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CONTESTING HIERARCHICAL OPPOSITIONS: THE DIALECTICS OF ADORNO AND LACAN

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Introduction

Modern capitalist societies are plagued by the prevalence of a series of oppositions, such as the subject/object, theory/practice, and the mind/body opposition. The problem with these oppositions is that they appear in an absolute opposition and in a hierarchical relation, which makes the negative pole (the object, practice and the body) appear inferior to the positive pole. In my previous work I have shown that the "inferior" pole is (often unconsciously) linked to women, racial minorities and working-class people, which leads to injustices towards these groups and upholds the hierarchies themselves.[1]

The central questions that concern me in this essay are the following: How are these oppositions connected and different from one another? And what can we do to challenge them and deal with the injustices they engender? I read Adorno in conjunction with Lacan to find answers to these questions, showing that at the center of Adorno and Lacan's thought is an effort to expose and challenge hierarchical oppositions. The different languages these thinkers employ in this enterprise are a result of the theoretical traditions they draw on: Adorno draws on Marx and Lacan draws on Freud.

However, Adorno goes beyond Marx and Lacan goes beyond Freud because of two central concepts we find in their thought: the non-identical in Adorno and the Real in Lacan.[2] In a recent article, I explained the commonalities and differences between these concepts as a means of challenging the hierarchical subject/object opposition. I have shown that the non-identical and the Real point to the remainder in concepts (Adorno) and signifiers (Lacan), which tells us that we cannot fully theorize the subject. At the same time, these concepts allow us to theorize an *outline* of a subject, which is necessary if we are to effect transformations in the socio-political sphere.[3]

In this article I deepen and expand on the combinative effect of Adorno and Lacan as a means of explaining in what ways the subject/object opposition is connected to the mind/body and theory/praxis opposition and what we can do to challenge these oppositions. Although at the core of both thinkers' projects is an attempt to expose hierarchies, Adorno, more than Lacan, explains the dialectical relation of oppositions and their link to a particular society and historical moment—to modern, capitalist societies. Lacan, on the other side, allows us to get a better grasp on central themes, such as subject-formation and the relation between subject and object.

Neither Adorno nor Lacan is easily accessible. This is one reason why many scholars shy away from an engagement with their theoretical frameworks. However, their difficult writing, which makes it perhaps impossible to fully understand them, points towards the fruitful moment of the non-identical and the Real, as it opens up a space to appropriate and refine Adorno and Lacan's thought. If that space is closed in an attempt to fully grasp them, our theorizing is in danger of becoming what Adorno called "identity thinking," a thinking that contributes to oppression instead of alleviating it.

Adorno and Lacan are placed at the margins of political theory. A reason for this is their radical critique of the autonomy of the subject, which critique led to the false accusation that they did away with the subject altogether, a line that has been predominant in continental thought since the late 1960's. Since they dispense with the subject, so the critique runs, their thought is not fit for political theory, which needs a subject that is not completely determined by objective structures if the subject is to be in a position to effect change.

The first section, "Adorno and Lacan on the Subject/Object Dialectics," challenges such a critique. It explains that although both of these thinkers critique the primacy of the subject, they do not dispense with the subject altogether. Rather, their conceptions of the non-identical and the Real allow us to think about a subject who is capable of challenging injustice in the socio-political sphere without becoming oppressive. Moreover, Lacan's starting out from the objective dimension in his theory of the subject challenges those readings that accuse him—and psychoanalysis in general—of reducing socio-political phenomena to the psyche of the subject.

The second section, "A Failed Subject/Object Dialectics," explains what happens if the subject sets herself as prior to and above the object and we are confronted with a hierarchical subject/object opposition: we are led into the Lacanian dimension of the imaginary, where the subject

falsely believes herself to be autonomous from the objective dimension, whereas she is in fact ruled by it. Lacan assists us here to grasp the Adornian assertion that the subject is more radically mediated by the object than the other way around. Adorno, on the other hand, allows us to grasp the socio-political dimension of the imaginary domain.

The third section, "Alienation, Conformity and the Myth of Science," shows that a hierarchical subject/object opposition leads to alienated subjects who conform to the status quo instead of challenging it. It explains Adorno and Lacan's similar treatment of science and enlightenment rationality as contributing to alienation and conformity in capitalist societies. Whereas Adorno shows us that the blind repetition of facts leads to the subject's conformity, Lacan explains that conformity is the result of the threat of punishment. Both thinkers show us that we find the hierarchical subject/object opposition in both enlightenment rationality and myth.

The fourth section, "The Mind/Body Opposition and Fascism," traces in what ways a failed subject/object dialectics is connected to the hierarchical mind/body opposition. Both Adorno and Lacan attacked the hierarchical mind/body opposition, where we find the "despised body" above the "pure mind." This opposition leads to cold subjects who have ceased to have any care for one another. Without such coldness the disasters of modernity, such as fascism, could not have been possible. This section challenges those critics who accuse Adorno and Lacan of abstracting from the body and merely focusing on the mind.

The fifth section, "Adorno, Lacan and the Possibility of a Political Praxis of Change," shows how the hierarchical theory/praxis opposition is connected to the mind/body opposition. It explains that both thinkers employ a dialectical approach to the theory/praxis opposition and as such do not aim to do away with praxis, as they are often accused of trying to do. Rather, both authors are concerned with a pseudo-praxis that abstracts from theory. This section also shows that we can arrive at a political praxis of change only via a subject who acknowledges the moment of non-completion, and as such remains an outline.

The sixth and last section, "Feminism and the Challenge to Hierarchical Oppositions" applies some of the themes discussed in the earlier sections with the aim of thinking about how we can address and redress the gender, class and racial injustices in contemporary societies. It shows the centrality of mediation in challenging hierarchical oppositions and explains the necessity of challenging the (often unconscious) linkage of women, racial minorities and working-class people to the negative poles of hierarchical oppositions. Furthermore, it proposes an outline of a feminist subject to address the concerns of all women through non-whole concepts.

I. Adorno and Lacan on Subject/Object Dialectics

Like Adorno, Lacan argues that it is impossible to unify oppositions once they split in reality: "When one gives rise to two, there is never a return. They don't revert to making one again, even if it is a new one. *Aufhebung* is one of philosophy's pretty little dreams."[4] However, Adorno, more than Lacan, helps us understand that philosophy's little dream of *Aufhebung* contributes to the lie that a society is free of antagonism. For Adorno oppositions are both real and a semblance. They are a semblance insofar as they appear as absolute opposites and in a hierarchical relation.

