen the “reverse” of the Greek spirit, it is content or the aorgic-sensual element which is in conflict, while form remains constant. What is natural to us remains *constant* in our character. With the Greeks it was the aorgic-sensual, the *being in time*, in other words, their destiny. What they mastered, that which was foreign, what was not *constant* but in *conflict* was representation, the formal-aorgic element. This conflict intensified this power of representation and took it to an extreme. The Greeks achieved a vision of their own destiny which was their hybris. With us what is natural is our power of representation, our organic-formal impulse, therefore it remains *constant*. What is foreign to us, what we must learn to master, is content, our aorgic-sensual impulse, our destiny, and so it is the content of our representations which is in opposition and *conflict*. Hölderlin writes:

[The poetic spirit] unites through opposition [Entgegengesetzung], through the meeting [Berühren] of extremes, in that these are comparable, not according to content but in the direction [Richtung] and degree of [their] opposition, so that they also *compare what is most contradictory*, and is thoroughly hyperbolic, that they proceed, not through opposition in form where but the first is related to the second according to content, but through the opposition in content, where the first is the same as the second in form, so that naive, heroic, and ideal tendencies contradict each other in the object of their tendency, but are comparable in the form of their conflict and striving, and



are united according to the laws of activity, consequently united in the most universal, in life. (W, I, s. 860, ELT, p. 67)

“Life in general” – Herder’s concept – will now be the manner in which the conflict of content is unified, and constitutes the “significance” of the poem.

... precisely through [the idea of life in general] does the poet provide the idealistic with a beginning, a direction, a significance. What is idealistic in this configuration [Gestalt] is the subjective ground of the poem... (W, I, s. 870, ELT, p. 67)

This subjective ground involves various “tones” or “moods”. These are: “feeling”, “striving”, and “intellectual intuition”. Through these moods the subjective ground prepares the way for an objective ground, by giving the poem a “beginning, a direction, and a significance”, it prepares the way for the poem to create a destiny.

The unity in “life in general” of the conflict of content, the “harmonious opposition” of what is opposed, leads to the “pure”, or the “divine”. This is the basis of Hölderlin’s theory of the “alternation of tones”. But to understand this we must yet again return to Schiller.

In his work *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller describes the dangers for both the naive and the sentimental poet.

Naive genius is not exposed to overstep [the limits of human nature], but rather *not to fill it entirely*, giving too much scope to external necessity, to accidental wants, at the expense of inner necessity. The danger for the sentimental genius is, on the other hand, by trying to remove all limits, of nullifying human nature absolutely, and not only rising, as is its right and duty, beyond finite and determinate reality as far as absolute possibility, or in other terms to idealize; but of passing even beyond possibility, or in other words,

*dreaming*. (NSP, p. 325)

While the naive poet “lets nature dominate”, the sentimental poet “leaves aside the real world to rise to the ideal and to command its matter with free spontaneity”. We fall into either an “object without inspiration, or an inspiration without an object”. But since naive and sentimental poetry are opposed in their nature, and their dangers are opposed in nature, it should be possible to use them to balance one another’s negative tendencies. At the very end of the essay, Schiller suggests such a possibility.

... we must seek a class of mind at once active, but not slavishly so, and idealizing, but not dreamy; uniting the reality of life within as few limits as possible, obeying the current of human affairs, but not enslaved by them,... In such a class – here regarded as a mere ideal – the simple and sentimental would keep each other from extremes of extravagance and relaxation. For the idea of a beautiful humanity is not exhausted by either, but can only be presented in the union of both. (NSP, p. 322)

Representation is what is natural to Hölderlin’s Modern-sentimental poet. So the tendency is to fall into the danger of over-abstraction, leaving the real world, being an inspiration without an object, being too idealistic, drifting into pure dream. The goal is to now unite the idealistic tendency with the real. “Life in general” will represent this unity of conflicting tones, and is achieved through the “alternation of tones” or “moods”. This will consist in balancing naive tones with sentimental tones. It is a balancing of the representation of the naive natural object with the sentimental ideal object He develops this idea in more detail in two essays. “On the Different Forms of Poetic Composition”, develops the *naive*, which he calls “the natural” or “epic” poetry. “On the Difference of Poetic Modes [Dichtarten]”, begins to develop the dynamics of Modern poetry and the alternation of tones. The *naive* tone is again used here but this time

in alternation with other modes in the manner suggested by Schiller. To follow this theory any further would be to drift from the concerns of this dissertation. What is important for us is that these “modes” or “tones” represent those elements of poetic expression tied to feeling, the aorgic-sensual, and which in the Modern poet is in opposition, while form, or life in general, remains constant.

We observe the same dynamic here which we saw developed in “The Ground for Empedocles” with regard to the Greeks, only reversed. The poetic spirit is here again characterized by a unity engendered through conflict. Therefore the “pure” will also be composed through conflict.

... the distinct moods [Stimmungen] are connected only there wherein the pure finds its opposition, namely, in the manner of striving-onward [Fortstrebens], as life in general, so that the purely poetic life is no longer to be found, for in each of the alternating moods it is connected in a particular form with what is directly opposed to it, [and is] consequently no longer pure; on the whole, it is only at hand as something striving-onward, and according to the law of striving-onward only as life in general, and from this perspective, there reigns throughout a conflict between the individual (material), universal (formal), and pure. (W, I, s. 871, ELT, p. 68)

There is no longer *one* monadic excess of interiority. There is no sense in which the Modern poetic spirit captures the pure in one moment. There are now a conflict of *several* moods [Stimmung] or tones [Tönen]. The purity of each mood or tone is in conflict with every other mood or tone, and in conflict with itself.

The pure conceived in every particular tone conflicts with the organ by which it is conceived, it conflicts with the pure of the other organ, it conflicts with the alternation. (W, I, s. 871-872, ELT, p. 68)

The pure conflicts with the organ by which it is conceived because this organ is “impure”. As we recall from Hölderlin’s letter to Neuffer.

The pure can only be depicted in the impure... because the noble itself as it comes towards expression bears the color of the destinies under which it originated. (Letter #167, W, II, s. 783)

The pure here emerges in a fragmentary way as opposed to the blinding way it emerged for the Greeks.

Conflict as we have seen in “The Ground to Empedocles” essay, is as much uniting as it is opposing. Conflict will be the source of the poetic spirit. And the pure now finds itself, is *present to itself*, in this conflict with the organ which comprises it. Spirit [Geist] is conceived not merely through life in general, and not merely through unity in general,

... but in the concept of the *unity* of the *unified* [Einheit des Einigen], so that from the harmoniously-connected, *one* like the *other* is *connected in the point of opposition*, and that *in this point the spirit*, that appeared as finite through this opposition, is *tangible in its infinity*, that the pure, conflicting as such with the organ, is *present to itself* in this very organ and only thus becomes a *living one*. (W, I, s. 873, ELT, p. 69)

It is conceived through opposition. Remember in Fichte, the ground for the unification of opposites was in their common point of conflict [zusammentreffen], and it was imagination which transformed this conflict into unity. We here work in the opposite direction, the common point of conflict of opposites allows for the emergence of “spirit”. Again, as with the Greek poetic spirit described in “The Ground to Empedocles” essay, the process of the poetic spirit is characterized by a unity engendered by conflict. Life in general is the unity of conflict. But the conflict here is

one of the opposition of content, or moods. Life in general then will be a sequence of conflicting moods. It is something *strung out*, something *temporal*, a “striving-onward”. To be *living* is to have a *unity in time*. If the pure is present only as fragments, then life in general is the temporal process which gives them a unity, a direction, and a significance. Likewise the attempt of the Modern poet to give his poem direction and significance through life in general is his attempt to prepare the poem to have an aorgic-temporal dimension, since having an aorgic-temporal dimension is the Modern poet’s “weakness”. The Modern poet in other words is creating a living “process”, a “destiny” – a *path*.

And finally through this conflict, the pure emerges as a monad, a “world within a world”.

... precisely in this [most material opposition], there the most infinite represents itself in the most tangible, in the most negative-positive and hyperbolic, that through the contrast of representation of the infinite, in its conflicting onward-striving towards the point and the meeting together in the point [Zusammentreffens im Punkt], the simultaneous interiority and differentiation of the harmoniously opposed living situated-toward-the-ground sentiment is positioned and at the same time becomes represented more clearly, more refined, more universally, as a particular [eigene] world according to form, as [a] world within the world, and thus as the voice [Stimme] of the eternal [directed back] to the eternal, by the free consciousness. (W, I, s. 874, ELT, p. 70)

The onward-striving process of the poetic spirit, through the free consciousness, becomes a particular voice, of the eternal directed back to itself. No longer a total image eclipsing the world in an act of hybris, but now only a particular voice generated in the temporal process of conflict.

But the poetic spirit here is still in the realm of the purely ideal. It is in a state of isolation, or in a state of “solitude” [Alleinseins]. This

state of solitude is an “empty infinity”, an “empty effortless shadow-play”. In the state of solitude, the “I” cannot recognize itself as a unity, cannot position itself in a Fichtian sense, without canceling itself. This was the mechanism of the sacrificial Greek dynamic, but because the Modern poetic spirit lacks a destiny this cancellation must be avoided. This is the importance of positioning this world in relationship to an outer sphere. It must now position itself in relation to a “sphere of influence”, where it “becomes a reality”, where it becomes “tangible in its infinity”. In other words, due to the condition of the Modern poet, the pure is here still at the level of form. Life in general, the subjective foundation, is still merely *ideal* and not yet *real*. The Modern poet must now effect a transition between the ideal process of his poetic spirit and the real. He must pass from the *spirit* to the *work*.

... it is necessary that the poetic spirit in its unity and harmonious progress also give itself an infinite perspective for its operation [Geschäfte], a unity, where in the harmonious progress and alternation everything goes forwards and backwards and through its uniform characteristic relationship to this unity [gain] not a merely objective connection, for the observer, [but] also gain [a] felt and tangible coherence and identity in the alternation of contrasts; and it is its last task, with this harmonious alternation to have a thread, a recollection, so that the spirit remain present never in one solitary moment, nor in the next solitary moment, but continue in one moment as in another and in the different tones. (W, I, s. 874-875, ELT, p. 72)

Life in general is here recorded into the work of art, the poem. The work gives it a “thread” [Faden] or continuity, it provides it with a “recollection” [Erinnerung]. This is different that the recollection involved in the Greek dynamic. There recollection unified the dis-integration of the poetic monad. Here, recollection gives a material continuity where fragments of tones and moods are stitched together within the medium of

language. This recollection prevents the poetic spirit from canceling itself in the state of solitude. Since the work is an external object, something separate from the poetic spirit, the poetic spirit must now “fixate” itself into the work.

However, since the [poetic spirit] cannot know the world through itself nor to itself, an external object is necessary ... so that consequently the individuality and its character now chosen, determined by the now chosen subject matter, can be recognized and fixated [festzuhalten] with freedom to both the pure individuality as well as to the other characters. (W, I, s. 876, ELT, p. 72)

This external object is the “thing-like” quality of the work of art.

When this is accomplished, we now achieve a “middle state” which corresponds with the divine. This state is half-way between the idealistic character of the Modern poet and the real, between the naive Greek and the experienced Modern, a middle state “between childhood and mature humanity”, so that it does not fall into the excesses of either. We achieve a state of “harmonious opposition” [Harmoniscentgegensetzung].

If we were following the Greek model, we would pass into this divine state by way of the *tragic moment*. The monadic finite world would conflict with the exterior real world and reveal itself as a deception, and as a result of its hybris, undergo a sacrificial dis-integration, leading to a harmonious divine state. As was discussed earlier, the Modern spirit cannot undergo this tragic moment. The “pure” does not emerge all at once as a blinding image, as a moment of hybris. With the Modern poetic spirit the conflict and opposition of tones yields only fragments of the divine entwined in a temporal process. While in the Greek dynamic the image exposed itself as a deception with respect to nature, here on the other hand, there is no longer any recoverable pure state of nature, and so everything is deception, unless it is “fixated” into the work.

And here we find another important difference with the Modern poetic spirit. The transition to this divine, middle state must be “continuous”, “conscious”, and carried out through “free choice”.

What everything depends on, then, is that the I remain not merely in reciprocal activity with its subjective nature, from which it cannot abstract without canceling itself [sich aufzuheben], but that it *with freedom choose an object from which it, if it wants, can abstract*, in order to be *adequately determined by it and determine it*. Herein rests the possibility that the I become recognizable in the harmoniously-opposed life as unity, and that the harmoniously-opposed as unity become recognizable in the I in pure, (poetic), individuality. The pure subjective life is led towards free individuality, towards unity and identity within itself only through the choice of its object. (W, I, s. 878, ELT, p. 73)

Position yourself *with free choice* in harmonious opposition with an outer sphere just as you are in *harmonious* opposition with yourself, by nature, but in an unrecognizable way, so long as you remain within yourself. (W, I, s. 879, ELT, p. 76)

As we read in Schiller, the Modern poet, the experienced adult, unlike the Greek-child ruled by necessity, is characterized by his “free choice”. The Modern poetic spirit is not time violating itself by the creation of an eternal representation, but representation trying to ground itself in time, and to create through its freedom a destiny for itself. The achievement of this “harmonious opposition” between his poetic individuality and this outer sphere will be his destiny.

Man’s destiny will be the achievement of this divine state which consists in his harmonious opposition to an outer sphere.



In this manner [man] reaches his destination [Bestimmung] which is - knowledge of the harmoniously-opposed within him, within his unity and individuality, and then again knowledge of his identity, his unity and individuality within the harmoniously-opposed. This is the true freedom of his Essence [Wesen]. (W, I, s. 880-881, ELT, p. 76)

This is what Hölderlin calls the “beautiful, sacred, divine, sentiment”. The Greeks called it “sophrosyne” in contrast to “hybris”.<sup>44</sup> It is the middle state between childhood and mature humanity, between “too objective and too subjective a state”, between not being able to abstract from nature and abstracting too much. It is the same stage achieved by means of the Kantian sublime, the same state achieved by the Greek poetic spirit after self-sacrificial dis-integration. But it is here achieved with the Modern poetic spirit only when it has through its “free choice”, positioned itself in relation to an outer sphere, as a unity within a larger unity, it only accomplishes this when it fixates itself in “language”. The spirit, Hölderlin says, “intuits” language.

Is not language like the cognition that was mentioned before and about which it was said that as a unity it contained the unified and vice versa? ...

Must not, for the one as well as the other, the most beautiful moment lie where there lies the proper *expression*, the most intellectual language, the most animated consciousness, the passage [Übergang] from a determined infinity to a more universal one? (W, I, s. 884, ELT, p. 79)

It is language which brings the process of the Modern poetic spirit – which in themselves constitute an empty infinity – and brings it down to earth from its solitary idealistic sphere, gives it life, gives it harmony and balance, thus achieving the middle state, the divine state. It is language that unifies conflict. When we are confronted with a *work* in the form

of the language of a poem, we naturally construct its sense into a unity.

Will not all judgment [Beurteilung] of language be reduced on itself, that one test it according to the most secure and possibly most nondeceptive characteristics [untruglichsten Kennzeichen], whether it is the language of an genuine, beautifully described sensation?

Just as cognition intuits language, language remembers cognition. (W, I, s. 884, ELT, p. 79)

Language, or the work also “remembers cognition” giving the process of the poetic spirit a “real”, “aorgic-sensual” element which it was missing. It also gives it a “temporal” continuity, connecting it into a “thread”, so the unity of conflicting moods is recorded in language. When the reader is confronted with the poem, he/she naturally reconstructs its unity “according to its most secure and possibly most nondeceptive characteristics”, and so reproduces the unity of conflicting moods. In this way the idealistic life of the poetic spirit become a real life in the poem, and the poetic spirit reproduces itself.

This allows for the work to replicate the destiny of the poetic spirit.

... hence if this appears to be the course and the destination of man in general, then the very same thing is the course and the destination all and any poesy; and just as on any stage of development where man, having emerged from originary childhood, has struggled-upwards in opposed attempts to the highest form, to the pure resonance of the first life and *so* feels himself as infinite spirit in the infinite life, just as man first properly enters life and intuits his effect and his destination on this stage of development, so the poet intuits, on that stage where he too, out of a originary sensation, has struggled-upward in opposed attempts to the tone, to the highest, pure form of the same sensation, and where he sees himself as wholly conceived in his whole inner and

outer life by that tone, at this stage he intuits his language and along with it the proper perfection [Vollendung] for the present as well as for all poesy. (W, I, s. 886-887, ELT, p. 81)

It is the “course and destination” [der Gang und der Bestimmung] of “man in general” to progress from his childhood, through “opposed attempts” and conflict, to his adulthood. From sensuality to form, from the aorgic to the organic, until he has reached the mature stage of development. It is at this mature stage that he has enough experience to be able to see the impact of his destiny. With the Greeks such a reflection was too early, it was a hybris, but with the adult, the vision of his own destiny is natural, and the divine goal of his destiny. This is also the course and destination of the poem, to work from the “originary sensation”, “struggling-upwards” through the conflict of opposed tones, to the pure tone, where his inner and outer life are in harmonious opposition, and language is intuited in order to record that pure tone.

But language also has the effect of creating destiny. In the course and destination of man in general to reach the level of the reflection of his own destiny, man also paid the price of being severed from his unity with nature. Now when man records the poem, which represents a destiny, into language, he constructs a *path* connecting reflection with nature. He gives an account of his drift from nature, he creates a connection of his condition with nature. The work of art creates a destiny, it cuts a path which in creating a direction, allows nature to be seen. Nature cannot be seen in its purity or totality, it only shows itself when such a path is cut through it. by way of language.

... nature and art, as he has come to know and see them, *speak* not until there exists a language for *him*, that is, not until what is now unknown and unnamed in his world becomes known and noted for him precisely through having been compared and found in accordance with his mood. (W, I, s. 887, ELT, p. 81)

The divine only shows itself according to finite configurations “founded” by the poet. There no longer is a complete *image* capturing the infinite, a *moment* of hybris. Here, the infinite expresses itself in a *temporal process*. Hölderlin uses the strange expression “negatively united in the stand-still of movement” (s. 888, p. 82). That is, movement itself now becomes a connecting, unifying medium.

