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‘Die eigentlich humane Leidenschaft’? Adorno’s conception of Love in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*¹ and *Minima Moralia*.

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Abstract: The term of ‘Liebe’ and its variants occurs over 70 times in Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*. The article will examine the function of the concept of ‘love’ in Adorno’s thought, especially in relation to the positioning of the subject and object of love and its relation to Adorno’s critique of (masculine) subjectivity. It will furthermore claim that the ideal-typical relationship between lovers serves as a critique of the capitalist ‘Tauschprinzip’ and thus mirrors the relationship between art object and beholder in Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, proceeding from the same dialectical ground as Adorno’s conception of the work of art.

Keywords: Adorno, Horkheimer, Love, Artwork, Subjectivity.

In his *Passagenwerk*, Walter Benjamin proposes the following methodological principle for ‘cultural-historical dialectic’:

Kleiner methodischer Vorschlag zur kulturgeschichtlichen Dialektik. Es ist sehr leicht, für jede Epoche auf ihren verschiedenen ‘Gebieten’ Zweiteilungen nach bestimmten Gesichtspunkten vorzunehmen, dergestalt, daß auf der einen Seite der ‘fruchtbare’, ‘zukunftsvolle’, ‘lebendige’, ‘positive’, auf der anderen der vergebliche, rückständige, abgestorbene Teil dieser Epoche liegt. Man wird sogar die Konturen dieses positiven Teils nur deutlich zum Vorschein bringen, wenn man ihn gegen den negativen profiliert. Aber jede Negation hat ihren Wert andererseits nur als Fond für die Umriss des Lebendigen, Positiven. Daher ist es von entscheidender Wichtigkeit, diesem, vorab aussgeschiedenen, negativen Teile von neuem eine Teilung zu applizieren, derart, daß, mit einer Verschiebung des Gesichtswinkels (nicht aber der Maßstäbe!) auch in ihm von neuem ein Positives und ein anderes zu Tage tritt, als das vorher bezeichnete. Und so weiter in infinitum, bis die ganze Vergangenheit in einer historischen Apokatastasis in die Gegenwart eingebracht ist.²

¹ It is by now generally accepted that the majority of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* stems from Adorno, so I shall treat it here as confluent with the rest of Adorno’s thought.

² Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*. In Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), V,1, [N1a,3], p. 573.

If one dispenses with the apocatastatic aspect of infinite asymptotic progression in Benjamin's methodological proposal, what remains is the principal example of the rhetorical deployment of concepts in Adorno's thinking, a paradoxical juxtaposition of a 'positive', 'productive' or 'utopian' vs. a 'negative', 'regressive' or 'ideological' aspect of the concept. For the following article, Adorno's concepts will be treated in this manner, i.e. as possessing a 'positive' or utopian and a 'negative' or socio-historical/ideological-critical charge, with the added complication that these two sides cannot be separated from one another, and that they function as correctives of other concepts, depending on their context of deployment.

I would like to make two claims in this article. First, that the concept of 'love' in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Minima Moralia* functions in precisely the fashion outlined above, i.e. both as bourgeois ideology for the transfiguration of patriarchy and as having a utopian aspect that potentially undermines (or is in contradistinction to) the 'principle of exchange' or 'Tauschprinzip', that Horkheimer and Adorno identify as the fundamental mythical principle of capitalist society, its principal form of (masculine) subjectivity and its form of conceptualization, identity thinking.³ And secondly, that there is an implicit analogy between this utopian aspect of love and Adorno's conception of the artwork. The article will first analyse the utopian aspect of Adorno's concept of love and its potential to subvert both the capitalist principle of exchange and the coercion to be a strong subject, before exploring the connection between love and Adorno's conception of the artwork's utopian potential.

Love as dialectical utopia

The term 'Liebe' and its grammatical variants (lieben, geliebt) occur over 120 times in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Minima Moralia* alone, more frequently than the terms 'bürgerlich' (18 times) or 'Tausch' (15 times), comparable in frequency only to 'Subjekt' (115 times) or 'Kunst'/'Kunstwerk' (123 times⁴). Love thus emerges as a key concept in Adorno's thought, one that has attracted astonishingly little commentary. With the exception of Eva

³ See Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), *Gesammelte Schriften* 3, pp. 67, 71, 73. Further references as: (DaA, page number). Further References to *Gesammelte Schriften* as: GS, volume number. See also Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Notizen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, *ibid.* GS, 4, pp. 49, 76, 146, 170, 177. Further references as: (MM, page number). Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, GS 6, *ibid.*, pp. 149, 290.

⁴ 161 times if one includes the 'Anhang' that, written in 1942, was found in Adorno's estate and is now appended to the edition of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in the *Gesammelte Schriften*.

Geulen's article that reads *Minima Moralia* as 'ars amandi',⁵ the few comments that exist have been both passing and negative.⁶ This article aims to close redress that through a closer investigation of Adorno's dialectical conception of love in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Minima Moralia* and by suggesting a link between the conception of love and Adorno's aesthetic thinking. Feminist critiques of Adorno's alleged gender bias will be addressed in passing. To set this up, I want to juxtapose two contemporary conceptions of love from contemporary social and feminist theory, Anthony Giddens' concept of 'confluent love' and Wendy Langford's critique of Giddens. As will be shown, both Giddens' conception of love and Langford's critique do not leave the conceptual territory that is critiqued in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

In *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), Giddens develops the concept of 'confluent love'. Arguing that 'romantic love has always been imbalanced in gender terms', Giddens notes an increasing democratization in contemporary relationship arrangements that tends towards a contractualization of intimate bonds that leads to a form of relationship that is entered into exclusively for the purpose of the relationship itself. Giddens refers to this as a 'pure' relationship 'where a social relation is entered for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only insofar as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it'.⁷ Taking issue with Giddens' optimism, Wendy Langford argues that Giddens' concept of 'confluent love' leaves the patriarchal 'tenets of romanticism [...] untouched'. Langford criticizes that in Giddens' analysis 'love in itself remains unanalysed and love for its own sake remains as a path to salvation', the idea of love for its own sake gaining dominance during the Romantic period.⁸ The reason for the persistence of romantic frameworks, Langford claims,

⁵ See Eva Geulen, "'No Happiness Without Fetishism". *Minima Moralia as Ars Amandi*, in *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno*, ed. by Renée J. Heberle (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press), 2006, pp. 97–112, (p. 97).

⁶ See for example the comments in *Theodor W. Adorno. 'Minima Moralia' neu gelesen*, ed. by Andreas Bernard and Ulrich Raulff (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2003), esp. Clemens Pornschlegel who describes the idea of love in *Minima Moralia* as celebrating 'ein heiteres Ideal bildungsromanhafter Liebes- und Adoleszenzswirren, das spätestens seit 1918 Makulatur ist', p. 99. For a feminist critique see Irmgard Schultz, 'Julie und Juliette und die Nachtseite der Geschichte Europas: Naturwissenschaft, Aufklärung und pathetische Projektion der *Dialektik der Aufklärung*', in *Zwielicht der Vernunft, Die Dialektik der Aufklärung aus der Sicht von Frauen*, ed. by Christine Kulke and Elvira Scheich (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1992), pp. 25–40.

⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love & Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), references to the paperback edition, 2003, p. 62 and p. 58.

⁸ Wendy Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart: Gender, Power and the Delusions of Love* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. xii.

is that '[w]e remain strangely reluctant to penetrate love's mystery, to subject love to systematic enquiry, to ask ourselves what *is* love anyway?'.⁹

Langford's answer to Cole Porter's question 'What is this thing called love?', however, is strangely unambiguous or, rather, in Horkheimer's and Adorno's terms, enlightened: While nodding to the deeply ambivalent, ambiguous and 'mysterious' nature of love in its social articulation as well as in theories about love, Langford herself takes a distinctly unambiguous position, one that exclusively highlights the power dynamics of emotional relationships, in her own words 'a radical feminist analysis'.¹⁰ Langford's study looks at love exclusively as 'an ideology which obscures the violent and conflictual nature of sexual relations and which therefore, particularly in its heterosexual forms, serves to reproduce the oppression of women'.¹¹

While Giddens's contractual concept of 'confluent love', where people only stay together as long as it is mutually beneficial, could be said to be fully in tune with the 'Tauschprinzip' that Adorno sees at the heart of a society that regards everything in terms of exchangeable values, Langford's radical desire to shine the light of reason into the murky and mythical waters of love strangely reminds of Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of Enlightenment rationality's hostility to what it perceives as mythic untruth. Langford's answer to the question 'what is love?', that it is pure ideology, i.e. nothing but the superstructure over the basis of domination, strangely chimes with Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of de Sade's dissection of romantic love (taking into account here that Langford's intention is fundamentally different from de Sade's and one that we could all agree with):

'... immer leiten uns falsche Definitionen in die Irre', erklärt Dolmance im denkwürdigen 5. Dialog der *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 'ich weiß nicht was das ist: das Herz. Ich nenne bloß die Schwäche des Geistes so.' 'Laßt uns einen Augenblick, wie Lucrez sagt, zu den "Hintergründen des Lebens" übergehen [...] und wir werden finden, daß weder die Erhöhung der Geliebten noch das romantische Gefühl der Analyse standhält.' (*DdA*, 129)

⁹ Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart*, p. 147.

¹⁰ Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart*, p. 141.

¹¹ Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart*, p. 1.

De Sade's rationalist gaze is read by Horkheimer and Adorno as evidence of Enlightenment's violence towards its 'other' that in its destructive critique of all conceptions ultimately violates itself. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* describes de Sade's project as a radically enlightening one that plays off the idealistic aspects of love against the materially and rationally tangible aspects of sex as a sign of the progress of rationality:

Wahr ist an all dem die Einsicht in die Dissoziation der Liebe, das Werk des Fortschritts. Durch solche Dissoziation, welche die Lust mechanisiert und die Sehnsucht in den Schwindel verzerrt, wird Liebe im Kern angegriffen. Indem Juliette das Lob der genitalen und perversen Sexualität zum Tadel des Unnatürlichen, Immateriellen, Illusionären macht, hat sich die Libertine selbst zu jener Normalität geschlagen, die mit dem utopischen Überschwang der Liebe auch den physischen Genuß, mit dem Glück der höchsten Höhe auch das der nächsten Nähe schmälert. (DdA, 129)

To be sure, Adorno and Horkheimer have no illusion about the ideological character of the ideal of romantic love and particularly the ideological power of the culture industry which 'reduces love to romance', as well as the transfiguring aspect of love in the Christian tradition:

In der schwärmerischen Adoration des Liebhabers wie der schrankenlosen Bewunderung, die ihm die Geliebte zollte, verklärte sich stets erneut die tatsächliche Knechtschaft der Frau. Auf Grund der Anerkennung dieser Knechtschaft söhnten die Geschlechter je und je sich wieder aus [...]. Durch das Christentum ward die Hierarchie der Geschlechter, [...] zur Vereinigung der Herzen in der Ehe verklärt [...]. (DdA, 127)

What interests me here, though, is not the ideological aspect of love but the way in which love is implicated into the entirety that is the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as both ideology and utopia, in a way that is paralleled probably only by the concept of art. In order to see what a dialectic and 'undissociated' conception of love might look like (in the sense of the above critique of the dissociation of love into genital sex as nature and romantic longing as illusion), one has to keep in mind that Adorno's concepts are non-identical, i.e. they have more than one valence and frequently function as regulators of other concepts. They have a positive as well as a negative side, a historical, an ideal, an ideological and socio-practical side. In the

following attempt to explore the 'utopian' aspect of Adorno's conception of love, it is necessary to keep its ideological aspect of transfiguration of the real oppression of women always in the back of one's mind. This is to say that the utopian aspect of love is as much tied to the history of Enlightenment as its ideological aspect, the one that is irrevocably tied to the history of both female oppression and masculine domination, as well as the entire history of becoming subject that ultimately culminates in bourgeois coldness and 'universale Fungibilität' (*DdA*, 26), while the development of rationality ultimately does away with transfiguration only to enslave all subjects under the dominance of the coercion to subjectivity as objects of the labour market. In the end stage of rationality, all idealism appears as unreasonable and mythic: 'Vor der Ratio erscheint die Hingabe ans angebetete Geschöpf als Götzendienst. Daß die Vergötterung zergehen muß, folgt aus dem Mythologieverbot [...] und von seiner säkularisierten Form, der Aufklärung [...].'
(*DdA*, 134) Hence love, as an 'unscientific term' undergoes the same kind of rational debunking as art and poetry:

Der Aufklärung wird zum Schein, was in Zahlen, zuletzt in der Eins, nicht aufgeht; der moderne Positivismus verweist es in die Dichtung. [...] Nicht bloß die romantische Geschlechtsliebe verfiel der Wissenschaft und Industrie als Metaphysik, sondern jede Liebe überhaupt, denn vor Vernunft vermag keine standzuhalten: die der Frau zum Mann so wenig wie die des Liebhabers zur Geliebten, die Eltern- so wenig wie die Kindesliebe. (*DdA*, 24 and 137)

The consequence is the rationalization of the relationship to body and desire in accordance with the objectifying principle of Enlightenment rationality: '[d]ie Menschen gewinnen das rationale, kalkulierende Verhältnis zum eigenen Geschlecht, das in Juliettes aufgeklärtem Kreise als alte Weisheit längst verkündet wurde.'
(*DdA*, 128)

In Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique, de Sade's enlightened dissociation of romantic affection is the result of the attempt to save the idea of pleasure, originating in myth, for Enlightenment. For Horkheimer and Adorno the 'dark thinkers of the bourgeoisie' spell out the 'shocking truth' about the Enlightenment that nothing persists before the cold gaze of

rationality:¹² With a sardonic reference to Kant's definition of Enlightenment reason as possessing the ability to use one's reason without guidance of another,¹³ Horkheimer and Adorno read de Sade's work as the completion of the Kantian project of subjective autonomy: 'Das Werk des Marquis de Sade zeigt den "Verstand ohne Leitung eines anderen", das heißt, das von Bevormundung befreite bürgerliche Subjekt.' (DdA, 106) In this, de Sade figures as a precursor of Nietzsche's deconstruction of bourgeois and Christian morality:

Nietzsche weiß, dass jeder Genuss noch mythisch ist. In der Hingabe an die Natur entsagt der Genuss dem, was möglich wäre, wie das Mitleid der Veränderung des Ganzen. Beide enthalten ein Moment der Resignation. [...] Juliette sucht ihn zu retten, indem sie die hingebende Liebe verwirft, die bürgerliche, die als Widerstand gegen die Klugheit des Bürgertums für sein letztes Jahrhundert charakteristisch ist. In der Liebe war Genuß verknüpft mit der Vergötterung des Menschen, der ihn gewährte, sie war die eigentlich humane Leidenschaft. Schließlich wird sie als durchs Geschlecht bedingtes Werturteil revoziert. (DdA, 127-8)

Two aspects of this section are worth commenting on. Firstly that love appears here as the bourgeoisie's own corrective to the idea of 'bürgerliche Kälte' (DdA, 123, MM, 82) that elsewhere characterizes Horkheimer's and Adorno's conception of the rationally calculating subject. Love is thus, like the myths that Enlightenment pursues, a product of the history of Enlightenment. Via the connection with 'Mitleid', Enlightenment rationality connotes love negatively with an implicitly feminine, or rather 'effeminate' quality, a dialectical 'other' that needs to be excized for the 'true' masculine character of selfhood to emerge: 'Commiseratio ist Menschlichkeit in unmittelbarer Gestalt, aber zugleich "mala et inutilis",¹⁴ nämlich das Gegenteil der männlichen Tüchtigkeit, die von der römischen virtus über die Medicis bis zur efficiency unter den Fords die einzig wahre männliche Tugend war.' (DdA, 127-28). Love is

¹² See Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Verschlingung von Mythos und Aufklärung. Bemerkungen zur *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – nach einer erneuten Lektüre', in *Mythos und Moderne*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Bohrer (Frankfurt/M.,: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 405–31 (p. 417).

¹³ See Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?' in Kant, *Was ist Aufklärung?* *Ausgewählte kleiner Schriften*, ed. by Horst D. Brandt (Hamburg: Meiner, 1999), pp. 20– 22 (p. 20).

¹⁴ 'Bad and useless', Horkheimer's and Adorno's reference is to Spinoza, *Ethica*.

thus, like the artwork, a dialectic remnant within the dialectic of Enlightenment and the world of calculating rationality it produced, a reminder of potential difference to the fundamental principle that underlies this rationality and not just its ideological product.

Secondly, to see what is properly 'humane' about the above mentioned 'bürgerliche Leidenschaft', it is necessary to see it in connection to the complex of becoming subject and the subject's relation to the object that is critiqued in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. What is important here is the terminological continuity between the concepts of love and nature in the term 'Hingabe' as denoting the potential to give oneself over to something, to relinquish one's hard subjectivity. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is, first and foremost, a critique of the emergence of subjectivity as ideal-typically masculine, the hard self-objectifying self:

Furchtbares hat die Menschheit sich antun müssen, bis das Selbst, der identische, zweckgerichtete, männliche Charakter des Menschen geschaffen war, und etwas davon wird noch in jeder Kindheit wiederholt. Die Anstrengung, das Ich zusammenzuhalten, haftet dem Ich auf allen Stufen an, und stets war die Lockung, es zu verlieren, mit der blinden Entschlossenheit zu seiner Erhaltung gepaart. (*DdA*, 50)

The possibility of 'Hingabe', both with respect to the semantic aspect of giving as well as the 'schrankenlose sich Wegwerfen' (*MM*, 102) denotes the potential of being subject in a different, or 'weaker' way, one that is elsewhere described by Adorno in Hegel's terms as 'Freiheit zum Objekt'.¹⁵ This shall be discussed further below. It is important, however, to note the difference between 'Hingabe' and 'Unterwerfung'. In contrast to the latter, 'Hingabe' is a properly dialectic term, it has a utopian and an ideology-critical aspect. The ideology-critical aspect is tied to the concept's connection to myth and thus untruth; it is connected to the idolatrous stage of mankind's development: 'Jeder Genuß aber verrät eine Vergötzung: er ist Selbstpreisgabe an ein Anderes' (*DdA*, 125). In the glorification of female subjection in the patriarchal concept of marriage, 'Hingabe' partakes of the transfiguration of patriarchal

¹⁵ See Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 33 and p. 410. See also Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, GS 6, p. 57.

power and female powerlessness. The utopian aspect of 'Hingabe', the 'schrackenlose sich Wegwerfen', however, lies in the aspect of a gift that does not carry the expectation or calculation of reciprocity: 'In der Welt des Tausches hat der Unrecht, der mehr gibt; der Liebende aber ist allemal der mehr Liebende.' (DdA, 92). 'Hingabe', and 'Selbstpreisgabe an ein Anderes' thus have the potential to undercut both the coercion to hold the self together and the capitalist logic of the equality of exchange. This aspect is expressed, in conjunction with the terms of tenderness and beauty in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, as a transformation of sexuality into the promise of a human intersubjective relation not ruled by equivalence as the fundamental principle of bourgeois society ('Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft ist beherrscht vom Äquivalent, DdA, 7):

Die Schönheit des Halses und die Rundung der Hüfte wirken auf die Sexualität nicht als geschichtslose, bloß natürliche Fakten sondern als Bilder ein, in denen alle gesellschaftliche Erfahrung enthalten ist; in dieser Erfahrung lebt die Intention auf das, was anders ist als Natur, die nicht aufs Geschlecht beschränkte Liebe. Zärtlichkeit aber, die unkörperlichste noch, ist verwandelte Sexualität, das Streichen der Hand übers Haar, der Kuß auf die Stirn, die den Wahnsinn der geistigen Liebe ausdrücken, sind das befriedete Schlagen und Beißen beim Geschlechtsakt der australischen Wilden. (DdA, 128-29)

It is difficult to look at this passage today, not just because of its apparent reduction of the implicitly gendered feminine object of masculine adoration to exterior appearance, but also because of the explicit hierarchization of 'civilized' vs. 'uncivilized' peoples. However, the 'Schönheit des Halses und die Rundung der Hüfte' are not Horkheimer's and Adorno's own terms, they are de Sade's who describes them as 'Gegenstände' (DdA, 127-8) which in de Sade exemplifies exactly that dissociation between *physis* and affect that Horkheimer and Adorno criticize. Whereas for de Sade tenderness is a mere subjective quirk, Horkheimer and Adorno read it as a signature of historical transformation of 'natural' sexual violence and of 'Erfahrung' of difference. The emphatically Benjaminian term 'Erfahrung' for a true historical experience is not accidental here. Finally, while the physical vision of beauty, even in the above quote, might not necessarily be gendered, or even heterosexual, in the context of the

critique of masculine subjectivity and violence in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, the vision of tenderness is arguably tied to that critique.