Yet they are at the same time *real*, insofar as they are the expression of the *Gespaltenheit* (*rivenness*) of a society.[5] Attempts to get rid of the *Spalte* by unifying them, or by pretending that they do not exist, are for Adorno nothing else but "an oblique projection of pacified, no longer antagonistic conditions upon the coordinates of supremacist, oppressive thinking."[6] Adorno finds such oppressive thinking in sociological theories that propagate a "classless society." By insinuating a false picture of class harmony, such theories blind people to the actual existence of class antagonism.[7]

In order to challenge hierarchical oppositions and the forms of oppression they engender, both Adorno and Lacan argue that we need to wake up from the dream of *Aufhebung*. However, this "awakening" comes with a danger: once we realize the impossibility of either unifying oppositions or doing away with them, there is a problematic tendency to characterize them as absolute. "If the dualism of subject and object were laid down as a basic principle," argues Adorno, "it would . . . be another monism. Absolute duality would be unity."[8] Adorno *and* Lacan (albeit differently) used the concept of "*mediation*" to avoid any false unity.[9]

Mediation implies in Adorno's thought that opposite poles are both dependent upon and independent from each other. The moment one pole denies its dependence on the other pole and sets itself up as first, we are confronted with a hierarchy between the two poles—and with that injustice sets in.[10] Mediation requires us to recognize, argues Adorno, that subject and object "are neither an ultimate duality nor a screen hiding ultimate unity. They constitute one another since by virtue of such constitution, they depart from each other."[11] The moment the subject sets herself as prior and above the object, oppression sets in.[12]

Lacan's theory of the subject explains then what Adorno means by the argument that subject and object constitute each other. The subject is constituted in the *symbolic* domain, the domain of language, or the Other with a capitalized O via the signifier.[13] The subject becomes a subject through *identifying* with the signifier, which explains the objective moment in subjectivity and why the subject is constituted by the object.[14] However, the subject at the same time constitutes the symbolic domain, insofar as she (re)creates signifiers, and with that the symbolic order, which explains the subjective moment in the objective dimension.

Lacan's theory of the subject can help us also to get a deeper understanding of Adorno's argument that subject and object at the same time depart from each other. Here it is necessary to introduce the Lacanian domain of the *Real.* In Lacan's theory of the subject, the subject's identification with the signifier still does not allow her to become entirely whole either, because there is a hole in the w/hole of the symbolic order and its signifiers, which refers to the Real. The Real is linked to the imaginary and the symbolic, but it is neither symbolic nor imaginary. Its constitution lies at the juncture of the symbolic and the imaginary.[15]

The Real is an element in the symbolic domain that resists absolute symbolization. Since the subject only becomes a subject through identifying with the signifier, the moment of the Real demonstrates that the object fails to fully determine the subject, which opens up the subject's possibility of challenging the symbolic order and its signifiers. The moment of the hole in the signifier also entails the subject's failure to fully determine the objective dimension.[16] There can therefore be no ultimate unity between subject and object since both remain non-whole in the symbolic domain.

What Lacan expresses with the moment of the Real in the signifier, Adorno expresses with the moment of the non-identical in the concept:[17] "The name of dialectics says no more, than that objects do not go into concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy."[18] In addition, Lacan expresses the moment of the Real as the "remainder" (*un reste*) in the signifier. The moment of the Real and the moment of the non-identical are a critical force insofar as they interrupt any totality in the signifier (Lacan) or the concept (Adorno).

Adorno challenges the primacy of the subject by starting out from what the subject aimed to render inferior: the object. Similarly, Lacan decenters the subject by showing us that the subject is a result of the signifier, or the objective dimension. However, this "starting out" from the objective dimension does not imply that these thinkers have given up on the subject altogether. Rather, the moment of the non-identical and the

Real allows us to think about a subject who necessarily needs to remain an *outline*, to avoid the dangers of what Adorno terms identity or totalizing thinking.[19]

For Adorno, doing away with the subject or the proposal of some notion of a "pure object" is problematic since it is nothing else but "the very reflection of abstract subjectivity: only it makes the Other like itself through abstraction."[20] According to Adorno, we need a subject, who acknowledges the non-identical, to counter hierarchical oppositions. In addition, Lacan's starting out from the objective dimension to explain the emergence of the subject does not imply a desire to do away with the subject altogether. Lacan makes clear that only a subject who identifies with the signifier can escape the violence characteristic of the imaginary domain.[21]

The moment the subject denies her mediatedness with the object (and with denial glosses over the moment of the non-identical and the Real), we are confronted with a hierarchical subject/object relation. If the subject/object dialectics fails, then the ego instead of the subject is born. Lacan distinguishes the ego in the imaginary from the subject in the symbolic domain: "If speech does not *mediate* between the subject and the other, it is only violence and a reduction of the other to the functions of the ego."[22] The violence that a failed subject/object dialectics engenders will be further explored in the following sections.

A reading of Lacan with Adorno allows us to get a deeper understanding of the mediated nature of the subject/object opposition. With the notion of identification in his theory of the subject, Lacan shows us why and how the subject is constituted by the objective dimension. The relation of the subject to the symbolic order and its signifiers explains further how and why the subject also constitutes the objective dimension. Moreover, the moment of the Lacanian Real, which implies parallels with the moment of the Adornian non-identical, explains why subject and object also depart from each other.

A reading of Adorno with Lacan allows us to historicize Lacan and thereby to understand that a failed subject/object dialectics is prevalent in this particular form in what Adorno calls "late capitalist societies," where we find a *Gespaltenheit,* a rivenness in society, of which hierarchical oppositions are an expression. Moreover, the combinative theoretical framework of Adorno and Lacan puts the concept of "mediation," which does not have as central a place in Lacan's thought as in Adorno's thought, at the forefront. The complementary Adorno/Lacan framework, therefore, sheds light on subject/object dialectics.

II. A Failed Subject/Object Dialectics

In identity thinking (which is for Adorno the predominant form of thinking in late capitalist societies), we encounter a failed subject/object dialectics. Here the subject aims to abstract from and set herself above the object by declaring herself free and autonomous, the ruler of her affairs. However, Adorno makes clear that any notion of an autonomous subject in capitalist societies is a mere delusion since the subject is more radically mediated by the object than the other way around: "The object is also mediated, but, according to its own concept," he argues, "it is not so thoroughly dependent upon subject as subject is dependent upon objectivity."[23]

Lacan's dimension of the imaginary supports Adorno's argument about the subject's radical mediation by the object. Lacan does not himself link the imaginary to capitalism. Rather, it is my reading of Adorno with Lacan—which asserts a failed subject/object dialectics in both the imaginary and capitalism—that supports such a link. In the imaginary domain, the subject (or more precisely the ego) is more radically mediated by the object than the other way around since the subject is nothing else but the object. As Lacan puts the matter, the "I is an other (*Je est un autre*)."[24] Lacan introduces two forms of identification to explain the (failed) subject/object dialectics.

