

21st Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 21st July 2013

REALISM VERSUS IDEALISM

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At least two ideologies need to be rebutted: on the one hand, the naturalist ideology, the phantasm of authenticity and purity, which cleaves to the cult of immediacy and the belief in the unmediated; on the other hand, the masochistic submission to fact. The masochist to fact is a subject that resembles Nietzsche's last man; his disappointment becomes absolute; it is, to him, religion after religion, a substitute for belief in which he invests his libido. The gesture of Adorno's thinking is always this double gesture, rejecting simple realism and simple idealism in favor of expanded concepts of both realism and idealism, in the name of what he gives us to think as an implicit incommensurability, in favor of a being that "amounts to more than what is, to more than the empirical." For "what is essential to art is that which in it is not the case, that which is incommensurable with the empirical measure of all things," as it marks the introjection of the new into the familiar, as an invention amid what already is, creative: "art is actually the world once over, as like it as it is unlike it."¹

Adorno uses the Wittgensteinian trope of what is the case to determine the already determined, which he associates with the immanence of culture, i.e., what already exists. The *back to nature* (or to the original rule of *phusis*) obfuscates nature's mediacy. It befits the pathos of any ontology (Adorno, of course, is thinking first and foremost of Heidegger) that aims at the "subject area of the pure,"² at the immediate that functions at the center of any ideological construction as its stabilizer. Against it we must insist on the mediacy of the natural: "In the universally mediated world everything experienced in primary terms is culturally preformed. Whoever wants the other has to start with the immanence of culture, in order to break out through it."³

Such breaking out is what art and philosophy have in common. Both art and philosophy are about being taken in neither by naturalist purism nor by the no less ideological culturalism as they do not cease to drill holes into the immanence of what already exists.

1 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 426–27, and cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, vol. 7 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 383.

2 Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (New York: Routledge, 2003), 80.

3 *Ibid.*, 81.