

# Adorno's Beethoven: Undoing Hegel From Within

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The year 2020 marks the 250th anniversary not just of Hegel, but also of Beethoven and Hölderlin—a constellation of names that signal a threshold, the end of classical form and the beginning of a modernity that we still inhabit. I will approach this constellation from out of Adorno's take on it, and what he terms the "late style," which he locates in Beethoven and to some extent in Hölderlin, and which pits both of them against Hegel. For Adorno, late style implies a process of disintegration, not just of inherited forms, but also, and perhaps more importantly, of the mediating power of the subject that held them together: the weight of objective moments turns organic form into a landscape of ruins, but also leaves a subjective void that remains to be filled.

Here the problem of subjective mediation emerges, and it will haunt modern art up to the present. Important here, although less noticed, is also the connection to Hölderlin's translations of Greek tragedy and his late poetry, which are crucial to Adorno's understanding of modern poetry and art in general, but also have an important bearing on his interpretation of Beethoven.

## *The General Question of Late Style*

"Art's substance," Adorno writes in *Aesthetic Theory*, "could be its transitoriness. It is thinkable, and not merely an abstract

possibility, that great music—a late development (*ein Spätes*)—was possible only during a limited phase of humanity” (Adorno 1973, p. 13; 2004, p. 4). The phrase appears in the beginning of the book, in the context of a discussion of Hegel’s theory of art’s historical nature, and of why Hegel’s historicizing of art as a moment in the history of spirit may be insufficient. How should we understand such a claim? What is this *lateness*—here perhaps somewhat normalized by the translation “late development,” which seems to place it within a linear chronology—if we understand it outside of the Hegelian theorem of art as a thing of the past with respect to philosophy, to which Adorno undoubtedly did not subscribe? Might this lateness, in a way that seems to contradict the obvious meaning of term, in fact be something that belongs to the *present*, and even to the *future*, as a possibility?

Put in terms of a somewhat crude alternative, the idea of lateness, or of a late style, seems to point in two directions.

1) The first is indicated by the passage just cited: great music, perhaps great art as such, and maybe also great philosophy, belongs to a unique historical moment that can never be retrieved. In this first version, the idea of lateness thus points to some historically singular event, an *Einmaligkeit* that condemns all that will follow to repeat, or more precisely, to unfold and radicalize a “logic of disintegration,” as it is called in *Negative Dialectics*. For Adorno, this is one of the basic features of modernism in philosophy as well as the arts, although it is undoubtedly always in conflict with other tendencies.

2) The second direction is that of continually present possibility, which cannot be tied to any particular moment in time. In this version, lateness discloses a dimension that belongs to an individual oeuvre as such, it is a limit of art that is also its highest possibility, and although it is always instantiated in precise historical contexts, it cannot be identified with any one of them.

## *Beethoven's Lateness*

Before moving on the Adorno's writings on late style, we must note that the idea of there being something particularly enigmatic, enticing, and challenging in Beethoven's late work is not a perception unique to Adorno.<sup>1</sup> For many historians and musicologists of various creeds and theoretical persuasions, Beethoven's position in these pieces is a singular one. This is perhaps in an astral sense: that the work curves the very fabric of time and historical succession, as Michael Spitzer suggests in his rich study of the idea of late style in Adorno when he says that Beethoven is "so heavy that he bends light" (Spitzer 2006, p. 17).

The question hinges upon Beethoven's position in relation to the "Classical Style," as Charles Rosen has called it (Rosen 1997). For some, this classical style, which, as Rosen acknowledges, is less a set of rigid technical criteria and more like a general attitude, is malleable enough to encompass even the deviations of a late style like Beethoven's; for others, these late works disrupt the categories and structural models inherited from Mozart and Haydn (the two main protagonists of the classical style in Rosen's study), and late Beethoven becomes a proto-romantic, or even proto-modernist. Disunity, disintegration, fragmentation, and other such categories have established themselves as key concepts in the discussion of these works, although they are by no means uncontested, especially among formalist scholars for whom the analysis of pure musical structure seems to preclude all such themes as irrelevant to music proper.

Outside of musicology, the idea of a radical breakthrough in Beethoven's late work has become almost a literary trope or even cliché. The most prominent case is of course Thomas Mann, whose

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief survey of earlier views of Beethoven's late style, see Blumenröder 1983, pp. 24–37.

