interviewee who was of the opinion that the dilemmas of the contemporary epoch would end if people would simply follow the lead of prominent personalities. Insofar as the culture industry arouses a feeling of well-being that the world is precisely in that order suggested by the culture industry, the substitute gratification which it prepares for human beings cheats them out of the same happiness which it deceitfully projects. The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which, as Horkheimer and I have noted, enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop. If the masses have been unjustly reviled from above as masses, the culture industry is not among the least responsible for making them into masses and then despising them, while obstructing the emancipation for which human beings are as ripe as the productive forces of the epoch permit.

14

The Autonomy of Art

During the final years of his life Adorno struggled to bring to completion a work which would represent what he had previously stated only diffusely, namely, a theory of aesthetics. From certain remarks we can see that Adorno even saw in this work the potential for a concept of praxis which would resolve what he took to be the key philosophical problem of non-identity: that is, the problem of explaining without reductionism subject-object interaction. The work, *Aesthetic Theory*, was not however to reach its final draft. It appeared in 1970 in its inevitably unsatisfactory form, one year after Adorno's death. Rolf Tiedemann tells us that Adorno had intended to give *Aesthetic Theory* this epigram from Friedrich von Schlegel: 'In the so-called philosophy of art one of two things is usually missing: either the philosophy or the art.' Adorno laboured intensely, and usually successfully, to avoid Schlegel's judgment. All theoretical discussions are contextualized within concrete instances, and artworks and art movements are explicated philosophically.

The central theme of *Aesthetic Theory* is the autonomy of art. Adorno argues that the great art of the bourgeois era is characterized by its apparent independence from society: it is not created for the purposes of public utility nor does it serve what Benjamin called a 'cultic function'. For these reasons bourgeois art has been criticized by other Marxist theorists who believe that art should, on the contrary, be politically committed. By its elevation, they say, bourgeois art fails to engage in a socially progressive critique of society. It thereby aligns itself with the forces of domination. In the sections from *Aesthetic Theory* reprinted here we see Adorno reject the idea of committed art in a confrontation with two western intellectuals, Bertold Brecht and Jean-Paul

Sartre. It is Adorno's contention that committed art is no better than political theory in that it has no specific aesthetic quality, merely political aspirations. Art loses its essence when it concedes heteronomy, in this case the heteronomy being political propaganda. Furthermore ideology cannot be exposed by edification. Political messages will be filtrated through false consciousness and dismissed. Rather, social contradictions need to be experienced and certain art holds open the possibility of that experience. Art is not autonomous in the sense that it is metaphysically removed from and independent of society. It is autonomous in that it is not reducible to the requirements of society, namely the presentation of a harmonious and meaningful whole. Adorno uses the metaphor of Leibniz's monad to explain the relation of autonomous art to society. The relevant parts of Leibniz's theory are that monads are unities, individual, internally dynamic, windowless in that they do not affect one another nor can anything pass on from any one of them, and finally they each reflect the universe from their individual perspective. Transposing this metaphor to the artwork, Adorno holds that each artwork is a coherent entity constituted by a dynamic force field of meanings. Furthermore, no artwork is reducible to any particular message (unlike, for example, committed art). Yet each is a cipher of society awaiting the appropriate interpretation. Art can be critical both in encouraging praxis which is contrary to socially prescribed experiences (cf. Schoenberg) and in drawing attention to the extraordinary in the ordinary (cf. Kafka or Beckett). With respect to the latter, neither Kafka nor Beckett ever address social conditions, yet their works are potentially more effective than explicitly critical ones in illuminating contemporary experience. This is achieved only by subversion of content by form. In this subversion art is at odds with itself whilst remaining as art. The significance of this – drawing attention to the extraordinary in the ordinary – is that it points, in the way that monads do (above), to the aporias of modern society. These aporias are unknown to false consciousness in that it takes its social environment as something given, natural, and essentially rational. Against this consciousness Kafka and Beckett provide in literary form the experience of contradiction which has, however indirectly, a critical relation to society. In this way alone is aesthetic resistance possible. Didactic art, by contrast, cannot provide that critical experience.

Adorno distinguishes autonomous art from the artworks of *l'art pour l'art* which are self-consciously positioned at a remove from a despised reality. But, this, Adorno claims, is ideological in that *l'art pour l'art* fails to engage reality and thereby becomes false consolation. The autonomy of art is the product of what Marx decried as a division between intellectual and physical labour. Even though Adorno argues for the superiority of autonomous art, a superiority due to its critical qualities, it is for him a historically necessary though not eternally desirable state of affairs precisely because it is a symptom of the division of labour.

There is no doubt that Adorno's distinctions are, at times, exceedingly fine. However, *Aesthetic Theory* stands among the twentieth century's best efforts to comprehend the essence of art.

Society, *Aesthetic Theory* [1970] (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 320–52 (abridged).
Translated by C. Lenhardt.

The Dual Essence of Art: Social Fact and Autonomy

There is no doubt that art was in some sense more directly a social thing before its emancipation than after. Autonomy, art's growing independence from society, is a function of the bourgeois consciousness of freedom, which in turn is tied up with a specific social structure. Before that, art may have been in conflict with the forces and mores dominating society, but it was never 'for itself'. Such conflicts have always existed; desultorily they are reflected in Plato's condemnation of art in the *Republic*. The notion of a fundamentally oppositional art, however, did not occur to anyone at the time. In short, there has been a great deal of direct social control over art, from its inception all the way down to modern totalitarian states, the one exception being the bourgeois era. There is a sense however, in which bourgeois society can be said to have integrated art even more completely than any previous society. The pressure exerted by the growth of nominalism forced the latently present social essence of art more and more into the open: in the bourgeois novel that essence is incomparably more palpable than in the highly stylized, distanced epics of chivalry. The influx into art of experiences that are no longer forced into given genres and the need to constitute form out of these experiences, from below, as it were – these are two phenomena which indicate the growth of 'realism', measured purely in terms of aesthetic categories rather than content. No longer sublimated by the principle of stylization, the relation of content to the society from which it springs is thus rendered much more direct, and not only in literature. The so-called lower forms too had kept their distance from society in pre-bourgeois times. This holds true even of genres like ancient Athenian comedy, with its focus on bourgeois relations and everyday events; the flight by Aristophanes to no man's land is not some kind of escapist aberration, but an essential aspect of his form.

