

attempts to vindicate it.²⁸ The intention of the avant-gardiste may be defined as the attempt to direct toward the practical the aesthetic experience (which rebels against the praxis of life) that Aestheticism developed. What most strongly conflicts with the means-ends rationality of bourgeois society is to become life's organizing principle.

Chapter Three

On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeois Society

Its autonomy (that of art) surely remains irrevocable.¹

*It is impossible to conceive of the autonomy of art
without covering up work.²*

1. Research Problems

The two sentences of Adorno circumscribe the contradictoriness of the category 'autonomy': necessary to define what art is in bourgeois society, it also carries the taint of ideological distortion where it does not reveal that it is socially conditioned. This suggests the definition of autonomy that will underlie the following comments and also serves to distinguish it from two other, competing concepts: the autonomy concept of *l'art pour l'art* and the autonomy concept of a positivist sociology that sees autonomy as the merely subjective idea of the producer of art.

If the autonomy of art is defined as art's independence from society, there are several ways of understanding that definition. Conceiving of art's apartness from society as its 'nature' means involuntarily adopting the *l'art pour l'art* concept of art and simultaneously making it impossible to explain this apartness as the product of a historical and social development. If, on the other hand, one puts forward the view that art's independence from society exists only in the artist's imagination and that it tells us nothing about the status of works, the correct insight that autonomy is a historically conditioned phenomenon turns into its denial; what remains is mere illusion. Both approaches miss the complexity of

autonomy, a category whose characteristic it is that it describes something real (the detachment of art as a special sphere of human activity from the nexus of the praxis of life) but simultaneously expresses this real phenomenon in concepts that block recognition of the social determinacy of the process. Like the public realm (*Öffentlichkeit*), the autonomy of art is a category of bourgeois society that both reveals and obscures an actual historical development. All discussion of this category must be judged by the extent to which it succeeds in showing and explaining logically and historically the contradictoriness inherent in the thing itself.

A history of art as an institution in bourgeois society cannot be sketched in what follows because the requisite preliminary studies in the arts and the social sciences have not been done. Instead, various approaches toward a materialist explanation of the genesis of the category 'autonomy' will be discussed because this may lead to a clarification of both the concept and the thing. Also, concrete research perspectives can most readily be developed from a critique of the most recent studies.³ B. Hinz explains the genesis of the idea of the autonomy of art as follows: "During this phase of the historical separation of the producer from his means of production, the artist remained as the only one whom the division of labor had passed by, though most assuredly not without leaving a trace. . . . The reason that his product could acquire importance as something special, 'autonomous,' seems to lie in the continuation of the handicraft mode of production after the historical division of labor had set in" (*Autonomie der Kunst*, p. 175 f.).⁴ Being arrested at the handicraft stage of production within a society where the division of labor and the separation of the worker from his means of production becomes increasingly the norm would thus be the actual precondition for seeing art as something special. Because the Renaissance artist worked principally at a court, he reacted "feudally" to the division of labor. He denied his status as craftsman and conceived of his achievement as purely intellectual. M. Müller comes to a similar conclusion: "At least in theory, it is the court that promotes the division of artistic work into material and intellectual production, the field in which this happens being the art that is created there. This division is a feudal reflex to changed conditions of production" (*Autonomie der Kunst*, p. 26).

Here, we have the significant attempt to advance a materialist explanation of intellectual phenomena that transcends the rigid opposition of bourgeoisie and nobility. The authors do not content themselves with merely attributing intellectual objectifications to