Whereas in the symbolic domain the subject identifies with the signifier to become a subject, in the imaginary domain she aims at total identification with an idealized, whole image of an other with a small o—either the fellow human being or the subject's mirror image, which refers to identity thinking.[25] The mirror stage is the original adventure in which the subject, for the first time,[26] obtains an imaginary mastery over her body via identification with an idealized "whole" image of an other. This mastery is imaginary because it is premature in relation to real mastery.

The mirror stage is, therefore, the moment that allows the subject, for the first time, the experience of "conceiving of [her/]himself as other than [s/]he is."[27] Any notion of an autonomous ego is then for Lacan so "deluded that one has to start by shedding the scales from one's eyes, as to realize what kind of illusion one has fallen prey."[28] Adorno exposes such an illusion in what he terms identity thinking. In identity thinking the subject aims to fully identify the object, and with that act to do away with the non-identical moment in the concept. Adorno refers here to the centrality of identification by terming identity thinking also *identifying thinking*.

However, Lacan's two notions of identification in the imaginary and symbolic domain allow us to understand why identification is central in both identity and what Adorno terms *dialectical thinking*. In dialectical thinking the subject acknowledges the remainder in the concept instead of discarding it. However, dialectical thinking is for Adorno not radically different from identity thinking because "we cannot think without identifying. Any definition is identification."[29] In dialectical thinking, which points to the Lacanian symbolic identification, the subject does not aim at full identification, but acknowledges the non-identical.

The creation of signifiers without a consideration of the Real or the non-identical leads to the creation of fixed signifiers. This has consequences for the subject, who, to become a subject, has to subject herself to the signifier.[30] In *Book XI,* Lacan explains the double function of the signifier that "functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject."[31] Similarly, Adorno argues that the prevalence of concepts, in which the moment of non-identity is discarded, leads to the *suffering* of subjects subsumed under fixed concepts.

Although Adorno shows us at certain points in his thought that identity thinking leads to the creation of the ego, he does not, like Lacan, make a sharp distinction between the subject and the ego, and he uses these terms somewhat interchangeably. The consequence of this limitation is that at certain points he even proposes a strengthening of the ego to counter identity thinking.[32] However, Lacan makes clear that any notion of ego does not lead us out of, but rather perpetuates, identity thinking. Nonetheless, Adorno is at certain points in his writing also aware that identity thinking and the ego are connected.

Adorno acknowledges for example the problematic American appropriation of Freudian psychoanalysis, which stresses the autonomous function of the ego. For him this appropriation is a misreading that turns the radical character of Freudian analysis into identity thinking. For Adorno, "Freudian psychoanalysis does not so much help to weave the appearance of individuality as it destroys it."[33] If the autonomy of the ego is declared, then Freudian theory becomes, according to him, nothing else "but another instrument to integrate psychical motions into the societal status quo."[34]

In a similar vein as Adorno, Lacan critiques the American appropriation of Freudian psychoanalysis. "Freud wanted to avoid the mirage of the famous total personality," argues Lacan, "that hasn't failed to regain the upper hand throughout the entire American school which continues to relish the term, promoting the restoration of the *primacy* of the ego. This is a complete misrecognition of Freud's teaching."[35] Like

Adorno, Lacan argues that a primacy of the ego in psychoanalysis, which asks the analysand to identify with the ego of the psychoanalyst, leads to nothing else but the subject's adaptation to the status quo.[36]

In *Zu Subjekt und Objekt*, Adorno explains further that "the solidity of the epistemological ego is modeled after the unreflected experience of the enduring, identical object."[37] Lacan's theory of the subject can help us understand how such "modeling" comes about and why any "solidity" of the ego is delusional. Lacan argues that the subject cannot achieve any solidity via the imaginary identification with an other. Rather, on the imaginary plane, any wholeness threatens to dissolve at every moment. This fundamental precariousness of the ego has consequences for both the subject (or more precisely the ego) and the other in the imaginary relation.

The subject aims to shore up her fragile ego through successive identifications with an idealized whole other that place the subject in a state of dependence relative to an idealized, forced image of an other—which leads to Lacan's argument that any notion of an autonomous ego is deceptive.[38] Moreover, the imaginary identification has negative consequences for the other. The subject's compulsion to reach an impossible identity leads to violence towards the other because the other is reduced to an ideal whole image of the subject, which Lacan underlines with the statement that, in the imaginary domain, "the other is me (*moi*)."[39]

Like Lacan, Adorno explains the violence inherent in the subject's denial of her mediatedness with the object: "Once radically separated from the object," he argues, "[the] subject reduces the object to itself."[40] A difference between Adorno and Lacan lies in their hope of reconciliation between the subject and the object. Lacan, more than Adorno, is critical of the notion of reconciliation. For him a reconciled state, or utopia, bears all the dangers of the imaginary, where we discover the philosophical imperialism of annexing difference, a problem I found in Adorno's writings on the working-class woman as a utopian construction.[41]

A reading of Lacan with Adorno has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of Adorno's argument that in capitalist societies the subject is more radically mediated by the object than the other way around. Lacan's notion of the imaginary has helped us also to explain why any notion of "autonomy" is delusional in such societies. Moreover, Lacan's two conceptions of symbolic and imaginary identification explain in more detail the centrality of identification in both identity and dialectical thinking. A reading of Adorno with Lacan has allowed us, then, to see the connection between a failed subject/object dialectics in the imaginary and capitalism.

III. Alienation, Conformity and the Myth of Modern Science

A failed subject/object dialectics not only has negative consequences for the object, it also has negative consequences for the subject. Although the subject's primacy announces her rule over the object, Adorno argues that she pays for such a rule because identity thinking leads to her fundamental *alienation* from the object. "The more relentlessly our identitarian thinking besets its object," argues Adorno, "the farther will it take us from the identity of the object."[42] The hierarchical subject/object opposition leads to a state of alienation, which for Adorno (following Marx) is pervasive in capitalist societies.