While art is always a social fact because it is a product of the social labour of spirit, this factual quality is being accentuated as art becomes bourgeoisified. Bourgeois art focuses directly on the relation between itself as an artefact and empirical society. *Don Quixote* marks the beginning of

this development. Art, however, is not social only because it is brought about in such a way that it embodies the dialectic of forces and relations of production. Nor is art social only because it derives its material content from society. Rather, it is social primarily because it stands opposed to society. Now this opposition art can mount only when it has become autonomous. By congealing into an entity unto itself – rather than obeying existing social norms and thus proving itself to be 'socially useful' – art criticizes society just by being there. Pure and immanently elaborated art is a tacit critique of the debasement of man by a condition that is moving towards a total-exchange society where everything is a for-other. This social deviance of art is the determinate negation of a determinate society. To be sure, the rejection of society that we see reflected in the sublimation of autonomous art through the law of form also lends itself to ideological abuse: art's distance from this horrifying society also betrays an attitude of non-intervention. It must be kept in mind that society is not co-extensive with ideology. Any society is more than sheer negativity to be indicted by the aesthetic law of form; even in its most objectionable shape, society is still capable of producing and reproducing human life. Art has had to take this aspect (no less than that of its critical task) into account, at least until such time as it became clear that the social process was headed for self-destruction. And art has no way of separating affirmation and critique intentionally because it is non-judgmental. Freed of heteronomous control, a pure force of production, like the aesthetic, is objectively the counter image of binding force, but it is also the paradigm of those dreadful activities undertaken for their own sake.

Art will live on only as long as it has the power to resist society. If it refuses to objectify itself, it becomes a commodity. What it contributes to society is not some directly communicable content but something more mediate, i.e. resistance. Resistance reproduces social development in aesthetic terms without directly imitating it. Radical modernism preserves the immanence of art by letting society into its precincts but only in dimmed form, as though it were a dream. If it refused to do so, it would dig its own grave.

There is nothing in art that is directly social, not even when direct sociality is the artist's express aim. Not so long ago the politically committed Brecht (since he wanted to go on giving artistic expression to his political orientation) had to move farther and farther away from social reality, although reality is what his plays are all about. Jesuitic ratiocination had to be employed to construe what he wrote as being socialist realism. Thus he managed a narrow escape from the inquisition. Music is telling tales out of school, the school of art as a whole. Just as, in music, society with its contradictory dynamic crops up only as a shadow, speaking through it but in need of being identified, so it is with all the other arts. Whenever art tries to copy social reality it is

all the more certain to become an as-if. Brecht's China in the *Good Woman of Setzuan* is no less stylized than Schiller's Messina in *The Bride of Messina*. All moral judgments about dramatic and fictional personages are null and void; they are appropriate only in relation to the real historical figures underlying those personages. Debates about whether or not a positive hero can have negative traits, and the like, are in fact as asinine as they appear to anyone who is not a student of dramatic theory. Form acts like a magnet ordering elements of real life in a manner such that they become estranged from their extra-aesthetic existence. But it is through this estrangement that their extra-aesthetic essence can be appropriated by art. At the other extreme there are the practices of the culture industry. It combines slavish respect for empirical details and illusory photographic attachment to them with ideological manipulation based on the utilization of those elements. What is social about art is not its political stance, but its immanent dynamic in opposition to society. Its historical posture repulses empirical reality, the fact that art works *qua* things are part of that reality notwithstanding. If any social function can be ascribed to art at all, it is the function to have no function. By being different from the ungodly reality, art negatively embodies an order of things in which empirical being would have its rightful place. The mystery of art is its demystifying power. Its social essence calls for a twofold reflection: on the being-for-itself of art, and on its ties with society. This dual essence of art comes out in all artistic phenomena; they change and contradict themselves.

Art's Fetish Character

Politically progressive critics have accused *l'art pour l'art*, many exponents of which were in fact in league with reactionary political interests, of fetishizing the concept of the pure, self-sufficient work of art. This indictment is valid in that works of art are products of social labour, and while they are subject to a law of form, be it an externally imposed or a self-generated one, they do tend to isolate themselves from what they are. Accordingly, every single work of art is vulnerable to the charge of false consciousness and ideology. In purely formal terms, prior to any analysis of what they express, art works are ideological because they *a priori* posit a spiritual entity as though it were independent of any conditions of material production, hence as though it were intrinsically superior to these conditions. In so doing art works cover up the age-old culpability that lies in the divorce of physical from mental labour. This divorce eventually undoes the original elevation of art to a status of superiority: it deflates art. That is why art works that claim to speak the truth are not wholly congruent with the concept of

art. Theorists of *l'art pour l'art*, like Valéry, have pointed this out. But as with any culpability, works of art are not finished just because one has exposed their culpable fetishism, for in a world that is totally mediated by social reality nothing is blameless. The fetish character of art works is a condition of their truth, including their social truth. The principle of being-for-other only seems to be antagonistic to fetishism; in reality it is the principle of exchange, and therein lies concealed real domination. Freedom from repression can be represented only by what does not succumb to repression; residual use value, only by what is useless. Works of art are plenipotentiaries of things beyond the mutilating sway of exchange, profit and false human needs. Against the background of an illusory, social totality, art's illusory being-in-itself is like a mask of truth. Marx denounced the fact that Milton was paid a pittance for *Paradise Lost*, which at the time represented an unmarketable commodity, socially useless labour.[1] Marx's denunciation of productive labour is the strongest defence of art against its functionalization in bourgeois society (the logical extension of which is the undialectical ostracism of art by society).

A free society would situate itself beyond both the irrationality of its false costs and the means-ends rationality of utility. This ideal is encoded in art and is responsible for art's social explosiveness. Since magical fetishes are one of the historical roots of art, there is in art works a fetishistic quality that transcends mere commodity fetishism and which can neither be discharged nor disavowed. In social terms the emphasis on the moment of illusion in works of art is a necessary corrective and therefore a vehicle of truth. If art works down-play consistency and the fetishistic pretence of being absolutes, they *ipso facto* lose all value. If they consciously hypostatize their fetishistic properties, as has been the case since the middle of the nineteenth century, the survival of art itself is in jeopardy. Delusion is art's condition of existence; none the less, art cannot advocate delusion. This leads art into a dilemma from which only an understanding of the rationality of art's irrationality promises a way out. The sort of works that try to free themselves from fetishism by siding with dubious political interventions find themselves regularly enmeshed in a false social consciousness because they tend to over-simplify, selling out to a myopic praxis to which they contribute nothing but their own blindness.

