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Between Alienation and Resonance: Atomization and Embedment from Schopen- hauer to Camus, from Hegel to Honneth, and from Thoreau to Houellebecq

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Die DFG-KollegforscherInnengruppe „Landnahme, Beschleunigung, Aktivierung. Dynamik und (De-) Stabilisierung moderner Wachstumsgesellschaften“ – kurz: „Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften“ – setzt an der soziologischen Diagnose multipler gesellschaftlicher Umbruchs- und Krisenphänomene an, die in ihrer Gesamtheit das überkommene Wachstumsregime moderner Gesellschaften in Frage stellen. Die strukturellen Dynamisierungsimperative der kapitalistischen Moderne stehen heute selbst zur Disposition: Die Steigerungslogik fortwährender Landnahmen, Beschleunigungen und Aktivierungen bringt weltweit historisch neuartige Gefährdungen der ökonomischen, ökologischen und sozialen Reproduktion hervor. Einen Gegenstand in Veränderung – die moderne Wachstumsgesellschaft – vor Augen, zielt das Kolleg auf die Entwicklung von wissenschaftlichen Arbeitsweisen und auf eine Praxis des kritischen Dialogs, mittels derer der übliche Rahmen hochgradig individualisierter oder aber projektförmig beschränkter Forschung überschritten werden kann. Fellows aus dem In- und Ausland suchen gemeinsam mit der Jenaer Kolleggruppe nach einem Verständnis gegenwärtiger Transformationsprozesse, um soziologische Expertise in jene gesellschaftliche Frage einzubringen, die nicht nur die europäische Öffentlichkeit in den nächsten Jahren bewegen wird: Lassen sich moderne Gesellschaften auch anders stabilisieren als über wirtschaftliches Wachstum?

Mathijs Peters

Between Alienation and Resonance: Atomization and Embedment from Schopenhauer to Camus, from Hegel to Honneth, and from Thoreau to Houellebecq

Zusammenfassung

Das Papier entwickelt einen historischen und philosophischen Überblick über unterschiedliche Konzeptualisierungen von ‚Entfremdung‘ und ‚Resonanz‘. Wobei ersteres ein Getrennt-sein zwischen dem Selbst und anderen, der Welt oder der Natur beschreibt, während das zweite Konzept als Gegenstück zu Entfremdung verstanden wird und daher als die Erfahrung des Eins-seins bzw. der Eingebettetheit des Selbst mit und in der Welt, der Kunst, einer sozialen Gemeinschaft, der Natur etc. Der Autor erörtert die Art und Weise, wie diese beiden Erfahrungen bei Schopenhauer, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Emerson, Marx, Weber, Lukacs, Benjamin, Adorno, Beckett, Fromm, Marcuse, Camus, Sartre, Habermas, Honneth und Houellebecq konzeptualisiert werden. Er stellt fest, dass Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche und Camus sich diesen Erfahrungen hauptsächlich im Kontext von religiösen und post-religiösen Fragen nähern, während die anderen diskutierten Denker Entfremdung und Resonanz in Bezug auf soziale, ökonomische und politische Analysen konzeptualisieren. Basierend auf diesen Erkenntnissen endet das Papier mit einer Verteidigung solcher Formen von Resonanz, die nicht die Spontanität, Autonomie oder Individualität des Selbst unterminieren.

Abstract

In this paper, a historical and philosophical overview is developed of different conceptualizations of ‘alienation’ and ‘resonance’. Whereas the first notion refers to a disconnection between the self and others, the world or nature, the second concept is understood as the opposite of alienation, and therefore as the experience of the self’s oneness with or embeddedness in the world, art, a social community, nature, etc. The author explores the ways in which these two experiences are conceptualized by Schopenhauer, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Emerson, Marx, Weber, Lukacs, Benjamin, Adorno, Beckett, Fromm, Marcuse, Camus, Sartre, Habermas, Honneth and Houellebecq. He observes that, whereas Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Camus mainly approach these experiences in the context of religious and post-religious questions, the other thinkers he discusses conceptualize alienation and resonance in relation to analyses of a social, economic and political nature. Based on these analyses, the paper ends with a defense of forms of resonance that do not undermine the self’s spontaneity, autonomy or individuality.

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1. Introduction

1.1 *The Present Age*

In his 1846 essay 'A Literary Review', Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) develops a critique of the society and culture in which he lived by contrasting it with what he calls the 'revolutionary age'. The present age, he opens his essay, 'is essentially *sensible, reflective, dispassionate, eruptive in its fleeting enthusiasms and prudently indolent in its relaxation*' (LR 60). Kierkegaard frequently uses the notion of 'reflection', which has several meanings in his essay. Firstly, it refers to the ability to think, to deliberate and to reflect on oneself, which has stifling consequences, in his view:

Nowadays not even a suicide does away with himself out of desperation, but considers this step so long and so sensibly that he is strangled by good sense, casting doubt on whether he may really be called a suicide, seeing that it was mainly consideration that took his life. (LR 60)

Deliberation is therefore contrasted in the essay with the ability to act, to manifest oneself as a passionate and spontaneous being *in the world*: 'There is as little action and decision these days as shallow-water paddlers have a daring desire to swim' (LR 63).

Secondly, 'reflection' refers to the ability to abstract from particular, empirical entities. Kierkegaard links this ability to the social phenomenon of the press: 'the present age is the age of advertisement, the age of miscellaneous announcements' (LR 62). Instead of focusing on action and passion itself, individuals merely read about events in watered-down and abstract *reflections* in newspapers. This disconnects them from that which is actually happening and makes them withdraw into the inwardness of their shallow and actionless subjectivity, Kierkegaard observes.

He links this emphasis on 'reflection' as well to the emergence of feelings of envy and egotism: people do not truly desire or throw themselves passionately into 'life' anymore, he writes, but only *compare* their achievements and status with those of others. This is made possible, in his view, by the level of abstraction achieved with the introduction of money: the *general* form of money enables the comparison of objects that are, *in themselves*, different from each other – 'money becomes the object of desire: indeed it too is a promissory note, an abstraction' (LR 66). In Kierkegaard's view, money robs every act, idea, feeling or individual of its particular nature and results in a *levelling* atmosphere in which ambiguity and characterlessness reign:

[W]hile a passionate age *accelerates, raises and topples, extols and oppresses*, a reflective, passionless age does the opposite – it *stifles and impedes, it levels*. Levelling is a quiet, mathematically abstract affair that avoids all fuss. While the eruptive short-term enthusiasm might look despondently for some misfortune, just to taste the strength of its existence, no interruption can help the apathy that succeeds it, any more than it helps the levelling engineer. If an uprising at its peak is like a volcanic explosion in which not a word can be heard, then levelling at its peak is like a deathly stillness over which nothing can raise itself but into which everything impotently sinks down. (LR 75)

Kierkegaard argues that these phenomena are not purely individual or psychological in nature, but are deeply entwined with social structures. He observes, for example, that in the 'present age' society erases 'all that is concrete' because 'the press creates this abstraction the public, composed as it is of unreal individuals' (LR 81). This 'public', in his view, is nothing but an abstract mass in which individuals are

pushed, robbed of their individual qualities and are reduced to ‘nothing’, to an ‘abstract waste and emptiness’ (LR 83), which makes levelling into ‘not a single individual’s action but an activity of reflection in the hands of an abstract power’ (LR 76).

This implies that the notion of ‘reflection’ can be interpreted in a *third* way: instead of connecting to other people, the world or to nature, and to appreciate and perceive the individuality and particularity of those we face and of our own selves, the ‘present age’ has imprisoned the individual in a cage of *reflecting mirrors*. The modern individual only perceives an abstract reflection of himself, mediated by the levelling nature of overly general images that society and the press create. Furthermore, this individual only perceives *others* by way of this mirror, Kierkegaard suggests, since he constantly compares their wealth and status with his own.

Kierkegaard’s analysis had an important influence on several philosophical analyses of life in modern societies. Hubert Dreyfus, for example, uses the Danish philosopher’s essay to criticize the influence of the internet. He does this by exploring Kierkegaard’s argument that ‘the Public Sphere, as implemented in the Press, promoted risk-free anonymity and idle curiosity that undermined responsibility and commitment’, which, ‘in turn, levelled all qualitative distinctions and led to nihilism’ (Dreyfus 2004). The internet, Dreyfus claims in line of Kierkegaard’s observations, reduces its mass of users to an anonymous whole, thereby watering down passion and especially personal *engagement*.

In line of Dreyfus’ observations, it could also be argued that Kierkegaard’s observations and concerns, formulated 171 years ago, return in Dave Eggers’ 2013 bestseller *The Circle*, which tells the story of an employee of a technology company called ‘The Circle’. Based on the current tendencies of companies like *Google*, *Facebook* and *Twitter*, Eggers describes how this company enables its users to systematize and structure everything and everyone, usurping each dimension of life – social, medical, economic, political, commercial – and turning it into a levelling machine that controls and manipulates society as a whole. In the name of ‘transparency’, it eradicates privacy and, as in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, does this in complete openness and with support of almost all members of society, who experience its workings as desirable, good and necessary. Herewith, every form of individuality or particularity is levelled, manipulated and standardized, resulting in a nihilism similar to the worldview that characterizes Kierkegaard’s ‘present age’, embedding people in a whole that merely revolves around reflections *on* and representations *of* this world.

1.2 Alienation and Resonance

In this paper, I will develop an overview of the ways in which this dualism between ‘reflection’ and ‘levelling’ on the one hand, and experiences of connection, engagement, spontaneity and embedment on the other, return in different forms in the analyses that several authors – both philosophers and writers – construct of what could, broadly, be defined as ‘modernity’. In their texts, I will show, the idea is developed that the generalization, rationalization, fragmentation, reification, commodification or reflection that they associate with modernity and with economic and social structures that came into being with the rise of modern capitalism, constituted a gap or schism between self and others, self and world and self and body, resulting in what several of them characterize as an *atomization* of the modern subject.

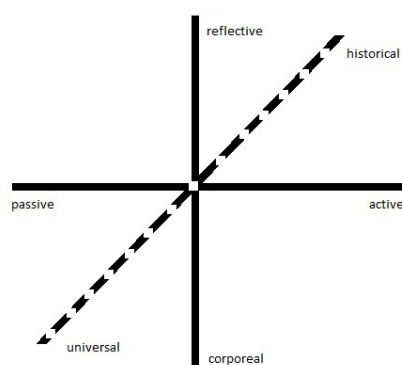
This experience of ‘atomization’ is described by Albert Camus as following from a ‘confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world’ (MS 28); from the experience that the world has stopped responding to one’s needs or feelings and has turned into a silent, cold or even deathlike-place; into the ‘shallow’, reflecting waters of Kierkegaard’s ‘present age’; into a world that Beckett, using an even extremer term, characterizes as ‘corpsed’ (E 20).

My aim is not to provide a comprehensive historical overview of the theories of all these authors, to reduce their observations to only one theme, or to summarize modernity-critique in general. Instead, I want to show how, throughout their works, a longing for connection, embedment or warmth forms a returning idea and follows from a negative diagnosis of the status quo – how different their observations otherwise may be. An example of these differences is formed by the fact that Kierkegaard, as mentioned above, criticizes reflection in his text on the present age, but that many of the authors that I will discuss emphasize the importance of reflection and of reason.

The conceptual background of this overview will be formed by the notions of ‘alienation’ and ‘resonance’. I will understand the first concept in the broadest possible way: as the constitution of a gap between the self and something or someone that or who thereby becomes *alien* to that self. This process ‘silences’ the context in which this self lives and reduces the subject to an atom that has no bonds with others or nature. In the case of each of these authors, I will show that they construct a particular understanding of this ‘silencing’ or ‘atomization’ of the world.

The second term – ‘resonance’ – is more difficult to define, especially because none of these authors explicitly develops it. In my use, it refers to the opposite of ‘alienation’ and thereby to the experience of a *connection* between self and body, self and other people or self and world. It refers to the experience of ‘warmth’ and to that which we can define, with Kierkegaard, as a passionate experience in which the body often plays an important role.

In order to flesh out this term in a structural way, I will use the following thematic and, of course, rather simplistic coordinate system and show where each author’s understanding of what I call ‘resonance’ can be positioned:



The vertical axis refers to our embodiment and is opposed to the mind. The horizontal axis refers to activity, which is opposed to passivity. And the third axis refers to the possible historical nature of the term and is opposed to the idea that it is ahistorical and universal in nature.

As an example, we can look at Kierkegaard’s critique of the ‘present age’ and his defence of a form of an existence that he links to the ‘revolutionary age’. Since this latter form of being has a strong bodily component and follows from a critique of the abstract nature of reflection, it should be positioned close to

'corporeality' on the horizontal axis. However, since Kierkegaard refers to action as a way of developing one's inner greatness and one's ideas, this experience is not completely devoid of concepts or thought: for Kierkegaard, resonance can be understood as pointing at a passionate *entwinement* of body and mind. On the vertical axis, it is clear that his diagnosis can be placed completely at the side of 'activity'. And since Kierkegaard links his description of what I want to define as 'resonance' to a specific age in which specific historically formed institutions (like the press) have constituted a specific way of being, it has a strong historical dimension as well. Kierkegaard, in other words, does not describe alienation and resonance as universal human dimensions, but links them to a diagnosis of a particular time, age and society, even though the terms 'present age' and 'revolutionary age' play a rather symbolic and, in places, even caricaturist role in his text.

1.3 Structure

This paper consists of three parts. In the *first* part, I discuss authors who approach alienation and resonance from the point of view of our 'existence in general': these authors argue that with the death of religion and other metaphysical systems that provided the subject with a feeling of being at home in the world, this world has become cold and non-respondent. Instead of analysing this experience from a social, cultural or economic point of view, they claim that it should be understood within the context of the human condition in general. In the *second* part, I explore these issues from the point of view of philosophers who argue that alienation and resonance should be approached as historical, economic, social and cultural phenomena, and therefore as experiences that are intrinsically bound to a situation that, according to most of them, can be overcome if these economic or social conditions are changed. In the *third* part, I briefly focus on several literary representations of alienation and resonance.

PART I: RELIGION, METAPHYSICS, EXISTENCE

2. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

The first author that I want to discuss is Arthur Schopenhauer. I want to begin with this famously pessimistic philosopher, since he is the first in the history of western philosophy who systematically develops the idea that we are completely not at home in the world, in our bodies and in social relationships. Even though his philosophy is devoid of historical or social critique, it nevertheless provides us with an understanding of what it means to claim that the world has 'become silent'. Furthermore, his thinking had an important influence on several of the other authors that I will discuss.

2.1 The Worst of All Possible Worlds

Following the tradition of German idealism, Schopenhauer famously developed a philosophy that revolves around the notion of a metaphysical force that transcends the world that we perceive. This latter world, which he calls the world-as-representation, is dependent, in his view, upon the perceiving subject, characterized by the *principium individuationis* and ruled by the law of causality: it consists of separate and

distinct objects, existing in time and space, that can influence or affect each other causally. Not only does this world include objects like stones or tables but also our own bodies: in the world we perceive, we are all separate beings, in Schopenhauer's view, since we all have separate bodies.

The world in itself, Schopenhauer argues, which transcends this world-as-representation, is fundamentally different: it consists of a metaphysical force, which he calls 'Will', that does not know the *principium individuationis*: it is an undivided, unstructured whole that knows no sense, goal or direction, and that has no rational goal or purpose. Since this Will forms the metaphysical core of all that exists, Schopenhauer concludes that everything, essentially, is driven by and consists of a force that is irrational in nature and that knows no logic.

With this claim, Schopenhauer explicitly criticizes Kant, Hegel and Leibniz and, more generally, broke with philosophical and religious traditions that are grounded in the idea that the world is good or that it is organized rationally according to a plan or an ideal. Instead, he claimed, it consists of a blind force that makes the world into a hellish and aimless place in which each creature struggles for survival and has no control over its own fate.

It is for this reason that I want to discuss Schopenhauer as the first author in this overview of conceptualizations of alienation: he explicitly breaks with the idea that we are at home in the world and therefore can be understood as developing an understanding of what alienation entails. In a famous passage, he describes his dissatisfaction with the structure of the world as follows by referring to Voltaire:

I cannot assign to ... that methodical and broad development of optimism, ... any other merit than that it later gave rise to the immortal *Candide* of the great Voltaire. In this way, of course, Leibniz's oft-repeated and lame excuse for the vile of the world, namely that the bad sometimes produces the good, obtained proof that for him was unexpected. Even by the name of his hero, Voltaire indicated that it needed only sincerity to recognize the opposite of optimism. Actually optimism cuts so strange a figure on this scene of sin, suffering, and death, that we should be forced to regard it as irony if we did not have an adequate explanation of its origin in its secret source (namely hypocritical flattery with an offensive confidence in its success...). ... But against the palpably sophisticated proofs of Leibniz that this is the best of all possible worlds, we may even oppose seriously and honestly the proof that it is the worst of all possible worlds. (WWR-II 582-3)

Even though Schopenhauer's philosophy is ahistorical in nature – he refers to an unchangeable metaphysical Will that knows no progress or history – it is important to notice that his philosophy forms the embodiment of a specific, historical way of thinking: he was strongly influenced by the naturalistic theories that were rising in his time. As Sebastian Gardner insightfully observes, Schopenhauer's philosophy is 'the primary point at which enlightenment rationalism registers the impact of naturalism' (Gardner 1999: 404).

This naturalism is most explicitly present in Schopenhauer's argument that the 'Will' manifests itself 'in' human beings and animals, and that they experience it in the form of hunger and thirst, sexual desires, the need to procreate and the drive to self-preservation. He herewith not only criticized those who claimed that there is a fundamental difference between human and non-human animals, but also observed that this situation makes our lives into endless cycles of desires and strivings, intermitted by brief moments of satisfaction that quickly turn into boredom. Famously he wrote that 'life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom... .' (WWR-I 312) and concluded:

Awakened to life out of the night of unconsciousness, the will finds itself as an individual in an endless and boundless world, among innumerable individuals, all striving, suffering, and erring; and, as if through a troubled dream, it hurries back to the old unconsciousness. Yet till then its desires are unlimited, its claims inexhaustible, and every satisfied desire gives birth to a new one. No possible satisfaction in the world could suffice to still its craving, set a final goal to its demands, and fill the bottomless pit of its heart. (WWR-II 573)

This aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophy suggests that people do not only feel not at home in the world, but also that they are not at home *in their own bodies*. As manifestations of Will, we are constantly overcome by desires and strivings, he claims, and we cannot change or influence these desires and strivings. Following his metaphysics of Will, Schopenhauer therefore argues that we are completely unfree: we have no rational control over that which we do, because our actions are defined by the strivings and desires inside of our bodies. He herewith anticipated several insights of psychoanalysis:

To make the matter clear, let us compare our consciousness to a sheet of water of some depth. Then the distinctly conscious ideas are merely the surface; on the other hand, the mass of the water is the indistinct, the feelings, the after-sensation of perceptions and intuitions and what is experienced in general, mingled with the disposition of our own will that is the kernel of our inner nature. Now this mass of the whole consciousness is more or less, in proportion to intellectual liveliness, in constant motion, and the clear pictures of the imagination, or the distinct, conscious ideas expressed in words, and the resolves of the will are what comes to the surface in consequence of this motion. The whole process of our thinking and resolving seldom lies on the surface, that is to say, seldom consists in a concatenation of clearly conceived judgements; although we aspire to this, in order to be able to give an account of it to ourselves and others. (WWR-II 135)

Our bodies leave us in the dark about that which truly defines our actions, feelings and existence: they are something that is 'alien' to us, something over which we have no control and which escapes our grasp. Schopenhauer explicitly links this 'bodily alienation' to the inability of human beings to find happiness: 'There is only one inborn error, and that is the notion that we exist in order to be happy. It is inborn in us, because it coincides with our existence itself, and our whole being is only its paraphrase, indeed our body is its monogram' (WWR-II 364). To summarize his ideas: as striving, corporeal beings, we constantly desire satisfaction and long for happiness, but we will never find this happiness since our strivings can never be satisfied and since the world is a hellish place without sense or purpose: 'Everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion. The grounds for this lie deep in the very nature of things' (WWR-II 573).

This leads us to the question of whether it is possible, according to Schopenhauer, to at least find some kind of connection to other human beings in a world that he characterizes as revolving almost exclusively around suffering. Following his metaphysics, Schopenhauer is very cynical about forms of contact between human beings, and mainly reduces possibly hopeful feelings between people to underlying desires or needs. An example is his discussion of love: following his above-mentioned naturalism, he aims to unmask the 'deep, unconscious seriousness' with which people who fall in love 'scrutinize each other' as in essence steered by the need to produce children that are as well-equipped for survival as possible (WWR-II 548). In detail, he describes the physiological characteristics that people feel attracted to in their partners, and

reduces feelings of love and desire to physiological processes in the brain that make the idea of romantic love into a mere 'delusion'; a physiological 'trick' that, in turn, is a manifestation of a deeper lying striving that can only be understood as an affirmation of one's species as a whole: 'while the lovers speak pathetically of the harmony of their souls, the core of the matter is often the agreement ... with regard to the being that is to be produced and to its perfection' (WWR-II 546). He therefore concludes that 'all amorousness is rooted in the sexual impulse alone' (WWR-II 546).

Following these pessimistic conclusions, it is no surprise that Schopenhauer's chief work ends with a discussion of the ways in which we can live in this world of suffering. He there argues that salvation can be found once an individual intuitively grasps the idea that the self is an illusion, denies the Will inside him- or herself and quietens down the endless strivings that overcome him or her. In this context, he discusses the practice of ascetism but also aesthetic contemplation. Only a complete denial of everything that we are, and thus a 'denial of the will-to-live', he suggests, may enable us to break free from the metaphysical machine that we are part of (see WWR-I 383).

2.2 A Mutual Need for Warmth

Based on this brief discussion of Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy, it seems impossible to claim, within the context of his thought, that the experience of any kind of resonance between self and world, self and itself or self and other people is possible: his metaphysics results in the idea that the world, *essentially*, is a horrible place in which we do not feel at home; that our bodies, *essentially*, torment us with strivings and desires that cannot permanently be satisfied and over which we have no control; and that our relationships with other people are, *by definition*, driven by egotism and self-preservation, which makes it difficult not to be sceptical about any kind of genuine warmth between people.

Nevertheless, however, I want to argue that Schopenhauer's philosophy, how pessimistic it may be, is characterized by a strong longing for an experience that could be defined as 'resonant'. A first hint at this longing can be found in his famous description of the 'porcupine's dilemma':

One cold winter's day, a number of porcupines huddled together quite closely in order through their mutual warmth to prevent themselves from being frozen. But they soon felt the effect of their quills on one another, which made them again move apart. Now when the need for warmth once more brought them together, the drawback of the quills was repeated so that they were tossed between two evils, until they had discovered the proper distance from which they could best tolerate one another. Thus the need for society which springs from the emptiness and monotony of men's lives, drives them together; but their many unpleasant and repulsive qualities and insufferable drawbacks once more drive them apart. The mean distance which they finally discover, and which enables them to endure being together, is politeness and good manners. Whoever does not keep to this, is told in England to 'keep his distance'. By virtue thereof, it is true that the need for mutual warmth will be only imperfectly satisfied, but, on the other hand, the prick of the quills will not be felt. Yet whoever has a great deal of internal warmth of his own will prefer to keep away from society in order to avoid giving or receiving trouble and annoyance. (PPII 651-2)

Schopenhauer here, on the one hand, describes the way in which the individual is embedded in a social whole: this individual keeps a safe distance from others because it cannot trust them and because any kind of connection or intimacy will always result in harm or pain. On the other hand, however, Schopenhauer

states that, despite the ‘quills’ that keep them divided, humans experience what he calls ‘a mutual need for warmth’; which could be interpreted as a longing to overcome separation and disconnection and to experience some kind of connection and embedment.

The most explicit formulation of this connection can be found in Schopenhauer’s discussion of *Mitleid* or compassion, which is the phenomenon on which his moral philosophy is based. His analysis of *Mitleid* follows from the above-described dualism between the world-as-representation and the world-as-will: whereas we *perceive* a world consisting of separate and distinct objects, this world is *transcended* by an undivided *in-itself* that is *one*. Whereas the first world affirms our egotistic tendencies and presents us with a whole in which every creature is separated from every other creature – a world in which we are all porcupines to each other – the second world forms the absolute opposite of this world: it is undivided. This means that, since we are all, as embodied beings, manifestations of the same undivided metaphysical force, we are united on a metaphysical level, Schopenhauer suggests. And this union is affirmed, according to him, by the phenomenon of *Mitleid*: the observation that we can *feel with* the suffering of others, that we can empathize with their well-being on a direct and instinctive level, forms an illustration of the idea that we are manifestations of the *same* metaphysical force. Put differently: Schopenhauer’s metaphysical conclusion that we are all one forms the explanation for the phenomenon of *Mitleid*:

[I]f plurality and separateness belong only to the *phenomenon*, and if it is one and the same essence manifests itself in all living things, then that conception that abolishes the difference between ego and non-ego is not erroneous; but on the contrary, the opposite conception must be. ... Accordingly, it would be the metaphysical basis of ethics and consists in *one* individual’s again recognizing in *another* his own true self, his own true inner nature. (BM 209)

Following his above-discussed claim that human beings are completely unfree and have no rational control over what they do, feel or experience, Schopenhauer understands *Mitleid* as a rather spontaneous and uncontrollable feeling that overcomes people who witness the suffering of others. Furthermore, following his naturalistic observations, he argues that we can feel *Mitleid* with suffering animals as well and criticizes rationalistic moralities for excluding non-human animals: ‘The moral incentive advanced by me as the genuine, is further confirmed by the fact that the animals are also taken under its protection. In other European systems of morality they are badly provided for, which is most inexcusable. ... In philosophy it rests, despite all evidence to the contrary, on the assumed total difference between man and animal’ (BM 175).

Schopenhauer’s philosophy herewith shifts from pessimistic observations on the essential nature of our suffering to ideas about the fundamental manner in which we can be connected to each other and may even find a form of warmth in this experience. Even the negativity of his writings transforms into positivity when discussing the nature of *Mitleid*: ‘the knowledge that every living thing is just as much our own inner being-in-itself as is our own person, extends our interest to all that lives; and in this way the heart is enlarged’ (WWR-I 373).

A similar uncharacteristic absence of negativity is found in Schopenhauer’s aesthetic theory, which contains, in my view, descriptions of another form of an experience that can be understood as ‘resonant’. His analysis of the arts is too multidimensional and complex to summarize here, but I want to briefly focus on two forms of art that Schopenhauer discusses: tragedy and music. He mainly argues that aesthetic contemplation is subjective in nature: artworks provide us, in his view, with *intuitive knowledge* about the

nature of the world by presenting the subject with the Ideal nature of that which is depicted, thereby enabling the subject to transform itself into a 'Will-less' and desire-less consciousness that could, to a certain extent, be characterized as resonant. However, I want to argue that his analyses of tragic art and music more explicitly hint at a *resonating moment* between subject and artwork (see WWR-I 179).

Following his pessimistic conclusions regarding the state of the world and the human condition, tragic art can show us, he argues, that human beings are destined to suffer and that this suffering is often caused by human beings themselves. Schopenhauer specifically praises tragedy that 'shows us the greatest misfortune not as an exception, not as something brought about by rare circumstances or by monstrous characters, but as something that arises easily and spontaneously out of the actions and characters of men, as something almost essential to them' (WWR-I 254).

But tragic art does more, according to Schopenhauer. Tragic heroes show us how, after a life filled with suffering and with senseless striving that knows no satisfaction, a process of self-denial can be set in motion. Tragic heroes, he argues, are 'purified by suffering' and reach a state in which they are able to turn away from that which has driven them all their lives: the will-to-live. Tragic art, in other words, provides us with an example of ways to quieten down the Will in ourselves and reach the above-discussed experience of salvation.

I believe that Schopenhauer's analysis of tragic art hints at a notion of 'resonance' since he suggests that the knowledge that arises from perceiving a tragic play rests on an identification of the spectator with the tragic hero. This may function as an explanation of the observation that tragedy often grasps its spectators in an intense manner, making them shudder as bodily beings at the sight of the horrors that are depicted, responding to the fate of the tragic hero in an almost compassionate manner and experiencing a kind of resonance with these heroes.

