

Chapter 1

Monopoly Capital and History

Philosophy, goes Adorno's famous lament, lives on because the moment of its realization was missed. But what the contemporary theory-market has typically taken to be the leitmotif of Negative Dialectics, either as the resonant pathos of mandarin European intellectuals supposedly unable to comprehend the fluorescent activism of the New Left (let alone the revolutionary dynamics of the Third World), or else as the paralyzing existential despair of the Hotel Abyss, shorn of the clarion call of Sartre's re-mobilizing moralism, is untrue in a double sense. Adorno was criticizing Hegel, not Marx; and the polemic target in question was the American Empire, not those Second World states which internalized the violence of the world-market in the form of late-developmental autarkies indistinguishable, in practice, from the national security states of the NATO bloc.

In fact the central task of Adorno's negative or multinational dialectics will be not merely to think through the Pax Americana, but to think *past* it, turning the categories of such against itself in order to unlock the historical energies bound up in its innermost constellations. Curious as it may seem, the confusion first-time readers and translators often experience during their initial contact with the conceptual hyperspace of Negative Dialectics is more than subjective shock at encountering an unfamiliar brand of thought; it is also, on a certain level, the cognition of an overwhelming familiarity, indeed the dawning realization of one's own position amidst the dizzying expanse and astonishing complexity of the American-led total system Adorno intends to map out.

This may explain why the single most stereotypical critique of the Frankfurt School by American intellectuals – the reproach that the former were a privileged group

of Weimar German exiles, grumpily whining about the country which saved them from Fascism instead of doing anything constructive – contains a grain of truth, though not in the sense one might think.¹ Adorno's work in the 1940s and early 1950s was already beginning to rethink the seismic events of the Depression, Stalinism, WW II and the Cold War from a radically international perspective. But it was not Americanization per se which primarily interested Adorno, so much as America's role as the exemplar and incarnation of a specific, historically-bounded stage of monopoly capitalism. Minima Moralia is, in that sense, already an attempt to bridge the gap between the realm of radical sociology on one hand (everything from post-Weberian theories of domination and post-Freudian analyses of the culture industry to the prescient deconstruction of Fascism) and the aesthetic theory of what might, with pardonable exaggeration, be termed the radical heritage of Eurocommunism on the other (the spectrum from Proust to the second Viennese school, Brecht to Benjamin, Kafka to Klee, and Lukaçs to Luxemburg). The result was an enormously productive range of new concepts, ranging from theories of monopoly subjectivity, to the identity-politics of an American consumerism just beginning to be exported around the world, and even to dissident contributions to the nascent field of Cold War area studies and geopolitics. By the mid-1960s, Adorno will refine this line of thinking by zeroing in on the contradiction between the dynamics of the new industrial mass culture on the one hand, and the international matrix of productive-forces ensconced within the national-monopoly relations of production endemic to the Cold War power-blocs on the other.

To properly appreciate the extraordinary power of this move, we need to remember one crucial feature of the 1960s world-system: not so much the might of the Pax Americana per se, but the dire economic and political subalternity of everyone else on the planet during the immediate post-1945 period. The limit-point of even the most

radical anti-colonial movements, the dramatic Third World revolutions of China, Vietnam and Cuba, and the autarkic regimes of the Eastern bloc, was their structural position as underdeveloped semi-peripheries or true peripheries in a tightly-organized world-system with no real parallels to the far more loosely organized British Empire of the Victorian era. In classic dialectical style, the true challengers to the superstates would emerge not in the heartlands of the Cold War, but in their contested semi-peripheries, namely East Asia and Central Europe.

In turn, Europe's semi-peripheral status is crucial to understanding the cultural outpouring of Francophone cultural theory during and after the watershed of May 1968 (Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Lacan and Althusser are the usual names invoked here, though one could also include Sartre). This latter was, in many ways, an attempt to think through the micropolitics of the Western European welfare state against the backdrop of the Eastern European dissident movements and civil insurrections. Similar tendencies were at work in the heart of the bloodiest battlefield of the Cold War of them all, namely the rapidly industrializing Pacific Rim zone located between peripheral China and metropolitan West Coast America; a region which developed a no less astonishingly diverse range of cultural, economic and social innovations, ranging from the Hong Kong movies and the Vietnamese Revolution to the 1987 South Korean democracy movement and Japanese state-led hyperdevelopment.

Indeed, one of the most intriguing consequences of Adorno's concept of monopoly capital is the notion that the theory-market is somehow part and parcel of the logic of the total system, such that if the thing did not exist, it would have to be reinvented all over again. The Western European theory-boom of the 1970s, for example, exhibits an intriguing tendency to both privilege the primarily cultural concerns of the Francophone theorists over and above the industrial sociologies of the Central European

economic zone (that crescent of export-platform economies snaking through the heart of Europe from Scandinavia to the Benelux countries, West Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and northern Italy, which comprises the high-tech core of the European Union), while at the same time studiously ignoring or avoiding the pressing issues mapped out by Fredric Jameson's luminous 1970s essays on the blockbuster Hollywood film or Pierre Bourdieu's magisterial Distinction – the politics, in short, of a newly multinational consumer culture and the rise of a whole new wave of high-tech electronic and mediatic neocolonialism. Where the initial radical impulse of the Western European post-structuralisms, everywhere from Derridean dissemination and Kristevan semiosis to Foucauldian power-analysis, failed to rise to the concrete aesthetic analysis of the media culture or the struggles of the post-1968 identity politics, theory tended to regress back to the multinational idealism of the Cold War power-blocs. In Derrida's case, to the extent that it merely reproduced the speculative nominalisms of the consumer culture rather than critiquing such, deconstruction remained a ruse of monopoly-national reason; indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that deconstruction was what Europe had instead of indigenous cable TV programming (i.e. a new type of high-tech or mediatic commodity).

Both represented the overdevelopment of form at the expense of content, something which, to be fair to the theorists, was the hallmark of the gargantuan economic speculations and financial bubbles of the 1975-2000 period. Post-structuralism, once the underground alternative to the cybernetic orthodoxies of 1960s consumerism (that uneasy admixture of late Fordism and early global marketing cleverly satirized by the roboticized astronauts and humanized AI mainframe in Kubrick's 2001), is nowadays part of the new orthodoxy of Wall Street's global informatic and credit speculations. Such antinomies are to be ascribed neither to subjective cowardice nor to political opportunism, but need to be

understood as the antipodes of a genuine historical contradiction – in this case, the painfully contradictory, complex emergence of a whole new transnational society out of the fifty-year chrysalis of the Cold War. Adorno's indispensable contribution here can best be described as writing the Das Kapital of the late 20th century. Where Fredric Jameson's luminous evocation of the global media and consumer culture of the early 1980s decoded the locally-produced, globally-consumed Hollywood 1970s blockbuster movie as a new type of global commodity fetishism, and thus furnished a theory of postmodernism as the cultural logic of multinational capitalism, and where Pierre Bourdieu outlined a path-breaking sociology of the European Union in Language and Symbolic Power (effectively mapping out the rise of a multinational Euroculture), Negative Dialectics provides the tools to analyze multinational capitalism as a mode of production.

