ADORNO, GADAMER, THE WORK OF ART AND THE RETRIEVAL OF THE SACRED

Adorno, Gadamer, a obra de arte e a recuperação do sagrado

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Abstract: **This paper considers the significant role the sacred played in Hans-Georg Gadamer and Theodor Adorno's theories of post Enlightenment rationality and experience. While these thinkers are typically thought to be at odds with one another, on this topic, as will become evident, their work remained proximate: both appealed at crucial points to theological models, somewhat controversially, to combat the limitations of strict methodological accounts of their rational. This paper first traces their mutual reliance in this endeavor upon Kantian and post- -Kantian accounts of aesthetics, which imported classical metaphysical notions of Truth, Beauty, and the Good into their accounts. Against this backdrop, I trace how Gadamer and Adorno employed theological models to articulate accounts of the poverty of contemporary experience and theory, affording possibilities for its reinterpretation. Thereby, both viewed the sacred as a still not exhausted critical reserve in our rational history, one that extends beyond the constraints of Enlightenment, precisely in posing the critical question of tradition itself: the question, as Adorno put it, of how "a thinking obliged to relinquish tradition might preserve and transform tradition."**

Keywords: **Sacred. Tradition. Aestethics. Post Enlightenment. Adorno. Gadamer.**

Resumo: **O artigo considera o papel significativo que o sagrado desempenhou nas teorias de Hans Georg Gadamer e Theodor Adorno sobre a racionalidade e a experiência do pós-Iluminismo. Embora estes pensadores sejam vistos tipicamente**

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como estando em desacordo entre si, sobre este tema, como se tornará evidente, sua obra permaneceu próxima: ambos apelaram em pontos cruciais para modelos teológicos, de modo um tanto controverso, a fim de combater as limitações das explicações estritamente metodológicas de sua racionalidade. O artigo traça em primeiro lugar sua mútua dependência nesta tarefa de concepções kantianas e pós-kantianas de estética, que implicavam as noções metafísicas clássicas de verdade e beleza e do bem em suas explanações. Tendo em vista este contexto, mostro como Gadamer e Adorno empregaram modelos teológicos para articular exposições da pobreza da experiência e teoria contemporâneas, proporcionando possibilidades de sua reinterpretação. Desse modo, ambos encararam o sagrado como como uma reserva crítica ainda não esgotada na história de nossa razão, que supera as restrições do Iluminismo, precisamente enquanto levantam a questão crítica da própria tradição, como Adorno a coloca: de que maneira "um pensamento obrigado a abandonar a tradição poderia preservá-la e transformá-la."

Palavras-chave: **Sagrado. Tradição. Estética. Pós-Iluminismo. Adorno. Gadamer.**

I n his "Theses Upon Art and Religion Today" Theodor Adorno argued that the unity of art and religion "cannot be regained at will" (NL: 292). In the first place, whenever such unity had been achieved, it had been so, he argued, only problematically. Citing "Plato's diatribes against the poets" and "the devil heads and grotesque figures which adorn Gothic Cathedrals" as evidence, he claimed that art was never easily united without resistance in traditional concepts -- and now less than ever can they be united into traditional or positive religion or philosophy (NL: 293). The diremption between religion and art, like that between concept and intuition, was all but complete. Moreover, previous musical forms (e.g., the mystery play or the oratorio) were claimed to be incommensurate with the disintegration of modern society (NL: 294). "Art now becomes a stage in the process of the Weber called the disenchantment of the world and it is intertwined with rationalization" (AT: 54). Its magical heritage seems stubbornly to contest such rationalization. Yet art cannot escape the "universal tendency of Enlightenment's progressive domination of nature"; attempts to do so emerge only at the cost of diminishing its own magical aura (NL: 296). Adorno's narrative thus became more explicitly political or emancipatory, appealing to its own intertwinement with the powers of rational construction "to make itself felt in new and more adequate forms". Indeed this was true even to the point that "the only possible way to save the 'spell' of art is now the denial of this spell by art itself" (NL: 295). Similarly, religion itself fares little better before the onslaught of progressive rational objectification. *Negative Dialectics* concludes its own stubborn contest with traditional metaphysics by claiming that this explains why "one who believes in God cannot believe in God, why the possibility represented by the divine name is maintained, rather by him who does not believe" (ND: 402).

Nonetheless, Adorno also knew it was complicated. *Negative Dialectics* had argued that we would need to add an additional question to the critical questions that incited Kant's famous *Critiques*: "and that is the question how a thinking obliged to relinquish tradition might preserve and transform tradition" (ND: 54-55). Tradition itself is argued to be "quasi-transcendental", like Kant's transcendental imagination, "the mechanism hidden in the depths of the soul" (ND: 54). The alternatives of simple traditional affirmation or progressive rejection of it were thus mythic – indeed as mythic as demythologizing itself, stuck in the immanent poverty of the present or what merely is (ND: 402). Without tradition, to use Nietzsche's terms, we will have forgotten how much it has cost us to tell the Enlightenment's totalizing truths.[1] Here, instead, in withholding the idea of truth itself, "supreme among the metaphysical ideas", to confront tradition, Adorno claims, we must read things "in the text of their becoming", where "thinking secularizes the irretrievable archetype of sacred texts" (ND: 401; 52.4). In this respect, "contemporary art as a whole responds to this loss of tradition" (T: 76). It is itself the complicated expression, then, of the lingering opposition between art and religion. Moreover, Adorno's invocation of the transcendent negation represented by the Divine Names (concept that defies concepts) or the prohibition of images, a prohibition of the immanence of transcendence, articulates the stubborn contest of metaphysics with its apparently sacred, magical past.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of hermeneutics as interpretive *Wirkungsgeschichte*, as "tradition producing tradition out of itself", is typically thought to be opposed to Adorno's strong position (TM: 293). Even on this issue, he claimed, it would be "meaningless to construct an opposition between art and religion" (RB: 153). Still, he was no less convinced of the Enlightenment's overdetermined impact upon it. All art may be 'revelatory' or 'magical' in Adorno's terms, but, ironically, the Enlightenment's own challenge to art was specifically religious in origins. Here Gadamer emphasized the Scriptures' skeptical claim concerning the limits of human achievement -- apart from what religion offers "against all expectation and hope" (RB: 152). In a strange inversion with the Enlightenment, "which", Gadamer believed, "grew out of Christianity," the effect was profound: "For the first time in the history of mankind, religion itself is declared to be redundant and denounced as an act of betrayal or self-betrayal" (RB: 152). Again, the scission between concept and intuition would be equally complete. The demand for certainty dissolves faith and experience alike: it dissolves all received tradition or *Vorurtheilen* as false.