This brings us to Schopenhauer's discussion of music. The melodic movements of music and the different tones and layers within musical compositions, he argues, reflect the movements of the metaphysical Will, striving for life on the countless levels and realms of nature – from the waves of the sea to moving glaciers, from bacteria to plants, from animals to human beings: 'the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the keynote in a thousand ways. ... In all these ways, melody expresses the many different forms of the will's efforts' (WWR-I 260). Listening to a symphony, he implies, is like walking through a rainforest, noticing how on every level life is striving; how the most beautiful and strange organisms have developed at the most unlikely places; living, breathing, striving without reflection or inner purpose: blind Will, fighting for life, crystallized into forms and shapes that exceed the imagination.

Indeed, Schopenhauer emphasizes the close connection between the metaphysics of music and the metaphysics of nature, stating that 'we can regard the phenomenal world, or nature, and music as two different expressions of the same thing...' (WWR-I 262) and even adds that 'we could just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will...' (WWR-I 263). Enjoying the beauty of nature, Schopenhauer suggests, is similar to enjoying the beauty of music: both consist of the experience of wonder over a world defined by endless movements and strivings, by a blind but all-overpowering force.

For our discussion of 'resonance', it is important to emphasize that music, according to Schopenhauer, does not completely reach one as manifested Will. Music therefore allows us to overview the nature and

essence of the world at a *distant* but, paradoxically, also *involved* way, in which Schopenhauer's observations on tragic art partly return:

Only in this way does music never cause us actual suffering, but still remains pleasant even in its most painful chords; and we like to hear in its language the secret history of our will and of all its stirrings and strivings with their many different delays, postponements, hindrances, and afflictions, even in the most sorrowful melodies. On the other hand, where in real life and its terrors our *will itself* is that which is roused and tormented, we are then not concerned with tones and their numerical relations; on the contrary, we ourselves are now the vibrating string that is stretched and plucked. (WWR-II 450)

This reference to the 'secret history of our will' implies that music, like tragic art, not only revolves around an intuitive grasping of the nature of the world, but also around a *recognition* of that which we essentially are: when listening to music, we feel that what is represented is also what drives us as living, embodied beings. Music, Schopenhauer therefore writes, represents 'human willing in general, in so far as it is expressed universally through its objectivity, the human body' (WWR-I 202).

To a certain extent, this means that Schopenhauer claims that music allows us to grasp our 'oneness' with the essence of the universe: it allows us to know intuitively that, essentially, we are not individuals but mere parts of an overpowering and blind whole with which we realize our unity once we have thrown off our individual willing. We realize, in other words, a certain *kinship* with music when we listen to it; music as a representation of Will resonates through us as manifestations of that same Will.

2.3 Overview

Even though Schopenhauer's philosophy revolves around the idea that the metaphysical core of the universe makes it impossible for human beings to be at home in the world, his dualism between a world-as-representation – characterized by the *principium individuationis* – and a world-as-will – characterized by oneness – enables him to make room for an experience of connectedness that I want to characterize as 'resonance'. At bottom, Schopenhauer argues, we are all united as metaphysical beings, which enables us to *feel with* the suffering of others. Whereas Schopenhauer's descriptions of the world and of human beings are, in general, characterized by an almost complete and totalizing negativism, his analysis of *Mitleid* contains several uncharacteristically positive descriptions.

Furthermore, I have argued that his descriptions of art contain hints of a completely different kind of resonance: whereas *Mitleid* is bodily in nature and overcomes us as corporeal beings, Schopenhauer's descriptions of tragic art and music revolve around the idea that they provide us with glimpses of our essential nature as suffering beings. I have characterized these aesthetic experiences as 'resonance', since Schopenhauer here describes a connection between the subject and the artwork that is based on the recognition of a certain *kinship*.

Positioning these conclusions in the coordinate system developed above, this means that the two forms of resonance that Schopenhauer's philosophy contains should be positioned on the passivity-activity axis on the side of *complete passivity*: both *Mitleid* and intuitive knowledge *overcome* the subject, which has no rational control or influence over these experiences. Furthermore, both are *completely ahistorical* in nature: Schopenhauer does not describe or criticize a specific, historically formed situation, but analyses an

unchanging, universal human condition that is defined by a metaphysical force that always remains the same. Regarding the mind-body axis, both experiences are different: *Mitleid* is understood by him as taking place through the body as a manifestation of an all-uniting Will, whereas intuitive knowledge is bodiless and mindful in nature.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

The philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer brings us to Friedrich Nietzsche, on whose ideas he had an enormous influence, especially during Nietzsche's younger years. Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche links ideas about alienation and living in a world devoid of passion or meaning to a specific time and age, which means that they can, at least partly, be understood as a critique of tendencies that are 'modern'. Even though Schopenhauer's works can be characterized as modern as well, since they embody the individual's struggle with the withering away of religious structures and a conflict between naturalism and idealism, Schopenhauer *himself* does not present his ideas as following from a specific historical epoch. With Nietzsche, in other words, our analysis gains a self-reflective historical and critical aura, even though specific analyses of economic and social structures are absent in his writings.

3.1 *The Death of God*

Probably the most clear and explicit formulation of Nietzsche's idea that we live in a silent world that 'does not speak to us' can be found in *The Gay Science*, which contains the famous parable of the madman:

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes.

"Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him, you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward. in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred

games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us - for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.”

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At first he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. “I have come too early,” he said then: “my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars - *and yet they have done it themselves.*”

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: “What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?” (GS 181-2)

Nietzsche describes how what he calls the ‘death of God’ has resulted in a wiping out of the entire horizon; in a world that is cold, dark and dead, alien to the self and unresponsive to its needs. It is important to realize that this parable should not be read as referring to only the demise of religious values, but to the crumbling down of any kind of absolute morality or metaphysical structure that provided the world with meaning and sense. The death of God, in other words, results in an age of *nihilism* and therewith in a silent, uninspiring and death-like world.

In several of his works, but most explicitly in his *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche links the death of God to a genealogical analysis of morality and Christian values. By way of this genealogy, he criticizes the subjectivity and the worldview that, in his view, characterize modern culture. In Nietzsche’s view, these values were constituted by a group of weak people who were dominated in a rather natural, primitive and unreflective way by a group of warriors; by ‘noble races’. Unable to do something about their situation as a weak and powerless group, the only way in which those belonging to the ‘dominated race’ could embed their existence in a meaningful structure was by turning their own (bodily) weaknesses into values and creating the illusion that their powerlessness formed the actual purpose of their lives. This celebration of their own situation, in turn, made the characteristics of the people who dominated them – power, strength, passion – into values that were considered wrong. The result was a normative worldview that was based on *resentment* and on a *reaction*. Instead of constituting their *own* values, these dominated races merely turned an already existing framework around.

Herewith, Nietzsche goes on, the notion of ‘subjectivity’ was created: whereas the dominating races merely ‘did’ and ‘were’ without reflection or rational purpose, religious and moral ways of thinking brought the idea into the world that they did this for specific *reasons* and *intentions*, which made it possible to claim that these reasons and intentions were *wrong*. Nietzsche poetically illustrates this idea as follows:

There is nothing strange about the fact that lambs bear a grudge towards large birds of prey: but that is no reason to blame the large birds of prey for carrying off the little lambs. And if the lambs say to each other, ‘These birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey and most like its opposite, a lamb, - is good, isn’t he?’, then there is no reason to raise objections to this

setting-up of an ideal beyond the fact that the birds of prey will view it somewhat derisively, and will perhaps say: 'We don't bear any grudge at all towards these good lambs, in fact we love them, nothing is tastier than a tender lamb.' - It is just as absurd to ask strength *not* to express itself as strength, *not* to be a desire to overthrow, crush, become master, to be a thirst for enemies, resistance and triumphs, as it is to ask weakness to express itself as strength. A quantum of force is just such a quantum of drive, will, action, in fact it is nothing but this driving, willing and acting, and only the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified within it), which construes and misconstrues all actions as conditional upon an agency, a 'subject', can make it appear otherwise. And just as the common people separates lightning from its flash and takes the latter to be a *deed*, something performed by a subject, which is called lightning, popular morality separates strength from the manifestations of strength, as though there were an indifferent substratum behind the strong person which had the *freedom* to manifest strength or not. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought, - the doing is everything. Basically, the common people double a deed; when they see lightning, they make a doing-a-deed out of it: they posit the same event, first as cause and then as its effect. (GM 25-6)

This 'doubling of the deed' resulted in the philosophy that characterizes religious thinking, Nietzsche argues: a morality that revolves around a celebration of weakness, forgiveness, submission, fear and powerlessness; a morality that was so successful in permeating the subject that it eventually came to dominate Western culture. But it also resulted in the 'splitting up' of the subject, in the notion of *agency*, which pulled the natural self out of its embedment in nature, out of a whole in which it simply 'is', and emphasized reflection, the intentionality *behind* one's deeds, and the domination and control of impulses and desires by a rational and 'dutiful' mind.

Morality, in Nietzsche's view, rises with this 'split' in the human subject, which allows this subject not only to reflect on itself and its deeds and feelings, but also to turn against them in the name of a God, a norm or a value. He describes how this withdrawal from a larger whole constituted a way of thinking that he characterizes with the phrase of 'bad conscience', which refers to the (Christian) idea that human beings are sinful and guilty and should feel bad about their own bodily needs, impulses and desires, and therefore suppress them. Nietzsche herewith places reason, the elevation out of a more primitive and unreflective state of being at the basis of an attitude that is hostile towards the body, towards emotions, even towards humanity itself: 'Ah, reason, solemnity, mastering of emotions, this really dismal thing called reflection, all these privileges and splendours man has: what a price had to be paid for them! How much blood and horror lies at the basis of all 'good things'!' (GM 39). He furthermore observes in *Twilight of the Idols*:

Make no mistake about the method at work here: a simple discipline of feeling and thought amounts to practically nothing (- this is the great misunderstanding of German education, which is totally illusory): you first need to persuade the *body*. Strict adherence to significant and refined gestures and an obligation to live only with people who do not 'let themselves go' is more than enough to become significant and refined: two or three generations later and everything is already *internalized*. It is crucial for the fate of individuals as well as peoples that culture begin in the *right* place - *not* in the 'soul' (which was the disastrous superstition of priests and half-priests): the right place is the body, gestures, diet, physiology, *everything else* follows from this. ... This is why the

Greeks are the *first cultural event* in history - they knew, they *did*, what needed to be done; Christianity, which despised the body, has been the greatest disaster for humanity so far. (TI 221)

In the same book, Nietzsche argues that this way of thinking not only results in a celebration of duty but also in the experience of boredom. In an aphorism entitled 'From a doctorate exam' he links this diagnosis of modern culture to Kant:

'What is the task of all higher education?' - To turn a man into a machine. – 'By what means?'- He has to learn how to feel bored. – 'How is that achieved?' - Through the concept of duty. – 'Who is his model?' - The philologist: he teaches how to grind. – 'Who is the perfect man?' - The civil servant. – 'Which philosophy provides the best formula for the civil servant?' - Kant's: the civil servant as thing in itself set as judge over the civil servant as appearance. – (TI 95)

Nietzsche combines this analysis of 'bad conscience' with a critique of what he calls 'ascetic ideals', by which he targeted not only religious thinkers, Luther, Schopenhauer (especially the latter's above-discussed ideas about self-denial and salvation) and Richard Wagner, but also scientists who, in Nietzsche's view, are so focused on the idea of absolute truth that they ignore the world itself. Again, he sees these ascetic values as born in a hostility against humanity, against life, against an existence that is embedded in the world and that embraces life in its fullest. As he observes in *The Gay Science*: 'the question "Why science?" leads back to the moral problem: *Why have morality at all* when life, nature, and history are "not moral"? No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this "other world" – look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our world?*' (GS 282-3).

It is this focus on absolute truth – this 'Will to truth' – that eventually results, in Nietzsche's view, in the demise of Christianity:

Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honour of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long enough interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of the salvation of the soul-that is all over now, that has man's conscience against it, that is considered indecent and dishonest by every more refined conscience-mendaciousness, feminism, weakness, and cowardice... . (GS 307)

The same subjectivity and way of thinking that lies at the roots of Christianity, in other words, paradoxically results in the above-mentioned wiping out of the horizon, in a destruction of meaning and the introduction of nihilism:

In this way, Christianity as a *dogma* was destroyed by its own morality, in the same way Christianity as a *morality* must also be destroyed, - we stand on the threshold of *this* occurrence. After Christian truthfulness has drawn one conclusion after another, it will finally draw the *strongest conclusion*, that *against* itself; this will, however, happen when it asks itself, '*What does all will to truth mean?*'... and here I touch on my problem again, on our problem, my *unknown* friends (-

because I don't *know* of any friend as yet): what meaning does *our* being have, if it were not that that will to truth has become conscious of itself *as a problem* in us? . . . Without a doubt, from now on, morality will be *destroyed* by the will to truth's becoming-conscious-of-itself: that great drama in a hundred acts reserved for Europe in the next two centuries, the most terrible, most questionable drama but perhaps also the one most rich in hope... (GM 119)

We herewith find an understanding of alienation that consists of the inability of the subject to find itself at home in the world, since this world is devoid of values, norms or ideas. Furthermore, Nietzsche argues, the silent and dead character of this world went hand in hand with the constitution of reflection and the notion of subjectivity: by 'doubling' the subject, by making it responsible for its acts, a form of consciousness came into being that withdrew the self from the world and from a natural oneness with its body, its deeds and its experiences. Modern subjectivity and its emphasis on reflection and self-control, in other words, are by definition based on separation and alienation, in Nietzsche's view.

3.2 *Amor Fati*

In the last sentence of the paragraph cited above, Nietzsche refers to 'hope', which brings us to the notion of resonance that can be distilled from his writings. He makes it clear that he does not want to *go back* to a primitive state of nature or embrace an existence that modernity left behind. In an aphorism entitled 'Progress in my sense' he clearly states:

I too speak of a 'return to nature', although it is not really a going-back but a *going-up* – up into a high, free, even frightful nature and naturalness, such as plays with great tasks, is permitted to play with them... To speak in a *parable*: Napoleon was a piece of 'return to nature' as I understand it ...
 . – But Rousseau – where did *he* really want to return to? (TI 113)

The only way out of the age of nihilism, in other words, is forwards and upwards instead of backwards. The best illustration of this process can perhaps be found in Nietzsche's idea of the eternal recurrence of the same. In *The Gay Science* he describes this complex notion as follows:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.' (GS 273)

This passage could be interpreted as a response to the nihilistic landscape that came into being with the death of God and the yearning for truth that characterizes the natural sciences. If everything consists simply of atoms and does not know a goal, purpose or sense, then in theory everything that happens could happen again and again until eternity. There is no closure or catharsis, no eventual ending. There are no metaphysical or moral structures in which our lives can be embedded and be provided with meaning or a sense of direction.

We can respond to this knowledge with despair, Nietzsche suggests, but also embrace everything that we do and are with passion – say 'Yes' to life instead of shying away from the observation that everything will happen again and again. Nietzsche characterizes this idea with the phrase *Amor Fati*; the love of one's fate:

I, too, shall say what it is that I wish from myself today, and what was the first thought to run across my heart this year-what thought shall be for me the reason, warranty, and sweetness of my life henceforth. I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation! And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (GS 223)

In an entry called 'Our ultimate gratitude to art' in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes how the arts can help us realizing this kind of existence in a world characterized by boredom and duty:

If we had not welcomed the arts and invented this kind of cult of the untrue, then the realization of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science – the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation-would be utterly unbearable. *Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide. But now there is a counterforce against our honesty that helps us to avoid such consequences: art as the *good* will to appearance. ... As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us, and art furnishes us with eyes and hands and above all the good conscience to be able to turn ourselves into such a phenomenon. At times we need a rest from ourselves by looking upon, by looking *down* upon ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *over* ourselves or weeping *over* ourselves. (GS 163-4)

Art, in other words, may enable us to live our lives in an aesthetic manner, to not take ourselves seriously but to transform ourselves with passion into works of art. Music, literature or poetry may *resonate* through us, lift us up towards a realm devoid of the calculating, nihilistic and hostile attitude Nietzsche associates with Christianity and the sciences, and thereby inspire us to live like passionate artists and embrace our fate.

This love of one's fate finds its most explicit expression, however, in what Nietzsche calls *The Übermensch* or 'overman', which could be understood as his description of the goal of humanity; as a way out of the age of nihilism brought about by the death of God and the way of thinking he associates with the natural sciences.

The overman presents us with a 're-evaluation of all values' that takes place through the creation of a new kind of life, a different form of existence in which humanity is overcome: 'Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live' (TSZ 59). Not only is this kind of life characterized by passion, creation, nobility and genius, it also rests on a rejection of what Nietzsche understands as the debilitating and distorting influences of the value of equality. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* he describes this idea as follows:

When Zarathustra came into the nearest town lying on the edge of the forest, he found many people gathered in the market place, for it had been promised that a tightrope walker would perform. And Zarathustra spoke thus to the people: "*I teach you the overman!*" Human being is something that must be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All creatures so far created something beyond themselves; and you want to be the ebb of this great flood and would even rather go back to animals than overcome humans? What is the ape to a human? A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment. And that is precisely what the human shall be to the overman: a laughing stock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to human, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now a human is still more ape than any

ape. But whoever is wisest among you is also just a conflict and a cross between plant and ghost. But do I implore you to become ghosts or plants? Behold, I teach you the overman! The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary: so let them fade away! Once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died, and then all these desecrators died. Now to desecrate the earth is the most terrible thing, and to esteem the bowels of the unfathomable higher than the meaning of the earth! Once the soul gazed contemptuously at the body, and then such contempt was the highest thing: it wanted the body gaunt, ghastly, starved. Thus it intended to escape the body and the earth. Oh this soul was gaunt, ghastly and starved, and cruelty was the lust of this soul! But you, too, my brothers, tell me: what does your body proclaim about your soul? Is your soul not poverty and filth and a pitiful contentment? Truly, mankind is a polluted stream. One has to be a sea to take in a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under. (TSZ 5-6)

The overman embraces life and loves his fate. He lives life with passion and shapes it like a piece of art. He has overcome values that revolve around a disdain of the body and of life in general. Instead, he creates his own values and is healthy in both mind and body. Resonance, within a Nietzschean context, should therefore primarily be understood as a rather solitary experience: the overman resonates with the values that he has created *himself*.

3.3 Overview

Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's critical diagnosis of the state of man and of human existence is linked to a historical situation. He analyses the death of God and the spirit of the natural sciences as dominating the age in which he lived, and argues that the wiping out of the horizon is a phenomenon that goes hand in hand with the 'will to truth' and with the rational reflection that characterizes the modern age, in his view. His ideas about the kind of life that overcome this state of nihilism, emptiness and suffering, however, which are embodied by the overman, have a rather ahistorical and almost religious aura: they provide us with an ideal of what life *could* be like; an ideal that is only accessible once human beings *overcome themselves*. On the thematic coordinate system described above, Nietzsche's analysis is therefore both historical and universal.

It is clear, furthermore, that the goal that Nietzsche sets to human beings is *active* in nature: Nietzsche claims that the overman constitutes his own values. For him, in other words, a good life is a life in which one is, in no way whatsoever, dependent on cultural, moral or social structures outside of oneself. Furthermore, active engagement with the realm of the arts plays an important role in his writings as well.

On the mind-body axis, Nietzsche's philosophy should be positioned in-between the two poles: the overman forms an *entwinement of body and mind*. The religious disdain of the body has been overcome, as well as its exclusive focus on an independent and controlling 'soul'. Instead, the overman constitutes itself as a creative being by becoming *whole*.

4. Albert Camus (1913-1960)

In Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, we find an explicit description and conceptualization of the idea that the world does not respond to the self anymore. Since he develops this idea mainly by analysing the type of *existence* that is possible in a post-religious, modern landscape, his observations come close to those of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

4.1 *The Absurd*

Camus uses the notion of 'the absurd' to define the idea that the world does not respond to the subject anymore: 'The absurd is born of [the] confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world' (MS 28). He links his discussion of the absurd to the question of suicide, opening his essay on Sisyphus with the following statement: 'There is but one truly philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy' (MS 3).

Camus uses the word 'judging', which means that his analysis of the 'absurd' is based on reason; on the human ability to *reflect* upon the world; to search for meaning; to answer the question of *why* we exist. Most of all, it rests on the fact that, as reflective creatures, we *know* that we will eventually die and that our time on this earth is just temporary: 'If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning, or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should *be* this world to which I am now opposed by my whole consciousness and my whole insistence upon familiarity. This ridiculous reason is what sets me in opposition to all creation' (MS 51).

Camus's reflections are furthermore written in a post-religious context. There is no God, he claims; there are only human beings, thrown into the world, looking for meaning in a universe that does not answer; that does not provide the self with eternal values or the notion of an afterlife to cling to. This observation results in a feeling that can be defined as *alienation*:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and this life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. All healthy men having thought of their own suicide, it can be seen, without further explanation, that there is a direct connection between this feeling and the longing for death. (MS 6)

This alienation is, for Camus, based on the experience of a 'divorce between man and his life'; a divorce that makes the world strange to him and himself a stranger in the world.

Camus not only describes how the ability to reflect on life and death results in alienation of self from world. He also hints at the idea that the experience of 'the absurd' expands to other realms, again constituting a gap between the self and that which it is alienated from, spreading itself over every dimension of our experience of the world and dissolving the bounds between ourselves and the horizons that used to surround us and made the world in which we live feel homely. In this context, Camus refers to *five* different forms of alienation. The first of these is alienation from *time*:

[D]uring every day of an unillustrious life, time carries us. But a moment always comes when we have to carry it. We live on the future: “tomorrow,” “later on,” “when you have made your way,” “you will understand when you are old enough.” Such irrelevancies are wonderful, for, after all, it’s a matter of dying. Yet a day comes when a man notices or says that he is thirty. Thus he asserts his youth. But simultaneously he situates himself in relation to time. He takes his place in it. He admits that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to its end. He belongs to time, and by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy. Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it. That revolt of the flesh is the absurd. (MS 13-14)

From the moment we are born, Camus observes, we are by definition embedded in time: we grow up, grow old and at the end of our ‘time’ lies death. Time, in this sense, is intrinsically connected to everything that we are. Yet, the experience of the absurd makes us violently reject this dimension of our lives and constitutes a gap between that which we want and need, and that which we experience and are.

Camus then describes alienation from *nature*:

A step lower and strangeness creeps in: perceiving that the world is “dense,” sensing to what a degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman, and these hills, the softness of the sky, the outline of these trees at this very minute lose the illusory meaning with which we had clothed them, henceforth more remote than a lost paradise. The primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia, for a second we cease to understand it because for centuries we have understood in it solely the images and designs that we had attributed to it beforehand, because henceforth we lack the power to make use of that artifice. The world evades us because it becomes itself again. ... : that denseness and that strangeness of the world is the absurd. (MS 14)

Again, Camus here refers to the *understanding* as playing a primary role in the constitution of the experience of absurdity: the moment we do not understand nature it becomes silent and ‘hostile’; it does not speak to us anymore.

Camus then extrapolates this experience to our perception of *other human beings* and of our *selves*:

Men, too, secrete the inhuman. At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their gestures, their meaningless pantomime makes silly everything that surrounds them. A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass partition; you cannot hear him, but you see his incomprehensible dumb show: you wonder why he is alive. This discomfort in the face of man’s own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this “nausea,” as a writer of today calls it, is also the absurd.

Likewise the stranger who at certain seconds comes to meet us in a mirror, the familiar and yet alarming brother we encounter in our own photographs is also the absurd. (MS 14-15)

Absurdity arises, Camus argues again, when we no longer experience human beings or even ourselves within meaning-giving contexts and frameworks. He makes a similar point about *death*, which is perhaps the most universal form of alienation he discusses: everyone dies, and no one, he claims, knows what death is. By definition we are therefore alienated from it:

I come at last to death and to the attitude we have toward it. On this point everything has been said and it is only proper to avoid pathos. Yet one will never be sufficiently surprised that everyone lives as if no one “knew.” This is because in reality there is no experience of death. Properly speaking, nothing has been experienced but what has been lived and made conscious. Here, it is barely possible to speak of the experience of others’ deaths. It is a substitute, an illusion, and it never quite convinces us. That melancholy convention cannot be persuasive. The horror comes in reality from the mathematical aspect of the event. If time frightens us, this is because it works out the problem and the solution comes afterward. All the pretty speeches about the soul will have their contrary convincingly proved, at least for a time. From this inert body on which a slap makes no mark the soul has disappeared. This elementary and definitive aspect of the adventure constitutes the absurd feeling. Under the fatal lighting of that destiny, its uselessness becomes evident. No code of ethics and no effort are justifiable a priori in the face of the cruel mathematics that command our condition. (MS 15)

This brings me to the end of my discussion of Camus’ analysis of what he calls ‘absurdity’ and what I have attempted to characterize as ‘alienation’. In each of the fields Camus discusses, alienation revolves around the constitution of a gap between self and world, caused by a reflective, rational mind looking for meaning and for values in a world that does not contain them:

[T]he mind that aims to understand reality can consider itself satisfied only by reducing it to terms of thought. If man realized that the universe like him can love and suffer, he would be reconciled. If thought discovered in the shimmering mirrors of phenomena eternal relations capable of summing them up and summing themselves up in a single principle, then would be seen an intellectual joy of which the myth of the blessed would be but a ridiculous imitation. That nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute illustrates the essential impulse of the human drama. (MS 17)

The absurd, to summarize Camus’ ideas, is born in the confrontation between subject and object, self and world: ‘what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together’ (MS 21). It is important to emphasize, again, that Camus explicitly equates longing for happiness with a longing for reason (MS 19): our discovery, as rational creatures, that the world is irrational results in unhappiness.

4.2 *Sisyphus*

Following this diagnosis of absurdity, Camus explores different ways to live in a world defined by alienation. Following his discussion of the absurd, these ways of living should provide us with an answer to the question of why we should not commit suicide.

By way of an interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus, Camus defends three dimensions of life that, in his view, are sparked by the absurd and that, furthermore, make it possible to live a good life *while* realizing that life and existence are absurd: *revolt*, *freedom* and *passion*. He links these virtues to descriptions of ‘the actor’, ‘the lover’ and ‘the conqueror’: ‘these images do not propose moral codes and involve no judgments: they are sketches. They merely represent a style of life’ (MS 90).

The first of these virtues consists of the idea that what Camus calls 'the absurd man' lives in constant *revolt* against the absurdity that characterizes his life. He does not commit suicide, since this would mean that he gives in to the futility of the world and succumbs to his inevitable death. Instead, he makes the conscious and reflective decision to rebel against his inevitable fate with all his powers, with everything he has and with everything he does:

Consciousness and revolt, these rejections are the contrary of renunciation. Everything that is indomitable and passionate in a human heart quickens them, on the contrary, with its own life. It is essential to die unreconciled and not of one's own free will. Suicide is repudiation. The absurd man can only drain everything to the bitter end and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension, which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth, which is defiance. (MS 55)

By revolting against the absurdity of life, by living in defiance, Camus argues, the absurd man provides his life with meaning: revolt 'is a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity. It is an insistence upon an impossible transparency. It challenges the world anew every second. ... That revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it' (MS 54). Therefore, 'revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life' (MS 55).