Since the work is constructed through the use of subject matter from the poet’s world which is shared by the world of the observer, the observer is already intertwined in the destiny of the work.

... out of this world he [the poet] took the subject matter in order to designate the tones of his spirit, to call forth from this mood, through this related sign, the towards-the-ground-situated-life, that he also, insofar as he names for me this sign, borrows the subject matter from my world, arranges for me to carry over this subject matter into the sign where... insofar as he makes himself understandable and comprehensible, [he moves] away from the lifeless, immaterial... (W, I, s. 888, ELT, p. 82)

The poet creates a path for the observer. It is language, that is the possibility of being read, that gives the poem life, that creates a destiny and gives this destiny a life. The divine is exposed in a temporal process recorded in language.

In summary, in distinction to the Greek poetic spirit which captures the divine by way of the hybris and dis-integration of the eternal moment, the Modern poetic spirit attempts to ground the conflict of its representations in *life*, in *temporality itself*. This process is recorded in the *language* of the poem which *remembers* the cognitions of the poetic spirit, and allows this particular *path* to be *followed* by the reader. The pure emerges by way of its interaction with the impure, the infinite only shows itself in the *particular process*, the *particular path*. No longer in a *unified image* but in *movement*, in *life*, in *flow*.

## The Spirit of the Stream

Both of Hölderlin's aesthetic theories are expressed in his *Pindar Fragments*. Here, translations of Pindar are interspersed with short commentaries. There are nine translations with corresponding commentaries. The nine sections take the form of three triads. I provide here the entire piece.<sup>45</sup>

### Pindar Fragments

#### 1) *Unfaithfulness of Wisdom*

O child, whom, to Pontus' wild game's hide  
The crag-loving, the mind [Gemüt]  
Hangs the most, every town joins you,  
in praising the present  
Willingly,  
And think otherwise in another time.

Capacity of the solitary school for the world. The guiltlessness [Unschuldige] of pure knowing [Wissens] as the soul of intelligence [Klugheit]. For intelligence is the art of remaining faithful under various circumstances; and knowing, of being certain in understanding [Verstande], notwithstanding positive errors. If Understanding be exercised intensely, it will attain its strength, even in diffuseness [Zerstreuten]; insofar as it easily recognizes what is foreign [Fremde] by means of its own polished acuity, and is therefore not easily confused in unknown situations.

Thus Jason, a pupil of the Centaur, steps before Pelias:

I believe that I possess  
Chirion's teaching. From the grotto, namely, I come,  
By Chariclo and Philyra, where the  
Centaur's daughters nurtured me,  
The sacred ones; twenty years, indeed,

I dwelt, and never a foul deed  
Nor such a word did I address  
To them, and have now come home  
To restore the rule of my father.

## 2) *Of Truth*

Beginning of great virtue, Queen Truth,  
May you not trip up  
My thinking on harsh falsehood.

Fear before the truth from taking pleasure in it. Namely, the first living comprehension [Auffassen] of truth in a living sense, is, like all pure feeling, exposed to confusions; so that one does not err, through one's own fault, nor through a disturbance, but because of the higher object, for which, relatively, the sense [Sinn] is too weak.

## 3) *Of Rest*

The public realm, that once a citizen  
In quiet weather has grasped,  
He should explore  
Of great-manly rest the holy light,  
And the uproar in his breast,  
From the ground, hinders, its winds; for he makes poor  
And is a fiend to teachers of children.

Before the laws, of great-manly rest the holy light, can be explored by someone, a law-giver or a prince, in the *more rapacious* or *more constant* fate of a fatherland and according to the way in which the receptivity of the people is constituted, must grasp the character of that fate [Schicksals], the *more kingly* or

*more total* element in the affairs of men, at an untouched time, *more usurpatorially*, as with the Greek sons of Nature, or *with more experience*, as with men of learning. Then, the laws become the means to hold fast to that destiny [Schicksal] in its untouched state. What holds for a prince originally, holds good, as imitation [Nachahmung], for the more essential citizen.

#### 4) *Of the Dolphin*

He who in the waveless depths of the sea by flutes  
Was moved, so lovingly, by the song.

The song of nature, in the weather of the muses, when the clouds hang like flakes over the blossoms, and over the melting of golden flowers. At this time, every creature gives its own note, its loyalty, the way in which in itself it hangs together. Then, only the difference between species [Arten] makes a division in nature, so that everything is therefore more song and pure voice than accent of need, or, on the other side, language.

It is the waveless sea, where the ready fish feels the pipe of the Tritons, the echo of growth in the soft plants of the water.

#### 5) *The Highest*

The Law  
Of everyone the King, mortals and  
Immortals; which is just why  
It mightily guides  
The rightest right with the very highest hand.

The immediate, in the strict sense, is impossible for mortals, as it is for the immortals; a God must distinguish different worlds, according to his nature, since heavenly goodness, because of itself,

must be sacred, unalloyed. Man, as a knowing creature, must also distinguish different worlds, because cognition [Erkenntnis] is only possible through opposition [Entgegengesetzen]. For this reason, the immediate is, in the strict sense, impossible for mortals, as for immortals.

Strict mediacy, however, is the law.

And for this reason, it wields the rightest right with the very highest hand.

Breeding, insofar as it is the form in which man and God meet; the law of the church and state; and the inherited statures (the holiness of God; and for man the possibility of knowledge, of an explanation): these wield mightily the rightest right with the very highest hand. More strictly than art, they hold fast the living affairs in which, with time, a people has encountered itself and continues so to encounter. *King* here means the superlative, which is only the sign for the highest ground of knowing, not for the highest power.

## 6) *Age*

Who with right and holiness  
Passes his life,  
Sweetly nourishing the heart,  
Long life making,  
Him Hope shall accompany, who  
Most of all for mortals  
Their flexible opinion rules.

One of the most beautiful images of life, the way in which guiltless custom preserves the living heart, from which hope comes; that then gives the bloom to simplicity, with its manifold attempts [Versuchen], making sense flexible and life thus long, with its hastening leisure.



7) *The Infinite*

Whether I of Right the wall,  
The high one, or crooked deception  
Will ascend, and so me myself  
Circumscribing, will live  
Myself out; over this  
Have I equivocal a  
Mind [Gemüt], exactly to speak.

One of the wise man's jokes, and the riddle could hardly be solved. For the wavering and struggling between right and intelligence [Klugheit] only resolves itself in a continuous relation. "I have an equivocal mind, exactly to speak it." That I may then find out the connection [Zusammenhang] between right and intelligence, which must not be ascribed to them themselves, but to a third, through which they hang together [zusammenhangen] infinitely (exactly) – that's why I have an equivocal mind.

8) *The Sanctuaries* [Die Asyle]

At first did  
They the well-advising Themis,  
The heavenly ones, on golden steeds, beside  
The ocean salt,  
The Times, to the ladder,  
Towards the holy one, lead, of Olympus, to  
The glittering return,  
The rescuer's ancient daughter,  
Of Zeus, to be,  
But she  
To the golden-bound, the goodly one,  
To the glittering-fructified places of rest gave birth.

How man positions himself, a son of Themis, when, out of a sense for the perfect, his spirit [Geist], on earth and in heaven, found no rest, until meeting in destiny, on the track of ancient breeding, God and man recognize one another again, and in the remembrance [Erinnerung] of original need man is happy *there, where he can hold himself.*

Themis, the order-loving one, did to the *sanctuaries of mankind*, the still places of rest, give birth, which nothing Foreign [Fremdes] can harm, because in them the working and life of nature concentrated itself, and a presentiment around them, as if in remembrance, which experiences exactly what they themselves did once experience.

#### 9) *The Enliveners* [Das Belebende]

The man-conqueror: after  
The Centaurs learnt  
The power  
Of the honey-sweet wine, suddenly they thrust  
The white milk with their hands, the table away, from  
themselves  
And drinking out of silver horns  
Intoxicated themselves.

The concept of the Centaur is probably that of the spirit of a stream [Geistes eines Stromes], insofar as it forms a course and a boundary [Bahn und Grenze], with violence, on the originally pathless and upwards growing earth.

His image [Bild] therefore occurs at places in nature, where the shore is rich in rocks and grottoes, *especially at places where originally the stream left the mountain chain and had to tear diagonally through its direction.*

Hence Centaurs were also originally teachers of natural philosophy, because nature can best be examined from this point of view.

In regions such as this, the stream had originally to wander aimlessly [umirren] before it could tear out a course. By this means, it formed [bildeten], as beside ponds, damp meadows, and caves in the earth for suckling creatures, whilst meanwhile the Centaur was a wild herdsman, like the Odyssean Cyclops. The waters longingly sought their direction [die Gewässer suchten sehndend ihre Richtung]. But the more firmly the dry land took shape upon the banks and secured its direction [fester bildete un Richtung] by means of the firmly rooting trees, by bushes and grape-vines, the more the stream also, which took its motion from the shape [Gestalt] of the bank, had to gain its direction, until, forced on from its source, it broke through at a point where the mountains that enclosed it were more loosely connected.

Thus the Centaurs *learnt the power of the honey-sweet wine*, they took their motion and direction from the firmly formed banks, so rich in trees, and hurled *the white milk and the table away with their hands*. The fashioned wave drove away the calm of the pond. The way of life on the shore also changed. The attack on the wood with the storms and the secure princes of the forest aroused the leisurely life on the heath, the stagnating water was thrust back from the steeper shore until *it grew arms*, and so with a direction of its own, *drinking spontaneously from silver horns*, it made a path [Bahn], took on a destination [Bestimmung].

The songs of Ossian especially are true Centaurian songs, sung with the spirit of the stream, and as if by the Greek Chiron, who also taught Achilles to play the lyre [Saitenspiel].

The first three express what we have already discussed, the conflict between the finite work of art and the intellectual image of the world, the “world of all worlds” which exposes the finite image as a deception. So #1, entitled “The Unfaithfulness of Wisdom”, expresses the finite work of art or finite wisdom. #2, “Of Truth”, expresses the world of all worlds or *truth*, which always exceeds the finite image of it, and #3, “Of Rest”, expresses the manner in which the tension between the two is resolved

for both the Greek and Modern poet. The “laws” refer to that element in the Greek poetic spirit which gives order and form to the world. Or to that element in the Modern poetic spirit where the work of art creates its own laws. The law is the manner in which the finite and the infinite, the particular and the absolute is bridged. It is the manner through which both Greek and Modern mortals commune with the immortal.

The next three sections follow a descending hierarchy. It is based upon the creation myths of Hesiod as was Hölderlin’s poem “Nature and Art”. In this case there is a very strong Neoplatonic element. #4 or “On the Dolphin” would express the dark source, that which is beyond all qualification. It is the immediate, the “waveless sea”. #5, even though it is called “The Highest” would represent the next stage in the descending hierarchy (“it is only the highest ground of knowing, not the highest power”). This contradiction represents the conflict of Kronos and Zeus or, in the latinized version, Saturn and Jupiter. Plotinus develops a hierarchy which descends from “The One”, to “Nous”, and then to the “World Soul”. He compares this to the descending hierarchy of Hesiod in the Theogeny which moves from Ouranos, to Kronos, and then to Zeus. If Hölderlin is following this progression closely the “Dolphin” would correspond to Kronos, Saturn, or “Nous”. The “Highest” would correspond to Zeus, Jupiter, or “World Soul”. This is the level of law, temporality, mediacy.<sup>46</sup> #6 is simply called “Age”. It is the lowest level of this descending hierarchy. It represents “custom” or what Hölderlin will elsewhere call “culture” or “the national” (“the national” is a concept which has its source in Herder).<sup>47</sup> It is the manner in which law is carried out in reality, and the level of the distinction between Greek and Modern.

The last triad concerns the strivings of art. #7 or “The Infinite”, expresses the ambiguous position of art. The tension between on one hand, intelligence/cleverness [Klugheit], or the ability to say something, and on the other hand, the “right” to say it. To speak would be only to capture something in a particular fragmented manner. Do we speak or do we keep silent? Right and intelligence find their connection in a third, that is #8, “The Sanctuaries”, which sees the work of art as a sanctuary. In

other words, the intensity of the conflict in #7, which characterizes nature, finds a place for itself, a sanctuary or place of rest. It is an *in-between* place where God and man can again recognize one another, where one's destiny can be seen. This place of conflict, this sanctuary, is the work of art. Now the tension between art as a kind of enigma in #7, and art as a sanctuary in #8, gives rise to art as a kind of motion.

So #9, or "*The Life-Giver*" describes the process of art itself. The destiny of art and the artistic process is compared to the "Centaur" or the "spirit of the stream". God, Nature, the Divine, does not expose itself as it is in itself, it is only exposed in the particular path, whether it be the destiny of man (the violent one), or in the destiny created through the work of art. The spirit of the stream represents these destinies which expose the divine. When a stream cuts across a mountain chain, it exposes the rock strata which would normally lie hidden from view. The *particular path* exposes *particular truths*. There is a very important concept developed here which is of great concern to us, that is, the concept of *directionality*. Hölderlin points out that as the stream searches for its own direction, nature "secures" this direction, by the "dry banks", "by means of the firmly rooted trees, by bushes and grape-vines". As a path is *freely* chosen, nature follows, turning that choice into *necessity*, into *nature*.

We can appreciate this dynamic of directionality even more by looking at the field of Biology which concerns itself with evolutionary theory, ideas involving "time's arrow" and "irreversibility" (usually in relationship with the second law of thermodynamics). Evolution occurs in a sequence of stages. For instance: the creation of amino acids, the creation of RNA from various cycles of amino acids, the encapsulation of RNA systems within cell walls, the development of cell structures, the development of multi-cellular organisms, etc. As each stage comes into existence it eliminates certain possibilities and creates new possibilities. If looked at all at once it seems almost miraculous for such a complex organism as a human being to develop out of the primal soup. But if looked at as a sequence of directional stages, it is much easier to comprehend. Once an amino acid has developed it is not much a statistical leap to

achieve the development of RNA, once RNA has developed, it is not much of a leap to the development of the life of the cell, once a fin has developed it is not much of a leap to the development of a limb, and so on.

The destiny of man in general is a gradual drifting from its source. And with this concept of directionality, we now see how radical this drifting is. We move from the childhood of man to adulthood. We move from Greek to Modern humanity. The childhood of man is ruled by the necessity of nature. The stream here is controlled by the firmness of its banks. But the more the stream drifts from its source, the more it grows in power. It grows into a river, it gains freedom, gains direction, and breaks free of the mountain chain and the necessity of nature. It gains the power to create the landscape, to alter actuality and possibility, to create nature itself. As we move forward, reality itself changes.

The adult state of Modern man is a state of *cultural entrenchment*. The pure state is now unrecoverable. Freedom has now overwhelmed the necessity of nature. Along the flood plain of large rivers grow grapes, reflecting the culture which has developed along the river. The Centaurs, who are the spirit of the stream, reject the leisurely, stagnated, calm, life of cultural entrenchment. New streams – tributaries – are thrust out from the placid river, extending back towards the mountains, back towards wilder nature and the source. These new paths or destinies represent the work of art. We strive to unite with nature not through a leap but through the individual path. As we saw in “On the Processes of the Poetic Spirit”, the destiny of art follows the destiny of man in general. Here we can now see that it repeats this destiny in opposing directions. The destiny of man follows the progression from his primordial source, through his childhood, to his adulthood where he has lost touch with nature, and where he is most active in shaping nature. The destiny of the work of art operates in the opposite direction. It begins from man’s adulthood and distance from nature and tries to move towards the divine. I will stop short of saying *back* towards the divine. As we deal with some of Hölderlin’s other hymns in the next chapter, we will see how complex this question of *directionality* becomes, or *leads*.

We see this whole process very clearly in one of Hölderlin's most famous late hymns "The Rhein".<sup>48</sup>

### The Rhein

- 1 In the dark ivy I sat, at the gate  
Of the forest, even, there the golden noon  
Visited the spring, coming  
Down the steps of the Alps  
Which for me is called the godly-built  
The castle of the heavenly  
After the old meaning, where but  
Many resolved secrets  
Still reach man; from there  
I perceived without expectation  
A destiny, for scarcely still  
Was my soul in the warm shade  
Conversing with itself [than it began]  
Curving toward Italy  
And beyond to the coasts of Morea.
  
- 2 But now, within mountains  
Deep under silver peaks  
And joyous green  
Where the forest shudders  
And rock heads peer over one another  
At him, day-long, there  
In the coldest abyss I heard  
Wailing for release  
The youth, it hears him, as he rages  
And accuses his mother earth  
And the thunderer who begot him.  
Pitying the parents, still  
Mortals flee from the place  
Because it was terrible, there lightless

In fetters he wallows,  
The ragings of the half-god.

- 3 The voice was of the most noble river  
The freeborn Rhein,  
With other hopes he departs from his  
Brothers, Ticino and Rhodanus  
Above, and wanders, and with impatience  
His royal soul drives him towards Asia.  
Still unintelligible is  
The wish for a destiny.  
Yet the blindest  
Are the sons of God. For man knows  
His house and the animal  
Where it should build, still to each is  
Given the defect of the inexperienced soul  
That they know not where to go.
- 4 A riddle is the pure source  
The song may hardly reveal it. For  
As you begin, you will remain  
And many tribulations also come,  
And rearing, mostly  
Is performed by the earth,  
And the ray of light, that  
Meets the newborn.  
But where is someone  
Who can remain free  
All his life long, and alone  
Fulfill his hearts wishes, born  
From heights as favorable, as the Rhein's  
From a womb as holy and  
With such fortune as that one?



5 That's why his word is a shout of joy  
He doesn't whine like other infants  
Bound in their diapers,  
For where the banks at first  
Slither to his sides, coiling,  
And thirstily twist him around  
Carelessly, pulling,  
Probably desiring to guard him  
In its own teeth, laughing he  
Rips apart these snakes and plunges  
With the booty in haste.  
If a greater one than he doesn't tame him  
Or make him grow, like a lightning bolt  
He must split the earth, and as if enchanted  
The forests flee after him,  
And the mountains slump together.