Lacan also shows us the centrality of alienation in the imaginary as a consequence of a failed subject/object dialectics. There is alienation also in the symbolic domain because of the presence of the Real, which underlines the subject's inability ever to become whole. However, for Lacan the imaginary domain marks alienation as such.[43] Since the ego, argues Lacan in an often-cited statement, "proceeds from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an 'orthopedic' form of its totality," she ends up with the "donned armor of an *alienating* identity that will mark [her/]his entire mental development with a rigid structure."[44]

Lacan fails to explain the societal forces that have an interest in maintaining an absolute subject/object opposition. Adorno is helpful in this regard since he shows us that it is specifically late capitalist societies that propagate the notion of an "autonomous subjectivity" with the aim of impairing any insight into the objective conditions of subjectivity—an impairment that is crucial for such societies to *function*. "The more individuals are in effect degraded into functions within the societal totality," he argues, "the more the person pure and simple, as a principle, is cheered up and exalted with the attributes of creative power, absolute rule, and spirit."[45]

Lacan fails to explain the vested societal forces upholding the delusion that subjects rule even in the midst of their domination by society. However, Lacan supports Adorno's argument with his formula S/s, which implies that the signifier S (the objective dimension or society) reigns above the signified s (the subject) and not the other way around.[46] The subject falsely believes herself to be independent of the object. However, the subject is ruled by society, albeit not completely, because of the presence of the Real, which refers to the /, or the arbitrary relation between signifier S and the signified s.

Lacan, moreover, in much the same way as Adorno, attacks Western philosophy and the sciences that reduce knowledge by making it adequate to the one. For him, such attempts are nothing but an instrument of power, in which the subjectivity of the object is destroyed: "In the end, the object is ever like that for science, and there is only ever one subject—the scientist who considers the whole."[47] The consequence of this fact is that any "truth" of the object becomes "a function of mirage, in which the subject refinds [her/]himself only as misrecognition and negation."[48]

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer attack the mirage of modern science. They show us that this mirage effect proceeds via *equivalence*, which makes the dissimilar comparable by reducing everything to abstract numbers. As a consequence, mathematical theorems became the epitome of modern science as well as Enlightenment thought. Their central aim is to arrive at the *Entzauberung* (disenchantment) of the world: "To the Enlightenment," argue the authors, "that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately the one, becomes illusion; modern positivism writes it off as literature."[49]

Instead of disenchanting the world, modern science effected its *Verzauberung* (reenchantment), which leads us to a central thesis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment:* "Myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology."[50] With an interpretation of Homer's epic hero Odysseus—the first prototype of the modern subject—Adorno and Horkheimer aim to show us that in myth we already find enlightenment rationality: "[Myth is] the original form of the objectifying definition, in which thing and concept are separated. The same form is already far advanced in the Homeric epic and confounds itself in modern positivist science."[51]

At the moment when modern science believes that it has rid itself of myth, it has actually returned to myth. At this moment science becomes an instrument of power for the existing order (hence the notion of instrumental rationality) because its main procedure, the mathematical procedure, decides the outcome of reality from the start through the *Wiederholung* (repetition) of facts.[52] Like the mythical, which refers to that which never changes, enlightenment rationality confirms facts *as* unchangeable: "In both the pregnancy of the mythical image and in the clarity of the scientific formula," argue the authors, "the everlastingness of the factual is confirmed."[53]

Whereas Adorno stresses the moment of *Wiederholung* as central to the perpetuation of the status quo, Lacan explains the threat of punishment as crucial to the creation of conformist subjects in both myth and modernity. "Mythologies are aimed at installing [wo/]man," argues

Lacan; "[mythologies tell her] exactly the form of punishment entailed by the outburst that produced the disturbance."[54] Throughout Homer's *Odyssey* we learn about the punishments of those who disturb the status quo, such as the suitors and the maids, who are murdered for engaging in pleasurable acts with each other.[55]

According to Lacan, the threat of punishment is also central to the establishment of modern subjectivity. Continuing the citation above, he argues: "As for us, we are reduced to very fearfully remaining conformist, we are afraid that we'll go a little bit mad as soon as we don't say exactly the same thing as everybody else. This is the situation of modern [wo/]man."[56] Adorno traces such a madness as the result of what he terms the "culture industry," which he studied during his exile in the United States.[57] The culture industry's administered rationality proceeds by "absorbing that which is spontaneous and not planned into planning."[58]

This absorption leads to the equation of cultural goods to the status quo through which culture's critical impulses are largely extinguished. The more the culture industry aims to identify everything, the less it tolerates anything new and the more everybody must be acquainted with the latest "novelties" in order not to feel excluded from society. Enthusiastic participation in the culture industry stands "under the sign of terror." "Enthusiasm," Adorno writes, "not merely betrays an unconscious eagerness to read the commands from above but already reveals the fear of disobedience"[59] that marks out the fascist subject.

This section has explained why a hierarchical subject/object opposition leads to alienated and conformist subjects. It has also covered Adorno and Lacan's similar treatment of science and enlightenment rationality as contributing to alienation and conformity, whose beginnings both authors trace in myth. Whereas Adorno suggests that the blind repetition of facts leads to the subject's conformity, Lacan explains that conformity is the result of the threat of punishment. Adorno shows us, moreover, that conformity, which he characterizes as a result of the culture industry, implies the potential for fascism.

IV. The Mind/Body Opposition and Fascism

Adorno's reference to fascism, a term he uses at certain points interchangeably with the culture industry, makes us aware of the potential for fascism inherent in the culture industry. However, Adorno does not conflate "the mass extermination of Jews on the one hand, and elements of implicit anti-Semitism in American proto-fascism, on the other," argues Simon Jarvis rightly. As Jarvis points out, "his emphasis on the affinities

between the culture industry and fascism is directed against the complacent assumption that fascism is a uniquely German disorder, has nothing to do with capitalism, and 'could never happen here' [in the United States]."[60]

Adorno explains the potential for fascism in identity thinking with another hierarchy, one closely related to the hierarchical subject/object opposition: the mind/body opposition. I agree with Lisa Yun Lee, who exposes the falsity of critiques that accuse Adorno of abstraction from the body.[61] Throughout his works Adorno attacks the priority of the mind and abstraction from the body. Hence here we are confronted with another meaning of the object in Adorno's works: it not only refers to the objective dimension (society) but also to nature and to what is natural in the subject: her body.