*Doktor Faustus*, published in 1947, drew heavily on discussions with Adorno, as Mann acknowledges in his companion book *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, published two years after the novel (Mann 1960, pp. 171–77). Mann was familiar with both the ideas of Adorno’s *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949), as well as the 1934 essay on Beethoven’s late style, and he builds them into his literary narrative in a way that has made them familiar to a large audience long before Adorno’s own writings on the topic were published.

In the novel, the composer Wendell Kretzschmar famously explains why Beethoven’s Piano Sonata op. 111 breaks off after the second movement. It is a “process of dissolution, estrangement, a step into the sphere of the foreign and no longer familiar,” that finally loses itself in the “vertiginous height” that could be called “transcendent or abstract” (Mann 1973, p. 73). Unlike in his middle phase, Kretzschmar suggests, Beethoven here allows conventions to emerge in naked form, and subjectivity and convention enter into a new relation determined by death, which transcends the merely personal and moves into the realm of the mythical and the collective. This also puts an end to art, and the absence of the third movement is a farewell to art, to its *Schein*, in favor of “crystal spheres in which hot and cold, calm and ecstasy, are one and the same” (ibid., p. 75).

It has often been noted that Mann—to the extent that we see his novel in the light of Adorno’s idea of lateness (which obviously does not exhaust the novel as such, whose major concern is not the break-up of classical forms at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the rise of fascism in Germany)<sup>2</sup>—while picking up several motifs and concepts from Adorno, also misrepresents him. The breakthrough achieved in Beethoven, where music has to stop, opens in Mann’s version onto a divine and transcendent

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<sup>2</sup> Cobley 2002, pp. 43–70.

sphere, whereas in Adorno this is only present as a faint glimpse. And the music produced by the composer Leverkühn in fact seems closer to romanticism than to the twelve-tone technique of Schönberg.

The popularity and presence of late style as a literary trope no doubt derives from Mann's novel, and the sublime, transcendent, and quasi-religious quality that was ascribed to Beethoven's late work, especially op. 111, for a long time made them sacrosanct. As Jost Hermand notes, when included in piano recitals in Germany in the late 1940s and '50s, op. 111 was always placed last, and applause was forbidden, so as to underscore the work's wholly singular and unique position (Hermand 1999, pp. 85–100). But let us now turn to Adorno himself, and see what he has to say about the idea of a late style.

### *Late Style in Adorno's Beethoven*

“Spätstil Beethovens,” Adorno's first essay on Beethoven's late style, was written in 1934 but published much later in the 1964 collection of essays *Moments Musicaux*. It forms a part of a larger, systematic but unfinished work on Beethoven, which has been posthumously published as *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik* (Adorno 2004).<sup>3</sup> Apart from the 1934 essay and the much later essay from 1957, “Verfremdetes Hauptwerk: Zur *Missa Solemnis*,” the book comprises notes and reflections on Beethoven, which Adorno was collecting for a systematic work that never materialized. These are fragments, and yet they display a remarkable continuity. They cover virtually all facets of Beethoven's work, and give us a picture of thought that is always underway and ready

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<sup>3</sup> The text was first published in (Adorno 1993). Henceforth cited with fragment number or pagination.

to question its own results, and even begins by retracing its steps back to the author's early childhood experiences.<sup>4</sup>

The material on late style has been assembled in two chapters (9 and 11), between which the tenth chapter presents us with the idea of "Spätwerk ohne Spätstil," i.e. the analysis of the *Missa Solemnis* that develops many themes from the first essay, while also subverting them—the inability to come to terms with the *Missa* was the key problem that prevented the book from taking on a definite shape, as Adorno notes in the preface to *Moments Musicaux*. A close reading of this material would no doubt detect a multiplicity of problems and interpretative angles, and perhaps it would be possible to here follow a thread that runs through Adorno's development up to the final major works, *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory*, which would show the problem of lateness to be not just an aside, but in fact something like a nucleus or formative figure in his thought. Such a systematic reading obviously falls outside of my scope here, and I will mainly focus