This stance of revolt introduces the notion of 'freedom'. If life is, indeed, absurd and is not structured by metaphysical, philosophical, religious or theoretical frameworks that provide it with sense and meaning, then the absurd man is absolutely free, Camus claims. There are no rules or norms that follow from universally valid philosophies, nor does a divine being or the notion of eternal reward or punishment define one's actions. Absurdity, therefore, is born in the idea that eternal or metaphysical freedom does not exist. Instead, it results in the notion of a freedom in the here and now: 'if the absurd cancels all my chances of eternal freedom, it restores and magnifies, on the other hand, my freedom of action. That privation of hope and future means an increase in man's availability' (MS 57). This freedom gives us a 'new independence' that 'has a definite time limit, like any freedom of action. It does not write a check on eternity. But it takes the place of the illusions of *freedom*, which all stopped with death' (MS 59). The absurd, in this sense, prompts us to live and to experience:

The absurd man thus catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe and draw from it his strength, his refusal to hope, and the unyielding evidence of a life without consolation. ... But what does life mean in such a universe? Nothing else for the moment but indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything that is given. (MS 60)

This idea brings us to the third virtue Camus defends: that of *passion*. He herewith comes close to the critical analysis developed by Kierkegaard, discussed in the introduction to this paper. Indeed, Camus argues that Kierkegaard, 'for a part of his existence at least, does more than discover the absurd, he lives it. ... He refuses consolations, ethics, reliable principles. As for that thorn he feels in his heart, he is careful not to quiet its pain. On the contrary, he awakens it and, in the desperate joy of a man crucified and happy to be so, he builds up piece by piece—lucidity, refusal, make believe—a category of the man possessed' (MS 25-6). Camus here mainly refers to Kierkegaard's descriptions of and struggles with different kinds of

life as developed, for example, in *Either/Or*. Another author whom Camus mentions frequently is Friedrich Nietzsche:

Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death—and I refuse suicide. I know, to be sure, the dull resonance that vibrates throughout these days. Yet I have but a word to say: that it is necessary. When Nietzsche writes: “It clearly seems that the chief thing in heaven and on earth is to *obey* at length and in a single direction: in the long run there results something for which it is worth the trouble of living on this earth as, for example, virtue, art, music, the dance, reason, the mind – something that transfigures, something delicate, mad, or divine,” he elucidates the rule of a really distinguished code of ethics. But he also points the way of the absurd man. Obeying the flame is both the easiest and the hardest thing to do. However, it is good for man to judge himself occasionally. He is alone in being able to do so. (MS 64-5)

Realizing that life is futile, in other words, requires one ‘to plunge into it with every excess’ (MS 117).

One of the ways in which this can be done, Camus argues, is through the creation of art, more specifically, through what he calls ‘absurd art’. Not only does he observe that creation *itself* can be a joy and provide one’s life with meaning, he also claims that certain forms of art *resonate* with people, showing them the futility of our lives and the struggles that literary personae go through. Again, Camus refers to Nietzsche to make this point: ‘All those lives maintained in the rarefied air of the absurd could not persevere without some profound and constant thought to infuse its strength into them. In this regard the absurd joy par excellence is creation. “Art and nothing but art,” said Nietzsche; “we have art in order not to die of the truth.” (MS 93). This defence of the exemplary and inspiring function of art also reminds of Schopenhauer’s above-discussed ideas about tragic heroes. Camus observes: ‘The absurd work illustrates thought’s renouncing of its prestige and its resignation to being no more than the intelligence that works up appearances and covers with images what has no reason. If the world were clear, art would not exist’ (MS 98).

This brings us to the hero of Camus’ essay: Sisyphus. Punished by the gods for deceitfulness, Sisyphus was compelled to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this action forever. In line of his above-discussed analysis of the absurd, Camus argues that we should understand Sisyphus as a tragic hero because he is *conscious* of his fate and of the utter futility of his actions: ‘If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? ... Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent’ (MS 121). With passion, Sisyphus throws himself into his work. He realizes that his life has no meaning or sense, but he provides it with *value* by revolting against this knowledge, even though he knows that his revolt is futile. Camus observes:

At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, combined under his memory’s eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling. I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the

mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (MS 123)

But whereas Sisyphus is completely alone and has to bear his fate in solitude, Camus also describes a *communal* form of rebellion. In his book *The Rebel*, for example, he analyses different forms of political revolt and describes how our dissatisfaction with the absurd may spark political uprisings, aimed at bettering the political systems under which we live. These uprisings, he argues, revolve around the notion of solidarity, since they affirm the value of human life: 'When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical' (Camus 1991: 12). Camus contrasts this idea of 'rebellion' with what he calls 'revolution', which he understands as a nihilistic and destructive form of change that denies both history and, eventually, the value of human life.

In his novel *The Plague*, furthermore, Camus describes a form of solidarity between two of the novel's characters, Dr. Rieux and his friend Tarrou, who live in the plague-stricken Algerian city of Oran. Their battles against this disease can be read as a metaphor for the human condition, in which we rebel against a life that is futile and absurd, but in which we nevertheless constitute the value of solidarity by fighting together against the irrational forces that surround us. It can also be read as a symbol of the Nazi Occupation of France and the forms of resistance that arose against this regime. Camus writes:

They undressed, and Rieux dived in first. After the first shock of cold had passed and he came back to the surface the water seemed tepid. When he had taken a few strokes he found that the sea was warm that night with the warmth of autumn seas that borrow from the shore the accumulated heat of the long days of summer. The movement of his feet left a foaming wake as he swam steadily ahead, and the water slipped along his arms to close in tightly on his legs. A loud splash told him that Tarrou had dived. Rieux lay on his back and stayed motionless, gazing up at the dome of sky lit by the stars and moon. He drew a deep breath. Then he heard a sound of beaten water, louder and louder, amazingly clear in the hollow silence of the night. Tarrou was coming up with him, he now could hear his breathing. Rieux turned and swam level with his friend, timing his stroke to Tarrou's. But Tarrou was the stronger swimmer and Rieux had to put on speed to keep up with him. For some minutes they swam side by side, with the same zest, in the same rhythm, isolated from the world, at last free of the town and of the plague. Rieux was the first to stop and they swam back slowly, except at one point, where unexpectedly they found themselves caught in an ice-cold current. Their energy whipped up by this trap the sea had sprung on them, both struck out more vigorously. They dressed and started back. Neither had said a word, but they were conscious of being perfectly at one, and the memory of this night would be cherished by them both. When they caught sight of the plague watchman, Rieux guessed that Tarrou, like himself, was thinking that the disease had given them a respite, and this was good, but now they must set their shoulders to the wheel again. (Camus 1948: 214)

This description of 'being perfectly at one', I believe, could be understood as an example of resonance: this experience overcomes the subject, in this case Rieux, and connects him on an almost instinctive and rather direct level to Tarrou. The sea, in this respect, embodies freedom for the novel's two characters: it enables

them to move, to live, and to partly escape the situation they are imprisoned in. In this respect, this experience forms the direct and rather literal opposite of the situation that Kierkegaard characterizes as follows: 'There is as little action and decision these days as shallow-water paddlers have a daring desire to swim' (LR 63).

A similar resonating connection with nature is described by Camus in his essays 'Summer in Algiers' and 'Return to Tipasa', in which he reflects on his memories of living in Algiers and on a visit to the Roman ruins of Tipasa, on the coast of Algeria. In the first essay, Camus hints at a deep, almost pre-individualistic connectedness with the world, describing how young people in Algiers visit the beach and swim, enjoy the sun's warmth and live a life of carelessness. The pre-individualistic nature of this connectedness is described in a passage on feelings of resonance with stones, the sun and the earth. 'How can one fail to participate', Camus asks the reader, 'in that dialogue of stone and flesh in tune with the sun and seasons?' (MS 144). In the second essay, Camus describes the feeling of happiness that he experienced amid the ruins of Tipasa:

Once already I had returned to Tipasa, soon after those war years that marked for me the end of youth. I hoped, I think, to recapture there a freedom I could not forget. In that spot, indeed, more than twenty years ago, I had spent whole mornings wandering among the ruins, breathing in the wormwood, warming myself against the stones, discovering little roses, soon plucked of their petals, which outlive the spring. Only at noon, at the hour when the cicadas themselves fell silent as if overcome, I would flee the greedy glare of an all-consuming light. Sometimes at night I would sleep open-eyed under a sky dripping with stars. I was alive then. (MS 196)

Happiness, Camus suggests, is found in resonance with the earth, the stones, the sun; in a feeling of 'oneness' with natural phenomena that contrasts rather acutely with his descriptions of the absurd.

4.3 Overview

This brings me to the end of this discussion of Albert Camus' description of alienation and resonance. We have seen that Camus provides us with a very clear understanding of alienation as a 'silencing of the world'. For Camus, the fact that the world does not respond to our questions and the 'needs of our heart' and that we find ourselves in an irrational world, constitutes the experience of the absurd, which he broadens to alienation from time, people, the self, nature and even death. All of these dimensions, he claims, can be experienced as alien from the subject, even as hostile.

Following these descriptions, Camus develops an understanding of 'styles of life' that revolve around the idea that the subject has to rebel against this situation without clinging to metaphysical or religious hope: it has to accept the completely futile and meaningless nature of its life, but at the same time provide this life with value by rebelling against the absurd. Only in this way does the absurd man take his situation seriously and follow its nature to the end.

Since this revolt against the absurd contains an emphasis on *connections* with the world and other people, I believe it can be characterized as 'resonant'. It is difficult to precisely position this experience on the axis of 'universal' vs 'historical' in the above-developed thematic coordinate system: on the one hand, Camus seems to discuss a condition that he characterizes as 'universal'. He understands the absurd as an experience that has resulted in religious structures, but also in revolutions and political violence. On the

other hand, he mainly discusses this experience in reference to authors like Kierkegaard, Chestov, Jaspers, Dostoyevsky, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and therewith understands it as a specific *modern* problem, tied to a specific historical condition in which religious structures have been overcome and the reflective individual has to decide who he is and what he has to do. Camus refers as follows, for example, to the writings of Dostoyevsky: 'All of Dostoyevsky's heroes question themselves as to the meaning of life. In this they are modern: they do not fear ridicule. What distinguishes modern sensibility from classical sensibility is that the latter thrives on moral problems and the former on metaphysical problems.' (MS 104). The same holds true for Camus' own discussion: Camus does not engage himself with questions regarding eternity, the existence of god or the laws of nature. Instead, he focuses on the here and now, on life in a world devoid of metaphysical frameworks or safeties, and on modern man as thrown back onto himself and forced to reflect on his own existence.

A similar point can be made about the mind-body axis: for Camus, the absurd man is both *reflecting* on its condition as well as strengthened by these same reflections. Only by not forgetting the nature of his situation and by constantly rebelling against it, will the absurd man be able to constitute his own values in an absurd world. In this line, Camus describes the absurd artist as follows: 'the great artist under this climate is, above all, a great living being, it being understood that living in this case is just as much experiencing as reflecting' (MS 98). Furthermore, Camus defends what he calls 'courage and reasoning': 'the first teaches him to live *without appeal* and to get along with what he has; the second informs him of his limits' (MS 66).

On the other hand, however, the most powerful passages in Camus' works refer to the experience of a 'letting go'; to a connection with the earth and with the stones; to a pre-individualistic form of resonance with rather 'timeless' objects like stones and the sun that transcend individual existence.

This brings me to the last axis: that of action and passivity. Overall, Camus defends a Kierkegaardian emphasis on *action*, on the ability to throw oneself into the world with passion. On the other hand, however, his emphasis on a connection with the stones and the earth hint at a passive form of being in the world that *precedes* action or passion.

The understanding of resonance that can be distilled from Camus' writings, we therefore have to conclude, contains several contradictory aspects that are not easy to reconcile. But it is perhaps precisely this impossibility that forms another example of what it means to live a life of absurdity.

PART II: HISTORY, SOCIETY, ECONOMICS

5. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)

Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Camus' approaches to alienation and resonance, which mainly revolve around metaphysical, religious and existential questions, I want to focus on the ideas of Hegel. With Hegel, philosophy gains a specifically *historical* character that foreshadows the *economic* analyses of authors like Marx and Lukács. Hegel's thought is famously complex, however, and I will therefore not attempt to summarize his theory as a whole. In the following, I will merely focus on certain ideas within his thought that are interesting in light of our discussion of alienation and resonance, especially since many of

these ideas return in the critical theories of those belonging to the *Frankfurter Schule*, but at places even come surprisingly close to those of Nietzsche. I will first discuss an early, religiously inspired essay of Hegel, published as 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', and then focus on the opening chapters of his masterwork *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

5.1 *Mankind's Withdrawal from a Natural Whole*

Hegel wrote 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate' in 1799, but it remained unpublished during his lifetime. The core of this essay consists of a critique of a specific understanding of the morality that, according to Hegel, characterizes Judaism and the rigidity of Kant's thought. The notion of a withdrawal from a natural whole and a subsequent longing to form part of a whole again play a central role in this critique, which is why I believe this early essay is important to discuss within the context of this paper on alienation and resonance.

Hegel develops his critique by focusing on the biblical story of Abraham and argues that Abraham's life and deeds can be understood as the result of a battle between man and nature. In a mythical pre-historical situation, he claims, man belonged to nature; was part of a 'natural whole' or unity. But then came the flood; a natural disaster that had such a powerful and destructive force that it changed man's outlook on nature forever. Nature was no longer a friend; a whole of which man formed part in harmony and peace. Instead, it became a threat, a force bringing death and destruction: 'Formerly friendly or tranquil, nature now abandoned the equipoise of her elements, now requited the faith the human race had in her with the most destructive, invincible, irresistible hostility...' (SCF 182). Following this change, man started living in fear of the ultimate Other: fear of death. This radical change in humanity's *view* of nature led to a radical change in humanity's *approach* to nature, Hegel argues. After the flood, man started to battle nature and tried desperately to master and control her in order to prevent future natural disasters.

The tale of Noah forms, in Hegel's view, an example of this overcoming of the unity of man and nature. What Noah represents is man's withdrawal from nature by way of the creation of something *outside* of this nature: Noah saved himself and thereby he saved mankind, but was only able to do this by creating the idea of a God mastering the universe, a God through whom man could save himself from the destructive forces of nature. By understanding this God as an entity *external* to the natural whole, as the ultimate creator and therefore as the master of the world, nature lost its enchanting power, Hegel observes. Noah, to put it differently, created the concept of a God, projected this concept *outside* of himself, and then subsumed all reality to this thought-product. Hereby, the world was transformed from an uncontrollable chaos of nature into a disenchanting whole subsumable to an external being – God. In Hegel's words:

If man was to hold out against the outbursts of a nature now hostile, nature had to be mastered; and since the whole can be divided only into idea and reality, so also the supreme unity of mastery lies either in something or in something real. It was in a thought-product that Noah built the distracted world together again; his thought-produced ideal he turned into a [real] Being and then set everything else against it, so that in this opposition realities were reduced to thoughts, i.e., to something mastered. (SCF 182-3)

Civilization, Hegel suggests, begins with this creation of a split between man and nature, with the destruction of the unity of nature. *Knowledge*, in this reading, implies *power*, and *conceptuality* implies a

destruction of the natural bonds between man and nature; the possibility to 'make the other realities into thoughts, i.e., to kill and master them' (SCF 184). This means that man gained dominance over the things he needed to control by *naming* them and by pushing the things he did not need or could not control away, behind a veil of concepts, thereby withdrawing himself from a direct and immediate unity with nature.

An important aspect of this withdrawal, of the origin of a breach between 'ideas' and 'reality', is the creation of laws; of formal morality; of an 'ought'. Central to the idea of a God, after all, is the creation of divine laws that govern the natural whole God dominates and controls; man could only control nature, Hegel suggests, by subsuming not only nature but also *himself* to an external idea. All actions, from this moment on, were reflected upon *through* God's moral laws, Hegel observes. This process can be understood as constituting *alienation*, implying that the origin of mankind and of civilization are characterized by separation, by the destruction of natural ties between man and nature, between man and other man and between man and his self.

This is what makes Abraham the prototype of civilized man, in Hegel's view. Abraham was ordered by God to kill his own son, to break the natural ties that bound him to his family and his community and force an external law upon himself and his existence. In Hegel's words:

[Abraham] tore himself free altogether from his family ..., in order to be a wholly self-subsistent, independent man, to be an overlord himself. ... The first act which made Abraham the progenitor of a nation is a dissection which snaps the bonds of communal life and love. The entirety of the relationships in which he had hitherto lived with men and nature, these beautiful relationships of his youth ..., he spurned. (SCF 185)

In Abraham, the total withdrawal of man out of a natural whole, and therewith the experience of *alienation*, is complete: 'The whole world Abraham regarded as simply his opposite; if he did not take it to be a nullity, he looked on it as sustained by the God who was alien to it' (SCF 187).

According to Hegel, Abraham hereby embodies the attitude towards nature and other people that characterizes Judaism and Kant's moral system; a morality based on a breach between subject and object, on the creation of external and divine laws telling subjects how they should act; on an uncritical embracement of a system of laws *external to their subjectivity*. Hegel defines this kind of thinking as 'positive', and argues that it destroys a part of our immediate experience by positioning laws and moral norms between the subject and 'reality'. This means that this kind of thinking not only ignores the value of the subject itself, but also follows from the idea that the world is essentially *hostile* to the self and *alien* to it.

5.2 Love and Ethics

Hegel's genealogy of the alienation constituted by Judaist and Kantian laws eventually results in a defence of a way of life that reintroduces connections and warmth between people and that therefore, I believe, can be characterized as 'resonant'. The ethical system Hegel defends in these early texts revolves around his understanding of the Christian faith as it was preached by Jesus. Central to this system are the notions of 'love' and 'fate'. Hegel argues that we should not base our ideas of good and bad, of morally wrong and morally right, on abstract and therefore one-sided and formalistic laws, but on the idea of a *total subjectivity*; of a *unity of all subjects*. Fate, in his interpretation, consists of this total subjectivity: 'Fate ... is incorruptible and unbounded like life itself' (SCF 233). This is what Jesus preached, according to Hegel:

'Against purely objective commands Jesus set something totally foreign to them, namely, the subjective in general' (SCF 209).

The forms of morality that Hegel associated with Kant and Judaism try to create a unity between idea and praxis, between a norm and the deed this norm refers to, but this unity is conceptual and one-sided and does not have anything to do with *life*, Hegel observes. A sin is not forgiven when someone is punished according to these laws, he argues, but when the individual whose life has been disrupted by his sinfulness is *reconciled* with life again and becomes one with subjectivity and his fate. In short: *becomes part of the whole* again and, I want to argue, experiences *resonance*:

Love ... comes before the altar conscious of a separation, but it leaves its gift there, is reconciled with its brother, and then and then only approaches the one God in purity and singleness of heart. It does not leave the judge to apportion its rights; it reconciles itself to its enemy with no regard to right whatsoever. (SCF 216)

Ethics should therefore, in Hegel's view, revolve around the attempt to reconcile ourselves both with others and with ourselves. It should not consist of a system of moral laws, but be based on subjectivity *as a whole*, which both shapes the way we are and tells us how we should exist. Love and fate, in other words, transgress the one-sided moral system and its destructive force of conceptualizing, subsuming and alienating that Hegel associated with Judaism and Kantianism, and thereby reintroduces a state of *wholeness* and *unity*.

5.3 *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Following these early works, I want to focus on what is arguably Hegel's most famous text – *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) – and describe how a similar 'movement' from separation to unity can be found in this famously complex book. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes the journey that spirit undertakes while thinking and analysing itself and its relation to the objective world, going from standpoint to disillusion about this standpoint to a next standpoint, until it has 'found itself' and has reached absolute knowledge, reason, and therewith, in Hegel's view, *freedom*. Put differently: this journey can be understood as spirit's struggle to 'wiggle itself out of itself' by trying to grasp its own identity and the identity of its relation to the objective world. Again put in different words: this journey leads spirit from different experiences of alienation to an eventual oneness with the world; a oneness in which it recognizes itself in this world and realizes that it only acquires freedom once it acknowledges other subjects. It is this oneness that I want to characterize in the following as a form of resonance.

In the first chapter of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, entitled 'Consciousness', Hegel describes the beginning of this journey by discussing various *common sense* understandings of the epistemological relation between subject and object. Herewith he begins, as it were, *in the middle*; with theories we *already* have about the manner in which the subject perceives reality. He then shows how each of these theories about the relation between subject and object results in paradoxes or unsolvable problems.

The inner logic of 'sense-certainty', for example, paradoxically forces us to understand the world by way of abstract concepts (PS 65), he argues, which means that the idea that we 'just' perceive a world of objects around ourselves collapses into the conclusion that this world is shaped by subjective concepts – objectivity herewith turns into subjectivity. The inner logic of 'perception', Hegel goes on, collapses into an

unsolvable tension between a plurality and singularity of properties (PS 76). Thirdly, the theory of 'forces' that the natural sciences provide us with turns out to transform the world we perceive into an empty and therefore meaningless structure of general concepts (PS 95). These 'forces', after all, are governed, according to the natural sciences, by general and unifying laws that are *subjective* in nature.

These three explorations result in the realization that the gap between subject and object, between mind and its Other, cannot be bridged, since the three common sense understandings of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity all *collapse into the subject*; in the case of each of these analyses of our experience of the world, in other words, the subject falls back into itself because it realizes that it merely projects its *own* schema upon or behind the objective world and requires this schema to justify its view of this world. This means that spirit is not able to escape itself and remains encapsulated in its own immanence. Already, we herewith find an understanding of alienation and of the need to overcome this experience: spirit is unable to connect in a fundamental sense to the world outside of itself, since all the theories it has about the possibility of doing this make it withdraw into itself again.

This constant collapse into itself, however, results according to Hegel in *self-consciousness*: since spirit constantly finds itself 'in' the objective world and is therefore unable to bridge the gap between itself and that which it seeks to grasp, it reaches awareness of itself and of its own *desire* to bridge this gap. Put more specifically: when analysing the idea of natural laws, spirit arrives at the conclusion that it only finds itself 'behind' the diverse objects that are governed by these laws. Furthermore, since these laws are general in nature and are aimed at developing a unifying theory of all that exists, spirit becomes *aware* of the fact that it has the *desire* to grasp reality in a unifying way: a desire for absolute truth and knowledge. Furthermore, spirit now also realizes that truth is not found in particular objects, but that it is only constituted in and by the universal, and that the universal is superior to the particular.

Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* contains a long passage in which he argues that Hegel herewith criticizes a relation between subject and object that can be characterized by the concept of 'reification':

The first three sections of the *Phenomenology* are a critique of positivism and, even more, of 'reification.' To begin with the latter, Hegel attempts to show that man can know the truth only if he breaks through his 'reified' world. We borrow the term 'reification' from the Marxist theory, where it denotes the fact that all relations between men in the world of capitalism appear as relations between things, or, that what in the social world seems to be the relations of things and 'natural' laws that regulate their movement are in reality relations of men and historical forces. The commodity, for instance, embodies in all its qualities the *social* relations of labor; capital is the power of disposing over men; and so on. By virtue of the inversion, the world has become an alienated, estranged world, in which man does not recognize or fulfill himself, but is overpowered by dead things and laws.

Hegel hit upon the same fact within the dimension of philosophy. Common sense and traditional scientific thought take the world as a totality of things, more or less existing *per se*, and seek the truth in objects that are taken to be independent of the knowing subject. This is more than an epistemological attitude; it is as pervasive as the practice of men and leads them to accept the feeling that they are secure only in knowing and handling objective facts. The more remote an idea is from the impulses, interests, and wants of the living subject, the more true it becomes. And this, according to Hegel, is the utmost defamation of truth. For there is, in the last analysis, no truth that

does not *essentially concern* the living subject and that is not the subject's truth. The world is an estranged and untrue world so long as man does not destroy its dead objectivity and recognize himself and his own life 'behind' the fixed forms of things and laws. When he finally wins this *self-consciousness*, he is on his way not only to the truth of himself but also of this world. And with the recognition goes the doing. He will try to put this truth into action and *make* the world what it *essentially* is, namely, the fulfillment of man's consciousness. (RR 112-13)

As mentioned above, Hegel herewith also formulates a critique of alienation, which revolves around the idea of an unbridgeable gap between the subject and that which it seeks to grasp.

The realization that it lies *itself* behind the objects it aims to grasp and the *self-awareness* that arises with this realization, leads in *Phenomenology of Spirit* to a next step: having become aware of its desire to constitute unity, the subject attempts to *master* the world around itself and to *prove* that the world is, indeed, permeated with subjectivity. It does this through *labour*, which Hegel understands as a process by which the subject shapes the world according to its own needs, and thereby masters and appropriates the object.

This desire to show that it is an autonomous entity that can master the world *then* shifts in *Phenomenology of Spirit* to a desire to master *subjects*, since spirit begins to realize that it needs the recognition of other subjects in order to truly become an individual; that its desire to master the world, in other words, is not truly aimed at the *objects* in this world, but at the self-consciousness of *other* subjects. The specific ideas or intentions behind this shift from a focus on objects to a focus on subjects is not completely clear, but it can partly be explained by Hegel's discussion of the lord and bondsman, the slave and master, during which spirit realizes that the process of labour does not produce dead and external objects, but that the products of labour are embodiments of the *essence of the producing subject*. This means that spirit realizes that the process during which objects are produced does not fundamentally revolve around these objects, but around the way in which subjects manifest themselves in these objects. Objectivity herewith again transforms into subjectivity, since the subject now realizes that it can only constitute itself as an independent entity if it is recognized by another subject *as independent*. In other words: the subject needs the gaze of the Other, the special recognition of the Other, in order to be able to recognize *itself* as independent of this Other (PS 112-13): 'Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness' (PS 110). I return to this below.

Before describing the struggle between lord and bondsman, however, Hegel focuses on a struggle for independency and autonomy that is characterized by *enmity*; the subject tries to constitute itself as a master and be recognized by another subject as an individual entity by *battling* this subject: two subjects now become involved in a life and death struggle. In this struggle, both try to establish their status as independent subjects by showing that this independency is so important to them that they are willing to give up their lives for it. In Hegel's words: 'The individual who has not risked his life, may well be recognized as a *person*, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness' (PS 114).

Since this struggle cannot result in a fruitful situation – one of the subjects will perish – a new stage is reached in *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which the two opposing subjects end up in different positions: one as slave and the other as master. The battling subjects, in other words, give up the life and death struggle and decide that this struggle does not result in a desirable situation. In this next stage, a form of

differentiation has been introduced, characterized by lordship and servitude. In this situation, the master commands the slave and lets the slave work for him. He uses the body of the slave to create products that satisfy his *own* desires, consummating the products of the slave's work (PS 115-6):

In this experience, self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness. In immediate self-consciousness the simple 'I' is absolute mediation, and has as its essential moment lasting independence. The dissolution of that simple unity is the result of the first experience; through this there is posited a pure self-consciousness, and a consciousness which is not purely for itself but for another, i.e. is a merely *immediate* consciousness, or consciousness in the form of *thinghood*. Both moments are essential. Since to begin with they are unequal and opposed, and their reflection into a unity has not yet been achieved, they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman. (PS 115)

Famously, it is not through the lord but through the bondsman that the subject gains independence in this situation: whereas the master *seems* to have control and power in this situation, Hegel turns this perspective around and claims that it is the slave who, in the end, benefits the most from this situation: 'servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness' (PS 117).

Whereas in the previous stage of a life and death struggle, two subjects experience a direct and immediate relation to the (natural) world around them and strive to satisfy their desires in immediate ways, the situation of master and slave ends this immediacy. Because the products of the slave's work go to the master, because the slave is not allowed to consummate these products instantly, a distance is created between himself and world. Herewith, the natural and immediate chain between his desire and the satisfaction of this desire is broken, which results in *alienation* of the slave from the products that he makes as well as from his own body, which is used by the master.

At the same time, however, it is this experience of alienation and disconnection that forces the slave to reflect upon his existence: his position as a slave provides him with a radically new perspective on his own situation. His unsatisfied desires change from random acts in a natural whole into acts that he can reflect upon and appropriate in a rational way. Furthermore, his disconnection from the objects he produces forces him to experience himself as an independent object. Hegel observes: 'Work ... is desire held in check, ... work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its form and something permanent, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence' (PS 118). The state of separation, in other words, enables the slave to reflect upon himself and his position in the world; to experience his body, his deeds and his desires as Other. They thereby lose their place in an unquestioned natural whole and become controllable, understandable; they become something that can be moulded and manipulated. Herewith, in turn, the idea is introduced that reality is something that can be controlled or worked upon: 'Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it' (PS 117).

A crucial aspect of this situation is the fear of death experienced by the slave, who is afraid of his master. Whereas, in the life and death struggle described above, this fear constituted the way in which two

subjects strive for the recognition of their status – they tried to show that they were ‘more’ than an animal striving for survival and life; that they were willing to risk their lives for something ‘higher’ –, the fear of death becomes institutionalized and socialized in the situation of master and slave. It could be argued that, for Hegel, this situation is the beginning of ‘the social’; of a relation that needs both subjects in order to work and therefore can only become stable once the fear of death becomes part of the slave’s everyday life and constitutes his obedience to his master.