The illusory attempt to resuture the unity between art and religion, Adorno pointed out, was Romantic in origins (NL: 293). As texts of Novalis,

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[1] NIETZSCHE, Friederich. *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufman, R.J. Hollingdale (New York, Random House, 1989), p. 95, p151ff

Schleiermacher, Schlegel, *et al* attest, the record backs him up -- as would, similarly, the Romantic quest for a new mythology. Still, we should add, if originally it was a new religion that was sought, it might still seem 'Enlightenment –-fast' to claim that conversions to an old version of religion were simply illusory, as Kierkegaard would soon object, another attempt to trick men out something by pretending that it is nothing.[2] Here we might mention Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism or Franz Joseph Molitor, whose Catholic account of mystical tradition in his *Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition* [1827-1857] influenced the Frankfurt School itself: Scholem referred to Molitor as "a Catholic kabbalaist."[3] Indeed it might be easily thought that hermeneutics in general looked very much like a similar conversion, starting from Schleiermacher's origins. Gadamer himself described the critique of Enlightenment by Romanticism as a persistent theme of his work (EPH: 137). After all, Gadamer's genealogy of hermeneutics would start here – and so would Heidegger's early advances towards hermeneutic ontology, by articulating a phenomenology of religion. And, of course, Heidegger would famously end claiming that only a God could save us

For Gadamer, however, such salvation seemed not to be the issue. In his later thought, however, even he thought it required a conversation concerning transcendence; indeed this alone is "what could still save us because we have nothing else" (CP: 73, 129, 73). But for Gadamer, such transcendence was not only at stake in philosophy; he criticized Jasper's secularized account of illuminated existence, for example, as "bourgeois morality" (CP: 128). Instead of such reflective appropriation (which he still tied to the Enlightenment), grasping this transcendence required equally "the conversation" between "the world's great religions." While this might look like a substantial revision of his position (and some have suggested it is), as will become evident, it also reaffirms a semantic richness and complexity inherent to Gadamer's initial formulations. He appealed to its heuristic fertility throughout. Moreover, Gadamer was adamant, and not far from Adorno, in claiming that the search for a new myth "merely testifies to the disintegration that is taking place" (TM: 88). Such a conversation might not seem so far from Adorno, who had parsed the difference between the account of the Divine Names from versions of Buddhism and what *Dialectic of Enlightenment* called "the indiscriminate denial of anything positive" (DE.17). Such denials would need to be distinguished from the heuristics of negative dialectic.

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[2] "Philosophy cannot and must not give faith, but it must understand itself and know what it offers and take nothing away, least of all trick men out of something by pretending that it is nothing." (KIERKEGAARD, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 33).

[3] See for example the analysis of Bram Mertens, *Dark Images, Secret Hints: Benjamin, Scholem, Molitor and the Jewish Tradition* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 1007). The description of Molitor as catholic kabblalist is from Scholem's *Briefe*, vol I. ed. Itta Shedletzky (Munchen: Beck, 1994), p. 58.

In any case, as much as Gadamer's own "retrieval" (*Wiedergwinnumg)* of the question of aesthetic truth had appealed to a genealogy of post-Kantian aesthetics, he denied that his hermeneutics was merely aesthetic (TM: 81). This was true every bit as much as Heidegger claimed that theology itself remained limited in scope, inevitably ontic. Indeed we might see it (and Gadamer, like Adorno himself, did at times) as grappling with the interweaving of spirit, that is, of art, philosophy and religion in German Idealism (CP: 78). But perhaps we do not stress enough either Gadamer's or Heidegger's (or Adorno's for that matter) conceptual appropriations of theology. As much as Adorno appealed to the problem of the Divine Names, both Heidegger and Gadamer appealed to (and differentiated themselves from) the conceptual resources of medieval theology to articulate their accounts. Heidegger's question of Being traced the modern reduction of the copula (or propositonal or intentional 'correlate') over against the ancient account of the *analogia entis*).[4] It would continue throughout his various accounts' criticism of the ontology of logicism. But *Being and Time* appealed to the Thomistic account of the *convenire* of being and understanding to explicate its existential 'counterconcept': Dasein's Being-in-the-World.[5] No less significantly, this medieval archive played a pivotal role for Gadamer, precisely in claiming that Heidegger's Dasein analysis remained insufficient, its account of *Mitsein* remained insufficiently linguistic, i.e. insufficiently dialogic and historical. On the face of it, *inter alia*, Gadamer's correction might have undermined Adorno's (and others') objection concerning the Dasein analysis's subjectivism, opening it in principle to alternate readings of its formally indicated existentials. Still the encounter remained ensconced in a medieval semiology that seemed also to complicate it. While he too spoke of internal tension in the idea of God as the Highest Being**,** Gadamer's account of interpretation appealed, somewhat strikingly, to the semantics of medieval theology: specifically, the semiotic multiplicity at issue in the doctrine of the Trinity. Alluding to Hegel's rationalist attempts to grapple with this doctrine, Gadamer claimed, "I personally believe that this doctrine has constantly stimulated the course of thought in the West as a challenge and invitation to try and think that which continually transcends the limits of human understanding" (RB: 5). It certainly challenged Gadamer's own interpreters of his appeals to this account. The interpretation of such appeals has been variously construed by very able Gadamer interpreters and are consequential precisely in their variance. But as will also become evident, these differences shed light not only upon Gadamer's interpretation of

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[4] Heidegger emphasized the importance of Hobbes' protocols for understanding contemporary logic. See HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstandter. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 190.

[5] HEIDEGGER , Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Dennis J. Schmidt. Albany: SUNY Press, 2010, p. 13.

the history of semantics, but also upon the specificity and the rationality of his own position, *vis a vis* Adorno.

Still, we need not wade too far into the particulars; not only papers, but books have been devoted to the topic. Here was Gadamer's claim:

> (W)hen the Greek idea of logic is penetrated by Christian theology, something new is born: the medium of language in which the mediation of the incarnation event achieves its full truth. (TM: 427)

The act of expression, involves a transition from potential to act, yet one that involves, not a single or complete word but (like the doctrine of the Trinity itself) a developing and self-generating multiplicity (TM: 424). Gadamer's account of *Sprachlichkeit* expression here is an emanation, but it remains, unlike the event of Incarnation, both a historical and conceptual development. Moreover in a nod to his phenomenological commitments, Gadamer claimed that in such multiplication, each word becomes enriched in the singular perception and transcendence of the thing, thus preserving the particularity of perception (TM: 427). Gadamer adds, however (precisely what Husserl would deny), that, because of this, human language is directed at the thing without completely containing it. And, the Incarnation itself remains, accordingly, a mystery human that discursiveness cannot capture, ultimately escaping the analogy between the human and the Divine word.

A central issue for his interpreters concerns the ambiguous status of such linguistic hermeneutics, especially granted the aforementioned criticisms of logicism, the status of its propositional expression. One of his most able interpreters, Jean Grondin, for example, claimed that Gadamer's own appeal to the Trinitarian theology of Augustine's Inner Word entailed that hermeneutic meaning, what Grice called speaker's meaning, could never result in adequately, fixed propositional meaning.[6] This on the face of it seems correct: after all, for the hermeneut, isolated propositions are often construed as apophantic abstractions, devoid of the interpretive context from which they emerge. But David Vessey responded, also apparently rightly, that if this 'inner' word or text is simply construed as prelinguistic, such claims defied Gadamer's concomitant (*Sprachlichkeit*) claim that meaning is always linguistic. Against the apparent priority of the 'Inner Word', Vessey appealed to the transcendence of (empricial) linguistic ideality itself: after all, if expression is incomplete, there is always more to be said.[7] Nonetheless, both appealed to Gadamer's hermeneutic claims about finitude: on the

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[6] See GRONDIN, Jean. "Augustine: The Universality of the Inner Logos," in *An Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven Yale University Press, 1994).
[7] See VESSEY, David. "Gadamer, Augustine, Aquinas, and Hermeneutic Universality" in *Philosophy Today*, Summer 2011, p. 161.

one hand, to the ultimate inexpressibility of lived experience, on the other hand, the ever present need to say more, the infinite conversation at stake in uncovering the thing itself, the *Sache* (TM: 422). In both cases hermeneutics is motivated by a history and an insufficiency. "Thus thought constantly proceeds to new conceptions and is fundamentally incapable of being wholly realized in any" (TM: 425-6).