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<sup>4</sup> This is how the text opens: "Reconstruct how I heard Beethoven as a child" (fr. 1). The following three fragments develop the same theme. In a review essay on the Beethoven book, Colin Sample suggests that "Adorno's philosophy of music is essentially contained in his remembrance of the child who would give to nature the tongue to speak as it wished" (Sample 1994, pp. 378–93, 380). Given that late style seems to reopen the question of nature and subjectivity in a more tragic fashion, it is tempting to develop the question further and ask if there might be a link between lateness and childhood, perhaps in the sense of something that remained unmastered from the beginning, and propagates its effects over all later phases. This is the sense of childhood proposed by Lyotard, for instance in his essay on Hannah Arendt: childhood is "the condition of a soul inhabited by something to which no answer could ever be given. The activities of this childhood are guided by an arrogant fidelity to this unknown guest, whose hostage it feels itself to be. The childhood of Antigone. Childhood should here be understood in the sense of obedience towards a debt that could be called a debt to life, time, or the event—the debt of being there in spite of everything; and it is only the constant feeling of this debt, and the respect towards it, that can save the adult from being a mere survivor, from living under a postponed sentence of annihilation" (Lyotard 1991, p. 66).

on outlining the basic ideas of the first essay in 1934, and only give a few hints as to how they may be aligned with Adorno's subsequent work.

Late style, Adorno suggests, is not like a fruit that becomes ripe; it resists being tasted, it is furrowed and ravaged, and in rejecting the unity demanded by classical aesthetics, it points to the power of history rather than to the idea of growth and maturing. It is a process, but not a development towards a completion, in a sense that leads these two terms, development and completion, into a profound antagonism.

This laceration is normally understood as a subjectivity that breaks through the crust of form and imbues harmony with passionate dissonance, which can then be related to the composer's biography, even a kind of abdication of mastery in the face of death. But for Adorno, the inverse is true: the law of form here resists being subsumed by expression, and instead we encounter forms that are distanced and seem devoid of expression, a form that is just as objective as it is subjective. Rather than an encounter with death, or something demonic, this music seems often enigmatically idyllic.

Subjectivity is indeed there, first in a Kantian fashion, not in order to disrupt form, but to create form; but then, in a second moment, there is a profound questioning of subjectivity, beginning in Hegel, but also going beyond Hegel, as we will see. These two gestures are played out against each other, in a process that is also at the center of Adorno's own philosophical development, which gives this analysis a paradigmatic value.

Conventions are the center of late style, which is what distinguishes it from Beethoven's middle period, which was in fact more subjective, in the sense that it did not tolerate conventions that had not been broken down and integrated into the subjective dynamic. In the late style, they inversely appear almost as if naked, in a way that would have been unacceptable earlier. These are conventions in the state of ruin, although not in the sense of

a psychological failure or trauma; rather they pose the question of subjectivity and convention in a new way.

It is true that the relation to death plays a role, but not as the theme of the work: it discloses the law of form, and deprives us of the right to art, which is why death cannot become a theme; it is only given in broken form, as allegory, otherwise it becomes a deceptive metaphysics (here one may probably detect a polemic against Heidegger). If subjectivity disrupts the works, it is not in order to express itself, but to shake off the appearance or semblance, the *Schein*, of art (the frequent translation “semblance,” while not simply incorrect, makes it difficult to hear the positive quality of *Schein* as the process of appearing, i.e., the essential proximity between *Schein* and *Erscheinung*, which is essential to Adorno, whose concept is modeled on Hegel’s “logic of essence”).

In this destruction of *Schein*, the material is as it were emancipated from the process of forming, and there is a profusion and overabundance of material, just as the conventions are left standing, to the effect that they themselves become expressive. This, Adorno suggests, is the role of abbreviation in Beethoven: not to purify music of clichés, but to liberate them, in their disparity, while still projecting intentions onto them. For instance, the frequent crescendos and diminuendos that often appear independent of the musical construction, the fiorituras, the substitution of polyphony for thematic development, and the absence of modulations in favor of abrupt transitions, all testify to this coming-apart—or negative dialectic, to use one of Adorno’s later terms—of intention and material.