specific social positions but try to derive ideologies (here, the idea of the nature of the process of artistic creation) from social dynamics. They see the autonomy claim of art as a phenomenon that emerges in the feudal sphere but that is a reaction to the change the early capitalist economy brings to courtly society. This nuanced interpretive scheme has its analogue in the conception Werner Krauss gave of the *honnête homme* in seventeenth century France.⁵ The social ideal of the *honnête homme* also cannot be understood simply as the ideology of a nobility that is losing its political role. Precisely because it turns against the particularism of the estates, Krauss interprets it as the attempt of the nobility to win the upper reaches of the bourgeoisie for its own struggle against absolutism. The value of the results of these studies in the sociology of art is qualified, however, because the speculative element (and this applies also to Müller) dominates to such a degree that the thesis cannot be justified by the findings. Another factor is more decisive: What is referred to here by the concept 'autonomy' is almost wholly the subjective side of the process in which art becomes autonomous. The object of the explanatory attempt are the ideas artists have about their activity, not the birth of autonomy as a whole. But this process comprises a second element, which is that of the freeing of a capacity for the perception and shaping of reality that had hitherto been integrated into cultic ends. Although there is reason to assume that the elements of the process (the ideological and the real) are connected, there is something problematical about reducing it to its ideological dimension. It is to the real side of the process that Lutz Winckler's explanatory attempt addresses itself. His point of departure is Hauser's comment that, with the transition from the individual who commissions an artist to create something for a specific purpose to the collector who acquires the work of prestigious artists on the growing art market, the independently working artist makes his appearance as the historical correlate of the collector.⁶ Winckler draws these conclusions: "The abstraction from the person who commissions a work and the work being commissioned, an abstraction which the market made possible, was the precondition for artistic abstraction, the interest in techniques of composition and coloring" (Winckler, p. 18). Hauser is largely descriptive; he sets forth a historical development, the simultaneous appearance of the collector and the independent artist, that is, the artist who produces for an anonymous market. On this, Winckler bases an explanation of the genesis of the autonomy of the aesthetic. Such an elaboration of descriptive statements into an explanatory historical construct

seems problematical to me, not least because other comments Hauser makes suggest different conclusions. Although artists' studios were still places of handicraft in the fifteenth century, Hauser writes, and subject to guild rules (p. 56 ff.), the social status of the artist changed around the beginning of the sixteenth century because the new seigneuries and principalities on the one hand, and wealthy cities on the other, became sources of an ever-increasing demand for qualified artists who were capable of taking on and executing important orders. In this context also, Hauser speaks of a demand on the art market, but what is meant is not the "market" on which individual works are bought and sold, but the growing number of important commissions. This increase resulted in a loosening of the guild ties of the artists (the guilds were an instrument of the producers by which they protected themselves against surplus production and the fall in prices this entailed). Whereas Winckler derives "artistic abstraction," the interest in techniques of composition and color, from the market mechanism (artists produce for the anonymous market on which the collector buys the works; they no longer produce for the individual who commissions something), an explanation that contradicts Winckler's could be deduced from the Hauser comments just given. The interest in techniques of composition and color would then be a consequence of the new social position of the artist, which results not from the decreasing importance of commissioned art but from its growth.

This is not the place to determine what the "correct" explanation may be. What is important is to recognize the research problem that the divergence of the various explanatory attempts makes apparent. The development of the art market (both of the old "commission" market and the new market where individual works are bought and sold) furnishes a kind of "fact" from which it is difficult to infer anything about the developing autonomy of the aesthetic. The process of the growth of the social sphere that we call art, which extended over centuries and was fitful because it was inhibited time and again by countermovements, can hardly be derived from any single cause, even though that cause be of such central importance for society as the market mechanism.

The study of Bredekamp differs from the approaches discussed so far because the author attempts to show "that the concept and idea of 'free' (autonomous) art is tied from the very beginning to a specific class, that the courts and the great bourgeoisie promoted art as a witness to their rule" (*Autonomie der Kunst*, p. 92). Because aesthetic appeal is used as a means of domination, Bredekamp sees