Gadamer also emphasized the significance of the Thomistic distinction between the *actus execitus* (the spontaneously executed act) and the *actus signatus* (an act specifically signified or designated), claiming that the latter is not dependent upon reflection [*non est reflexum*], insofar as what is designated is not the mind but the intelligible species of the thing (TM: 426; PH: 123). Vessey aptly claims, against Grondin, that the latter is further evidence for the claim that thought only becomes realized ("perfected") in the word and claims such realization as grounds for asserting Gadamer's (or Aquinas') realism.[8]

Still, we need to add the following: Gadamer's realism is of a very peculiar kind and, in any case, to use terms Nietzsche invoked against "presuppositionless science", explicitly not a realism of the *factum brutum* (TM: 261).[9] Everything that is said (qua determination) is of the real: as he referenced Cusa's articulation of semantic implication and complication, if expression is fitting (*congruum*), not everyone is exact (*precisum*) (TM: 437). Indeed Gadamer denied the real is a fixed 'text' as much as he denies that experience is prelinguistic: hence "a word is not simply the perfection of the species, as medieval thought held" or simply the reflection of a pregiven order of being (TM: 457). It is also its unfinished exploration: what is incompletely expressed is not the speaker's meaning but the Being expression infinitely seeks to conquer (TM: 426).[10] Here hermeneutics, extending beyond Dilthey, for example, too, encounters the *Seinsproblem*; we confront it as a semiotic problem, precisely that of complication, multiplicity, synthesis and the need for invention. But the result seems that we are stuck in interpretative antinomies between the inner and the outer word.

What more should be added? First of all, in a 1964 paper, further glossing the Thomistic *actus exercitus* and *signitus,* Gadamer explained that his account followed Heidegger's Marburg lectures he attended (HW: 33ff). It was perhaps this distinction between act and expression that reasonably

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[8] *Ibid*, 161n.
[9] See NIETZSCHE, F. *Genealogy*, p. 151. Adorno similarly rejected what he called the empiricism of *facta bruta* (ND: 11).
[10] Unlike the Divine Word, the human word is not present to itself (TM: 425). As much as Gadamer, like Benjamin, would invoke the model of eschatological venture, the human word participates positively in infinity only by complication, in the search itself (TM:425-7).

led Grondin to interpret Gadamer along Heideggerian lines. Gadamer claimed that Heidegger followed this distinction in distinguishing between the ready to hand (like *actus exercitus*, spontaneous, intrinsic and nonreflective) and the present to hand, one specifically formulated to overcome the idealists' circle of reflection the Thomistic distinction might seem to authorize (HW: 35). But in a strikingly dissimilar repetition, which should signal to us the status of hermeneutic articulemes (and again the interpretive status of *Being and Time*'s existentials), Heidegger's early motivation was characterized by Gadamer as religious while his own was conceptual or categorial (HW: 31; 180). This interepetive status might explain why Heidegger's artculemes were contested as much by Edith Stein as Adorno. But perhaps we should question the opposition. Heidegger's issue from the outset also had been categorial, a question of the *modi significandi* in medieval semantics. He appealed to the latter originally, citing Schlegel's "eternal affirmations", for a more "primordial" account of the inner or qualitative relation between the soul and God.[11] In any case, Gadamer's own linguistic transformation of Heidegger's *Mitsein*, as has been seen, attests both to its limitations and its potential for refinement.

Significantly, Gadamer's 1964 text that traced the Heideggerean existentials back to Aquinas ends, like *Truth and Method* begins (again proximate to Adorno), by also tracing his own starting point regarding the "historicality of self-knowledge" to "the experience of art" (HW: 39). Accordingly, especially in light of its rejection of 'fixed realism', we will need to supplement *Truth and Method*'s retrieval of medieval semantics with his discussion of Kant's *Critique of Judgment's* account of symbolic (versus determinate or schematic) representation, where the indeterminate conceptual interpretation provoked by the work of art is viewed as a symbolic presentation of the Good. On the one hand, the latter, in leading beyond mere sensual attractiveness, inaugurates, especially after Schiller, the problem of the modern *humaniora..* On the other, such considerations obviously further augment the complex semiotics that we found in confronting the *Seinsproblem*. Yet at the same time, as will become evident, it will usher us into the foyer that Gadamer shares with the Frankfurt school, making explicit their mutual theoretical emergence from Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics. Such symbolic representation had been the focus of Frankfurt school criticism (correlating it with naïve knowledge) -- and now would allow us to further differentiate the latter from Gadamer's account. However, Gadamer' own'theological' interpretation obviates in this regard the proximity of the Frankfurt school's indebtedness to Benjamin and Scholem, complicating their implicit objections to Gadamer's account.

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[11] See HEIDEGGER, M. "The Theory of Categories and Meaning in Duns Scotus," Conclusion in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essay to Being and Time and Beyond*, trans. Roderick M. Stewart, John van Buren.Albany; Suny Press, 2002, p. 66-7.

For example, Walter Benjamin's rehabilitation of baroque allegory characterized the account of medieval allegory as merely "didactic".[12] Gadamer, on the other hand, appealed (at the categorial level) to the "truth of Christianity with its new and profound insight into the transcendence of God" (RB: 6). But for its grasp we should recall *Truth and Method's* Kantian gloss on the symbol: "This concept of symbolic representation is one of the most brilliant results of Kantian thought. He thus does justice to the theological truth that had found its scholastic form in the *analogia entis* and keeps human concepts separate from God" (TM: 75).[13] Echoing his own account of *Sprachlichkeit*, Gadamer claims, "The symbol (which can be interpreted inexhaustibly because it is indeterminate) is opposed to allegory (understood as standing in a more exact relation to meaning and exhausted by it) as art is related to non-art" (TM:74-5).

As has become evident, Gadamer claims, such separation between indirect or endless or infinite interpretation and finite or static "direct exhibition" or reference underlies the potential of medieval hermeneutics. But in *Truth and Method*, Kant provides its critical gloss. And, for its impact, we can also examine his explicit, concomitant claim that he was surpassing Adorno's stress on aesthetic judgment, which he thought overly restricted to aesthetic consciousness (RB: 161). For Gadamer, Kant's aesthetic judgment (and Adorno's over reliance upon it) remains inadequate, the latter still bound by the rigors, ie. the subjective relativity of taste or the decorative. "The being of art cannot be defined by an object of aesthetic consciousness because…the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself" (TM: 116).

Instead, as his emphasis on the *Third Critique*'s discussion of the symbol evidences, Gadamer insists that we need a more ontological account, echoing his claim about the medieval process of signification as an expressive ontological event (TM: 382). The latter he finds still further, albeit implicitly, developed, in Kant's account of the imaginative freedom of genius,

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[12] BENJAMIN, Walter, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne. New Yorl: Verso, 1985, p. 171. Gadamer also privileged the baroque in his analysis of painting: "We cannot hide the fact that over 150 years ago Christian art also lost its power to speak as myth. It was not the revolution of modern painting but the close of the baroque, the last great European style, that really sounded an end—the end of the whole tradition of pictorial imagery within Western art" (RB: 100).