As *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is a critique of the masculine tradition of becoming subject, the female appears essentially as that which is produced by this process: 'Das Weib als vorgebliches Naturwesen ist Produkt der Geschichte, die es denaturiert' (DdA, 132). From within the masculine enlightened perspective that is animated by a drive towards abstraction, the individual female becomes the representative of the species: 'Die Einzelne ist gesellschaftlich Beispiel der Gattung, Vertreterin ihres Geschlechts' (DdA, 132). The hierarchical relation between the sexes is thus an imprint of the 'verunglückte Zivilisation': 'Die Herrschaft über die Natur reproduziert sich innerhalb der Menschheit' (DdA, 130). Within this, Christianity's ideological attempt to compensate for the oppression of the female by its reverence is doomed because '[d]er Affekt, der zur Praxis der Unterdrückung paßt, ist Verachtung, nicht Verehrung' (DdA, 131).

At this point, it may be appropriate to insert a reflection on the issue of gender and gender binaries in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and Adorno in general, as both *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and Adorno have been frequently criticized from within gender theory for their alleged affirmation of a heteropatriarchal (masculine) perspective and reliance on binary gender stereotypes. I take recourse here to Rochelle Duford's review of Feminist critiques of Adorno in *Hypathia*, because of the complexity of the argument it is worth reconstructing it in some length.

***Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Adorno and Heteropatriarchal Gender Binarism**

Feminist Critiques of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and Adorno focus, as Duford has argued, generally on two issues: a critique of his alleged 'vicious essentializing [...] of the concept of women as damaged or incomplete subjects' and an attempt to appropriate his thought for the formulation of a 'positive feminist project'.¹⁶ While the second issue is of no interest here, the first critique that culminates in an allegation of Adorno's implicit heteronormativity and

¹⁶ Rochelle Duford, 'Daughters of the Enlightenment: Reconstructing Adorno on Gender and Feminist Praxis', *Hypathia*, 4 (2017), 784–800 (p. 785).

the implicit masculine perspective of his thought, goes right to the heart of my argument.¹⁷ This critique focuses largely on the alleged exclusion of woman from the dialectic of Enlightenment and Horkheimer's and Adorno's location of woman on the side of nature and art, and on the characters of Circe and Penelope in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: 'On this account, women (both as subject and concept) are not subject to the dialectic of Enlightenment precisely because of their position within the constellation of non-identity.'¹⁸ However, as Duford argues, this reconstruction of woman as impotent utopian figure is 'mistaken',¹⁹ as it fails to take into account the character of Juliette, who is afforded the largest space in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Refusing to take up any of the available positions in the 'triad of Madonna (Penelope), whore (Circe) or lack (understood as either castrated or simply excluded)', Juliette 'asserts herself as a subject' outside this triad.²⁰ However, while Juliette's subversion of patriarchal logic allows her to exit from the hall of mirrors of projections of femininity, it 'liberates her into the same dominating logic to which men are subjected: the totalizing domination of Enlightenment reason, subjectivity, economics, and liberal politics'.²¹ There are thus two models of woman in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: that of wife/whore/lack and that of Juliette as affirming the (masculine) logic of coercion to subjectivity. However, *both* are essentially projections from within the logic of totalizing domination.²²

It is worth adding that, throughout *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Horkheimer and Adorno refer to 'die Frau' or 'das Weib', in distinction to references to women as social beings; the same is true for *Minima Moralia*. As generic conceptualization, 'woman' is fundamentally a projection

¹⁷ See e.g. Geulen's assertion that Adorno 'unabashedly assumes the point of view of a male heterosexual.' Geulen, 'No Happiness without Fetishism', p. 98. See also Helga Geyer-Ryan and Helmut Lethen's critique that Horkheimer and Adorno repress 'das Wissen vom eigenen Blick als männlichem'. Helga Geyer-Ryan/Helmut Lethen, 'Von der Dialektik der Gewalt zur *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Eine Re-Vision der *Odysee*', in *Vierzig Jahre Flaschenpost: 'Dialektik der Aufklärung' 1947 bis 1987*, ed. by in Willem van Reijen, Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1987), pp. 41–72 (p. 46). See also Heidi M. Schlipphacke's critique of the implicitly "masculine" construction of the "critical subject". Schlipphacke, 'A Hidden Agenda: Gender in Selected Writings by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer', *Orbis Litterarum*, 56 (2001), 294–312, (p. 296).

¹⁸ Duford, 'Daughters of the Enlightenment', p. 786.

¹⁹ On the utopian potential of a 'fantasm of the feminine' see Andrew Hewitt, 'A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment? Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited', *New German Critique*, Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno, 56 (1992), 143–170, (p. 147).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Duford, 'Daughters of the Enlightenment', 788.

²² 'Stereotypisierung wird explizit als tragendes Moment des aufklärerischen Geschichtsbewußtsens analysiert und als Projektionsmechanismus durchsichtig gemacht, [...].' Schultz, 'Julie und Juliette und die Nachtseite der Geschichte Europas', p. 37.

and not identical with women as social embodied beings: 'Woman, as a concept, is not part of a constellation with nature, art, and beauty because these are utopian, but because these concepts are all inadequate to their objects.'²³ Rather than Horkheimer and Adorno repeating 'the generalization they gesture to condemn', the generic term is a continuous reminder that the concept violates the object it denotes, an exemplification of the impossibility 'of ever getting it right'.²⁴

A conflation of the difference between the conceptualization of 'woman' within the dialectic of enlightenment as a 'lesser' or 'inferior' subject, and the subjectivity of female embodied subjects frequently leads to the allegation of a 'male bias' in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, for example, in Regina Becker-Schmidt's allegation: 'Wie den Arbeitern, so wird auch den Frauen Individualität im emphatischen Sinne abgesprochen. Das Subjektivitätskonzept der Frankfurter Schule hat also nicht nur einen bürgerlichen, sondern auch einen männlichen Bias.'²⁵ Feminist critiques of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, especially where they criticize Horkheimer's and Adorno's conception of love or marriage, frequently tend to take the dialectical 'half' of the concept for the whole.²⁶

It is therefore important to note that the dynamics that result in the ideal-typical masculinization of subjectivity and identity explicitly affects *all* human subjects: 'Furchtbares hat die Menschheit sich antun müssen, bis das Selbst, der identische, zweckgerichtete, männliche Charakter des Menschen geschaffen war, und etwas davon wird noch in *jeder* Kindheit wiederholt.' (*DdA*, 50, my emphasis)

²³ Duford, 'Daughters of the Enlightenment', p. 789.

²⁴ Hewitt, 'A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment?', p. 148.