autonomy as a delusion (*Schein-Realität*) and contrasts it with non-autonomous art, which he considers a positive value. He tries to show that it was not out of an emotional conservatism that the lower classes clung to trecento forms in the fifteenth century "but because they had the capacity to experience and resist the process by which art develops from cult and then lays claim to autonomy as tied to the ideology of the upper classes" (ibid., p. 128). Similarly, he interprets the iconoclasm of the plebeian and petit bourgeois sects as a radical protest against the process by which sensuous appeal becomes something in its own right, for Savonarola certainly did not object to an art that tended toward moral instruction. In this type of interpretation, the principal problem is that it equates the interpreter's insight and the experience of those who lived through the event. The interpreter doubtlessly has the right to make attributions; on the basis of one's experience in and of society, one may tend to believe that the aesthetic conservatism of the lower strata contains an element of truth. But the interpreter cannot simply impute this insight to the petit bourgeois and plebeian strata of fifteenth-century Italy as their experience. That this is what Bredekamp does becomes clear once more at the end of his study, where he characterizes ascetic-religious art as an "early form" of 'partisanship' and ascribes to it as positive attributes "the denunciation of the aura of ascendancy and its abundance of art, the tendency toward receptibility by the masses, and the neglect of aesthetic appeal in favor of didactic and political clarity" (p. 169). Without meaning to, Bredekamp thus confirms the traditional view that engaged art cannot be 'genuine' art. More decisive is the fact that because of his partiality to a moralizing art, Bredekamp fails to give due weight to what is liberating in the emancipation of aesthetic appeal from religious contexts.

The divergence of genesis and validity must be taken note of here if one wishes to grasp the contradictoriness of the process by which art becomes autonomous. The works in which the aesthetic offers itself for the first time as a special object of pleasure may well have been connected in their genesis with the aura emanating from those that rule, but that does not change the fact that in the course of further historical development, they not only made possible a certain kind of pleasure (the aesthetic) but contributed toward the creation of the sphere we call art. In other words: critical science must not simply deny an aspect of social reality (and the autonomy of art is such an aspect) and retreat to the formulation of a few dichotomies (aura of the rulers versus receptibility by the masses, aesthetic appeal versus didactic-political clarity). It must open itself to the dialectic

of art that Benjamin summarized in the phrase: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."⁷ Benjamin had no intention of condemning civilization with this phrase—an idea that would be at odds with his concept of criticism as something that saves or preserves. Rather, he formulates the insight that hitherto, culture has always been paid for by the suffering of those who were excluded from it. Greek culture, for example, was the culture of a slaveholding society). True, the beauty of works does not justify the suffering to which they owe their existence; but neither may one negate the work that alone testifies to that suffering. Although it is important to show what is suppression (aura of ascendancy) in the great works, they must not be reduced to it. Attempts to annul what is contradictory in the development of art, by playing off a 'moralizing' against an 'autonomous' art, miss the point because they overlook both what is liberating in autonomous and what is regressive in moralizing art. Compared with such undialectical reflections, Horkheimer and Adorno are correct when, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they insist that the process of civilization cannot be separated from suppression.

The various more recent approaches toward the clarification of the genesis of the autonomy of art were not confronted with each other here, but not because such efforts should be discouraged. Quite the contrary; I believe that they are extremely important. Yet it is also true that such confrontation shows the danger of historical-philosophical speculation. Especially a science that understands itself as materialist should be on guard against it. This is not meant as a call to blindly abandon oneself to the 'material' but as a plea for an empiricism that is informed by theory. This formula points to concealed research problems that, to the best of my knowledge, materialist cultural science has not yet clearly formulated and that it certainly has not solved: what procedures can be devised for the attempt to solve certain technical problems such that the investigation of the historical material can yield results not already postulated at the theoretical level? As long as this question has not been asked, the cultural sciences always risk oscillating between bad concreteness and bad generalization. With reference to the problem of autonomy, one should ask whether there is a connection between its two elements (the detachment of art from the praxis of life, and the obscuring of the historical conditions of this process as in the cult of genius, for example), and what sort of connection that may be. The emancipation of the aesthetic from the praxis of life could probably