The slave’s fear of death eventually results in a consciousness that is crucial for the subject’s development towards independence. The slave becomes so afraid, so anxious, that everything he used to take for granted disappears; everything around the slave trembles and shakes. This all-encompassing feeling of *Angst* eventually forces the slave break his bonds with his environment and forces him to develop a consciousness of himself as an independent being, as an object among other objects that is separated from his environment:

[I]ts whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. ... [T]his pure universal moment, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, pure being-for-self... . (PS 117)

As in Hegel’s interpretation of the stories of Noah and Abraham discussed above, fear of death and separation result in *Phenomenology of Spirit* in a breach between mankind and nature, between subject and object, constituting independence and self-consciousness: ‘Without the formative activity, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly for itself’ (PH 119). Mankind and its ability to reflect on itself, in other words, could only rise out of a natural whole by way of a shattering of natural bonds; a destruction of everything it took for granted.

It is therefore this shattering of natural bonds that introduces a *new* form or shape of self-consciousness, which Hegel associates with a specific definition of freedom and with the activity of *thinking*: through the division of labour that characterizes the relationship between master and servant, spirit becomes conscious of itself as a freely thinking subject whose thinking permeates the world of objects around itself: it realizes that its essence, as well as the relationship between master and servant, is manifested in the product that the servant produces. Marcuse insightfully puts this idea into words as follows:

[T]he subject of thinking is not the ‘abstract ego’ but the consciousness that knows that it is the ‘substance’ of the world. Or, thinking consists in knowing that the objective world is in reality a subjective world, that it is the objectification of the subject. The subject that really thinks comprehends the world as ‘his’ world. Everything in it has its true form only as a ‘comprehended’ (*begriffenes*) object, namely, as part and parcel of the development of a free self-consciousness. The totality of objects that make up a man’s world have to be freed from their ‘opposition’ to consciousness and must be taken up in such a ways as to assist its development. (RR 118)

Herewith, the stage of lordship and bondage transforms into its opposite: a stage in which a definition of freedom arises that is associated with pure self-sufficiency, and in which the subject constitutes its individuality by understanding everything outside of itself as hostile – it wants to completely absorb the world around itself and make every *externality* into something *internal*. Since this is not possible, the embrace of this kind of freedom results in a form of existence that Hegel associates with ‘stoicism’: an independent and indifferent subject that escapes the world by fleeing inside its own thinking.

However, it is this absolute opposite or negation of a state of 'fear and bondage' that eventually results, through several other changes and movements that are too complex too extensively discuss here, in the realization that this state does not bring true freedom either, since it is mere *abstract* thought. By way of this realization, spirit then enters its *final* stage, in which, according to Hegel, the 'I' becomes the 'We'; subjectivity becomes intersubjectivity; and the subject finds its own freedom in a unity with the objective world and with others, embracing the value of social recognition that it first discovered in the relation between master and slave through the idea that 'self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness' (PS 110). Herewith, absolute knowledge is reached, as well as true freedom, Hegel observes, which consists of the realization that *reality is reason* and that the subject permeates and appropriates existence *as a whole*. This realization is embodied by Hegel's philosophy, which he understands as the embodiment of the history of philosophy and of human history.

This latter observation is important: Hegel understands the journey that spirit undertakes in *Phenomenology of Spirit* not just as philosophical in nature but also historical: the different stages that spirit goes through are actual stages in the history of humanity (from the Greek city state to the French revolution and the German nation state), and embody the ways in which the subject *actually* struggles with the world, understands it and attempts to dominate or shape it, he argues. The process of history and the process of knowledge are, in other words, deeply entwined.

The French revolution, for example, is understood by Hegel as embodying the subject's attempt, discussed above, to create a state of radical freedom in which it frees itself from bondage and slavery. However, since this revolution did not result in a state of existence in which essential freedom was constituted, Hegel observes, the subject withdrew, as also described above, into the immanence of its own thought, a process that Hegel understands as embodied by Kant's philosophy. In the latter's thought, after all, freedom is defined as a submission to the subject's *own* laws. This means that at this point Hegel's analysis switches from the French revolution to German idealism and, more generally, that after the historical event of the French revolution, spirit resumes its struggles in the realm of philosophy. It is in this realm that it eventually finds essential and true freedom. Marcuse puts this last stage into words as follows:

The conflict that developed from Kant's reconciliation of the individual with the universal, a conflict between the dictate of duty and the desire for happiness, forced the individual to seek the truth in other solutions. He [Hegel] looks for it in art and religion and finally finds it in the 'absolute knowledge' of dialectical philosophy. There, all opposition between consciousness and its object is overcome; the subject possesses and knows the world as its own reality, as reason. (RR 96)

It is this unity reached by the subject that I want to define as resonance: the subject now incorporates the history of humanity as well as philosophy, and finds itself in the world by appropriating it in freedom and through reason. Furthermore, it thereby constitutes a social whole in which it turns the independent 'I' into a collective 'We', enabling the subject to fully develop its potentials and appropriate the world. To conclude with Hegel's words: 'In thus apprehending itself, after losing the grave of its truth, after the abolition of its actuality is itself abolished, and after the singleness of consciousness is for it in itself Absolute Essence, it discovers the world as *its* new real world, which in its permanence holds an interest for it which previously lay only in its transiency; for the *existence* of the world becomes for self-consciousness its own *truth* and *presence*; it is certain of experiencing only itself therein' (PS 140).

5.4 Overview

The two texts that I have discussed above can be read as powerful arguments for the claims that intersubjectivity forms a necessary condition for subjectivity, and that the subject only achieves true and essential freedom once it realizes that it itself permeates the world. The subject, Hegel shows, *needs* the Other in order to become an independent entity itself. Put more generally: subjects, but also ideas, concepts or theories, always require their opposite in order not to collapse into themselves and transform into empty shells.

This argument is developed in both 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate' and *Phenomenology of Spirit* by describing a similar movement or journey, directed towards the constitution of a resonating oneness with the world. Both texts, in other words, are driven by the subject's need to connect to a world that it is alienated and disconnected from. In 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', however, Hegel starts at the beginning of this journey; with the origin of civilization. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* he begins in the middle, with spirit's own ideas about its relation towards the world – 'common sense' theories about sense-certainty, perception and the notion of natural laws.

Positioning the oneness of absolute knowledge that Hegel herewith arrives at in the thematic coordinate system developed above, it is first of all clear that it is deeply *historical* in nature: in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel understands the stages that the subject goes through as reflecting actual historical stages and forms of thinking and appropriating the world. We will see that all theories on alienation and resonance developed after Hegel were deeply influenced by this emphasis on history.

Furthermore, the form of resonance found in Hegel's texts is *active* in nature: appropriating the world in true freedom is done by a self-consciousness that *acts*, that is *creative* and *productive*. Answering the question of whether Hegel herewith includes embodiment in his idea of oneness is difficult. However, since he is primarily concerned with ways of thinking and of understanding the world, the notion of resonance that might be distilled from his writings mainly revolves around the subject; the thinking mind; spirit.

6. The Early Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Since Marx's works contain different approaches to alienation and to the opposite of this phenomenon, I will divide my discussion of his works in two parts. First, I will focus on his early works, which contain a rich analysis of several forms of alienation. Then, I will discuss Marx's analysis of reification in *Capital*, and link it to the observations of Georg Lukács.

6.1 Six Forms of Alienation

Marx describes the phenomenon of alienation in several of his texts. He thereby refers to different spheres of life and to multiple social and historical processes, developing a comprehensive theory of what this process entails. One of his most specific characterizations of 'alienation' can be found in *The German Ideology*, in which he writes:

The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since

their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these. (GI 54-5)

This passage makes clear that, for Marx, alienation points first of all to a process that takes place in the economic sphere and that originates most explicitly and clearly with the development of a capitalist system, since this system is characterized by a division of labour. Marx herewith follows up on Hegel's above-mentioned idea that the different relationships that are constituted by a division of labour are reflected by the relationships between the worker and the product he makes, and furthermore that the product embodies the *essence* of its producer.

Marx uses different terms to characterize the process of alienation, but all point at the idea that a gap is created between the self and that which this self is alienated from. In the passage from *The German Ideology*, he uses phrases like 'alien force', 'existing outside of the self', the self being 'ignorant of origin and goal', 'independent of the will', etc. Furthermore, in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, he refers to things becoming 'hostile and alien' (72), to a process that turns workers into 'machines' (71), and that produces 'idiocy', 'cretinism' and 'deformity' (73), 'self-denial' and a 'mortification' of the body (74).

In these manuscripts, Marx describes six different forms of alienation. The *first* form he discusses is that of the worker from his product; from that which he produces. In a system based on a division of labour, Marx argues, the product that the worker makes is no longer his own, but belongs to those who control and own the means of production: the capitalists. This division separates the worker from his product, Marx observes, but thereby sets a process in motion that eventually permeates all spheres of life (EM 69 and further).

Not only does the labourer, once this process sets through, get disconnected from the product he produces, Marx also describes how labour *itself* becomes 'external to the labourer, i.e. it does not belong to his essential being', which means that he, in his work, 'does not affirm himself but denies himself': 'he is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home' (EM 74). This is the *second* form of alienation found in Marx's texts. Work, he argues in this context, becomes a process that is not part of the worker's life, but merely a means to exist in a world defined by capital. It is thereby turned into an empty and meaningless process in which all happiness seems to be (EM 74). In several places, Marx uses religion as a metaphor to show what this kind of alienation entails:

Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates independently of the individual – that is, operates on him as an alien, divine or diabolical activity – in the same way the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self. (EM 74)

This characterization of a 'loss of self' introduces several other forms of alienation, which are closely interlinked since they all contribute to the corrosion or even to a complete unravelling of the subject.

Marx explains this alienation of the self with reference to the idea that man is a 'species being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species as his object ... but also because he treats himself

as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being' (EM 75). Marx here refers, amongst other things, to the (Hegelian) idea that human beings are able to reflect on themselves and their relation to nature, which enables them to disconnect their actions from their immediate needs. Whereas the actions of animals are aimed directly at the satisfaction of a need, he observes, human beings are productive beings that work on nature to achieve other aims than just direct satisfaction: 'the animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its *life-activity*. Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity' (EM 76).

As a clear example of this kind of productivity, Marx mentions art: unlike animals, human beings can form things 'in accordance with the laws of beauty' (EM 77), he observes. This kind of productivity and creativity is what makes man into a free creature: he can shape and produce things of his own free will. Marx associates this ability with 'spontaneity' and 'action'.

This characterization of the human being as a 'species being' enables Marx to point at several forms of alienation that are caused by the initial division of labour and that not only concern the products of labour or the process of labour, but man's whole existence as a free and spontaneous subject. Estranged labour, he argues, robs human beings of their ability to freely form the world around them according to their own ideas and reflections, since their labour becomes standardized and machine-like, and defined by an economic system over which they have no control. This robs the subject of the ability to live in a world that it has shaped itself according to its own ideals and aims, and reduces its existence to that of a slave who merely works and produces in order to survive (EM 118).

This machine-like existence is based on an alienation from three different dimensions. The first of these, and the *third* form of alienation Marx discusses in general, is alienation of the self from its consciousness. The *fourth* is alienation from the body, and the *fifth* is alienation of the self from the nature that surrounds him; from external nature. These three forms of alienation are entwined: the moment man does not have a creative and spontaneous relationship with his environment anymore, in which he is able, as a bodily and spontaneous being, to shape this environment according to his own ideas, he is reduced to a mere object that is trying to survive in a system that is strange to him; that he does not control and that is owned by others. This, Marx observes, turns man's consciousness into a 'means to his individual existence' (EM 77/8) and disconnects the subject from its body, since spontaneous bodily action is not possible anymore.

At several places, Marx argues that this process robs human beings of that which makes them human, and reduces them to mere animals that are only allowed to satisfy their most basic needs. By approaching human beings as mere slaves whose existence is only justified with reference to the amount of money it generates for the capitalist, the worker's needs are 'reduced to the barest' and his activity is reduced to the 'most abstract mechanical movement' (EM 118). Marx summarizes that this approach 'knows the worker only as a working animal – as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs' (EM 29).

Marx argues furthermore that this process makes the environment in which this subject lives fundamentally different: no longer is this subject surrounded by a natural world in which it can manifest itself as a free being, and shape this nature according to its own aims. Instead, it reduces this nature, again, to a mere means of its survival, into a soulless whole that the labourer involuntarily has to transform into products that he does not own or want. Estranged labour, Marx summarizes these three forms of alienation, makes '*Man's species being*, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to

him, into a *means* to his *individual existence*. It estranges man's own body from him, as it does external nature and his spiritual essence, his *human being*' (EM 77-8).

This brings us to the *sixth* and last form of alienation that Marx discusses: alienation of man from his fellow man. Again, his discussion of this process is deeply linked to his understanding of the human being as a 'species being' and forms part of the process he characterizes as a 'loss of the self'. The moment human beings are disconnected from their species being, from their ability to reflect on themselves, from their bodies and from their ability to spontaneously manifest themselves in the world as acting and creative creatures, Marx argues, they are disconnected from everything that essentially makes them human and *therefore* from humanity as a whole. This is the case, since in his view a human being always develops itself in relation to other human beings and in a social whole defined by human values, ideas and relationships. Again, Marx herewith follows Hegel and argues that human beings are always born in a social whole, and therefore learn how to relate to themselves by relating to others, and learn to reflect on themselves by way of the universal capacity that characterizes every human being: the capacity to reflect and produce (EM 78). Getting robbed of that which makes a human being into a human being, means getting robbed from being part of the whole of humanity, which results in the alienation of man from his fellow man. Marx writes:

The estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man stands to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship in which a man stands to other men. Hence within the relationship of estranged labour each man views the other in accordance with the standard and position in which he finds himself as a worker. (EM 79)

This process makes it impossible for people to treat other human beings in a spontaneous, active and reflective manner, but instead forces them to approach others as mere means to an end, as mere cogs in a soulless machine.

6.2 Active Self-Realization in a Social Whole

Even though I have only managed to scratch the surface of Marx's observations on alienation, it is clear that his early work contains a rich exploration of this concept. Not only does Marx discuss alienation of the self from other people and from nature, he also argues that the division of labour results in alienation from labour, from the process of labour, from consciousness and from corporeality.

Following this brief exploration of Marx's analysis, I now want to look at the question of whether it is possible to base a positive understanding of what the good life looks like on Marx's negative analysis of the economic structures he analyses. I will do this by exploring the understanding of 'resonance' that follows from his early texts. It is thereby first of all important to notice that Marx does not conceptualize an ideal state of nature that was corrupted by the capitalist process. In the *Early Manuscripts* he makes this point, again, by referring to the nature of religion:

Do not let us go back to a fictitious primordial condition as the political economist does, when he tries to explain. Such a primordial condition explains nothing. He merely pushes the question away into a grey nebulous distance. He assumes in the form of fact, of an event, what he is supposed to deduce – namely, the necessary relationship between two things – between, for example, between division of labour and exchange. Theology in the same way explains the origin of evil by the fall of

man; that is, it assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained. We proceed from an *actual* economic fact. (EM 70-1)

Marx, in other words, analyses an already developing historical situation, criticizes that situation, and looks at those places where it actually goes wrong, where people suffer, and which paradoxes and contradictions it contains. It would therefore be wrong to claim that Marx bases his analysis on an ahistorical idea of what human beings essentially are, in line of Schopenhauer's analysis, for example. Instead, Marx approaches human beings as creatures that constantly develop themselves in relation to other people and to previous generations. Furthermore, his emphasis on production and on the human ability to shape nature according to one's ideas and aims suggests that human beings live in a world they have shaped themselves, as well as previous generations. They are, in other words, always already born in an ongoing process of shaping, creating and producing.

It is precisely in line of this latter observation, however, that I believe a notion of 'resonance' *can* be based on Marx's analysis of alienation. This notion does not refer to a passive state, to a specific kind of experience or to a corrupted original state of nature, but to an *active* and *creative* relationship between self and world, self and others, self and nature, self and consciousness, self and body, self and work and self and the product of this work. A hint at this kind of relationship can be found in a passage in the *Early Manuscripts*, in which Marx explains his above-mentioned idea that humans, as *species-beings*, shape their environment according to their own ideas, needs, aims and reflections:

Man appropriates his total essence in a total manner, that is to say, as a whole man. Each of his *human* relations to the world-seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, being aware, sensing, wanting, acting, loving-in short, all the organs of his individual being, like those organs which are directly social in their form, are in their *objective* orientation or in their *orientation to the object*, the appropriation of that object, the appropriation of the *human* world; their orientation to the object is the *manifestation of the human world...* (EM 106)

I believe that the notion of 'resonance' that we can base on a passage like this is the following: a human being experiences resonance once it stands in a creative and unhindered relationship with its environment, a relationship that is constantly developing in all dimensions of human life. Not only does Marx refer to the bodily senses, but also to the ability to love, wish, hope and desire. Furthermore, he claims that these aspects are 'organs of his individuality': a human being, in other words, needs to be able to develop itself as a specific individual in order to find resonance, which can be understood as the opposite of Marx's negative analyses of 'abstract' approaches to humanity.

Furthermore, resonance has a deeply historical meaning in Marx:

[N]ot only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses - the practical senses (will, love, etc.) – in a word, *human* sense – the humanness of the senses – comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized* nature. The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of humanized nature. The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present. (EM 108-9)

In his famous study of Marx's ideas on the human essence, György Markus puts this idea into words as follows:

The human individual is a material, natural being who depends on his actual environment, is conditioned by the social objects of his wants and abilities, the objects of the realization of his life that exists independently from him. But the individual is, at the same time, an active – humanly active – being, for whom the environment is not an externally given fact but a material reality appropriated and transformed by his own activity. (Markus 1966: 77)

This means that ‘resonance’ has a strong social dimension in Marx: it refers to the ability to develop ourselves as individuals in a social context, thereby both affirming our unique individuality as well as the individuality of everyone else with whom we live in a social whole.

6.3 Overview

Positioning Marx’s understanding of ‘resonance’ in the thematic coordinate system developed above, it can be placed on the first axis *in between mind and body*: Marx refers clearly to an organic entwining of all human faculties, bodily and mental. On the second axis, it should be placed on the side of *activity*: only as an active spontaneous being, Marx argues, can resonance be found. On the third axis, it should be placed on the side of *history*: Marx’s understanding of resonance is firmly embedded in a specific historical analysis, therewith following Hegel’s ideas on history as a process during which the subject attempts to appropriate its Other in different ways.

It is interesting to notice that several of Kierkegaard’s concerns return in Marx’s observations as well: the former’s affirmation on activity and passion is clearly present in Marx’s text. Furthermore, Kierkegaard’s aversion of abstraction forms an important part of Marx’s critique as well: human beings, he argues, should be understood and approached as particular creatures, embedded in a specific time and age, developing their unique individuality in a social and natural context. Even Kierkegaard’s idea that the generalizing nature of money introduces a certain death-like flatness to the world returns in Marx’s critique.

7. Reification: Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Georg Lukács (1885-1971)

This brings us to the second part of Marx’s analysis of alienation that I want to focus on: his ideas about commodification and reification. In the following, I will analyse his discussion of this process in *Capital*. Furthermore, I will show how the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács further developed these ideas.

7.1 Reification

In the paragraph ‘The fetishism of the commodity and its secret’, in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx analyses the development of an economic system in which goods can be exchanged. Since such a system makes it possible for people to become less dependent on that which they produce themselves and increases their chances of survival, the development of such an economic system is steered by the drive to self-preservation, he observes.

In order to create this economic system, the use-value of a product has to be replaced by exchange-value, Marx argues. Whereas the first concept refers to the value a product has for a particular person in a particular situation, the second kind of value determines what other products it can be traded for. This latter

value was originally based on the average time needed to produce a product, Marx claims (C 164-5). Determining the exchange-value of products in this way makes it possible, in other words, to compare products with each other and to trade them within a market-system. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx describes this process as follows:

Through the subordination of man to the machine the situation arises in which men are effaced by their labour; in which the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives. Therefore, we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that one man during an hour is worth just as much as another man during an hour. Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at the most the incarnation of time. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything: hour for hour, day for day... (as quoted in HCC 89-90)

This emphasis on shared value and on average production time, Marx observes, robs products of their individual and particular qualities and transforms them into what he calls 'commodities'. As commodities, products are no longer valued by their particular qualities and the individual skills needed to produce them, but are approached from a general point of view and provided with a value that is based on a non-existing standard that is only created to compare them. Commodities hereby gain a 'mystical character' (C 164), of which Marx writes that it has 'absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of it' (C 165).

But since capitalist societies revolve around profit and since profit is made by way of a market-system based on exchange, Marx argues that within this society more and more products become standardized and commodified, which eventually results in the 'finished form of the world of commodities – the money form... ' (C 168). Money became the universal way of comparing and trading goods, he claims, because it makes it possible to not only measure the value of products in a standardized manner, but also the value of time, labour and, eventually, people.

This process of commodification and standardization, driven by the ever-growing need to produce surplus-value, eventually results in the phenomenon of alienation, Marx famously observes. Workers are disconnected from the products of their work: they are placed on assembly lines, for example, made part of only a small aspect of the production process. Furthermore, people become alienated from each other and the world in which they live: once more and more spheres of life are permeated with a standardizing system according to which everything and everyone can be valued in terms of money, these spheres lose their particular and individual nature. And since money makes it possible to measure the value of labour power, generalizing the individual work that particular people do for the people who own of the means of production, this eventually makes relations between people 'appear as relations between material objects' (C 169) and reduces them to 'objects of utility' (C 165): they become *reified*.

This process of reification transforms people, like products, into mere functions in an equation that has to result in profit, robbing them of their individuality and making them into mere parts of a machine. Furthermore, Marx argues, reification enhances domination, not only of the workers who are reduced to functions in an equation, but also of nature and of natural resources, which are perceived from a standardized and efficiency-focused standpoint and robbed of their intrinsic value and their individual and particular nature.

A crucial aspect of Marx's analysis consists of the idea that the process of reification eventually appears as a 'natural law'. Marx writes:

What initially concerns producers in practice when they make an exchange is how much of some other product they get for their own; in what proportions can the products be exchanged? As soon as these proportions have attained a certain customary ability, they appear to result from the nature of the products... (C 168)

This brings us to Georg Lukács, who develops this idea further in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), mainly in the chapter 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat'. Lukács there argues that Marx's understanding of reification can be applied to modern society as a whole and has been brought about by modern forms of capitalism: 'commodity fetishism is a *specific* problem of our age, the age of modern capitalism. Commodity exchange and the corresponding subjective and objective commodity relations existed, as we know, when society was still very primitive. What is at issue *here*, however, is the question: how far is commodity exchange together with its structural consequences able to influence the *total* outer and inner life of society?' (HCC 84).

The main idea behind Lukács' critique of modern capitalism is that commodity relations have permeated every aspect of society, both its objective relations – the relations between objects that are exchanged – and its subjective relations – the subjective *experiences* of relations between people and between people and things. Lukács mainly uses Marx's analysis of time and money to make this point. With the introduction of a general form that made it possible to compare goods that, in themselves, could not be compared, a calculating and rationalizing way of thinking was constituted, Lukács argues with Marx, and this way of thinking has permeated every aspect of modern life.

This process has two consequences: 'the mathematical analysis of work-processes denotes a break with the organic, irrational and qualitatively determined unity of the product. ... Rationalisation ... must declare war on the organic manufacture of whole products based on the traditional *amalgam of empirical experiences of work...* .' (HCC 88). Secondly, 'this fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject. ... Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not' (HCC 88-89).

Following this discussion of Marx's ideas about commodification and reification, Lukács argues that this process has resulted in the constitution of what he ironically defines as the 'free worker': the worker who is only a mere function in a pre-determined machine and who has lost all control over that which he does or produces:

[T]he principle of rational mechanisation and calculability must embrace every aspect of life. Consumer aspects no longer appear as the products of an organic process within a community (as for example a village community). They now appear, on the one hand, as abstract members of a species identical by definition with its other members and, on the other hand, as isolated objects the possession or non-possession of which depends on rational calculations. Only when the whole life of society is thus fragmented into the isolated acts of commodity exchange can the 'free' worker come into being; at the same time his fate becomes the typical fate of the whole society. (HCC 91)

Lukács frequently uses the words 'atomisation' and 'dehumanization' to define the results of this calculating and rationalising attitude: in modern capitalist societies, commodity relations have expanded from the isolated sphere of industries to society as a whole, and have thereby set a process in motion that robs every object and every subjects of its particularity. It even permeates the consciousness of individuals and makes these relations, as Marx already argued, appear as 'natural', 'logical' or 'rational':

The atomisation of the individual ... is only the reflex in consciousness of the fact that the 'natural laws' of capitalist production have been extended to cover every aspect of life in society; that – for the first time in history – the whole of society is subjected, or tends to be subjected, to a unified economic process, and that the fate of every member of society is determined by unified laws. (HCC 91-2)

Following Marx again, Lukács claims that this permeation of consciousness results in a veil that covers the world and makes commodity relations appear as natural. He observes in a famous passage:

[M]en are constantly smashing, replacing, and leaving behind the "natural," irrational, and actually existing bonds, while, on the other hand, they erect around themselves in the reality that they have created and "made," a kind of second nature which evolves with exactly the same inexorable necessity as was the case earlier with irrational forces of nature (HCC 128)

This process, which makes the 'mysterious' and, according to Marx and Lukács, completely superficial commodity character of a product appear as its true nature, has dramatic consequences. Now, Lukács observes: 'the powers that are beyond man's control assume quite a different character', which appears 'as the ineluctable consequence of known, knowable, rational systems of laws, as a necessity which cannot ultimately and wholly be grasped' (HCC 129). The process of reification, in other words, not only permeates more and more aspects of society – dominating people, nature and work – but also appears as *rational*, necessary and unchangeable, as the way things are and will always be, and thereby controls the manner in which people experience themselves and their environment.

Lukács herewith not only criticizes a society that reduces people to dehumanised atoms, but also an all-permeating bureaucratic system that approaches everything and everyone in a distant, cold and formulaic manner. He therewith infuses his Marxism with the ideas of Max Weber on rationalization and bureaucratization, which I discuss below:

It is not only a question of the completely mechanical, 'mindless' work of the lower echelons of the bureaucracy which bears such an extraordinary close resemblance to operating a machine and which indeed often surpasses it in sterility and uniformity. It is also a question, on the one hand, of the way in which objectively all issues are subjected to an increasingly *formal* and standardised treatment and in which there is an ever-increasing remoteness from the qualitative and material essence of the 'things' to which bureaucratic activity pertains. On the other hand, there is an ever more monstrous intensification of the one-sided specialisation which represents such a violation of man's humanity. (HCC 99)

This results, ultimately, in a consciousness that lacks real personality and individuality, Lukács argues, and permeates, for example, the experience that people have of their sexuality, targeting Kant's ideas as embodying this *ethos*:

This transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of ‘ghostly objectivity’ ... stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can ‘own’ or ‘dispose of’ like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic ‘qualities’ into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process. We need only think of marriage, and without troubling to point to the development of the nineteenth century we can remind ourselves of the way in which Kant, for example, described the situation “Sexual community”, he says, “is the reciprocal use made of one person of the sexual organs and faculties of another ... marriage is the union of two people of different sexes with a view of the mutual possession of each other’s sexual attributes for the duration of their lives.” (HCC 100)

Reification, in other words, reduces every feeling of spontaneity, warmth or belonging to a relation defined by rationalisation and calculation, and makes individuals in capitalist societies into mere interchangeable atoms that are alienation from everything and everyone around them.