²⁵ Regina Becker-Schmidt, 'Identitätslogik und Gewalt: zum Verhältnis von Kritischer Theorie und Feminismus', in *Kultur und Gesellschaft: Gemeinsamer Kongreß der Deutschen, der Österreichischen und der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Soziologie*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny (Zürich: Seismo Verlag 1989), pp. 97–99 (p. 99). Becker-Schmidt's allegation of a 'bürgerlichen bias' is likewise mistaken, as both *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and Adorno's conception of the artwork contain a sustained critique of bourgeois 'enjoyment' as violating the utopian potential of the artwork and excluding the working classes (see the allegorical reading of the *Odyssey's* sirens' episode): 'Das Kulturgut steht zur kommandierten Arbeit in genauer Korrelation. Beide gründen im unentrinnbaren Zwang zur gesellschaftlichen Herrschaft über die Natur.' (*DdA*, 52) To conceive of Adorno's concept of the artwork as 'bürgerlich' confuses the artwork's essence with its historical space of production and reception, a space that equally defines the 'non-bourgeois' arts of film, photography and radio, all of which are, in the first half of the twentieth century and beyond, in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

²⁶ See for example Schultz, 'Julie und Juliette und die Nachtseite der Geschichte Europas', esp. pp. 34–35.

Sigrid Weigel has described this as the paradox of a ‘female dialectics of enlightenment’.²⁷ As the female is ‘in der männlichen Ordnung zugleich *beteiligt und ausgegrenzt*’, this results in a paradoxical position with respect to the articulation of an *independent* female subjectivity, one that is not part of the history of reflections of ‘woman’ as emerging from and in relation to the masculine self.²⁸ As I have argued elsewhere,²⁹ what this produces is a relation between (masculine) reason and its ‘other’ as temporally upside-down: reason emerges from its ‘other’, but in the subjection of this ‘other’ it conceives of itself as prior. However, once this process has occurred, this ‘other’ of reason is no longer what it was prior to reason’s emergence. In other words that ‘other’ is, like the ‘self’ that conceives of itself as emerging in contradistinction from it, only available as projection.

While *Dialektik der Aufklärung* thus has no vision of a specifically female subjectivity outside masculine subjectivity or one that is not constituted by either its difference from male/masculine or its relation to it, the same is true for the form subjectivity configured as masculine. Secondly, it is important to note that for Horkheimer and Adorno both sex and gender are fundamentally social categories and do not originate in what they term ‘first nature’ (i.e. nature prior to its domination by humans) but are part of the ‘wound’.³⁰ Hence, configurations of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ or ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* are projections and as projections are essentially social categories. While Adorno’s historically binary use of gender pronouns does not reflect current developments as regards both non-binary, or fluid, gender identities and their conceptualizations in gender theory, his conception of both sex and gender is that they are fundamentally social constructs. They thus need to be seen as performative, rather than as characteristics of specific individuals. This is what leads Duford to claim that Adorno operates with a ‘nascent queer theory’ as ‘all subjects as gendered subjects are damaged by heteropatriarchy’.³¹ While feminist critiques of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* do not necessarily subvert the binary conception of gender they

²⁷ Sigrid Weigel, ‘Leib- und Bildraum. Zur Problematik und Darstellbarkeit einer weiblichen *Dialektik der Aufklärung*’, in Weigel, *Topographien der Geschlechter* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1999), pp. 15–39.

²⁸ Sigrid Weigel: ‘Der schielende Blick’, in Inge Stephan, Sigrid Weigel, *Die verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Argument, 1984), pp. 35–94 (p. 37).

²⁹ See Helmut Schmitz, ‘The “nachtseite des abendlands”. Barbara Köhler’s *Niemands Frau* and the Dialectic of Enlightenment’, in *An Odyssey for our Time: Barbara Köhler’s Niemands Frau*, ed. by Georgina Paul (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 139–61 (p. 144).

³⁰ See Duford, ‘Daughters of the Enlightenment’, p. 786.

³¹ Duford, ‘Daughters of the Enlightenment’, p. 794 and 786.

criticize Horkheimer and Adorno for, Duford argues that Adorno's conception of both sex and gender is closer to contemporary Gender Theory than usually assumed. The identity-constituting markers of masculine/feminine transcend both sexed and gendered subjects and do not denote gender or sex.

While Simon Jarvis is thus correct in claiming that 'Adorno has no elaborated theory of gender and kinship',³² critiques of Adorno's alleged affirmation of heteropatriarchy and gender binarism are frequently mistaken, because the original binary is not that of sex or gender, but of subject and object. The gender binary of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is thus a gendered reflection of the power hierarchy of subject and object. Adorno's entire thought is a critique of 'Identitätsdenken', of thinking in subject and object categories that, however, cannot be escaped or suspended: 'Denken heißt identifizieren.'³³ 'Identity thinking' affects the conceptualization of all gender identities, including their contemporary plethorization under a rule of self-identification. For the remainder of this argument, then, masculine and feminine attributes are regarded as being equally attributable to any sex or gender, they denote a performance of subjectivity, not subjectivity itself.

Within these performative categories, the weaker and inferior feminine triggers aggression in the masculine, precisely because he has become subject by and through the persistent control of his fears and banishment of his weakness: 'Was unten liegt, zieht den Angriff auf sich, [...] Die Lust geht anstatt mit der Zärtlichkeit mit der Grausamkeit einen Bund ein, [...].'³⁴ (DdA, 133) Within this dialectic, tenderness is both a remnant of the original violence of sexual union and a promise of difference from it, both a reminder of a pre-civilized violence and the memory of its potential transformation into a non-violent and non-hierarchical relationship based on a different relation of the subject to themselves and the other.

The focus on exterior appearance in this act of tenderness in the previously mentioned quote about the 'Schönheit des Halses', rather than exemplifying an objectification, has to be seen in the context of Adorno's critique of personality as fetish and with respect to the particularity of the image: 'Wären Menschen kein Besitz mehr, so könnten sie auch nicht mehr vertauscht

³² Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 86.

³³ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, GS 6, p. 17.

werden. Die wahre Neigung wäre eine, die den anderen spezifisch anspricht, an geliebte Züge sich heftet und nicht ans Idol der Persönlichkeit, die Spiegelung von Besitz.' (MM, 89)

The utopian aspect of love, its transcendence of the coercion to subjectivity as the law of bourgeois society, is thus connected to the utopian aspect of 'Hingabe' as a voluntary weakening of the coercion to be subject. As such, it is analogically related to the conception of the artwork and aesthetic experience in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and Adorno's thought in general.

