

# Collectivity as Critical Model: *Pace Adorno?*

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## PRELUDE

*Horkheimer:* We still have something of a breathing space. We must not lose sight of that in our discussion of theory. We cannot be active politically and yet every word we write is political. We have to say clearly that the Communist Party is not a whit superior to the liberal politicians in the Federal Republic. The claim that new constellations are possible has echoes of Trotsky.

*Adorno:* The fact that art exists is not rendered immaterial by the statement that what really counts is revolution.

*Horkheimer:* Art is actually not different from what we have in mind, but we have to articulate it.

*Adorno:* We should not blind ourselves to this.

*Horkheimer:* We need to make explicit matters that Picasso can remain silent about. It must become quite clear from our general position why one can be a communist and yet despise the Russians.

*Adorno:* We must be against Adenauer.

*Horkheimer:* But that is only true as long as we list the reasons that make it possible to keep on living in the West. An appeal for the reestablishment of a socialist party.

*Adorno:* With a strictly Leninist manifesto.<sup>1</sup>

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\* For information about the author s. the introductory article to this issue, p. 7.

1 Theodor W. Adorno/Max Horkheimer, "Towards a New Manifesto?", in: *New Left Review*, Vol. 65, 1956/2010, pp. 33-61 (p. 57). This transcript was posthu-

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“With a strictly Leninist manifesto”. This utterance by Theodor W. Adorno was taken down most probably by Gretel Adorno during the discussions that he and Max Horkheimer shared in the spring of 1956. Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly agree upon taking the Communist Manifesto “as a theme for variations”<sup>2</sup> and a “tool”<sup>3</sup> that will do “justice to the current situation”<sup>4</sup>—given that they deemed themselves living “in a world in which we can no longer imagine a better one”<sup>5,6</sup>.

When asserting the need for “a strictly Leninist Manifesto” as groundwork of a potential new party formation Adorno was not just doing politics by attacking the renouncement of Marxism as the main ideological fundament of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) according to its new (Godesberg) Programme. Nor did he just instrumentalize theory as a mere “tool” out of the post-WWII ideological cul-de-sac. After all, it was Horkheimer in the discussion mentioned above, who suggested—a couple of lines later—that “[t]heory is, as it were, one of humanity’s tools.”<sup>7</sup> Needless also to scrutinize whether, when conjuring Leninism, Adorno plead for a vain-guard, totalitarian, authoritarian, centralized party. Nothing could be more alien to Adorno than *political Leninism* and the suffocating party structures political Leninism advocated. However, should we adduce *theoretical Leninism* under the pronounced need for a “Leninist Manifesto” things could look differently. Theoretical Leninism’s notion of hegemony designating that in order to secure the aspirated revolution “[w]e must ‘go among all classes of the population’ as theoreticians, as propagandists, as

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mously published in German in the 13th volume of Max Horkheimer’s collected works alongside a series of also previously unpublished manuscripts. Of the twelve protocols, only the first one bears a title “The Role of Theory”.

2 Ibid., p. 40.

3 Ibid., p. 57.

4 Ibid., p. 56.

5 Ibid., p. 61.

6 Given this the aporia “Towards a New Manifesto?” chosen by the New Left Review as title of the translation and the first English publication of these discussions in 2010 seems to be appropriate.

7 Adorno/Horkheimer (n. 1), p. 57.

agitators, and as organisers”<sup>8</sup> seems to reflect Adorno’s own interventionist philosophy as well as the scopes of the above-mentioned discussion. Interesting as this discussion may be, it was rather another necessity that Adorno wanted to underline when proclaiming a “strictly Leninist Manifesto”: The need—this is the thick assumption of this paper—that the manifesto of this new party ought to be a radically collectivist one.

Yet, what Adorno besought for the political level seemed impossible to be conceived epistemologically. Only when arguing aesthetically seemed Adorno to be at ease to assert collective forms of practice as the only way out of the late capitalism’s impasses. The apostrophe in the discussion with Horkheimer where Adorno hastens to portend that art is also capable of carrying along the envisaged project indicates that he is not too reluctant to endorse art as vector of such politics. When aesthetically addressed, collective ways of practice and collective formations needed not to be ontologically grounded; even less did they need to be metaphysically presupposed as a necessary, normative, condition for—let’s say—a good life. By thwarting any external (metaphysical or ontological) foundation of collectivities, Adorno sought to guarantee the freedom and self-determination of the individual that can be deduced only immanently. By prefiguring collectivities only aesthetically and by avoiding to elaborate on how collectivities ought to be manifested in the Political he was once more trying desperately to secure the individual against the repressive and authoritarian politics that mass movements deploy. His discussion with Canetti or his reappropriation of Freud in order to highlight how fascism turns individuals to masses leave no doubt concerning whether collectivities may lead to such phenomena as subordination and barbarism.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, should art be able to function,

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8 Vladimir I. Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Moscow 1973 (1902), p. 78. See also Vladimir I. Lenin, “Where to Begin?”, in: Vladimir I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Moscow 1961 (1907), pp. 13-24. In an article written as early as 1899 for the *Rabochaya Gazeta* which remained unpublished throughout Lenin’s life he asserts the necessity of the newspaper as inextricable part of his later “Leninist” politics; Vladimir I. Lenin, “Our Immediate Task”, in: Vladimir I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, Moscow 1964 (1899), pp. 215-220 (p. 220).

9 Elias Canetti, “Discussion with Theodor W. Adorno”, in: *Thesis Eleven*, 1996 (1962), Vol. 45, pp. 1-15; Theodor W. Adorno, “Freudian Theory and the Pat-

as categorically stated in the prelude, as equivalent of such emancipatory politics and should collectivities be bestowed—as will be shown—with inherently emancipatory potential, then collectivities should also be revisited as to whether—with and against Adorno—they are able to render such politics possible or not.