be most easily traced if one examined the development of aesthetic ideas. The nexus between art and the sciences that the Renaissance created would then have to be interpreted as the first phase of art's emancipation from ritual. In the emancipation of art from the direct tie to the sacral, one should probably see the center of that process that is so difficult to analyze because it required centuries for its completion, the achievement of autonomy by art. The detachment of art from ecclesiastical ritual should undoubtedly not be understood as an unbroken development; its course was contradictory (Hauser repeatedly emphasizes that as late as the fifteenth century, the Italian merchant class still satisfied its need for representation by commissioning sacral works). But even within what still had the external appearance of sacral art, the emancipation of the aesthetic proceeds. Even the counterreformers who used art for its effect paradoxically promoted its emancipation by their very action. It is true that Baroque art makes an extraordinary impression, but its connection with the religious subject has become relatively loose. This art does not derive its principal effect from the *sujet* but from the abundance of colors and forms. The art that the counterreformers intended to make a means of ecclesiastical propaganda can thus detach itself from the sacral purpose because the artist developed a heightened sense for the effects of colors and forms.⁸ There is yet another sense in which the process of emancipation of the aesthetic is a contradictory one. For as we have seen, what occurs here is not merely that a new way of perceiving that is immune to the coercion of means-ends rationality comes into existence. It is also that the sphere this opens up is ideologized (notion of genius, etc.). Concerning the genesis of the process, finally, it will undoubtedly be necessary to make its connection with the rise of bourgeois society the point of departure. It will have become clear that to prove such a connection, much remains to be done. Here, the first steps taken by the Marburg researchers into the sociology of art would have to be developed further.

2. The Autonomy of Art in the Aesthetics of Kant and Schiller

So far, it has been the fine arts of the Renaissance that have served to give some idea of the prehistory of the development of the autonomy of art. Not until the eighteenth century, with the rise of bourgeois society and the seizure of political power by a bourgeoisie that had gained economic strength, does a systematic aesthetics as a

philosophical discipline and a new concept of autonomous art come into being. In philosophical aesthetics, the result of a centuries-long process is conceptualized. By the "modern concept of art as a comprehensive designation for poetry, music, the stage, sculpture, painting and architecture which did not become current until the end of the 18th century,"⁹ artistic activity is understood as an activity that differs from all others. "The various arts were removed from the context of everyday life and conceived of as something that could be treated as a whole. . . . As the realm of non-purposive creation and disinterested pleasure, this whole was contrasted with the life of society which it seemed the task of the future to order rationally, in strict adaptation to definable ends."¹⁰ With the constitution of aesthetics as an autonomous sphere of philosophical knowledge, this concept of art comes into being. Its result is that artistic production is divorced from the totality of social activities and comes to confront them abstractly. Whereas the unity of *delectare* and *prodesse* had been a commonplace not only of all poetries since Hellenism and especially since Horace but also a fundamental tenet of artistic self-understanding, the construction of a non-purposive realm of art brings it about that in theory, *prodesse* is understood as an extra-aesthetic factor and that criticism censures as inartistic works with a didactic tendency.

In Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), the subjective aspect of the detachment of art from the practical concerns of life is reflected.¹¹ It is not the work of art but the aesthetic judgment (judgment of taste) that Kant investigates. It is situated between the realm of the senses and that of reason, between the "interest of inclination in the case of the agreeable" (*Critique of Judgment*, § 5) and the interest of practical reason in the realization of the moral law, and is defined as *disinterested*. "The delight which determines the judgment of taste is independent of all interest" (§ 2), where interest is defined by "reference to the faculty of desire" (*ibid.*). If the faculty of desire is that human capability which makes possible on the side of the subject a society based on the principle of the maximization of profit, then Kant's axiom also defines the freedom of art from the constraints of the developing bourgeois-capitalist society. The aesthetic is conceived as a sphere that does not fall under the principle of the maximization of profit prevailing in all spheres of life. In Kant, this element does not yet come to the fore. On the contrary, he makes clear what is meant (the detachment of the aesthetic from all practical life contexts) by emphasizing the

universality of aesthetic judgment as compared with the particularity of the judgment to which the bourgeois social critic subjects the feudal life style: "If anyone asks me whether I consider that the palace I see before me is beautiful, I may, perhaps reply that I do not care for things of that sort that are merely made to be gaped at. Or I may reply in the same strain as that Iroquois sachem who said that nothing in Paris pleased him better than the eating-houses. I may even go a step further and inveigh with the vigor of a Rousseau against the vanity of the great who spend the sweat of the people on such superfluous things. . . . All this may be admitted and approved; only it is not the point now at issue. All one wants to know is whether the mere representation of the object is to my liking" (*Critique of Judgment*, § 2).