6 A God however will spare his sons  
From hasty life, and smiles  
When unabstinent, but checked  
By the holy Alps,  
The river rages up at him  
From the deep as that one does.  
From such a furnace then  
All pure things are forged  
And beauty comes thereafter,  
After he leaves the mountains  
Quietly wandering through German lands  
Content, and silences his longings  
In good commerce, cultivating the land,  
Father Rhein feeds his dear children  
In towns which he founded.

7 Still never, never he forgets  
For sooner shall man's dwelling pass away,  
And his rules, and the day of man  
Dis-appear, than such a one  
Forget his origin  
And the pure voice of his youth.  
Who was it, that first  
Corrupted the ties of love  
And made fetters of them?  
Then the defiant ones  
Made a mockery of their own rights  
And surely of the heavenly fires  
When they despised the mortal paths,  
Chose boldness  
And strove to be like the Gods.

8 But the Gods have enough  
Immortality of their own,  
And if the heavenly need anything,  
Then it is heroes and men,  
And otherwise mortals. For since  
The most spiritual feel nothing themselves,  
They must, if it is  
Permitted to speak  
In such a way, in God's name  
Feel through the participation of another,  
Him they need; however its judgment  
Is that his house  
Break apart and he curse  
Who he loves most as his enemy  
And bury his father and child  
Under the rubble,  
If one would to be like them and not  
Tolerate inequality, the dreamer.

- 9 Therefore happy is he who found  
A well-directed destiny,  
Where still the wandering  
And sweet sufferings are remembered like  
Whispers on a secure shore,  
That from here to there gladly  
He may see to the limits  
Of his abode which God  
Has drawn for him at his birth.  
Then he rests, spiritually-directed,  
For everything he wills,  
The heavenly, surrounds him,  
Effortlessly, smiling  
Now, here he rests, the bold one.
- 10 Demi-Gods I'm thinking of now  
And I must know them, these dear ones,  
For often their lives have so  
Moved my longing breast,  
Yet to one like you Rousseau  
[with his] indomitable soul [so]  
Strongly persevering,  
And secure sense,  
And the sweet talent to hear,  
To speak so, that he from holy plenitude,  
Like the winegod, foolish godly  
And lawlessly makes the language of the purest  
Intelligible to the good, but with right  
Strikes the attentionless with blindness  
The desecrating servant, how do I name the stranger?
- 11 The sons of the earth are, like their mother,  
All-loving, so they, the lucky, also  
Effortlessly receive everything.  
Therefore it also surprises

And shocks the mortal man,  
When he considers the heaven that  
He with loving arms  
Once heaped upon his shoulders  
And the burden of joy;  
After it appeared to him often the best,  
Nearly to be completely forgotten there,  
Where the ray does not burn,  
To be in the shade of the forest  
By Lake Bienne among the fresh greenness,  
And unaccustomed to the sounds,  
To learn, like beginners,  
Among the Nightingales.

12 And it is magnificent then from holy sleep to  
Stand, and from the cool forest to  
Wake to the evening now  
And meet the milder light,  
When he who built the mountains  
And delineated the courses of streams,  
Afterwards smiling, who also  
Drives man's busy lives,  
The othe-poor, like sails  
With his breath,  
Also rests, and now finds the creator  
Of the pupil more good than evil,  
Towards today's earth the day sets.

13 Then Men and Gods celebrate their engagement  
All living things celebrate,  
And equal  
For a while are the destinies.  
And fugitives seek a rest house  
And the brave, sweet slumber,  
But the lovers

Are, what they are, they are  
At home, where the flower enjoys  
Innocuous heat and the spirit rustles  
Around the gloomy trees but the unreconciled  
Are transformed and hurry  
To extend their hand to one another,  
Before the friendly light  
Goes down and night comes.

14 Yet for some this  
Quickly hurries by, others  
Retain it longer.  
The eternal God is  
Always full of life; but unto death  
Can a man also  
Still hold in memory the best,  
And then he has experienced the highest.  
Only each one has his measure.  
For it is difficult to bear  
Misfortune, but more difficult to bear fortune.  
However one wise one  
At the banquet was able  
From midday till midnight  
And until the brightness of morning,  
To remain lucid.

15 To you on the hot paths under pines or  
Hidden in the dark of the oak woods  
In the sword God may appear my Sinklair,  
Or in the clouds, you'll know him, there you'll know  
The good power, and the master's smile  
Is never concealed from you,  
By day when  
The living appears  
Feverish and enchained,

Or by night, when all diffuses,  
Is orderless, and there returns  
Primeval chaos.

It would be foolish to pretend to exhaust the poetic and philosophical resonances of this poem. I merely wish to show the presence of an aesthetic theory (or theories) within it. I will merely float down the river gesturing to certain aspects. In the first six strophes we can see the manner in which the destiny of *man in general* is again repeated by way of the concept of the spirit of the river or stream. Again we have a progression from the divine source, through childhood and finally to adulthood. The river remains the same in one sense, but it changes as it progresses in time and destination, as it moves further and further from its divine source. The river is the destiny of man in general.

The first seven strophes run with this analogy.

#1 The sun, the golden noon, visiting the spring is the divine source. The narrator is shielded in the dark ivy – a secure place – watching this event. His soul begins to *take a direction* just as the water rising in the spring must take a direction.

#2 The stream now grows and begins to take on a *voice of its own* within the majesty of nature, its wailing and raging. It begins to take on an identity in opposition to nature.

#3 The stream now achieves a fully developed *identity* – the Rhein – but not yet a fully developed destiny (the Rhein in its headwaters changes direction from east to north, it seems to be wandering aimlessly).

#4 The full destiny of the stream is already present in its source, from the beginning. Consider that in the geomorphic development of any river, a deflection caused by a small rock in its youth can completely alter the shape of the river in its old age. As you begin so you will remain. This is the concept of directionality already discussed. The earth rears the stream, it represents the power and necessity of nature. Remember that the child and the Greek are still bound by the necessity of nature.

#5 The stream slowly begins to gain power over the necessity of nature. But at this stage it is still a battle. The banks twist the stream around but the stream breaks loose, plunging over a waterfall, or splitting the earth. The early course of the stream – and man’s destiny – is a struggle between necessity and freedom.

#6 The stream is now a river. Still checked by the mountains – or necessity – it yet rages up at the gods. This is the dangerous, defiant aspect of man which leads him to hybris against nature and the gods. Yet God smiles at this defiance; in a way, it is a natural process of the river, and a natural stage in man’s destiny. Beauty and freedom finally come when the river gains enough power to *break free* of the mountains.

In strophes 7-10 we find different stages in man’s relationship to the divine as his destiny drifts further from its source.

#7 The river represents a *continuity* and so cannot forget its origin, its destiny. Yet there are those who do destroy these ties with their origin by trying to capture their origin directly, turning these ties of love into fetters. They try to stand outside the mortal paths and become like the gods.

#8 But the gods have enough immortality of their own. Occasionally they do use mortals to feel for them since they cannot do this themselves, but when the gods use mortals in such a way, they destroy them as the demi-gods in the myths of Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and Greek drama attest. We will encounter the scattered remains of the demi-gods in the next chapter in Hölderlin’s hymn “Mnemosyne”.

#9 Happiness comes as the result of finding a well directed path of one’s own where all of one’s wanderings are remembered in a place of rest, on a secure shore, where one’s destiny is entirely present to oneself. This is the divine state, it is what Hölderlin called in the *Pindar Fragments*, art as “sanctuary”.

#10 Rousseau is now set forth as the representative of artistic genius, a Modern demi-god, with his secure sense, and ability to listen (to nature) and to speak (to man). The receptive ones are here contrasted to the unreceptive, the desecrating servants.

#11 But man realizes that the divine cannot be captured all at once. It cannot with loving arms be heaped upon the shoulders, one cannot stand beneath the burning rays of the noonday sun. The direct rays of the sun represent the tragic moment of the highest opposition. In his “Notes to Antigone”, Hölderlin writes:

The boldest moment of a day’s course or work of art is, where the spirit of time and nature, the heavenly, which seizes man, and the object in which he is interested, stand in the wildest opposition, because the sensuous object reaches only half way, *but the spirit awakens most where the second half begins*. At this moment man has to *sustain himself the most [am meisten festhalten]*, for that reason he also stands the most exposed in his character. (NA, pp. 205-206)<sup>49</sup>

The reason that Modern man cannot stand the highest intensity of conflict, why he cannot stand directly beneath the noon-day sun, is that he is already too fire-like in his nature (too Apollinian) and he lacks the naiveté to pass into the sacrificial resolution. Now that the tragic dissolution is unavailable to him, man must protect himself from the intensity arising from the highest opposition, symbolized by the direct rays of the sun. Now it appears best not to reach *directly* for the divine but to keep to the mortal paths and to reach the divine through the process of life, along the shady paths, at the pace of the *natural processes*. Nature cannot be recovered purely but only in fragments corresponding to the particularity of individual paths. Rousseau represents this turning from the direct rays of the sun towards these shady paths, from demi-god to mortal, exemplified in his work *On the Reveries of the Solitary Walker*.<sup>50</sup> There is a shift from the intense joy of a direct communion with the divine, to the calm joy of the individual moment. Here we see the transition from the Greek to the Modern aesthetic. This is also much like Hyperion’s return to nature after his failure to achieve a Schillerian reconciliation of man and nature.



#12 This state of milder light is where one must now search for the divine. Here, in twilight, the divine sun descends down to meet the horizon and man's earth. God descends at the end of the day to meet man.<sup>51</sup>

Strophes 13-15 now represent the stage of equilibrium of form and content.

#13 At this stage men and gods are reconciled, destinies are all equal, for all destinies are recognized for what they are: various paths of destination of man from his source.

#14 Night is about to come. Every destination ends in death, and each one has his own measure. Some achieve the divine, some are destroyed by such good fortune, some do not reach it at all before night or death comes. The river also ends in the ocean, the ocean is primeval chaos. This is a kind of *night* towards which the destiny of man in general moves. This night also reflects the age when the gods have fled. In the process of the river, it naturally keeps moving increasingly farther away from the divine source. Man's destiny is moving farther from god's light and gradually entering a state of darkness. The function of poetry now is less a matter of exposing the divine, but more an attempt to merely remember and record the paths along which man is drifting from the divine source, until a time comes, a new morning, when these maps can be used to retrace a way back. Hence the allusion to Socrates, one wise one at the banquet was able from midday till midnight and until morning to remain lucid. In another late hymn, "Andenken", Hölderlin says: "the poet establishes what remains". At times this is the poet's only function. We will engage these dimension more in the next chapter.

#15 True reconciliation now involves turning away from the *whole* and turning towards the *particular*. Hölderlin exhorts his friend Sinklair to stick to the mortal paths, to the paths through the shade of the forest, through nature, in his search for the divine. In this way he will not see it directly but recognize it in particular things. Somewhere between day when all is feverish and shackled, and night when primeval chaos returns.

In summary we can say here that we can no longer be like the Greek demi-gods and try to capture the divine directly. For us Moderns it is too *blinding*. We must now meet the divine where both Gods and mortals find their rest, at the pace of the natural processes and in the *milder light* of the work of art. We can construct another table to show this shift.

GREEK	MODERN
Demi-God	Modern Poet
capture divine directly, sacrificially.	turn away from direct contact with divine, turn towards natural process
circular dynamic	directional dynamic

We can also boldly point out here that this transition represents the rejection of the *outside*, the rejection of the *Other* as a locus of reconciliation. We no longer have a sacrificial access to such a pure place. The whole concept of the path disrupts such a dynamic. We will see in the next chapter how this begins to erode the strategies of deconstruction and post Modernism.

## The Place of Theory

Hölderlin wrote a marginal note which refers to his earliest version of “The Rhein”. It stands in the upper margin of the first page and is underlined by the poet. It reads:

The law of this hymn is: the first two parts [strophes 1-6] are opposed in form through progress and regress but the same in content, in the following two [parts, strophes 7-12] the form is the same but the content is opposed, the last [part, strophes 13-15] is wholly reconciled [ausgleicht] through metaphor. (W, I, s. 1062)

Notice that Hölderlin is here following the Schillerian prescription for the balancing the naive and sentimental.

Certainly the theory expressed in the note is not completely insignificant, but the poem is able to stand on its own without such a marginal note. The place of theory outside of Hölderlin's poetry seems to be declining. Let's remember that the poem or the work of art has a transformative function. It creates a destiny in reverse, a path back to the source for the reader. The poem is by its very essence something theoretical. Everything necessary to this transformation must be present in the poem. So the poem must be its own theory, it must create its own ground, principles, and direction.

So the theory contained in the marginal note is *already* present to the receptive reader. The conflict of tones or moods in the poem is merely a conflict of perspectives; the same path or destiny seen from different angles. Reconciliation occurs when the reader sees the harmoniously opposed within himself and sees himself within the harmoniously opposed, as a unity harmoniously opposed to a larger unity, and does not see himself from merely one perspective. This alternation is important in order that the reader not only see the destiny of man in general in the poem but is also able to see himself as a part of that destiny. But yet we do not need an external note to explain this. We no longer find any notes appended to any other of Hölderlin's great late hymns. All the theory which is needed to enable us to come to terms with destiny and the divine are generated by the poem itself. And so we see here that theory, outside of the work, is becoming more and more superfluous.

So we notice an evolution not only with respect to theory in Hölderlin's writings but also in the place of theory. The theory of the work gradually begins to merge with the work itself. In the prefaces of the versions of *Hyperion* and also in the *Homburg essays* theory was more or less self-contained. In the *Pindar Fragments* we arrive at a stage where theory becomes entwined into the work. Now with his later poetry it becomes identical with the work itself. Theory becomes bound up with the destiny of the work. Each work represents its own process, its own path, its own material thread of recollection, its own resonance (or lack of resonance) with the divine, and its own variation on what he had

previously developed as the Modern aesthetic theory. No philosophical reading can stand outside of the destiny of the work.

## **Greek and Modern?**

We have seen Hölderlin appropriating Schiller's distinction between the naive and the sentimental as the Greek and the Modern-Hesperian. Schiller recognized (as did Schelling, and Peter Szondi after him) that the naive is the naive only in relation to the sentimental. This leads one to question the validity of the distinction between the Greek and Modern, and whether Hölderlin is justified in creating a separate aesthetic theory for each. We might ask if the Greek sacrificial theory is merely a projection; the ideal of the Modern poet. We might ask if even the systematic philosophies of Kant and the German Idealists are the dreams of the Modern mourning his detachment from nature.

Yet the distinction between Greek and Modern is not something illegitimized by its illusory character. Likewise the relationship need not be something real (whether symmetrical as in Szondi, or asymmetrical as in Warminski). Both are understood only through one another. To repeat the words of Rousseau, it is a state "which perhaps never existed ... yet about which it is necessary to have accurate notions in order to judge properly our own present state". One need only to look at the function of the Modern poem for Hölderlin. The poem itself is like a river. It is a temporal process of drift away from its source. And all of the elements within this drift are efforts to orient oneself and navigate in the process of this drift. Both natural objects and ideal events of transcendence, both Greek and Modern elements are alternated and embedded in the motion of the poem. This interweaving of the Greek and Modern elements can be seen in the seeming ambiguity of the importance of Pindar for Hölderlin's Modern "Hesperian" poetry.

# THE PATH AND THE ABYSS

Since we are concerned here more with a way of being  
Than with a platter served up before our eyes,  
Speech is more suitable than paint  
Which will never do.

(Francis Ponge, *The Pré*)

According to the coordinates which we have been examining, this chapter would represent the moment of highest hostility of the confrontation between Hölderlin and Adorno. Here, I will examine Adorno's reading of Hölderlin's late poetry expressed in his essay "Parataxis". As we have seen, Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* follows Hölderlin's Greek model of the work of art. Adorno's reading of Hölderlin follows the aesthetics expressed in his *Aesthetic Theory*. So Adorno reads Hölderlin's Modern poetry according to the Greek model of the work of art. Yet the purpose of examining these tensions is not to merely expose a mis-reading. These tensions also expose elements within the thinking of both writers which might remain hidden from view. Further, I wish to show how the difference between Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Hölderlin and Adorno's interpretation underlie the differences in their philosophies in general. In cultivating the tensions between Benjamin and Adorno we discover elements normally hidden by the common tendency to see continuities between their philosophies.

The fruits of the labor of this dissertation are produced by the cultivation of these tensions. It is out of these tensions that its own voice begins to emerge.

## Parataxis

Not all works of art are created equal. At least for Adorno. We have seen the manner which he *puts the work of art to work* in his *Aesthetic Theory*, to further the ends which he described in *Negative Dialectics*. This is because some works of art express the *beauty of nature* better than other works of art. Since the *beauty of nature* can best be expressed through dissonance, atonality, and the self-critique of illusion, then those works of art which are most in control of this dialectic, most critical of their own illusion, are of more use to Adorno. They would be *good* works of art. The alternative would be *bad* works of art which do not critique their own illusory power and so perpetuate entrenched ideologies and nature-dominating rationality. Hölderlin, for Adorno, is a poet who understands the sacrificial process of art and is in control of it. Hölderlin's *good art explodes the illusion* of the work of art, and Adorno stands back and watches.

Adorno's interpretation of Hölderlin's late poetry in his 1963 essay "Parataxis" follows the aesthetics we saw established in his work *Aesthetic Theory*. It is a reading of Hölderlin based upon the idea of the hybris and sacrifice of the work of art as a monadic whole and mirrors Hölderlin's *Greek* aesthetic theory. Adorno therefore reads Hölderlin's *Modern* work according to the coordinates of his *Greek* aesthetic theory.<sup>52</sup>

Through the concept of "parataxis", Adorno is attempting to affirm a type of operation in Hölderlin's poetry where heterogeneous elements are connected without being synthesized, hence challenging the identity and unity of the work.

He is referring here to Hölderlin's technique of joining clauses and ideas without the use of mediating conjunctions. He is also referring to the use of terms such as "aber" and "nämlich" which challenge the continuity of the work. He will refer to these as "caesuras", a term he

extracts from Hölderlin's notes to his translations of Sophocles. Adorno calls them "artificial disturbances that evade the logical hierarchy of a subordinating syntax". This technique allows Hölderlin to join ideas without subordinating them, without suppressing difference through synthesis. Adorno compares this operation in Hölderlin's later poetry to music. "Great music is a-conceptual synthesis; this is the prototype for Hölderlin's late poetry." (P, p. 130). This is because music is able to provide alternative forms of connection to the rational synthetic connections which he finds oppressive. "The transformation of language into a serial order whose elements are linked differently than in the judgment is music-like" (p. 131). He is especially fond of comparing Hölderlin's poetry to Beethoven's later musical works.