7.2 Revolution and Transcendental Homelessness

Since both Marx and Lukács argue that the subject’s consciousness is completely reified and that the laws of modern capitalism appear as natural, logical and rational, it is very difficult to distil a notion of resonance from their theories: every form of experience, after all, has been distorted. Furthermore, Lukács repeatedly claims, these laws are not completely clear or explicitly formulated. They form, as it were, an underlying structure that escapes the full understanding of those who live under modern capitalism:

[The law of the market] must not merely impose itself despite the wishes of individuals, it may *not even be fully and adequately knowable*. For the complete knowledge of the whole would vouchsafe the knower a monopoly that would amount to the virtual abolition of the capitalist economy. (HCC 102)

Emphasis therefore lies within the works of Marx and Lukács on rational and critical analysis of the conditions under which people live. Such an analysis should enable subjects to pierce through the layer that covers the world they experience. In this context, one could also think of a (Leninist) political party that stimulates critique, reflection and opposition to the conditions that cause suffering. The reflexive capacities of reason, in other words, might enable the subject to criticize the commodifying and reifying workings of society.

In this paragraph, however, I want to focus on a different dimension of Lukács’ writings: his reflections on literature. In several works, Lukács defends realist literature and realism in general against modernist texts, because realist literature is able to mirror objective reality and show people the true nature of the world in which they live, he argues. Whereas modernist texts merely present the reader with an abstract representation of the world (we can think here of Kafka, Beckett, James Joyce or the Surrealists), realist texts make it possible to draw the reader in and to make him aware of the social relations that define his existence. Even though a text may not contain specific revolutionary ideals or a Marxist critique, a historical novel may show the reader that the conditions under which people live are ‘just’ historical conditions, part of a certain time and age, and *therefore* changeable. Literature, in other words, may rob ‘second nature’ of

its rational and logical aura and expose it for what it is: a specific structure that is a product of a historical situation and that reifies every form of experience the subject has.

In *The Theory of the Novel*, which he later rejected in favour of his Marxist ideas, Lukács develops the notion of a 'transcendental homelessness', the opposite of which perhaps comes the closest to descriptions of 'resonance' found in his works: he argues that the novel, thereby especially focusing on the tradition of German romanticism, is driven by a feeling of homelessness that is caused by a schism or division between self and world. He opens *The Theory of the Novel* as follows:

Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths—ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. The world is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars; the world and the self, the light and the fire, are sharply distinct, yet they never become permanent strangers to one another, for fire is the soul of all light and all fire clothes itself in light. Thus each action of the soul becomes meaningful and rounded in this duality: complete in meaning—in sense—and complete for the senses; rounded because the soul rests within itself even while it acts; rounded because its action separates itself from it and, having become itself, finds a centre of its own and draws a closed circumference round itself. 'Philosophy is really homesickness,' says Novalis: 'it is the urge to be at home everywhere.' That is why philosophy, as a form of life or as that which determines the form and supplies the content of literary creation, is always a symptom of the rift between 'inside' and 'outside', a sign of the essential difference between the self and the world, the incongruence of soul and deed. That is why the happy ages have no philosophy, or why (it comes to the same thing) all men in such ages are philosophers, sharing the Utopian aim of every philosophy. For what is the task of true philosophy if not to draw that archetypal map? What is the problem of the transcendental locus if not to determine how every impulse which springs from the innermost depths is co-ordinated with a form that it is ignorant of, but that has been assigned to it from eternity and that must envelop it in liberating symbols? When this is so, passion is the way, predetermined by reason, towards complete self-being and from madness come enigmatic yet decipherable messages of a transcendental power, otherwise condemned to silence. There is not yet any interiority, for there is not yet any exterior, any 'otherness' for the soul. The soul goes out to seek adventure; it lives through adventures, but it does not know the real torment of seeking and the real danger of finding; such a soul never stakes itself; it does not yet know that it can lose itself, it never thinks of having to look for itself. Such an age is the age of the epic. (TN 29-30)

The soul, Lukács goes on, demands 'greatness' and 'wholeness', and in the epic, by which he refers to the writings of the ancient Greeks, the subject's deeds satisfy this demand, which means that the subject does not experience an abyss within itself anymore (TN 30).

[The world of the Greeks] is a homogeneous world, and even the separation between man and world, between 'I' and 'you', cannot disturb its homogeneity. Like every other component of this rhythm, the soul stands in the midst of the world; the frontier that makes up its contours is not different in essence from the contours of things: it draws sharp, sure lines, but it separates only relatively, only in relation to and for the purpose of a homogeneous system of adequate balances. For man does not stand alone, as the sole bearer of substantiality, in the midst of reflexive forms:

his relations to others and the structures which arise therefrom are as full of substance as he is himself, indeed they are more truly filled with substance because they are more general, more 'philosophic', closer and more akin to the archetypal home: love, the family, the state. (TN 32-3)

This unity or oneness has been broken in modernity, Lukács argues, and the rational subject is disconnected from the world in which it lives. Herewith, he comes rather close to Nietzsche's observations on rational reflection:

Kant's starry firmament now shines only in the dark night of pure cognition, it no longer lights any solitary wanderer's path (for to be a man in the new world is to be solitary). And the inner light affords evidence of security, or its illusion, only to the wanderer's next step. No light radiates any longer from within into the world of events, into its vast complexity to which the soul is a stranger. And who can tell whether the fitness of the action to the essential nature of the subject—the only guide that still remains—really touches upon the essence, when the subject has become a phenomenon, an object unto itself; when his innermost and most particular essential nature appears to him only as a neverceasing demand written upon the imaginary sky of that which 'should be'; when this innermost nature must emerge from an unfathomable chasm which lies within the subject himself, when only what comes up from the furthest depths is his essential nature, and no one can ever sound or even glimpse the bottom of those depths? Art, the visionary reality of the world made to our measure, has thus become independent: it is no longer a copy, for all the models have gone; it is a created totality, for the natural unity of the metaphysical spheres has been destroyed forever. (TN 36-7)

Following these rather romantic observations, Lukács argues that novels can be understood as driven by the need to be at home in the world and overcome the schism that separates the subject from the reality that surrounds it: 'German Romanticism, although it did not always completely clarify its concept of the novel, drew a close connection between it and the concept of the Romantic; and rightly so, for the novel form is, like no other, an expression of this transcendental homelessness' (TN 41). And: 'The novel is the form of mature virility: its song of comfort rings out of the dawning recognition that traces or lost meaning are to be found everywhere; that the enemy comes from the same lost home as the knight and defender of the essence; that life had to lose its immanence of meaning so that it might be equally present everywhere' (TN 123).

Lukács stresses that the realism of novels, which makes them into true expressions of transcendental homelessness, is constituted for a large part by the element of time:

The greatest discrepancy between idea and reality is time: the process of time as duration. The most profound and most humiliating impotence of subjectivity consists not so much in its hopeless struggle against the lack of idea in social forms and their human representatives, as in the fact that it cannot resist the sluggish, yet constant progress of time; that it must slip down, slowly yet inexorably, from the peaks it has labouriously scaled; that time—that ungraspable, invisibly moving substance—gradually robs subjectivity of all its possessions and imperceptibly forces alien contents into it. That is why only the novel, the literary form of the transcendent homelessness of the idea, includes real time—Bergson's *durée*—among its constitutive principles. (TN 121)

Even though *The Theory of the Novel* is not constituted within a Marxist framework, these observations do remind of Marx's above-discussed references to time as a calculating factor that makes it possible to reify workers and social relations.

7.3 Overview

Marx's observations on commodification and reification are clearly *historical* in nature: they provide a critical analysis of a specific time and age, and of historically formed economic and social conditions. Following his critique of the process of reification, which reduces people to mindless cogs in a large machine, in his view, the notion of resonance that could be understood as the opposite of this state of being consists, as with the younger Marx, of a certain *wholeness*: in this state, the subject realizes itself as a productive, creative, thinking and bodily being. In the thematic coordinate system, this means that this form of resonance is *active*, and finds its place *in between body and mind*. However, Marx is much less clear about this experience in *Capital* than he is in the more anthropologically oriented *Early Manuscripts*.

The same holds true for Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*. I have shown, however, that in his earlier works we do find an understanding of resonance: when usurped by a novel, Lukács there argues, the reader finds its home again and is *overcome* by the story the novel tells. This form of resonance is characterized by an *absence of embodiment* but also an emphasis on *passivity*: a novel, after all, addresses its readers as thinking subjects and pulls the reading self into another world. It is therefore important to stress that Lukács later abandoned the romantic implications of his ideas about the novel in favour of his Marxist and more rational critique of society.

8. Max Weber (1864-1920)

From Marx and Lukács, I will now shift to a discussion of the modernity-critique of Max Weber. In contrast with Marx, Weber famously emphasized the idea that social analyses should not just be focused on material relations between those who control the forces of production and those who produce, but also on cultural factors and their influence on the subject's orientation towards reality; on the manner in which 'ideas become effective forces in history' (PESC 48). This does not mean, in his own words, that he aims 'to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and of history. Each is equally possible, but each, it is does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth' (PESC 125). One of the main cultural factors important for my discussion of Weber's works in this paper is that of religion, more specifically that of Protestantism and Weber's analysis of its emphasis on ascetism and purity.

8.1 The Iron Cage

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber explores the question of how a specific type of modern capitalism came into being in Western Europe and North America. This type of capitalism is driven by what Weber calls a 'spirit'; 'an ethically coloured maxim for the conduct of life' (PECS 17) that he

characterizes with reference to the writings of Benjamin Franklin. One of the most famous parts of Franklin's text as quoted by Benjamin reads as follows:

Remember, that *time* is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon *that* the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides.

Remember, that *credit* is money. If a man lets his money lie in my hands after it is due, he gives me the interest, or so much as I can make of it during that time. This amounts to a considerable sum where a man has good and large credit, and makes good use of it. Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Five shillings turned is six, turned again it is seven and threepence, and so on, till it becomes a hundred pounds. The more there is of it, the more it produces every turning, so that the profits rise quicker and quicker. He that kills a breeding-sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth generation. He that murders a crown, destroys all that it might have produced, even scores of pounds.

Remember this saying, *The good paymaster is lord of another man's purse*. He that is known to pay punctually and exactly to the time he promises, may at any time, and on any occasion, raise all the money his friends can spare. (PESC 14-15)

Weber argues that the spirit of modern capitalism, embodied by Franklin's observations, robs man of his spontaneous enjoyment of life and throws him into a machine-like, rationalized existence that only revolves around efficiency and the gaining of wealth and money.

Herewith, we arrive at Weber's modernity-critique and the notion of alienation that can be distilled from his writings: under modern capitalism, man loses spontaneous and impulsive connections with the world in which he lives, as well as with the work he does and the products he makes, Weber observes. These are no longer connected to his well-being or to that which he needs, but are merely driven by an emphasis on the gaining of wealth for the sake of itself:

In fact, the *summum bonum* of this ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudæmonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. This reversal of what we should call the natural relationship, so irrational from a naïve point of view, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence. (PESC 18)

Modern capitalism, in other words, breaks the 'natural bonds' between man and his surroundings. Furthermore, it is driven, in Weber's view, by an *irrational form of rationality*: it revolves around the complete rationalization of a certain type of life, in which every action and thought is organized rationally in light of an irrational goal – 'it is just that which seems to the pre-capitalistic man so incomprehensible and mysterious, so unworthy and contemptible. That anyone should be able to make it the sole purpose of his life-work, to sink into the grave weighed down with a great material load of money and goods, seems to him explicable only as the product of a perverse instinct, the *auri sacra fames*' (PESC 33).

The irrationality of this endeavour, however, is not noticed by those living *within* the capitalist system. Herewith, Weber develops an understanding of the ideology of capitalism that comes close to Lukács' idea of 'second nature':

The capitalistic economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live. It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalistic rules of action. The manufacturer who in the long run acts counter to these norms, will just as inevitably be eliminated from the economic scene as the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them will be thrown into the streets without a job. (PESC 19)

Weber herewith argues that modern capitalism is not driven by greed or specific emotions, but is understood as the *only right way of living* and can therefore be understood as a religious *calling*; as that which one is supposed to do if one wants to live a right life; as a 'mass phenomenon' (PESC 22) that is considered universally true.

Weber famously arrives at the conclusion that this 'spirit of capitalism' finds its origins in the ascetic ideals that, according to his interpretation, go hand in hand with different branches of Protestantism and their emphasis on predestination. This is the case, he argues, since the notion of predestination results in the idea that, even though one is never sure if one is chosen to be saved from damnation, one has to regard oneself as chosen, since if one does not act upon this belief one does not have faith in God. Furthermore, the belief in predestination instilled the idea in people that one has to do good deeds in order to *show* that one has faith and regards oneself as chosen. Hard labour, in other words, shows one's faith in God and forms the best way to attain certainty of grace.

Weber observes that these ideas, in turn, resulted in the theory that one has to work as hard as possible and gain as much wealth as possible in order to show that one believed one was chosen to be saved from damnation. Interpreting the writings of Richard Baxter, Weber argues: 'Not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity serves to increase the glory of God, according to the definite manifestations of His will' (PESC 104). Weber goes on:

Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation. It does not yet hold, with Franklin, that time is money, but the proposition is true in a certain spiritual sense. It is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God. Thus inactive contemplation is also valueless, or even directly reprehensible if it is at the expense of one's daily work. For it is less pleasing to God than the active performance of His will in a calling. Besides, Sunday is provided for that, and, according to Baxter, it is always those who are not diligent in their callings who have no time for God when the occasion demands it. (PESC 104-5)

As in Hegel (especially his early writings), Nietzsche and Marx, Weber shows how this rationalization of life embodies hostility towards feelings of play, enjoyment, sensuality and spontaneity: 'ascetism turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer' (PESC 111), and condemned 'the spontaneous expression of undisciplined impulses' (PESC 112), theatre, the erotic and nudity (PESC 113):

The conception of idle talk, of superfluities, and of vain ostentation, all designations of an irrational attitude without objective purpose, thus not ascetic, and especially not serving the glory of God, but of man, were always hand in hand to serve in deciding in favour of sober utility against any artistic tendencies. This was especially true in the case of decoration of the person, for instance clothing. That powerful tendency toward uniformity of life, which to-day so immensely aids the capitalistic interests in the standardization of production, had its ideal foundations in the repudiation of all idolatry of the flesh. (PESC 114)

Weber writes how ‘ascetism descended like a frost’ (PESC 113), hinting at the idea that this alienation from any kind of pleasure or playfulness – from the body and its impulses – introduces experiences of *coldness* – a term that returns, as we will see, in Adorno’s analysis. Not only does Weber herewith describe alienation from the *body*, but also alienation between subjects, since the Protestant ethos encourages economic exploitation:

Now naturally the whole ascetic literature of almost all denominations is saturated with the idea that faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God. In this respect Protestant Asceticism added in itself nothing new. But it not only deepened this idea most powerfully, it also created the force which was alone decisive for its effectiveness: the psychological sanction of it through the conception of this labour as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining certainty of grace. And on the other hand it legalized the exploitation of this specific willingness to work, in that it also interpreted the employer’s business activity as a calling. (PESC 121)

Like Nietzsche, Weber eventually observes that the values and spirit behind Protestantism result in the demise of this religious doctrine, which brings us to a dimension of his thought that is important in light of discussions of alienation and resonance. Whereas Nietzsche argues that the will to truth behind religious thought results in the demystifying power of the natural sciences, Weber claims that the emphasis on material wealth and technological structures that characterizes capitalism removes Protestantism from its pedestal and declares religion to be redundant. Capitalism, in other words, introduces a machine-like society, characterized by rationalization and bureaucracy, in which individuals are merely reduced to cogs; to functions in an equation in which religion does not play a role anymore. In the last paragraphs of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he famously uses the term ‘iron cage’ to characterize this process:

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter’s view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the “saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment”. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.

Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no

previous period in history. To-day the spirit of religious asceticism – whether finally, who knows? – has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer. The rosy blush of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading, and the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs. Where the fulfilment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all. (PESC 123-4)

Therewith, the spirit of Protestantism eliminated what Weber calls 'magic' from the world: 'The genuine Puritan even rejected all signs of religious ceremony at the grave and buried his nearest and dearest without song or ritual in order that no superstition, no trust in the effects of magical and sacramental forces on salvation, should creep in. There was not only no magical means of attaining the grace of God for those to whom God had decided to deny it, but no means whatever' (PESC 61).

In *The Sociology of Religion*, Weber makes a similar point, and famously characterizes the state in which bureaucratization and rationalization has resulted as a form of 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*), which he describes as follows in contrast with other religions and cultures:

Only ascetic Protestantism completely eliminated enchantment and supernatural quest for salvation, of which the highest form was intellectualist, contemplative illumination. It alone created the religious motivations for seeking salvation primarily through the immersion in one's worldly vocation (*Beruf*). This Protestant stress upon the methodically rationalized fulfillment of one's vocational responsibility was diametrically opposite to Hinduism's strongly traditionalistic concept of vocations. For the various folk religiosity of Asia, in contrast to ascetic Protestantism, the world remained a great enchanted garden, in which the practical way to orient oneself, or to find security in this world or the next, was to revere or coerce the spirits and seek salvation through ritualistic, idolatrous, or sacramental procedures. (Weber 1978a: 631)

Not only is this life disenchanted, however, it is also *lonely*. Weber observes that the doctrine of predestination, 'in its extreme inhumanity ... must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency. That was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual' (PESC 60).

The notion of 'disenchantment' was influenced by Friedrich Schiller's poem 'The Gods of Greece' ('Die Götter Griechenland'), which contains the following passage:

Cold, from the north, has gone
 Over the flowers the blast that killed their May;
 And, to enrich the worship of the one,
 A universe of gods must pass away!
 Mourning, I search on yonder starry steeps,
 But thee no more, Selene, there I see!
 And through the woods I call, and o'er the deeps,
 And—Echo answers me!
 Deaf to the joys she gives—
 Blind to the pomp of which she is possessed—
 Unconscious of the spiritual power that lives

Around, and rules her—by our bliss unblessed—
 Dull to the art that colors or creates,
 Like the dead timepiece, godless nature creeps
 Her plodding round, and, by the leaden weights,
 The slavish motion keeps.
 Home! and with them are gone
 The hues they gazed on and the tones they heard;
 Life's beauty and life's melody:—alone
 Broods o'er the desolate void, the lifeless word;
 Yet rescued from time's deluge, still they throng
 Unseen the Pindus they were wont to cherish:
 All, that which gains immortal life in song,
 To mortal life must perish! (Schiller 2007:108)

Whereas Schiller refers to a 'godless nature' (*entgötterte Natur*), lamenting the death of the polytheistic universe of the Greeks, Weber describes a world that is robbed of its 'magic'.

8.2 Charisma

Since Weber does not explicitly provide an understanding of what the good life should or could be like, it is almost impossible to distil an understanding of 'resonance' from his texts. Weber's frequent references to the notion of 'spontaneity' and to playfulness hint at the idea, however, that such an experience would consist of a free and creative existence that comes close to the one celebrated by German romanticism, as is perhaps suggested by the influence of Schiller's poem. Also, Weber uses the following phrase to criticize modern life, which might have been inspired by either Nietzsche or Goethe: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved' (PESC 124). This suggests that the form of resonance that Weber's texts might hint at is found in the experience of *passion* and *engagement*, but also takes place within a horizon that provides the individual's life with *meaning*.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that Weber's analysis of disenchantment does not have to be interpreted as *completely* pessimistic and negative in nature. Put differently: his ideas about disenchantment do not necessarily suggest that the world *should* be re-enchanted. In line of Nietzsche and Camus, it might be able to argue that the disenchantment that comes with Protestantism and modern capitalism makes room for the individual to eventually constitute itself as an autonomous, spontaneous being in the world, even though this world has lost its metaphysical and religious horizons and is emptied of meaning by processes of rationalization, fragmentation and bureaucratization. We will see that Habermas defends this idea.

Another suggestion for thinking about 'resonance' within a Weberian framework can be found in his analysis of *charisma*, which was inspired by the theological works of Rudolph Sohm. Weber argues that a person 'has' charisma when superhuman and exceptional qualities are attributed to his being, which constitutes the *authority* of charismatic individuals. These qualities might even be thought of as supernatural or divine. He opens his text on 'Charismatic Authority' as follows:

The term “charisma” will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a “leader.” In primitive circumstances this peculiar kind of quality is thought of as resting on magical powers, whether of prophets, persons with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, leaders in the hunt, or heroes in war. (Weber 1978b: 241)

It could be argued that Weber’s analysis of the relationship between a charismatic leader and a group of people under his influence can be characterized as a form of resonance. After all, Weber defines this ‘charismatic community’ (*Gemeinde*) as ‘based on an emotional form of communal relationship (*Vergemeinschaftung*)’ (Weber 1978b: 243), which is irrational in nature and holds a certain revolutionary power that goes against tradition and the status quo:

Since it is “extra-ordinary,” charismatic authority is sharply opposed to rational and particularly bureaucratic, authority, and to traditional authority, whether in its patriarchal, patrimonial, or estate variants, all of which are everyday forms of domination; while the charismatic type is the direct antithesis of this. Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules. Traditional authority is bound to the precedents handed down from the past and to this extent is also oriented to rules. Within the sphere of its claims, charismatic authority repudiates the past, and is in this sense a specifically revolutionary force. It recognizes no appropriation of positions of power by virtue of the possession of property, either on the part of a chief or of socially privileged groups. The only basis of legitimacy for it is personal charisma so long as it is proved; that is, as long as it receives recognition and as long as the followers and disciples prove their usefulness charismatically. (Weber 1978b: 244)

Charisma, in other words, is based on an ungraspable feeling of divinity that those who follow a charismatic person attribute to him. The ungraspable, irrational and emotional nature, as well as the feeling of oneness that those belonging to a charismatic community experience, might make it possible to claim that the *Vergemeinschaftung* on which this community is based consists of an experience of resonance, shared by all its members, and originating in the ‘superhuman’ and ‘divine’ qualities of the charismatic authority. This is especially the case, since Weber associates charisma with the notion of magic, arguing that even objects can have charismatic power, which they ‘radiate’ when they are experienced as *enchanted*:

Only we, judging from the standpoint of our modern views of nature, can distinguish objectively in such behaviour those attributions of causality which are “correct” from those which are “fallacious,” and then designate the fallacious attributions of causality as irrational, and the corresponding acts as “magic.” Quite a different distinction will be made by the person performing the magical act, who will instead distinguish between the greater or lesser ordinarieness of the phenomena in question. For example, not every stone can serve as a fetish, a source of magical power. Nor does every person have the capacity to achieve the ecstatic states which are viewed, in accordance with primitive experience, as the pre-conditions for producing certain effects in meteorology, healing, divination, and telepathy. It is primarily, though not exclusively, these extraordinary powers that have been designated by such special terms as “mana,” “orenda,” and the Iranian “maga” (the term

from which our word “magic” is derived). We shall henceforth employ the term “charisma” for such extraordinary powers.

Charisma may be either of two types. Where this appellation is fully merited, charisma is a gift that inheres in an object or person simply by virtue of natural endowment. Such primary charisma cannot be acquired by any means. But charisma of the other type may be produced artificially in an object or person through some extraordinary means. Even then, it is assumed that charismatic powers can be developed only in people or objects in which the germ already existed but would have remained dormant unless evoked by some ascetic or other regimen. (Weber 1978a: 400)

Again, however, we have to be careful in attributing a positive aura to the idea of ‘resonance’ that follows from this discussion of charisma, since Weber merely appears to describe cultural and social phenomena without embedding them in a normative framework.

8.3 Overview

We have seen that Weber explores the influence of ideas on historical and economic developments and structures. He thereby adds a specifically cultural dimension to the forms of modernity critique discussed above, attempting to answer the question of what specifically lies behind the modern, capitalistic goal of accumulating as much wealth as one can, even though one does not need this wealth for one’s well-being or existence.

The conclusion that the answer lies in the ascetic values that characterize Protestantism, furthermore, introduces a critique of a specific form of existing; a lifestyle dominated by an *iron consistency* and a condemnation of everything bodily, joyous or pleasurable. It is clear that both Nietzsche and Marx’s ideas echo through these observations.

I have indicated that we do not find a clear notion of ‘resonance’ in Weber’s writings; mainly a critical analysis of the way things are. Nevertheless, if we look at those values that are repressed by the iron cage that Weber describes, it is possible to sketch the facades of an existence in which its limiting nature is overcome. Furthermore, I have argued that his analysis of ‘charisma’ could be understood as referring to an experience of ‘resonance’ as well, since it is based on the feeling that a subject or objects is ‘enchanted’.

Because Weber develops a sociological analysis of a specific *historical* situation, and furthermore is wary of any kind of explanation that suggests that history develops according to a determined schema, his analysis should be positioned on the side of ‘history’ in the thematic coordinate system. Furthermore, he implies that bodily *spontaneity* as well as joyous forms of activity are repressed by the culture he discusses. This suggests that if we can speak of ‘resonance’ within the contours of Weber’s thought, it has a strong *bodily* dimension and is *active* in nature. The same holds true for his discussion of ‘charisma’: a person or object is only experienced as charismatic when the subject *attributes* certain qualities to it and submits itself to this attribution with both body and mind.

9. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)

The works of Walter Benjamin cover different disciplines and describe phenomena as diverse as literature, Marxism, capitalism, translation, photography and poetry. It is therefore difficult to distil a clear and systematic theory about modernity from his writings. They mainly contain fragments, descriptions of modern life, in which we find references to a critique of capitalism that is inspired by Marx and Lukács, but also by Weber's claim that ideas and subjective orientations should play a role in critical analyses of modern societies. To a certain extent, his observations on modern life thereby come closer to those of Kierkegaard than to the systematic analyses of, for example, Marx or Lukács.

9.1 *The Phantasmagoria*

Benjamin opens his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' with the observation that when Marx analysed capitalism, this system was only in its infancy. With his essay, Benjamin therefore attempts to develop a diagnosis of the extent to which capitalist modes of production have permeated nearly all aspects of modern life (WAAMR 218) and focuses specifically on its influence on the arts.

Famously, he argues that modern forms of reproduction have robbed the artwork of what he calls its 'aura': the possibility of making endless reproduction of a work of art takes away the unique nature of this art product, resulting in a 'tremendous shattering of tradition' (WAAMR 221). An important aspect of his analysis revolves around the medium of film. What makes film interesting, he observes, is that it changes the relationship between the actor and the movie-goer (the actor does not perform for a concrete audience and is thereby distanced from the spectator) and addresses movie-goers as a general mass of consumers (WAAMR 231). This results in a superficial and commodified form of existence in which individuals are reduced to cogs in the capitalist machine:

The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the "personality" outside of the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity. (WAAMR 231)

In his writings on Charles Baudelaire, Benjamin builds further upon this idea. He interprets the French author's poems as representing the kind of life that can be lived in a capitalist society in which more and more aspects of life become commercialized. Characteristic of Benjamin's reading is his quotation of an observation by Georg Simmel: 'Before the development of buses, railroads, and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in situations where they had to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another' (PSEB 69). With the constitution of masses, Benjamin argues with reference to Baudelaire's texts, distances are constituted between people, as well as between people and the world in which they live. These distances are not spatial in nature, but subjective and 'moral', as it were.

This latter idea becomes the clearest in Benjamin's references to the 'phantasmagoria' (a form of theatre created with a magic lantern) that became popular in Baudelaire's age. Benjamin frequently refers to phantasmagorias to illustrate the idea that people, under capitalism, live in a commodified whole; in an illusion that does not present them with anything new but merely with the ever same. He illustrates this observation with reference to Nietzsche:

Eternal recurrence is an attempt to combine the two antinomic principles of happiness: that of eternity and that of the “yet again.” - The idea of eternal recurrence conjures the speculative idea (or phantasmagoria) of happiness from the misery of the times. Nietzsche's heroism has its counterpoint in the heroism of Baudelaire, who conjures the phantasmagoria of modernity from the misery of philistinism. (CP 161)

And in another text:

Newness is a quality independent of the use value of the commodity. It is the origin of the semblance that belongs inalienably to images produced by the collective unconscious. It is the quintessence of that false consciousness whose indefatigable agent is fashion. This semblance of the new is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the semblance of the ever recurrent. The product of this reflection is the phantasmagoria of “cultural history,” in which the bourgeois enjoys its false consciousness to the full. (PCNC 41-2)

Benjamin's reference to ‘reflection’ in this passage reminds of Kierkegaard's descriptions of this same term in ‘A Literary Review’: both authors suggest that modern life imprisons the individual in a cage of mirrors in which this individual only perceives ever-recurring and superficial images.