Reception and Production

For its part, the objectification of art, which is the same as what society outside perceives as art's fetishism, is a product of the social division of

labour. That is why, if we want to determine the nature of the relation between art and society, we must look not at the sphere of reception, but at the more basic sphere of production. Concern with the social explication of art has to address the production of art rather than study its impact (which in many cases diverges completely from art works and their social content, a divergence that can in turn be explained sociologically). Since time immemorial human responses to art works have been exceedingly mediate; they are not directly related to the specificity of a work but are determined by society as a whole. In short, the study of effects fails to show what is social about art. Under the aegis of positivism, this approach has even usurped the right to dictate norms for art to follow. The degree of heteronomy foisted on art by this normative turn in the positivist approach to phenomena of reception is more restrictive than that of all ideological aspects that pertain to art by virtue of its fetishization. Art and society converge in substance, not in something that is extraneous to art. That also applies to art history. The collectivization of the individual is a drain on society's productive forces. The real history of society repeats itself in art history because the productive forces of the former can dissociate themselves from society and live a life of their own in art. This explains why art is a recollection of transience. Art preserves the transient, bringing it before our eyes by changing it. This is the sociological explanation of art's temporal core. Seeking to steer clear of social praxis, art becomes a schema of social praxis just the same: every authentic work revolutionizes art.

However, while society insinuates itself into art via the aesthetic forces and relations – only to vanish there – art for its part tends to be amenable to socialization, i.e. to integration by society. This integration is not, as the progressivist cliché would have it, some posthumous benediction that says this or that artistic phenomenon was meet and proper after all. Reception tends to dull the critical edge of art, its determinate negation of society. Works are most critical when they first see the light of day; afterwards they become neutralized because, among other things, the social conditions have changed. Neutralization is the social price art pays for its autonomy. Once art works are buried in the pantheon of cultural exhibits, their truth content deteriorates. In the administered world neutralization becomes universal.

Surrealism once undertook to revolt against the fetishistic segregation of art in a sphere unto itself. But surrealism moved beyond pure protest and became art. Unlike André Masson, who valued the quality of *peinture* more highly than protest, some surrealist painters achieved a balance between scandal and social reception. In the end, somebody like Salvador Dali was

able to become a kind of jet-set painter, the Laszlo or Van Dongen of a generation that prided itself on being 'sophisticated' in an era when crisis conditions seemed to have given way to stability. This gave birth to the false posthumous life of surrealism. Modern currents such as surrealism are predestined to align themselves with the world as soon as the surrealist law of form is damaged by the sudden invasion of content: that world finds unsublimated materials easy to get along with, for they have no critical bite. In an age of total neutralization of art, however, a similar fate has befallen radically abstract painting as well: the non-representational is perfectly compatible with the ideas affluent members of society have about decorating their walls. There is no telling whether this detracts from the immanent quality of modern painting as well. Reactionaries tend to think it does, but that may be false alarm. It would actually be downright idealistic to conceive the link between art and society strictly in terms of the structural problems of society. The dual essence of art – its autonomy and its being a *fait social* – comes out again and again in tangible dependencies and conflicts of both areas. At times there is direct socioeconomic intervention in the production of art, for instance when painters enter long-term agreements with art dealers who are always on the lookout for something idiosyncratic, some personalized gimmick or trademark.

The fact that German expressionism faded away as quickly as it did may have artistic reasons pertaining to the tension between the general idea of a work (to which expressionism still adhered) and the specific idea of the absolute scream. This meant that few expressionist works actually succeeded. Another reason for the premature obsolescence of expressionism is political: it declined when its revolutionary impetus failed to be realized and when the Soviet Union began to prosecute radical art. Forced to make ends meet, the authors belonging to this then neglected movement – it took forty to fifty years for expressionism to be taken note of – 'went commercial', as the American idiom goes. This could be shown in reference to most of the German expressionist writers who survived the First World War. What we can learn sociologically from the fate of the expressionists is that the bourgeois notion of having a stable occupation is more important than the need to express oneself, which supposedly inspired the expressionists. In bourgeois society artists, like other categories of mental labour, are forced to go on being artists once they have chosen 'artist' for an occupational label. Retired expressionists chose without any compunction themes that carried the promise of marketability. For them there was no aesthetic necessity to go on producing, only an economic one. Hence the objective indifference and insignificance of the post-war expressionist output.

Choice of Subject Matter; Artistic Subject; Relation to Science

Among the links that mediate art and society, subject matter is the most superficial and fallible one. I am referring to the treatment in art of overtly or covertly social phenomena. Today the notion that a sculpture portraying a coal heaver is intrinsically more relevant in social or political terms than one without such a proletarian hero is being promoted only by socialist regimes seeking to exploit art for the purpose of augmenting economic productivity. Emile Meunier's idealized coal heaver and his realism in general are perfectly congruent with a bourgeois ideology that disarmed the proletariat by attesting to the existence of a few beautiful people and noble physiques in its ranks. Unmitigated naturalism also often finds itself in agreement with the bourgeois personality type, notably its anal deformations. The naturalist is prone to derive satisfaction from the penury and depravation he castigates. Zola, for example, glorified fertility like the ideologues of blood and soil, and he is known to have spouted anti-Semitic rubbish. In its material dimension an artistic indictment is often an amalgam of aggressiveness and conformism. The same goes for a choral work written in the agitprop vein around 1930; it was meant to give voice to the dissatisfaction of unemployed workers. It is one thing to show one's political colours (not the most progressive ones, in this case); it is quite another to preface the work with the instruction 'to be sung in an ugly manner', for it is an open question whether an artistic attitude of howling and crudeness denounces reality or identifies with it. Maybe denunciation is made possible only by figuration. And figuration is completely ignored by a social aesthetics that puts a premium on material and nothing else. What makes art works socially significant is content that articulates itself in formal structures.

Kafka is a good example here. Nowhere in his work did he address monopoly capitalism directly. Yet by zeroing in on the dregs of the administered world, he laid bare the inhumanity of a repressive social totality, and he did so more powerfully and uncompromisingly than if he had written novels about corruption in multinational corporations. That form is the key to understanding social content can be shown concretely in Kafka's language, the Kleistian matter-of-factness of which has often been noticed. Sensitive readers will invariably recognize the contrast that exists in Kafka between stylistic sobriety and highly imaginary happenings. This contrast effects a transfer such that the quasi-realistic description brings what seems distant and

impossible into menacingly close range. But the, at least for a committed reader, overly artistic critique of the realistic features of Kafka's form does have a social dimension, for those features seem to make their peace with an ideal of order, perhaps an ideal of simple life and contentment with one's appointed station in it – all of which is social repression in disguise. The linguistic schema of describing what is thus-and-no-different is Kafka's medium of translating the spell of society into artistic appearance. He wisely refrains from naming, and thereby breaking, that spell. This spell in its tenacious omnipresence defines the space of Kafka's work; and since it is an *'a priori* premise it cannot become an explicit theme for him. His language is the vehicle for expressing the intricate configuration of positivism and myth, the social relevance of which is only now becoming transparent. The old spell has taken on a new form of mythical immutability: reified consciousness. The latter both presupposes and confirms the fateful perpetuity of empirical being, and Kafka's epic style with its archaic qualities is a form of mimetic assimilation to it. While his work foreswore any attempt at transcending myth, it lays bare the universal blindness, which is society. This exposure is brought about by Kafka's language. In his narrative the bizarre is as normal as it is in social reality.