The quotation makes clear what Kant means by disinterest. Both the interest of the "Iroquois sachem," which is directed toward the immediate satisfaction of needs, and the practical interest of reason of Rousseau's social critic lie outside the sphere Kant stakes out for aesthetic judgment. With his demand that the aesthetic judgment be universal, Kant also closes his eyes to the particular interests of his class. Toward the products of the class enemy also, the bourgeois theoretician claims impartiality. What is bourgeois in Kant's argument is precisely the demand that the aesthetic judgment have universal validity. The pathos of universality is characteristic of the bourgeoisie, which fights the feudal nobility as an estate that represents particular interests.¹²

Kant not only declares the aesthetic as independent of the sphere of the sensuous and the moral (the beautiful is neither the agreeable nor the morally good) but also of the sphere of the theoretical. The logical peculiarity of the judgment of taste is that whereas it claims universal validity, it is not "a logical universality according to concepts" (§ 31) because in that case, the "necessary and universal approval would be capable of being enforced by proofs" (§ 35). For Kant, the universality of the aesthetic judgment is thus grounded in the agreement of an idea with the subjective conditions of the use of judgment that apply to all, concretely, in the agreement of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) and understanding (*Verstand*).

In Kant's philosophical system, judgment occupies a central place, for it is assigned the task of mediating between theoretical knowledge (nature) and practical knowledge (freedom). It furnishes the "concept of a purposiveness of nature" that not only permits moving upward from the particular to the general but also the

practical modification of reality. For only a nature conceived as purposive in its manifoldness can be cognized as unity and become the object of practical action.

Kant assigned the aesthetic a special position between sensuousness and reason, and defined the judgment of taste as free and disinterested. For Schiller, these Kantian reflections become a point of departure from which he can proceed toward something like a definition of the social function of the aesthetic. The attempt strikes one as paradoxical, for it was precisely the disinterestedness of the aesthetic judgment and, it would seem at first, the *functionlessness* of art as an implicit consequence that Kant had emphasized. Schiller attempts to show that it is on the very basis of its autonomy, its not being tied to immediate ends, that art can fulfill a task that cannot be fulfilled any other way: the furtherance of humanity. The point of departure of his reflections is an analysis of what, under the influence of the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, he calls the "drama of our period":

Among the lower and more numerous classes we find crude, lawless impulses which have been unleashed by the loosening of the bonds of civil order, and are hastening with ungovernable fury to their brutal satisfaction. . . . The extinction of the state contains its vindication. Society uncontrolled, instead of hastening upward into organic life, is relapsing into its original elements. On the other hand, the civilized classes present to us the still more repugnant spectacle of indolence and a depravity of character which is all the more shocking since culture itself is the source of it. . . . The intellectual enlightenment on which the refined ranks of society not without justification, pride themselves, reveal, on the whole, an influence on the disposition so little ennobling that it rather furnishes maxims to confirm depravity.¹³

At the level of analysis quoted here, the problem seems to have no solution. In their actions, the "lower and more numerous classes" are slaves to the immediate satisfaction of their drives. Not only that, the "enlightenment of reason" has done nothing to teach the "civilized classes" to act morally. According to Schiller's analysis, in other words, one may put one's trust neither in man's good nature nor in the educability of his reason.