[13] Gadamer is referring to Kant's claim in the Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgment, proceeding by the "double function" of analogy, stating that the beautiful ("like all our cognition of God", merely symbolic) is an indirect exhibition of the Good (while morality is a direct exhibition). See KANT, I. *Critique of Judgement,* trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hacker, 1987, p. 227-229. While Gadamer credits Kant with rediscovering the depth semantics of the medieval account and its more explicitly ontological account, in relating the transcendentals of the Good and the Beautiful, his hermeneutics denies Kant's claim that morality, unlike aesthetic judgment, overcomes the indeterminacies of reflective judgment and finds " direct exhibition". For further discussion of this issue and the emergence of the humaniora in Kant see my *Tradition(s) I: Refiguring Community and Virtue in Classical German Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, ch. 2.

a concept that overcomes subjectivism more forcefully. While emphasizing the freedom of imagination, the concept of genius also acknowledged the inexhaustible task of interpretation, detaching it from the correlate of simply conscious or reflective origins. As he puts it elsewhere, we overcome the subjectivism of the *mens auctoris* in acknowledging the unconscious and what escapes the immanence of reflection in the work of art (HW: 40).

Such terms are Schellingian, deriving from The 1801 *System of Transcendentalism*'s attempted elevation of the work of art as the fulfillment (and overcoming the subjective reflective limitations) of the critical system. Adorno also noted its importance as a model for the great systems of idealism and affirmed its importance for understanding art, especially in removing it from the aesthetics of naïve realism (AT: 91). Gadamer himself claimed that the quarrel between the ancient and the moderns was fought out monumentally in Hegel (HD: 33). But he claimed again that Schelling retained a sense of transcendence (and revelation) over against claims to absolute reflection he found in Hegel (CP: 76). Additionally, we can note, here again, we are not far from Sholem's 'mentor', Molitor, who had been initially provoked by Schelling's 1804 *Philosophy and Religion* for his account of tradition, one that had sought to recapture not only the implicit truth of ancient metaphysic but equally reclaimed even the potential mystery of the kabbalist tradition.

It may be difficult to simply affirm Gadamer's charge concerning the limitations of Adorno's account to aesthetic consciousness. Adorno, of course, also found recourse in Kant's aesthetic. Rather than its apparent ontological retrieval, Adorno further insisted on its moral implications. He focused on Kant's account of our resistance and elevation before the sublime, emphasizing its connection with Kant's account of nature and stressing its link to Enlightenment rationality. Here Adorno stressed not Aquinas or Aristotle but Luther's more modernist influence insofar as nature in the sublime calls forth our power (which is not part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned ("goods, health, and life") and thus to assume our moral vocation. "This is very reminiscent of the hymn by Luther: you can see how certain theological categories –'Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also'—could be said to have migrated into the basic categories of aesthetics" (LA: 30).

On the other hand, Adorno considered the question of *analogia entis* a remnant of Aristotle's move from metaphysics to the theology of the "unmoved mover" and, as such, one that dissolved the dialectic in its midst (M: 59). Hence, instead of the medieval *analogia entis*, Adorno interpreted Kant's claims within the ambiguous dialectic of modernity itself.

> Namely: in nature, there is, on the one hand, that element which is stronger than we are, and which does not really permit us to contemplate beauty any more than was possible in earlier times, before the increasing domination of nature; but on the other hand, after nature was harnessed to a

degree and lost its horror, this awakened the self awareness of humans and a kind of second affinity, a form of symbolic reconciliation, was brought with nature, which humans had subjugated, but to which they had done an injustice. (LA: 30)

For Adorno, this dialectic of enlightenment (or that of symbolic and the sublime) will not be resolved: nature will no more be fully dominated than our self awareness will be complete (AT: 198).

As with Gadamer, the Kantian analysis of genius provides further backdrop for understanding Adorno's position. Here, too, the concept of genius is paired epistemologically with the original creative intellect, the *intellectus archeypus*. But works of art are not creative in this sense, even though they arise through individuation. In this sense they are fabrications (*techne*) and losing sight of this risks simply aligning their spontaneity with an irrational unconscious. Linked to a primary creative will, the account still stands in the shadow of the Enlightenment's dominating rationality. On the other hand, turning to the Idealism of Enlightenment, and simply stressing individuality risks, as was the case with Schiller, making the artist more important than the work of art. What the concept of genius does accomplish, rightly understood, is that works of art cannot be wholly reduced to objectification (AT: 171).

Gadamer, as has become evident, emphasized the account of genius in attempting to overcome the limitations of the Kantian aesthetics based in the judgment of taste. Indeed he did so, like Adorno, in stressing Kant's account of the sublimity of nature, one he thought also prepared a transition beyond the limitations of taste (RB: 167). But, beyond the limitations of modernity, in a seemingly more affirmative manner, *Truth and Method* claimed the account of genius also surpassed the historical relativity of taste: "The miracle of art—that enigmatic perfection possessed by successful artistic creations—is visible in all ages" (TM: 58). Nonetheless, he also claims that the account of genius is inadequate; in effect it lacks the distance Gadamer claimed Kant's reflective judgment captured in echoing the medieval symbolic account of language. Like Adorno, he thought the concept of genius still naively relies upon a theology of creation, in effect an 'ontotheological metaphysics'. Again, this is precisely the motivation for the necessity of the renewed ontological turn, one Gadamer found in *Being and Time*. But the latter, Adorno claimed, simply smuggled religious customs from now fully securlarized religion, nothing but the "evaporating aura" of 'authenticity', 'guilt' 'anxiety', guilt', 'call' still intact. (ND: 99).

Even were this the case, in his own account of linguisticality Gadamer has demurred from the latter, claiming that, granted the fluidity of usage, any concept can be refigured: there are no concepts in themselves. As has been seen, he also demurred from the classical humanist account of the symbolic (one whose revelation also undergird Schelling's Idealism). Instead

of the classical account of symbol's devaluation of allegory, in refocusing its connection with the account of the Kantian sublime, Gadamer arguably surpassed what Benjamin criticized as its correlation between beauty and idea. Against such Idealism, Benjamin's account of the mourning at stake in allegory emphasized not Christian transcendence but Christian guilt.[14]

For Gadamer, the symbolic work of art, rightly seen, surpasses the correlationism of knowledge and the totalization of metaphysics; it "elevates" us beyond the limits of ordinary intuition (and its simple pleasure) in forcing us to encounter the world anew (RB: 168-9). Hence the work of art's peculiar temporality remains the time of fulfillment, one that holds true even in its tragedy or finitude (RB: 42).[15] But it occurs, Gadamer claimed, both by not limiting the elevation to a schematic text (Gadamer's own critique of allegorical presentation) but also because the symbol (unlike the text-focus rhetorical use of allegory) inaugurate us to an experience of an unknown, instituting an "anagogic" and even "gnostic function" in the relation between the visible and the invisible. It was in this way that in the medieval account "it is possible to be led beyond the sensible to the divine" (TM: 73). Sounding more like Schlegel, he claimed, "the particular represents itself as a fragment of being that promises to make whole whatever corresponds to it" (RB: 32).[16]

Unlike Adorno, who conceptualized myth through the protocols of an irrationality ever repressed in Enlightenment, for Gadamer myth, ritual, the religions of the book, and even philosophy still articulate a transcendence and the mystery none of these elements (albeit in different guise) ever finally adequates before the unsaid. This, in turn, led him to criticize the 19th century's subjectvization of aesthetic consciousness in *Erlebnis*—and thus what he termed the more recent rehabilitation of allegory as its criticism. Instead, beyond the subjectivization at work in the ontotheology of genius, Gadamer here notes that if symbolization is not bound as is the allegorical text is, neither is it wholly creative or 'free'. Instead it depends upon the continuing historical existence of allegorical tradition. Thus, notwithstanding what might have seen as his own apparent devaluation of allegory, this led him to ultimately conclude that the contrast between symbol and allegory ultimately becomes only relative, again, tradition 'pro-

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[14] *ibid*, p. 224.

