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ART & FACTS
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1. We must resist both with the same intransigence: the absolutism of thought as much as its relationism, blind universality as much as blind particularity.
2. That the non-existing is composed of the existing does not mean that it now itself *is*.
3. It means that the absolute shows itself only in the relational (or, also, the relative), the universal only in the particular, but as something elusive and intangible that resists reduction to fact.
4. The “affront to the reigning needs” to which, according to Theodor W. Adorno, the works of art have an “inherent tendency” is an affront to the world of fact, to its promise of coherency, to its positivist affirmation of the status quo, which is to say, to all those logics that legitimate “transformation of consciousness” as much as “transformation of reality” under the precondition that nothing be truly transformed, that everything remain more or less as it is: familiar rather than unfamiliar, known rather than unknown, etc.
5. Yet the affront to established reality implies that “different lights [are cast] on the familiar,”¹ a shift that, even if it does not substitute for this reality a second, a wholly different world, releases a radically altered relation to it, a relation of disquiet, a sort of fever that reveals to the subject the element of unfamiliarity in its reality.
6. The Hegelian attempt “to do away with foreignness” turns into its opposite, into the attempt to resist this temptation, in an effort to bring a little disquiet and foreignness into our orderly affairs, not from outside but from within these very affairs, since what they call order remains tied to a pre-synthetic disorderliness often called “chaos.”

7. Jacques Rancière has rightly pointed out that a certain “valorization of the incommensurable” (or of “chaos”) can by now look back on a “rather long genealogy”² in the self-description of modernity (and this genealogy probably reaches back further than modernity, although it is part of it insofar as modernity constitutes itself as an active mediation to its pre-modern “dark” or “unconscious” elements), and that (here he refers to Flaubert) the traversing of the chaos and the mediation of its force in the work “separates” art “from the *everything merges* of explosive madness or consensual idiocy.”³

8. If we translate this claim into Adorno’s conceptual apparatus, the definition we arrive at is something like the following: the work of art is a double affront, on the one hand to the merely “already existing” (the homogeneous world, including its consensualisms), on the other hand to the (purely) non-identical or heterogeneous (chaos), as it enacts the contentious compossibility of both orders under the title of *art*.

1 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 317.

2 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 34.

3 *Ibid.*, 47.