Adorno begins not, however, with the latest products of globalization in the 1960s, but with its prehistory in the 1940s, by distilling a monopoly-national content out of the monopoly-national forms mobilized by Heidegger's fundamental ontology. One of the crucial features of this latter was its role as neo-national mythos, whose cultural content was available only elsewhere, in the monopoly-cultural practice of Hollywood. The summary judgement of Brecht's Arturo Ui, that Germany had Fascism where America had the gangster film, has its logical corollary in the conjunction of early American postmodernism with the late modernisms of the European semi-periphery: fundamental ontology was the Hollywood of the Adenauer elite, precisely where Lukacs' ontology of labor lay claim to the radical Brechtian conscience of the Eastern culture-worker. Such startling claims are part and parcel of Adorno's notion of non-identity, so often misinterpreted as a mere polemic position or aristocratic gesture (the Great Refusal) rather than as a powerful aesthetic ideologeme and a nascent academic praxis all its own.

Inasmuch as the contradiction is, as Adorno puts it, the index or desiderata of untruth of identity, non-identity yields that scandalous content otherwise displaced, glossed or relegated by the contradiction to the merely formal antinomy or logical aporia. This latter is by no means, as in canonic post-structuralism, to be written off as the reproductive or self-producing sign-system, something which tends to freeze the field of difference or non-identity into place, in the form of the familiar technological surplus-rent, telecom grid or cyberspace matrix. What is at issue is not multinational technology, but multinational capital itself; something which is, as Marx's famous injunction teaches, not a thing, but a discrete social relation between a wide range of antagonistic local, national, monopoly-national and international bodies of capital. Adorno's first move towards decoding this latter will, logically enough, be the evocation of the global exchange-net underlying all these things:

The contradiction is the non-identical under the aspect of identity; the primacy of the principle of contradiction in dialectics measures what is heterogenous in unitary thinking. By colliding against its own borders, it reaches beyond itself. Dialectics is the consistent consciousness of non-identity. It is not related in advance to a standpoint. Thought is driven, out of its unavoidable insufficiency, its guilt for what it thinks, towards it. If one objected, as has been repeated ever since by the Aristotelian critics of Hegel,² that dialectics for its part grinds everything indiscriminately in its mill down into the mere logical form of the contradiction, overlooking – even Croce argued this³ – the true polyvalence of that which is not contradictory, of the simply different, one is only displacing the blame for the thing onto the method. That which is differentiated appears as divergent, dissonant, negative, so long as consciousness must push towards unity according to its own formation: so long as it measures that which is not identical with itself, with its claim to the totality. This is what dialectics holds up to the consciousness as the contradiction. Thanks to the immanent nature of consciousness, that which is in contradiction has itself the character of inescapable and catastrophic nomothetism [Gesetzmaessigkeit: lawfulness, juridicality]. Identity and contradiction in thinking are welded to one another. The totality of the contradiction is nothing other than the untruth of the total identification, as it is manifested in the latter. Contradiction is non-identity under the bane [Bann] of the law, which also influences the non-identical. ND:17-18

The contradiction is thus the conceptual hinge by which identity, that primal ruse of reason of the capitalist subject (in the sense that what is seemingly most subjective or personal in commodity society, namely one's own subjectivity, is shaped by the most

impersonal social and historical forces imaginable) mediates between the commodity-form and the totalizing principle of such, that is to say, the exchange-net. Simultaneously the residue of non-identity bound up in this totality, or that which exceeds, escapes or otherwise resists the continuum of unequal exchange, either in terms of the utopian use-values of archaic modes of production, or as the occasional prefiguration of a post-capitalist exchange, returns in two ways. The first is the subjective ideology of autonomy, by which the subjective drive to self-preservation harmonizes with an objectively antagonistic equivalence-principle (in the context of German idealism, the identity of the concept with what is being thought; in our own society, the convergence of what is sold with what people have been conspicuously trained to want). The second is the objective bane or the baleful spell of the totality, namely that symbolic mystification or occultation of the total system by which the coded antagonism or hostility of the latter towards its constituent members (the brutal necessity of global corporate competition) is transformed into a kind of surplus-consciousness. Adorno's brilliantly Marxist point is that this consciousness, the raw material of that class ideology which can be later hammered out by empiricists and positivists alike into coherent ideologemes and philosophical systems, or else refined into new types of aesthetic experience-content, is its own worst enemy. It is a systemic subjectivity which, because it must finance its development out of the expropriation of the labor-time of others, has the potential to comprehend and thereby turn against its own systemic character. In Adorno's words:

To change this direction of conceptuality, to turn it towards the non-identical, is the hinge of negative dialectics. Before the insight into the constitutive character of the non-conceptual in the concept, the compulsion of identity, which carries along the concept without the delay of such a reflection, dissolves. Its self-determination leads away from the appearance [Schein] of the concept's being-in-itself as a unity of meaning, out towards its own meaning.

The disenchantment of the concept is the antidote of philosophy. It prevents its overgrowth: that it would become the absolute itself. ND:24

Note that Adorno does not wish to project some sort of historical telos here, wherein the earliest proto-national collectives of the peasant uprisings and religious wars logically flow into the national-democratic revolutions and national unifications, and thence into First World mass parties, Second World developmental states and Third World decolonizations and nationalisms. Rather, the global surplus-consciousness out of which ideological systems, social theories and political movements is deeply contradictory and discontinuous: it is mediated primarily in terms of what Adorno terms subject-expression, and only secondarily as a coherent ideological field, philosophical system or cultural tendency. The asynchronous development of theory – the necessity to use abstractions in order to comprehend a society predicated on the unrelenting accumulation of abstract exchange-value out of concrete labor – is dictated not, as the reactionary ontologies and conservative positivisms would have it, by too much consciousness or rationality, but by the crying scarcity of both. “In sharp contrast to the usual scientific ideal,” notes Adorno paradigmatically, “the objectivity of dialectical cognition needs more subject, not less.”

ND:50

This has its cultural model in Walter Benjamin’s notion of the radical politics of the past, indeed in the politicization of history in general amidst the increasing ahistoricism of commodity-society; it is out of the allegorical materials of Baudelaire’s fictionalized Paris that Benjamin will read, for example, the class mobilization of the French proletariat against the national rentier and industrialist overclasses. Adorno’s key move here is to replace national-revolutionary allegory with the category of monopoly-national mythos or consumerism, whose logical complement or objective counterpart is *Gesetzmaessigkeit* or “nomothetism”, the institutional infrastructure of monopoly capitalism: the Benjaminic flâneur and urban arcade accede to the mall rat and the interstate highway. This insight permits Adorno to radically historicize both Weber’s

sociological insight into the genesis of Wilhelmine bureaucracy, and Nietzsche's stinging philosophical rebuke of the liberal quotient in the Wilhelmine ideology of Bismarck's Germany alike, by emphasizing the degree to which these concepts are merely localized or partial accounts of the classic Marxian dialectic of the division of labor. This last is no longer delimited to the spinning-mill revolts, Factory Act legislations, colonial expansions or entrepreneurial ventures of Victorian capitalism, but must be rethought in the context of the shopfloor Fordism, multidivisional corporate structures, industrial trade unionism and Keynesian consumption-politics typical of the era of monopoly capitalism.