[15] Such fulfillment sounds perhaps Schellingian again. Gadamer pairs it both with Benjamin's notion of aura and Kant's account of the beautiful, "purposiveness without a purpose" (RB: 33, 43). He could easily have paired it with Kant's notion of "elevation" (*Erhebung*) or wonder that occurs in the sublime – or even, on his reading, Husserl's notion of intentional *Erlüllung* in our encounter with truth.

[16] In his later work, Gadamer admitted, "I clearly am in much greater proximity to Schlegel than I had preciously realized" (HL: 123). Influenced by Schlegel scholars such as Ernst Behler and Manfred Frank, this again brought him closer to the Frankfurt school, starting with Benjamin's thesis on Schlegel.

ducing tradition out of itself'. We might add then, that, notwithstanding the mystery of gnostic elements in their midst, perhaps here lies Adorno's critical question concerning the continuing relevance of tradition. As the latter insisted, "all interpretation is critical interpretation: (LND: 51). But if so, we will need to further parse their differences concerning the status of such interpretation.

One way to examine the critical implications of their accounts is by briefly reconsidering Habermas' now classical criticisms of both Gadamer and Adorno. Habermas viewed Gadamer as the 'urbanizer' of Heidegger and the bridge builder to Hegel, the humanist tradition and classical thought.[17] Habermas ultimately criticized Gadamer's account (as did other's, for example Leo Strauss) as insufficiently critical, overly historicist and relativist.[18] In this light Gadamer's respect for the perdurance of tradition might also remain proximate perhaps even to Scholem, whose account of kabbala endorses Molitor's Schellingian account of tradition as a mystery containing a mixture of written and unwritten, implicit and explicit, said and the unsaid elements. Habermas, early on a Schelling scholar, knew well that behind Hegel's speculations also lay Oetinger and Boehme, who mediate the tradition of mysticism.[19] Indeed, *Truth and Method*'s genealogy cites them all. Behind all the emphasis on the sublime, Habermas elsewhere points out, lies the mystical element, one still active even in the truth of Marxist allegory.[20] Moreover, Habermas himself here recognized the tradition Gadamer too affirmed: "the theological tradition, extending from Augustine through logos mysticism to radical Protestantism, that appeals to the originary character of the divine Word and to language as the medium of the divine message to man". He did so however negatively, precisely in criticizing Horkheimer's (and Adorno's) claim that "theological metaphysics is right against positivism, because no proposition can avoid raising the impossible claim."[21] Overall, Habermas criticized the early Frankfurt School's account of language for lacking the (Kantian) account of concrete objectivity he still found in Hegel -- and yet, more to the point, Gadamer.

That is, while he insisted that Gadamer's 'urbanization' hoped to defend the speechlessness of the mystic still active in Heidegger's poetic *Denken*,

[17] HABERMAS, Jűrgen. *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick C. Lawrence. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1983, p. 192-3.
[18] On Gadamer's relation to Strauss, see my, *Extensions: Essays on Interpretation, Rationality, and the Closure of Modernism.* Albany: SUNY Press. 1992, ch vi, Supplement.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 67. Gerald R. Bruns has outlined the proximity between midrash and hermeneutics in *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992. See Part One, Chapter five, p. 104ff.
[20] HABERMAS, J. *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, p. 33.
[21] HABERMAS, J. "To Seek to Salvage an Unconditioned Meaning With God is a Futile Undertaking: Reflections on a Remark of Max Horkheimer's", in *Religion and Rationality*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Cambridge: Mass: MIT Press, 2002, p. 106.

Habermas claimed the emphasis upon *Sprachlichkeit* did so by "casting his gaze back to Hegel" and taking "into account the massive stream of the tradition of words that has become objective and concrete."[22] Here we would acknowledge the Kantian past in Hegel. The real is constituted by objective categories: in Thomistic terms, the *actus signatus* that Vessey emphasized in Gadamer's account of the *Sprachlichkeit* of understanding. It is this account, Habermas claimed, Adorno and Horkheimer's account of language missed and Gadamer maintained, albeit insufficiently. But, as has become apparent, the issue of *Sprachlichkeit* led Gadamer not only towards the communicable meaning of objective thought stressed by Habermas. He did so, by also articulating a transcendence that escaped it in its midst, Grondin's *actus execitus*: a mystery that is still not fully unsayable. Moreover, as Gadamer put it in an essay on the heritage of Hegel, this semantic 'thickness', precisely in surpassing the constraints of Heidegger's history of metaphysics, animates all conversation, allowing for its continual refinement: proceeding not by a return to *mythos* but by "open dialectic" (RAS: 56). But this transformation will also impact Kant's legacy. For Gadamer, if objectivity, as Kant thought in the first *Critique* will be systematic, it will also be historical, dependent upon what is yet to be said, its experience still proximate to the horizon of the legacy of the third *Critique*'s indeterminacies. Understood as such, Kant's work signaled to his followers, Gadamer included, that Enlightenment rationality is neither simply instrumental nor 'dominating', but equally the venture of the experimental.

Tthis complicated relation between the said and the unsaid is not limited to operative discursive rationality; it even underwrites the account of aesthetic rationality in Gadamer's description of painting as "the speechless" image. He denies that this means anything like simply "mute" or dumb.[23] Rather than being "struck speechless" the authentic work of art involves a provocation: "something for which we have to seek new words" (RB: 83). Instead we confront something with its own "mute eloquence" (RB: 85). Such a confrontation attests, as Vessey righty insists, attest to the phenomenon of linguisticality; once again, "everything we understand is language". But it attests, beyond the account of linguistic accessibility (the "everything that is understood is understood as language"), less to the prelinguistic but to the 'extra-linguistic', the *excessibility* or transcendence of Being in general with regard to things said. In this regard, the phenomenon of 'speechless' provocation acknowledges the gap – let's call it the phenomenological gap, perhaps the abyss (*Ab-grund*) --between the sayable and the said. The provocation of this excess -- let's call it the problem of the *haecceity* or, again, the indeterminacy that provokes Kant'reflective judgment -- acknowledges

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[22] HABERMAS, J. *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, p. 195.
[23] Gadamer does not deny the problem of such speechlessness and even suggests, in accord with his account of the leveling of modernity, that classical painting, for example, no longer speaks to us, merely imparting "the impression of speechlessness" (RB: 83).

that not all experience reduces to things said. If everything is sayable it is never completely said, attesting once more to Gadamer's complicated realism. But, as has been provisionally indicated, and now will require the promissory notes' fulfillment, it also attests once more to Gadamer's complicated phenomenological underpinnings. Thereby it might furnish the rationale in Grondin's attempt to stress (or salvage) an Augustinian experience. Here however it emerges, critically, in its modern or Cartesian reading, attesting perhaps to Husserl's lingering Augustinianism.