Love, Art and *Erfahrung*: Freedom to the Object

Art is afforded a particular status in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as virtually the only human product that escapes the logic of domination that underscored the history of human civilization. In Horkheimer's and Adorno's reading, the sirens episode in the *Odyssey* becomes the allegory of the birth of art out of the division of labour. Odysseus's decision to have himself tied to the mast of the ship to listen to the sirens' song while his comrades, their ears stuffed with wax, row the ship past the sirens' rock, simultaneously degrades his comrades to workers and disempowers the powerful sirens' song to an aesthetic spectacle for the delectation of the bourgeois master: 'Die Gefährten, die selbst nicht hören, wissen nur von der Gefahr des Lieds, nicht von seiner Schönheit. [...] Der Gefesselte wohnt einem Konzert bei, [...]. (DdA, 51). The origin of art in the division of labour is doubly disempowering: as aesthetic spectacle it is kept away from having any claims to the world of human praxis and knowledge, and as object of class enjoyment its implicit universalism is reduced to reflecting class interest. However, the other aspect of the origin of art, its tie to the world of magic, to what Horkheimer and Adorno refer to as the pre-mythic 'Vorwelt' (DdA, 30) liberates art from being fully ideological. The crucial difference between magic and myth for Horkheimer and Adorno is that, while myth is fundamentally narrative and thus legitimizes domination, magic has not yet fully entered the unifying conceptual universe of rationality due to its mimetic aspects:

Es war nicht der eine und identische Geist, der Magie betrieb; er wechselte gleich den Kultmasken, die den vielen Geistern ähnlich sein sollten. Magie ist blutige Unwahrheit, aber

in ihr wird Herrschaft noch nicht dadurch verleugnet, daß sie sich, in die reine Wahrheit transformiert, der ihr verfallenen Welt zugrundelegt. Der Zauberer macht sich Dämonen ähnlich [...]. (DdA, 25-6)

While mimesis is thus both likened 'um Haaresbreite' to instrumental reason, it is, nevertheless, differentiated 'within' it because it pursues its goal by 'nachahmende Anähnlichung', rather than conceptual thought.³⁴ Geulen has described Adorno's concept of mimesis as 'one of the thorniest theorems in his aesthetic theory, [...] belonging to an archaic level of experience that reason and abstraction have long overcome'.³⁵ As mimesis, art is magic transformed into truth through the process of rationalization: 'Kunst ist Magie, befreit von der Lüge, Wahrheit zu sein' (MM, 254). Unlike other objects of human labour, art bears the imprint of uncoercive creation, which transforms the aspect of untruth in magic into arts truthful moment as a rational creation that exposes the untruth of rationality:

Kunst ist Zuflucht des mimetischen Verhaltens. In ihr stellt das Subjekt, auf wechselnden Stufen seiner Autonomie, sich zu seinem Anderen, davon getrennt und doch nicht durchaus getrennt. Ihre Absage an die magischen Praktiken, ihre Ahnen, involviert Teilhabe an Rationalität. Daß sie, ein Mimetisches, inmitten von Rationalität möglich ist und ihrer Mittel sich bedient, reagiert auf die schlechte Irrationalität der rationalen Welt als einer verwalteten.³⁶

This gives rise to the 'Doppelcharakter der Kunst als autonom und als fait social', both part of and outside the dialectic of Enlightenment.³⁷ The autonomous character of art lies in Adorno's conception of the artwork as an objective fact, independent of subjective perception or enjoyment. In its 'ästhetische Objektivität', Art is thus both a product of the dialectic of enlightenment and its utopian critique.³⁸ The utopian character of art is its lack of function in

³⁴ See Birgit Sandkaulen, 'Begriff der Aufklärung', in *Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno: Dialektik der Aufklärung*, ed. by Gunnar Hinrichs, *Klassiker auslegen*, vol. 63 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 5–21 (p. 17)

³⁵ Geulen, 'No Happiness Without Fetishism', p. 100.

³⁶ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 85–87.

³⁷ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 16 and p. 340. On the double nature of art see James Hellings, *Adorno and Art: Aesthetic Theory Contra Critical Theory* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 8–11.

³⁸ Adorno, *Ästhetik (1958/59)*, ed. by Eberhard Ortland (Frankfurt/M.: 2009), p. 12.

a world of 'universale Fungibilität' (*DdA*, 16). If the capitalist 'Äquivalententausch [...] verhexht [...] die Liebe, das Leben und die Theorien', the work of art represents an object cleansed from the exchange of equivalents: 'Kunstwerke sind die Statthalter der nicht länger vom Tausch verunstalteten Dinge'.³⁹ Most importantly, art escapes the logic of domination and of identity thinking because art thinks non-conceptually. In contrast to instrumental reason which violates the particular by subsuming it under a general concept, artworks synthesize its individual parts 'ohne daß das eine Moment vom anderen ausgesagt würde'.⁴⁰ In their non-discursive aesthetic mediation of general and particular, artworks are 'Erkenntnis als begriffsloser Gegenstand'.⁴¹ Artworks are 'conceptless', because, unlike conceptual thought, they do not subsume their particular aspects under a generalizing category. They are 'knowledge' because in contrast to the bourgeois, especially Kantian, aesthetic tradition which conceives of art as 'erkenntnislos', Adorno insists on art's historical truth content.⁴² This simultaneously demarcates the artwork's greatest distance to products of the culture industry. In contrast to culture industry products which are made for consumption and consequently affirm the consumer's taste and prejudices, artworks demand a specific form of engagement that Adorno terms 'ästhetisches Verhalten', a form of non-consumptive engagement is based on a withdrawal from the principle of object domination that characterizes the 'enlightened' subject's behaviour towards objects and that will be discussed further below.

Art, in Adorno's conception, is a living reminder both of the wound that civilization has forced upon nature, 'Schaustellung der Wunde, in der beherrschte Natur sich wiedererkennt' (*DdA*, 289), and of a possible difference to the logic of domination and coercive labour. The work of art is thus simultaneously object and subject. As a human creation it is an object of 'Betrachtung'. On the other hand, the work of art is addressed as 'lebend' or 'lebendig' in

³⁹ Jochen Hörisch, *Es gibt (k)ein richtiges Leben im falschen* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2003), p. 50.

⁴⁰ Adorno, 'Erpreßte Versöhnung', in *Noten zur Literatur*, G 11, pp. 251–80, (p. 270).

⁴¹ Adorno, 'Engagement', in *Noten zur Literatur*, GS 11, pp. 409–30 (p. 428).