Benjamin's many references to the ‘phantasmagoria’ make it possible to argue that with this concept he refers to the same process that Lukács describe with the term ‘second nature’. The modern man, he claims, lives in a world that is difficult to connect to, since this world has the nature of a ‘phantasmagoria’; of an illusion. Famously, Benjamin refers to the arcades in Paris as embodying this state of experience:

The arcades are something between a street and an interior. ... The street becomes a dwelling place for the flâneur; he is as much at home among house façades as a citizen is within his four walls. To him, a shiny enameled shop sign is at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his living room. Buildings' walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; newsstands are his libraries; and cafe terraces are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (PSEB 68-9)

Following Simmel's above-cited observation that railroads and taxis made it necessary to spend time close together without looking at each other or without having any kind of contact, Benjamin observes how Baudelaire's *flâneur* experiences solitude in the closeness of crowds: ‘The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the flâneur as phantasmagoria - now a landscape, now a room. Both become elements of the department store, which makes use of flânerie itself to sell goods. The department store is the last promenade for the flâneur (OCNC 40).’

Benjamin links these observations on how the subject disappears into the crowd and thereby loses its particular and individual nature to the notion of commodity fetishism:

The crowd is not only the newest asylum of outlaws; it is also the latest narcotic for people who have been abandoned. The flâneur is someone abandoned in the crowd. He is thus in the same situation as the commodity. He is unaware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effect on him; it permeates him blissfully, like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the flâneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity immersed in a surging stream of customers. If there were such a thing as a commodity-soul (a notion that Marx occasionally mentions in jest), it would be the most empathetic ever encountered

in the realm of souls, for it would be bound to see every individual as a buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle. Empathy is the nature of the intoxication to which the flâneur abandons himself in the crowd. “The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else, as he sees fit. Like those roving souls in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; and if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth visiting.” The commodity itself is the speaker here. Yes, the last words give a rather accurate idea of what the commodity whispers to a poor wretch who passes a shopwindow containing beautiful and expensive things. These objects are not interested in this person; they do not empathize with him. (PSEB 85-6)

A similar theme is explored in ‘The Work of art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in which Benjamin describes the difference between ‘distraction’ and ‘concentration’ as follows:

A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. (WAAMR 239)

I return below to this difference, which is illustrative in regard to our discussion of ‘resonance’.

Another important aspect that Benjamin mentions as constituting the commodified life of modern man is alienation from *history*. Famously, he distinguishes two forms of experience that he calls *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*: whereas the latter refers to a long experience that is embedded in one’s existence as a person with a particular history and part of the collective and traditional narrative that is shared by a certain people in a certain age, the former is a brief experience that is not profound enough to become part of one’s being as a whole or to be linked to a collective consciousness. In modernity, Benjamin observes, the latter transforms into the former: like the commodities displayed in shopping windows and like the commodified perception symbolized by the phantasmagoria, modern capitalism reduces *Erfahrungen* to brief and superficial *Erlebnisse*.

Benjamin specifically explores what he calls ‘shock experiences’, which play an important role in modern life, he observes. The *flâneur* wanders through a world in which he only perceives brief and shallow impressions of commodified objects and people around him. This changes his attitude, his way of experiencing the world, even his consciousness, and makes life revolve around sensationalist stimuli instead of around long and challenging engagements with one’s surroundings:

The greater the shock factor in particular impressions, the more vigilant consciousness has to be in screening stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less these impressions enter long experience [*Erfahrung*] and the more they correspond to the concept of isolated experience [*Erlebnis*]. Perhaps the special achievement of shock defense is the way it assigns an incident a precise point in time in consciousness, at the cost of the integrity of the incident’s contents. This would be a peak achievement of the intellect; it would turn the incident into an isolated experience. (SMB 178)

This change in experience is coupled by Benjamin to the importance of souvenirs, which symbolize the briefness of an experience that one would, in its isolated nature, otherwise forget:

The souvenir [*Andenken*] is a secularized relic. The souvenir is the complement to "isolated experience." In it is precipitated the increasing self-estrangement of human beings, whose past is inventoried as dead effects. In the nineteenth century, allegory withdrew from the world around us to settle in the inner world. The relic comes from the cadaver; the souvenir comes from the defunct experience [*Erfahrung*] which thinks of itself, euphemistically, as living [*Erlebnis*]. (CP 159)

In line of Marx and Lukács, Benjamin also refers to the idea that the calculating nature of capitalism has resulted in a formal experience of *time*. Describing Baudelaire's 1889 collection of poems *Le Spleen de Paris* ('Spleen' refers to a kind of melancholy without cause, a disgust with everything), he writes: 'In spleen, time is reified: the minutes cover a man like snowflakes. This time is historyless, like that of the *memoire involontaire*. But in spleen the perception of time is supernaturally keen. Every second finds consciousness ready to intercept its shock' (SMB 201).

Benjamin summarizes his ideas as follows:

Comfort isolates; on the other hand, it brings those enjoying it closer to mechanization. In the mid-nineteenth century, the invention of the match brought forth a number of innovations which have one thing in common: a single abrupt movement of the hand triggers a process of many steps. This development is taking place in many areas. A case in point is the telephone, where the lifting of a receiver has taken the place of the steady movement that used to be required to crank the older models. With regard to countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the "snapping" by the photographer had the greatest consequences. Henceforth a touch of the finger sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were. Haptic experiences of this kind were joined by optic ones, such as are supplied by the advertising pages of a newspaper or the traffic of a big city. ... Thus, technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. (SMB 190-1)

Even though he does this in a more poetic and fragmentary way, Benjamin herewith comes very close to making the same point as Lukács: modern capitalist forms of production have permeated all spheres of society, including the arts, and have thereby changed our perception and experience of our surroundings, ourselves and other people.

9.2 Surrealist Shock Experiences

It is difficult to base a notion of 'resonance' on Benjamin's texts. His Marxist ideas are entwined with a messianic understanding of history that makes it almost impossible to develop a clear notion of what 'the good life' might look like or on which forms of (re)connection the development of a healthy subject rests. Following his discussion of the *flâneur*, it could be argued that the good life, for Benjamin, consists of a state of existence not unlike the way of being described by Marx and Lukács. A healthy subject develops itself autonomously and creatively in relation to an environment that is full of possibilities and is not permeated with commodified categories, this discussion suggests. Furthermore, this subject has a full grasp of the context and history in which it lives, and is able to make its experiences (*Erfahrungen*) part of the larger narrative that has formed its identity.

On the other hand, however, Benjamin's writings make it rather difficult to claim that capitalist societies will change in this direction: only a revolutionary and rather unexpected and *spontaneous* change might

better the conditions under which people live. Like Marx and Lukács, he argues that this can only happen when people pierce through the commodified veil, through second nature, through the phantasmagoria that capitalist societies have woven around the subject. Even though he criticizes the way in which the production of films has changed the experience of the masses and has resulted in the cult of the actor, he does suggest that films may also have a revolutionary character: not unlike Lukács' defence of realism, Benjamin claims that, by showing the conditions under which people live, films may encourage people to develop a critical perspective on the society in which they live and the social conditions they experience as 'normal' or 'necessary' (WAAMR 231)

In his writings on Baudelaire, furthermore, he suggests that a similar process may be set in motion when the subject experiences *disgust* (Baudelaire's 'spleen') with the world and focuses on the waste products of the commodified system. These waste products are not monitored by this system, nor part of the phantasmagoria:

It is the quintessence of an isolated experience (*Erlebnis*) that struts about in the borrowed garb of long experience [*Erfahrung*]. Spleen, on the other hand, exposes the isolated experience in all its nakedness. To his horror, the melancholy man sees the earth revert to a mere state of nature. No breath of prehistory surrounds it-no aura. (SMB 202)

When confronted with the historyless character of the commodified whole in which it lives, in other words, the subject experiences disgust and thereby might be able to constitute a critical distance between itself and this whole.

In his essay on surrealism, furthermore, Benjamin argues that surrealist art might confront the commodified subject with shocks that are not, like shocks experienced in the *phantasmagoria*, turned into harmless and superficial *Erlebnisse*, but manage to confront the subject with that which lies underneath the commodified veil. Surrealist depictions thereby might speak to the subject's unconsciousness and draw it into a dream-like world that transcends the commodified world: 'In the world's structure dream loosens individuality like a bad tooth. This loosening of the self by intoxication is, at the same time, precisely the fruitful, living experience that allowed these people [the Surrealists] to step outside the domain of intoxication' (S 179). This 'loosening of the self' and this 'living experience' are driven by a notion of freedom that is radical in its totalizing nature, Benjamin observes:

Since Bakunin, Europe has lacked a radical concept of freedom. The Surrealists have one. They are the first to liquidate the sclerotic liberal-moral-humanistic ideal of freedom, because they are convinced that "freedom, which on this earth can only be bought with a thousand of the hardest sacrifices, must be enjoyed unrestrictedly in its fullness without any kind of pragmatic calculation, as long as it lasts." (S 189)

But this emphasis on complete freedom, Benjamin goes on, is difficult to rhyme with the other dimension of his intellectual background: the idea of a *controlled* and constructive revolution. Only when an energetic, bodily shock response is coupled to a *collective* and *planned* movement, in other words, a revolution might come about:

Only when in technology body and image so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge, has reality transcended itself to the extent described by the *Communist Manifesto*. For

the moment, only the Surrealists have understood its present commands. They exchange, to a man, the play of human features for the face of an alarm clock that in each minute rings for sixty seconds. (S 192)

In this context, Benjamin's above-mentioned differentiation between 'concentration' and 'distraction' is perhaps the best illustration of an experience that can be defined as resonant in nature. A subject can only find resonance with a work of art and be overcome by such a disrupting experience of shock, this distinction suggests, if it is *completely absorbed* by the artwork.

9.3 Overview

As with Marx and Lukács, I have argued that it is difficult to distil a notion of resonance from Benjamin's writings. Nevertheless, we have seen, his texts do contain hints regarding a better kind of life; an involved existence in which the subject has escaped from the false images that encapsulate his existence. This makes his understanding of resonance *historical* in nature. As with Lukács' notion of transcendental homelessness, Benjamin's brief reference to being usurped by a work of art furthermore implies a certain *passivity*, which contrasts, however, with his emphasis on the active nature of revolution and the energetic moment that may spark political resistance. Lastly, Benjamin's analysis on the body as part of the phantasmagoria, part of the spectacle in and through which people perceive each other as parts of crowds and masses, implies that a resonant experience is one in which *mind and body are entwined*.

10. Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969)

Many of the themes discussed above return in several forms in Adorno's critique of modernity: Marx's emphasis on alienation from nature, self, consciousness, body and other people, but also Marx's, Lukács' and Benjamin's critique of the reifying processes that, in their views, define modern life. These analyses are combined in Adorno's works with an overwhelming negativity that, in places, comes close to Schopenhauer's pessimism and that makes it even more difficult than in the case of the three above-mentioned authors to construct an understanding of what 'resonance' might entail within the context of his thought. In the following, I will nevertheless provide a brief account of the many sides of Adorno's critique of modernity, whereby I aim to highlight those places where his ideas overlap with those of the authors discussed above.

10.1 Coldness and the Principium Individuationis

Adorno's analysis of alienation is intrinsically linked to a critique of modernity that follows, for an important part, from Marx's above-discussed notion of reification in *Capital* and from Lukács' interpretation of reification and 'second nature'. Adorno combines these ideas with an analysis of instrumental reason, which he develops most clearly in his and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. By way of an interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey*, Adorno there argues that the birth of the modern, enlightened self should be understood as driven by an entwinement of the drive to self-preservation and the faculty of reason.

It is this entwinement that forms the basis of Adorno's discussion of several forms of alienation. Like Marx, he understands these forms as following from the constitution of a gap between the self and that which it is alienated from. Adorno develops an understanding of this gap in an analysis of instrumental rationality that comes close to Hegel's ideas, described above, as developed in 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate'. The ability to rationally grasp, oversee and control one's self, other people and one's environment, Adorno argues, enables the self to pull itself out of a whole determined by natural laws and constitute itself as an autonomous being. This elevation out of nature by way of rational reflection, however, goes hand in hand with the development of a hostile attitude towards self, nature, body and other people, Adorno observes; towards every bit of nature that might form a threat to this rational self. This means that rational self-reflection and self-constitution, for Adorno, are based on the constitution of a gap between the rational self on the one hand and that which this self seeks to rationally grasp on the other, a process that eventually results in a dissolution of the self:

The human being's mastery of itself, on which the self is founded, practically always involves the annihilation of the subject in whose service that mastery is maintained, because the substance which is mastered, suppressed, and disintegrated by self-preservation is nothing other than the living entity, of which the achievements of self-preservation can only be defined as functions – in other words, self-preservation destroys the very thing which is to be preserved. (DE 43)

In several places, Adorno links these observations to an interpretation of the Kantian transcendental self and approaches Kant's philosophy as a reflection of the dominating nature of the faculty of reason. He thereby partly follows Nietzsche and Lukács' above-cited ridiculing references to Kant's ideas about the civil servant and sexuality. Adorno indeed mainly criticizes Kant's philosophy for its 'exclusion of all desires and impulses' (PMP 108) and portrays his emphasis on rational self-constitution as the triumph of a violently repressive super-ego over anything that borders on the body, impulsivity or sensuality, instrumentalizing, controlling and mechanizing the corporeal dimension of human existence and making it into a 'static' and 'sanitized' object. The Kantian self – more accurately: that which it embodies, in Adorno's view – is encapsulated in its own self-declared autonomy: 'Kant's Copernican turn precisely expresses the objectification of the subject...' (SO 254-5). This means that Adorno not only argues that, with the rise of instrumental rationality, the self gets alienated from its body and its bodily needs and feelings, but also that this process 'objectifies' or 'reifies' the subject: it turns the reflective subject into an empty form that is disconnected from its body and thereby imprisoned in its own rationality, unable to spontaneously transform its own ideas into bodily actions. Adorno observes: 'the real self has already become in the world what Schopenhauer recognized it to be in introspection, a phantom' (MM 154).

Adorno combines this idea with Marx's analysis of reification by arguing that both the process of reification and the constitution of the modern self go hand in hand with generalization and standardization. Most importantly, both revolve around a dominating attitude towards people and nature, robbing the particular of its individual nature, subsuming it under broad categories and only approaching it by relating it to the needs of the dominating self.

The form of subjectivity that Adorno links to modernity is herewith based not only on alienation from self and body, but also on alienation from nature, as well as alienation from other people. In order to make these rather totalizing and abstract claims more concrete, I want to discuss four spheres of modern life in which Adorno discerns the mechanisms of reification and standardization. The *first* is philosophy and, more

specifically, what Adorno calls 'identity-thinking'. Since philosophy is conceptual in nature, he argues, it always partly fails to grasp its 'other', fails to grasp the particularity and individuality of that which it refers to. As he puts this in *Negative Dialectics*: 'An object can be conceived only by a subject but always remains something other than the subject...' (ND 183). Conceptual thought, in other words, is never entirely able to do justice to the *non-identity* of the object.

This is a general aspect of conceptuality, Adorno argues, but in modernity the idea has been uncritically embraced that the subject can completely grasp the object. Herewith, he mainly refers to the kind of thinking that he associates with enlightenment thought, scientific progress and positivism. Within these traditions, Adorno observes, philosophy is understood as completely mirroring reality. He argues that when it is guided by this idea, philosophy acquires the rather aggressive tendency to make everything equal to itself, not unlike, in Marx's view, exchange-value eradicates the particular and individual characteristics of a specific product; and not unlike the modern self, in Adorno's view, developed the ability to master and dominate his environment by rationally reflecting on it and schematizing it. It is this aspect of the modern subject that constitutes a gap between this subject and everything that surrounds it and that it seeks to understand, experience or perceive, resulting in the alienation of self from world.

This alienation of self from world is affirmed even more by the *second* aspect of Adorno's modernity-critique: he argues that the instrumental rationality he criticizes results in a pathological celebration of technology, which was originally 'the epitome of the means of self-preservation of the human species' (EA 29), but gradually became an end instead of a means, instrumentalizing the environment, human beings and animals, and replacing the intrinsic good of their well-being and flourishing with a celebration of technological progress. Marx's analysis of reification returns here, according to which the means used to produce products, exchange them and better the quality of life, eventually turned into domination, exploitation and alienation. The irrationality of this technology is symbolized by the mass-destruction made possible by the atom bomb, to which Adorno refers frequently, implying that, so far, violence and hostility have gone hand in hand with Western progress and an open relationship between self and world has been replaced by one of domination (M 116; ND 320).

Third, Adorno describes the industry of death that he generally refers to with the word 'Auschwitz'. In his view, the instrumental rationality that revolves around an irrational and blind celebration of self-preservation and a violent approach of that which is 'other', transformed into the idea of being part of one's people or of one's country's preservation and into feelings of hatred towards everything and everyone depicted as 'different'. It thereby eventually resulted in an irrational and blind pursuit of aggressiveness and industrialized torture on a rational and *planned* level (HF 15).

Fourth, Adorno refers to what he and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* call the 'culture industry': a consumption culture consisting of a 'unified system' (DE 119) that manipulates people's needs, thoughts and experiences by pushing them into a pre-fabricated and false image force-fed to the masses through television, radio and movies.

Whereas this latter aspect of Adorno's thought affirms his discussion of the alienation of self from body, the third aspect concerns alienation of the self from other people. One of the main characteristics of the modern world that he describes is a corrosion of meaningful and compassionate relationships between people, for which he frequently uses the term 'coldness'. In *Negative Dialectics*, he describes coldness as 'the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz' (ND 363).

In 'Education After Auschwitz', furthermore, we find the following passage: 'The silence under the terror was only its consequence. The coldness of the societal monad, the isolated competitor, was the precondition, as indifference to the fate of others, for the fact that only very few people reacted. The torturers know this, and they put it to the test ever anew' (EA 30). Adorno directly links this attitude of coldness to the inescapable and all-permeating nature of the 'wrong whole': 'the very movement of withdrawal bears features of what it negates. It is forced to develop a coldness indistinguishable from that of the bourgeois' (MM 26).

Warm relationships between people are replaced, according to Adorno's analysis, by a cold and instrumentalizing attitude that reduces subjects to disconnected, individuated atoms. Paradoxically, people thereby become more individuated and disconnected from each other, whereas the process through which this happens is deeply social in nature. Adorno herewith follows Marx, Lukács and Benjamin, who argue, as we have seen above, that the process of reification makes relations between people appear as relations between things; reduces them to 'objects of utility' that only appear as valuable when they fit in a whole mediated by efficiency, profit and money.

Frequently, Adorno refers to Schopenhauer's analysis of the *principium individuationis* to illustrate this observation. Above, I have shown that, for Schopenhauer, the world that the subject perceives necessarily consists of separate and distinct objects. Furthermore, he argues that this world-as-representation is an illusion that covers a world of 'oneness' that is the real essence of the universe. Adorno transforms these ideas into a historical analysis of society and culture:

Society determines the individuals to be what they are, even by their immanent genesis. Their freedom or unfreedom is not primary, as it would seem under the veil of the *principium individuationis*. For the ego, as Schopenhauer explained by the myth of Maya's veil, makes even the insight into its dependence difficult to gain for the subjective consciousness. The principle of individualization, the law of particularity to which the universal reason in the individuals is tied, tends to insulate them from the encompassing contexts, and thereby strengthens their flattering confidence in the subject's autarky. (ND 219)

The idea that every individual is separated from every other individual, that every being is self-sufficient and therefore not dependent on other beings or on society, is an illusion that makes people blind to the observation that they are deeply historical and social creatures, Adorno observes.

10.2 Openness and Warmth

This brings us to the notion of 'resonance'. As mentioned above, it is difficult to base such an idea on Adorno's writings. They are so overwhelmingly negative that it has been argued that his philosophy should be understood as containing no traces of a positive nature at all: instead of affirming or describing ways in which we *should* act, live or think, this reading goes, Adorno claims that the social whole in which we live is so wrong that we can only show how we should *not* act, live or think (see Freyenhagen 2013).

Even though I am sympathetic to this interpretation, I believe Adorno's works do actually contain hints and traces of what I believe can be described as 'resonance' or, in the context of his discussion of 'coldness': *warmth*. Again, it is thereby important to stress that Adorno does this against a very negative

background that makes it almost impossible to distil any kind of positivity from his thought, a positivity that, as we will see, can be found in the works of Marcuse and Fromm.

Following his idea that the Kantian division between the rational subject and the body's impulsivity embodies a truth moment of the society he criticizes, the first hint in the direction of an Adornian understanding of 'resonance' lies in the idea that a *reconnection* of the mind with its body should take place, a reconnection that results in the subject's ability to connect to its body, nature, other people and itself as a reflective creature. Even though Adorno stays vague about any understanding of what the good life might be, hints can be found in his references to ungraspable experiences that have a strong bodily content. These references can be found in four different contexts: morality, action, perception and metaphysics.

Regarding the *first* context, Adorno refers to a bodily spark of *Mitleid* or compassion with suffering bodies. This spark should be understood in the context of his analysis of what he calls 'Auschwitz': Adorno refers to the horrible forms of suffering that took place in the concentration camps in Nazi Germany. He does this by using the term 'addendum' (*das Hinzutredende*), thereby affirming the ungraspable aura that this bodily feeling has. He writes, for example, about 'a bodily sensation of the moral addendum – bodily, because it is now the practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony to which individuals are exposed even with individuality about to vanish as a form of mental reflection' (ND 365). In another passage he refers to the addendum in this context as a 'remainder': 'moral action cannot be wholly translated into its theoretical determinants without remainder' (PMP 97). In one of his most-quoted passages on morality he refers to a similar 'impulse', this time not using the concept of the 'addendum':

It is not in their nauseating parody, sexual repression, that moral questions are succinctly posed: it is in lines such as: No man should be tortured; there should be no concentration camps – while all of this continues in Asia and Africa and is repressed merely because, as ever, the humanity of civilisation is inhumane toward the people it shamelessly brands as uncivilized. ... The lines are true as an impulse, as a reaction to the news that torture is going on somewhere. They must not be rationalized; as an abstract principle they would fall promptly into the bad infinities of derivation and validity. ... The impulse – naked physical fear, and the sense of solidarity with what Brecht called "tormentable bodies" – is immanent in moral conduct and would be denied in attempts at ruthless rationalization. (ND 185-6)

In the context of morality, the addendum should be understood as a corporeal shock of compassion with suffering beings, a shock about which Adorno explicitly claims that it cannot and should not be rationalized. A first hint in the direction of 'resonance', in other words, is found in the idea that on an almost instinctive bodily level, a connection between bodily beings comes about; a connection that allows them to feel compassion with each other as creatures vulnerable to pain.

The *second* context in which I want to discuss 'resonance' is that of action. We have seen above that Adorno claims that the modern subject is characterized by a gap between consciousness and body, a gap that petrifies both the life of the mind and the life of the spirit. Following this idea, Adorno again uses the term 'addendum', but refers this time to a spark that connects body and mind, a spark that, again, cannot be grasped by philosophical reflection on that which constitutes a bodily act:

To philosophical reflection [the addendum] appears as downright otherness because the will that has been reduced to pure practical reason is an abstraction. The addendum is the name for that

which was eliminated in this abstraction; without it, there would be no real will at all. It is a flash of light between the poles of something long past, something grown all but unrecognizable, and that which some day might come to be. (ND 229)

Placed within the dichotomy between subject and object, the addendum forms a rather ungraspable and mysterious element that combines both the subjective world and the material world and creates the possibility of a mind, of *subjectivity*, to manifest itself in the world, in *objectivity*, through bodily acts. This idea reminds of Marx's above-mentioned emphasis on the importance of *spontaneity*.

The *third* context concerns the connection between the subject and the world in which this subject lives, and therefore refers to the connection between self and world that makes *experience* and *perception* possible. We have seen above that, for Adorno, the modern subject constitutes a conceptual gap between itself and the world around it, which means that a form of reconnection between subject and world has to be based on an opening up of the subject towards the world around it. It has to constitute a kind of contact, in other words, with the object it seeks to experience. Adorno does this by arguing that the idea of a pure consciousness needs a form of 'naturalism', needs to be able to claim that the subject is in bodily contact with the world around it, that it has sense organs that touch, feel, hear, smell and taste the world in which the subject lives (see AE 144-5). If we take sensibility seriously, he argues, the transcendental subject 'cannot be isolated from the sense organs at all' (AE 145n). Furthermore, Adorno defends what he calls the 'preponderance of the object': a form of contact with the objective world that constitutes what he calls an 'objective moment' (M 142) and makes room for the element of surprise, for an open and *mimetic* relationship between subject and world in which both are entwined and influence each other without turning into a one-sided relationship of domination; a relationship, in other words, that is *negative dialectical* in nature since the subject does not encapsulate its Other but preserves a dialectical, two-sided relationship .

The *fourth* context in which Adorno refers to an experience that I want to link to the notion of 'resonance' is that of metaphysics. It is in this context as well that Adorno describes a rather ungraspable form of subjective openness towards the world. This openness is driven, in his analysis, by hope and expectations, which he illustrates with reference to Marcel Proust's descriptions of the hope embodied by the names of villages: 'When one is on holiday as a child and reads or hears names like Monbrunn, Reuenthal, Hambrunn, one has the feeling: if only one were there, at that place, that would be it. This 'it' – what the 'it' is – is extraordinarily difficult to say; one will probably be able to say, following Proust's tracks here too, that it is happiness' (M 140).

Adorno characterizes this happiness as metaphysical, because the experience promised by the village name is vulnerable, fleeting and ungraspable (M 140). Being *in* the village, one has the feeling that one is too close to it to actually be happy, to grasp the happiness that the village embodies from a distance. He illustrates the ungraspability of this promise of happiness with the image of a rainbow (M 140) and argues that 'the person who is happy is too close to this 'it' to be able to have any standpoint towards it within consciousness' (M 140).

Another hint at this kind of openness towards ungraspable experienced can be find in an entry in Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, in which he describes the example of lying on one's back on water:

Rien faire comme une bête, lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky, 'being, nothing else, without any definition and fulfilment', might take the place of process, act, satisfaction, and so truly

keep the promise of dialectical logic that it would culminate in its origin. None of the abstract concepts comes closer to fulfilled utopia than that of eternal peace. (MM 157)

In this rather uncharacteristic passage, Adorno refers to an *animalistic* existence in which one is at peace with oneself, one's body and nature. Furthermore, this existence is characterized by him as passive; as an openness towards the world that enables the subject to be *overwhelmed* by certain experiences.

10.3 Overview

Even though I have argued that Adorno's philosophy is so negative that it is difficult to base an explicit notion of 'resonance' on his critical analysis of modernity, I believe that his works do contain hints in the direction of what this kind of experience might entail. All of these hints revolve around the body and around the idea that the subject needs to be entwined again with its corporeal dimension in order to open up towards other people or the world around it. Furthermore, even though Adorno on the one hand discusses the ability to spontaneously manifest oneself in the world as an acting, embodied creature, on the other he emphasizes the passive nature of this openness, and argues that the subject needs to let go of its dominating tendencies. This means that, on the passivity-activity axis in the thematic coordinate system, the notion of 'resonance' that we can base on Adorno's works should be positioned on each of the two opposite poles: Adorno refers to the ability to *spontaneously* act, but also to an openness towards the world that is found in *passivity*. Herewith, Adorno *partly* turns away from Marx's emphasis on creativity and productivity, and *partly* presents us with a more passive understanding of what I have defined as 'resonance'.

Regarding the mind-body axis, Adorno is divided as well. On the one hand, he clearly refers to an entwinement of body and mind, to a reconnection of the two that results, for example, in the above-mentioned spontaneity. On the other hand, his works contain many references to the positive aspects of self-critique and rational reflection. Even though he criticizes Kant, for example, he also praises the radical nature of his emphasis on rationality: 'A philosophy like Kant's ... never simply repeats what goes on in society, but has the tendency to criticize existing society and to hold up to it an alternative image of the possible, or an imageless image of the possible' (PMP 151). Self-critique, in other words, might enable the subject to temper its own dominating tendencies and thereby constitute experiences of resonance. Important as well in this context is his work *The Jargon of Authenticity*, in which Adorno criticizes the existentialist phenomenology of mainly Heidegger for dissolving into vague references to authenticity and oneness, in which self-critique disappears and the notion that the concept can never grasp its 'Other' is uncritically overlooked. Nevertheless, at the same time Adorno also explicitly criticizes the damaging nature of abstraction, of pure conceptual thought, and keeps emphasizing the idea that the subject needs to constitute a form of openness towards that which it seeks to grasp.