Artistic products that are nothing but regurgitations of what is happening socially, flattering themselves that this kind of metabolism with second nature passes for a genuine process of copying such products, are smitten with silence. The artistic subject as such is social, not private. In any case, it does not become social by means of forced collectivization or by choosing certain materials. In an age of repressive collectivism, the power of resistance to compact majorities resides in the lonely, exposed producer of art. This power of resistance has become a *sine qua non* of art; without it art would be socially untrue.[2] The productive artist always relates to his own immediacy in part negatively, which means he is unconsciously obeying a social universal: as he improves and corrects his work, a collective subject is looking over his shoulders, one that is itself badly in need of improvement. The notion of artistic objectivity goes hand in hand with[3] social emancipation, the latter being a situation where something frees itself on its own steam from social convention and control. Works of art cannot rest content with such vague and abstract universality as is typical of classicism. They depend on diremption, and that means that the concrete historical situation, art's other, is their condition. Their social truth depends on whether or not they open themselves to that concrete content, making it their own through assimilation. Their law of form for its part does not smooth over the cleavage but concerns itself with how to shape it. [. . .]

Art as a Mode of Behaviour

Social conflicts and class relations leave an imprint on the structure of works of art. By contrast, the political positions art works explicitly take are epiphenomenal. Frequently they work to the disadvantage of elaboration, ultimately undermining even the social truth content. In art little is achieved by political convictions alone.

It is a matter of controversy to what extent Attic tragedy, including Euripides, took sides in the divisive social conflicts that were raging at the time. Nevertheless, the thrust of the tragic form, as opposed to its mythical subject matter, was in the direction of undercutting the spell of fate and replacing it by subjectivity. Socio-politically, this attests as much to the growing emancipation from feudal-familial conditions as to the existence of an antagonism between the political powers backed by destiny and the idea of mankind growing up into adulthood. Both the historico-philosophical tendency and the antagonism combined to become the *a priori* form of ancient tragedy. The latter would hardly have attained the substantiality it did had it dealt with these matters directly in terms of content. Society is the more authentically portrayed in classical Greek tragedy the less directly it is addressed. Real partisanship, a virtue of art works no less than of human beings, dwells deep down, where social antinomies turn into the dialectic of forms. Artists articulate these antinomies in the language of the art work, thereby performing their role as social beings. In his later years even Lukács saw the need to think along these lines.

By articulating the otherwise ineffable contradictions of society, figuration takes on the features of a praxis which is the opposite of escapism, transforming art into a mode of behaviour. Art is a type of praxis and there is no need to make apologies for its failure to act directly. Art could not do so even if it wanted to. Surely the political impact even of so-called committed art is highly uncertain. The political positions artists take may play a role in defining their standpoint in relation to the prevailing consciousness, but when it comes to the growth of their work those positions have little importance. It is, for example, immaterial for the truth content of Mozart's music that he mouthed disgusting political views on the occasion of Voltaire's death. On the other hand, it would not make sense either to abstract completely from the political intentions of works of art, especially at the time of their first appearance in public. For instance, somebody who evaluates Brecht strictly in terms of his artistic merits would be as foolishly one-sided as another person who judges him only in terms of the significance of his political tenets. The immanence of society in art is not the immanence of art *in* society

but the essential social relation *of* art. The social content of art resides in the principle of individuation, which for its part is social. This explains why art cannot gain insight into its social essence by itself but has to rely on interpretation to do the job.

Ideology and Truth

Some art works are ideological through and through, and still truth content is able to hold its own in them. Ideology is socially necessary illusion, which means that if it is necessary it must be a shape of truth, no matter how distorted. One of the ways in which a socially conscious aesthetics sets itself off from artlessness and philistinism is by reflecting the social critique levelled at the ideological dimension of art works, rather than simply regurgitating it.

The nineteenth-century German novelist Adalbert Stifter is a paradigmatic case of a writer whose *oeuvre* contains truth despite his overtly ideological intentions. What is overtly ideological in Stifter is, first of all, the reactionary choices he makes in terms of subject matter and of what the *fabula* is supposed to teach the reader. In addition, as far as form is concerned, he takes up an objectivistic posture with his minute and tender description of little things, thereby asserting the presence of meaning and justice in a life worth writing about. No wonder he became the idol of a noble and backward-looking bourgeoisie. Nowadays those layers that used to guarantee his semi-esoteric popularity have peeled off. But Stifter is by no means dead. The complaints about him as a harmonistic, affirmative writer have been exaggerated, especially in reference to his late works, where objectivity is reduced to a lifeless mask and where the alleged evocation of life reads more like a ritual to keep life at a distance. Through the eccentricity of ideology shines the hidden, repressed suffering of the alienated subject and thus the unreconciled nature of real life. A pale light is cast over Stifter's mature prose, as though it were allergic to blissful colours. It is almost like a pencil drawing, because social reality with its unruly, disturbing features has been excluded to make room for the poet's world view and his epical *a priori*, both of them incompatible with that reality. In Stifter's prose the discrepancy between form and the emergent capitalist society (which is contrary to the intentions of that prose) enhances expression. The ideological eccentricity of his work mediately imparts truth content to it and establishes Stifter's superiority over the average edification literature of his time, giving him that authentic quality which Nietzsche admired. He is a prime example of an artist whose poetic intentions – the meaning he imparts directly to his works – are at odds with

objective content. Content in Stifter is truly the negation of meaning, and yet there would be no content at all were it not for the author's positing a falsely intentional content in the first place, a content that is subsequently superseded by the specific makeup of the work.