In what follows I will start by addressing both those paths of Adorno's dialectical understanding of aesthetical collectivities: how they not only bring about the massivization and passivization of the individual, but also how they interfere as inherent qualities of art form(-s) that therefore can also contribute to the emancipation of the individual from such authoritarian structures. In a second step, I will show how Adorno—even if maybe here-in unaware of the range of his predication—realized collectivity both as the very way of the epistemological thinking and the only way for philosophy to avoid its (self-)reification and (self-)alienation. It is from this perspective from which collectivity will be shown as being a vector of critique or, to speak with Adorno, a *critical model*. Nevertheless, and in spite of even this borderline interpretation, there seems to be an outmost limit that Adorno was not willing to question and that his philosophy is not possible to transgress: the integrality of the subject. In his *Aesthetic Theory* he alludes to the erosion of the notion of an integral subjectivity by pointing out the collective disposition/structuration of the subject but does not elaborate further upon it. In the last part of the paper I will venture to sketch collectivity as a critical model not only because of the epistemological insights collectivity provides, or because of the critique it enables to exert, but also because it functions as a model of structuration of subjectivity.

The notion of collectivity that will be henceforth operated with designates a 'more', a 'more than one', the fact that more than one entities, dimensions, elements, and/or processes are already at play. Notions like "constellations", "riddle", or "remainder" (signified) that Adorno found important to introduce (see chapter three) are condign because they carry within their semantic meaning this 'more' (signifier).

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tern of Fascist Propaganda", in: Andrew Arato/Eike Gehardt (eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, London 1982 (1951), pp. 118-137.

## 2. ADORNO'S MODELS AND AESTHETIC COLLECTIVITIES

### 2.1. Critical Models and Thought Models

When Adorno—loyal to his demand that one must either accept or reject Hegel altogether<sup>10</sup>—deliberately decided to develop philosophical models instead of a philosophical system, he did not have collectivity as such a model in mind. Adorno published two sets of such models: one comprising of three major “thought models” in his *Negative Dialectics* elaborating on the concepts of freedom, the world spirit and metaphysics; and one containing three bundles of briefer (unfinished and posthumously published) “critical models” (or interventions or catchwords) where he tackles themes such as critique, progress, resignation, education, television, sexual taboos and the law, free time, ideology, subject/object etc.<sup>11</sup> In which of those two sets Adorno would have placed collectivity as a model is questionable.

Adorno did not give a clear definition of “thought models”. In the preface to the *Negative Dialectics* he discerned their scope as follows:

They [the models of negative dialectics; T.T.] are not examples; they do not simply elucidate general reflections. Guiding into the substantive realm, they seek simultaneously to do justice to the topical intention of what has initially, of necessity, been generally treated—as opposed to the use of examples which Plato introduced and philosophy repeated ever since: as matters of indifference in themselves. The models are to make plain what negative dialectics is and to bring it into the realm of reality, in line with its own concept. At the same time—not unlike the so-called “exemplary method”—they serve the purpose of discussing key concepts of philosophical disciplines and centrally intervening in those disciplines.<sup>12</sup>

10 Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel. Three Studies*, Cambridge (MA) 1993 (1963).

11 Due to the fact that the last set was based primarily on radio broadcastings, the models of the second set met an unprecedented appreciation and were quickly – and rightly – promoted to Adornite *bon mots*. Moreover, they were acknowledged as quintessential depictions of Adorno’s political philosophy and as political manifestations of his negative-philosophical thinking.

12 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, London 1973 (1966), p. xx.

Adorno's translator Henry W. Pickford (a) reminds us that Adorno understood his work as standing in the tradition of "[e]ncyclopedic thinking—rationally organized and yet discontinuous, unsystematic, loose"<sup>13</sup> and how it "expressed the self-critical spirit of reason"<sup>14</sup>. He (b) reaffirms how the "critical models" offer

specific analyses that tactically employ the negative dialectical strategy [...] by which a phenomenon or concept pretending to self-sufficient immediacy is discursively unmasked as a societally mediated, historical result.<sup>15</sup>

Pickford (c) attributes both the specific model form of those writings and the content to Adorno's "eminently practical intentions to effect change."<sup>16</sup> Fragmented moments of public intervention that are paratactically read-joined in a book compendium and tend to effectuate societal transformation may not sound very "Leninist". If at all, this would be neither political, nor theoretical, but *critical* Leninism. Yet again, what is at stake here is not to see if Adorno was a Leninist, nor how he grounds collectivity. Rather what is at stake here is to see how he cannot but allude to the critical function that collectivities could deploy. For someone as cautious as Adorno, the latter should be appraised as already being more than one could expect.

## **2.2 Collectivizing the Aesthetic: The Case of the Cinematic Collectivities**

Maybe the most prominent and intriguing case where Adorno stresses not only the authoritarian, but also the emancipatory and therefore the critical character of collectivity is in a text on cinema written in 1966.<sup>17</sup> Primarily

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13 Adorno cit. Henry W. Pickford "Preface", in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models. Interventions and Catchwords*, New York 2005, pp. vii-xii (p. x). This translation has been slightly altered so as to match the translation of E. B. Ashton in: Adorno (n. 12), p. 29.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. ix

16 Ibid.

17 Theodor W. Adorno, "Transparencies on Film", in: *New German Critique* 24/25, 1981/1982, pp. 199-205.

he tackles the innate technological character of the film, i.e. how technology infiltrates and determines the film production in order to arise as a constitutive quality of the film as an art-genre. Yet at the same time, the text swarms with more or less obvious references to how collectivity “inheres in the innermost elements of film.”<sup>18</sup> Generally speaking, there are five aspects of collectivity with regard to cinema and three reasons for critique.

The first one is the relation cinema bears to the *vanguard*. After introducing the newly released film “Der junge Törless” of Völker Schlöndorff, Adorno exhorts the directors not to eschew their intellectuality. Rather, those “filmmakers ostracized for being too intellectual should, by way of revision, absorb this insight into their working methods.”<sup>19</sup> Adorno’s encouragement to the directors not to balk at their role as guiding intellectuals, as leading figures, as vanguard provides some first insights into his positive attitude towards collectivities. Vanguard is a collective phenomenon in a twofold sense: First, the vanguard cannot but be a collective entity, since one sole person would not be vanguard, but the personification of the *Führerprinzip*; second, in order for the vanguard to be vanguard we need on the one hand a collective entity that guides and on the other hand a collective entity that needs or lets itself to be guided. This is cannot be depicted through notions such as e.g. intersubjectivity that became predominant in the later context of the Critical Theory of *Frankfurt School*. The relationship between the vanguard and the rest is not one of two generalized persons interacting or communicating in an intersubjective mode with one another. We are not to reduce the collective character of those two entities to a one-dimensional collective or a supra-individual entity.