According to Adorno, the hierarchical mind/body opposition went hand in hand with the oldest opposition, the separation between mental and physical labor.[62] He suggests that upholding its absoluteness became the absolute purpose of those who benefited from such a hierarchy: "The more dependent the ruling classes become on the work of others, the more they despise that work," argues Adorno, and the more "the exploited body should be considered by those on the bottom as the worst and the mind, into which the others were free to indulge, as the supreme good."[63]

Lacan does not—like Adorno—trace the mind/body opposition to the separation between mental and physical labor. However, in much the same way as Adorno, Lacan attacks the primacy of the mind. In *Book I*, he argues that an opposition between the intellectual (the mind) and the affective (the body) is a "fundamental misunderstanding." Such a misunderstanding "urges analysis down strange paths." For him, the "affective is not like a special density, which would escape an intellectual accounting."[64] At the same time, it would be misguided to propose a "pure mind," in which the affective has no say.

In "*Interesse am Körper*,"[65] a part of the notes and drafts at the end of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer trace the strange path down which Europe's history has been urged: besides a well-known, written history, we find "an underground history," which "consists in the fate of the human instincts and passions which are suppressed and distorted by civilization."[66] Europe's suppression of the body is directly related to its path to fascism: "The compulsive urge to cruelty and destruction," Adorno argues, "springs from the organic repression of the subject's affinity to the body."[67]

We find such a repression of the subject's affinity to the body already in myth. Throughout *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer

show us that Odysseus' male, bourgeois subjectivity is the result of his abstraction from his bodily desires. Although he still indulges in his bodily desires throughout his adventures, his subjectivity is ultimately established if he manages to keep his bodily desires in check, expressed by his return to bourgeois marriage. The subject's abstraction from her desires has become the central feature of modern society: a society where desires always have to wait for later.

Although we do not find in Lacan a central engagement with the Nazi regime as we do in Adorno's work, Lacan is aware that fascism is a result of the subject's abstraction from her bodily desires. He tells us about Hitler's arrival in Paris:

> The permeable isn't important: "I have to come to liberate you from this or that." The essential point is "Carry on working. Work must go on." Which, of course, means: "Let it be clear to everyone that this is on no account the moment to express the least surge of desire." The morality of power, of the service of goods, is as follows: "As far as desires are concerned, come back later. Make them wait."[68]

According to both thinkers, the morality of power, in which the subject is required to abstract from her bodily desires, leads to a coldness that permeates modern societies. Adorno finds such a coldness as a result of the culture industry in the United States, where "in spite of all sententious humanitarianism . . . [the subject] becomes even colder, harder and more pitiless."[69] This coldness is perfected in fascism, where the subject has ceased to have any compassion for the other. Without such coldness, the disasters of the enlightenment, such as Auschwitz, would not have been possible.

In a similar vein as Adorno, Lacan, in *Television*, argues that phallic *jouissance*, which is the *jouissance* that glosses over the moment of the Real in the signifier, is a *cold jouissance.*[70] Moreover, Like Adorno, who is highly critical of all "sententious humanitarianism," Lacan explains that we can find a cold *jouissance* in all those humanitarian activities that aim at the "love of one's neighbor." Since the good I want for the other is cast in the image of my own *jouissance,* what poses a problem for me (or my love) is the other's own mode of *jouissance,* which must then be erased.

For Lacan, "leaving this Other to his own mode of jouissance . . . would only be possible by not imposing our own on [her/]him, by not thinking of [her/]him as underdeveloped."[71] However, according to Lacan, the one who deprives the other of her jouissance also loses her humanity. Adorno's emphasis on the affinities between the culture industry and fascism has obtained a certain sad truth in current politics,

where under the guise of "humanitarianism" and bringing "development" in the form of democracy, the United States has brought nothing but suffering and destruction to the Middle East.

This section has shown that a failed subject/object dialectics leads to a situation in which the subject abstracts from her bodily desires, and it has suggested as well that neither Adorno nor Lacan aimed to do away with the concept of the body. Rather, both challenged the hierarchical mind/body opposition. Moreover, they showed us that hierarchical oppositions lead to a central coldness that parades as "humanitarianism" but that leads only to destruction, as the example of fascism has proven. The main focus in the remaining sections will be to consider how we can ensure that similar disasters (which are well on their way) do not happen again.

V. Adorno, Lacan and the Possibility of a Political Praxis of Change

To think about a political praxis of change that allows us to challenge hierarchical oppositions and thereby alleviate the grave injustices they engender, we must take a closer look at Adorno and Lacan's understanding of *political* praxis. To begin with, both thinkers have been tagged with the reputation of not having much to offer in terms of a political praxis, since—so the critique runs—they are merely concerned with "high theory" that abstracts from all considerations of praxis. This section shows that neither Adorno nor Lacan aims to do away with praxis as such, but only with a praxis that denies its mediatedness with theory.

For Adorno, theory and praxis are neither an absolute opposition nor an absolute unity. "[The] immediate unity of theory and praxis is hardly possible," he argues, because "it would imitate the false identity of subject and object and would perpetuate the principle of domination that posits identity and that a true praxis must oppose."[72] The hierarchical theory/praxis opposition, prevalent in capitalist societies, is connected to the subject/object hierarchy. To oppose the false praxis of identity thinking, which Adorno also calls "pseudo" praxis, we must consider the dialectical relationship between theory and praxis with the notion of *discontinuity*.

Discontinuity between theory and praxis implies that the terms in this opposition are both dependent on and independent from each other.[73] Praxis cannot proceed without theory and theory cannot proceed without praxis. Theory also needs a moment of independence from practice; otherwise praxis will tailor theory "to fit the result it enjoys."[74] Conversely,

praxis needs a moment of independence from theory to be effective. The trouble with thinking—a damaged form of praxis in capitalist societies—is that it has become indifferent to "the task of changing the world." That indifference, argues Adorno, has "made it a piece of obtuse practice, a method and an instrumentality."[75]

Adorno does not, therefore, do away with praxis. Rather, like Marx in his famous thesis eleven of *Die Thesen*, he opposes the praxis of thinking that does not concern itself with the task of changing the world but merely reinforces the status quo. Moreover, he critiques a praxis that abstracts from theory. Such a praxis does not lead to any changes; it merely reinforces what it charges theory with—abstraction.[76] Moreover, the primacy of theory in late capitalist society took its toll on praxis. In such a society the stress upon praxis as the only means to effect change is problematic, since praxis is itself damaged.

For Adorno, then, the only means by which we can effect change is through acknowledging the mediated nature of theory and praxis. Moreover, Lacan stresses the mediation between theory and praxis to effect change. He introduces "analysis as a science of the particular" to counter psychoanalytic theory's tendency to abstract from particular cases.[77] Since analysis proceeds by a series of revelations that are particular to each subject, argues Lacan, "the quest for truth is not entirely reducible to the objective, and objectifying, quest of ordinary scientific method."[78] If psychoanalytic theory abstracts from the particular, it becomes a pseudo-praxis.