On the last axis, regarding the historical nature of his understanding of 'resonance', my Adornian interpretation of this concept should be positioned completely at the side of history. His analysis of forms of life that we can define as 'good' is embedded in a critique of a specific time and age. In a famous passage in *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno describes this idea as follows:

At its most materialistic, materialism comes to agree with theology. Its great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh, a desire utterly foreign to idealism, the realm of the absolute spirit. The perspective vanishing point of historic materialism would be its self-sublimation, the spirit's

liberation from the primacy of material needs in their state of fulfilment. Only if the physical urge were quenched would the spirit be reconciled and would become that which it only promises while the spell of material conditions will not let it satisfy material needs. (ND 207)

Adorno here develops the idea that the existence of hunger, pain and suffering, caused by the material conditions of society, prevents the subject from experiencing ‘the resurrection of the flesh’ and keeps pulling it down into a material reality of pain, suffering and survival. Resonance, in other words, can only be experienced once a historical situation has been constituted in which people no longer suffer.

11. Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

The philosophy of Erich Fromm comes probably the closest to the idea behind this paper. Throughout his works, Fromm places himself in a line of authors who, in his view, all express discontent with modernity and claim that a certain way of being in the world has been lost:

The position in which the individual finds himself in our period had already been foreseen by visionary thinkers in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard describes the helpless individual torn and tormented by doubts, overwhelmed by the feeling of aloneness and insignificance. Nietzsche visualizes the approaching nihilism which was to become manifest in Nazism and paints a picture of a “superman” as the negation of the insignificant, directionless individual he saw in reality. The theme of the powerlessness of man has found a most precise expression in Franz Kafka’s work. In his *Castle* he describes the man who wants to get in touch with the mysterious inhabitants of a castle, who are supposed to tell him what to do and show him his place in the world. All his life consists in his frantic effort to get in touch with them, but he never succeeds and is left alone with a sense of utter futility and helplessness. (EF 154)

In the following, I will describe what Fromm understands as the origins of what he calls a ‘feeling of isolation and powerlessness’ (EF 154) that characterizes modern man, and the experience that he describes as its opposite and that could be defined, I will argue, as one of resonance.

11.1 *Alienation and Symbiosis*

Fromm’s analysis of modernity is developed within a framework that consists of a combination of Marxism and psychoanalysis. Like most researchers belonging to the *Frankfurter Schule*, Fromm attempts to understand why modernity culminated in the horrors of Nazi Germany, but also develops a critique of capitalism and consumerism.

Fromm’s theory is based on a description of a form of human life that, in places, comes close to an almost universal human condition. At the same time, however, he links this description to interpretation of *historical* processes. In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm argues that human beings develop themselves as individuals by elevating themselves out of a whole characterized by oneness; by primal bonds between the subject and the world in which it lives. It is clear that this idea is inspired by both Hegel and Freud. Fromm describes this process on three different levels. On one of these levels, he refers to the origins of humanity as a species:

What is essential in the existence of man is the fact that he has emerged from the animal kingdom, from instinctive adaptation, that he has transcended nature – although he never leaves it; he is a part of it – and yet once torn away from nature, he cannot return to it; once thrown out of paradise – a state of original oneness with nature – cherubim with flaming swords block his way, if he should try to return. Man can only go forward by developing his reason, by finding a new harmony, a human one, instead of the prehuman harmony which is irretrievably lost. (AL 6)

With this emergence out of nature, Fromm claims, culture began: instead of being embedded in a natural whole, driven by instincts and devoid of reflection, self-awareness led to the constitution of society; of social structures that arose out of man's ability to reflect on himself as an individual being.

On a second level, Fromm approaches this elevation out of nature as a historical process by arguing that the constitution of self-awareness can be understood as lying at the origins of modernity. Whereas in pre-modern times, man was firmly embedded in a society in which especially religious theories provided a meaning-generating metaphysical framework, modernity begins at the moment these frameworks start crumbling down (Nietzsche's 'death of God') and man has to find his *own* place in the world as an *individual*. Fromm observes in *Escape from Freedom*:

The social history of man started with his emerging from a state of oneness with the natural world to an awareness of himself as an entity separate from surrounding nature and men. Yet this awareness remained very dim over long periods of history. The individual continued to be closely tied to the natural and social world from which he emerged; while being partly aware of himself as a separate entity, he felt also part of the world around him. The growing process of the emergence of the individual from his original ties, a process which we may call "individuation", seems to have reached its peak in modern history in the centuries between the Reformation and the present. (EF 49-1)

The third level on which Fromm refers to the breaking of these primary bonds between self and world concerns the development from fetus to child to adult. Fromm writes:

In the life history of an individual we find the same process. A child is born when it is no longer one with its mother and becomes a biological entity separate from her. Yet, while this biological separation is the beginning of individual human existence, the child remains functionally one with its mother for a considerable period. (EF 40)

It is the change from an original state of embedment to a state of separation and individuality that Fromm understands as man's greatest challenge. Not only does this individuation result in man's *freedom*, it also means that man is constantly longing for a new state of connection and embeddedness, a state of oneness – resonance – that he lost when he developed awareness:

To the degree to which the individual, figuratively speaking, has not yet completely severed the umbilical cord which fastens him to the outside world, he lacks freedom; but these ties give him security and a feeling of belonging and of being rooted somewhere. I wish to call these ties that exist before the process of individuation has resulted in the complete emergence of an individual "primary ties". They are organic in the sense that they are part of normal human development; they imply a lack of individuality, but they also give security and orientation to the individual. They are the ties that connect the child with its mother, the member of a primitive community with his clan

and nature, of the medieval man with the Church and his social caste. Once the stage of complete individuation is reached and the individual is free from these primary ties, he is confronted with a new task: to orient and root himself in the world and to find security in other ways than those which were characteristic of his preindividualistic existence. (EF 40)

Following this loss of connectedness, rootedness and oneness, Fromm claims that human beings, throughout their lives, desire to *belong* to something outside of themselves. He understands this need as part of 'man's nature' and explains most social and cultural phenomena as following from this 'need to avoid aloneness' (34). One can be physically alone, he observes, and long to be surrounded by and close to other people. But one can also be 'morally alone' and look for connectedness by relating to 'ideas, values or at least social patterns that give ... a feeling of communion and "belonging"' (EF 34).

It is important to emphasize that Fromm links this need to the human ability to *reflect* and to *think*: only when man starts to reflect on himself, does he become aware of his separateness from others; of the fact that he is fundamentally alone. And this awareness leads to anxiety, Fromm claims, an anxiety that forms the main drive behind almost every form of human behaviour, in his view:

Man is gifted with reason; he is *life being aware of itself*; he has awareness of himself, of his fellow man, of his past, and of the possibilities of his future. This awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span, of the fact that without his will he is born and against his will he dies, that he will die before those whom he loves, or they before him, the awareness of aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society, all this makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison. He would become insane could he not liberate himself from this prison and reach out, unite himself in some form or other with men, with the world outside. The experience of separateness arouses anxiety, it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety. (AL 6-7).

Fromm understands capitalism as one of the main forces behind the process of individuation and observes, thereby referring to Weber: 'What Protestantism had started to do in freeing man spiritually, capitalism continued to do mentally, socially, and politically. Economic freedom was the basis of this development, the middle class was its champion. The individual was no longer bound by a fixed social system...' (EF 126). However, Fromm goes on, this resulted at the same time in a system in which individuals became more and more isolated, disconnected and alone, generating the above-mentioned feeling of anxiety.

The kind of freedom that these systems generate is described by Fromm as a *freedom from*. We become disconnected *from* the social, natural or familial structures that used to govern our lives and our existence and prevented us from feeling anxious and alone, which increases our freedom. But at the same time this 'freedom from' only throws us into a world in which we are completely alone and responsible for our own existence: man now is 'alone and free, yet powerless and afraid. The newly won freedom appears as a curse; he is free from the sweet bondage of paradise, but he is not free to govern himself, to realize his individuality' (EF 50).

This brings us to Fromm's discussion of the concept of *alienation*, which plays an important role in his thought and which he mainly interprets in a Marxist sense:

In capitalism economic activity, success, material gains, become ends in themselves. It becomes man's fate to contribute to the growth of the economic system, to amass capital, not for purposes of

his own happiness of salvation, but as an end in itself. Man became a cog in the vast economic machine – an important one if he had much capital, an insignificant one if he had none – but always a cog to serve a purpose outside of himself. (EF 130)

The freedom found in this state of alienation, in other words, only increases the individual's anxiety, and places him in a social whole in which rootedness or connectedness cannot be found. In fact, the whole in which he is embedded is experienced as overpowering, threatening and hostile, as completely alien to his self:

Those factors which tend to weaken the individual self have gained, while those strengthening the individual have relatively lost in weight. The individual's feeling of powerlessness and aloneness has increased, his "freedom" from all traditional bonds has become more pronounced, his possibilities for individual economic achievement have narrowed down. He feels threatened by gigantic forces and the situation resembles in many ways that of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (EF 144)

Fromm describes different ways in which human beings attempt to overcome the feelings of aloneness and isolation that characterize this existence. He describes experimenting with drugs and the longing for a trance (AL 9), but also sexuality and 'orgiastic states' (AL 9-10). Most importantly, however, he refers to political systems that enable the isolated individual to *escape from his freedom* and to submit his self to something *external*.

The first system Fromm discusses is that of Nazism and, more generally, totalitarianism. These systems, he argues, provide an experience of being embedded in the world that he characterizes as 'symbiotic' and defines as follows: 'the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside of the own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other' (EF 180). This 'symbiotic relationship' can be masochistic or sadistic in nature, Fromm observes, and in both cases one's self is connected to the self of someone else or to external structures in such a way that one's individual autonomy is corroded or even completely destroyed. Authoritarian structures, in other words, provide the self with a feeling of embeddedness, but do this in such a way that this self becomes completely dependent on these structures and thereby loses its ability to freely develop as an autonomous being.

Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism have in common that they offered the atomized individual a new refuge and security. These systems are the culmination of alienation. The individual is made to feel powerless and insignificant, but taught to project all his human powers into the figure of the leader, the state, the "fatherland", to whom he has to submit and to whom he has to worship. He escapes from freedom into a new idolatry. (SS 208)

The second system that Fromm describes is capitalism, which provides the isolated individual with the possibility of becoming what he calls an 'automaton'. Unlike Nazism, which explicitly emphasizes the idea that the individual should submerge in a larger whole and overcome his independency, modern capitalism provides human beings with the *illusion* that they are free and unique individuals while manipulating their existence on a minute scale. This provides the isolated individual with the belief that it is not alone, while its possibility of forming an autonomous self is completely undermined. Fromm writes:

Because we have freed ourselves of the older overt forms of authority, we do not see that we have become the prey of a new kind of authority. We have become automatons who live under the illusion of being self-willing individuals. This illusion helps the individual to remain unaware of his insecurity, but this is all the help such an illusion can give. Basically the self of the individual is weakened, so that he feels powerless and extremely insecure. He lives in a world to which he has lost genuine relatedness and in which everybody and everything has become instrumentalized, where he has become a part of the machine that his hands have built. He thinks, feels, and wills what he believes he is supposed to think, feel, and will; in this very process he loses his self upon which all genuine security of a free individual must be built. (EF 279-80)

This has resulted in a society in which alienation reigns:

By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts – but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experiences; with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside productively. (SS 111)

Fromm describes different forms of alienation and argues that this experience has permeated almost every sphere of modern, capitalist societies, as did Lukács, Benjamin and Adorno. Man's embedment in an economic system has resulted in alienation of men from other men. Like Marx, Fromm claims: 'personal relations between men have this character of alienation; instead of relations between human beings, they assume the character of relations between things' (EF 139-40). Furthermore, in *The Sane Society* Fromm describes how modern individuals experience alienation in the process of *love*, since they do not manage to remain equal and autonomous beings in loving relationships but submit themselves to others instead (SS 113). They are also alienated from *work*, he argues (following Marx), and from the *things* and *pleasures* they consume, since they do this in a commercialized whole in which consuming equals *buying* and in which they are disconnected from the individual qualities of objects (SS 125). Furthermore, Fromm describes alienation from the *state*, to which the modern man completely submits himself (SS 128); from *himself*, because he approaches himself as 'a thing to be successfully employed on the market' (SS 129); and from *authority* in general (SS 138). A last form of alienation Fromm described concerns the dimension of *time*:

[F]or modern man, patience is as difficult to practice as discipline and concentration. Our whole industrial system fosters exactly the opposite: quickness. All our machines are designed to for quickness: the car and airplane bring us quickly to our destination – and the quicker the better. The machine which can produce the same quantity in half the time is twice as good as the older and slower one. Of course, there are important economic reasons for this. But, as in so many other aspects, human values have become determined by economic values. What is good for machines must be good for man – so goes the logic. Modern man thinks he loses something – time – when he does not do things quickly; yet he does not know what to do with the time he gains – except kill it (TAL 92).

In modern society, Fromm summarizes all these forms of alienation, men have become 'atoms': 'Modern society consists of "atoms" (if we use the Greek equivalent of "individual"), little particles estranged from each other but held together by selfish interests and by the necessity to make use of each other' (SS 127). And in another text:

Contemporary society preaches this ideal of unindividualized equality because it needs human atoms, each one the same, to make them function in a mass aggregation, smoothly, without friction; all obeying the same commands, yet everybody being convinced that he is following his own desires. Just as modern mass production requires the standardization of commodities, so the social process requires standardization of man, and this standardization is called "equality". (AL 13)

It is clear that Fromm herewith develops an understanding of alienation that is almost total, and that he furthermore comes close to the idea that the world has been 'silenced' and nihilism reigns. In *The Sane Society*, Fromm indeed positions his ideas in line of Nietzsche's above-discussed critique:

In the nineteenth century the problem was that God is dead; in the twentieth century the problem is that man is dead. In the nineteenth century inhumanity meant cruelty; in the twentieth century it means schizoid self-alienation. The danger of the past was that men became slaves. The danger of the future is that men may become robots. (SS 312)

Alienation in the modern world, in other words, results in a death-like existence, devoid of creativity, spontaneity, embeddedness or rootedness: 'Psychologically, the automaton, while being alive biologically, is dead, emotionally and mentally. While he goes through the motions of living, his life runs through his hands like sand' (EF 281). Herewith, both the ideas of those focusing on existence (like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche) and the reflections of those analysing historical and economic structures (Hegel, Marx, Lukács) are combined, which results in a radical condemnation of modern capitalism and the suffering it causes.

11.2 Positive Freedom and Love

In *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm makes the following observation:

Once the primary bonds which gave security to the individual are severed, once the individual faces the world outside of himself as a completely separate entity, two courses are open to him since he has to overcome the unbearable state of powerlessness and aloneness. By one course he can progress to "positive freedom"; he can relate himself spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of his emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities; he can thus become one again with man, nature, and himself, without giving up the independence and integrity of his individual self. The other course open to him is to fall back, give up his freedom, and to try to overcome his aloneness by eliminating the gap that has arisen between his individual self and the world. (EF 161)

It is clear that Fromm understands the symbiotic unity of fascism and the conformity that is offered by capitalism as belonging to this second path. However, even though he observes that these two systems have become extremely powerful in modernity, his analysis is less pessimistic in nature than, for example, Adorno's critique of modernity:

The escape into symbiosis can alleviate the suffering for a time but it does not eliminate it. The history of mankind is the history of growing individuation, but it is also the history of growing freedom. The quest for freedom is not a metaphysical force and cannot be explained by natural law; it is the necessary result of the process of individuation and of the growth of culture. The authoritarian systems cannot do away with the basic conditions that make for the quest for freedom; neither can they exterminate the quest for freedom that springs from these conditions. (EF 264)

This brings me to the first road Fromm mentions in the passage above: the road characterized by *positive freedom* – ‘freedom to’ instead of ‘freedom from’ –, which forms the direct opposite of alienation, atomization, anxiety and isolation and which may result in an experience that can be defined with the term ‘resonance’.

An understanding of the good life, for Fromm, is based on a satisfying solution to the problem of aloneness, of feeling isolated and atomized, which follows from the cutting through of primary ties. At the same time, however, this answer does not point towards a *regress* to a primary, preindividualistic situation, in Fromm’s texts. The main experience that Fromm describes to characterize this experience is that of *love*. Mainly in *The Art of Loving* but also in other works, Fromm defends a specific kind of love that he differentiates from that which he understands as the common Western idea of this phenomenon, and which he places in the ‘confusion between the initial experience of “falling” in love and the permanent state of *being* in love, or, as we might better say, of “standing” in love’ (AL 3). Love is not something that ‘overcomes’ people and then just stays the same, Fromm argues, but it is an ‘art’ that has to be learned and *actively* practiced.

This observation is closely linked by Fromm to the argument that searching for love and union is not an irrational practice. Instead, it is based on the quest for knowledge, which Fromm interprets in an almost mystical manner as lying in the ‘act of love’:

The experience of union, with man, or religiously speaking, with God, is by no means irrational. On the contrary, it is as Albert Schweitzer has pointed out, the consequence of rationalism, its most daring and radical consequence. It is based on our knowledge of the fundamental, and not the accidental, limitations of our knowledge. It is the knowledge that we shall never “grasp” the secret of man and of the universe, but that we can know, nevertheless, in the act of love. ... Care, responsibility, respect and knowledge are mutually interdependent. They are a syndrome of attitudes which are to be found in the mature person; that is, in the person who develops his own powers productively, who only wants to have that which he has worked for, who has given up narcissistic dreams of omniscience and omnipotence, who has acquired humility based on the inner strength which only genuine productive activity can give. (AL 27)

In this passage, Fromm mentions what he understands as the key characteristics of love: activity, productivity, humility, care, respect and knowledge. But the most important characteristic Fromm describes is *spontaneity*, by which he paradoxically *does* point at a certain ‘overwhelming’ aspect of the relationship between self and world. This experience of being ‘overwhelmed’, however, originates, according to his analysis, from *within* the subject. In a long passage in *Escape from Freedom*, he summarizes these ideas as follows:

Most of us can observe at least moments of our own spontaneity which are at the same time moments of genuine happiness. Whether it be the fresh and spontaneous perception of a landscape, or the dawning of some truth as the result of our thinking, or a sensuous pleasure that is not stereotyped, or the welling up of love for another person – in these moments we all know what a spontaneous act is and may have some vision of what human life could be if these experiences were not such rare and uncultivated occurrences. ... Spontaneous activity is the one way in which man can overcome the terror of aloneness without sacrificing the integrity of his self; for in the spontaneous realization of the self man unites himself anew with the world – with man, nature, and himself. Love is the foremost component of such spontaneity; not love as the dissolution of the self in another person, not love as the possession of another person, but love as spontaneous affirmation of others, as the union of the individual with others on the basis of the preservation of the individual self. The dynamic quality of love lies in this very polarity: that it springs from the need of overcoming separateness, that it leads to oneness, - and yet that individuality is not eliminated. Work is the other component: not work as a compulsive activity in order to escape aloneness, not work as a relationship to nature which is partly one of dominating her, partly one of worship of and enslavement by the very products of man's hands, but work as creation in which man becomes one with nature in the act of creation. What holds true of love and work holds true of all spontaneous action, whether it be the realization or participation in the political life of the community. It affirms the individuality of the self and at the same time it unites the self with man and nature. The basic dichotomy that is inherent in freedom – the birth of individuality and the pain of aloneness – is dissolved on a higher plane by man's spontaneous action. (EF 286-7)

By arguing that love and work form the main ways in which human beings generate a spontaneous relationship with themselves, others and nature, Fromm claims that the only healthy way of looking for connection after the initial cutting through of primary ties that throw human beings into a state of aloneness, is the positive freedom to constitute oneself as an autonomous *and* connected creature. Herewith, Fromm suggests that only *as a whole*, as a thinking and acting being, can man find happiness. And whereas modern man lives in a society in which his emotions are suppressed (EF 270), this means that a happy man lives in a society in which he is not reduced to an automaton or put in a submissive or sadistic relationship with others. Fromm's analysis herewith also gains an economic dimension: 'the realization of positive freedom and individualism is also bound up with economic and social changes that will permit the individual to become free in terms of the realization of his self' (EF 298).

Besides the need to be related, Fromm mentions several other needs that are part of the human condition, most systematically in *The Sane Society*. All of these needs contribute to the understanding of 'resonance' that I want to base on his analyses, but also contain the danger of resulting in behaviour that is negative and destructive. He describes *transcendence* – being endowed with reason, man needs to do something about his passivity as a creature 'thrown into the world without his knowledge' (TSS 41) and can do this by either destroying *or* creating -; *rootedness* – the need to feel at home in the world after leaving 'the protective orbit of the mother' (43), which can be done by developing oneself as an autonomous individual *or* by 'returning to the womb' and refusing to grow up -; the need to form a *sense of identity* – which can again be done by becoming an individual *or* by wanting to become part of a herd (TSS 63) -; and the *need for a frame of orientation and devotion* – which refers to the rational need to understand the

world and make it meaningful, which can be done by either understanding it in relation to one's feelings and emotions *or* by manipulating and distorting the world (TSS 66).

This emphasis on activity, productivity and spontaneity is taken by Fromm from the philosophy of Karl Marx, especially as described in the above-mentioned *Early Manuscripts*. In *Marx's Concept of Man*, Fromm observes: 'Only in being productively active can man make sense of his life, and while he thus enjoys life, he is not greedily holding on to it. He has given up the greed for *having*, and is fulfilled with *being*; he is filled because he is empty: he *is* much, because he *has* little' (MCM 29).

Fromm also links this emphasis on production to other authors. He mentions Goethe, for example, from whom he takes the following quotations:

As long as [the poet] expresses only these few subjective sentences, he can not yet be called a poet, but as soon as he knows *how to appropriate the world for himself, and to express it*, he is a poet. Then he is inexhaustible, and can be ever new, while his purely subjective nature has exhausted itself soon and ceases to have anything to say.

Man knows himself only inasmuch as he knows the world; he knows the world only within himself and he is aware of himself only within the world. Each new object truly recognized, opens up a new organ within ourselves. (MCM 28-9)

Herewith, we find a Hegelian element in Fromm's thought as well: the subject only finds connection and embedment if it *appropriates* the world around itself. Fromm observes: 'For Hegel, knowledge is not obtained in the position of the subject-object split, in which the object is grasped as something separated from and opposed to the thinker. In order to *know* the world, man has to *make this world his own*. Man and things are in a constant transition from one suchness into another...' (MCM 27). Becoming one with the world and escaping the isolation of one's subjectivity, in other words, means *creatively, spontaneously and actively* changing it, *understanding* it and *forming* it.

11.3 Overview

We have seen that Fromm understands human existence as characterized by a fundamental need for connectedness, relatedness, unity, rootedness and transcendence, which stems from the cutting through of primary ties; the leaving behind of an original oneness and the constitution of what he calls 'freedom from'. The leaving behind of this oneness results in a state of alienation that is exploited and increased when the need for reconnection results in an embrace of fascist or capitalist structures. But it can also result in a positive form of freedom ('freedom to'), which Fromm mainly understands as embodied by experiences of love. He claims that this experience only results in true positive freedom if the individual develops itself in such a way that that it, *on the one hand*, experiences embeddedness, belonging and unity, but *on the other hand* also becomes an *autonomous* and particular person. Fromm understands this process as biological (humanity leaving a state of nature), historical (the rise of the modern self out of religiously dominated discourses) and psychological (the human self developing from birth to adulthood) in nature.

This means that the notion of resonance that can be based on Fromm's writings and that forms an answer to his diagnosis of alienation has a strong *historical* dimension. Even though Fromm suggests that the need for connection is a basic human need that characterizes human existence in general, he argues at the same time that this need only truly finds its expression in modernity, in which processes of

capitalism, differentiation and individualization have constituted what he calls a 'freedom from' social or natural bonds. This ambiguity is reflected by the fact that he places his theory in line of those developed by Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Goethe, who all attempted to find a solution to modernity's problem of alienation and its accompanying need for connection, in his view, but did this, as I have argued above, only by focusing on the human condition itself and did not explicitly discuss economic structures.

On the mind-body axis, Fromm clearly positions resonance in the middle: only when man is united as a *whole*, and when both his ratio and his emotions define his existence and his outlook on the world, does he truly develop himself as *both* an embedded *and* an autonomous being. Lastly, Fromm emphasizes the *active* and productive aspects of the modern and free individual: the subject only finds freedom and love, he argues following Hegel and Marx, when it appropriates the world around itself in a creative manner.

12. Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)

Marcuse's critique of modern society follows from an approach that is similar to the analyses formulated by Theodor W. Adorno and, especially, Erich Fromm. Like the latter authors, he criticizes the modern world from a point of view that consists of a combination of the theories of Marx and Freud. In the following, I will focus specifically on the influence of the latter, since I have not explicitly discussed Freud's ideas above.

12.1 *Prometheus and the Performance Principle*

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse argues that 'Freud's individual psychology is in its very essence social psychology' (EC 16). This enables him to combine observations made by Freud with a critical understanding of modern capitalism. Marcuse does this mainly by focusing on Freud's concept of the 'reality principle'. This principle is contrasted in the latter's theory with what Freud calls the 'pleasure principle'. Freud relates 'pleasure and unpleasure to the quantity of excitation that is present in the mind ...; unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*' (BPP 4). Based on this definition of pleasure, Freud argues that the mind has a tendency to keep its mental energy on a stable level and thereby to avoid the pain and suffering that comes, in his view, with an increase in excitation. It is this tendency that he refers to as the 'pleasure principle'. Since this principle is closely linked to constancy, and since Freud associates pleasure with stability, the pleasure principle implies that the mind always aims to keep itself on the same level and maintain order and structure.

During the development of the psyche, Freud argues, the pleasure principle gets replaced by the reality principle. Whereas the pleasure principle can be understood as 'blind' since it is merely aimed at *immediate* experiences of pleasure and pain, the mind adopts the reality principle when the ego is confronted with the outside world and has to cope with situations that might be dangerous or threatening. These situations require a more planned and rational overview instead of a mere blind and direct response to feelings of pain and pleasure, which means that the notion of the reality principle refers to the ability to reflect on oneself and to suppress certain desires and feelings in favour of others; even to postpone the satisfaction of urges. Hegel's analysis of the condition of the bondsman comes to mind in this context as well. The reality principle, in other words, replaces the instant-pleasure seeking principle with a calculating and rational attitude. Freud writes:

This [reality principle] does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (BPP 7)

This brings us back to Marcuse, who links Freud's understanding of the reality principle to a critical analysis of capitalist societies. He does this by arguing that life under modern capitalism forces the subject to adopt norms and ideals (reality principles) that repress the possibility of finding happiness and pleasure. This reintroduces the critique developed by Lukács, Benjamin, Adorno and Fromm: adopting this principle in capitalist societies means enslaving oneself to principles external to oneself, Marcuse claims, and forces one to become part of a social whole in which no joy or pleasure can be found (EC 12) – the reality principle implies repression, unfreedom and *alienation*, in his view.