Looking back to the process he described in *Aesthetic Theory*, we might say that, for Adorno, Hölderlin's later hymns represent *good* works of art which recognize the process of the truth of the work. They recognize that "the critique of illusion has its place in the work". They recognize that "dissonance is the truth of harmony". So for Adorno, Hölderlin's later hymns represent a "rebellion against harmony. What is lined up in sequence, unconnected, is as harsh as it is flowing" (p. 133). Since unity and harmony are to be found in the synthetic function of language, it is this synthetic function that Hölderlin's hymns will try to subvert to allow dissonance to express itself.

The paratactic revolt against synthesis attains its limit in the synthetic function of language as such. What is envisioned is a synthesis of a different kind, language's critical self-reflection, while language retains synthesis. To destroy the unity of language would constitute an act of violence equivalent to the one that unity perpetrates; but Hölderlin so transmutes the form of unity that not only is multiplicity reflected in it – that is possible within traditional synthetic language as well – but in addition the unity indicates that it knows itself to be inconclusive. (P, p. 136)

This is the same image of the work of art which we saw developed in *Aesthetic Theory*. It is the good work of art which is in control of the sacrificial dynamic which gives it its power.

This self-sacrifice of the synthetic function of language is also the sacrifice of the subject. Referring to the whole paratactic style, Adorno writes:

Poetically this represents the sacrifice of the legislating subject itself. It is in Hölderlin, with that sacrifice, that the poetic movement unsettles the category of meaning for the first time. For meaning is constituted through the linguistic expression of synthetic unity. The subject's intention, the primacy of meaning, is ceded to language along with the legislating subject. (P, p. 136)

Adorno points out that Hölderlin recognized that “a subject becomes a subject only through language”. Therefore through language's self-reflection in the work, the unity of the subject can be canceled. The self-cancellation of synthetic language is therefore the self-cancellation of the unity of the subject. It is a sacrifice and dis-integration of both the subject and the work, since illusion represents the coincidence between form and material on one hand and subject and language on the other. What is liberated in this cancellation is language itself.

Hölderlin attempted to rescue language from conformity, “use”, by elevating it above the subject through subjective freedom. In this process the illusion that language would be consonant with the subject or that the truth manifested in language would be identical with a subjectivity manifesting itself disintegrates. The linguistic technique coincides with the antisubjectivism of the content. (P, p. 137)

Yet this is not simply a sacrifice of the subject but of the unity of the subject and its oppression of language, reflected in conceptual synthesis.



In cutting the ties that bind it to the subject, language speaks for the subject, which – and Hölderlin’s art was probably the first to intimate this – can no longer speak for itself. (P, p. 137)

Now, language can speak for the subject as opposed to the subject dominating language.

As in *Aesthetic Theory*, it is not merely through subjective volition that such a step beyond subjective intention can be achieved. This is why it is important for Adorno to retain the sacrificial moment, “the disintegrative moment in which the unattainability of the linguistic ideal is revealed” (p. 137). It is through this sacrificial moment that reconciliation is possible.

Hölderlin’s poetry is an art which is in control of the sacrificial dynamic of art – as it was developed in *Aesthetic Theory*. It wants to step beyond subjective intention to liberate language from the subject. The manner in which it surpasses its own subjectivity is through sacrifice. The sacrifice of language which carries with it the sacrifice of the subject. In this way, Hölderlin’s poetry represents an “assassination attempt on the harmonious work.”

The liberation of language from the subjective is a kind of reconciliation as we saw in *Aesthetic Theory*. In this case the reconciliation involves a twofold liberation: 1) a liberation of nature from the domination of reason, or the liberation of language from subjective intention, and 2) a liberation of humanity from the domination by nature through myth. So the first is a liberation from the subject, and the second is a liberation from the object. The medium of both of these liberations is “self-reflection”. “Hölderlin expects a state of freedom to be attained only in and through the synthetic principle, through self-reflection” (p. 143). Only through the synthetic principle can the synthetic principle be overcome. Self-reflection leads to sacrificial dis-integration.

Subjective reflection is also negated by the fallibility and finitude of the individual, which accompanies the poetic

“I”. For the late hymns, subjectivity is neither the absolute nor the ultimate. Subjectivity commits a violation in setting itself up as absolute when it is in fact immanently compelled to self-positioning. This is Hölderlin’s construal of *hybris*. (P, p. 143)

Self-reflection is therefore “self-cancellation”. Because of this self-cancellation, Adorno believes that Hölderlin was able to achieve the sacrificial reconciliation that Kierkegaard failed to achieve. The escape from the immanence of the subject and the system.

So the twofold liberation will occur through self-cancellation. On one hand humanity is liberated from synthetic nature-dominating reason.

The punishment for *hybris* is the revocation of the synthesis in the movement of spirit itself. Hölderlin condemns sacrifice as historically obsolete and nevertheless condemns spirit – which continues to sacrifice what does not resemble it – to be sacrificed. (P, p. 144)

(And it is interesting to see that Adorno recognizes Hölderlin’s move beyond the concept of sacrifice, and yet stubbornly holds on to it himself.)

And on the other hand, humanity is liberated from its “entanglement” within nature expressed in “myth”. Adorno writes, “The doctrine that the quintessence of entanglement is its own meaning culminates in sacrifice”. The self-reflection which destroys subjective unity also destroys the unity of the objective. Pure exteriority is sacrificed just as pure interiority was. *Hybris* has its origins in myth, but Hölderlin uses myth against itself just as he uses reason against itself.

For demythologization itself is nothing other than the self-reflection of the solar Logos, a reflection that helps oppressed nature to return, whereas in myth nature was one with the oppressing element. Only what gives myth its due can provide liberation from myth. The healing of what

the romantic-mythologizing thesis conceives reflection to be guilty of is to occur, according to the Hölderlinian antithesis, through reflection in the strict sense, through the assimilation of what has been oppressed into consciousness through remembrance. (P, p. 141)

Part of the liberation from our entanglement with nature through myth also involves a liberation from the idea that there is a pure state of nature which was lost. It frees us from the anxiety of origins and leaves us in a state of “peace”.

Hölderlin’s metaphysical substance takes its leave from myth, and does so in objective complicity with enlightenment... The experience that what was lost – and what clothed itself in the aura of absolute meaning only as something lost – cannot be restored becomes the sole indicator of what is true and reconciled, of peace as the condition over which myth, that which is old and false, has lost its power. (P, p. 145)

The passive acceptance of the lost origin leads to a state of peace, a state over which myth has lost its power.<sup>53</sup> Again, self-reflection collects everything within itself and through its self-cancellation, eliminates its own rational domination.

The thread that survives this self-cancellation of self-reflection to enter into this state of peace is “genius”.

But genius is spirit in that it defines itself as nature through self-reflection; the reconciliatory moment in spirit, which does not exhaust itself in the domination of nature but remains and exhales after the spell of the domination of nature has been shaken off, a spell which turns that which dominates to stone as well. Genius would be consciousness of the non-identical object. To use one of Hölderlin’s

favorite terms, the world of genius is “das Offene”,... (P, p. 146)

Genius here, as in Kant, stands between the *subject* and *nature* and so can survive the cancellation of both, and can act as the locus of reconciliation. In the language of *Aesthetic Theory*, genius can be understood in terms of “expression”, or “the non-subjective in the subject” which remains when the unity of the subject dis-integrates. Genius represents a reconciliation with nature in such a way that the domination *of* nature through reason is broken, and the domination *by* nature through myth is broken.

That which would be different is called peace, reconciliation. It does not eradicate the era of violence in turn but rather rescues it as it perishes, in the anamnesis of echo. For reconciliation, in which enthrallment to nature comes to an end, is not above nature as something Other pure and simple, which could only be domination of nature once again by virtue of its difference and would share in its curse through suppression. What puts an end to the state of nature is mediated with it, not through a third element between them but within nature itself. Genius, which cancels the cycle of domination and nature, is not wholly unlike nature; it has that affinity with it without which, as Plato knew, experience of the other is not possible. (P, p. 148)

It recognizes the other then in its Kantian *free play* which does not subordinate its objects under the domination of the concept. Genius lives on after the self-cancellation of subject and nature and achieves a state of peace and reconciliation, an end to domination, and an openness to the other.

It is clear that Adorno reads Hölderlin’s later work from the standpoint of the Greek-sacrificial model. The “Modern” work becomes merely a illusory unity which cultivates its own dissonant multiplicity, to expose itself as illusory. This tension leads to the sacrificial self-

cancellation which ends in the reconciliation with nature.

But we have already seen Hölderlin's distinction between the Greek sacrificial aesthetics and the Modern one. In the Modern aesthetics, sacrifice is rejected. The transition to a new state must be through "free choice". Self-cancellation of the unity of the subject is precisely the thing to be avoided. I repeat here an important passage from "On the Processes of the Poetic Spirit".

What everything depends upon, then, is that the I remain not merely in reciprocal activity with its subjective nature, from which it cannot abstract without canceling itself, but that it *with freedom choose an object from which it, if it wants, can abstract*, in order to be *adequately determined by it and determine it*. (W, band I, s. 878, ELT, p. 73)

The new state for Hölderlin is one of "harmonious opposition". Conflict is not canceled but preserved. It is maintained harmoniously. Also, the unity of the subject is not canceled but preserved, and is positioned against [gegengesetzen], a larger unity. And in turn this harmonious opposition is reflected within the unity of the subject. The unity of the subject now takes the form of its movement in time. The conflict of moods is the subject and its destiny.

This transition to this new state, this *self-grounding* of the poetic spirit, occurs when the poetic spirit fixates itself in the language of the work. Language here would be the concrete, so Hölderlin's free choice can be understood in the manner of Kierkegaard's treatment of "choice". Language would then be that outer sphere against which we must position ourselves as a unity. And the reason for this is precisely so we do not cancel ourselves as a result of the emptiness of the subject in a state of solitude. We can now distinguish Hölderlin's approach from both that of Hegel and Adorno.

Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* made the transition from the self-consciousness in a state of solitude (the "master" self-consciousness),

to the self-consciousness which recognizes itself as a unity within a larger sphere (“the absolute”), through the *self-abandonment* in work, and *fear* characteristic of the “servant” self-consciousness. The result is the “priestly” self-consciousness. For Hegel, the sacrifice of the unity of the subject results in the movement toward the absolute.

For Adorno it is the opposite. *The whole is the false*. The sacrifice of the subject leads to expression, genius, the free play of the imagination, without the “aufheben” to a new level of domination and oppression. The manner in which the unity of the subject is sacrificed is the sacrifice of synthetic language which creates the unity of the subject. The sacrifice of synthetic language is accomplished through an *asynthetic, paratactic* language.

But this of course is not what Hölderlin is doing. He does not want to sacrifice the subject and language. Hölderlin achieves in his approach what both the later Schelling and Kierkegaard will attempt to develop: the refutation of idealism by a return to choice, concrete life, language, the work of art. The work of art is a *sanctuary*, a peaceful locus of conflict, where the ideal conflicts with the real, the organic with the aorgic, time with atemporality. It is a place of rest which contains motion within itself. And it is a kind of motion, the creation of a direction, a path, and any confrontation with the work occurs along its paths.

## Poetry, Philosophy, and the Pure Outside

According to Adorno, even Hölderlin’s poetry requires philosophical interpretation to complete its process, to recover its truth. And again this is due to the fact that the truth of the work “consumes subjective intention and leaves it behind as irrelevant”. (p. 110) And again this is due to its self-sacrificial transcendence.

The contradiction according to which every work wants to be understood purely on its own terms but none can in fact be so understood is what leads to the truth content. No work can be explicated solely on the basis of its content ...

the content requires the level of understanding meaning, whereas the higher levels of understanding shatter meaning. The path followed by the determinate negation of meaning is the path to the truth content. If the truth content is to be truth in the emphatic sense, if it is to be more than merely what is intended, then it leaves immanence behind as it constitutes itself. The truth of a poem does not exist without the structure [Gefüge] of the poem, the totality of its moments; but at the same time it is something that transcends this structure ... (P, p. 112)

Since this is the process through which the truth content of Hölderlin's poetry is manifested for Adorno, Hölderlin's poetry requires philosophical interpretation.

While Hölderlin's poetry, like everything that is poetry in the emphatic sense, needs philosophy as the medium that brings its truth content to light, this need is not fulfilled through recourse to a philosophy that in any way seizes possession of the poetry. (P, p. 113)

This is the mistake of Heidegger according to Adorno. Heidegger becomes too entangled in the language of Hölderlin's poetry (what is said directly) to see its truth content. Heidegger is not adequately disengaged to correctly interpret Hölderlin. Adorno's criticism of Heidegger then resembles his criticism of Kierkegaard. Heidegger like Kierkegaard remains trapped within a sphere of immanence, and does not take the step back outside of the work, does not take the step of sacrificial transcendence, which the appropriation of the truth content requires.<sup>54</sup>

But we have already seen the move Hölderlin makes in his Modern theory. Sacrificial transcendence is rejected. The subject consciously, intentionally, through free choice, fixates itself in the language of the work in order to create a destiny. Every destiny is a path which – following the image of the dynamics of the stream – exposes the truth. It is the path

*itself* which exposes the truth. There is nothing outside of the path. There are only multiple conflicting paths each creating their own directions, each exposing different particular truths, falling into error, or connecting up with a partial appreciation of the source. There is no pure standpoint from which to judge the truth content of these paths, no *philosophical-Marxist-objective-aesthetics* from which to judge the true truth and the good from the bad paths. In fact the ambiguities which underlie any theory – its possibility or impossibility, its multiple positions – are bound up within the conflictual dynamic of the poem. To position a standpoint for theory outside of the poem is to violate the poem. We can appreciate this by looking at another of Hölderlin’s late hymns – “Mnemosyne”.

### **Ein Wandersmann geht zornig**

Adorno tries to support his reading of Hölderlin through many direct references to his poetry. But we can take as an example one particular reading which is indicative of Adorno’s reading of Hölderlin in general – Hölderlin’s late hymn: “Mnemosyne”. I quote Adorno’s passage in full.

The beginning of the third version of “Mnemosyne”, perhaps the most important text for deciphering Hölderlin philosophically, gives us these statements in sequence: “But evil are / The paths. Namely astray / Like horses, go the captured / Elements, and the ancient / Laws of the earth. And always / Into the unbounded goes a longing.” The next line, “But much is / To keep”, which legitimizes the poet as one who remembers, is equally valid for what has been suppressed and must be kept faith with. The stanza ends with the lines: “Forwards however and backwards we / Don’t want to look, left to rock / Like a swaying boat in the sea.” Not forward: under the law of the present, which in Hölderlin is the law of poetry, with a taboo against abstract utopia... Not backwards: because of the irretrievability of something once overthrown, the point at which poetry, history, and ideal intersect. The decision, finally, expressed



as an anacoluth in an amazing reversal, “Left to rock / Like a swaying boat in the sea”, is like an intention to cast aside synthesis and trust to pure passivity in order to completely fill the present. For all synthesis – no one knew that better than Kant – occurs in opposition to the pure present, as a relationship to the past and the future, the backwards and the forwards that falls under Hölderlin’s taboo.<sup>55</sup>

Adorno interprets Hölderlin as advocating a rejection of the “evil” paths leading both to the past, or to any future utopia. A path involves synthetic connection. By severing ourselves from paths we “cast aside synthesis”, and thereby achieve reconciliation. But Adorno’s citation is very selective. Here is the strophe in its entirety.

### **Ripe is the Fruit...**

Ripe is the fruit, dipped in fire, cooked  
And tested on the earth and it is a law  
That all things pass on, snake-like,  
Prophetic, dreaming on  
The hills of heaven. And much  
Like a burden of failures  
Upon the shoulders is there  
To keep. But evil are  
The paths. Namely astray  
like horses, go the captured  
Elements, and the ancient  
Laws of the earth. And always  
Into the unbounded goes a longing. But much is  
To keep. And in crisis, our faithfulness.  
Forwards however and backwards we  
Don’t want to look, left to rock  
Like a swaying boat in the sea.<sup>56</sup>

The opening line takes its Biblical imagery from both Mark and the Book of Revelation.<sup>57</sup> It refers to the age in which humanity has reached maturity. The ambiguity of the strophe exposes the ambiguity of this age. Adorno emphasizes the “longing” for the “unbounded”. A “reaching” for the “abyss”. In emphasizing this trait he ignores the other positions of the poem. The whole poem involves an alternation between positions, the whole strophe is “snake-like”. The line which Adorno quotes in a supplemental way. “But much is to keep”, is not supplemental at all but becomes a significant refrain to the desire to retreat into the pure present. The poem moves back and forth between the desire for origins and the desire for forgetfulness, between the desire to cut paths to create destiny and meaning, and the desire to retreat from such paths because they lead into error, between the pure and the impure (the dynamic which we saw expressed in the Neuffer letter). And also, the poem itself is a path which snakes back and forth. It might be said that the last lines do not represent a prescription for passive recognition, a retreat into the pure present, but a conflict. Even though we “want” to stand-still and not look forward or back, nevertheless we are “rocked” back and forth. It will be helpful now to look at the last version of “Mnemosyne” to which the above strophe is related. It focuses upon the problem of time and memory and highlights the differences between Hölderlin’s and Adorno’s idea of the role of the work of art.

### **Mnemosyne**

A sign are we, meaningless  
Painless are we and have almost  
Lost our language in foreign lands.  
If namely over man  
There is a quarrel in the heavens and forcefully  
Goes the moon, then so speaks  
The sea and rivers must  
Search their path. Doubtless

There is but one, who  
Can daily change this. He hardly needs  
Law. And so the leaves rustle and the Oaktree sways next to  
The glacier. Because not everything  
Is in the capacity of the heavenly. Namely mortals will  
Sooner reach to the Abyss. The echo  
Returns to itself with them. Long is  
The time, but [eventually] there occurs  
The true.