What Adorno is saying, years before the micropolitical praxis of the New Left confirmed the theoretical intuition, is that capitalist politics has been and always will be identity politics. Put somewhat crudely, identity and contradiction relate to one another in the rarefied field of monopoly-era aesthetic theory in much the same way that industrial and finance capital interact in Rudolf Hilferding's classic exposition of Central European finance-capitalism, or indeed in the manner that the proletarian parties and bourgeois civil society in Luxemburg's Spartacism or Gramsci's war of ideological movement mediate each other's positions: as a radically plebian international content confronting a compromised or otherwise subaltern (*vis-à-vis* the industrialized UK and US) national form. This, it will quickly be observed, has the most profound affinities to the work of two other great theoreticians of monopoly-era Marxism, namely Lukačs' transcendent vision of bourgeois reification and proletarian class consciousness, and Sartre's immanent dialectic of ideological determination and mass-cultural derealization; what bridges the divide between the Eastern and Western European Marxisms is, indeed, Adorno's Central European concept of the critical reflexion upon the national-monopoly mass party.

Put more concretely still, Adorno is insisting that we rethink the spectrum from the Leninist developmental bureaucracies to the Social Democratic and Eurocommunist parties, from the national mass media and governmental agencies of the New Deal to the national industrial unions of the steel, chemical, automobile and energy industries, and from the university professionals to self-financing institutes or foundations (such as the Frankfurt School itself), in the context of the division of labor under monopoly capitalism. What is at issue here is the contradiction between the productive forces of the multidivisional or monopoly corporation on the one hand, and the extended class conflicts of such on the other; or what amounts to the division between applied and pure research, scientific team-work, the emergence of national laboratories and large-scale research institutions on the one hand, and the new social spaces created by decolonization, the culture-industry, and the creation of the Second and Third Worlds on the other. Interestingly, this contradiction had its subterranean debut in the progressive-regressive method rehearsed in Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason, in the form of that Mediterranean trading-zone whose currency-marketplace mediated both the colonization of the New World and the emergence of national aesthetics proper (essentially, the aesthetic version of the infamous economic transition to capitalism) out of the thriving bureaucracies and subaltern mercantile bourgeoisies of the absolutist states.

This category, essentially a late or delayed variant of the Benjaminic national allegory (and it speaks volumes about the historical position of the Central European intellectuals, that the complete erasure of a Left national praxis amidst the catastrophes of Fascism and Stalinism should redound as the crucial spur to a coherent theory of the internationalization of capital) allows Sartre to recode or retranslate the otherwise privatized or monadic categories of existentialist aesthetics back into a newly internationalized and collectivized politics: the subjective surcharge of the concepts of

derealization, the project, and the imaginary merges seamlessly, at their outer limit, into the objective relations of seriality, the practico-inert and class ideology of early postwar consumer capitalism. It is no accident that the Sartrean mediations should have their most powerful echo in that land of untrammelled consumerism, namely the United States, and specifically in the work of Fredric Jameson. The much-maligned Sartrean subject, so often misconstrued as an exiguous cultural trope rather than an unavoidable political situation, is nothing less than the cipher of the newly hegemonic American Empire itself: it is the motivating spirit or *Weltgeist* of the postwar world-system, whose superstate was charged with divvying up the world into allied or antagonistic power-blocs, and whose multidivisional corporations were to reorganize the former colonial blocs and war economies into truly multinational markets.

The existentialisms were, in this sense, the crucial mediating codes or philosophemes by which the social antagonisms and class struggles of this process – not so much the Americanization of the world as the consumerization of the world-market – could be narrated. Where Sartre's cultural praxis confronts, at its outer limit, the self-representing nominalism of the American films, advertising and consumer goods flooding postwar Europe with that radical proletarian ghost elsewhere available in the street demonstrations of the Eurocommunist parties, and savagely repressed in the US proper by McCarthyism, Adorno will ground his negative dialectics on the self-reflection of the theory-market vis-à-vis the idealist systems and philosophic modernisms alike (everything from the Right-wing ontologies and Husserl's logical absolutism to the proliferating varieties of Western Marxism). Where the work of both dialecticians converges is in the concept of historicity: the Marxist dictum that all history, including that of our own period, is prehistory, returns firstly as the Benjaminic national allegory or historical trope later taken up by Adorno's immanent categories of monopoly capital,²

and secondly as the Sartrean decryption of the Gaullist state apparatus and its various external and internal decolonizations. The nation-state itself, whether coded as the Hegelian state-developmental system or the no less universalizing legal and political discourses handed down by the French and American Revolutions, is reproduced by the monopoly-formation in question as a relativized or subsidiary sub-narrative, already given over in advance to the various marketing and publicity bureaus of the media-culture: where Genet's novelic menagerie (the urban types of the Policeman, the Thief, the Stool Pigeon, the Con Artist, etc.) anticipates the internationalized character-tropes of his later plays (most famously, *Third World Village* and *First World Virtue* in The Blacks), the stock characters of the American war movie (the fatherly sergeant, the genteel Southerner, the Midwestern farm boy, the street kid from the wrong side of the tracks, etc.) provide the proto-national foundation for the incipiently transnational mass-cultural tropes of the G-man, the secret agent, the suburban domestic comedy, and the film noir detective.

Adorno will in fact follow a similar strategy in his 1956 Against Epistemology, which confronts the immanently transnational nominalism of the 1950s by recourse to the antinomies of Husserlian phenomenology. The repressed historicity of the latter, namely the non-identity of the logical apperception (something like the early mass-cultural version of the Kantian intuition) with the monopoly commodities issuing forth from the American metropole turns out to yield, not the things themselves, but the serialized access-codes to such – i.e. that dizzying multiplication of consumer credit typical of the global consumer society, elsewhere valorized by the equally proliferating jargons of the existentialisms and the visual tropes of the auteur films alike in a subjective or moralizing turn, as the dialectics of the gaze (window-shopping), the choice (purchasing), crime (commercial competition), guilt (debt service) and so forth.³

Although Sartre's meditations on film, with their rich subtexts of the theatrical gaze, the national cinematic genres and the early transition to televisual or international visual forms, are clearly superior to Adorno's own rather limited concept of the phantasmagoria, it's worth pointing out that Adorno displays an incomparable dexterity on the rather different grounds of Central European musical aesthetics. In a phrase, Adorno hears what Sartre sees.⁴ This is worth exploring a bit further in the context of the immediate successor to the 1944 Dialectic of the Enlightenment, namely the 1947 Philosophy of Modern Music, and the problematic relationship of the modernisms with the newer aesthetic technologies:

To continue to paint pictures or write quartets may remain far behind the division of labor and the experimental technical organization of film, but the objective technical formulation of the painting and the quartet holds fast to that possibility of film which is disrupted by the social mode of its production. Its 'rationality', however chimerically wrapped up in itself and problematic in its impenetrable reserve, is superior to the rationalization of film production. These manipulate prefabricated – indeed already evanescent – objects and resignedly leave them in their externality, thus grasping the object itself only intermittently. Out of those reflexes, however, which photography powerlessly allows to fall on the depicted objects, Picasso constructs those of his which the latter themselves demand. No less is true of twelve-tone composition. What survives the oncoming ice-age may yet find shelter in its labyrinth. PNM:109-110

What Adorno's thought unconsciously gropes towards, without ever quite finding its object (though he does come admirably close!), is indeed that new class of aesthetic producers symbolized by the filmic auteurs, and cognized here in the significant conjunction of the mythic labyrinth – actually an inversion of a very old Goethean trope, namely the transcription of Frankfurt's mercantile culture onto the proto-national coordinates of the Weimar principality (a.k.a. the elision of the urban-caste familial bond by the national-mercantile elective or speculative affinity) – with the Expressionist vision of a renaturalized social upheaval or monopoly-era Darwinism. What Adorno overlooks here, of course, is the unique solution of American mass-culture in the 1930s – the prehistoric monster or science-fiction adventure narrative, whose most famous visual

monument is probably the dinosaur extinction sequence of Disney's Fantasia, wherein prehistorical carcasses litter the screen like the car-designs of rival automobile producers crushed or bought out by General Motors and Ford. The naturalized antipode of this socialized catastrophe was the incipiently postmodern signifier of the brimming, liquefied animated surface – whether water or lava – emancipated from the specifically cinematic visual field. Hitchcock's early thrillers did something similar, by coding the subject as the signifying or betraying clue amidst the materials of the photographic panorama not yet dynamized into the moving surfaces of the Western or war-movie. This in turn tended to foreground, not the detective or private eye, but a new kind of collective cultural praxis, namely the sublation of the detective-narrative and the Hollywood adventure serial into the protagonist of the 1950s action-adventure thriller (most famously, North by Northwest, which invents most of the visual categories of the Bond spectacular).

Where Adorno's concept of compositional material finds its greatest relevance, paradoxically enough, is in the trajectory of jazz modernism; though Adorno himself was as personally unfamiliar with the most progressive jazz works of his period as he was with those of the cinema, his categories of mass-cultural absorption, hit-tune versus critical musical consciousness, and the consequent isolation and specialization of musical aesthetics are eminently applicable to late jazz modernism, particularly in the transition from the late bebop of Charlie Parker and Thelonius Monk to the free jazz of John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and others. Where the auteurs negated the Hollywood special effect by recuperating the photographic sublime out of the stereotypical visual trope (the panorama, the tracking shot, the close-up, etc.), bebop rescued the category of instrumental timbre out of the stereotypical scale-modulations and chromatic effects of the big band and swing era. In particular, Parker's annullment of the big band melody and instrumental solo in the thirty-second note and the continuous bebop improvisation paved

the way for Monk's minor-key transitions and austere piano fingerings, which dissolved the chromatic scale into serialized enclaves of dissonance, in much the same fashion that Schoenberg's free atonality in the Expressionist work Pierrot Lunaire negated the harmonic chromaticism of late European Romanticism via the nascent musical seriality of twelve-tone technique. That solo founded by Louis Armstrong's sovereign control of the melodic material over the subordinate orchestra, and carried to its height in the orchestration of Duke Ellington and Count Basie (very roughly, the transition from New Orleans to swing and thence to Kansas City jazz), was thereby democratized into the free-floating bebop solo. This latter followed the principle of extended improvisation, wherein each individual performer was called upon to improvise upon the harmonic raw material in question. This principle was radicalized still further by free jazz, which by degrees dissolved the last remaining neo-national harmonic and rhythmic constraints of bebop by sublating the instrumental technique of the jazz solo (always limited by the sonic possibilities of the saxophone or other instrument) into the aural palettes of a multinational studio and recording technology. On Coltrane's very last works, e.g. Manifestations, the iterative repetition of every possible tone-cluster at every conceivable pitch is interleaved with the objective materials of Second and Third World musical styles; or what amounts to the aural version of that multinational or cybernetic subject patented by William S. Burroughs in Nova Express (1964), which is brought into contact with the decolonized materials of its musical prehistory.

As a model of aesthetic experience, this has the most striking parallel to Adorno's initial categories in Negative Dialectics, namely the discrete model and the serialized ensemble. What interposes itself between the two is the moment of cognitive distance or freedom-towards-the-object,⁵ essentially the conceptual version of what the 1970s theoreticians celebrated as the aesthetic principle of aleatory play, a.k.a. the social space

of consumerism. Against the rationalist exchange of neutralized sign-systems or the pure nominalism of rationalized signs, however, Adorno posits the historicization of the exchange-net altogether:

Immersion into the particular, dialectical immanence raised to an extreme, requires as one of its moments the freedom to step out of the object, too, the freedom which the claim of identity cuts off. Hegel would have abjured this; he relied upon the complete mediation in objects. In the praxis of cognition, the resolution of the irresolvable, the moment of such transcendence of thought comes to light in that solely as a micrology does it employ macrological means. The demand for committalness [Verbindlichkeit] without system is that for thought-models. These are not of a merely monadological sort. The model strikes the specific and more than the specific, without dissolving it into its more general master-concept. To think philosophically is so much as to think in models; negative dialectics is an ensemble of model-analyses. ND:39

The windowless monad and the positivistic system, the twin axial termini of the great 19th century philosophic systems ranging from Hegel's mythic inauguration of the German ideology to Nietzsche's no less mythic demolition of such, are thus superseded by the thought-model and the systematic contradiction (what Adorno calls elsewhere the critical systematic spirit, instead of the spirit of the system [ND:35]), or what amounts to the prescient anticipation of the stratospheric theory-market and rhizomic social spaces of multinational capitalism. What mediates between these two categories is not the hegemonic nominalism of the global consumer culture, but the meditation on the problem of philosophic exposition or *Darstellung*, in the form of the antinomies and unlikely political peregrinations of the thought-model, or what Adorno initially designates that "geistige Erfahrung" which forms the necessary antipode to the abstraction of theory.

Significantly, this had its first great exposition in Freud's notion of sublimation – that process of internalization and subjectivization whereby external laws, constraints, mores and the like are assimilated into the ego-structure of the individual from without, in the form of a super-ego which adjudicates the conflicts of the ego (which Freud famously defined as "organized id") and the id (pure desire, a.k.a. Victorian-era

consumerism) from the position of the constitutional monarch. This striking formulation of the national-monopoly political aporias of the Hapsburg Empire, riven by ethnic neo-nationalisms and the class strife of rapid industrialization, has its monopoly-national cognate in the social space of turn-of-the-century Vienna. Inasmuch as Vienna was an island of modernization relative to the semi-industrialized Eastern European periphery, the class struggles indigenous to such were necessarily mediated through the social forms of that periphery, i.e. nobilitarian elites and the still-numerous peasant producers and handicrafts artisans.⁶ This, of course, is precisely the grounds Benjamin will reappropriate in Origin of the German Tragedy-Play, and one can argue that Benjamin's notion of the modernist or Surrealist shock is really a reverse-engineered variant of the concept of sublimation, designed to extract the modernist trope of vertigo or kinetic mobility. In Adorno's retrospective version of this:

In contrast to this, the cognition throws itself *à fond perdu* [French: "into the depths"] at objects, so as to be fruitful. The vertigo which this creates is an *index veri* [Latin: "index of truth"]; the shock of the revelation, the negativity, or what it necessarily seems to be amidst what is hidden and monotonous, untruth only for the untrue. ND:43

The point is not so much to provide the immanent index by which the transcendental materials of the late modernisms could be measured in the first place (the implicit telos of Adorno's unfinished Aesthetic Theory), but rather to grasp the problem of interpretation as a piece of theoretical praxis: aesthetic works cannot simply be analyzed from without, they must be experienced from within. The task of theory is to assimilate and reprocess the cognitive and conceptual innovations of the 19th century, setting them in motion in much the same way that monopoly capital refunctioned the aesthetic forms of liberal capitalism for its own purposes, or the way the modernisms liberally parodied, quoted or otherwise incorporated otherwise archaic materials into innovative forms. To use Adorno's language, modernism set the objectified impulses of the national culture-

industry into motion towards the utopia of the international subject: the non-identity of the two categories becomes the crucial motor (rather than any instrumentalized telos) of a properly dialectical subjectivity. Orson Welles' democratization of the athleticized panorama of Leni Riefenstahl's Olympia in Citizen Kane, Picasso's negation of the newsreels and radio coverage of the Spanish Civil War in Guernica, Schoenberg's antithesis of the Hollywood film score in the Variations for Orchestra (Op. 31), and Count Basie's orchestration of the swing beat in Kansas City jazz are all compelling models of this process.

Adorno's first serious attempt to put this agenda into practice was undoubtedly his study of Kierkegaard and the existential antinomies. Kierkegaard's philosophic provenance had its functional limit in the class position of that Scandinavian rentier-class condemned, in the existentialist sense, to oscillate between those limited surplus-rents of the world colonial trade already largely secured by the British competition, and the more lucrative but riskier manufacturing speculation which might go awry. Kierkegaard's crafty Central European response is, of course, to socialize the credit-risk involved, by an idealism qua state-developmental bureaucracy willing to play theological investment banker to the concepts involved; something which the logical absolutists and their ontological successors would subsequently pursue in the re-nationalizing form of an idealized monopoly state apparatus (the technocratic perspective of Husserl's abstract *Wesensschau* as much as the Heideggerian *Technologie*).

Adorno's irresistible conclusion is that one can no longer speak of the drive towards a national or even an international totality, but rather several semi-autonomous drives or tendencies set within an irrevocably multinational historical process. This indeed is the genesis of the Adornic constellation, so often misinterpreted as a static hermeneutic or theological trope, but which functions rather as a kind of heuristic register

or aesthetic range-finder roughly corresponding to Sartre's stinging retort to the Vietnam-era PCF in *Search for a Method*: "...there are [only] *proletariats*." CRD:75 The irreducible multiplicity or heterogeneity concealed beneath the totalizing veil of the exchange-net is not simply the abstract or Lukácsian negation of this latter, but is the necessary antipode of such: without the exchange-net, the non-identical would be as impossible as a national proletariat without a national bourgeoisie. Sartre's point, that the relative underdevelopment of the latter in the Russian or Brazilian context was only the flip side of the imperial overdevelopment of the British and American (or indeed French) overclass, has its Central European echo in Adorno's decryption of the embryonic forms of multinational capitalism amidst the primal vortex of export-platform neo-nationalism and free-trade internationalism characteristic of the postwar EC.

From such a standpoint, the emergence of the European Union out of this latter was not in the least bit foreordained; it was, rather, the contingent end-result of Central Europe's location between the hammer of Eastern bloc ideological competition and the anvil of unrelenting American corporate competition. Caught in the firefight between the Taylorist Hegelians of the Eastern bloc apparatchiks and the cybernetic production strategies of the Americans, Central Europe had to be more socialist than the Soviets and more capitalist than the Americans, if it was not to be permanently absorbed into either bloc à la Latin America or the Soviet Asian republics. This ideological crisis is something Adorno initially identifies as the ontological need, i.e. the necessity to legitimate international accumulation structures out of whatever local or proto-national materials were handy, and which will later drive the successive waves of existentialism, structuralism, and post-structuralism which narrated the rise of the European superstate out of a pool of international, neo-Gaullist, and post-Gaullist cultural registers.

Conversely, the informatic ideology of the global rentiers which attempts to privilege the mass-cultural surplus or technology-rent over the production-system in question, by cloaking genuinely multinational productive forces in the guise of neonational relations of production (flexibilization, post-Fordism, etc.), has its concrete negation in the production-networks of those nascent subjects of post-national history, the multinational corporations themselves (Toyotism, just-in-time production, etc.). Adorno's key innovation will be to derive the non-identical element out of this latter, or what amounts to the further division of intellectual labor to a position both locally immanent to the multinational agency (in the sense of the multinational class praxis of the global rentiers, the technology-rents of the multis, and the oppositional projects of micropolitical groups and global trade unions) and globally transcendent to the world-market as a whole (the space of a world government, trade regulations, a juridical system and the like). This prodigious rethinking and expansion of the national and international Marxisms is not without consequences for the vocation of theory:

In the reading of the existent as a text of its becoming, idealistic and materialistic dialectics touch. However, while idealism justifies the inner history of immediacy as a stage of the concept, it becomes materialistically the measure not only of the untruth of concepts, but also that of the existing immediacy. What negative dialectics drives through its hardened objects is the possibility which their reality has betrayed, and yet which gleams from each one of these. Yet even in the most extreme efforts to express the history congealed in the things in language, the words used for this remain concepts. Their precision is a surrogate of the selfness of the thing, never wholly present; a gap yawns between it and what it wants to conjure. Thus the dregs of caprice and relativity in the choice of words as well as in representation [Darstellung] generally. Even in Benjamin concepts have a tendency of hiding their conceptuality in an authoritarian manner. Only concepts can fulfill what the concept hinders. Cognition is a *trôsas iasêta* [Greek: wounded healing]. The determinate failure of all concepts necessitates the citation of others; therein originate those constellations, into which alone something of the hope of the Name has passed. ND:62

The effect is like some early computer flight simulator, which generates the most expansive perspectives out of an array of simplified codes; here, the ontological or neonational codes of the existential or Sartrean field of possibility, the theoretical

concept, and the nominalistic name, respectively, turn out to access the overtly multinational consumer-subject, the postmodern theory-market and the cybernetic, self-iterating text. This in turn allows us to grasp the essential precondition for the nationally-based guerilla struggles and anti-colonial revolutions which raged through the 1960s world-system as the emergence of the multinational marketplace itself: what the economists call the further integration of the raw materials peripheries of Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa into the world-economy, a.k.a. a kind of postmodern primitive accumulation.