⁴² For Kant, the aesthetic judgement is essentially exhausted in the statement that something is beautiful, i.e. no 'Erkenntnis' or knowledge content is attached to it. See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Felix Meiner Verlag: Hamburg, 1990), esp. §§ 55-59, pp. 195-215. See Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of society's tolerance of artworks as long as they do not demand to be regarded as knowledge: 'Solange Kunst darauf verzichtet, als Erkenntnis zu gelten, und sich dadurch von der Praxis abschließt, wird sie von der gesellschaftlichen Praxis toleriert, wie de Lust.' (*DdA*, 50)

both his 1958/59 lectures on aesthetics and *Ästhetische Theorie*.⁴³ The work of art is configured in 'Affinität [...] zum Subjekt' with reference to the ultimate lines of Rilke's Poem 'Archaischer Torso Apollos': 'Die Rilkesche Zeile "denn da ist keine Stelle, / die dich nicht sieht", [...], hat jene [...] Sprache der Kunstwerke in kaum übertroffener Weise kodifiziert: Ausdruck ist der Blick der Kunstwerke'.⁴⁴ The origin of Adorno's subjectivization of artworks is Walter Benjamin's conception of the experience of the artwork's aura in analogy to an intersubjective exchange of gazes: 'Der Angesehene oder angesehen sich Glaubende schlägt den Blick auf. Die Aura einer Erscheinung erfahren, heißt, sie mit dem Vermögen belehnen, den Blick aufzuschlagen.'⁴⁵

It is this conceptualization of the artwork as both object and possessing qualities of the subject that links its dialectic conceptualization as both ideological and utopian to the concept of love. Moreover, the dialectically utopian aspect of love in the potential to perform a weaker subjectivity mirrors Adorno's conception of aesthetic experience, or more precisely, his conception of the communication between subject and artwork. This can be illustrated with recourse to the famous aphorism of *Minima Moralia*: 'Geliebt wirst du einzig, wo du schwach dich zeigen kannst, ohne Stärke zu provozieren' (*MM*, 218). While Geulen ironically notes that the 'romanticizing' aphorism 'strikes just the right balance between banality and profundity that is required of such tokens of love',⁴⁶ Adorno's aphorism develops its full force when read as reversal of the power relationship between strong (masculine) and objectified weak (feminine) subject, addressed in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: 'Was unten liegt, zieht den Angriff auf sich' (*DdA*, 133). Adorno's aphorism thus assumes the status of a model of doing subjectivity in a different, 'weaker' way. Secondly, it is important to note that, unlike in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, the subject exposing its weakness is not explicitly gendered. If being loved thus depends on the possibility to perform a weaker subjectivity, what does this mean for the other side of the relation, that of the one who loves? What is the position of the one who loves the other who shows him/herself to be weak? If his/her love to the beloved exists only by and in the absence of being provoked into a demonstration of strength, here a marker

⁴³ Adorno, *Ästhetik*, pp. 15, 35. *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, pp. 14, 262, 268.

⁴⁴ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 172.

⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin, 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire', *Gesammelte Schriften*, I.2, 603–53 (pp. 646–47). Cf. Adorno, *Ästhetik*, p. 46: 'ein Kunstwerk schlägt die Augen auf', with reference to Benjamin.

⁴⁶ Geulen, 'No Happiness Without Fetishism', p. 98.

for (masculine) Enlightenment subjectivity, then the relationship between the two subjects undercuts the coercion to be a (strong) subject on both sides. The implicit reciprocity of this relation turns both subjects, the lover and the one who is loved simultaneously into objects which escape both the instrumental rationality of subject-object relations critiqued in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and the universal 'Tauschgesetz' that is the principle of capitalism. The relationship between two loving subjects thus enacts, or performs, or is analogous to, the 'Konstellation' between the artwork and its beholder.⁴⁷

The encounter between artwork and beholder is itself configured in analogy to an encounter between two subjects and predicated upon the beholder withholding from either 'consuming' the artwork, or, treating the artwork as a means to an end. The aesthetic encounter therefore demands of the subject a temporary suspension of the 'Realitätsprinzip' and depends on the ability to 'enter' the artwork: '[...] daß die ästhetische Erfahrung eben wesentlich darin besteht, [...] daß man das Kunstwerk mitvollzieht.'⁴⁸ This experience is dependent on a 'Selbstvergessenheit gegenüber dem Gegenstand',⁴⁹ and thus on a suspension of the coercion to be a strong (masculine) subject. Adorno has described this as 'ästhetisches Verhalten'.⁵⁰ Aesthetic comportment is thus distinct from the bourgeois 'enjoyment' of the artwork, the model for which is Odysseus's listening to the sirens' song, a degradation of the artwork's utopian potential.⁵¹

The constellation between artwork and beholder thus demands of the beholder a similar ability to be a 'weaker' subject, as the encounter between two lovers. This can be demonstrated with reference to two instances, first the idea of investment, and secondly Adorno's description of aesthetic relationship between subject and the artwork as 'freedom to the object'. The ideal of love appears as a relationship not based on either calculation or equivalence: A section in *Minima Moralia* negatively links the demand by the cultured philistine that the artwork should 'give' him something to the image of love relationships under the curse of commodity exchange:

⁴⁷ Adorno, *Ästhetik*, p. 46.

⁴⁸ Adorno, *Ästhetik*, p. 146 and p. 188.

⁴⁹ Adorno, *Ästhetik*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ Adorno *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 22. On aesthetic comportment see Hellings, *Adorno and Art*, p. 109.

⁵¹ See Adorno, *Ästhetik*, pp. 33–35.

Kultivierte Banausen pflegen vom Kunstwerk zu verlangen, daß es ihnen etwas gebe. [...]. Daß einem etwas gegeben werden soll, dem Scheine nach das Postulat von Substantialität und Fülle, schneidet diese gerade ab und läßt das Gebende verarmen. Darin aber kommt das Verhältnis zu Menschen dem ästhetischen gleich. [...] Beide müssen etwas geben, Glück als das gerade nicht Tauschbare, nicht Klagbare, aber solches Geben ist untrennbar von dem Nehmen. [...] Keine Liebe, die nicht Echo wäre. [...] Glück ist überholt, unökonomisch. (MM, 247-248)

The idea of giving without expecting the equivalent return that is paradoxically tied to the necessity of mutuality has the potential to undercut the exchange principle as the fundamental principle of bourgeois society. Both the ability to suspend the contractual expectation to receive something from the artwork, and from the partner, depend on the ability to be a 'weaker' subject, to open oneself up to the artwork as well as the other. The paradox here is that the giving without expectation of return depends on mutuality to realize its potential.

The relationship between lovers is thus configured analogous to the ideal relationship between the beholder of an artwork and the work itself. This relationship is characterized by Adorno in Hegel's terms of 'Freiheit zum Objekt'. This 'freedom to the object' is performed in likening oneself to the object, rather than following the imperative of the dialectic of enlightenment, to dominate the object. In *Ästhetische Theorie*, this behaviour is explicitly opposed to the demand that the artwork should 'give' you something:

Bis zur Phase totaler Verwaltung sollte das Subjekt, das ein Gebilde betrachtete, hörte, las, sich vergessen, sich gleichgültig werden, darin erlöschen. Die Identifikation, die es vollzog, war dem Ideal nach nicht die, daß es das Kunstwerk sich, sondern daß es sich dem Kunstwerk gleichmachte. Darin bestand ästhetische Sublimierung; Hegel nannte solche Verhaltensweise generell die Freiheit zum Objekt. Damit gerade erwies er dem Subjekt Ehre, das in geistiger Erfahrung Subjekt wird durch seine Entäußerung, dem Gegenteil des spießbürgerlichen Verlangens, daß das Kunstwerk ihm etwas gebe.⁵²

⁵² Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 33.