But how [occurs] lovable things? Sunshine  
We see on the floor and dry dust  
And the forest deep with shadows, smoke blooms  
From the roofs with their ancient crowned  
Turrents, peaceful; good are namely,  
If the heavenly ones have wounded  
The soul in objection, the day-signs.  
For snow, like May-flowers  
The noble-minded, where  
it be, significant, glistens with the green meadow  
Of the Alps, halfway  
There, speaking of the crosses,  
Placed for those who have once  
Died on the way, along the high road  
The wanderer goes enraged,  
distant premonitions with  
The others, but what is this?

By the Figtree has my  
Achilles died.  
And Ajax lies  
By the grottoes of the sea.  
By the brooks, neighboring Scamandros.  
By the roaring in his temples,  
According to the immovable Salamis' steady

Custom, in a foreign land has great  
Ajax died.  
But Patroklos in the king's armor. And there have died  
Still many others. But by Kithairon lies  
Eleutherai, the city of Mnemosyne. Who, after  
God removes his cloak, nightly  
Also loosens her locks. Namely the heavenly are  
Unwilling, if one does not  
His soul carefully  
Gather-together, yet he still must, for him  
Even mourning is lacking.<sup>58</sup>

This is a poem about the relationship of the poet to the temporality of the divine. It plays upon the tension between the Greek attempt to reach directly for the divine and the Modern condition where we resign ourselves to finding the divine in a more partial indirect manner within temporal process. This is a tension which we observed Hölderlin developing in "The Rhein" in the figure of Rousseau turning towards nature.

Recall what Hölderlin wrote in "Becoming and Passing Away":

For the world of all worlds, the all in all which always is,  
represents itself, only in all time – or in the undergoing, the  
moment, or more genetically in the becoming of moments  
and the beginning of time and world ... (W, I, s. 900, ELT,  
p. 96)

This would be the ontological basis of both the Greek and the Modern. While the Greek reaches for the divine in the moment, the Modern must take the other option since the Greek option is not open to him. He must resign himself to the idea that the true occurs only in all of time and he is a part of this happening of the true. This is a difficult problem however for the poet and the poem concerns the struggle of the poet in the face of the relative impotence of his own poetry.

We are a “sign without meaning”. In Schelling, as we saw, a “schematism” would be a sign without meaning. It is a particular configuration of the divine which has the potential to develop meaning. A human being then would be a sign without meaning. It is up to us to create our meaning, our destiny. But this is a precarious process. The further we drift from the source towards the foreign, the more vulnerable we are to the loss of our language, the meaning which we create for ourselves.

The heavenly have “quarreled over man”, and so distanced themselves from man. This means that, unlike the Greeks – the childhood of humanity – our destinies are not directly guided by the Gods. Because of this distance we must now create our own destinies. Like rivers we must search our own path. “Not everything is in the capacity of the heavenly”, that is, they depend on mortals to meet them half-way.

Human life is caught between the double locus of the divine. The divine is only to be found in the moment or in all of time. Because we are distanced from direct contact with the divine we cannot capture it in the moment, and yet our lives are short in relation to the complete unfolding of the divine. And so Hölderlin writes “the leaves rustle and the oaktree sways then next to the glacier”. Here we recall Hölderlin’s idea that “all dissonances are a part of a higher harmony”. In relation to the complete unfolding of the true, our own finite journey seems very fragmentary and dissonant. Because of the inaccessibility of the divine in our journey through life (and the artistic journey of the poet) we long to turn directly toward the abyss, yet we must nevertheless patiently follow our own fragmentary path. It takes time but eventually “the true occurs”.<sup>59</sup>

But now Hölderlin asks in the second strophe: along our fragmentary paths, how the beautiful “lovable things” we experience occur? This state of “peace” is characterized by conflict. The contrast between light and shadow, the house as a sanctuary of conflict with its smoke joining earth to sky. The “day-signs” are good if the “soul has been wounded in objection”. Or in other words, we can glimpse the divine in the particularity of our experience if we have learned not to try to capture the divine directly, or to attempt to capture things in their totality. We must

not be blinded by the noonday sun. We are instead to focus on nature: the particular, the changing, the alternating, the conflict of light and shadow. This is the only way the divine is accessible *for us*.

The next lines represent the quest of the poet and follow the allegory of climbing a mountain path.<sup>60</sup> We are dealing with the contrast between the situation of the Modern poet and the Greek demi-god. As the poet climbs he encounters various markers – flowers and crosses – commemorating those who have previously traveled and died along the way. These markers give a sense of direction to the poet and yet act as a warning. What is significant is the contrast, the white snow against the green meadow, the “halfway there”, repeating the idea in the first strophe concerning our having to meet the divine halfway.

In the third strophe we discover these fellow wanderers or “noble minds” who have died along the way. Here we find the signs the “demi-god”, those who have tried to commune with the divine directly. Achilles died. Ajax went insane, and died by his own hand. Patroklos was struck blind by Apollo.<sup>61</sup> It is a reflection of the Modern encountering the Greek along his temporal paths. Notice here how all of these demi-gods, in their tragic strife are contrasted to natural processes. They lie by the “figtree”, “by the grottoes of the sea”, “by the brooks”. The demi-gods reaching directly for the divine are sacrificed, and what remain are temporal, natural processes, “mayflowers”, “lovable things”.

Within this landscape however there is a sanctuary, the city of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. This is the sanctuary of the work of art. In Hölderlin’s poem “The Voice of the People” which is closely related to “Mnemosyne”, Hölderlin speak of the self-destruction of a city in the face of the threat of being conquered. Many writers on Hölderlin take this even further to assert that this represents the death of Mnemosyne, or the death of memory itself. They interpret “losen die Locken” as “cutting a lock of hair”, the Greek manner of being marked for death.<sup>62</sup> But Hölderlin is referring here to the following account in Hesiod’s *Theogony*.

Mnemosyne, mistress of the Eleutherian hills, lay with father Zeus and in Pieria gave birth to the Muses which soothe men's troubles and make them forget their sorrows. Zeus the counselor, far from the other immortals, leaped into her sacred bed and lay with her for nine nights.<sup>63</sup>

“Losen die Locken” does not (simply) mean Mnemosyne's hair is being cut to mark her for death. She is loosening her hair, letting down her hair while God (Zeus) is “nightly” taking off his cloak. They are preparing to lay together. This will result in the birth of the muses who are responsible for artistic inspiration.

There is also a play of words here. The word for memory [mnemosyne] is being played off the word for forgetting [lesmosyne].<sup>64</sup> It is art and song which allow for the forgetting of man's troubles.<sup>65</sup> The forgetting of ones troubles, through memory, is also a step in reconciliation. This process had interested Hölderlin in his translations of passages in Sophocles' *Ajax*.<sup>66</sup>

Notice that the origin of memory is something that no longer exists. The death of the city of memory is not the death of memory itself but its possibility, and the birth of the muses, the possibility for art, the origin of the work of art. In a sense, memory would be a standing within a process. It would be a sanctuary.<sup>67</sup>

Also recall what Hölderlin says in his essay, “The Perspective from which we have to look at Antiquity”. It is memory which holds the process together into a path, it helps us avoid error and gives us direction. Likewise in Hölderlin's “On the Processes of the Poetic Spirit”, the language of the poem *remembers cognition* and allows the path of the poetic spirits to fixate itself into the poem.

Hölderlin's “Mnemosyne” is very close to Pindar's seventh Nemean ode. It is in this ode that Pindar criticizes Homer and the deceptive nature of myth and art.<sup>68</sup> Here, as in Pindar, the place of art is put into question. To show the ambiguous position of the work of art, it would be helpful here to take a short excursion though Hölderlin's ode “The

Voice of the People". Here the artist wishes to destroy his art and reach to the abyss directly.

Freely surpassed the long art  
There before the inimitable, he himself,  
Man, with his own hand broke, to  
Honor the highest, his work, the artist.<sup>69</sup>

Even art finds itself impotent with regard to the long road it is condemned to take. Yet the artist recognizes that he not only has a responsibility to the divine but also to the people.

Still no less is that one attracted to men,  
They love in return, as they are loved,  
And delays often, the path of men,  
so that they may long delight in the light.<sup>70</sup>

The artist delays [hemmen] the journey of the people so that they may achieve a glimpse of the divine light along their paths leading back to the divine. This is the function of the Modern poet. Regardless of the desire to reach to the abyss, to destroy one's own art due to its impotence, one must carry on in a more fragmentary, more limited manner. The role of the artist is to remember the course of the true, to keep alive the memories of the demi-gods, to remember the lost origin. At the end of "The Voice of the People" Hölderlin writes:

So had the children heard, and doubtless  
The legends are good, for a remembrance [Gedächtnis]  
Are they of the highest, still there is also needed  
One, to interpret the holy.<sup>71</sup>

In the face of the desire for the abyss, the Modern poet must stay true to memory and movement. Seen from this perspective, Adorno's self-



sacrificial work is not a viable option for the Modern poet.

Yet the poet is caught in the tension between the need for art and its impotence. This is what is ultimately asserted in “Mnemosyne”. The climbing of the Modern poet is one of danger, to which Hölderlin’s own life will attest. The sanctuary of the work of art is placed in peril. It becomes a challenge to “hold himself” in this sanctuary. Yet “in crisis, our faithfulness”. It is precisely because of this peril that we must become extra vigilant. The theme of the Sophocles’ *Ajax*, which is important here, is often seen as being about “hybris” and “sophrosyne”. Sophrosyne would be the opposite of hybris, it would represent a state of *balance*, *humility*, and *sobriety*, a recognition of the *responsibility* to the divine. We recognize sophrosyne as the state which the Greek passes into through hybris, and which the Modern passes into through free choice. We must freely cultivate this sophrosyne and keep climbing since the Heavenly ones are “unwilling” to help us if we do not help ourselves, if we do not “carefully” “gather-together” [zusammengenommen] our “soul”. This would involve struggling against the dispersal of our souls in insanity [Zorns] and striving along our own paths to create our destiny and meaning. It is the onward movement which is affirmed above all else. In “The Ister” we read:

But the rock needs engravings  
And the earth needs furrows,  
Otherwise inhospitable it would be, un-abiding;<sup>72</sup>

In the end we are often left climbing blindly, “painlessly”, and as Hölderlin says of the poet in the final line, “for him even mourning is lacking”. Onward movement here takes precedence even over memory.

There is no longer any pure state of nature to recover. The divine is only reached either in all of time or in death. All of our finite human paths lead to error, yet as living human beings, and as artists, we have no choice but to choose a path. The most we can do is the balance the tones and moods which constitute our paths. As we set out on our path,

we create destiny, and nature follows behind and *freezes* our free decision into necessity. We create *natures* as we move onward.

Adorno cannot accept this. He needs the work of art to fall into its own abyss, so that there is a *place* for his own philosophical discourse. Adorno must interpret Hölderlin's later poetry according to the Greek model of *Aesthetic Theory*. He must read Hölderlin's poems as monadic entities which intentionally cancel themselves out, paralyzing the paths into the future. Notice that this is also the strategy of deconstruction.<sup>73</sup> Adorno must stop Hölderlin since Hölderlin is always in danger of surpassing his position, and leaving without him. We will see how Adorno tries to stop Benjamin in the same way.

And again this leaves no place for theory outside of the poem. Theory is intertwined with the conflict of the poem. The poem itself struggles with the contradiction that any theory is impossible, any path leads ultimately astray, yet theory and paths are necessary.

## Benjamin and Adorno

In Hölderlin's later hymn "Patmos" we find the Modern condition characterized as a state where the divine is present only in isolated fragments and ruins. In the last strophe of the poem, these fragments are the only thing left for us on which to hold.

Too long, too long already has  
The honor of the heavenly been invisible.  
For they must almost the finger  
Direct and abusively  
A power wrests our hearts from us.  
For every one of the heavenly want offerings,  
When but one was missed  
Never has any good resulted.  
We have served Mother Earth  
And have more recently served the sunlight,  
Unknowingly, But what the father,  
Who rules over all, loves

Most of all, is that well-cared-for is  
The solid letter, and the existing well  
Interpreted. To which this German song complies.<sup>74</sup>

In “Mnemosyne” it was only the way-side crosses which gave us a sense of place in our wanderings by creating the occasion for the memory of those noble-minded ones who have gone before. Likewise here, the only thing to give us place is the solid letter and existing things. These are empty signs or fragments of a divine which was once present on earth but which has now retreated. Now our only alternative is to conserve these fragments since they are the only thing left of the divine.

We can look back to Schelling’s distinction between the “allegorical” and the “symbolic”. The symbol passes cleanly over into the infinite and the infinite passes over into the symbol. In the allegory, the infinite is present only as a “possibility”. This means that while the symbol is in pure contact with the infinite, the allegory is somehow detached. While in the Greek world the divinity was directly present in nature, in the landscape, now with Modern man there is a gap. The divine is now present only in detached fragments, allegories. We will now see Benjamin developing this idea of allegory, and Adorno’s failure to appreciate this dynamic.

It is interesting to discover that Walter Benjamin follows Hölderlin’s Modern dynamic much more closely than Adorno. It is very instructive for us to contrast Benjamin’s reading of Hölderlin against Adorno’s. The differences between Benjamin’s reading and Adorno’s reading of Hölderlin, underlies the differences in their respective philosophies as a whole.

In his early essay on Hölderlin, “Zwei Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin”, Benjamin appreciates the significance of the distinction between the Greek and the Modern. He understands the Greek aesthetic as one of “inspiration” and the Modern aesthetic as one of “calculation”.<sup>75</sup> This distinction will animate his interpretation of Hölderlin’s poetry.

The central concept of the essay is “Das Gedichtete”. This might be translated as “the poeticized”.<sup>76</sup> This is the locus of the *truth* of the poem.

In Hölderlin, we saw that the work of art is a “sanctuary for conflict”. Benjamin recognizes the same thing. For him, as for Hölderlin, “Life” is the unifying element for the Modern poet. Just as Hölderlin calls “life in general” the “significance” of the poem, Benjamin will say, “Life is in general the poeticized of the poem” [Das Leben ist allgemein das Gedichtete der Gedichte]. Not only does the poem express life, but life is also conditioned, determined by the poem. Here we can begin to appreciate “das Gedichtete”, life and nature becomes “poeticized”, that is, conditioned by the poem. Life occurs on the temporal plane. It is the temporal extension of the divine. It is connected with destiny. Benjamin demonstrates this with reference to two of Hölderlin’s poems, “Dichtermut” [The Poet’s Courage] and its later version, “Blödigkeit” [Timidness].

For Benjamin, “Dichtermut” does not achieve the poetic unity. Its “mythological” elements do not lose themselves in this constellation which Benjamin will call the “poetic middle”. The later version “Blödigkeit”, does achieve this unity. It is “mythical” rather than “mythological”, that is the mythological elements lose themselves in the poetic unity. There “das Gedichtete” is present. The poem is the master of its own destiny.

But it grounds therein the mythic character of this activity, that it passes in accordance to destiny, comprehends its execution already in itself. Like all activity of the poet in conformity-to-destiny grasps determinate orders, and so these orders are eternally sublated and sublates themselves, for that produces the existence of the people and their proximity to the poet. (I, s. 33)

The Modern – in the age of the distance from the gods – creates the order of truth. This involves the connection of two separate planes, a horizontal plane of mortals, and the vertical plane of the Gods. For this

first horizontal plane, Benjamin refers to the first strophe of “Blödigkeit”.

Are then not known to you many of the living?  
Don't your feet go on the truth, as on carpets?  
For that reason, my genius, step only  
Boldly into life and care not! (I, s. 27)

The poet *walks* on the truth as on carpets, and as he walks upon this *horizontal plane* he determines the truth. The poem is the “Lage” where this walking takes place. The term “Lage” is very rich, it refers to a location, place, occasion, situation, or a layer. It is here with the “Lage” that the “determining” is in a reciprocal causality to the “determined”. The *Lage* supports the walking yet the walking determines the *Lage*. It is here in this idea of the self-determination of the poetic *Lage*, that the “spatial” and “spiritual” orders are joined. Benjamin further extends Hölderlin's idea of the carpet when he discusses the idea of “ornament”.

Now... in the image of the carpet, where a plane for a spiritual system is positioned, the spiritual arbitrariness of the ornaments of thinking is seen – and also the ornament puts out a true determination of *Lage*, makes them absolute – so the walking-out order of truth itself inhabits the intensive activity of the ways as inner plastic temporal form. Walking-out is this spiritual region, which more or less necessarily leaves the stepping, with every arbitrary step, in the order of the true. (I, s. 34)

Truth for the poet is the order of a “walking-onward” [Bescreitbar]. Hölderlin in his Processes essay had called this a “striving onward”. It is not in a direct relationship with the divine, yet with each step, the *true* is determined. As in Hölderlin, we move from the spiritual to the temporal realm.

He contrasts this to the *vertical plane* which he finds in the fifth strophe.

Who allows the thinking day to poor and rich,  
Who toward the turning of time, to us the sleeping,  
Holds upright with golden  
Strings, like children. (I, s. 27)

The spiritual realm is on a different plane than that plane on which the living, poets and people walk. When we walk we mostly look straight ahead, we seldom look down at the ground, nor up to the sky. We do not see truth in front of us as a vertical image, but we inhabit the truth – blindly? – as we walk on its horizontal plane. While the gods hold us with their golden strings – like children, or puppets – we are unaware, we are asleep.

So the role of the poet is to forever stitch the heavenly realm to the temporal realm of movement, through his determinations and creation of “Lage”, through his “walking-onward”. Benjamin refers to the last strophe of *Blödigkeit*.

Good also are we and skilled/sent for something/someone  
When we come, with art, and from the heavenly  
Bring one. Yet we ourselves  
Bring skillful hands. (I, s. 27)

In the first line [Gut auch sind und geschickt einem zu etwas wir], the “skill” [geschickt] of the poet’s hands are connected with the poet being “sent” [geschickt] and the “destiny” [Geschick] which the poet creates.