The second and third aspect of collectivity pertains to the *production* of the film. They can be found in the following quotation, which may be interpreted as Adorno’s explanation of cinema’s inherent collectivity: “The movements which the film presents are mimetic impulses which, prior to all content and meaning, incite the viewers and listeners to fall into step as if in

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18 Ibid., p. 203.

19 Ibid. Note: This text was originally written for the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*. Interestingly enough – given the discussion of the vanguard position of the director – one year later it reappeared in the book *Ohne Leitbild* (which literally means: “without leading figure”).

a parade.”<sup>20</sup> The second aspect is the mimetic quality of the film. Before depersonalizing its viewers, mimesis is first and foremost replication. Adorno does not reason against the latter. He just contests that this is all what mimesis has to offer. The film, as mimesis, cannot but also repeat or imitate its prototype. By that, it multiplies its source and blurs any difference between the source and the outcome. As such, there are no more discernible roles like the prototype and its imitations, but a collectivity of amorphous indiscernible art works. Mimesis thus results to the eventual destruction of the difference between a prototype and its replica and to the eventual deconstruction of those formerly distinctive poles through the mimetic process to indeterminable faceless figures. Seen this way, film is collective because mimesis is collective. It is not a collective that precedes the mimetic process and instantiates mimesis, but mimesis coincides with this very process of creating a collective.

The third aspect refers to the simple fact that a film requires a collective to produce it. This does not only refer to the multitude of persons involved in its production, the director, the actors, technicians etc. Film as art-genre is a collective work of art, since it, furthermore, comprises in its way of production a multitude of aesthetic elements. Film is not only an artwork of picture, but also of sound; it is photography, montage, stage and costume design as it is motion and performance altogether. Considering all those elements, Adorno is right when claiming that it “would not be incorrect to describe the constitutive subject of film as a ‘we’ in which the aesthetic [multitude of persons and aesthetic elements; T.T.] and sociological [mimesis; T.T.] aspects of the medium converge.”<sup>21</sup>

From those assumptions, a fourth aspect can be extrapolated regarding the collective nature of film. It resides in the way the film *presents itself*. Films do hardly articulate the aforementioned collectivities that brought it forward (its mimetic character, the collectivities of technicians, actors etc. and of elements like technology, sound, picture etc. that constitute it). As far as they do (e.g. end titles) they do not do so in a distinctive and egalitarian way. In other words films do not take every one of those aspects equally into account and acknowledge its irreducible individuality. Instead the film creates an amorphous mass out of those elements; a mass that levels any

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20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

distinction and erases any differences. As Adorno pejoratively points out, this time when commenting on Lewis Milestone's "Anything goes" (1936),

*Anything Goes* was the title of a film from the thirties with the popular English actress Gracie Fields; this 'anything' captures the very substance of film's formal movement, prior to all content. As the eye is carried along, it joins the current of all those who are responding to the same appeal. The indeterminate nature of this collective 'anything' (*Es*), however, which is linked to the formal character of film facilitates the ideological misuse of the medium: the 'things must change' is conveyed by the gesture of banging one's fist on the table.<sup>22</sup>

The film's collectivity shares its fifth and final aspect with art in general. Every product of art is being created in order *to be shown* to a certain *audience*. The production of the film does not end with its final montage, but with its release and its public viewing in the cinema hall.

These five aspects (vanguard, mimesis, multitude of producers and aesthetic elements, audience) make cinema a collective endeavor. But as such it is not an emancipatory one. On the contrary, Adorno—the vanguard mission of the director apart—points out why cinema is uncritical, and why it is so exactly because of its inherent collectivity. There are three reasons for this. The first one is once again mimesis. The film is bound to an empirical reality which it repeats, and so far no reason has been given why it should do so in a critical and emancipatory way. The second reason has already been alluded to. The film formally represents itself as stratified unit. Through this formalization the film cannot obviate reproducing authoritarian patterns both on the level of the multitude of the persons that worked for its production and on the level of the multitude of the aesthetic elements that the film as art work engulfs. On the level of the multitude of persons those authoritarian patterns result in the reproduction of hierarchies and hierarchical structures. On the level of the multitude of elements those authoritarian structures are best manifested in the massivization of those elements, in the flattening of their individually artistic character and in their subsequent subordination under the almightiness of the picture.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Ibid.

23 Cf. Adorno's and Hanns Eisler's *Composing for the Films* [London 2005 (1947)] where they tackle specifically the intertwining between picture and

Both reasons are aspects of the third one. As soon as the film contents itself with fulfilling and providing yet another service alongside the principle of supply and demand it does not create an emancipated audience. Therefore, no film is an emancipatory product of art as such nor is film an emancipatory art-genre in general. The film will remain a medium of reification and the viewer its riveted consumer. This does not mean that the sole responsibility is with the creator of the film. Still if the boundaries between film and viewer remain indissoluble, i.e. if neither the viewer aborts the passive consumer role, nor the film disrupts it (by way of content, method or form) —the film cannot avoid reproducing and affirming the empirical reality it reflects (mimesis). As Adorno puts it:

That is why the culture industry is not the art of the consumer but rather the projection of the will of those in control onto their victims. The automatic self-reproduction of the status quo in its established forms is itself an expression of domination.<sup>24</sup>

While this caustic critique very much sounds like Adorno, there is a rather surprising way out of this dialectical perniciousness. The latter resides in rewinding what caused those inherent antinomies in the first place. Film seems to be neither picture, nor sound; neither technique, nor its viewers, but an *a priori* collectivity. So even if collectivity is prone to cause the problems mentioned above it cannot be done away with. From this perspective Adorno could not call for another kind of film, but only for another usage, application and understanding of the collectivity that would henceforth permeate differently the way of production, the way of (self-)presentation, and the way the film is shown. If the film is manifested collectivity, it is collectivity that has to be readdressed in order for the film to be differently manifested. This matches what Adorno writes about the *Verblendungszusammenhänge* “in which men are caught”<sup>25</sup>. “[T]earing the veil”<sup>26</sup> —i.e. the *Verblendungszusammenhänge*—is only possible when taking into

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music, the subsequent subordination of music under the motion picture and ways to break out of such hierarchical patterns.