What is decisive in Schiller's procedure is that he does not interpret the result of his analysis anthropologically, in the sense of a definitively fixed human nature, but historically, as the result of a historical process. He argues that the development of civilization has destroyed the unity of the senses and of reason, which still existed among the Greeks: "We see not merely individual persons

but whole classes of human beings developing only part of their capacities, while the rest of them, like a stunted plant, shew only a feeble vestige of their nature" (p. 38). "Eternally chained to only one single little fragment of the whole, Man himself grew to be only a fragment; with the monotonous noise of the wheel he drives everlastingly in his ears, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of imprinting humanity upon his nature he becomes merely the imprint of his occupation, of his science" (p. 40). As activities become distinct from each other, "a more rigorous dissociation of ranks and occupations" becomes necessary (p. 39). Formulated in concepts of the social sciences, this means that the division of labor has class society as its unavoidable consequence. But Schiller argues that class society cannot be abolished by a political revolution because the revolution can be carried out only by those men who, having been stamped by a society where the division of labor prevails, have for that reason been unable to develop their humanity. The aporia that appeared at the first level of Schiller's analysis as the irresolvable contradiction of sensuousness and reason reappears at the second. Although the contradiction here is no longer an eternal but a historical one, it seems no less hopeless, for every change that would make society both rational and humane presupposes human beings who would need such a society to develop in.

It is at precisely this point of his argument that Schiller introduces art, to which he assigns no less a task than to put back together the "halves" of man that have been torn asunder—which means that it is within a society already characterized by the division of labor that art is to make possible the development of the totality of human potentialities that the individual cannot develop in his sphere of activity. "But can Man really be destined to neglect himself for any end whatever? Should Nature be able, by her designs, to rob us of a completeness which Reason prescribes to us by hers? It must be false that the cultivation of individual powers necessitates the sacrifice of their totality; or however much the law of Nature did have that tendency, we must be at liberty to restore by means of a higher Art this wholeness in our nature which Art has destroyed" (p. 45). This is a difficult passage, because the concepts here are not rigid but, seized by the dialectics of thought, pass into their opposite. 'End' refers first to the limited task of the individual, then to the teleology (unfolding into distinct human powers) that occurs in and through historical development ('nature'); and finally, to an all-around development of man that reason calls for. Similar considera-

tions apply to the concept of nature that is both a law of development but also refers to man as a psychophysical totality. Art also means two different things. First, it refers to technique and science, and then it has the modern meaning of a sphere that has been set apart from the praxis of life ("higher art"). It is Schiller's idea that precisely because it renounces all direct intervention in reality, art is suited to restore man's wholeness. Schiller, who sees no chance in his time for the building of a society that permits the development of the totality of everyone's powers, does not surrender this goal, however. It is true, though, that the creation of a rational society is made dependent on a humanity that has first been realized through art.

It cannot be our purpose here to trace Schiller's thought in its detail, to observe how he defines the play impulse, which he identifies with artistic activity as the synthesis of sense impulse and form impulse, or how, in a speculative history, he seeks to find liberation from the spell of sensuousness through the experience of the beautiful. What is to be emphasized in our context is the central social function that Schiller assigns to art precisely because it has been removed from all the contexts of practical life.

To summarize: the *autonomy of art* is a category of bourgeois society. It permits the description of art's detachment from the context of practical life as a historical development—that among the members of those classes which, at least at times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-ends relationships. Here we find the moment of truth in the talk about the autonomous work of art. What this category cannot lay hold of is that this detachment of art from practical contexts is a *historical process*, i.e., that it is socially conditioned. And here lies the untruth of the category, the element of distortion that characterizes every ideology, provided one uses this term in the sense the early Marx does when he speaks of the critique of ideology. The category 'autonomy' does not permit the understanding of its referent as one that developed historically. The relative dissociation of the work of art from the praxis of life in bourgeois society thus becomes transformed into the (erroneous) idea that the work of art is totally independent of society. In the strict meaning of the term, 'autonomy' is thus an ideological category that joins an element of truth (the apartness of art from the praxis of life) and an element of untruth (the hypostatization of this fact, which is a result of historical development as the 'essence' of art).

3. The Negation of the Autonomy of Art by the Avant-Garde

In scholarly discussion up to now, the category 'autonomy' has suffered from the imprecision of the various subcategories thought of as constituting a unity in the concept of the autonomous work of art. Since the development of the individual subcategories is not synchronous, it may happen that sometimes courtly art seems already autonomous, while at other times only bourgeois art appears to have that characteristic. To make clear that the contradictions between the various interpretations result from the nature of the case, we will sketch a historical typology that is deliberately reduced to three elements (purpose or function, production, reception), because the point here is to have the nonsynchronism in the development of individual categories emerge with clarity.