The spatial extension of the living determines itself in the temporal inner intervention of the Poets: so explains the word “geschickt” (skilled). (I, s. 41)

When the poet creates, he brings the gods to the people. He joins the two planes. Benjamin writes:

So the poet is no longer seen as form, but only still as principle of form, the delimiter, the one still carrying even his own body. He brings his hands – and the heavenly ones. The striking caesura of this place produces the distance, which the poet, as their unity, should have in the presence of all form and the world. (I, s. 45)

We have seen in Hölderlin's theory how the work of art is the *sanctuary for conflict*. Here, the poet is responsible for broaching that which is in conflict: the spiritual and sensual realms. He joins them in his determinations, through temporal movement, through the “walking-onward” character of Modern poetry, with its calculations, its *caesuras*. And the Gods emerge within the poem as fragments.

[when] God has become an object in his dead infinity, the poet grasps him. The order of People and God as dis-integrated into unities, here moves toward unity in poetic destiny. (I, s. 41)

This is a much different reading of the *caesura* than in Adorno. In Adorno, the fragmentation which the *caesura* represented, was a destruction of synthesis and unity, a paralysis of determination. Here in Benjamin it is the *stepping* of the truth, the process of movement and destiny itself. Stepping is a process which is broken and continuous at the same time. It is fragmentary and yet it propels us forward. The gods emerge in the poem as allegories, isolated by this *caesuraed* movement, fragmented, surpassed, repeated – like footprints. The conflicting elements are held together in “constellations”. The divine is here woven into the plane of poetry like a oriental brocade.<sup>77</sup> And again the reader of the poem is bound within its “Lage”, its determination, its destiny. We follow and extend the patterns of its footprints as we read and provide commentary.

In a theoretical fragment from 1917, Benjamin repeats the idea of planes, this time to distinguish the “painting” [Malerei] from the “graphic”

[Graphik]. He writes:

An image wants to be vertical in front of the viewer. A mosaic on the floor lies horizontal to his feet. Concerning this difference, one cares no further than how to view a graphic and a picture. Still it is a very important and far reaching difference, that in making a graphic, one becomes like a school student. According to the manner of looking at a painting, a Rembrandt-like landscape may only in the best of cases have its canvas left in a neutral horizontal position [Lage]. In contrast to this is how one looks at children's drawings. It becomes mostly an offense to its inner sense to additionally stand it vertically before oneself... one must leave it horizontal on the table. (Werke, II. 2, s. 602)

Consider that a child's drawing does not have any pretensions to organic unity. It is not divorced from its temporal process. It is a *history of marks*. It is not an image like a Rembrandt painting. Benjamin continues:

We are confronted here with a very deep problem of art and its mythical roots. One could speak of two cuts through the world-substance: the longitudinal section of painting and the cross section of certain graphics. The longitudinal section seems to be representative; it somehow contains the things; the cross section is symbolic: it contains the signs. Or perhaps it appears so only to our reading that we put the pages horizontally in front of us: and is there perhaps also a vertical position original to writing, like the inscriptions carved in stone? (s. 603)

In other words, within our horizontal plane of truth, the divine will appear to us only as fragments, not as a picture in the vertical visual order, not to be *seen.*, not as *Schein*. This theme concerning a transition from vision to blindness is also developed by Warminski. One must be careful how



far one takes this theme of blindness. Hölderlin in his Perspective essay cautions us against proceeding blindly. The Modern poet must use the memory of paths already taken to help him project his destiny. Benjamin overcomes this problem by leading us somewhere between blindness and vision in his development of the concept of “allegory”. This is the theme of his work *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.

In this work, Benjamin recognizes the transition from the Greek to the Modern dynamic, which he finds represented in German Baroque literature. It is for him the transition from Tragedy to “Trauerspiel”, literally a *play of mourning*. This transition also involves a loss of the mechanism of tragic dis-integration and reconciliation, and a shift from the “symbol” to “allegory”.

Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or rather in a death’s head. And although such a thing lacks all *symbolic* freedom of expression, all classical proportion, all humanity – nevertheless, this is the form in which man’s subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline. (OGTD, p. 166)

So we see here the same transition from a sacrificial dynamic where nature expresses itself in the dis-integration of the image, to a dynamic where sacrifice is suppressed. And likewise there is a shift from a situation

where destiny is assured, to a situation where there is a search for destiny, expressed in “the biographical historicity of the individual”. The retreat of the gods have led us from nature to history. The Hegelian concept of *Bildung* becomes an evil concept. History is the history of decline, of “melancholy”, of a drift from the source, the same drift we saw in Hölderlin’s “The Rhein”.

Allegorical meaning now is to be found only in “fragments”.

In the field of allegorical intuition the image is a fragment, a rune. Its beauty as a symbol evaporates when the light of divine learning falls upon it. The false appearance of totality is extinguished. For the *eidos* disappears, the simile ceases to exist, and the cosmos it contained shrivels up. The dry rebuses which remain contain an insight, which is still available to the confused investigator. (OGTD, p. 176)

We are no longer operating with Adorno’s dependence upon the dialectical dis-integration of totality to reach the particular. Benjamin, like Hölderlin, realizes that the particular can no longer be approached through the sacrifice of totality. Instead we begin with the particular completely divorced from totality. The “rebus”, like the “solid letter” of Hölderlin, is the only receptacle left for meaning. These “fragments” or “runes” will also, with reference to history, be called by Benjamin “ruins”.

The allegorical physiognomy of the nature-history, which is put on stage in the *Trauerspiel*, is present in reality in the form of the ruin. In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things. (OGTD, p. 178)

Here, nature is no longer redeemed, but is merged to the particularity of the path, merged with history. And here we can begin to understand his reading of the angel of history in *Illuminations*.

A Klee painting named “Angelus Novus” shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (I, p. 258)

Benjamin recognizes that the dynamic of this Baroque *Trauerspiel* prefigures the Modern condition. Even in the characteristic of its inherent *conflict*. Now history is beginning to *fuse* with nature. Nature becomes the directions chosen.

And Benjamin directly characterizes Baroque *Trauerspiel* in a way that directly mirrors Hölderlin’s late poetry.

The *Trauerspiel* is therefore in no way characterized by immobility, nor indeed by slowness of action..., but by the irregular rhythm of the constant pause, the sudden change of direction, and consolidation into new rigidity. (OGTD, p. 197)

These pauses, and reversals which we have already understood as *caesuras* and *parataxis* in Hölderlin, does not in any way destroy or cancel the paths

of synthetic language – in the manner of Adorno’s deconstructive reading. Instead, for Benjamin, this technique involves a conflict between the spoken and written word which illuminates the nature of language itself.

Written language and sound confront one another in tense polarity... The division between signifying written language and intoxicating spoken language opens up a gulf in the solid mass of verbal meaning and forces the gaze into the depths of language... The spoken word, it might be said, is the ecstasy of the creature, it is exposure, rashness, powerlessness before God; the written word is the composure of the creature, dignity, superiority, omnipotence over the objects of the world. (OGTD, p. 201)

Returning to Hölderlin, we might say that the paratactic mechanism of his late poetry does not “reduce language to silence” but on the contrary, plays the sound of language against the written symbol. This is the conflict of what is moving against what is static, the conflict of temporality against atemporality, the aergic against the organic. Or in a more general sense, we can say that this represents the conflict between the corporeal aspect of man with his transcendental aspect. Again we remain within conflict without escaping through any deconstructive resolution. Through this conflict we are led deeper into the essence of language, its presence and absence. And there is no inside or outside to this conflict. Benjamin writes:

The abstract elements of language, however, have their roots in the evaluative work, the judgment. And while, in the earthly court, the uncertain subjectivity of judgment is firmly anchored in reality, with punishments, in the heavenly court, the illusion of evil comes entirely into its own... In evil as such subjectivity grasps what is real in it, and sees it simply as its own reflection in God. In the allegorical image of the world, therefore, the subjective perspective is entirely absorbed in the economy of the

whole. (OGTD, p. 234)

This reminds us again of the concept of objectivity as “resistance” [Anstoss] in Reinhold and Fichte, except here we have not a condition of a *static* systematic whole, but one of *wandering*. In the work of Hölderlin – as in Benjamin’s interpretation of the Baroque – there is no outside. There is only conflict and struggle. Conflict creates the possibility of the *real*, the *pure*, the *divine* if it ever chooses to expose itself to us. In both the Baroque and in Hölderlin’s later poetry, we have a state of subjective immanence which is so complete that it ceases to be subjective and ceases to be immanent.

Adorno’s work has been characterized as being positively influenced by Benjamin’s concept of allegory.<sup>78</sup> Yet in fact, all through his writings Adorno is struggling against the concept of allegory. As we saw, the shift of allegory away from the symbolic also involves the end of the transcendent sacrificial dynamic and its power of reconciliation. These elements are integral to Adorno’s philosophy. In his early work on Kierkegaard – which in many ways is a direct response to Benjamin’s work on baroque *Trauerspiel* – Adorno is critical of Kierkegaard’s aesthetic because it remains within the closed realm of “objectless inwardness”, “immanence”, “idealism”, and “subjectivity”. Its sacrifices are not fully realized because they do not escape this closed immanence and Kierkegaard remains within the idealism which he wishes to demolish. Adorno recognizes Kierkegaard as a *baroque allegorist* and writes:

According to its cultural-historical genesis, Kierkegaard’s Baroque is anachronistic; yet it is historically consistent according to the law of mythical inwardness, whose labyrinth the “solitary person” traverses; an inwardness that is inseparable from its historical-natural imagery. Through melancholy, inwardness conjures the semblance of truth to the point that melancholy itself becomes transparent as semblance; to the point, that is, that melancholy is wiped

out and at the same time rescued; melancholy conjures images, and these stand ready for it in history as enigmatic figures. (K, p. 64)

Because Kierkegaard “never reflected on the profundity of allegory” he was never in control of its power, and so its power, within Kierkegaard’s work, works against his work. Reconciliation which was supposed to come from the outside is merely an allegorical figure caught in the web of subjective immanence.

When his philosophy – in the name of existence – takes objective inwardness and mythical conjuration as substantial reality, it capitulates to the semblance that it rejects in the depths of oblivion. Semblance, which illuminates thought from the remoteness of the images like the star of reconciliation, burns in the abyss of inwardness as an all-consuming fire. It is to be sought out and named in this abyss, if the hope that it radiates is not to be forfeited by knowledge. (K, p. 67)

We might say that for Benjamin, it is the ambiguity inherent in allegory which prevents it from possessing a symbolic sacrificial function. It is in a way contaminated by the irrational. So in a sense the rational itself is always contaminated by the irrational. There is no outside to the rational which would tragically intervene to correct it. Adorno must always keep the rational separate from the irrational in order to conserve its negative dialectical and sacrificial relationship.

So it is no wonder that allegory never does get a good hearing in Adorno’s work. Allegory, by its very dynamic, has no outside to its wanderings, no objective truth, no reconciliation. This dynamic cannot find a place in Adorno’s theory. In *Aesthetic Theory*, we find allegory transformed to correspond to the sacrificial dynamic of the symbol.

Works of art are not just allegories, but the catastrophic fulfillment of allegories. This is especially evident in the most recent art. The shocks it inflicts mark the explosion of its appearance. (AT, p. 125)

There is no such thing as an exploding allegory. So we might charge that Adorno himself had “never reflected upon the profundity of allegory”, or that, throughout his career, he constantly struggled against it.

This sets the stage for Adorno’s later disagreements with Benjamin’s aesthetics. Adorno could not accept the image of the work of art Benjamin developed in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. For Benjamin the age of the technological reproduction of the image represents an end to the “aura” of the work; its ritualistic value.

... the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. (*Illuminations*, p. 221)

We see that the destruction of aura is also the collapsing of distance. In bringing the work so close to the user, it can no longer be seen. We are left on the blind horizontal “Lage” of truth. The distance which allowed representation to be represented is lost. We have now become so close to representation that is *used* without being *seen*.

But illusion and distance are two elements central to Adorno’s aesthetics. Aura is nothing else but the “Schein quality” of the work in Adorno’s aesthetics, and as we saw is integral to the sacrificial mechanism of its redemptive power. Illusion is central to the negative dialectic of the work. The destruction of aura, or illusion, as we saw, has its place in the sacrificial mechanism of the work of art itself. For the same reason he resists the passage from *symbol* to *allegory*, he also resists the loss of

aura. In a letter to Benjamin, Adorno writes:

Understand me correctly. I would not want to claim the autonomy of the work of art as a prerogative, and I agree with you that the aural element of the work of art is declining – not only because of its technical reproducibility, incidentally, but above all because of the fulfillment of its own autonomous formal laws... But the autonomy of the work of art, and therefore its material form, is not identical with the magical element in it. The reification of a great work of art is not just loss, any more than the reification of the cinema is all loss.<sup>79</sup>

While Benjamin reads the loss of aura from Hölderlin's Modern shift, Adorno must always preserve illusion within his dialectic, and provide the corresponding distance from the dialectic of illusion, for the philosopher to stand.

In summary, this tension between Hölderlin and Adorno, and between Benjamin and Adorno, calls attention to the possibilities of discerning an aesthetic model applicable to the Modern. We begin to see a movement of Hölderlin (and Benjamin) beyond Adorno's aesthetic model. The Modern Age is a landscape of blindness, of movement, of an unbridgeable gap with the divine. Redemption is no longer possible. All that is left of the divine are fragments, allegorical fragments by which the Modern Poet struggles to orient himself. Adorno's attempts to hold on to illusion suggests a misplaced hope in the power of redemption. He does not realize that there is no longer a pure state of nature against which illusion can expose itself. Since the medium of our existence is representation, we are unable to see illusion. We now live illusion. Adorno is blind to the blindness of the age.

There is also no longer any space for an aesthetic theory to inhabit outside of particular works. We now see the possibilities of an aesthetic theory lost within the conflicting tones of the movement itself. All is left for us, now, is movement.



### Summary

This work has followed its own eccentric path. This path is tied to the history of its development and to the effort to let the conflict of conceptual distinctions create their own effects without attempting to deconstruct them. We began with the distinction between art and nature to observe the various romantic attempts to address this distinction. Distance, fragmentation, powers, conflict, are concepts which emerged in these attempts. Hölderlin inherited these concepts in his attempts to address the problem. His Greek aesthetic theory was an attempt to develop a model of pure reconciliation between art and nature. Adorno (inspired by a interest in finding a model of pure reconciliation) appropriates this model. For pure reconciliation to be possible, a pure space has to exist outside of the hybris of rationality. For Adorno this was the irrationality of Nature, the unknowability and unconsciousness of Nature. Pure Nature is always standing outside of the concept and the work of art, ready to show itself as the beauty of nature for the concept or work of art which chooses to explode its illusory power. The retention of a boundary between art and nature is necessary for this sacrificial dynamic to occur. The rational is cleanly separated from the irrational, the known from the unknown, the inside from the outside, the transcendental from the corporeal, and philosophy is separate from art.

We have already seen how these distinctions are interwoven in the Modern dynamic developed by Hölderlin and later by Benjamin. While the distinctions are still operative and in conflict, there is no clean relationship between them. There is no longer a pure Schein to the work of art,. There is no longer a pure unity and hence hybris of the subject. We

no longer follow the model of a pure image of nature eclipsing true nature. Just as there is no longer an integrity to art and subject, there is no longer a pure nature *outside* to reconcile with. All the boundaries which made reconciliation possible for the Greek and for Adorno are no longer clear.

The historical process which eliminated these boundaries is tied to the idea of directionality. The transcendental element of man has conditioned the corporeal element, the artificial contaminates the natural to the point where one can no longer distinguish between them. This has not only destroyed the “purity” of nature (if such a thing can even be assumed) but has also transformed the transcendental element itself. No longer is there a possibility of a pure image of nature: whether it take the form of the aura of the work of art or the integrity of the philosophical or scientific system. The transcendental elements take a more particular nature. They become flashes of transcendence within the momentum of history. The transcendental is no longer in any dialectical relationship to corporeality. Now both are interwoven within the movement of history. We can review these aspects more closely.

## **Directionality in Art, Science, and Philosophy**

We have discussed the loss of “aura” of the work of art, and that perhaps Adorno’s application of the Greek dynamic to Modern art is untenable. This deficiency is most clear with regard to the medium of film. Hölderlin’s poetry is structured like a film. And film becomes more representative of the Modern directional dynamic. It is a type of “caesuraed” motion. It is an alternation of tones or moods, while its representational medium remains constant. As a pure representational or transcendental sphere, it is dislodged from true nature, from the divine, and its only connection to the divine is in the harmonious opposition of tones of its creations, and the particular paths that it creates for the viewer. We can even go so far as to say that we no longer “see” films. Since representation is so natural to us it becomes pure medium, it no longer appears as *hybris* as with the Greeks. We are left in Benjamin’s pure horizontal plane of blindness. Instead of seeing films, we merely

react to its graphic, allegorical runes which trigger our various emotions, moods, ideals, and destinies.

For us, “aura”, “Schein”, image, or space, are no longer operative. We enter a “Virtual Reality”, where the spaces through which we move are merely a calculated series of runes to be reacted to. Like billboards on a freeway, like the buttons on a coke machine or an automatic teller, like the targets in virtual military guidance systems, like the opportunities to create more points in virtual reality games which keeps the game player amused, addicted, and willing to continue depositing his coins in the slot.

We have used art as a model which also included science and philosophy. Now in a very sketchy manner we can rejoin them together under the idea of directionality.

We would like to think that there is some sort of standpoint of objectivity, or some sort of hermeneutic process towards objectivity. But the idea of directionality leads to the conclusion that as we progress in the establishment of theories and works, reality itself changes. There is no pure state of nature to mirror.

Nietzsche writes in the Birth of Tragedy:

We find a type of deep seated illusion, first manifested in Socrates: the illusion that thought, guided by the thread of causation, might plumb the farthest abysses of being and even *correct* it. This grand metaphysical illusion has become integral to the scientific endeavor and again and again leads science to those far limits of its inquiry where it becomes art – *which in this mechanism, is what is really intended.*

Science here becomes aware of it’s hybris. Nietzsche is trapped like Adorno within the Greek dynamic. But if we follow the Modern directional dynamic we discover something very different. Science moves on, there is no moment of truth because science changes the truth as it progresses. It creates its instruments, sensibilities, perceptibilities, it creates new

worlds, new natures.