24 Ibid., p. 205.

25 Adorno (n. 12), p. 372.

26 Ibid.

account its constituents. As Adorno observes: “every individual trait in the nexus [collectivity, T.T.] of deception is [...] relevant to its possible end”<sup>27</sup>

What is therefore to be done? “The liberated film would have to wrest its *a priori* collectivity from the mechanisms of unconscious and irrational influence and enlist this collectivity in the service of emancipatory intentions.”<sup>28</sup> Adorno sure is far from proposing an ontological understanding of the film. Still, at this point, he cannot but let a certain—at least—socio-ontological component of the film gleam through; a component that seems to determine both its genesis and viewing independently of the social reality it mediates: and this element is collectivity. As such, collectivity is being foregrounded as the vector not only of the film’s ideological, cultural-industrial expedience, but also of its emancipation. In order to grasp the full implication of this idea we must now move on to the epistemological foundations of Adorno’s philosophy. As we will see it is based upon the critique of ontological purity and unity. Thus, collectivity can be interpreted as the underlying critical model of Adorno’s philosophy.

### 3. EPISTEMOLOGY AS COLLECTIVE PRACTICE

Further aesthetical collectives found in music or in literature could be added to the cinematic one, yet all as ambivalent as this one: the accord and the dissonance as collective constituents of musical language;<sup>29</sup> the orchestra,

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27 Adorno (n. 13), p. 147.

28 Ibid., p. 203-204. In his *Minima Moralia* Adorno will articulate this point as follows: “The film is not a mass art, but is merely manipulated for the deception of the masses? But the wishes of the masses make themselves felt incessantly through the market; its collective production alone would guarantee its collective essence [Wesen]”; Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, London 1974 (1951), Aphorism No. 131.

29 Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Philosophy of Modern Music*, New York 1973, p. 86, where Adorno describes – in one of the nicest passages ever written – the relationship between consonances/accords and dissonance.

the audience<sup>30</sup> and the music pupils<sup>31</sup> as collectives of musical (re-) production, performance and consumption; concrete collectives, like the dead, being aroused in Joseph von Eichendorff's lyrical poetry<sup>32</sup>; last but not least the more abstract form of the "collective undercurrent"<sup>33</sup> that Adorno positively acknowledges as carrying all—individual—poetry.<sup>34</sup> In

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30 Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, New York 1976 (1962), especially the chapters on the types of musical conduct (pp. 1-20) and musical life (pp. 118-137).

31 Cf. the chapter on musical pedagogy in Theodor W. Adorno's, *Dissonanzen: Musik in der verwalteten Welt*, Göttingen 1973 (1956), pp. 102-119.

32 Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 1, New York 1991 (1958), p. 66.

33 Eva Geulen, "Adorno and the Poetics of Genre", in: David Cunningham/Nigel Mapp (eds.), *Adorno and Literature*, London 2006, pp. 53-66 (p. 60).

34 Adorno (n. 32), p. 45. When analyzing Adorno's inspiring reading of Rudolf Borchardt idiosyncratic poetry, [cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 2, New York 1991 (1967), pp. 193-210] Eva Geulen argues in her insightful paper (n. 33, pp. 60-61) that even natural phenomena ought to be understood as parts of this social collective undercurrent. At this point it must be said that Adorno acquiesces to the notion of collective undercurrent a much broader application field that can be addressed here. The collective undercurrent is not only the bearer of individual lyrical poetry, but it comports language in general; cf. Adorno (n. 32), p. 45. As such, the collective undercurrent is acclaimed by Adorno as being also the fundament of the language of the artwork, see Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, New York 2002 (1970), p. 86. Seen this way, it would not be farfetched to try to conceive of collectivity not as a critical model, but as the primary mode of this collective undercurrent. Enticing as this may be, this would lead to an ontologizing dehistoricization of the notion of collectivity and subsequently of the notion of collective undercurrent. Therefore the notion of the model seemed to be more suitable in order to address collectivity in Adorno's philosophy. Unfortunately, it cannot be further elaborated on Adorno's philosophy of language. His notion of parataxis, the undermining effects it deploys and to what extent the subject's collective essence could be addressed through this notion deserves a lengthier, separate discussion; cf. Theodor W. Adorno, "Parataxis: On Holderlin's Late Poetry", in: idem, *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 2, New York 1992 (1967), pp. 109-149. Undoubtedly the most interesting

all of them Adorno seems to work out a theory that can guarantee collective emancipation without assimilation,<sup>35</sup> standardization, or invariance<sup>36</sup> of the individual. Ambivalent, too, is what interpreters have made of Adorno's attitude towards collectivity: Robert Witkin's hostility towards any form of collectivity,<sup>37</sup> Lydia Goehr's more temperate approach,<sup>38</sup> Jay M. Bernstein's messianic expectancy of the one collective<sup>39</sup> or Lambert Zuidervaart's emphatic steadfastness that the forge of a collective as positive social-philosophical category alongside Adorno's aestheticization of the collective is not only possible, but also urgent<sup>40</sup>. These ambivalences are understandable and—as explicated with regard to the cinematic collectivity—can be traced back to the aspirations, the semantics, the functionality and/or the structural importance that collectivities purport in Adorno's aesthetic writings. Resolving these ambivalences probably is an impossible task as Adorno from the beginning seems to have conceived of collectivity as being intrinsically ambivalent.

Therefore collectivity will be sought on another level: that of epistemology. Not the way to conceive of a collective epistemologically will be shown as being of importance, but rather the fact that *thinking itself is a materialized collective praxis*. More accurately thinking will not be revealed as being the praxis of a collective, but as a matter that is in itself collective. The fact that the latter could correspond to a subjectivity that is collective in its essence (as a product of socio-historical processes) is also not

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recent study on Adorno's philosophy of language is Philipp Hög's *Communication and Expression. Adorno's Philosophy of Language*, New York 2017.

35 Adorno (n. 12), p. 151.

36 Theodor W. Adorno, "Einleitung zu Emile Durkheim", in: ders., *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 8, Frankfurt/M. 1972, pp. 245-280 (p. 267; p. 258).

37 Robert R. Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, London 1998.

38 Lydia Goehr, "Reviewing Adorno: Public Opinion and Critique", in: Adorno (n. 9), pp. xii-xlvi.

39 J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, University Park 1992.

40 Lambert Zuidervaart, *Social Philosophy after Adorno*, Cambridge 2007. The fifth chapter of the book, in which Zuidervaart extrapolates feminist politics according to Adorno's aesthetic writings, is especially striking, refreshing and inspiring for such endeavors.

unknown to Adorno. Yet, just as he ‘shied away’—to use an expression used by Eva Geulen, when coming to define narrower his aesthetic collectives,<sup>41</sup> he also shies away to elaborate further on what he would himself call the “subject’s collective essence”<sup>42</sup>. In the next and last section some tentative remarks will be added concerning how the subject could be conceived of as being collective in its essence. It is only after those remarks that an assertion will be attempted as to if collectivity qualifies as a critical model.