As in Stifter, affirmative art generally may become a cipher of despair. Conversely, pure negativity of content has always an admixture of affirmation. The brilliance radiated today by all anti-affirmative works is the appearance of an ineffable affirmation, the dawn of a non-existent that pretends it has being. Its claim to being passes away with the instant of aesthetic illusion. But what has no being none the less represents a promise, if it has the ability to appear. This relation between the existent and non-existent is the Utopian figure of art. While art is driven into a position of absolute negativity, it is never absolutely negative precisely because of that negativity. It always has an affirmative residue. The antinomial essence of this residue rubs off on art works immanently, i.e. before they even take a stance on the existent *qua* society, casting a penumbra over them. Beauty of any kind has to face the question of whether it is in fact beautiful or whether it is just a false claim resting on static affirmation. In a sense, the disgust with arts and crafts parallels the guilty conscience that art as such has whenever a musical chord is struck, a colour put before our eyes. Social criticism of art does not rely on external palpation. Instead, it springs directly from intra-aesthetic formations. The heightened sensitivity of the aesthetic sense tends to converge with the socially determined aversion to art.

Truth and ideology do not represent good and bad respectively. Art contains them both. This dualism in turn gives rise alike to ideological misuse and summary dismissal. It takes only one small step to pass from the Utopia of self-sameness in art works to the stench of those heavenly roses that art is said to scatter over our this-worldly life, like the women in Schiller's tirade. The more openly society moves towards ever greater totalization, assigning art (along with everything else) its specific function, the more completely it polarizes art into ideology and protest. This polarization is likely to be detrimental to art. Absolute protest hems art in, impinging on its *raison d'être*, whereas absolute ideology reduces art to a thin, authoritarian copy of reality.[4]

'Culpability'

Although art was resurrected in Germany after the catastrophe, it has a distinctly ideological flavour just by being there, and apart from any content or substance. There is such a great discrepancy between art and the recent

atrocities (as well as impending ones) that art is condemned to cynicism. Even when it addresses them, it tends to divert attention from them. Objectification in post-war art entails a frigid attitude to reality, downgrading art's role to that of a henchman of barbarism. The opposite stance leaves art no better off: those who forsake objectification and drift with the current of immediacy are also accomplices of barbarity, regardless of the polemical commitment they display. At present, all works of art including radical ones have a conservative tinge, for they help reinforce the existence of a separate domain of spirit and culture whose practical impotence and complicity with the principle of unmitigated disaster are painfully evident. However, this conservative element – which is most pronounced in radically modern art – ought not simply to be junked. No resistance to the social totality and its omnipotence is conceivable unless spirit in its most progressive shape survives and goes on progressing. If the advancing spirit does not bequeath to mankind what the latter is poised to liquidate, the world would be mired in lasting barbarity instead of moving forward to a rational social order. Even when art is tolerated as it is in the administered world, it embodies something that goes against the total arrangement of things and is therefore suppressed.

The Greek military junta knew only too well why it banned Beckett's plays in which not a word is said about politics. This perceived social deviance of art becomes its political justification. Authentic works must wipe out any memory trace of reconciliation – in the interest of reconciliation. At the same time, the inescapable straining towards unity is necessarily tied up with the notion of reconciliation in its old form. By definition, art works are socially culpable. But the worthy ones among them try to atone for their guilt. Their chance for survival hinges on the requirement that this straining towards synthesis must have an irreconcilable component. Without any synthesis that confronts reality with the autonomous life of the art work, the spell of reality would be ubiquitous. Spell originates in the fundamental fact that spirit dissociates itself and is set to one side. The same principle works in the opposite direction: it breaks the spell by making it determinate. [. . .]

The Mediation of Art and Society

The fact that society 'appears' in works of art both in an ideological and a critical manner is apt to lead to historico-philosophical mystification. Speculative thought is easily duped into thinking there is a pre-established harmony between society and works of art, courtesy of world spirit. Their true relation is different, however.

The process that occurs in art works and which is arrested in them has to be conceived as being the same as the social process surrounding them. In Leibnizian terminology, they represent this process in a windowless fashion. The configurative totalization of elements in the art work follows immanent laws that are akin to those of society outside. Society's productive forces and relations, shorn of their facticity, crop up in art because artistic labour is social labour and because an artistic product is a social product. Artistic forces of production are not *per se* different from social ones. The difference lies in the constitutive turn, by the former, away from real society. All that art works do or bring forth has its latent model in social production. It is this affinity that determines whether or not a work has strength and validity outside the confines of its immanence.

Along with the social force of production, the decisive relation of production, namely the commodity form, as well as the antagonism between both, affect the work of art. That means works of art are absolute commodities; they are social products which have discarded the illusion of being-for-society, an illusion tenaciously retained by all other commodities. An absolute commodity rids itself of the ideology inherent in the commodity form. The latter pretends it is a being-for-other whereas in truth it is only for-itself, i.e. for the ruling interests of society. This shift from ideology to truth pertains to aesthetic substance; it does not directly pertain to the position that art occupies in society. Alas, even as an absolute commodity art has retained its commercial value, becoming a 'natural monopoly'. Offering art for sale on a market, as pottery and little statues used to be sold in a marketplace, is not some perverse use of art but simply a logical consequence of art's participation in productive relations. It is possible that completely non-ideological art is entirely unfeasible. Art surely does not become non-ideological just by being antithetical to empirical reality.

Sartre rightly pointed out that the principle of *l'art pour l'art* – which has had just as strong a hold on French art since Baudelaire as did the opposite ideal of art as a moral institution on German art – was perfectly acceptable to the bourgeoisie because it served as a means to neutralize art, whereas the German bourgeoisie appropriated art by assigning to it the role of an ally in its attempt to institute social control.[5] The ideological essence of *l'art pour l'art* lies not in the emphatic antithesis it posits between art and empirical life, but in the abstract and facile character of this antithesis. The idea of beauty advocated by *l'art pour l'art*, at least after Baudelaire, was not supposed to be a formal classicist one, and yet it too tended to filter out all contents except those that fit the dogmatic canon of beauty. In this vein, Stefan George complained in a letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal that it was improper to

let Titian die of the plague, as Hofmannsthal had suggested in a remark about the painter.[6] The concept of beauty in *l'art pour l'art* is at once strangely empty and content-laden. It is an artificial *jugendstil* happening of the sort that inspired Ibsen's formulations about vines that entwine somebody's hair or about 'dying in beauty'. Unable to determine itself, beauty is like an aerial root, becoming entangled in the fate of artificial ornamentation. What makes this idea of beauty so narrow in conception is its direct antithesis to the ugliness of society, whereas earlier on people like Baudelaire and Rimbaud had been able to extract an antithetical impetus from social content – in Baudelaire's case the imagery of Paris – converting an attitude of sheer distance into interventionist, determinate negation. The reason why neo-romantic and symbolistic beauty have become a consumer good so quickly lies in the self-sufficiency of this ideal, i.e., its prudish reserve before those social aspects that alone make form possible. Art of this kind brackets the world of commodities, denying its existence. In so doing its products become commodities themselves. They are condemned to being kitsch because latent in them there is the commodity form. No wonder they are being laughed out of court today. It would be easy to show in the 'artism' of Rimbaud the simultaneous presence of incisive social criticism and elements of sheepish conormity along the lines of Rilke's ecstatic response to the smell of an old chest. What ultimately won the day was the affirmative side of *l'art pour l'art*, a triumph that spelled the end of this aesthetic ideal.