If these later works can be taken as a kind of landscape, then Beethoven does not gather all of its details into a unified image, but rather, Adorno suggests, he lights it up with a fire that ignites subjectivity, a spark transmitted between extremes that remain in a state of tension. Subjectivity is what forces these extremes together, but only so as to itself appear as petrified. The caesuras and breaks are moments of a breaking through or out,



*Durchbruch*.<sup>5</sup> The resulting parts are forced together through the command of subjectivity, but the secret, the enigma of late style, is that which occurs between, it is the secret of their constellation, the figure formed by the discordant parts. In this way, Beethoven's late work is both subjective and objective: the ruinous landscape is the objective moment, the light cast over it is the subjective moment, and what the late style does is to dissociate them, to tear these moments apart in time—but maybe in order to finally preserve them in eternity (and here we can glimpse the utopian moment of redemption in Adorno, although in this early text, just as in the later, it is struck by the ban on images). In fragment 363, dating from 1948, Adorno writes: “hope in Beethoven is so decisive a secularized and therefore not neutralized category [...] The image of hope without the lie of religion. NB hope is one of the imageless images that specifically and immediately belongs to music, i.e., it belongs in general to music.”

These late works are catastrophes, he concludes, but we should undoubtedly not hear this in the sense of failures, or simple disasters, but in the Greek sense: *katastrophe*, the sudden moment of reversal and overturning, when something is revealed, as in tragedy, the final part when we move towards the resolution of the plot.

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of caesura is used in several senses in the Beethoven study, ranging from formal musical analysis to a more philosophically laden sense of temporal expectation and disruption, and to the explicit references to Hölderlin's analysis of tragedy, see fr. 154, 222, 232, text 3 (“Spätstil Beethovens”), 180, and text 4 (“Ludwig van Beethoven: Sechs Bagatellen für Klavier, op. 126”), 190 and 192. *Durchbuch* is also a key term in the interpretation of Mahler (Adorno 1960), where it is set against *Erfüllung* and *Suspension*, at once signaling the power of music to promise something else than music and yet being unable to deliver it, which provides Mahler's music with its utopian energy.

## *With and Against Hegel*

Two important extra-musical references that take the idea of late style beyond the confines of an analysis of a single artist, no matter how dense and astronomically singular, are Kant, but more profoundly Hegel, in particular his *Logic*; and, seemingly more incidentally, but in way that throws considerable light on the historical conjuncture of Beethoven, Hölderlin's late poetry. Let us begin with Hegel, who unquestionably remains the key philosophical reference throughout Adorno's entire work on Beethoven.

First of all, what is the relation between music and concept? Obviously music is not simply identical to concepts, and it has no direct reference—it is the “the logic of the judgmentless synthesis” (fr. 26), which is why the true synthesis occurs in the interplay between subjectivity and inherited forms; the “matter” of music is the history of accumulated conventions, as in Beethoven's treatment of the sonata form, with its theme and variation; there is both an internal and an external dialectic, both a development of a theme and a subjectivizing of a convention, so that they eventually are sublated, *aufgehoben*, on a higher level.

We noted that Adorno detects in Beethoven a move from a Kantian version of the concept, in which it generates form out of a fixed subjectivity that accounts for the unity of experience, to a Hegelian version, in which the concept has a movement of its own and inscribes the position of the earlier subject as a limited one, and where there rather is an experience *of* subjectivity as an object, as an appearance. The Kantian movement corresponds to Beethoven's move into the second phase of his work, where the system of tonality is brought back into subjectivity in the form of the musical subject that lets the formal structure develop organically out of the development of the thematic material. The symphonies are a great testimony to this, as well as the sonatas. The subsequent Hegelian step, where a full mediation of particular and universal is achieved, crowns the second phase, but is then

pursued in the third phase, in such a way that it goes beyond its own confines. This is the crucial critical move, and it is here that Beethoven's singularity comes to the fore. In a rather hyperbolic fragment that summarizes Beethoven's second phase, Adorno exclaims: "In a sense similar to that in which there is only Hegel's philosophy, there is in the history of Western music only Beethoven" (fr. 24); but to this we must also add the subsequent step, where Beethoven is "more Hegelian than Hegel" (fr. 320)—it is only through the late works that we see the limit of Hegel, and where the circular time of completion opens onto the reversal of catastrophe.