### 3.1 Impurity as Historical Necessity

Maybe the most approachable way to approximate Adorno’s collectivization of thinking is through what Simon Jarvis labeled “the *model* for Adorno’s attempt to free critical thinking from the armour of its transcendental method.”<sup>43</sup> He thus paraphrases Adorno’s “thinking without purity”. The notion of purity runs counter not only to Adorno’s discard of fundamental ontology, but also to his moral philosophy.<sup>44</sup> Thus it could not stay un-

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41 Geulen (n. 33), p. 60.

42 Adorno 2002 (n. 34), p. 131.

43 Simon Jarvis, *Adorno. A Critical Introduction*, New York 1998, p. 159; emphasis added. Cf. also Adorno (n. 12), p. 392.

44 As Adorno asserts in his, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, Stanford 2000 (1996), p. 80: “We should remind ourselves here that for its part any determinate individual phenomenon only becomes individual in time and space, that is, as a thing that contains something material or a sensation in itself. This contradicts the principle of purity to the degree that it is tied to such material, that something is given to me as material which is distinct from me as a pure form of consciousness.” This already correlates to the idea that epistemology is only allegedly pure. This becomes clear when Adorno – in the same work – tries to save Kant from the abstruse attempt undertaken by Neo-Kantians to bare him of all his empirical elements (cf. p. 106-107). The reason why purity cannot be morally tolerated is explicated in Adorno’s penultimate lecture where he states that “the moral is not self-evident, but instead a pure moral demand can by virtue of its own purity be transformed into evil. It may do this, to put it briefly, by destroying the object, or more accurately, the subject, on whom this moral demand is imposed.” (p. 158).

scathed also in his negative epistemology. Purity is not only politically speaking a defense mechanism of the bourgeois society that guarantees hereby perpetuation and—more importantly—exoneration from all criticism.<sup>45</sup> The graver problem is that purity is tangent of both ontology and epistemology since it pits Being and form respectively against content,<sup>46</sup> i.e. historical experience. It can, at least for Adorno, be only societally appropriated.

Nevertheless, it is thanks to this demand for purity and to the subsequent absolutization of the mind that we come to realize: The mind is dependent *from* and unavoidably and insurmountably entangled *with* what it has to detach itself from in order to only supposedly liberate itself. “The mind, for all its indirectness, shares *in existence*, the substitute for its alleged transcendental purity.”<sup>47</sup> The purification of ontology just as the purification of epistemology goes into inventing beings that only when declared as ontologically existing or metaphysically presupposed can retain their irreducibility. In reality though, in their actual existence, only history can produce and consolidate entities. From this perspective, the demand for purity vivisects those entities from any historical context within which they solely can be experienced. But vivisection is not purification since vivisection of subject and object is violent disentanglement and the loss of any relation, communication or interaction. And it is precisely this relatedness that makes subject(s) and object(s) distinguishable in the first place. The perniciousness of the undertaking lies hence not in the fact that such endeavors “postulate of a self-given phenomenal object”<sup>48</sup>, allow for “the categorial achievement of the synthesis to be hypostatized [...] as given”<sup>49</sup> leading finally to a “mere shadow of the false concept of Being.”<sup>50</sup> The problem is that purity holds down any attempt to rethink the historical formation of subject and/or object and the historicity of their relationship. Purity thus inhibits to understand the modes of the entanglement of subject and object. Subsequently it also makes it impossible to think of practices

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45 Adorno (n. 12), p. 54.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

47 *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

towards their disentanglement. The latter is of importance not for the sake of normativity, but due to imminent historicity. From this perspective ‘thinking without purity’ implies that as soon as social entanglements crystallize themselves as subject and object, not purity, but, if at all, then, synthesis of the societally brought forward material should be demanded.

Having to think without purity entails, at least implicitly, collectivity since the opposite of purity is for Adorno not impurity, i.e. something monadologically impure.<sup>51</sup> Rather the opposite of purity is the existence of a ‘more’, of more than one entity, of a —call it—subject and a—call it—object. These cannot be reconciled in unity, cannot be reproduced in multiplicity and cannot be addressed as plurality except for under the specter of the non-identity of unity. Jarvis rightly opts for the Adornite “coercionless synthesis of the manifold” as a valid and bearable alternative concerning the mode of the intertwinement of this ‘more’. Having to ‘think without purity’ denotes that a collectivity, i.e. more than one entities, is and has to stay at play.<sup>52</sup> This is why purity, alongside its longing, comes down to a falsification of truth.

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51 It is for this very reason that I take part from Witkin’s, in any other respect compelling, analysis of Adorno’s writings on music. According to him Adorno is in search of a “differential sociality”, i.e. of a sociality that “engenders difference, a gap between self and other; differential society constructs the non-identity if subject and object”; Witkin (n. 37), p. 74.

52 Note that collectivity as effect of the historically developed necessity of impurity is independent of the mode of the articulation of the coexistence of this ‘more’, i.e. independent of whether the articulation of the subject and the object as constituents of this ‘more’ happens in the mode of unity, of multiplicity or of plurality. It is also independent of the reasons enabling this coercionless synthesis. The preponderance of the object (“Vorrang des Objekts”) seems to carry the strongest claim regarding the latter; cf. Theodor W. Adorno (n. 12), pp. 183-192; Theodor W. Adorno, *Ontologie und Dialektik*, Frankfurt/M. 2008 (1960/1), pp. 333; Theodor W. Adorno, *Vorlesungen über Negative Dialektik – Fragmente zur Vorlesung 1965/66*, Frankfurt/M. 2007 (1965/6), pp. 196-197.