In its relation to society art finds itself in a dilemma today. If it lets go of autonomy it sells out to the established order, whereas if it tries to stay strictly within its autonomous confines it becomes equally co-optable, living a harmless life in its appointed niche. This dilemma reflects the larger phenomenon of a social totality capable of ingesting all that comes its way. Modernism's refusal to communicate is a neccessary but not a sufficient condition of ideology-free art. Such art also requires vitality of expression – a kind of expression that is tensed so as to articulate the tacit posture of art works. Expression reveals works to be lacerations inflicted by society; expression is the social ferment that is added to their autonomous shape. A telling example of this is Picasso's *Guernica:* it is wholly incompatible with criteria of realism, gaining expression through inhuman construction; eventually this expression takes on the unambiguously sharp contours of social protest. The socially critical dimensions of art works are those that hurt, those that bring to light (through the medium of expression and in historically determinate ways) what is wrong with present social conditions. The public outcry evoked by works like *Guernica* is a response to that. [. . .]

Impact, Lived Experience; 'Tremor'

Art's dialectical relation to praxis manifests itself in the impact it has on society. That art is able to intervene politically can justly be doubted. Where it does so intervene, the kind of impact that results is peripheral or, worse, detrimental to the quality of art. Art's social impact, strictly understood, is very mediate. Its influence is due to the fact that art participates in spirit, which in turn congeals in art works, helping to determine changes in society, albeit in a subterranean, invisible fashion. Objectification is the precondition for this kind of participation in spirit. The impact works of art have operates at the level of remembrance; impact has nothing to do with translating their latent praxis into manifest praxis, the growth of autonomy having gone too far to permit any kind of immediate correspondence.

The historical genesis of works of art points back to cause and effect relations that do not simply vanish in these works. On the contrary, the process enacted by every art work – as a model for a kind of praxis wherein a collective subject is being constituted – has repercussions on society. No matter how small the importance of art's impact, and no matter how great the importance of art's shape may be, some impact emanates from this shape all the same. A critical analysis of the impact of art may therefore bring to light a great deal that would otherwise be hidden behind the thing-likeness of art works. An example here might be the ideological effect Richard Wagner had. It is perfectly proper to reflect on art works and their chemistry sociologically, as long as this does not take the form of imputing social characteristics from on high, an approach that ignores the tension between the substance of art and its impact.

Whether or not art works intervene practically (and how much) is not for them to decide but depends on historical circumstances. The comedies of Beaumarchais may not have been committed literature in the sense of Brecht and Sartre, but they did have a not inconsiderable political impact because their tangible content agreed with a historical tendency that found itself flattered by those comedies. When social impact is second-hand it is openly paradoxical: it is chalked up to spontaneity but actually hinges on overall social developments. Contrariwise, Brecht's work, intent as it was on change since the writing of *St Joan of the Stockyards* (1929), was probably politically impotent; and Brecht was certainly too astute not to have noticed that. His impact might be characterized as a form of preaching to the converted. The use of the estrangement effect would, he thought, cause the viewer to think. This demand for a reflective attitude on the one hand converges with the valid idea that art works need to be known objectively

– a stance which major autonomous works invariably presuppose on the part of the viewer, listener, reader. On the other hand, Brecht's didactic posture reflects intolerance of ambiguity, the sort of ambiguity that touches off thought and reflection. In this Brecht is authoritarian. Perhaps this authoritarianism was his response to what he perceived to be the lack of impact of his didactic plays: he wanted to be influential at all costs, if necessary by employing techniques of domination (at which he was a virtuoso), just as earlier on he had set in motion a plan to gain fame. Still, it is Brecht in large measure to whom we owe the growth in the self-consciousness of the art work, for when it is viewed as an element of political praxis its resistance to ideological mystification becomes that much stronger. Brecht's emphasis on praxis was a formative influence on his entire work and cannot simply be eliminated from its truth content, no matter how removed the latter actually is from the world of praxis.

One decisive reason why art works, at least those that refuse to surrender to propaganda, are lacking in social impact is that they have to give up the use of those communicative means that would make them palatable to a larger public. If they do not, they become pawns in the all-encompassing system of communication. If art works have any social influence at all, it is not by haranguing, but by changing consciousness in ways that are ever so difficult to pin down. Any directly propagandistic effect evaporates quickly, perhaps because even works of this genre tend to be perceived as being ultimately irrational, with the result that the mechanism that is supposed to trigger praxis is interrupted by the intervention of the aesthetic principle. Aesthetic education 'educes' the individual from the pre-aesthetic twilight zone where art and reality are intermingled, creating a sense of distance and laying bare the objective nature of the work of art. At the subjective level it puts an end to primitive modes of identification, annulling the recipient *qua* empirical-psychological personality in order to stress his relation to the art work. Subjectively, art calls for externalization (which is what Brecht's critique of sensitivity was all about). Art is practical in the sense that it defines the person who experiences art as a *zoon politikón* by forcing him to step outside of himself. In addition art is objectively practical because it forms and educates consciousness, provided it stays away from outright propaganda.

If you have a dispassionate attitude to art works, you will not be tempted into the kind of enthusiasm that is the basis of any call to action. The only subjective orientation that corresponds to the cognitive quality of art works is a cognitive one. Works of art affront prevailing needs by throwing new light on the familiar, thus meeting the objective need for a change in consciousness that might ultimately lead to a change of reality. Art cannot achieve

the much desired impact by adapting to existing needs, for this would deprive human beings precisely of what art has to offer. Aesthetic needs are fairly vague and poorly articulated, and it is unlikely that the culture industry has done much to change that. That culture has failed points to the determination of subjective cultural needs by the supply side and the mechanisms of distribution. These needs do not exist in isolation.