In fact, multinational accumulation did not take a single predetermined form, but was mediated by a host of proto-national, neo-national and international class formations, ranging from the military dirigism of Brazil and Indonesia to the developmental states of Singapore and Taiwan, all the way to the cadre politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, wherein ceaseless purges permitted a heretofore unknown upwards mobility of the middle peasant classes (whose most famous alumnus was Mao himself).⁷ Similar processes were undoubtedly at work in the more straightforward nationalizations instituted by Allende and Castro, as well as the various attempts at instituting agrarian reforms in post-colonial Africa. That the vast majority of these attempts at creating genuinely local accumulation were ruthlessly smashed by global finance capital, in much the same way that the newly independent 19th century Latin American economies were crushed under the heel of British and American finance imperialism, is neither a license to write off the Third World generally nor political party-building locally, but merely underlines the need for new types of multinational organization, solidarity and theory.

One of the most pressing tasks facing theorists today is explaining why and how successful late industrializers in East Asia and Central Europe succeeded where so many others failed, and then applying that knowledge in the practical struggles for autonomous,

socially responsible and ecologically sustainable development elsewhere in the world. Though Adorno is the furthest thing from a developmental technocrat one could imagine, there is a moment where he indeed begins to wrestle with this problem. This is the moment at the beginning of Negative Dialectics, where the various philosophic identities (from Hegel's deferred patriotism to the cybernetic ideologies of the Cold War monopoly-state) are set in motion towards their intermediating national moralities (from Kant to the mass-cultural ontologies and existentialisms). Where Sartre analyzed the cinematic unconscious of a Gaullist state caught between an external decolonization and an internal EEC-ization, Adorno does something similar for the philosophic unconscious, as it were, of that Central European developmental state forced to oscillate unhappily between a catastrophic autarky (the Heideggerian ontologies as much as the Diamat orthodoxies of the GDR) and the catastrophic reality of the Pax Americana. The result is the sublation of Soviet autarky and the American hegemony alike in an initial scansion of the nascent world-system of the 1950s, as in the following semiotic rectangle:

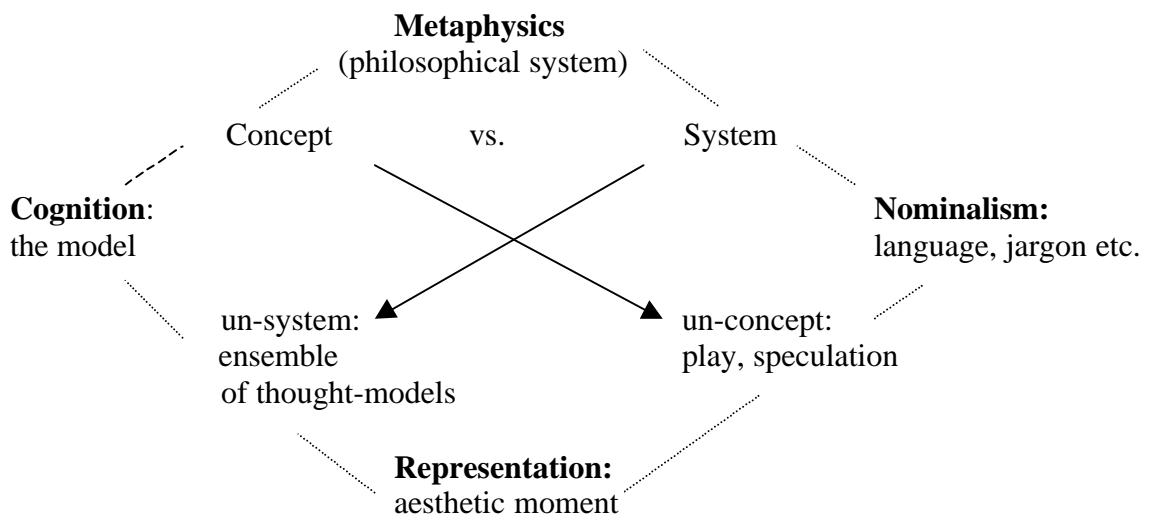


FIGURE 1. Antinomies of the international philosophical system.

Where Lukács of History and Class Consciousness posited, for the first time, the ontology of theoretical labor (in honorable opposition to the parties which bureaucratically proclaimed themselves as the embodiment of such) which Gramsci later reconfirmed as the cornerstone of revolutionary class consciousness, Adorno democratizes such, by insisting that the utopian moment of theory is not reducible to a party platform or a proscriptive morality. Rather, it hinges upon the further reflection and meditation upon an entire constellation of class praxes, indeed on their crucial interrelation and intermediation.

Though this is something which is almost taken for granted nowadays, in the experience of micropolitical alliances and grassroots activism, the heterogeneous solidarities of the welfare state and an increasingly multinational union movement, it's worth stressing the degree to which such a multinational dialectics represented a shockingly scandalous break from the national-monopoly corpus of the Leninist, Social Democratic and New Deal political traditions. Crucial here is the subtle reconfiguration of one of the oldest themes of Adorno's work, namely the antagonism between a high modernist avant-garde and a stupefying culture-industry, into the more complex constellation of the marketplace of cognition on the one hand (not just the vocation of theory, but the entire spectrum of subjective responses to the relentless aestheticization of the life-world under late capitalist consumerism), and the flourishing mass-cultural nominalisms, mediatic sign-systems and modes of signification of the media culture on the other.

The immense productivity of this move can perhaps best be grasped in the context of the competing critical methods of the day, e.g. the heuristic minimalism of New Criticism, whose notion of a reading frame or objective authorial presence exorcised of its compromising political or social content reads like the literary version of what Cold

War area studies did to radical sociology. This has obvious parallels to what the Hollywood blockbuster of the 1950s did to the film classics of the silent film era, not to mention how the multidivisional corporate bureaucracies of postwar GM, BMW and Toyota replaced the heroic motor car and aeroplane entrepreneurs of the 1920s. What was new about these literary, sociological and managerial tendencies was their ability to retrofit of a wide range of local and regional innovations into a mandatory monopoly-national cultural matrix. Something similar is true for the abstractive oppositions and difference engines of 1960s structuralism, which eagerly combed through the heritage of those indigenous and Third World narrative raw materials mapped out by Levi-Strauss' classic Tristes Tropiques, or else sought out new meanings in extraneous or marginal forms, as in Barthes' nostalgic Polaroids or gender-bending white writings, only to rediscover, to their surprise, that the same national-monopoly mythologies they thought they had left behind in the capitalist metropolises were operative in the micro-cultures of the global periphery as well.⁸ Where the objective element in New Criticism – namely, the text shorn of any presumably Communistic extra-textual mediations – was all too subjective, the subjective element in structuralism (the signifying structure or foreground against which the totality was to be construed) was all too objective.