Psychoanalysis as a pseudo-praxis merely reinforces egos, which conform to the status quo instead of challenging it. Although Lacan insists that psychoanalytic theory needs to "start out" from particular cases for it to become a true praxis, it would be misguided to believe that he does away with the universal or with psychoanalytic theory altogether. "The coming to fruition of an analysis is always a unique case," argues Lacan, "even if these unique cases lend themselves all the same to some generality, since there is more than one analyst."[79] For psychoanalysis to become genuine praxis, it needs to acknowledge the mediated nature of the relationship between theory and praxis.

Although Adorno critiques the praxis of identity thinking that equalizes everything to itself as a pseudo-praxis, he does not argue that we can do away with thinking or rationality altogether. As Jay Bernstein rightly explains, Adorno "unswervingly affirmed the values of Enlightenment, and believed that modernity suffered from a deficit rather than a surplus of reason and rationality."[80] According to Adorno, we need to think more, not less, to break the power of identity thinking. A true

praxis of thinking is one in which we acknowledge the moment of non-identity or the Real—and with the acknowledgement of that moment, the mediated nature of the relationship between oppositions as well.

In order to arrive at a political praxis of change, it is crucial to trace the emergence of the theory/practice opposition as closely linked with the emergence of the subject/object opposition. "At the same time as the Cartesian doctrine of two substances ratified the dichotomy of subject and object," argues Adorno, "literature for the first time portrayed praxis as a dubious undertaking on account of its tension with reflection."[81] Again, Adorno does not here critique praxis as such. Rather, he critiques the primacy of the subject that made praxis a dubious undertaking by falsely asserting an absolute opposition between praxis and reflection (theory).

For our thinking to become a praxis of change that is in a position to break the power of identity thinking, it is crucial, therefore, to challenge the primacy of the subject. As explained earlier, we can challenge the hierarchical subject/object relation by acknowledging the necessity for mediation between subject and object and by starting out from the objective dimension in our thinking about the subject. Moreover, and perhaps most central, we can introduce the moment of the Real and the non-identical to theorize the subject as an *outline*. It is also important to grasp the connection between the hierarchical subject/object and mind/body opposition.

According to Adorno, both the subject/object and the mind/body opposition can be traced back to the oldest division between physical and intellectual labor.[82] The primacy of the subject implies, then, that she abstracts not only from the objective dimension (society) but also from the bodily dimension, and with that her desires, which term refers to the two meanings of the object in Adorno's thought: society and bodily desires. To counter a pseudo-praxis, which we find most centrally expressed in fascism, it is crucial to challenge the subject's abstraction from her bodily desires.

One means to challenge a society in which abstraction reigns is to take seriously the desires and fears that the moment of non-identity and the Real incites. Although Adorno is aware that desire and fear are at the basis of the pseudo-praxis of identity thinking,[83] Lacan elaborates this in more detail by relating the moment of the Real to *trauma*.[84] The subject's recognition that she remains "a subject-with-holes (*sujet troué*)"[85] is a traumatic moment, a moment that leads to her *desire* to reach an impossible wholeness and, consequently, to a compulsion to reach an identity expressible in identity thinking.

The *objet petit a* is, according to Lacan, the historically contingent object that, in an unconscious fantasy, takes on the function of concealing the impossibility of attaining the whole.[86] Lacan shows us that men create women as *objet petit a* in order to conceal the impossibility of reaching wholeness. I have shown how working-class woman serves as *objet petit a* in Adorno's thought, and the ways in which money serves as object petit a to gloss over the instability of the commodity form in relation to Marx's thought.[87] In order to counter hierarchical oppositions, it is therefore crucial to uncover these unconscious fantasy objects and give them up.

This section has explained Adorno and Lacan's dialectical approach to the theory/praxis opposition, making it clear that both thinkers hardly aim to do away with praxis as such. Rather, they challenge a pseudo-praxis that denies its mediated relationship with theory and does not lead to changes in the socio-political sphere. I have also suggested that for praxis to become a political praxis of change, it must grasp the interconnection between the theory/praxis opposition, subject/object and the mind/body oppositions. Only if we see this interconnection between oppositions and challenge all of them will the road for political change open up.

VI. Feminism and the Challenge to Hierarchical Oppositions

For feminism to arrive at a political praxis of change, it needs to acknowledge subject/object dialectics. The delusion of the subject's primacy has not only been central to the functioning of capitalist society, it has also been central to the operations of patriarchy and white society. By making women, racial minorities and working-class people believe that that they are autonomous subjects and the rulers of their affairs, the (continuing) aim has been to blind them to the objective conditions of their subjectivities. Such a blindness has been and continues to be central to keeping men, whites and the dominant classes in positions of power.

At the same time, it would be misguided to establish a new opposition, this time with the object on top and the subject on bottom. It is central to decenter the primacy of the subject by starting out from the objective dimension. However, it is also crucial to grasp that the objective dimension fails to fully determine the subject because of the moment of the Real and the non-identical in the signifier. Although societal structures aim to keep women, racial minorities and working-class people in a subjected position, there remains, at least at a minimum, the possibility of resisting objective structures in the moment of the hole in the signifier.

Women, as an example, have to subject themselves to the signifier "woman" to become women. The problem with the signifier woman is that it has been constructed by generations of subjects without a consideration of the moment of non-identity and the Real. As a consequence, this signifier circulates in the dominant fashion in current societies, implying at base "mother and wife." Feminist thinkers such as Carry Hull have shown us that the subsumption of all women under this concept leads to suffering for all women who do not neatly fit into the boundaries of the signifier, such as women who decide *not* to become mothers.[88]

Although women only become women through identifying with the signifier or concept "woman," the crucial insight of the Adorno/Lacan connection is that this concept fails to fully determine what women are all about because of the moment of non-identity or the Real. In such moments of failure, those women who have been excluded by the dominant signifier can step forward and redefine what it means to be a woman. It is precisely in the gap between the object and the subject (which marks their dialectical moment) where political change becomes a possibility.

However, such a "step forward"—and with it a political praxis of change—is not an easy enterprise. The myth of "woman" has been fabricated by generations through the repetition of countless "facts" and as such seems (almost) unchangeable. Moreover, those subjects who dare to step into the space that the moment of dialectics opens up and redefine the meaning of the signifier "woman" also face the threat of very real punishment. This threat of punishment becomes obvious, for example, in the intimidation and sometimes physical violence against women who resist becoming men's wives, choosing instead to love other women.