In philosophy we can infer the same dynamic. Many writers today bemoan the event of Cartesian dualism, the division of mind from body, man from nature, the excesses of phalocentrism, logocentrism, and eurocentrism. They interpret the history of philosophy as if it were a series of delusions, mistakes, manipulations, strategies of domination, which can be remedied if we subvert these structures deconstructively.

But deconstruction follows the Greek dynamic. It is still bound to the mechanism of sacrifice. Witness Bataille's and Blanchot's idea of sacrifice, death, transgression, the opening of a restricted economy to a general economy. Witness Derrida's deconstruction of the closure of the work by subverting it from the inside. Occasionally Derrida passes across our Modern directional landscape but it is always in reaction to a work which denies this element. Deconstruction always operates with a pure sacrificial state which illuminates the illusions of the text.

Postmodernism is often in complicity with deconstructive strategies. It speaks of the fragmentation of the subject but does not understand that the subject, as we have seen, always already involves fragmentation. It embraces one side of the conflict of positions: disunity over unity, the nonsubjective over the subjective, but it does not recognize that "in reality" all are operative and in conflict. As we see in Hölderlin, the Modern is a dynamic which includes the postmodern. With Hölderlin's idea of the Modern, we do not need the idea of the postmodern as it is developed in contemporary discourse (but yet it must be admitted that both deconstruction and postModernism as something established, have already created a destiny, and so are something real and significant.)

The attempt to deconstruct the history of philosophy, or to try to dismiss it due to postmodern concerns is reconciliation according to the Greek model. If we follow the Modern directional dynamic, we can appreciate Descartes not as the villain, but as establishing the true. The mind body division is a the destiny of his work, it has become reality. We live in this reality and proceed onward. Previous paths leave their own trace as the bend in a young sapling becomes the crook in an old tree.

We can never reach a state where we can pretend that the mind, body division never existed. There is no state of reconciliation. Philosophy is an organic process, involving the destinies of various established “works”, established concepts, established divisions.

In any case, there is no space outside of the work of art, science, and philosophy. We always operate within the destinies of these works.

## Nature(s)

Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift  
Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,  
Beading thy path – condense eternity:  
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.  
(Hart Crane, “The Bridge”)

There is no longer a pure state of nature to recover, either directly or sacrificially. No other, no outside against which to deconstruct our constructions, our pathways. We no longer turn back since there is no way back. There are only ways forward. As we move forward we condition reality. With each step things change. And not only our pathway, but other pathways, many pathways intertwining, diverging, and moving farther from the source. We are creating natures. Nature cannot revenge itself upon us. Although a laboratory may be destroyed by a tornado, there are others to take its place, to fill in the gaps, and in the end it is the tornado which was measured, sensed by orbiting satellites, plotted on maps, and insurance adjusters, bankers, and lawyers rush in to reconnect the dots. An act of nature is anticipated in many ways and leaves many echoes. No longer is there any Derridian “trembling from the outside”.

## The Poem as a Thing and a Destiny

And this emerges as one of the most important aspects of Hölderlin’s late poetry. The poem reflects this same process. The poem *is* nature. It is a particular channel of nature. It is a thing, and yet out of

the thing-like quality of the words on the paper, flashes of transcendence emerge, allegorical runes which point toward futures and pasts, conflicting elements woven into a unified path. The poem recollects the past, the lives of the demi-gods. It mourns that which has been lost, and sometimes projects the possibility for reconciliation ahead in the form of feast-days. The poem is the motion of history and nature itself. Its sensible element emerge out of its corporeal elements and collapse again with the corporeal motion.

The work of art as a path is also a destiny. It is still easy for Adorno to deceive himself that he judges the work of art from a neutral perspective since he keeps the transcendental element separate from the corporeal. But any engagement with the work of art is on its own terms. It follows a physical engagement with the corporeality with the work itself. Critique always remains downstream of the flow of the poem itself. Each of Hölderlin's late poems recognize that they are corporeal things which have projected their own destiny.

## **Destinies of this Work of Art**

And if I may be presumptuous enough to claim this dissertation as a work of art, then it too has its destiny. It has assembled a group of people in a room to attend a defense. It has elicited readings, reactions, rejections (?), not only of the readers, but also will lead to the author's future ideas, reflections, and paths. Not a very prolific destiny as it will probably sit on a shelf collecting dust, these written lines silenced within the darkness of a closed book. Yet a destiny nevertheless,

this destiny,  
involving you who are reading,  
in this reality,  
right now!

- <sup>1</sup> Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Rousseau points out that the gap between ourselves and the primitive state makes it impossible for us to recover this state, that our perspective is distorted by our own development. Yet at the same time there is a *need* to have a concept of this primitive state. This would place the whole dynamics of Rousseau's discussion outside of a deconstructive, (which always remains a conceptual) analysis of origins.
- <sup>2</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Learned Ignorance*. In book I, chapter 11, Cusa points out that "perceptible things [images] are in a state of continual instability because of the material possibility abounding in them" (p 61). Notice this will also become Spinoza's position. Mathematics (and likewise geometry and music) are much more suited to the investigation of the maximum because they are more fixed and certain. In book II, chapter 13, we find in fact that it is through these arts that God created the world. It is the image therefore which is deceptive, because it is corruptible, because it is caught up in the flux of the world.
- <sup>3</sup> Condillac, *Traite' des Sensations*. Condillac's concept of "sensation" as the internal link to an external world should remind us of Reinhold and Fichte's use of the concept of "resistance" [Anstoss]. There also seems to be some connections between Condillac's and Fichte's use of the idea of "conflict".
- <sup>4</sup> Notice how in Kant there is a non-subjective mechanical dynamic which animates the subjective dynamic. An "aesthetics" both precedes a "logic" in the first critique, and also precedes the judging and moral subject in the third.
- <sup>5</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 222-225. This will be the basis for Schutze's criticism of Reinhold.
- <sup>6</sup> Schulze, "Aenesidemus", in *Between Kant and Hegel*, p. 105.
- <sup>7</sup> Novalis, Fichte-Studien, fragment 6, in *Werke, Tagebuecher und Briefe*, band 2, p. 12.
- <sup>8</sup> Herder, *Shakespeare*, in H.B. Nisbet ed. *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*, p. 163.
- <sup>9</sup> It is believed that Herder, like Condillac, was influenced by the theories of the French biologist Buffon

- <sup>10</sup> Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, band viii, p. 177. (the following quotations from the *Sämtliche Werke* are my own translations).
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 178.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 217
- <sup>13</sup> Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 61.
- <sup>14</sup> The epitaph by Loyola would be translated: “Not to be oppressed by the greatest, and yet not limited by the smallest”.
- <sup>15</sup> Hemsterhuis, *Letter sur les Desirs*.
- <sup>16</sup> The last lines read “So dacht ich. Nachstens mehr.” The novel was never continued, but already Hölderlin seems to be suggesting that such a sacrificial reconciliation is no longer possible.
- <sup>17</sup> Bruno, quoted in Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 190.
- <sup>18</sup> Indeed the entire second half of the book deals with the power of the imagination to construct whole-part relationships.
- <sup>19</sup> Schelling believed against those who sought, like Reinhold and Fichte, to unify Kantian philosophy into a *single* system, that Kant’s philosophy can only be expressed in an opposition of two systems: “dogmatism” and “criticism”. Cf. Schelling, “Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism” in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge*, fifth letter, pp. 167-173.
- <sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note that Proclus, the neoplatonist, recognized the same thing. see proposition 4: “Everything that is unified is other than the One itself.” in *The Elements of Theology*, p. 5.
- <sup>21</sup> In this passage I try to keep separate form [Form], configuration [Gestalt], and appearance [Schein]. I translate “Gestalt” as “configuration” since here Hölderlin is discussing the manner in which the organic and aorgic aspect con-form to one another, how they “appear” to become one another. “Schema” might be another possible translation. I translate “Schein” as appear because it refers to that illusory element which will become a “deception” [Trug-bild] in this essay.
- <sup>22</sup> It should be mentioned that Schelling also recognized this in his *Philosophy of Art*. Cf. his discussion of the sublime and the intuition of the sublime as “chaos”, in section 65.



- <sup>23</sup> In Hölderlin's "Greek" theory, the hubris of subjective interiority brings upon itself its own sacrifice. In Kierkegaard, subjective interiority must "choose" to sacrifice itself, and move on to the religious stage. Later we will see how Hölderlin moves beyond sacrifice and embraces the idea of "free choice" (yet this is choice without sacrifice).
- <sup>24</sup> Novalis, "Miscellaneous Writings" in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe*, fragment 11, p.85.
- <sup>25</sup> Schlegel, "Ideas", in *ibid.*, fragment 131, p. 58.
- <sup>26</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen Über Aesthetik*, p. 124-125, (my translation). See also the translations of Solger's dialogue *Erwin*, and the correspondence with Tieck in the Wheeler book, and the *Nachgelassene Schriften*. Solger's work also attracted the attention of Hegel who wrote an review of the publication of the above mentioned work: "Solgers Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel" in *Berliner Schriften*.
- <sup>27</sup> This has its origins in Plotinus' *Enneads*, and Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*. Plotinus continually refers to the Kronos myth. In the fifth Ennead, eighth tractate, section 13, he says: "The God fettered, [as in the Kronos myth] to an unchanging identity leaves the ordering of the universe to his son (to Zeus)."
- <sup>28</sup> (My translation). Most translators have difficulty with the sixth strophe. To me it represents the idea that before one recognizes Jupiter (Kronion) as one's master, one must first awaken from the realm of his father Saturn (Kronos), the true master.

Und hab ich erst am Herzen Lebendiges  
 Gefühlt und dämmert, was du gestaltetest,  
 Und war in ihrer Wiege mir in  
 Wonne die wechselnde Zeit entschlummert:  
 (Werke, band I, p. 325)

Cf. Plotinus' discussion on the relationship between time and eternity. He speaks of eternity as an "unchanging repose" and time awaking out of this repose. An "active principle ... set on governing itself and realizing itself ... stirred from its rest and time stirred with it." Third Ennead, tractate 7, section 11.

- <sup>29</sup> Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, see the section entitled "The Sublime Sacrifice", pp. 187-190
- <sup>30</sup> Translated by Adler in, *Comparative Criticism*, 5 (1983) p. 237. (I have modified these translations).

- <sup>31</sup> Cf. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, specifically the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue”, pp. 41-44. It is interesting to compare Hölderlin’s and Benjamin’s concept of “Origin” with that of Heidegger in “The Origin of the Work of Art”.
- <sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen: “Germanien” und “Der Rhein”*, p. 217.
- <sup>33</sup> What might be called “deconstruction”, which has a trajectory extending through Heidegger, Nietzsche, Adorno, Bataille, Blanchot, and Derrida, all seem to be aligned with the dynamics of Hölderlin’s “Greek” theory. Especially its emphasis on sacrifice, and transgression, as the means to reconcile with the Other. Sacrifice as the means of passage from a restricted to a general economy. The embracing of silence, the purity of the other, difference. The critique of closure and the celebration of the non-closure of the work.
- <sup>34</sup> Hölderlin, “Letter to Neuffer”, see note below.
- <sup>35</sup> In fact, according to Gerhard van den Bergh, in his work *Adornos Philosophisches Deuten von Dichtung*, Hölderlin’s poetry, in the form analyzed in Adorno’s essay “Parataxis”, becomes the model of the work of art as developed by *Aesthetic Theory*.
- <sup>36</sup> Cf. Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*. Monadic illusion in the work of art is analyzed here with regard to whether it is broader or more narrow than objective reality.
- <sup>37</sup> According to Adorno, while Kierkegaard is able to affirm the interiority of a piece of music such as Mozart’s “Don Juan”, he would be unable “to have approved of a single phrase of Beethoven”. (p. 22). For Adorno, Beethoven would be to music as Hölderlin is to poetry: the self-cancellation of subjective interiority.
- <sup>38</sup> Novalis, *Henrich von Ofterdingen*, p. 111.
- <sup>39</sup> Paul Claudel, *L’Oiseau noir*, p. 229.
- <sup>40</sup> This work is one of the most important influences on German Romanticism. The distinction between the “naive” and “sentimental” will repeat itself in many different forms. This distinction is also the source of much disagreement among the Romantics. cf., the introduction to Wheeler, *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*.
- <sup>41</sup> See Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, where he speaks of the Kantian dynamic of the sublime being surpassed in this move towards “sobriety” and “lawful calculation. *Gesammelte Schriften* I.I.104.
- <sup>42</sup> Schelling writes:

To be intoxicated and sober, not at different times, but simultaneously - this is the secret of true poetry. It is this which distinguishes Apoline inspiration from the merely Dionysiac. An infinite content, and thus a content which actually resists form and appears to destroy all form - to depict such an infinite

content in its most complete, that is, in its most finite form, is the highest calling of art.

The above is cited in Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, p. 212 It is clear that Schelling is following the same distinction made in the Bohlendorff letter. However he resists the tragic “Greek” resolution. And does not follow the more allegorical dynamic of Hölderlin’s Modern aesthetic. Schelling needs the absolute to shine clearly through the perfectly crafted work. This aligns him closer to Hegel’s aesthetic.

Nietzsche develops the interaction of the Apollinian and Dionysian in various ways. It is Socrates who will become the transition between the Greek and the Modern in a Hölderlinian sense. The whole purpose of *The Birth of Tragedy* is a recovery of the tragic element for Modern man. A task that Hölderlin realizes is impossible.

- <sup>43</sup> While the sense of balance occurs for the Greek after his self-sacrifice, The Modern must possess this balance from the very beginning. This is why Hölderlin calls this aesthetic one of “calculation”. It is this aspect which will also interest Walter Benjamin in his *Zwei Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin*.
- <sup>44</sup> The theme of Sophocle’s *Ajax*, which interested Hölderlin greatly, and began to translate, is usually considered to be about the distinction between “hubris” and “sophrosyne”.
- <sup>45</sup> Hölderlin, “Pindar Fragments” trans. Jeremy Adler in *Comparative Criticism*, 6 (1984) pp. 41-46. (I have modified this translation).
- <sup>46</sup> For discussions concerning the Neoplatonic interpretations of the Hesiodic creation myths see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, p.87, pp.104-105, see also Pierre-Henri Hadot, “Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus in Plotinus’ Treatise Against the Gnostics”, in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. M.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus.
- <sup>47</sup> Herder of course uses this concept to distinguish his own culture from other cultures within his relativistic historical scheme. The word has developed suspicious overtones due to its appropriation by Nazi writers, however we should not harbor such suspicions with regard to Herder and Hölderlin. The “national”, the “fatherland”, the concept of “Heimat”, are merely words referring to the geological, cultural, historical, artistic landscapes from which any particular poetic spirit emerges.
- <sup>48</sup> The following is my own translation. I have attempted to translate Hölderlin’s poetry in the manner in which he translates Sophocles. That is, as literally as possible, and trying to retain his perfectly constructed ambiguities.
- <sup>49</sup> Hölderlin, “Notes to Antigone” trans. Jeremy Adler in *Comparative Criticism*, 5 (1983) pp. 205-244.

<sup>50</sup> This work would represent Rousseau's retreat from his role as a redeemer of mankind, to a life absorbed in the intricate particularities of nature. This *shift* is what Hölderlin has in mind. cf. Paul deMan, "The Image of Rousseau in Hölderlin" in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. deMan however will follow Adorno in his mis-reading of Hölderlin's modern poetic spirit.

Whereas the Greeks were destroyed by an action that was all to significant, we risk being destroyed by the very success of a thought all to lucid. (p. 42)

According to deMan, Hölderlin finds the solution in the experience of Rousseau. deMan focuses on strophes 10 to 12 of "The Rhein". Where the "demi-god" (Rousseau) retreats from the burning rays of the sun to the cool of the forest. According to deMan this retreat represents the "retreat into the self" which is to be found in the fifth "reverie" of Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. deMan writes of the connection of Hölderlin's retreat to Rousseau:

This retreat, this concentration of being in his own consciousness, this return to the originary I at the moment which this I, although saved from the temptation of the object, risks losing itself in the infinity of the divine parousia - this is Rousseau's profound fidelity to his nature as human being (for whom access to the divine is prohibited) and as demi-god (who cannot forget the presence of being in consciousness). (p. 43)

This retreat is also connected to a "forgetting".

Rather we have to forget the fullness of our thought itself when it has been put back on the path of truth - especially in its almost uncanny understanding of the past and its concrete anticipation of the future. At the moment when the western spirit reaches its maturity (when, as the hymn "Mnemosyne" says, "Ripe is the fruit, dipped in fire, cooked...") it permits a knowledge of its own genesis... but such that the power of its clarity threatens to blind like lightning. (p. 45)

And it is here that he, like Adorno, cites the final lines of "Mnemosyne" (we will investigate Adorno's reading in the next chapter). Hölderlin is read as advocating a retreat into pure passivity. But in Hölderlin we saw the dangers of interiority in the Modern poetic spirit just as well as the Greek poetic spirit. Hölderlin's "turn" - as some commentators call it - is not merely a reversal. The modern poetic spirit cancels itself in the state of solitude. This can only be overcome by positioning itself through free choice to an outer sphere - language. Moreover, Rousseau, far from retreating into the pure self, or pure present, recognizes the exact same thing. The *Reveries* did not represent a retreat into the self but a turn toward the particular processes of exterior nature. Also in *Emile*, in the section called "The Creed of a Savoyard Priest",

Rousseau writes:

There is some sort of moral order wherever there is feeling and intelligence. The difference is the good man orders his life in relation to all, while the bad man orders it in relation to himself. The latter makes himself the center of everything. The former measures his radius and remains at the circumference, so that his position is fixed in relation to the common center, which is God, and all the concentric circles, which are God's creatures. (*Emile*, p. 265)

It is not so much a retreat into the self as a recognition of the limits of the self in such a way that the self can be harmoniously opposed to an outer sphere. Here Hölderlin does indeed follow Rousseau and deMan has misread them both.