A. Sacral Art (example: the art of the High Middle Ages) serves as cult object. It is wholly integrated into the social institution 'religion.' It is produced collectively, as a craft. The mode of reception also is institutionalized as collective.¹⁴

B. Courtly Art (example: the art at the court of Louis XIV) also has a precisely defined function. It is representational and serves the glory of the prince and the self-portrayal of courtly society. Courtly art is part of the life praxis of courtly society, just as sacral art is part of the life praxis of the faithful. Yet the detachment from the sacral tie is a first step in the emancipation of art. ('Emancipation' is being used here as a descriptive term, as referring to the process by which art constitutes itself as a distinct social subsystem.) The difference from sacral art becomes particularly apparent in the realm of production: the artist produces as an individual and develops a consciousness of the uniqueness of his activity. Reception, on the other hand, remains collective. But the content of the collective performance is no longer sacral, it is sociability.

C. Only to the extent that the bourgeoisie adopts concepts of value held by the aristocracy does bourgeois art have a representational function. When it is genuinely bourgeois, this art is the objectification of the self-understanding of the bourgeois class. Production and reception of the self-understanding as articulated in art are no longer tied to the praxis of life. Habermas calls this the satisfaction of residual needs, that is, of needs that have become submerged in

pp. 9-45, which is an answer to Benjamin's essay. See also Christa Bürger, *Textanalyse als Ideologiekritik. Zur Rezeption zeitgenössischer Unterhaltungsliteratur* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1973), chap. I, 2.

24. B. Brecht, *The Threepenny Lawsuit* (1931), in John Willett, ed., trans., *Brecht on Theatre. The development of an aesthetic*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), p. 48.

25. This is the reason for the difficulties encountered by attempts to ground an aesthetic theory today in the concept of reflection. Such attempts are historically conditioned by the development of art in bourgeois society, more precisely, by the 'withering' of the mimetic function of art that sets in with the avant-garde. The attempt to provide a sociological explanation of modern painting is undertaken by A. Gehlen, *Zeit-Bilder. Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei* (Frankfurt/Bonn, 1960). But the social conditions of the development of modern painting as listed by Gehlen remain rather general. In addition to the invention of photography, he mentions the enlargement of living space and the end of the nexus between painting and the natural sciences (*ibid.*, p. 40 ff.).

26. "With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art" ("The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction," p. 224).

27. See P. Francastel, who summarizes his investigations on art and technique as follows: 1. "There is no contradiction between the development of certain forms of contemporary art and the forms scientific and technical activity takes in contemporary society"; 2. "the development of the arts in the present obeys a specific esthetic developmental principle" (*Art et technique aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles* [Bibl. Meditations 16, 1964], p. 221 f.).

28. See Th. W. Adorno, "George und Hofmannsthal. Zum Briefwechsel: 1891-1906 in *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (München: dtv 159, 1963), pp. 190-231; and Adorno, "Der Artist als Statthalter," in *Noten zur Literatur I*, pp. 173-93.

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1. Th. W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, ed. Gretel Adorno, R. Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 9.

2. Th. W. Adorno, *Versuch über Wagner* (München/Zürich: Knaur, 1964), p. 88 f.

3. I am referring to the following studies: M. Müller, "Künstlerische und materielle Produktion. Zur Autonomie der Kunst in der italienischen Renaissance," H. Bredekamp, "Autonomie und Askese," B. Hinz, "Zur Dialektik des bürgerlichen Autonomie-Begriffs," all of which appeared in the volume *Autonomie der Kunst. Zur Genese und Kritik einer bürgerlichen Kategorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), which is quoted as 'autonomy of art' in what follows. I refer further to L. Winckler, "Entstehung und Funktion des literarischen Marktes," in Winckler, *Kulturwarenproduktion. Aufsätze zur Literatur- und Sprachsoziologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 12-75; and B. J. Warneken, "Autonomie und Indienstnahme. Zu ihrer Beziehung in der Literatur der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft," in *Rhetorik, Ästhetik, Ideologie. Aspekte einer kritischen Kulturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1973), pp. 79-115.