For those women to be able to step forward and challenge the symbolic domain, it is also crucial not to give up on the concept "woman" and, with that surrender, to give up as well on the feminine subject altogether. However, the feminine subject needs to remain an outline to counter its own tendencies to become total. As such we need to acknowledge that whatever we determine the signifier "woman" to be is historically contingent and needs to remain open to change. Only if we accept the moment of the non-identical and the Real in our reconceptualizations of what it means to be a woman can our political praxis lead to change.

If we fail to accept this moment and try to close the signifier "woman" in our redefinitions, then our praxis of thinking will become petrifying in future for women who have to subject themselves to an inadequate

signifier to become "women." Perhaps the weakness of the current feminist movement, which largely fails to appeal to and is alienated from younger women, is a result of identity thinking, as expressed in narrow conceptions of what being a "feminist" means. For the feminist movement to invite younger women in and strengthen itself, it is crucial to include the concept of the non-identical and the Real in its theory and praxis.

The importance of the moment of non-identical and the Real here is that they are always present to challenge any total conceptions. Even if we recreate the signifier "woman" as fixed and with that recreation contribute to an objective domain that leads to oppression, we can never fully grasp the "truth" of women, since any such truth is an expression of identity thinking. It is in the moment of untruth, then, where future generations of women can appropriate that concept. However, a true praxis—one that allows us to challenge and overcome hierarchical oppositions—makes an effort to incorporate the moment of non-completion in its own conceptions.

Because that effort is so vital, a constructive way to engage with oppositions without resorting to identity thinking is to introduce the moment of the non-identical and the Real into feminist thinking. Since the Real/non-identical marks an "indissoluble something" between binaries, it allows us to acknowledge difference without fixing difference as an absolute. The Real/non-identical tells us that we can never fully capture what sexual, class and racial difference is all about since there is always the bar between the signifier (S) and the signified (s), which is the moment that resists absolute signification.

A political praxis of change can only come about if we acknowledge that we cannot fully grasp what differences mean. However, this does not mean that we cannot say anything about what these differences imply. We must say *something* in order to change the socio-political sphere. However, whatever we say and however forceful the concepts we use for addressing our concerns may be, it is important that we keep in mind that we cannot say everything. The moment we aim at totality, our feminist praxis becomes a pseudo-praxis. A praxis of change is one that remains open while still acknowledging the importance of minimal closure.

To arrive at a political praxis of change, it is also important to acknowledge the desires and fears that make it difficult to acknowledge the moment of the hole in the signifier. If such passions are cast aside, we are in danger of reducing our attempts to challenge identity thinking to nothing but another form of such thinking. Women of color, working-class and queer women have shown that feminists, despite their attempt to create a better world for all women, have engaged in identity thinking by

creating a world that has only become (somewhat) more hospitable for white, affluent women and not for the rest of their "sisters."

Feminist scholars such as Nancy Jay have shown us, moreover, that hierarchical oppositions contribute to the oppression of women because the feminine is linked to negative poles such as the object, practice, the particular and the body.[89] I have shown that not only women but also working-class people and racial minorities are linked to the negative poles of hierarchical oppositions, a linkage that contributes to their oppression. These often unconsciously reinforced links have been and *continue to be* crucial to the establishment and perpetuation of the power of those linked to the "superior" poles—men, the middle classes, and whites.[90]

In order to challenge hierarchical oppositions, it is crucial to make ourselves conscious of them whenever they occur and to de-link oppositions from gender, class and race.[91] It is moreover crucial to grasp the connection between different hierarchical oppositions, such as the subject/object, mind/body and theory/praxis oppositions. Only if we see the interconnectedness of hierarchies (as well as dialectics as their defining moment) are we in a position to do away with their hierarchical relation. This might lead us to a better world without suffering and violence, where subject and object are perhaps not reconciled, but acknowledge their mediatedness.

Notes

[1] See Claudia Leeb, "Marx and the Gendered Structure of Capitalism," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 33.7 (November 2007), 833-859.

[2] In the article "Marx, Lacan, Capitalism and the Unconscious," (under review) I argue that Marx, although he did not have a comparable concept to the Real, he had an understanding of the fundamental incompleteness of the commodity form, which points to this concept.

[3] A limited portion of the present essay has been adapted from: Claudia Leeb, "Toward a Theoretical Outline of the Subject: The Centrality of Adorno and Lacan for Feminist Political Theorizing," *Political Theory* 36.3 (June 2008), 351-376, Copyright © 2008 by SAGE Publications, Inc. Reprinted by permission of SAGE Publications, Inc.

[4] Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX: Encore! 1972-1973*, trans. Bruce Fink, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 86.

[5] The German term *Gespaltenheit* (rivenness) is derived from the term *Spalte* (split), which Adorno uses to refer to the split between binaries.

[6] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (1973, 1966 orig., New York/London: Continuum), 24.

[7] Theodor W. Adorno, "Reflections on Class Theory," in *Can One Live after Auschwitz?*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 96, 98.

[8] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 174.

[9] The term "mediation" refers in Adorno's thought also to the term dialectics.

[10] Following Marx, Adorno explains that the model for such societies is the commodity form, where exchange-value reigns over use-value.

[11] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 175.

[12] for Adorno the object refers to both nature and the socio-political domain.

[13] Lacan focused in his early works, especially *Book I* and *Book II,* on elaborating the imaginary. Since his Rome address "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" in 1953, Lacan's focus shifted to explain the symbolic; and since *Book VII* he engaged more deeply with the Real. Lacan develops these from one seminar to the next, looks at them from different angles, but all of these concepts have been present and relevant throughout Lacan's works.

[14] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, 25. Lacan's starting out from the objective dimension to theorize the subject explains that he does *not* reduce the socio-political to subjectivity.

[15] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960,* trans. Dennis Porter (1986, 1992, New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 63.

[16] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III: The Psychoses, 1955-1956,* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981, 1993), 139.

[17] In my reading of Adorno with Lacan I use the terms "concept" and "signifier" interchangeably.

[18] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 5.

[19] Leeb, "Toward a Theoretical Outline of the Subject."

[20] Theodor W. Adorno, "On Subject and Object," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords,* trans. Henry W. Pickford, 250.

[21] The imaginary domain will be further explained in the next section.

[22] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954,* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975, 1991), 51, my emphasis.

[23] Adorno, "On Subject and Object," 250.