- <sup>51</sup> Notice how also in the history Medieval empiricism (through Henry of Ghent, Dun Scotus, and William of Ockham), it is the recognition of the absolute transcendence and omnipotence (and thus unpredictability) of God, which turns the attention philosophy away from divine things and towards particular empirical things.
- <sup>52</sup> For a reading of "Parataxis" which interprets Adorno's reading of Hölderlin as the "model" for his *Aesthetic Theory*, see Gerhard van den Bergh, *Adornos philosophisches Deuten von Dichten: Asthetische Theorie und Praxis der Interpretation: Der Hölderlin-Essay als Modell*.
- <sup>53</sup> Cf. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*. In "mythical thought" there is a repeated ritualistic return to a primordial mythical time. A repeated return to origins. One can say that mythical thought is "cyclic" while the time of Modern man is "linear".
- <sup>54</sup> Notice that this would from our standpoint redeem Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin in that he understands that he is intertwined in the destiny of the work of art, unlike Adorno who wants to disengage and stand back from it. Cf. Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymn "Andenken"*. Here Heidegger writes at the end of the *Vorbetrachtungen*: "Ohne die immer wieder versuchte Annäherung an das Wort des Dichters hat der Besuch dieser Vorlesung nicht den nötigen Anhalt." (p. 17).
- <sup>55</sup> Adorno, p. 142.
- <sup>56</sup> Hölderlin, *Werke*, band I, p. 394, (My translation) Notice here that the final lines "Vorwärts aber un ruckwärts wollen wir / Nicht sehn. Uns wiegen lassen, wie / Auf schwankem Kahne der See." There is an ambiguity here, is it the boat which is swaying or the sea which appears to sway as we see it from the boat?
- <sup>57</sup> See Mark 4:29, and Revelation 14:15-18.
- <sup>58</sup> Hölderlin, *Werke*, band I, pp. 394-395, (My translation). The last line "Gliech fehlet die Trauer" is translated by Sieburth as "Likewise, mourning is in error". For him it represents a warning against an excessive mourning for the death of Memory.

- <sup>59</sup> For Hegel too, the absolute cannot be captured by thought all at once. In the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* he develops the *thinking of the absolute* into a process. But notice that while Hegel has faith in the purity of his path, Hölderlin recognizes the danger of every path leading astray. Notice too that Hegel is disengaged (like Adorno) from his path in order to enjoy the fruits of the *glimpse* it achieves of the absolute.
- <sup>60</sup> Novalis had earlier developed this theme in his novel *Henrich von Ofterdingen*. In book two Henrich “the pilgrim” journeys into the mountains. This journey represents the tribulations and development of the poet. It is also a theme connected with Lenz, both in his own writings and in the modern prose piece by Büchner. The mad poet stalks the mountains, alone and far above the rest of humanity.
- <sup>61</sup> For the death of Patroclus, see Homer, *The Iliad*, book XVI, 780-862.
- <sup>62</sup> Beissner, “Hölderlins letzte Hymne” in *Über Hölderlin*. It is Beissner who is responsible for this reading of “Mnemosyne” which continues to generate debate. Beissner writes:

Das Lösen der Locken ist altgriechische Vorstellung, derzufolge der göttliche Todesbote eine Locke vom Stirnhaar des Todgeweihten trennt. Aus der Fülle der Belege, die aus griechischen und römischen Dichtern anzuführen wären, sei einer herausgegriffen. Im 4. Gesang der “Aeneis” läßt Virgil die Todesbotin Iris zu der sterbenden Dido sagen, sie scheidet sie nun auf Plutos Geheiß von ihrem Leibe: “- sic ait et dextra crinem secat”. Schiller übersetzt 1792: “Sie sagt und lößt das Haar ab”; in der Fassung von 1803: “...und lößt die Locke”. “als ablegte den Mantel Gott”: das bedeutet: als der griechische Göttertag zu Ende war. In der dritten Fassung des Gesangs, der mit den Worten beginnt “Versöhnender der du nimmergeglaubt...” tritt Gott (der “Vater”), nachdem er wie ein Meister bis zum Feiertag (und für den Feiertag) gearbeitet, aus der Werkstatt und zieht ein festliches Gewand an. - Hier legt er am Ende des Feiertags den Mantel, das Feierkleid, ab. Erwägen Sie nun recht die furchtbare Bedeutung dieser Vision von Tode der Mnemosyne: daß mit den Helden auch ihr Gedächtnis gestorben wäre, daß nichts behalten und alle Treue tot wäre! Das wäre nach dem Untergang des griechischen Feiertags eine Nacht ohne Hoffnung auf einen neuen Morgen, eine Nacht ganz anders, als sie in der Elegie “Brod und Wein” gefeiert wird. (p. 151)

There is of course a point to be made for the reading of the death of memory. It is memory which as we saw gives direction to our paths. If it is true that all paths are evil, memory would seem to have failed us. But Hölderlin is cultivating an ambiguity. The reading which Beissner ignores is the sexual reading. God takes off his cloak, Mnemosyne “lets down her locks” and they sleep together for nine nights. From

this union results the nine Muses who are responsible for artistic inspiration. Art is a sanctuary for conflict. It is equivalent to the return to the particular, the return to the natural process, light and shadow, the standing in the field. I believe it is this image which Hölderlin puts forth as an image of “hope” in the face of the “night” which Beissner speaks of. In support of the reading that Mnemosyne does not die, see Junger, *Mnemosyne und die Musen*. pp. 264-272.

<sup>63</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, 53-57

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*.

<sup>65</sup> Hesiod writes: “Blessed is the man whom the Muses love; sweet song flows from his mouth. A man may have some fresh grief over which to mourn, and sorrow may have left him no more tears, but if a singer, a servant of the Muses, sing the glories of ancient men and hymns the blessed gods who dwell on Olympos, the heavy hearted man soon shakes off his dark mood, and forgetfulness soothes his grief, for this gift of the gods diverts his mind. (*Theogony*, 96-103).

<sup>66</sup> Some of the fragments we have of Hölderlin’s attempt to translate Sophocles’ *Ajax*, deal with this relationship between memory and forgetting of troubles. The following is my translation:

Ares has relaxed the cruel sorrow from the eyes.  
Io, Io, Now also,  
Now Zeus appears to the white light  
Of the beautiful day driving  
The fast ships, there Ajax,  
Forgets his troubles, again, also the Gods  
The beautiful smoke of sacrifice  
Completed, are lawfully served  
With highness.  
Everything draws from the great age, thereby it  
Passes away. And I name nothing insensible  
Since unexpected, Ajax in courage reconciled  
With the Atreidae form great strife.  
(*Werke*, band II, p. 463)

Memory would here be the memory of the Greek age of the divine. And again there is a perfectly crafted ambiguity here. On one hand the signs of the divine are a warning to the modern poet to stick to the natural processes and shady paths, on the other hand the signs of these demi-god make us forget our troubles as we remember the age when the divine was present.

- <sup>67</sup> Supporting this less pessimistic reading, it should also be noted that the passage in the last version of the poem concerning Mnemosyne, is the replacement for the following passage in the first version.

With their own hand  
Many sad, wild courageous [ones], still Godly  
Compelled, finally [die], But the others  
Stand in destinies, in the Field  
(*Werke*, band I, p. 394)

Mit eigener Hand  
Viel traurige, wilden Muts, doch gottlich  
Gezwungen, zuletzt, die anderen aber  
Im Gesckicke stehend, im Feld.

- <sup>68</sup> In Pindar's "Nemean Ode VII" we find the same cast of characters. Although Hölderlin seems to have never translated this ode, it would be the closest to Hölderlin's "Mnemosyne", it is Pindar's most pessimistic ode concerning art.

It begins with Eleithyia, the director of man's destinies, and proceeds to the remembrance of destiny through song. In the second strophe we read:

Even high deeds of bravery  
Have a great darkness if they lack song;  
We can hold a mirror to fine doings  
In one way only,  
If with the help of Memory in her glittering crown  
Recompense is found for labor  
In echoing words of song.

But song also distorts the deeds of men. Against Homer, Pindar writes:

But I hold that the name of Odysseus  
Is more than his sufferings  
Because of Homer's sweet singing;  
For on his untruths and winged cunning  
A majesty lies.  
Art beguiles and cheats with its tales,  
And often the heart of the human herd is blind.  
If it could have seen the truth,  
Ajax would not, in wrath about armor,  
Have driven a smooth sword through his breast.  
After Achilles he was the strongest in battle



Song itself involves certain dangers, over or underestimation of deeds and destinies.  
Yet Pindar recognizes that as a poet he must go on.

I am a guest. I keep black reproach away.  
I shall bring true glory like running water  
To the man that I love, and praise him.  
This reward is right for the noble.

The best he can do is to try to minimize the distortion of his song.

I have not overshot my mark; I have thrust  
All violence from my goings.  
May the rest of my days come to me with kindness.  
Anyone who knows me can tell  
If I come with a song that is harsh and out of tune.

<sup>69</sup> Werke, band I, s. 336

<sup>70</sup> Werke, band I, s. 337

<sup>71</sup> Werke, band I, s. 337

<sup>72</sup> Hölderlin, *Werke*, band I, p. 392, (my translation).

<sup>73</sup> Many contemporary readings of Hölderlin follow what might be called a deconstructive reading. By *deconstructive* I simply mean those readings of Hölderlin which see his work as self-cancellation of the unity of the subject and language, and stress the impossibility of directly achieving the divine state. They read Hölderlin as anticipating in his work the type of deconstructive strategies prevalent in contemporary discourse. We saw in Adorno how this involved a one-sided reading which had the effect of eliminating conflict by reducing it to a state of passivity. Other readings follow this same strategy.

Lacoue-Labarthe, in his essay “The Caesura of the Speculative”, follows Adorno quite closely. But instead of using the idea of “parataxis” to deconstruct rational “synthesis”, he uses the concept of the “caesura” to deconstruct the “speculative” which amounts to the same thing. Again it is a matter of the self-cancellation of the speculative from the inside.

Hölderlin, by a movement of “regression”,... comes to touch upon something that dislocates *from within* the speculative. Something that immobilizes it and prohibits it - or rather distends and suspends it. Something that constantly prevents it from completing itself and never ceases, by doubling it, to divert it from itself, to dig into it in such a way as to create a spiral, and to bring about its collapse. Or that interrupts it, from place to place, and provokes its “spasm”. (p. 227)

This “spasm” is accomplished through the “caesura”, which is an element of Hölderlin’s interpretation of the tragic. The very essence of the tragic for Lacoue-Labarthe is the idea of the “hyperbologic”.

the more the tragic is identified with the speculative desire for the infinite and the divine, the more tragedy presents it as a casting into separation, differentiation, finitude. Tragedy, then, is the catharsis of the speculative. (p. 232)

It is this “hyperbologic” dynamic which is responsible for the internal self-cancellation of speculative.

Thus, he who desires difference and exclusion excludes himself, and suffers, to the point of irreversible loss, this inexorable, unlimited differentiation that the “hyperbologic” introduces in its doubling of the dialectical-sacrificial process in such a way as to prevent its culmination and paralyze it *from within*. Tragedy, because it is the catharsis of the speculative, presents disappropriation as that which secretly animates and constitutes it; tragedy presents (dis)appropriation. This is why Oedipus incarnates the madness of knowledge (all knowledge is the desire for appropriation) and represents, in his tragic course, the “demented quest for a consciousness”: nothing other, perhaps, than the madness of self-consciousness. (p. 233)

The sacrifice of language (of the speculative) is here again the sacrifice of the subject. Although in another essay he acknowledges that Hölderlin goes beyond the sacrificial model in his later work, he stresses that the later work must be understood according to this “hyperbologic” which is the essence of the tragic.

...only the “hyperbologic” is capable of accounting for the scheme of this “double turning about” upon which Hölderlin’s last thought is founded and according to which the very excess of the speculative switches into the very excess of submission to finitude (a scheme in which the “categorical” turning about of the divine corresponds to the *volte-face*, as Beaufret says, of man toward the earth, his pious infidelity, and his extended wandering “under the unthinkable”, which fundamentally define the Kantian age to which we belong. (p. 232)

Again, as in Adorno, and characteristic of the deconstructive strategy, in the face of the self-cancellation of the speculative, we are left in a state of passivity. Just as in Adorno’s musical analogies of this dynamic, the harmony of the work is destroyed and one is left with “rhythm”.

Such a disarticulation of the work and of the process of succession through alternations that constitutes it as such - by which we pass (and here again,

by what effect of “regression”?) from a *melodic* conception of the work to a *rhythmic* one - does not do away with the logic of exchange and alternation. It simply brings it to a halt, reestablishes its equilibrium; it prevents it, as Hölderlin says, from carrying along its representations exclusively in one sense or another... The disarticulation represents the active neutrality of the interval between [entre-deux]. (T, p. 234-235)

What is emphasized is not any of the poles of the conflict but the “between” of the conflict. In so doing the speculative is frozen, “paralyzed”. Lacoue-Labarthe will say that Hölderlin “caesuraed the speculative (which is not to go beyond it, or to maintain it, or to sublimate it) and in so doing, rediscover something of the “Trauerspiel” (p. 235). We end up in the same position which Adorno read into the final lines of the third version of “Mnemosyne”.

Forwards however and backwards we  
Don't want to look, left to rock  
Like a swaying boat on the sea.

A prescription for the passive retreat into the pure present.

Warminski very carefully focuses upon Hölderlin's “turn” from the Greek to the Modern aesthetics. This for him has a structure similar to the “chiasm” described in Merleau-Ponty's work *The Visible and the Invisible*. It becomes a chiasm which cannot be crossed. With this in mind Warminski criticizes readings of Hölderlin which remain in the Greek dynamic and ignore the oriental elements in his poetry, and here he rightly criticizes Lacoue-Labarthe. But he goes further, identifying the Modern with the Egyptian. Warminski's identification of the Egyptians with the Moderns however goes against his appropriation of the *chiasm* with its impossibility of passage. Although at times Hölderlin is attracted to *cyclic* metaphors, especially with regard to Empedocles, it is not such that a pure symmetry between the Egyptians and the Moderns can be established. It goes against process, experience, memory, the allegory of the river, and the continuing importance of “holding oneself” within the sanctuary of the work of art.

Finally, Warminski's emphasis on the failure of communication, the pure inaccessibility of the Greek, I believe follows a deconstructive (and therefore sacrificial) logic, which is in complicity with Hölderlin's Greek theory. In the end he seems to be guilty of the same thing for which he attacks Lacoue-Labarthe.

Kuzniar, in her work *Delayed Endings* attempts to show how both Novalis and Hölderlin develop a type of writing which forever postpones parousia and closure. Kuzniar recognizes the ambiguity present in Hölderlin: the conflict of the pure and impure, the desire to follow paths and the desire to retreat into the pure present, the

conflict of “presence” and “absence”. Yet she opts for “absence” and centers her discussion around the same isolated lines of Mnemosyne.

The language of the poet is left to forever wander under the absence of the divine, waiting for some future time when the divine returns. Hölderlin’s language is a kind of waiting.

[Hölderlin] knows his site to be one of dislocation and loss, reflected in the ellipses of his verse and in his intricate syntax. Hölderlin interrupts, complicates, and even at times suspends articulated language. He discovers a speech which maintains silence. Paradoxically then, displacement serves to orient Hölderlin’s poetic voice; it renders his verse unique and distinctive. By constantly correcting itself, Hölderlin’s voice constitutes itself. Likewise paradoxically, we can say that the period of waiting about which Hölderlin writes is pregnant and attentive in its silence. Indeed, the word *still* meaning both *silent* and *quiet*, appears with notable frequency in his verse. Hölderlin’s keen sense of absence is coupled with the posture of listening. He matches the fear of misrepresentation with a desire for presence in language. (p. 166)

The conflict is mediated by a kind of perpetual wandering of language, nonclosure, delayed ending. This is similar to the perpetual wandering of writing in wake of the failure of onto-theology for Derrida.

It is difficult to do justice to such readings in so short a space. Yet it is not enough to recognize Hölderlin’s desire for the “presence” of language against the all-pervasive “absence” of the age, and then to focus of the “inbetween”. Certainly Hölderlin in creating contradiction and ambiguity in his discourse wants to avoid the affirmation of one side of the conflict over the other, but also he does not want to negate this conflict by falling into the “inbetween”, which is a type of conceptual mediation.

Likewise it is a mistake to see Hölderlin as “assassinating” language, “paralyzing” speculation, retreating into the “pure present”, retreating into the “self”, since such ideas involve a negation and mediation of conflict. But this is the whole strategy of Deconstruction since it has no positive answers in the face of the sins of logocentrism, onto-theology, the “fading” of the subject, the “fragmentation” of experience. Its discourse then is one of waiting, silence, to allow the possibility of new and unanticipated voices to emerge from their own repressed silence. Deconstruction always retreats to a state of passivity, and self-cancellation.

Furthermore, deconstructive strategies depend upon the idea of “displacement”, in other words a pure outside of the work. Against which the failure of the illusion of the purity of the work can be seen. We can say that deconstruction is has a *sacrificial*

logic. And it is this very logic that Hölderlin turns away from. For Hölderlin, as we saw, there is no pure position outside of the conflict of positions within the work.

Likewise the discourse of Postmodernism develops its ideas concerning the fading of the subject, fragmentation, and the failure of meta-narratives only against a pure negative space. Postmodernism is also sacrificial.

The language of Hölderlin however represents a real conflict between passivity and activity, between the desire to say something (the speculative) and the impossibility of saying it (the deconstruction of the speculative). Any attempt to characterize the voice of Hölderlin as anticipating these deconstructive strategies loses its most important trait - conflict.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 385, (my translation).

<sup>75</sup> This would follow the idea that any aesthetic theory is not a “construction” separate from the work, but a “commentary” directly intertwined in the destiny of the work.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Tom McCall, “Plastic Time and Poetic Middles: Benjamin’s Hölderlin.” in *Studies in Romanticism*, 31 (Winter 1992) pp. 481-499. McCall translates “Das Gedichtete” as the “poematized”. See also Rainer Nagele “Benjamin’s Ground”, and David Wellbery, “Benjamin’s Theory of the Lyric”, in *Benjamin’s Ground*, ed. Rainer Nagele.

<sup>77</sup> We find something similar in medieval Persian poetry. This poetry is also one of “calculation”. The word for poetry – “nazm” – means “ordering”, while the word for prose – “nathr” – means “scattered”. See A. Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> See for example Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.

<sup>79</sup> These letters are translated in Taylor, *Aesthetics and Politics*, p. 123.

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