That the solution to such ideological aporias is neither to blindly condemn the formal techniques of New Critical analysis, nor to simply trash structuralism altogether, but to radically historicize both on the grounds of their own privileged mediations (what Bourdieu would call the self-reflection of the fields of literary criticism and anthropology, respectively), is probably not a scandalous assertion in the context of our own post-structuralized present. The scandal, indeed, lies elsewhere: namely, in the stubbornly Marxist insistence, in the teeth of the most ferocious repression and outraged denials by the Cold War apparatchiks and functionaries of the national security states,

and the no less ferocious budgetary repressions and vengeful neonationalisms of present-day neoliberalism, that the theoretical is the political. This is, indeed, the radical sting at the heart of Adorno's and Horkheimer's path-breaking analysis of the Enlightenment in Dialectic of Enlightenment: that objectivity accorded to a scientific knowledge which was not the monopoly of a priestly caste, but which was answerable to the democratic proof of the empirical case study or experiment, itself one of the key political demands of the pre-1789 Enlightenment, became counterrevolutionary the moment this objectivity was signed over to the marketplace of opinion, i.e. turned into a species of positivism. Although we will have more to say about this in the future, for now it's worth noting that, as Fredric Jameson pointed out in his Late Marxism, positivism was something like the postmodernism of Adorno's era, i.e. an all-embracing ideology or tidal trend rather than a voluntary ideological option, whose power was rooted in the overwhelming ubiquity of the nationally-based, globally-expanding multidivisional corporation and its attendant Fordist division of labor (certainly, the postmodern managerial ideologies of innovation and total quality control role could be read as the spin-off and subcontracting out of the Fordist bureaucracies of shopfloor surveillance and control, as henceforth independent industries).⁹

What this means in concrete terms is that while no theory can avoid staking a claim on class struggle, the reverse is certainly not the case: class struggle is not primarily about theory, in the sense of the post-structuralists or the Habermasians, who imagine that all social conflicts can be mediated or translated on some level into nominalistic or linguistic terms. The notion that we're all free to shop in the global village is as true and as false as the existence of the privileged elites who do indeed mortgage globally and shop locally; the point, as Adorno urgently reminds us, is that theory is by no means reducible to mere ideology. The latter maps out a given position in a given field of class

struggles and social antagonisms at a given time, and is in that sense merely a moment of the former, not its terminus. Practice is not to be privileged over theory, any more than theory is to be privileged over practice; the point is to think and act against the principle of privilege altogether, a.k.a. the blind, prehistorical necessity of the marketplace which forces us to rank this or that topic as worthy of study and theoretical explication in the first place. To be sure, this necessity takes on different forms at different places in the total system: the price Northamericans pay for professional survival in a US university system increasingly defined by proletarianized Ph.D.-holders working at contingent jobs is not strictly comparable to the price paid by those Second and Third World professional classes radically impoverished by the brutish austerity programs of the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s. This does not mean, however, that the former have nothing in common with the latter; but merely highlights the fact that multinational solidarity requires the creation of a *range* of solidarities, across all manner of cultural, social, political and economic divides.

The whole point of the Frankfurt School's much-misunderstood notion of the Great Refusal is to emphasize the fact that none of these solidarities can be guaranteed in advance by bureaucratic fiat. Rather, they have to be constructed from the ground up, and patiently critiqued, tested and rebuilt. Returning to our previous example, if the formation of the New Critical interpretive canon is not to be separated from the rise of the American monopoly-national consumer and advertising culture which formed the peculiar substructure of such, any more than structuralist anthropology can really be isolated from the larger trajectory of the Americanization of the post-WW II world generally, nor are these things simply to be collapsed into one another, either. The sectarian Left orthodoxy which tarred all theory with the broad brush of class collaboration was the mirror-image of the malignant orthodoxy of the Cold War Right, to whom Lukaçs or indeed the

practitioners of Western or any other Marxism were simply enemies to be liquidated with properly Zhdanovite dispatch. The choice between East and West Germany was, quite simply, no choice at all.

It is worth emphasizing how closely Adorno's solution to the problem of defining this solidarity – the turn towards the micrology and the constellation – dovetails with the later work of surely the greatest dialectician of false consciousness and mass-cultural reification of the 1960s, namely Jean-Paul Sartre. Though the analogy should not be drawn too closely, there is indeed a sense in which The Family Idiot, with its ceaseless shuttling between the boarding school as an agency of class conflict and class mobility, 19th century medical discourses and scientific positivism, child-rearing practices of the French bourgeoisie, and a para-feudal sibling rivalry on the one hand, and the shock-waves of 1848, the railroad boom and the rise of the great urban financiers and speculators, the Second Napoleon and the German national unification, and the specter of the Communards on the other, offers one possible confirmation and working-out of Adorno's meditations on modernist aesthetics, in the specialized field of the modernist novel. To be sure, Sartre's multivolume effort was hardly the end of the matter, but anticipated that theoretical space later occupied by Bourdieu's The Rules of Art, the astringent sociological corrective to the aporias of Sartre's late work – in particular, the problem of the multiplicity of determinations. Instead of rising to the concrete mediations of the Parisian arcades, street-walkers, flâneurs and journals evoked by Benjamin's wondrous analysis of Baudelaire, these tend to bog down in abstract reiterations of the machinery of self-reflection (i.e. Flaubert's gratuitously selfless autobiographical project), and it's interesting that Bourdieu himself would take Benjamin's hint, by mapping out the overlapping social spaces salons, art-markets and stock markets of 19th century Paris.

What Sartre did pull off in grand fashion, however, was the leveraging of Adorno's concept of the non-identical in the demesne of the psychobiography (whose distinguished genealogy stretches back to Freud and laterally to Erikson), as opposed to the aesthetic excursus per se. This is the central and suggestive interrogative refrain of The Family Idiot, "what can be known about a man", which – overlooking the implicit sexism of the question – in due course redounds as the inconceivable inhumanity of the social forces which necessarily produced someone like Flaubert. Adorno will go one better than this, by asking Sartre's question in reverse: not what can be known about any individual, but what can be known by theory and theoretical experience generally, as refracted through the self-reflective instrumentarium of a powerfully reenergized, multinational dialectics. With typical far-sightedness, Adorno will begin this task not, as one might have expected, with the American Empire or its Second World analogues, but by engaging with the archenemy of the century itself, namely German fascism, and the peculiar case of fundamental ontology.

Notes

1. Even the normally acute Terry Eagleton called Minima Moralia a “bizarre blend of probing insight and patrician grousing” and had this to say about Adorno’s contemporary irrelevance: “It is by now widely agreed that Adorno’s experience of fascism led him and other members of the Frankfurt School to travesty and misrecognize some of the specific power-structures of liberal capitalism, projecting the minatory shadow of the former sort of regime upon the quite different institutions of the latter. Much the same confusion is inherited by some post-structuralist theory, with its perilously indiscriminate conflation of widely divergent orders of power, forms of oppression and modalities of law. The breathtaking subtlety of Adorno’s disquisitions on art are in inverse proportion to the two-dimensional crudity of some of his political perceptions. Indeed these two facets of his thought are closely intertwined, as a defeatist politics generates a compensatorily rich aesthetics...” The Ideology of the Aesthetic, Basil Blackwell, Cambridge, MA: 1990 (359). And somewhat later: “If Adorno can detect the longing for happiness in some bureaucratic edict, he is also depressingly skillful at discerning the rapaciousness which lurks within our most edifying gestures. There can be no truth without ideology, no transcendence without betrayal, no beneficence which is not bought at the cost of another’s happiness. If the skein of history is meshed as fine as this, then to tug on any one thread of it is to risk unravelling some rare design in the name of unpicking an obstructive knot. Textuality, with Adorno as with some later theorists, thus becomes a rationale for political inertia; *praxis* is a crude, blundering affair, which could never live up to the exquisite many-sidedness of our theoretical insights. It is remarkable how this Arnoldian doctrine is still alive and well today, occasionally in the most ‘radical’ of circles.” *Ibid.* (363) We, of course, will take the position that what seems to be inertia is really a conceptual revolution, which anticipates many features of the praxis of the post-Cold War era.