[24] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955,* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978, 1991), 7.

[25] Lacan distinguishes this other with a small o from the big Other with a capital O (*Autre*, symbolized as A).

[26] That is, at the age of six and eighteen months, before the beginning of articulate speech.

[27] Lacan, *Book I,* 79.

[28] Lacan, *Book II,* 48.

[29] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 149.
[30] The moment of subjection shows us that power is at the root of any subjectivity.
[31] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973, 1977), 207.
[32] "The ego must have been historically strengthened if, beyond the immediacy of the reality principle, it is to conceive the idea of what is more than entity." Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 397.
[33] Ibid, 352.
[34] Theodor W. Adorno, "Die Revidierte Psychoanalyse," *Adorno: Soziologische Schriften I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 20-41, 40.
[35] Lacan, *Book III*, 241, my emphasis.
[36] In the next section I will further explain in what ways identity thinking, or the ego, leads to the subject's adaptation to the status quo.
[37] Adorno, "On Subject and Object," 256.
[38] Lacan, *Book II,* 7, 48.
[39] Lacan, *Book II,* 95.
[40] Adorno, "On Subject and Object," 246, my emphasis.
[41] See Claudia Leeb "Fears and Desires: Women, Class and Adorno," *Theory & Event* 11.1 (February 2008).
[42] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 149.
[43] Lacan, *Book III,* 146.
[44] Lacan, *Ecrits,* 6.
[45] Adorno, "On Subject and Object," 248.
[46] Adorno, "On Subject and Object," 248.
[47] Lacan, *Book I,* 194; see also Lacan, *Book II,* 71-72.
[48] Lacan, *Book III*, 240.
[49] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2002), 7.
[50] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* xvi.
[51] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* 15.
[52] Hence Adorno's notion of instrumental rationality, which is nothing but another term for identity thinking.
[53] Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 26.
[54] Lacan, *Book III*, 200-201.
[55] Leeb "Fears and Desires: Women, Class and Adorno."
[56] Lacan, *Book III*, 200-201.
[57] In "Culture Industry Reconsidered," Adorno replaces the concept of "mass culture" used in earlier works with the concept of "culture industry" to exclude "from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates," who would contend "that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary from of popular art." Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, ed. Jay Bernstein (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 98.
[58] "absorbing that which is spontaneous and not planned into planning. . . ." This is nothing else but the rationality of science. See Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 127.

[59] Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 97.
[60] Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 63.
[61] Lisa Yun Lee, *Dialectics of the Body: Corporeality in the Philosophy of T. W. Adorno* (New York and London: Rutledge, 2005).
[62] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 177, my emphasis.
[63] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), 246-247. Translation adapted from Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2002), 231-32.
[64] Lacan, *Book I*, 57.
[65] "Interest on the body" has been wrongly translated as "The Importance of the body."
[66] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 246. Translation adapted from Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2002), 231.
[67] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 247. Translation adapted from Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2002), 233.
[68] Lacan, *Book VII*, 315.
[69] Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 91.
[70] Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment,* ed. Joan Copjec, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974, 1990), 31.
[71] Lacan, *Television,* 31.
[72] Theodor W. Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford, 259-278, 259.
[73] This poses the question of whether mediation and discontinuity are the same, which it seems that they are, according to Adorno's definition of dialectics.
[74] Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis," 265.
[75] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 244
[76] Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis," 261.
[77] Lacan, *Book I,* 21.
[78] Lacan, *Book I,* 21.
[79] Lacan, *Book I,* 21.
[80] Jay Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.
[81] Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis," 259.
[82] Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis," 262.
[83] In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as well as in *Negative Dialectics,* we learn about the deeper reason behind enlightenment rationality's blind aim to abstract from nature: the *fear* of nature. To take away the fear of nature was already the central aim of myths; however, argue Adorno and Horkheimer, the "Enlightenment is mythic fear turned radical." Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 16.
[84] To the relationship of trauma with the Real see Lacan, *Book XI,* 5.
[85] Lacan, *Book XI,* 182.

[86] Lacan, *Book XI,* 103.
[87] Leeb, "Fears and Desires: Women, Class and Adorno," and Leeb (work in progress), "Marx, Lacan, Capitalism and the Unconscious."
[88] Carry Hull, "Materiality in Theodor W. Adorno and Judith Butler," *Radical Philosophy* 84 (1997): 22-35.
[89] Nancy Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy," *Feminist Studies*, 1981, 7, 38–55.
[90] They are central to the exclusion of those groups of people in contexts, such as politics and academia, where the "superior" poles are especially valued
[91] Women, working-class people and racial minorities have always been linked to the negative poles, which makes the de-linking a challenging enterprise for them. To arrive at change it is then crucial that all scholars, regardless of their sex, class and race join into Adorno and Lacan's project of challenging hierarchical oppositions by starting out from those poles that have been rendered as "inferior" in capitalist societies, such as the object and the body.

ART AFTER AUSCHWITZ: ADORNO REVISITED

ELAINE MARTIN*

Das Bedürfnis Leiden beredt werden zu lassen, ist die Bedingung aller Wahrheit.[1]
[The necessity of giving voice to suffering is the condition of all truth].
—Theodor W. Adorno

"Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben ist barbarisch" (It is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz). There is hardly a single contribution to the debate surrounding the representation of the Shoah that does not cite what has become a seemingly established maxim in literary discourse pertaining to this event.[2] Of Adorno's extensive reflections on the possibilities and limitations of art in the wake of the Shoah, this single sentence has attracted, and indeed continues to attract, an inordinate share of attention and has been widely interpreted as a general call for the abandonment of art in the face of the horror. Adorno's writings on this subject are, however, far too involuted to license any such interpretation.[3] The all-too-frequent misinterpretation of Adorno's thought emerges when quotes are abstracted from their context and examined in isolation from the remainder of the text. Particularly astonishing is that in the case of the abovementioned "maxim"—or "dictum" as it is commonly referred to—the sentence in question constitutes a mere *sub-clause* of the original German text. However, when read in isolation from its immediate textual context and employed without reference to the overall framework of Adorno's thought, this pronouncement and those others most frequently cited—in particular the so-called "Widerruf" (retraction) thesis—lose the crucial dialectical quality conferred on them in the original text. In the following analysis I shall attempt to elucidate Adorno's *extensive* reflections on the status of art in the wake of the Shoah and to examine this supposed dictum not only within its immediate textual context but also within the greater framework of Adorno's thought, with particular reference to his modernist critique, his reflections on the moral peril involved in the artistic rendering of mass extermination and his critique of