How should we understand this process, where totality is achieved only to be broken down? In Hegel, the objective forms first become historicized and are set in motion, they are understood both as points of departure and results, just as individual and particular musical elements mean something only in and through their contradiction and mediation through the whole. This is the outcome of the second phase, where "the sensuous, non-qualified and yet in itself mediated, and that which sets the whole in movement, is the motivistic-thematic," whereas "spirit, mediation, is the whole as form" (fr. 27). On the one hand, as Adorno suggests in a letter to Rudolf Kolisch, "the formal meaning essentially consists in disclosing the nothingness [of the particular] brought about by the whole" (appendix, p. 256); on the other hand, "the whole is never external to the particular, but only proceeds out of its movement, or rather, is this movement" (fr. 57). Tonality is thus both what is always *presupposed*, as well as what *results* from self-development and self-reflection, in the movement of a negation that returns to its point of departure. The analyses of the Waldstein Sonata (fr. 131) would be the most clear-cut and pedagogical case, even to the point of displaying the kind of ternary thesis-antithesis-synthesis model that Adorno in many other places rejects as a cartoon or "claptrap" version of Hegel, and rightly so; the third movement in the C-major Sonata op. 101,

he says later, is, “were one not ashamed to write it down—the synthesis” (fr. 265).

But this fully worked out synthesis is also the moment of *untruth* in this music, which also, in a sense, points towards *truth*: the whole, the totality that seems to flow seamlessly from the movement of the particular and yet is violently forced onto it, reflects the emergence of an administered society, although not just as a static image, but already as an interpretation of it (for comments on the link between musical and social totality, see for instance fr. 87, 88, 92, 113). But beyond this, and as a latent consequence of this interpretation, the supreme greatness—or *lateness*—lies in the next step, where Beethoven unleashes the “mimetic” power inherent in the second phase and becomes “more Hegelian than Hegel,” pursuing a negative dialectics, with *and* against Hegel. This is not simply a critique of Hegel; as Adorno will say much later, rather than abandon metaphysics as a false theory, we must attempt to think systematicity in a fractured form, as “constellations” and “micrologies,” i.e. develop a mode of thought that remains “in solidarity with metaphysics in the moment of its downfall” (*im Augenblick ihres Sturzes*), as the final line in *Negative Dialectics* reads (Adorno 1984a, 6:396). Thus, if Beethoven finally explodes the Hegelian model, he does so not by opposing it to some other system, but from *within*, which is why his late style contains the seeds of an immanent critique that will become paradigmatic for modernism in the arts and in philosophy. If Hegel is the last moment of security, metaphysics thinking itself in the form of a system that would be able to ground itself, then this also corresponds to the summit of a “classical style” that claims to derive particulars from form, and form from particulars, in a total mediation. Consequently, the downfall of the Hegelian system not only signals a crisis for the possibility of metaphysics, but also an opening toward modernism in the arts, within which Beethoven’s late style would be not only the initial envoi, but

also that which already in advance anticipates the impossibility of ever again achieving something like the classical mediation and totality out of which it emerged.

### *Hölderlin's Paratactic Form*

The proximity to Hölderlin, on the other hand, only comes across in a few passages in the Beethoven book, and in a somewhat inconclusive fashion. In fr. 152, Hölderlin's "calculable law tragedy" is compared to the "symphonic exposition of Beethoven's type," and the "caesura" Hölderlin famously locates in tragedy, and expounds in his "Remarks on Oedipus," is seen as analogous to the "moment when subjectivity breaks into form," which seems to enclose the relation to Hölderlin squarely in Beethoven's second period. It is only in the radio lecture from 1966—sublimely enough broadcast under the title "avant-gardism of old men" ("Avantgardismus der Greisen")—that Adorno makes the connection explicit: "In these late works, the language of music or the material itself speaks, and the composing subject only properly speaks through the gaps in this language, perhaps not wholly dissimilarly to that which occurs with poetic language in the late style of Hölderlin" (Appendix, text 9, 268).

It is no doubt possible to make a connection to the 1963 essay on Hölderlin, "Parataxis," where the poet's encounter with language in many respects seems similar to Beethoven's struggle with the inherited language of musical form. And beyond the exegesis of historical material, the idea of parataxis finally has profound implications for Adorno's understanding of his own philosophical discourse, as in the letters to Rolf Tiedemann cited in the latter's editorial postface to *Aesthetic Theory*, where he suggests that the architecture of the treatise, with its hierarchies and prescribed order of reading, which still organized *Negative Dialectics*, has finally become impossible, and that "the book must,

so to speak, be written in equally weighted, paratactical parts that are arranged around a midpoint that they express through their constellation” (Adorno 1973, p. 541; 2004, p. 462).