### 3.2 The Notion of Constellation, Philosophy as a Riddle, and the Remainder of Dialectics

This is why Adorno raises “constellation” as core notion not only of his philosophy, but of philosophy in generally; of a philosophy that he defines as a riddle (“Rätsel”). From this perspective, it is not surprising that Adorno from the beginning of his academic career<sup>53</sup> ties the epistemological aspects of the notion of constellation with aesthetics as part of the groundwork of his entire prospective philosophy. As he states in “Actuality of Philosophy”, constellation designates not only the interdisciplinary methodology that inheres in philosophy as having to be informed by the other sciences. It is also the basic structure of the philosophical questioning. The task of philosophy is not only to provide answers, but to unveil the question. This, in turn, is a construction, a palimpsest of sedimented material: a *collective* of different moments and movements that appear in the form of a question

Authentic philosophic interpretation does not meet up with a fixed meaning which already lies behind the question, but lights it up suddenly and momentarily, and consumes it at the same time. Just as the riddle-solving is constituted, in that the singular and dispersed elements of the question are brought into various groupings long enough for them to close together in a figure out of which the solution springs forth, while the question disappears—so philosophy has to bring its elements which it receives from the sciences, into changing constellations [...] into changing trial combinations, until they fall into a figure which can be read as an answer.<sup>54</sup>

Against the revelation of something fundamentally ontological or the interpretation of something phenomenologically given Adorno brings out the historicity of the question, i.e. the historical process that culminated in what became a question. As he categorically states,

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53 I.e. in his essay on the idea of natural history or, primarily, in his inaugural lecture on the actuality of philosophy, s. Theodor W. Adorno, “The Idea of Natural History”, in: *Telos* 60, 1984, pp. 111-124; Theodor W. Adorno, “The Actuality of Philosophy”, in: *Telos* 31, 1977, pp. 120-133.

54 Adorno 1977 (n. 53), p. 127.

[i]n regard to the manipulation of conceptual material by philosophy, I speak purposely of grouping and trial arrangement, of constellation and construction. The historical images, which do not constitute the meaning of being (Dasein) but dissolve and resolve its questions are not simply self-given. They do not lie organically ready in history; not showing (*Schau* [Husserl]) or intuition is required to become aware of them. They are not magically sent by the gods to be taken in and venerated. Rather, they must be produced by human beings and are legitimated in the last analysis alone by the fact that reality crystalizes about them in striking conclusiveness (*Evidenz* [Husserl]).<sup>55</sup>

Philosophy should not want to impose itself upon the reality it seeks to analyze, but coincide immanently with the historical contextuality that brought it forth. The task of philosophy in this theoretical, i.e. historical, framework is acknowledging the processes of knowledge (and thus processualizing knowledge) and not the existence of pre-, a-, or transhistorical existences (and thus accepting unquestionably their mode of being).

He who interprets by searching behind the phenomenal world for a world-in-itself (*Welt an sich*) which forms its foundation and support, acts mistakenly like someone who wants to find in the riddle the reflection of a being which lies behind it, a being mirrored in the riddle, in which it is contained. Instead, the function of riddle-solving is to light up the riddle-*Gestalt* like lightning and to negate it (*aufzuheben*), not to persist behind the riddle and imitate it.<sup>56</sup>

Philosophical praxis of the riddle, just like that of the constellation, resides in the demontage of the original philosophical question, in—not just undermining, but—destroying its solidity by turning it into a “charnel-house”<sup>57</sup>. At the very end, it means collectivizing the monolithicity of the question by fragmentizing it into innumerable, particular ones. It means acknowledging the autonomy of these question-fragments, making them integral and sovereign, before dialecticizing them by bringing them in contact to one another again. Yet this is far from being a unifying process. Dialecticization—in which philosophy flows, when analyzing reality, not as singular

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55 Ibid., p. 131.

56 Ibid., p. 127.

57 Adorno 1984 (n. 53), p. 121.

facticity, but as historical constellation—never ends up in producing a reinstated, integral and pure monad. Collectivity infiltrates or parasitizes not only the questions of philosophy creating constellations out of them. Nor does collectivity just force philosophy to abort its pretense as epistemological unanimity in order to be able henceforth to appear only in the form of riddle and not in the form of an answer. Collectivity disallows also dialectics to complete its unitary effects. If dialectics in its Hegelian understanding ought to reconcile a fragmented world, negative dialectics defy the latter by acknowledging that no *Aufhebung* can take place without producing a remainder or without setting in motion an addendum (*Hinzutretende*) to co-exist parallel to it. Adorno could not assert this point more categorically than when, in the introduction to his *Negative Dialectics*, he claimed that

[t]he name of dialectics says no more [...] than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy. Contradiction is not what Hegel's absolute idealism was bound to transfigure it into: it is not of the essence in a Heraclitean sense. It indicates the untruth of identity, the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived.<sup>58</sup>

This quote is not only paradigmatic for Adorno's negative dialectics. It is the most radical and definite assertion of the omnipotence, the historical genesis, the practical necessity, and the mode of theorizing collectivities that we could find in Adorno's work. The realization of the remainder is neither the coming-to-life of *an* essence nor the proof of the plurality of *the* essence. The remainder impurifies truth by making sure that it can never come down to a single one—just as impurity is not the quality of being, but collectivity is what renders and upholds the social being impure. On the same grounds, the remainder is not indicative of the inadequacy of the concept (Hegelian or not) to conceptualize itself, but of the impossibility of the sublation of the movements to a sole, syncretical, unifying *Bewusst-* or *Selbstbewusstsein*. The remainder is the proof of the co(n)llectivity of the *consciousness* running counter to the systematically structured and holistic *Bewusstsein*. Moreover, the remainder *is* not, but can only *become* traceable as reaction to the (violent) attempt to identify, theorize and/or philosophize the processes of historical realization. As such the remainder is not

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58 Adorno (n. 12), p. 5

the external form of an intrinsically fluid, divided, (self-)differential etc. movement, nor a quality awaiting to be discovered.<sup>59</sup> It is the inherent reaction to any attempt to define the historization of historicity from the outside (as ontological foundation or metaphysical presupposition) and not *immanently*, i.e. through history itself, through the actions and thinking of the actors that history brought forward. The remainder is but another “key[], before which reality springs open”<sup>60</sup>. The remainder itself is a historical reality transformed to an epistemological devise which designates that another ‘more’ is time and again innate to the sociality under question.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3 Philosophy as Collective Praxis

So Adorno—unlike his approach concerning aesthetic collectivities—did ‘shy way’ when it came to addressing how collectivities are at work on the epistemological level. At the same time, though, the new, critical philosophy he was carving let shine through that collectivities are constitutive for the epistemological faculties of the individual. This becomes visible in three demands: First, that we rework our understanding of philosophy as a riddle that needs to take into account the collectivity of epistemological options and material situations resulting in what we call a philosophical question; second, that we devise new epistemological tools such as the notion of

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59 According to this reading the remainder is not a quality, and thus Alireza Shomali’s tautologization of the remainder with the non-identical is unacceptable.