And in a Paralipomenon:

Wohl verlangt auch das authentische Verhältnis zum Kunstwerk einen Akt der Identifikation: in die Sache eingehen, mitvollziehen, wie Benjamin sagt: 'die Aura atmen'. Aber sein Medium ist, was Hegel die Freiheit zum Objekt nennt: nicht muß der Betrachter, was in ihm vorgeht, aufs Kunstwerk projizieren, um darin sich bestätigt, überhöht, befriedigt zu finden, sondern muß umgekehrt zum Kunstwerk sich entäußern, ihm sich gleichmachen, es von sich aus vollziehen.⁵³

The ideal relationship between both artwork and beholder and between humans is configured around the concept of the 'uncoercive gaze'.⁵⁴ A passage in *Minima Moralia* explicitly links the 'uncoercive gaze' on humans with that on objects as one that both reflects on the coercion to dominate the object and evades it:

Der lange, kontemplative Blick jedoch, dem Menschen und Dinge erst sich entfalten, ist immer der, in dem der Drang zum Objekt gebrochen, reflektiert ist. Gewaltlose Betrachtung, von der alles Glück der Wahrheit kommt, ist gebunden daran, dass der Betrachtende nicht das Objekt sich einverleibt: Nähe and Distanz. (MM, 100)

This relationship between the artwork and the beholder thus requires of the beholder the ability both to suspend the coercion to be subject and a performance of what Adorno terms 'mimetic behaviour':

Kunstwerke sind die vom Identitätszwang befreite Sichselbstgleichheit. Der peripatetische Satz, einzig Gleiches könne Gleiches erkennen, scheidet die Erkenntnis, die Kunst ist, von der

⁵³ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie: Paralipomena*. GS 7, p. 409.

⁵⁴ On Adorno's 'uncoercive gaze' being the fundamental principle of his thought see Gerhard Richter, *Thinking with Adorno: The Uncoercive Gaze* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

begrifflichen: das wesentlich Mimetische erwartet mimetisches Verhalten. Machen Kunstwerke nichts nach als sich, dann versteht sie kein anderer, als der sie nachmacht.⁵⁵

Becoming human, likewise depends on imitation: a human becomes human only by imitating other humans: 'Das Humane haftet an der Nachahmung: ein Mensch wird zum Menschen überhaupt erst, indem er andere Menschen imitiert' (MM, 176). Both being human and the ability of aesthetic experience are thus linked to 'mimetic behaviour'.

Both love and aesthetic experience are examples of 'uncoercive', non-violent performances of 'weaker' subjectivity. Geulen maintains that love in *Minima Moralia* 'attains the status of a model' for a relationship between the self and society, insofar as the performative aspect of mimetic behaviour serves as a reminder that 'no relationship to the self can ever be authentic': 'Any self always owes itself to another. But only in love is this truth acknowledged.'⁵⁶ In a similar vein, Hellings has described Adorno's conception of aesthetic comportment ('Haltung') as a model for emancipation:

Adorno's belief in the cultivation of aesthetic experience radically re-conceptualizes the relation of the subject of art to the object of art. The individual producing and perceiving, experiencing and reflecting upon art is redefined. Adorno viewed the transformation of consciousness, the cultivation or (mis-)education of the subject through the aesthetic experience of works of art, as a valuable and necessary opportunity for socio-political emancipation.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In her 2019 study *The End of Love*, Eva Illouz comments on developments in dating and partnership in the period of neoliberalism. She claims that the influence of internet technologies such as matching sites, dating apps and the permanent availability of pornography, have resulted in a mutual and reciprocal objectification of both partners as permanently sexualized bodies.⁵⁸ While ironically this paradox mixture of empowerment and

⁵⁵ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 190.

⁵⁶ Geulen, 'No Happiness Without Fetishism', p. 101.

⁵⁷ Hellings, *Adorno and Art*, pp. 104–05.

⁵⁸ See Eva Illouz, *The End of Love. A Sociology of Negative Relations* (Oxford: OUP, 2019 (*Warum Liebe endet*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018), esp. chapter 4, pp. 98-143.

devaluation benefits men more than women, Illouz' analysis chimes with Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of the enlightenment subject's treatment of nature as a gigantic resource, the 'unentrinnbaren Zwang zur gesellschaftlichen Herrschaft über die Natur' (*DdA*, 52). Illouz describes the mutual and reciprocal objectification of sexual partners in the same terms, albeit with recourse to Heidegger's concept of the 'standing reserve' which designates an attitude to the world in which nature and others are treated as permanently available to fulfil our needs: 'the contraceptive pill, the institutionalization of sexuality in consumer culture, and the high velocity of Internet technology all place human beings, and especially women, in a state of permanent availability to other people's sexual needs, men's in particular.'⁵⁹

Adorno's conception of the (reciprocal) weakening of subjectivity in his conception of love and of the relationship of the beholder to the artwork is thus precisely the reverse image of Illouz' analysis of the mutual and reciprocal objectification in contemporary dating partners. Both artworks and loved persons require what Adorno terms 'aesthetic comportment'. The utopian aspect within Adorno's concept of love is, like the artwork 'immer auch ein Stück Aufklärung'.⁶⁰ However, even this utopian aspect of love, and not just its ideological aspect, is always roped back into the 'general untruthful', just like the artwork's utopian aspects which serve as a reminder of the state of falsehood, voice of that which is suppressed by the dialectic of Enlightenment, not as a promise of happiness:⁶¹ 'Noch in den zartesten Verzweigungen des Gefühls setzt der Mechanismus [of the coercion to subjectivity, HS] sich durch, bis Liebe selber, [...] so sehr zur Kälte getrieben wird, daß sie über der eigenen Verwirklichung zerfällt.' (*DdA*, 92) Any 'idealist' transfiguration of love becomes 'untruthful' in relation to the reality of bourgeois life and the gender relations within it that utilize the idealist moment for the transfiguration of social reality.

Love is thus an integral part of the double bind between the coercion to be a (hard) subject and the fearful desire to regress into a status quo ante that is projected as 'nature'. However, as 'Selbstpreisgabe an ein Anderes' (*DdA*, 125), it is the obverse of the 'idolatry of the self' that characterizes Horkheimer's and Adorno's description of the path of Odysseus' becoming

⁵⁹ Illouz, *The End of Love*, p. 141.

⁶⁰ Adorno *Ästhetik*, p. 77.

⁶¹ Cf Adorno, *Ästhetik*, pp. 80–81.

self: Odysseus' path is described as the introjection of sacrifice for the purpose of self-preservation, the calculated action 'sich wegzuerfen, um sich zu behalten.' (*DdA*, 66): 'Die eigene Lust hat zur Voraussetzung das schrankenlose sich Wegwerfen, dessen die Frauen [...] so wenig mächtig sind wie die Männer in ihrer Aufgeblasenheit. Nicht bloß die objektive Möglichkeit – auch die subjektive Fähigkeit zum Glück gehört erst der Freiheit an.' (*MM*, 102)

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