4. In the twenties, the Russian avant-gardiste B. Arvatov had already given a similar interpretation of bourgeois art: "While the entire technique of capitalist society is based on the highest and most recent achievements and represents a technique of mass production (industry, radio, transport, newspapers, scientific laboratory etc.)—bourgeois art has remained handicraft in principle and has for that reason been pushed out of the general social praxis of mankind and into isolation, into the sphere of pure esthetics. . . . The

solitary master is the only type of artist in capitalist society, the type of the specialist of 'pure' art who works outside of a directly utilitarian praxis because that praxis is based on the technique of machines. This is the cause of the illusion that art is an end in itself, and it is here that all of its bourgeois fetishism originates." H. Günther and Karla Hielscher, ed., trans., *Kunst und Produktion* [München: Hanser, 1972], p. 11 f.).

5. W. Krauss, "Über die Träger der klassischen Gesinnung im 17. Jahrhundert," in Krauss, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur und Sprachwissenschaft* (Frankfurt, 1949), pp. 321-38. The essay is based on and continues the significant study of the sociology of the public by Erich Auerbach, "La cour et la ville," in Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959; reprint forthcoming from Univ. of Minnesota Press).

6. A. Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, vol. II (New York: Vintage Books, n.d.), p. 42. Quoted as Hauser in what follows.

7. W. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, p. 256.

8. An art that is an integral part of ritual cannot be harnessed because it does not exist as an independent sphere. Here, the work of art is part of the ritual. Only an art that has become (relatively) autonomous can be harnessed. The autonomy of art is thus simultaneously the precondition for later heteronomy. Commodity aesthetics presupposes an autonomous art.

9. H. Kuhn, "Ästhetik," in *Das Fischer Lexikon. Literatur 2/1*, ed. W.-H. Friedrich, W. Killy (Frankfurt, 1965), pp. 52, 53.

10. *Ibid.*

11. I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).

12. This element is considerably more important in Kant's argument than is the anti-feudal element that Warneken demonstrated in Kant's comment that table music is merely pleasant but cannot claim to be beautiful (*Critique*, § 44), (*Autonomie und Indienstnahme*, p. 85).

13. Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 35-36.

14. On this, see the recent essay by R. Warning, "Ritus, Mythos und geistliches Spiel," in *Terror und Spiel. Probleme der Mythenrezeption*, ed. Fuhrmann (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971), pp. 211-39.

15. Hegel already referred to the novel as "the modern middle-class epic" (*Ästhetik*, ed. F. Bassenge, 2 vols. [Berlin/Weimar, 1965], vol. II, p. 452.) [In his translation of the *Aesthetics*, T. M. Knox renders this passage as follows: "But it is quite different with romance, the modern popular epic" (vol. II, p. 1092), but this seems wrong. Translator's note.]

16. On the problem of the false sublation of art in the praxis of life, see J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied/Berlin, 1968), § 18, p. 176 ff.

17. See P. Bürger, "Funktion und Bedeutung des *orgueil* bei Paul Valéry," in *Romanistisches Jahrbuch 16* (1965), pp. 149-68.

18. Examples of neo-avant-gardiste paintings and sculptures to be found in the catalog of the exhibit *Sammlung Cremer. Europäische Avantgarde 1950-1970*, ed. G. Adriani (Tübingen, 1973). See also chapter 3, I below on the problem of the Neo-avant-garde.

19. T. Tzara, "Pour faire un Poème dadaïste," in Tzara, *Lampisteries précédées des sept manifestes dada* (place of publication not given, 1963), p. 64. A. Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme" (1924), in Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Coll. Idées 23, 1963), p. 42 f.

20. On the Surrealists' conception of groups and the collective experiences they sought

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Theory of the Avant-Garde

Peter Bürger

Translation from the German by Michael Shaw

Foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse

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