But this is a minor point to an otherwise magnificent attempt to reactualize and craft modern politics according to Adorno, cf. Alireza Shomali, *Politics and the Criteria of Truth*, New York 2010, p. 67.

60 Adorno 1977 (n. 53), p. 130.

61 It has to be admitted that this ‘more’ could be said to be of a dubious nature, cf. Jay M. Bernstein’s or Yvonne Sherratt’s analysis of this term. Sherratt (*Adorno’s Positive Dialectic*, Edinburgh 2002, p. 159) writes that the remainder is not only epistemological, but also of interdisciplinary nature so that, as Adorno has underlined, art or sociology could be thought of as being the remainder of philosophy as discipline. Bernstein points out, equally in compliance with Adorno, that the remainder is Janus-headed: not only the remainder functions as something emancipatory positive that defies identification, but it is also an undermining attempt of Kant’s intangible Thing in itself; cf. Bernstein (n. 39), p. 332-333.

constellation in order to decipher such a collective structuration and sedimentation of the philosophical question; third, that we acknowledge that every solipsistic attempt must be doomed to fail as inappropriate to the collective character of the social processes that always leave a remainder.<sup>62</sup>

Seen this way, collectivity is not an aggregate of intersubjective relations as in the later work of Jürgen Habermas. Neither does it originate as normative necessity so that an insufficient individual be recognized and thus become an integrative part of the moral, political and democratic sphere, as e.g. Axel Honneth would have it. Collectivity seems to be(come) constitutive<sup>63</sup> for the social reality, but not as ontological axiom, or hermeneutical principle, nor as a moral value, or normative ideal, but because collectivity is the result of historical processes anchored in the social sphere.

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62 Thus, it would not be farfetched to argue that, given the universally constitutive character of the collectivity, an equally universal collectivity has to be extrapolated as its respective political agent. That could be mankind in toto though not as mirroring reality in a dialectically materialistic or naturalistically dialectic fashion, but as ensuring that no historical processes and the political claims are left unattended or unidentified. Fabian Freyenhagen has recently made a compelling argument concerning mankind as Adorno's sole agent towards emancipation. But he derived it primarily from Adorno's moral philosophy rather than from his epistemology. In his words: "The new categorical imperative is mainly aimed at humanity as a whole, since only as a collective could we change the objective condition – only as ›global subject‹ can humanity make genuine progress and avert 'the most extreme, total disaster'. The content of these demands – not to let Auschwitz repeat itself and to end the bad infinity that is the current social world – is such that only humanity as a whole could fulfil them. [...] The important point for now is that while individually we cannot change the social world Adorno seems to think that socially speaking we have all that is required for fulfilling these demands. In this sense, we have both collective responsibility and – in the absence of our changing world – collective guilt." idem, *Adorno's Practical Philosophy: Living Less Wrongly*, Cambridge 2013, p. 153.

63 Max Pensky offers a nice account of the temporal, praxeological and epistemological accounts of collectivity according to Adorno in his "Natural History: The Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno", in John Rundell et al (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives in Critical and Social Philosophy*, Leiden 2004, pp. 227-258.

As such collectivity is as much a social object as also the trigger for theoretical contemplation and therefore the condition of practical-politically overcoming its ambivalences. Collectivity thus seems to meet Adorno's criteria of a critical model. What seemed to be practically implementable only on the aesthetic level appears to permeate the epistemological processes and is needed to be addressed. Philosophy had to be essentially restructured in order to be able to approach it, and in this process philosophy was rediscovered as being a collective science itself. Yet far from being a mere contemplation, this reworking of philosophy was the immanent result of historical formations leading—through the collectivization of philosophy that they instantiated—to their own redevelopment. As such, the collective processes that we habitually call history caused the collectivization of the analytic tools that were needed to grasp it. And the means to grasp the order are the means to change it—the means of emancipation.

#### 4. TOWARDS A COLLECTIVIZATION OF THE SUBJECT?

From this perspective it is surprising that neither Adorno, nor his interpreters<sup>64</sup> took the last step towards this direction and substantiated in a more

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64 The volume *Negativity and Revolution. Adorno and Political Activism* (eds. John Holloway/Fernando Matamoros/Sergio Tischler, London 2009) is one of the few attempts moving in the direction promulgated here. Alberto R. Bonnet's reinterpretation of Adorno's notion of life as being social in essence and its re-substantialization within a post-structuralist context needs to be specifically mentioned, cf. idem, "Antagonism and Difference: Negative Dialectics and Poststructuralism in View of the Critique of Modern Capitalism", in : *ibid.*, pp. 41-78 (p. 61 f.). I am obliged to acknowledge that my interest in scrutinizing Adorno's expression of the subject as being collective in essence has been undoubtedly inspired by the intersectional feminist readings of Adorno's philosophy as laid down by Regina Becker-Schmidt in her "'Class', 'gender', 'ethnicity', 'race': Logiken der Differenzsetzung, Verschränkungen von Ungleichheitslagen und gesellschaftliche Strukturierung", in Cornelia Klinger, Gudrun-Axeli Knapp and Birgit Sauer (eds.), *Achsen der Ungleichheit. Zum Verhältnis von Klasse, Geschlecht und Ethnizität*, Frankfurt/M. 2007, pp. 56-83. Equally inspiring have been Gudrun Axeli-Knapp's "'Intersectionality' – ein neues Par-

systematic way the collectivization of the sacrosanctly integral individual. If a 'more' lies at the bottom of any philosophical question, if the result of philosophy is a multi-faceted riddle, a collective constellation or a remainder, why spare the subject from such a collectivization?