The assertion that there is a need for art is largely ideological. People can do without art if they have to. This statement holds objectively as well as subjectively in terms of the psychological household of the consumer (who has no trouble changing his tastes in response to changes in his existence provided they are piecemeal). In a society that teaches its members not to think beyond themselves, anything that transcends the material reproduction of life is ultimately useless. And that includes art, even though society makes every effort to pound the notion of art's usefulness into their heads. At a time when, absurdly enough, material penury continues, when barbarism reproduces itself on an expanding scale and when the threat of total destruction is ever-present – at such a time any phenomenon that shows no concern for the preservation of life takes on a silly appearance. This much is valid about the present rebellion against art. On the one hand, the culture industry gobbles up all artistic products, even relatively good ones, and the artist therefore seems justified in being unconcerned. On the other hand, the objective indifference of the culture industry, its co-optative capacity, does ultimately affect art as well, making it equally indifferent. Quite undialectically and naively, Marx implied that there are distinct cultural needs forming part of a larger cultural sphere. He was unable to foresee that things would come to a point where the only way to show one's respect for culture is to decide to do without it and to boycott its festivals. Better to go hungry than to be force-fed.

The notion of cultural needs is objectionable not only for practical but also for aesthetic reasons. The idea behind the work of art is the intention to break up the interminable metabolism of need and gratification and thereby sin against those needs which remain unfulfilled. Any theory of needs, whether aesthetic or sociological, harks back to what is called 'lived experience' (*Erlebnis*), an old-fashioned and deficient concept. It presupposes an equivalence between the objective substance of lived experience – roughly, emotional expression – and the subjective lived experience of the recipient. In other words, when music gets excited the listener is supposed to be equally excited. This is nonsense: if he is knowledgeable, he will stay emotionally neutral, no matter now wildly the music may gesticulate. In this connection it is difficult to imagine anything more artless than those scientific experiments that try to quantify aesthetic effect and lived experience by measuring

human pulse rates. The notion of an equivalence between objective and subjective lived experience is murky indeed. According to one widely held view, what is being re-enacted by lived experience are the feelings of the author. Far from being the decisive moment, the emotions of the producer are only a small part of the work as a whole. What is more, they are not verbatim reports of emotions – such verbatim reports are least likely to appeal to the listener or lend themselves to empathy and lived experience by him – but become radically changed when they are embedded in the context of artistic autonomy. Theories of lived experience distort, indeed deny, the interaction between the constructive and the mimetic element in art. What they do is take a particular out of context, blowing it out of proportion. The assumed equivalence simply does not exist. Re-enacting emotions means taking them out of their aesthetic context and translating them back into empirical data.

A legitimate subjective response to art is a sense of concern (*Betroffenheit*). Concern is triggered by great works. Concern is not some repressed emotion in the recipient that is brought to the surface by art but a momentary discomfiture, more precisely a tremor (*Erschütterung*), during which he gives himself over to the work. He loses his footing, as it were, discovering that the truth embodied in the aesthetic image has real tangible possibilities. This kind of immediacy (in the best sense of the term) in one's relation to works is a function of mediation, i.e. of incisive, encompassing experience. Experience congeals in an instant, and for it to do so the whole of consciousness is required rather than some one-dimensional stimulus and response. To experience the truth or untruth of art is more than a subjective 'lived experience': it signals the breaking-through of objectivity into subjective consciousness. Objectivity mediates aesthetic experience even when the subjective response is at its most intense.

Many a situation in Beethoven is a *scène à faire*[7] and therefore flawed. The onset of the reprise in the Ninth Symphony is a celebration of the unity of the original thesis and the symphonic process of development. It resounds like an overwhelming 'This is how it is'. Now, subjective tremor is a response to the fear of being overwhelmed. While the music is mainly affirmative, it also exposes untruth. Without employing discursive judgments, art works seem to point a finger at their content. And the spontaneous response of the recipient is a mimetic adaptation to the immediacy of that deictic gesture. But this is by no means all. The passage in Beethoven takes up a position by virtue of its gesture, a position which in turn is subject to a critical query, namely, whether or not the power of thusness (to the epiphany of which such instants of art are devoted) is an index of truth. This question calls for a conceptual answer by comprehensive experience; the latter ends up rendering a judgment about the non-judgmental work. 'Lived experience' is only

a moment of a comprehensive notion of experience, a moment that is both fallible and suggestible. Works like the Ninth Symphony exert a mesmerizing influence; the power they have by virtue of their structure is translated into power over people. After Beethoven, art's power of suggestion, originally borrowed from society, has rebounded on to society and become propagandistic and ideological.

Antithetical to the conventional notion of lived experience, tremor is no particularistic gratification of the ego; indeed, it is not pleasurable at all. Rather, it is a reminder of the liquidation of the ego. However, by being shaken up the ego becomes aware of its limits and finitude. The experience of tremor, then, is contrary to the weakening of the ego that is promoted by the culture industry. For the culture industry the notion of tremor is just so much hot air. This may be one of the inmost causes for the desubstantialization of art. If the ego wishes to look beyond the walls of the prison that it is, it needs not distraction, but the utmost concentration. This state of concentration prevents tremor from being regressive even though it is spontaneous behaviour. In his aesthetics of the sublime Kant faithfully depicted the power of the subject as being a precondition for the sublime. The statement that the ego is being destroyed is not literally true because of the presence of art. What are called aesthetic lived experiences, however, must be real psychological phenomena; if one were to view them as illusory, they would not make sense. Lived experience is not an as-if. The ego, it is true does not actually vanish in the instant of tremor; rapture or ecstasy would achieve this kind of total disappearance, but they are incompatible with artistic experience. Momentarily the ego is perfectly able to become aware of the chance it has to leave the realm of self-preservation behind, but this ability alone does not suffice to realize that chance.

What is illusory is not the aesthetic tremor itself, but its stance towards objectivity: in its immediacy tremor senses the existence of a potential that it pretends is real. The ego is seized by a consciousness that is unmetaphorical and destructive of aesthetic illusion. This consciousness tells the ego that it is not an absolute but an illusion. From the perspective of the subject, art at this juncture can be seen to turn into a historical spokesman for repressed nature. In the last analysis art is critical of the ego principle, the internal agency of repression. The subjective experience of an opposition to the ego is a moment of art's objective truth.

To those who obsessively relate art works only to themselves, the avenue of lived experience is closed, except in the false form of a surrogate manipulated by culture. It is easy to misconceive the nature of this surrogate. The products of the culture industry – more tepid and standardized in kind than any one of its consumers – aim at identification, but chances are they will

miss even this modest aim. In any event, the question as to what the culture industry does to people is probably too naive. The impact of the culture industry may well be more diffuse than is suggested by the specific form of the question. What it does do is fill empty time with more emptiness. It does not even produce false consciousness, but takes great pains to leave everything as it is.

Commitment

The aspect of objective praxis inherent in art turns into subjective intention when art's oppositon to society – because of the objective social tendencies and the critical reflection of art – becomes irreconcilable. The accepted term for this phenomenon is 'commitment'. Artistic commitment represents a higher stage of reflection than tendentious art, which only wants to mitigate irksome social ills, although commitment sometimes does not rise above this level of criticism, either. As a rule, however, commitment aims at changing the conditions underlying social ills, not the ill *per se*. In this it is akin to the aesthetic category of essence.