On this reading, however, phenomenology might not simply reduce to an epistemic encounter or correlation with the prelinguistic. Adorno's book-length study of Husserl interpreted his intuitionism in the tradition of Fichte or Schelling's intellectual intuition. He also acknowledged that Husserl did not simply equate science with the absolute nor claim that the transcendental captured all transcendence (AE: 52-3). But while he acknowledged in his "deeper and more binding insight" that Husserl's account of concrete individuality could be linked up with Kant's third *Critique*, he still claimed that it remained "scholastic" in ultimately equating haecceity and essence (AE: 96: 105). Adorno's metacritique of Husserl's epistemology charged that his phenomenological self -clarification of experience fell into the lot of circularity, presupposing its own veridicality, its lingering correlationism taking recourse to the necessary error of regulative ideas and futile correction: in effect, appealing both to immanence and transcendence, analysis and synthesis.(AE: 25). Put otherwise, he charged Husserl with "Munchhausen tricks" (AE: 231). We will leave open how much Adorno's own account of experience still owes to his metacritique and his attempt to surpass the figure he referred to as "the only German scholastic philosopher of the period" (AE: 214)

For many in what came to be called the phenomenological movement, beyond its apparent inner antinomies, Husserl's thought remained more heuristic. This includes Gadamer, whose debts, in any case, are more open. Beyond correlationism, for Gadamer, phenomenology always arises as a heuristic excess, as he stresses, for example, the Husserlian anonymous intentionalites that underlie all objectifications, ie., that always accompanies, but horizonally exceeds things said (HW: 34). Nonetheless, Gadamer too condemned both "scholastic thought" and Husserl for invoking "an unlimited universality of reason that can clarify each and everything": following Heidegger, he charged them both with "the contradiction in the idea of total objectifiability" (HW: 34).[24] Instead, for Gadamer, it is

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[24] Indeed here we find Gadamer's affirmative differentiation of scholasticism, which he links to modern philosophy and what he terms are appropriate "terminological fixation" of "the constructive region of modern science" (PA: 190). Great philosophers have always protected the fluidity of language even when they undertook to fix concepts in their thematic analyses. "But in opposition to this, there has always been scholasticism – ancient medieval, modern, contemporary" (PA: 190).

the open concept of horizon that is "of crucial importance for Husserl's phenomenological research"(TM: 245). Here it became transformed into the hermeneutic problem of the fusion of different experiential and conceptual interpretive horizons and linked inherently to transcendence (thereby, as we saw earlier, maintaining the truth of perception). But rightly construed, the transcendental reduction (which Gadamer too strongly linked to immanent reflection) is precisely a metamorphosis beyond things said: to use Merleau-Ponty's trope, an expressive or *langagière* experience that irreducibly accompanies the determinate or formal constrains of *la langue* without being reducible to things said. Here the reduction involves a process, never complete, that undergoes both on-going conceptual and intuitional refinement.[25] As Gadamer pointed out in his discussion of Bacon and the account of prejudice, it involves intrinsically the experiment and the exploration of *Sprachlichkeit* itself.

Gadamer famously criticized Bacon's account in affirming the heuristic or traditional potential of prejudices as *Vor-Urteil* capable of reapplication or refinement. But, as such, he still affirmed Bacon's corrective teleology as "a true element in the structure of experience" (TM: 350).[26] Indeed this awareness that "life is itself an experiment" is precisely what, Gadamer claims, Husserl adds to the speculative concept of life (and hence the ontology) of German Idealism. (TM: 251). In this respect he follows, Heidegger 1919 claim of "the back and forth formation of recepts and concepts" at stake in "hermeneutic intuition": the living rationality or the "life" that undergird and vivified theory, one that Heidegger, explicitly claimed, overcame the Munchhausen problem.[27] Adorno, who found Husserl too encased in the project of Enlightenment (and Heidegger affirming its mythic alternative), insisted on the crucial role the work of art played in escaping the alternative of systematic rational domination. The account of hermeneutic intentionality, moreover, took its model, not from the transcendental reflection of German idealism but from Aristotle's practical philosophy; hermeneutics was not an absolute position but an experience (PA: 184; 189). As has been seen, Adorno himself insisted on recognizing the work of art as a *techne*, to overcome the instrumental will of Enlightenment. But if Gadamer still referenced Bacon's experimental venture, Adorno instead chose Shakespeare. Shakespeare, that is, viewed "the theatrum mundi not from the perspective of progress but that of the victims of progress" (AT:

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[25] For further discussion of this issue see my "On the Metamorphoses of Transcendental Reduction: Merleau-Ponty and 'the Adventures of Constitutive Analyeis'" in *Phenomenology and the Primacy of the Political: Essays in Honor of Jacques Taminiaux* (ed. V. Foti, P. Kontos). Cham: Springer, 2017.

[26] Such a teleology was not understood as enumerative induction, but Aristotle's *epagoge* (TM: 432).

[27] HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler. New York: Continuum, 2000, p. 99, 14.

255). Hence again the apparent antinomies between Gadamer and Adorno, even in their mutual affirmation of the importance of art and the perdurance of the effect of the sacred. Both focused on the important role art provided the rational but seemingly differed on the rationality of our time and the role art played within it. Still, as close as we have found them, the issue may need to be even more focused. We may need to question whether, granted the importance of the work of art for both, Gadamer's commitment to tradition had confronted all that, for Adorno, threatened art within modernity. As Adorno charged: "Only that which inexorably denies tradition may once again retrieve it" (T: 82).

Gadamer insisted that hermeneutics did not reduce to the genealogy of aesthetic consciousness that provides its protocols, though it did provide the essence of its experience (TM: 63). Granted: there was, in addition, the models of legal hermeneutics and the theological hermeneutics and these also furnished some of its protocols. Nonetheless, if hermeneutics does not reduce to aesthetic consciousness, the phenomenology of modern art provided one of its most troubling encounters. Indeed its challenge underwrote Gadamer's account of "the retrieval of the question of artistic truth", making sense of the perduring effect of the classical by defining it in terms of a tradition that remains still relevant (TM: 81). Clearly such commitments wrankled his and Heidegger's Frankfurt advocates. Adorno acknowledged Heidegger's own account of the work of art as thing overcame idealism, but in the end he viewed his account of Being's revelation in the *Es gibt* as one more modern mythic invention (AT: 99). In the end, as he quoted Scholem, Heidegger's procedure "is a 'Teutonizing cabbalism'" (ND: 112).

Still, as pessimistic as he might be, in his "Theses on Art and Religion Today," with which we began, Adorno himself could not bring himself to fully affirm the diremptionof art and religion: "As firmly as I am convinced that the dichotomy between art and religion is irreversible, as firmly do I believe that it cannot be naively regarded as something final and ultimate" (NL: 297). He was convinced that art needed to be detached from universality or the concept to reveal "the acme of genuine individuation," becoming thereby "instrumental with regard to the materialization of a truly theological idea" (LA: 297). This too, as he claimed from as early as the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* admitted, was not without its theological protocol, once again appealing to the experience of impossible presence "in the prohibition on uttering the name of God" (DE: 17).