As already mentioned, Adorno did allude to individuality being collective and, thus, the individual being an collective entity when he asserted—even if in passing—that the universality of art is collective analogous to the philosophical universality since it is derived from a collective subject. This subject is not a supra-individual entity, i.e. a subject containing more than one concrete individual. Adorno specifies the collectivity as pertaining to a subject that is of “collective essence”<sup>65</sup>. This collective essence of which the artwork reminds us is “simultaneously always the anticipation of a condition beyond the diremption of the individual and the collective.”<sup>66</sup> As such it is equally non-individual, as it is non-supraindividual. Collectivity, as the truth of the subjectivity induced from the historical processes that take place in society, cannot appear as Adorno in a mostly interesting *passus* asserts, without, i.e. “χωρίς from the subject”<sup>67</sup>. On the contrary, collectivity has to appear “*by way of the subject*”<sup>68</sup>, i.e. collectivity has to take the form of a subject in order to appear. At the same time though it is also the subject that as “collective form of reaction becomes manifest”<sup>69</sup>. By terming the subject a ‘reaction’ and by claiming that that historical processes such as collectivity have to appear ‘*by way of the subject*’ Adorno makes visible a unique dialectical twofold: the societal production of subjectivity becomes as equally manifested as the collective character of the form of this socially produced subjectivity. Collectivity, i.e. collective essence, seems to be the subject’s truth as being infused to it through the society.

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adigma feministischer Theorie? Zur transatlantischen Reise von ‘Race, Class, Gender’“, in: *Feministische Studien* 23/1, 2005, pp. 68-81, or Sora Y. Han’s “Intersectional Sensibility and the Shudder”, in: Renée Heberle (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno*, University Park 2006, pp. 173-192.

65 Adorno 2002 (n. 34).

66 *Ibid.*; Adorno is referring here to collective memory.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

69 *Ibid.*

Speaking of the subject's "idiosyncratic impulse"<sup>70</sup> Adorno will address individuality as necessary prerequisite to approach the essence of the subject. However, by qualifying it as 'idiosyncratic' it can be assumed that even if unwillingly he allowed for us to contest individuality, i.e. integrality, sovereignty and purity, as the subject's real essence. Individuality is unavoidable, yet at the same time it is idiosyncratic because individuality is epiphenomenal and not a substantial quality of the subject.

By the latter Adorno does not provide yet another narration of the subject's techno-social construction. More importantly he guarantees that the critical potentiality is immanently generated. Realizing the subject's collective essence does not only designate the subject's constitution. The collectivity of the subject questions both the integrality or sovereignty of its essence and subsequently its alleged autonomy. Last but not least, it debilitates its capability to emancipate itself on an individual basis. According to this reading, agon and critique are engendered in the subject not as facultative qualities in virtue of an ontological foundation or metaphysical presupposition. Rather critique is inherent in the historical situation of the subject's socially instantiated collective essence. Just as an only

meager and impure idea of this dialectical unity is given by the way in which artists of a single genre perceive themselves to be working in a subterranean collective that is virtually independent of their individual products<sup>71</sup>

collectivity is not critical due to it being an ontological undercurrent. It is critical because collectivity turns its components against each other.

There is a wide range of loosely queued insights to be found in Adorno's writings that provide for the possibility of a collectivization of subjectivity. Of those quotes the most prominent is probably the following one where Adorno gives in to the subject being a social construction:

By virtue of its mimetic preindividual elements, every idiosyncrasy lives from collective forces of which it is unconscious. The critical reflection of the subject, however isolated that subject, stands watch that these forces do not provoke regression. Social reflection on aesthetics habitually neglects the concept of productive force.

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70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., p. 35

Yet deeply embedded in the technological processes this force is the subject, the subject congealed as technology. Productions that avoid it, that effectively want to make themselves technically autonomous, are obliged to correct themselves by way of the subject.<sup>72</sup>

Only idiosyncratically is subjectivity an individual one. In fact, it is the product of collective forces that precede it and unconsciously bring it about. As product of collective historical forces the subject can potentially become both the locus of its critical self-reflection and of its uncritical regression. In order to enable the former and avoid the latter the subject has to acknowledge its collective structuration just as it has to acknowledge its being a collective being, the compendium of identificatory processes taking place in society. As a collective being the subject is thus the amalgam of any possible identities that society brings forward, which means that at the same time it is a stratified collective, the palimpsest of identification struggles apparent in society and, as such, the subject results to incorporate a struggle field. Seen this way the idiosyncrasy of the individual has to be supplemented with the collective consciousness of the subject's collective essence and the struggles in society are reallocated in the subject through which they come forward. This is not a plea for collective supraindividual practices that neglect, abandon or annihilate the subject. Rather it needs to be understood as a plea for reinstating collectivity "by way of the subject", i.e. a plea for collectivizing the individual [and make it] a subject that is collective in its essence. As such, as palimpsest of identities and as field of struggles, it becomes, potentially, capable of exerting collective agency and entering into collective forms of praxis.

## 5. OUTLOOK

In conclusion the subject has to behave like cinema or philosophy. The cinema had "to wrest its *a priori* collectivity from the mechanisms of unconscious and irrational influence and enlist this collectivity in the service of emancipatory intentions"<sup>73</sup>. And philosophy had to recognize its depend-

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72 Ibid., p. 42.

73 Cf. Adorno (n. 28).

ence on other disciplines (like sociology or art), craft new methods (like the negative dialectics) and invent new tools (like the notions of constellation, the non-identical, the riddle etc.) in order to readdress the given (as a henceforth pathological, instrumental, authoritarian etc.) so that its new scopes and goals (like emancipation, self-determination, dereification etc.) be realized. Analogously the subject has to acknowledge its collective structuration and rework it in such a way so as to avoid its instrumentalization from totalitarian, authoritarian, reifying power structures. It has to radically reconceptualize itself by renouncing its sovereign integrality as a (bourgeois) myth in order to subsequently embrace its collective essence.

The Leninization of politics upon which Adorno so emphatically called, results—seen in this way—in the collectivization of the subject. The “strictly Leninist Manifesto” needed eventually is the realization of the subject’s manifestation as a collective essence. As such, collectivity does not only explicate the emergence of the subject as socially constructed, i.e. as the mimesis of pre-individually existing, socially anchored collective forces. But it also indicates the means of its self-appropriation. It is exactly from this perspective that collectivity can affirmatively be asserted as a critical model. Collectivity does not only epistemologically elucidate historical reality, but it also allows for the self-realization of the subject’s coming to being. As soon as the latter is realized there is only a short way till a *new* socio-historical reality “springs open”. The new, emancipated socio-historical reality can be as collectively achieved as the agent of its emancipation, the essentially collective subject, was brought forward collectively.