2. “The system is the Mind turned belly, rage the signature of each and every idealism...” ND:34 The objective rapacity of American capitalism thus had its subjective expression in the national security state apparatus charged with managing the flow of raw materials and the cheap labor pools of the global semi-peripheries (in the 1950s, this meant Japan and Western Europe; something later extended, at the zenith of the American Empire, to East Asia and Central and Southern Europe in the 1960s). Put another way, the American superstate was forced to undermine its own long-term hegemony precisely in order to maintain its short-term control over potential defectors to the state-autarkic camp; a paradox nicely captured by Adorno’s meditation on the concept of continuity in late capitalism, or what amounts to the antinomies of extended accumulation: “The antinomy of totality and infinity – for the restless Ad infinitum explodes the self-contained system, which nevertheless exists solely thanks to the infinite – is that of idealistic essence. It mimics a central feature of bourgeois society. This too must, in order to preserve itself, to stay the same, to “be”, constantly expand, go further, push the borders ever further, respect no limits, not stay the same.” ND:37 The American Empire had to destroy itself in order to save itself.

3. Adorno’s own version of this is, by contrast, delimited to the juridical categories involved, rather than the cultural forms which evolved out of these things: “His [Husserl’s] system too resembles, in more modern parlance, a credit system. Its concepts form a constellation, in which each one vouches for the obligations of every other, although the representation of the process conceals that which interlinks them. Husserl’s expressions, such as fulfillment – that of a contract; evidence – that of juridical proof; judgement – that of a courtroom procedure – involuntarily construe epistemology as analogous to a universal legal relationship. In the end the

similarity is if possible strengthened by such archaicizing ingredients from juridical discourse such as domain and lien.” Theodor Adorno. Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie. Gesammelte Schriften Vol. 5, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970 (33-34).

4. The phantasmagoria, which dates back to Adorno’s diagnosis of the Wilhelmine ideology in In Search of Wagner, has its determinate negation in the radically autonomized or late modernist aesthetic work, which responds to the intolerable claim of the totality (the objective socialization of the aesthetic material) by a kind of mimetic reflex, i.e. that internal scission or renewed aesthetic division of labor by which the modernist work of art created an experimental or innovatory aesthetic language on the grounds of the cast-off, suppressed or otherwise antagonistic materials of the national mass-culture or consumer culture in question. “If the thought truly realized itself [entaussern: to relinquish, divest oneself of, realize] in the thing,” notes Adorno concerning the politics of interpretation, “if this counted for something and not its category, the object itself would begin to speak under the thought’s leisurely glance.” ND:38 Aesthetic theory is consequently, as Benjamin never tired of pointing out, hardly a luxury of the national intellectuals but in reality the most urgent and pressing task of Left praxis generally; which indeed goes far towards explaining the identical defamation of radical art by state bureaucracies of both Stalinist and Fascist stripe. The interpretive is the political.

5. “The freedom towards the object, which in Hegel resulted in the disempowerment of the subject, is first of all to be constructed. Until then, dialectics diverges as method and as one of the matter at hand [Sache]. Concept and reality are of the same contradictory essence. What tears society apart antagonistically, the dominating principle, is the same thing which, intellectualized, causes the difference between the concept and that which is subordinated under it. The logical form of the contradiction however achieves that difference, because every one which does not suborn itself to the unity of the dominating principle, according to the measure of the principle, does not appear as a polyvalence which is indifferent to this, but as an infraction against logic.” ND:58

6. The greatest literary example of this is the densely allegorical, heavily disguised battle between the land-surveyor and Count West-West in Kafka’s The Castle; one could also point to Agatha Christie’s Poirot mysteries for the gender-bending variation on the same theme, i.e. a protagonist whose bourgeois fortitude vis-à-vis aristocratic snobs conceals a working-class insouciance.

7. Intermediate cases might include South Korea, where rival military and political elites battled for control of an American-funded developmental state for decades, as well as Hong Kong, a wealthy colonial entrepot whose transition to export-led accumulation combined a liberal market ideology with Swiss-style interventions in property and currency markets. In certain cases, e.g. Turkey, the two could even coexist: as with Istanbul’s mercantile elites and the Kemalian traditions of the military, which could be reconciled only by common threats elsewhere, i.e. Kurdish nationalists in the hinterland or fundamentalism in the urban slums. Israel’s ascent to the Europeriphery courtesy of American military-rents and cheap Palestinian labor is another good example here. All would-be late industrializers, whether of Communist or ASEAN ideological hue, mobilized national monopoly-rents for development; what determined the relative success or failure of the strategy in question was the objectively multinational constellation accorded to such. The global semi-periphery, in short, was in the most violent competition with itself (in the form of the two Germanies, Koreas and Vietnams, and the three Chinas) as much as with First World multinationals.

8. One should not lose sight of the fact that France was, as late as 1960, a cultural coeval but an industrial semi-periphery in relation to the Pax Americana. Levi-Strauss' honorable political commitment was based at least in part on this insight: that the urbanizing masses of Latin America, Asia and Africa were locked into struggle, not just with a comprador bourgeoisie, but with a global developmental ideology as well. Something similar was undoubtedly at work in the semiotic inquiries of a Barthes or an Eco: the intuition of the non-identity of French or Italian aesthetics, even its mass-cultural dimension, in relation to a hegemonic US media export machine, is recouped from the standpoint of the theoretical reflection and meditation on culture per se. The insider joke, that if Barthes had been an American, he would've written just another Updike novel instead of *S/Z.*, finds its ultimate confirmation in Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, written for a European culture-market which has clearly caught up with its erstwhile American mentor.

9. Adorno goes further than explicitly denouncing the technocratic aspect of anthropology, and in fact identifies such as the American version of German fundamental ontology, i.e. the naked academic justification of existing exploitation: "What humanity is, is not to be presumed. It is nowadays mere function, unfree, regressing behind everything with which it is stamped as invariant, be it even the defenseless neediness, on which many anthropologists swear. The disfigurements, which it experienced over millenia, it carries along as a social legacy. If the essence of humanity were deciphered from its contemporary constitution, this would sabotage its possibility. A so-called historical anthropology would scarcely serve any longer. Indeed it would have an insight into the nature of becoming and conditionality, but would shuffle this off onto the subjects, under the abstraction of the dehumanization, which made them into what they are, and which continues to be tolerated in the name of a *qualitas humana* [Latin: human quality]. The more concretely anthropology appears, the more deceptive it becomes, indifferent towards that in human beings which is by no means grounded within them as the subject but rather in the process of desubjectivization, which since time immemorial ran parallel with the historical formation of the subject." ND:130