Nonetheless, Adorno's appeal to the Jewish prohibition against the name came as part of its impossible appropriation within Enlightenment. He could grant, still reflecting Weber's historical sociology, that "High Scholasticism, and especially the *Summa* of St Thomas have their force and dignity in the fact that, without absolutizing the concept of reason they never condemned

it; theology went so far only in the age of nominalism, particularly with Luther"(CM:139-140). The balance between reason and revelation was also a balance between its feudal epoch and the science of its time. But in his "Theses on Religion", Adorno signals in the contemporary epoch it is now Proust that he has in mind, who in remembrance of things past tried "to salvage life, as an image, from the throes of death" (NL: 298). As Benjamin also knew, such mourning is through and through theological, implicitly eschatological: as Adorno said elsewhere, Proust's individuality "restores the promise of the universality we were cheated of" (NL: 316).

Decades later, Adorno reaffirms Proust's prominence, precisely in arguing again for a metaphysical experience that escapes "the antithesis between tradition and cognition", the question, he argued, escaped Kant's critical enquiry (M: 138). He declares that the great mystical experiences, "such as St John of the Cross, hardly seems to be accessible any longer" (M: 139). But, if so, Proust still give us this "exploration of the possibility of experience", counter to reification, "the joy of finding that somewhere some such thing as life were possible at all" (M: 141,143). The Proustian image attests both to the "This is it" and calls for its requisite contemporary dialectical critique. Here, pairing Proust and Brecht, Adorno returns to the problem of nothingness, in a passage that echoes his critique of the indiscriminate denials of 'Buddhism': "This work is really an attempt so to conceive nothingness that it is at the same time, not *merely* nothingness, but to do so within complete negativity" (M: 136).[28]

In Proust all of this was to be recaptured not by the will of reflection, but by the concretization of "*memoire involuntaire*", once again proximate to Schelling.[29] The result was a revelation of *haeccitas* beyond the dominating will of Enlightenment (AT: 24). Nevertheless, if Proust were the artist capable of restoring the promise of the happiness we had been cheated, Kafka, for Adorno, attested to its current actuality. Noting Kafka is often connected to the cabbala, Adorno states "in its late phase Jewish mysticism vanishes and becomes rational": Kafka reacts in the spirit of Enlightenment to the mythology of modern life. Kafka's theology concerns the God of *deus absconditus* (P: 268). Gadamer, not wholly denying the latter also adds to the current "discussion of Kafka's writings" focused on its "detached lucidity", that "this apparently familiar world is accompanied by a mysterious feeling of strangeness which creates the impression that everything in it actually points beyond itself to something else" (RB: 71).

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[28] Or as *Negative Dialectic* casts it: "The concept clings to the promised happiness of the world, while the world that denies us our happiness is the world of the reigning universal, the world stubbornly opposed by Proust's reconstruction of experience" (ND: 374).

[29] For further discussion of Proust's proximity to Schelling, see my "Proust's Disenchantments, The 'Repoetization' of Experience and the Lineaments of the Visible" in *Chiasmi International*, Vol. 21: 2019.

As has become evident, we would be wrong to see simply an antinomy here. For example, Gadamer acknowledged both the threats of the moment and the tragic limitations of hermeneutic finitude. They also share more than that. For example, both in interpreting contemporary art appealed to the event of the *deus absconditus*: while Adorno did so in reference to Kafke, Gadamer did so invoking Celan (P: 268; C: 80). Adorno himself thought Celan again made poetry possible after Auschwitz. Celan's was a poetry "without aura" that "inverted" the content of the lyrical precisely informed by a suffering that escapes both experience and sublimation (AT: 322). Nonetheless, while others interpeted Celan's "bittler lines" through the lens of the later Heidegger, Gadamer still interpreted Celan through *Being and Time*'s account of time, individuality, Being- toward-death and even its Christian aura and "the wholly other" of poetry (C: 118; 173-176).[30]

It is not clear what this entails. As much as we may wonder whether this still echoes Gadamer's dialogue with Hegel's Trinitarian speculations, one thing again seems evident: the dialogue between religions Gadamer had hoped for, in effect (precisely as *Wirkungsgechichte)*, had already begun. Gadamer acknowledged the rupture between philosophy and religion or myth, a rupture he argued at one point began with the very origin of Western thought (WT: 33).[31] Still, Gadamer too was direct: if it were not a matter of apologetics, it was also because of the theoretical *Auseinandersetzung* in which this tradition proves its perduring relevance within the leveling of modernity. As much as Horkheimer or Adorno, for Gadamer, the account of the Inner Word in *Truth and Method* acquires its "particular significance in the face of instrumentalist understanding of language" (EPH: 69). Indeed, at one point, clearly with Weber's Iron Cage in mind, Gadamer declared that "only one experience has been salvaged in our case, and that, to be precise, is Calvinism" (CP: 73). The problem everywhere was a more generalized contestation of instrumental or so-called 'positivist' reductions of the rational.

Notwithstanding his appeals to the perduring relevance of the beautiful, Gadamer acknowledged its contemporary threat. In his essay, "The Speechless Image" Gadamer equally claims that in a world of planning, design, assembly" a world of commodization and consumption, even

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[30] See LACOUE-LABARTHE, Philippe. *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, p 94. Lacoue-Labarthe argued that Gadamer had missed Celan's despair over Heidegger and the issue of poetry in a "post-Auschwitz era", p. 7. Nonetheless Lacoue-Labarthe also saw in Celan the question of the possible/impossible name of God, a God beyond the name, and a "question asked to God to the detriment of ontotheology", p. 73, 80.

[31] Similarly "The Philosophy And Religion of Judaism," which parses the contributions of Greek, Christian and Jewish religion and culture to Western Culture, concludes by appealing to the "infinite conversation which rises above all facts of nature and history to the infinite conversation concerning human destiny, which we call philosophy" (EPH:163.)

the uniqueness of the sensible image is threatened with obsolescence (RB: 90). Moreover such dispersion is not only echoed in the art that Gadamer had hoped to link to the ancient metaphysical presumptions he had reaffirmed. At the beginning of the last century, Gadamer notes, precisely against the classicism *Truth and Method* defended, art began to "dissolve and splinter" our expectations into an "inconceivable variety of possible forms", everywhere apparently denying unity, the unity of subject matter, iconographic tradition, compositional structure (perspectivism), even the unity of the frame (RB: 88). Sounding very much like Adorno's analysis of the disintegrating primitive effect of rhythm in Stravinsky, he condemned "the obsessive rhythms of modern music" (PNM: 115ff; RB: 51). He similarly condemned "the very barren forms of abstract art" and sought to find a way to restore them to nature as in his analysis of crystalline abstract art Klee.[32] (RB: 51; 91). In either case, such obsessive rhythms would seem to pale against the ancient rhythms Augustine, for example, had linked to the ontotheological question at issue in his analyses of the Inner Word, a rhythm linking the terrestrial and the celestial, the finite and the infinite in "the great poem of the universe."[33] Yet its remnants continued to find refrain not only in Gadamer, but in 'postmodern' analyses.[34]

Adorno himself also recognized similar perduring remnants here, perhaps especially in music, albeit within the antinomies that had underwritten the dialectic of enlightenment. Music escapes the dominating will of the rational.