The polemical self-consciousness of art presupposes spiritualization. As art becomes more allergic to sensuous immediacy – once the defining characteristic of art – it also becomes more critical in its stance towards crude reality, including social reality (which is an extension of the natural state of things). The critical-reflexive feature of spiritualization intensifies the relation between art and its substance, and not only formally. Turning away from the older sensualist aesthetics of taste, Hegel emphasized both the spiritualization of the art work and the need to give greater weight to material substance. The earlier notion that art has a direct impact on other spiritual phenomena was false. After Hegel it has become possible to look at spriritualization in the context of particular works.

The concept of artistic commitment has to be used circumspectly. If it is employed as a yardstick to censor art, then it merely serves to reinforce that domination to which art stood opposed long before anybody conceived the idea of commitment. This is not an argument for doing away with notions like tendentious art and its unsophisticated descendants. While the aesthetics of taste would like to do just that, there is a sense in which such notions are legitimate, if only because we have entered a historical phase where the longing for, and the will to, change are extremely intense. All this does not annul the power of the law of form. Spiritual content is ultimately nothing else but material or stuff consumed by the work of art, regardless of any ideas the author may have about the centrality of content. Whatever is educational

in Brecht's plays can be taught more convincingly by theory – if it needs teaching at all. His audiences were not exactly unfamiliar with insights like these: that the rich are better off than the poor; that the world is full of injustice; that repression continues amid formal equality; that private goodness turns into its opposite in a public context of objective evil; that – a dubious wisdom at best – goodness needs the mask of evil. The sententious directness with which Brecht translated such stale gems of wisdom into dramatic gestures gave his work its uniqueness. His didactic approach prompted him to introduce dramatic innovations designed to oust the old theatre of intrigue and psychology. In his plays 'theses' are important not for what they say but for what they do: they constitute the anti-illusory nature of Brechtian drama, thus contributing to the decomposition of a unified complex of meaning. This accounts for its quality; commitment has nothing to do with it. The only thing that commitment contributes to quality is the mimetic element. The Brechtian commitment reinforces the historical trend towards the decomposition of the work of art. Commitment brings a hidden property to the surface, thanks to the increasing mastery and artefactuality of art: what used to be an in-itself now becomes a for-itself.

The immanence of art works, i.e. their almost *a priori* distance from empirical being, would be inconceivable were it not for the implicit presupposition of a new social order brought about by self-conscious praxis. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Shakespeare does not by any means expressly espouse an ideal of love free of familial meddling. And yet the drama is about precisely this: the human longing for a condition where love is no longer disfigured or prohibited by patriarchal rule, or any rule for that matter. Were it not for this tacit, imageless Utopia it would be difficult to explain the abiding attraction *Romeo and Juliet* has had for generations of theatre-goers. That it is only a tacit Utopia is no coincidence, for the same taboo that forbids cognition to flesh out Utopias holds for art too. Praxis is not the impact works have; it is the hidden potential of their truth content. That is why commitment can become an aesthetic force of production.

The conservative attacks upon tendentious and committed art for their part are just plain dreadful and stupid. Their concern is to keep culture pure. Underlying this concern is a desire to keep everything as it is, not only the fetishized culture but also the world outside. The indignation these purists display in the face of committed art is not so different from that shown at the opposite pole, where the 'committed' camp is prone to pounce on anything that smacks of ivory-tower art, as they like to call it, and which is therefore alleged to be outmoded in an age of mass communication. The common denominator of the conservatives and the exponents of commitment is the

notion of message (*Aussage*). Brecht tastefully avoided using the term, but, positivist that he was, he did not shrink from invoking the principle behind it. The two views refute each other. If we look at a work like *Don Quixote*, we might say it furthered a completely irrelevant tendency, working towards the definitive abolition of the chivalric romance which had been dragged along as a genre long after feudalism had given way to the bourgeois age. Still, the book became a paradigmatic work of art, using this modest 'tendency' as a vehicle. The antagonistic literary genres Cervantes was working with, unbeknown to the author, turned into an antagonism of real world-historical ages, eventually into an authentic metaphysical expression of the crisis of immanent meaning in a disenchanted world. Similarly, a non-tendentious work like Goethe's *The Sufferings of Young Werther* probably had a considerable impact on the emancipation of bourgeois consciousness in Germany. The novel focuses on the problem of the collision between society and the individual who is driven to suicide out of a feeling of unrequited love. In this work Goethe protested effectively against petty bourgeois rigidity, without expressly naming it.

What the two censorial positions of bourgeois consciousness – that art ought not to want change and that it ought to be for everybody – have in common is that they defend the status quo, the first by vindicating the accommodation of art to the world, the second by seeing to it that art conforms to the accepted notions of public consciousness. Commitment and hermetic art, on the other hand, have in common a disaffection with the status quo. Reified consciousness abhors intervention because it seems to want to reify the reified work of art a second time. For it the objectification of the art work is not a movement against society but a vehicle for neutralizing art politically. Thus the extroverted side of the art work is falsely regarded as its essence and no attention is paid to its formation or to its truth content. No work of art can be true in social and political terms unless it is true in its own terms as well. By the same token, aesthetic authenticity is incompatible with a false political consciousness. The political and the immanent dimension are not congruent, but they art not radically divergent, either. This divergence has been grossly exaggerated by culture fetishists and praxis fetishists alike. Truth content always points beyond the immanent aesthetic makeup of art works towards some political significance. This duality of immanence and sociality is stamped on every single work of art. It is not some formula that defines abstractly what art in general is but the vital element of art in its many particular shapes. Art is social to the extent to which it is an in-itself, and vice versa. In art the dialectic of the social and the immanent operates at the level of the specific complexion of art works: nothing is tolerated that is purely internal and not susceptible to externalization; nor is anything

tolerated that is purely external and not susceptible of becoming the vehicle of the internal, i.e. truth content.

Notes

1 Karl Marx. *Theories of Surplus Value* (Moscow: Progress, 1968), vol. 1, p. 389.
2 This, incidentally, is not to say that there is no room for collective forms of production like the composer workshops envisaged by Schoenberg. There is.
3 Interpolating 'verschwistert'. – Tr.
4 Reading 'sie' for 'sich'. – Tr.
5 Jean Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 21.
6 See R. Boehringer (ed.), *Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal* (Munich and Düsseldorf: Küpper, 1953), p. 42.
7 Principal scene in a play. – Tr.