Parataxis, in philosophy as in poetry, points to a loosening of the joints, an unbinding of discourse, which is also a foregrounding of its materiality. We find such a “disjoint” at many levels in Hölderlin: theoretically, in his analysis of “caesura” in Greek tragedy; on the level of poetic content, in his invocations of the Greek gods precisely as departed and absent; textually, in the aberrant use of logical connectives (*dann*, *nämlich*, *also*, etc.) that instead of binding his poems together cause them to fracture, destroy the hierarchical links of hypotaxis, and leave us with a paratactical landscape of ruins. “With parataxis, we should not only think of the transitions that juxtapose micrological shapes. Just as in music, the tendency takes hold of larger structures. [...] In a way similar to Hegel, mediations of a vulgar type, a middle outside of the moments, should be eliminated as external and unessential, as is often the case in Beethoven’s late style” (Adorno 1984b, 2:473).<sup>6</sup>

Here too, the ruinous landscape can be seen as the objective moment, the light cast over them as the subjective moment, and if the late style is what dissociates them, in Hölderlin it is even more the case that it tears them apart in time—the temporal and historical caesura, in tragedy, poetry, as well as in modernity’s task of translating the ancients into our own language, is one of

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of parataxis as opposed to hypotaxis to me seems at least partially misleading, which is what Adorno in fact shows. Just as little as the loosening of joints in Beethoven’s late work does Hölderlin provide us with a juxtaposition of unconnected elements, but rather a hypotaxis blocked from within by hypotactic-logical particles that normally signal subordination, premise, conclusion, etc., but whose sense remains suspended, which in turn produces the tension. This seems to be what is claimed in the 1934 sketch for a theory of late style when Adorno writes that the conventions are as it were left unmediated, like splinters severed from the subject and themselves become expressive.

the great themes of Hölderlin—but perhaps in order to preserve them in eternity.<sup>7</sup>

### *Lateness and Modernism*

In a certain sense it would be relatively easy to transpose Adorno's analysis of late style as a particular historical moment to other arts, such as painting. Beethoven's lateness as the effect of a historical caesura or disintegration brought about by the downfall of something like a "classical style" would have as its equivalent in painting the crumbling of the authority of the Academy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which is perhaps not just the beginning of a new style, but the beginning of a modern idea of style as such. As such, this idea is obviously not specific to Adorno. In 1932, Paul Valéry (who always remained a key reference in Adorno's analysis of modern art) writes not about Turner or Monet, but about Delacroix: "The transition from the earlier grandeur of Painting to its present state appears in the works and writings of Eugène Delacroix. Unrest and the sense of impotence is what tears apart this modern artist, so full of ideas, at each moment running up against the limits of his own means in his attempts to equal the masters of the past." Delacroix, Valéry continues, is "fighting with himself, and he engages feverishly in the last battle of the grand style in art" (Valéry 1984, p. 1323).

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<sup>7</sup> Many of Adorno's claims must here be understood as systematically opposed to Heidegger: the impossibility of retrieving an origin, Hölderlin's dialectical relation to German Idealism, the resistance of poetic language as *Schein* to translation into philosophical statements. As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe notes, these differences notwithstanding, we should not overlook that Adorno and Heidegger share the problem of how to account for a philosophical truth of poetry that cannot be reduced to philological, biographical, and literary-historical categories; see Lacoue-Labarthe 2002, p. 93ff. For a discussion of this relation that focuses on the idea of parataxis, see Wilke 1987, pp. 627–647.

Here the language of art falls apart, unleashing a multiplicity of styles and formal features that all claim to be the new language, although without ever succeeding in attaining the authority of the language of the Academy. This would in a sense come close to Adorno, although without the heavy Hegelian architecture that subtends his idea.

But as we have noted, the most important facets of Adorno's theory point in the opposite direction: late style is not so much the emergence of a subjectivity that breaks free in order to upset an inherited, objectivized formal canon, rather it is the irruption of the objective, the force of the world, inside a subject whose former freedom now proves to have been an illusion and thus in fact unfreedom, and it registers the impact of history, or "the law of form" in the aesthetic register, on expressivity, in the sense that mediation no longer appears possible between them. It is not a sheer destruction of the subject, but a petrifying of its former capacities, an immobilization that at the same time lets them live on in the constellation of fragments that points, albeit in a veiled, obscure, oblique manner, towards eternity and a reconciliation between history and subject. The ruinous landscape of lateness emerges in the recognition of the *limit* of art, the boundaries set for its *Schein*, but precisely in order to preserve the imageless image of redemption beyond all empirical forms into which it might be prematurely sealed.

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