> The language of music is quite different from the language of intentionality. It contains a theological dimension. What it has to say is simultaneously revealed and concealed. Its Idea is the divine Name which has been given shape. It is dymythologized prayer, rid of efficacious magic. (QUF 2)

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[32] For further discussion of Gadamer's interpretation of Klee, See my *Crescent Moon Over the Rational: Philosophical Interpretations of Paul Klee.* Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2009. Ch. 2

[33] Augustine, *De musica*, VI. xi. 29.

[34] The problematic status of art's revelation would continue to echo in postmodern interpretations of the *Critique of Judgment*. Lyotard, for example, appealing to Barnett Newman's "The sublime is now", claimed, proximate to the diremption between art and the sacred with which we began, that art no longer attests to the mystery of transcendence but its absence. See "Newman: The Instant" in Jean François Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, chapter 13. But Lyotard found it, not only in Kant's judgment of the sublime but behind it, in the diremption of art and religion in Augustine, now complicating our discussion of the Inner Word. After all, the problem of writing (and reading) in Augustine is inextricably linked to the problem of the *Sprachlichkeit* of our finitude: for Augustine, the sentence is the tract of our distension in time, as Lyotard notes, obliquely anticipating a time when we will read without letters. See LYOTARD, Jean-François. *The Confession of Augustine*, trans. Richard Beardsworth. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 40-46. In it we confront a transcendence but also a forgetfulness (an oblivion or nothingness) that "obliterates" all knowing. But this nothingness is not just the counter-concept to Being but is intrinsic to the rhythm of creation.

Again, Adorno claimed, this contrasts with the limited intentional scope of the rational proposition:

> Intentional language wants to mediate the absolute, and the absolute escapes language for every specific intention, leaves each one behind because it is limited. Music finds the absolute immediately, but at the moment of discovery it becomes obscured, just as too powerful a light dazzles the eye. (QUN: 4)

We might again ask how proximate we remain to the Absolute of Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion*, which "hovers around us eternally, but as Fichte has said, it is only there if one does not have it; as soon as one possesses it, it vanishes."[35] In any case, we have evidence of how Adorno privileged Kant's account of the sublime. But here, too, he found its connection with theology. "The sublime marks the immediate occupation of the artwork by theology, an occupation that vindicates the meaning of existence one last time by virtue of its collapse" (AT: 198). But if the sublime reveals "the grandeur of human beings", it also reveals the "nothingness, the frailty of the empirical individual" (AT: 198). This nothingess, as theological as it may seem, again, is not the same as Augustine's before the Nothingness of the creation, one that resounds in the silence even between words.[36] Rather it is the nothingness of the individual before its universal destiny, a nothingess Adorno declared, Proust's revelations still sought to express, still sought to say..

Now, as has become evident, Gadamer, too, privileged the Kantian account of the sublime but did so without endorsing Adorno's account of the strict opposition between art and language. What is true of the work of art is true of the endless attempt of *Sprachlichkeit*, of our unending attempt to utter the unsaid. In this the opposition that we saw between Gadamer's interpreters seems to have reappeared -- but perhaps it hasn't. Indeed perhaps it has lessened, especially with respect to the dialectic of the sayable and the said. *Negative Dialectics* itself, having abandoned Bergson's and Husserl's futile attempts to "break out" of the conceptual (the former by depriving duration of all rationality, the latter by equating it with pre-essence), claimed that the task of philosophy was "to counter Wittgenstein by uttering the unsaid", to use concepts to "unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal" (ND: 9 10). Instead he, too, insisted on the complexity of the interpretive and

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[35] SCHELLING, F.W.J. *Philosophy and Religion*, trans. Klaus Ottmann. Putnam, Spring Publications, 2010, p. 9. We might also recall the privilege Schelling granted to music, and to rhythm, in particular, as the "music within music", qualifying "music for reflection and self-consciousness", the implantation of unity into multiplicity and "the infinite into the finite". See SCHELLING, F.W.J. *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 107-112.

[36] See *De musica* VI. x. 27.

historical setting: "philosophy consists in the effort to say what cannot be said, in particular what cannot be said directly in a single sentence, or a few sentences, but only a context" (LND: 74).[37] In this way it would bring philosophy proximate to the expression of art's experience without making it equal to it. Both in the end would remain faithful to themselves: art by making itself resistant to meaning; philosophy by refusing to clutch at any immediate thing (ND: 15). Hence Adorno was adamant: "The task of aesthetics is not to comprehend artworks as hermeneutic objects" (AT: 118). Such a reduction, devoid of interpretive setting, loses their "fractured transcendence", belying *Verstehen, (AT:* 126).

Granted this apparent rejection of hermeneutics, how should we conclude? How far is Gadamer's own fragmented transcendence removed from this? At the very least, one might consider the extent to which Adorno's appeal to the concept of dialectical context remains proximate to the interpretive setting of Gadamer's hermeneutic *Wirkungsgeschichte:* both emerge, as has been seen, in contesting the straight jacket of modern rationality, articulating resources that extend beyond it. They did so by invoking resources beyond the determinate or strictly rule-governed limits of the rational, rendering its propositional sequence further contextual or historical: in Adorno's words, by confronting tradition "in the texts of their becoming". At the same time, both remained proximate to Hegel's speculative proposition– but precisely in order to articulate the yet unsaid. To do so (as did Hegel), both further appealed to an experience and its articulemes still not exhausted (secularized or disenchanted). They appealed, that is, to the conceptual and experiential articulemes of the sacred to outline the open dialectic between the sayable and the said that both sought. Thus both viewed the sacred as a still not exhausted critical reserve in our rational history, one that extends beyond the constraints of Enlightenment, precisely in posing the critical question of tradition itself: the question again as Adorno put it, of how "a thinking obliged to relinquish tradition might preserve and transform tradition". And, they did so for the sake of persevering rationality and to understand both history and ourselves better.

As has also become evident, both in this endeavor priviliged the work of art in their retrieval of the sacred. While acknowledging the danger that threatens contemporary art, Gadamer ever appealed here to the question

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[37] Here we would need to further distinguish the semantic potential of the not yet said and the unsayable, especially in relation to the severe account of semantic limits of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus.* Later, of course, Wittgenstein himself would ultimately demure, for example, in responding to James' claim that our vocabulary is inadequate to describe certain experiences: "Then why don't we introduce a new one?" See WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1953, p. 159. As their discussions of the sacred reveal, Adorno and Gadamer would articulate experience by appealing, against the static limits of the representationalist account, both to its historical antecedents and the dialectical sequences from which it emerges.

of transcendence and the work of art's fragmented promise of fulfillment. But, in this regard, he called, further, for a conversation between the great religions. Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt school appealed to the experience of Jewish mysticism. Yet especially in his analyses of its current actuality in contemporary works of art such as Kafka's, Adorno found fracturedness -- and explicitly not transcendence but enigma (*Rätsel*) (AT 126). "If transcendence were present in them they would be mysteries not enigmas" (AT: 126). Hence again we confront their difference: Gadamer acknowledged art to be a "riddle", one that resists "pure conceptualization" (RB: 46, 34). But, as has been seen, Gadamer did indeed find something still mysterious in Kafka, something that points beyond itself. But Adorno himself acknowledged this much -- that every "authentic work of art also suggests the solution to its unresolvable enigma" (AT: 126).

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