In order to adapt Freud's analysis into one that is critical of the specific aspects of modern capitalism, Marcuse coins the notion of the *performance principle*; 'to emphasize that under its rule society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members' (EC 44). In line of the critical authors mentioned above, Marcuse observes:

The performance principle, which is that of an acquisitive and antagonistic society in the process of constant expansion, presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalized: control over social labor now reproduces society on an enlarged scale and under improving conditions. For a long way, the interests of domination and the interests of the whole coincide: the profitable utilization of the productive apparatus fulfils the needs and faculties of the individuals. For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labor; but their labor is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live. And it becomes the more alien the more specialized the division of labor becomes. Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. While they work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but work in *alienation*. Work has now become general, and so have the restrictions placed upon the libido: labor time, which is the largest part of the individual's life time, is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle. (EC 45)

An important aspect of Marcuse's critique focuses on technology. Given our technological progress, it should be possible to work less and enjoy more, he observes. Instead, we have become more unfree and believe that working as much as possible is necessary. This means that the reality principle not only has a repressive function but also constitutes *false consciousness*: we internalize ideas and rules to such a high degree that we are not able to realize that we are repressed; that it is not necessary to work as much as we do:

The better-living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living. People dwell in apartment concentrations - and have private automobiles with which they can no longer escape into a different world. They have huge refrigerator filled with frozen foods. They have dozens of newspapers and magazine that espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep the occupied and divert their attention from the real issue – which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine

their own needs and satisfactions. The ideology of today lies in that production and consumption reproduce and justify domination. (EC 100)

Like Benjamin, Adorno and Fromm, furthermore, Marcuse targets the shape that rationality has taken up in the modern world: 'Reason is the rationality of the performance principle. Even at the beginning of Western civilization, long before this principle was institutionalized, reason was defined as an instrument of constraint, of instinctual suppression; the domain of the instincts, sensuousness, was considered as eternally hostile and detrimental to reason' (EC 159). As a symbol of this attitude, Marcuse chooses Prometheus, 'the culture-hero of toil, productivity, and progress through repression' (EC 161), since this mythical hero understood Pandora or, in Marcuse's terms, 'the female principle', as a curse and as disruptive (EC 161).

Eros and Civilization was published in 1955. As we will see below, the Freudian background of this book provides Marcuse with a rather positive understanding of ways to overcome a society defined by the internalization of the performance principle. In his 1964 *One Dimensional Man*, however, Marcuse's ideas about modern life have become grimmer. Before developing an idea about his understanding of 'resonance', I want to focus on the contexts of this latter work.

Instead of being able to live a full life, develop its own talents and abilities and fully experience the world and others, capitalist societies are 'one dimensional', Marcuse argues in *One Dimensional Man*: 'Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behaviour in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its qualitative extension' (ODM 24).

An important part of Marcuse's analysis in this book revolves around that which Adorno and Horkheimer define as the culture industry: following the claim that 'the intensity, the satisfaction and even the character of human needs, beyond the biological level, have always been pre-conditioned' by the society in which people live (ODM 18), Marcuse argues that capitalist societies create and sustain what he characterizes as 'false needs':

We may distinguish both true and false needs. "False" are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability to (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs. Such needs have a societal content and function which are determined by external powers over which the individual has no control; the development and satisfaction of those needs is heteronomous. No matter how much such needs may have become the individual's own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning – products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression. (ODM 19)

Marcuse hereby mainly targets technological developments and progress as crucial for the coming about of a system in which needs are fabricated and exploited in favour of a system that, in itself, is only concerned with profit and efficiency, instead of with the happiness of those that it reduces to atoms. Like Marx, Adorno and Fromm, he furthermore claims – as he did in *Eros and Civilization* – that technological progress could be used to better the living conditions of human beings but has, instead, developed into a system he defines as ‘totalitarian’:

The technological processes of mechanization and standardization might release individual energy into a yet uncharted realm of freedom beyond necessity. The very structure of human existence would be altered; the individual would be liberated from the work world’s imposing upon him alien needs and alien possibilities. The individual would be free to exert autonomy over a life that would be his own. If the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible.

This is a goal within the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization, the “end” of technological rationality. In actual fact, however, the contrary trend operates: the apparatus imposes its economic and political requirements for defence and expansion on labour time and free time, on the material and intellectual culture. By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For “totalitarian” is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests. It thus precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole. Not only a specific form of government or party rule makes for totalitarianism, but also a specific system of production and distribution which may well be compatible with a “pluralism” of parties, newspapers, “countervailing powers,” etc. (ODM 17)

One of the most important examples Marcuse mentions of the functioning of this totalitarian system is sexuality. By way of movies, commercials, journalism and television programs, he argues, sexuality is manipulated in such a way that it provides human beings with the idea that they are free individuals who can explore every aspect of their being, while they are, at the same time, made into harmless and obeying atoms. Instead of completely blocking or frustrating sexual feelings and needs, capitalist society and especially consumption culture channel these needs by forcing them into pre-fabricated structures or schemas. This makes the internalization of the reality principle not so much into an aggressive act, but into an embedment in a whole that is welcoming to one’s needs and feelings: ‘The individual must adapt himself to a world which does not seem to demand the denial of his innermost needs – a world which is not essentially hostile’ (ODM 70). This results in an individual that does not feel fundamentally frustrated or treated with hostility by the society in which it grows up, which makes it easier in turn to force them to live by the rules and become part of the capitalist machine: ‘This society turns everything it touches into a potential source of progress *and* of exploitation, of drudgery *and* satisfaction, of freedom *and* of oppression’ (ODM 73).

In line of Adorno and Fromm, Marcuse characterizes modern society therefore as fragmented and devoid of real critical potential: ‘a world of mute objects without a subject, without the practice which would move these subjects in the new direction’ (ODM 197). Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* comes to mind here as well: instead of explicit repression and domination, modern capitalism provides the self with the

illusion that it is free and happy, and enables it to experience shallow forms of pleasure that make this self into an uncritical part of the whole in which it is embedded.

12.2 *Narcissus*

This brings us to the positive understanding of connection and of resonance that follows from Marcuse's critical analyses of capitalist societies. Following Marx and the Marxist authors discussed above, he claims that the only hope for constituting a better form of life is through a fundamental change in social and economic conditions. Based on his analysis of repression and the reality principle, he argues in *Eros and Civilization* that the energy for such a change will mainly come from the realm of fantasy, since it remains largely unaffected by the reality principle and contains the desires, wishes and impulses that are repressed in modern societies: 'In so far as sexuality is organized and controlled by the reality principle, phantasy asserts itself chiefly against normal sexuality' (EC 146).

As briefly discussed above, Marcuse understands the progress of modern capitalism as the progress of repression; of a growing tension between repressed desires and the performance principle. Whereas Marx understands tensions between relations of production inherent to capitalist society as eventually resulting in an explosive unravelling of this society, Marcuse understands tensions between the realms of the conscious and the unconscious as resulting in a turning point as well:

The negation of the performance principle emerges not against but with the progress of conscious rationality; it presupposes the highest maturity of civilization. The very achievements of the performance principle have intensified the discrepancy between the archaic unconscious and conscious processes of man, on the one hand, and his actual potentialities, on the other. The history of mankind seems to tend toward another turning point in the vicissitudes of the instincts. (EC 150)

This brings us to the kind of society and the form of life that Marcuse understands as the results of such a change. Following the observation in *Eros and Civilization* that '[t]he notion that a non-repressive civilization is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory' (EC 17), Marcuse argues we can formulate ideas about the good life and about a non-repressive society if we *reinterpret* Freud's claims. This is possible, he argues, because 'our definition of the specific historical character of the established reality principle led to a re-examination of what Freud considered to be its universal validity' (EC 175). Since the reality principle, in other words, is a historical and therefore *contingent* construct, we can argue that it can be overcome or, at least, changed, whereas Freud understood this kind of repression as *necessary* for the formation of an individual in a civilized whole.

The most explicit notion of such a society and of an experience that can be defined as 'resonant' is described in *Eros and Civilization*, based again on an interpretation of Freud's works, although this time on his analysis of 'Eros' and 'Thanatos'. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, released in 1920, Freud questioned his own idea that pleasure is the ultimate goal of all mental procedures and mechanisms, and feels forced to introduce a different mental tendency. Confronted with patients with a masochistic nature and with complex inner conflicts and tensions, he develops the idea that there is an instinct active in the human psyche that he characterizes as the death instinct or 'Thanatos'. He now approaches the human mind as driven by two different and conflicting instincts. On the one hand there is *Thanatos*, the death instinct,

which strives for dissolution and fragmentation; for a coming to rest in death; for giving up everything. On the other hand there is *Eros*, which covers the sexual instincts, seeks connection, stability, love and embraces life.

The notion of 'resonance' that can be distilled from Marcuse's theory, as well as his main model for an ideal society, is based on a non-Freudian interpretation of the mythical character of Narcissus, who forms the opposite of his above-mentioned understanding of Prometheus. According to the myth, Narcissus was punished for his pride by the gods, who made him fall in love with his own reflection. In Marcuse's reading, this means that Narcissus makes no distinction between himself and the world, since he does not know that the person he sees in the mirror and whom he loves is himself. Narcissus therefore embodies the idea of loving everything around oneself, of eroticizing the whole world in which one lives and of overcoming the repressing influence of the performance principle (EC 161-4). In this sense, Marcuse's Narcissus embodies the attempt to break through Kierkegaard's reflecting mirrors and to constitute a connection between self and world.

Following this idea, Marcuse argues that the good society is directed towards *Eros*, and impulses of a joyful and playful nature are encouraged (EC 187). Based on a discussion of Schiller's analysis of aesthetics, to which I briefly return below, Marcuse refers with this reconciliation to the idea that labour is transformed into play, that sensuousness becomes self-sublimated, that reason becomes de-sublimated, and that the dominating and controlling nature of time is overcome (EC 193).

Marcuse even claims that this new society is based on the development of a new kind of sexuality; instead of the conservative, bourgeois, 'genital-based' form of sexuality, this new kind of sexuality eroticizes the whole body, he argues. Even reason becomes part of *Eros*, of the life instincts, and is used to increase pleasure and freedom: 'With the transformation from sexuality into *Eros*, the life instincts evolve their sensuous order, while reason becomes sensuous to the degree to which it comprehends and organizes necessity in terms of protecting and enriching the life-instincts. ... It assumes a new rationality' (EC 223). This means that the 'new individual' does not throw itself blindly in pleasure, but preserves its autonomy and at the same time gains true freedom:

What distinguishes pleasure from the blind satisfaction of want is the instinct's refusal to exhaust itself in immediate satisfaction, its ability to build up and use barriers for intensifying fulfilment. Though this instinctual refusal has done the work of domination, it can also serve the opposite function: eroticize non-libidinal relations, transform biological tension and relief into free happiness. No longer employed as instruments for retaining men in alienated performances, the barriers against absolute gratification would become elements of human freedom; they would protect that other alienation in which pleasure originates – man's alienation not from himself but from mere nature: his free self-realization. Men would really exist as individuals, each shaping his own life; they would face each other with truly different needs and truly different modes of satisfaction – with their own refusals and their own selections. (EC 228)

Marcuse, in other words, claims that this ideal society, which he understands not as utopian in nature but as reasonable and realistic (EC 225), provides human beings both with the opportunity to develop themselves as individuals (which, as Fromm also observes, requires a certain amount of alienation), and to reconnect themselves in a mature way to the whole in which they live and thereby achieve resonance with everything that exists.

As mentioned above, Marcuse is more sceptical and pessimistic about the possibility of overcoming the dominating tendencies of modern societies in *One Dimensional Man*, coming closer to Adorno's observations. In the latter work, after all, he developed the idea that the reality principle, which is social in nature, is not *forced* upon the subject but is *internalized* by the self through processes of manipulation in which experiences of pleasure play an important role. This means that even though the subject is alienated from itself, other people and the world in which it lives, it *does not know* this and even believes it is free and happy. Therefore, Marcuse now argues that a better society can only come about when those who *are* able to oversee what goes wrong in society – mainly intellectuals and students – work together with minorities. Since these minorities are not fully absorbed by the controlling mechanisms of capitalist and consumerist societies, they are able to develop a different point of view and to formulate more explicitly how and why these societies are wrong and totalitarian. Marcuse herewith adopts a Marxist perspective and observes in *One Dimensional Man*:

To the degree to which consciousness is determined by the exigencies and interests of the established society, it is "unfree"; to the degree to which the established society is irrational, the consciousness becomes free for the higher historical rationality only in the struggle *against* the established society. The truth and the freedom of negative thinking have their ground and reason in this struggle. (ODM 175)

Following these ideas, Marcuse stresses the ideas of 'determinate negation' and of 'negative thinking': only by radically turning against the system *as a whole* can its totalitarian spell be broken, he argues. A new kind of subjectivity will arise after this is done, which he links to autonomy, reflection and freedom:

Self-determination will be real to the extent to which the masses have been dissolved into individuals liberated from all propaganda, indoctrination, and manipulation, capable of knowing and comprehending the facts and of evaluating the alternatives. In other words, society would be rational and free to the extent to which it is organized, sustained, and reproduced by an essentially new historical Subject. (ODM 196)

Even though *One Dimensional Man* does not come as close to describing experiences of resonance as *Eros and Civilization*, it nevertheless contains passages, especially on the realm of aesthetics, in which Marcuse formulates rather ungraspable phenomena that are important in the context of this paper:

Talking of a beautiful girl, a beautiful landscape, a beautiful picture, I certainly have very different things in mind. What is common to all of them – "beauty" – is neither a mysterious entity, not a mysterious word. On the contrary, nothing is perhaps more directly and clearly experienced than the appearance of "beauty" in various beautiful objects. The boy friend and the philosopher, the artist and the mortician may "define" it in very different ways, but they all define the same specific state or condition – some quality or qualities which make the beautiful *contrast* with other objects. In this vagueness and directness, beauty is experienced *in* the beautiful – that is, it is seen, heard, smelled, touched, felt, comprehended. It is experienced almost as a shock, perhaps due to the contrast-character of beauty, which breaks the circle of everyday experience and opens (for a short moment) another reality (of which fright may be an integral element.

This description is of precisely that metaphysical character which positivistic analysis wishes to eliminate by translation, but the translation eliminates that which was to be defined. (ODM 166)

It is clear, however, that if we want to distil a notion of ‘resonance’ from Marcuse’s writings, his references to Narcissus are the most helpful. When describing the Narcissistic worldview, after all, Marcuse refers to an embedment in the world that enables us to feel a resonating oneness with all that exists.

12.3 Overview

We have seen that in two of his most famous critical analyses of modern capitalist society, Marcuse develops different ideas about the nature of repression under capitalism and, subsequently, the understanding of a good society. In *Eros and Civilization*, he claims that individuals incorporate the performance principle, which reduces them to functioning atoms in the capitalist machine. Since this principle represses sexual energy and pushes desires and instincts into the realm of fantasy, this analysis results in the idea that this energy will eventually result in a radical energetic outburst. In *One Dimensional Man*, on the other hand, Marcuse claims that modern capitalism provides the subject with forms of superficial pleasure that make such an outburst much more difficult and much less realistic: the individual is ‘drugged’, as it were, by commercialism, not unlike the protagonists of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse therefore argues that only marginalized groups that are not completely absorbed by the culture industry may be able to formulate critical ideas and see through the commodified veil that covers the world. In *Eros and Civilization*, however, he claims that, once capitalist structures are overcome, a new kind of sexuality may arise that is characterized by the figure of Narcissus. He links this sexuality to an experience of complete embeddedness in the world, which allows the subject to express itself freely and to constitute itself as an *individual* without repressing the desires and instincts that make it experience pleasure. It is this embeddedness, I believe, that can be characterized as resonant since, like Narcissus, it allows the subject to experience itself in and through everything and everyone and reach true oneness.

Positioning this experience in the thematic coordinate system developed above, this means that Marcuse comes very close to especially Fromm. As with Marx, Lukács, Benjamin, Adorno and Fromm, his understanding of resonance as found in *Eros and Civilization* is historical in nature and follows from a critical analysis of modern societies. Nevertheless, his ideas about a society driven by Eros and characterized by Narcissus are based on an almost ahistorical embrace of everything that exists and a full blossoming of play, creativity and love. This means, furthermore, that, like Fromm’s observations, this form of existence revolves around a complete *entwinement of body and mind*, in which reason becomes ‘sensualized’ and forms an integral part of one’s existence as a whole. Lastly, the existence in resonance that Marcuse describes in *Eros and Civilization* is *active* in nature: it follows from Eros, the drive to live, and revolves around an active involvement in and engagement with one’s surroundings.

13. Jürgen Habermas (1929)

In the following, I will discuss the most important author of the second generation of Frankfurt School thinkers: Jürgen Habermas. Even though Habermas develops a clear and extensive understanding of what it means to connect to other people, we will see that it is difficult to distil a notion of ‘resonance’ from his

works, mainly since he is primarily focused on different forms of *reason* and does not extensively discuss corporeal or pre-cognitive experiences in which spontaneity plays a role.

13.1 *Colonization of the Lifeworld*

In his magnum opus *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), Habermas attempts to formulate a conception of reason that does not follow from a metaphysical framework and that is not rooted in an absolute, unchangeable notion of the human condition. Instead, he adopts a more pragmatic standpoint and analyses the forms of rationality that are inherent to and constitutive of modern, post-metaphysical societies. Famously, this eventually makes him explore the rationality inherent to communicative action and the normative framework that follows from it. He therewith argues against the idea, developed, *in his view*, by Horkheimer and Adorno, that reason is always instrumental in nature, claiming instead that the rationality inherent to communicative action, aimed at reaching consensus, contains an emancipatory moment that makes it possible to hold on to modernity's promise of freedom and autonomy. He summarizes his analysis of this form of reason as follows:

To sum up, we can say that actions regulated by norms, expressive self-presentations, and also evaluative expressions, supplement constative speech acts in constituting a communicative practice which, against the background of a lifeworld, is oriented to achieving, sustaining, and renewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the inter subjective recognition of criticizable validity claims. The rationality inherent in this practice is seen in the fact that a communicatively achieved agreement must be based *in the end* on reasons. And the rationality of those who participate in this communicative practice is determined by whether, if necessary, they could, *under suitable circumstances*, provide reasons for their expressions. (TCA-I 17).

Language, Habermas argues, is both inherently *rational* and inherently *social* in nature, which means that communicative reason embeds the individual in a social structure and forces this individual (in an 'unforced' manner) to adopt certain norms in its contact with others, aiming to reach consensus by way of rational and truthful argumentation.

In order to explore Habermas' understanding of the dangers inherent to modern societies and the 'false consciousness' it constitutes, we need to look at his distinction between 'lifeworld' and 'system'. These correspond to two different approaches to society. The first is a viewpoint internal to society, and corresponds to the experience of social actors and individuals, forming their *Lebenswelt*. He understands this lifeworld as 'complementary to communicative action' (TCA-II 119) and writes that it is 'represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns' (TCA-II 124). It is in the lifeworld, he argues, that the socialization and integration of individuals is secured, since it forms the 'unproblematic' background of communicative processes:

Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld. Their lifeworld is formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions. This lifeworld background serves as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic. In their interpretive accomplishments the members of a communication community demarcate the one objective world and their intersubjectively shared social world from the subjective worlds of individuals and (other) collectives. The world-concepts

and the corresponding validity claims provide the formal scaffolding with which those acting communicatively order problematic contexts of situations, that is, those requiring agreement, in their lifeworld, which is presupposed as unproblematic. (TCA-I 70)

The second viewpoint Habermas discusses is related to what he calls the 'system'. This approach to society is external in nature and corresponds, for example, to economic markets and, more generally, to the idea that society should be approached as a self-regulating, systematic whole that is not normative in nature and that overpowers individual, subjective intentionality. The media that this systematic approach to society revolves around are not subjective intentions, but money and power. Habermas describes the difference between communicative action and system regulation as follows:

The market is one of those systemic mechanisms that stabilize nonintended interconnections of action by way of functionally intermeshing action *consequences*, whereas the mechanism of mutual understanding harmonizes the action *orientations* of participants. Thus I have proposed that we distinguish between *social integration and system integration*: the former attaches to action orientations, while the latter reaches right through them. In one case the action system is integrated through consensus, whether normatively guaranteed or communicatively achieved; in the other case it is integrated through the nonnormative steering of individual decisions not subjectively coordinated. (TCA-II 150)

Habermas argues that during the evolution of modern societies, system and lifeworld drift further and further away from each other: the lifeworld differentiates more, and the system becomes more complex.

This brings us to his critique of modern capitalism, in which Lukács' above-discussed notion of reification plays a main role. Because lifeworld and system drift apart, Habermas claims, the connection between normative forms of self-understanding on the one hand, and systemic approaches to social life on the other, becomes weaker. This makes the systematic viewpoint and the media it revolves around – money and power – appear as a 'block of quasi-natural reality' that Habermas describes by referring to Lukács' concept of 'second nature':

In societies with a low degree of differentiation, systemic interconnections are tightly interwoven with mechanisms of social integration; in modern societies they are consolidated and objectified into norm-free structures. Members behave toward formally organized action systems, steered via processes of exchange and power, as toward a block of quasi-natural reality; within these media-steered subsystems society congeals into a second nature. Actors have always been able to sheer off from an orientation to mutual understanding, adopt a strategic attitude, and objectify normative contexts into something in the objective world, but in modern societies, economic and bureaucratic spheres emerge in which social relations are regulated only via money and power. Norm-conformative attitudes and identity-forming social memberships are neither necessary nor possible in these spheres; they are made peripheral instead. (TCA-II 154)

The form of reason that Habermas distills from communicative action herewith loses its central position and is replaced by systemic steering media like power and money: 'In the end, systemic mechanisms suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where a consensus-dependent coordination of action cannot be replaced, that is, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake. In these areas, the *mediatization* of the lifeworld assumes the form of a *colonization*' (TCA-II 196).

To a large extent, this analysis follows from Max Weber's above-described observation that the processes of rationalization and bureaucratization that characterize modernity have resulted in the fragmentation of collectively shared, meaningful horizons into different 'spheres of value'. This corrodes a unifying cultural and social horizon, results in the lifeworld losing 'its structural possibilities of ideology formation' (TCA-II 354), and fragments the subject's consciousness:

The lifeworld is always constituted in the form of a global knowledge intersubjectively shared by its members; thus, the desires equivalent for no longer available ideologies might simply consist in the fact that the everyday knowledge appearing in totalized form remains diffuse, or at least never attains that level of articulation at which alone knowledge can be accepted as valid according to the standards of cultural modernity. *Everyday consciousness* is robbed of its power to synthesize; it becomes *fragmented*.

Something of this sort does in fact happen; the differentiation of science, morality, and art, which is characteristic of occidental rationalism, results not only in a growing autonomy for sectors dealt with by specialists, but also in the splitting off of these sectors from a stream of tradition continuing on in everyday practice in a quasi-natural fashion. ... Everyday consciousness sees itself thrown back on traditions whose claims on validity have already been suspended; where it does escape the spell of traditionalism, it is hopelessly splintered. In place of "false consciousness" we today have a "fragmented consciousness" that blocks enlightenment by the mechanism of reification. It is only with this that the conditions for a *colonization of the lifeworld* are met. When stripped of their ideological veils, the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside – like colonial masters coming into a tribal society – and force a process of assimilation upon it. (TCA-II 355)

This process, in other words, introduces norms and decision-making processes into the lifeworld that are alien to it, and thereby distort communicative forms of action and inter-subjective decision making processes.

In the last part of the second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas discusses how his thesis regarding the colonization of the lifeworld can be translated into a new understanding of 'reification', which does not follow, as in Lukács' works, from general theoretical claims about economic relations that result in ideas about the *total* reification of society, but instead enable him, in his own view, to criticize processes that take place in *specific* areas of the lifeworld and that can, furthermore, be assessed empirically.

Referring to Weber's diagnosis of modernity, Habermas characterizes the results of reification as a loss of freedom and a loss of meaning. This loss of freedom should be understood 'in terms of a systematically induced reification of communicatively structured domains of action' (TCA-II 352); 'Monetarization and bureaucratization appear to overstep the boundaries of normality when they instrumentalized an influx from the lifeworld that possesses its own logic' (TCA-II 323). Modern life loses its meaning, in turn, because the colonization of the lifeworld results in an instrumentalization of individual actions and in the constitution of spheres of justice that are decoupled from moral or ethical justification (TCA-II 324).

These processes may result in a 'false consciousness' and cause subjects to deceive themselves about the actual goals of their actions and the contact they have with others. This process may take place,

Habermas observes, because these subjects measure that which they do only by way of power and money, instead of by way of the validity claims inherent to communicative action:

Social pathologies are not to be measured against “biological” goal states but in relation to the contradictions in which communicatively intermeshed interaction can get caught because deception and self-deception can gain objective power in an everyday practice reliant on the facticity of validity claims. (TCA-II 278)

Again, it is important to emphasize that Habermas herewith does not claim that modern capitalist societies are reified as a *whole* or that these pathologies are *necessarily* parts of processes of modernization.

13.2 Communicative Resonance

Unlike Weber, Habermas argues that the fragmentation of the lifeworld and the corrosion of the power of religious and traditional values result not just and not necessarily only in a world devoid of meaning and freedom, but that this same process enhances the emancipatory qualities of communicative action since it forces individuals to relate to each other through communicative processes: ‘the further the structural components of the lifeworld and the processes that contribute to maintaining them get differentiated, the more interaction contexts come under conditions of rationally motivated mutual understanding, that is, of consensus formation that rests *in the end* on the authority of the better argument’ (TCA-II 145).

This emphasis on a specific kind of rationality makes it difficult, I believe, to distil an understanding of ‘resonance’ from Habermas’ texts, since he is not primarily concerned with pre-cognitive, emotional or bodily forms of connection or reconciliation that I have associated with this experience above. This is illustrated by Habermas’ critique of Weber, Adorno and Horkheimer:

The concept of instrumental reason suggests that the rationality of knowing and acting subjects is systematically expanded into a purposive rationality of a higher order. Thus the rationality of self-regulating systems, whose imperative overrides the consciousness of the members integrated into them, appears in the shape of a totalized purposive rationality. This confusion of system rationality and action rationality prevented Horkheimer and Adorno, as it did Weber before them, from adequately separating the rationalization of action orientations within the framework of a structurally differentiated lifeworld from the expansion of the steering capacity of differentiated social systems. As a result, they could locate the spontaneity that was not yet in the grips of the reifying force of systematic rationalization only in irrational powers – in the charismatic power of the leader or in the mimetic power of art and love.

Horkheimer and Adorno failed to recognize the communicative rationality of the lifeworld that had to develop out of the rationalization of worldviews before there could be any development of formally organized domains of action at all. It is only this communicative rationality, reflected in the self-understanding of modernity, that gives an inner logic – and not merely the important rage of nature in revolt – to resistance against the colonization of the lifeworld by the inner dynamics of autonomous systems. (TCA-II 333)

Whereas Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno, in Habermas’ view, turn towards irrational forms of experience in which spontaneity, passion and sensuality play important roles, he himself affirms a specific kind of reason that modernity ‘became aware of’ through its social evolution.

Unlike the more existentially-oriented writings of authors like Nietzsche and Camus, or the psychoanalytical analyses of Adorno, Fromm and Marcuse, this means that Habermas' ideas do not turn towards an understanding of 'resonance' in which passion, aesthetic beauty, spontaneity or embodiment play major roles. If we *could* speak of resonance within *The Theory of Communicative Action*, it should be sought in that which Habermas understands as the *opposite* of reification and colonization: the meaning-generating embeddedness and harmony found in the context of the lifeworld. The lifeworld, after all, forms the implicitly accepted background, an informal 'living realm', in which socially, historically and culturally formed linguistic meanings are embedded; in which the subjects finds itself at home as a communicative agent; and in which 'individual life histories are in harmony with collective forms of life' (TCA-II 141).

This brings me to Habermas' understanding of the 'ideal speech situation', which forms a rather symbolic and explanatory conceptualization of the norms that constitute communicative acts. In the first volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, he argues that analyses of communicative action enable us to argue that three structural conditions constitute this condition:

[T]he structures of an ideal speech situation immunized against repression and inequality in a special way; then the structures of a ritualized competition for the better arguments; finally the structures that determine the construction of individual arguments and their interrelations. At no single one of these analytical levels can the very idea intrinsic to argumentative speech be adequately developed. The fundamental intuition connected with argumentation can best be characterized from the process perspective by the intention of convincing a *universal audience* and gaining general assent for an utterance; from the procedural perspective, by the intention of ending a dispute about hypothetical validity claims with a *rationaly motivated agreement*; and from the product perspective by the intention of grounding or *redeeming* a validity claim with arguments. (TCA-II 26)

This model of the 'ideal speech situation' follows from the idea that 'every action oriented to reaching understanding can be conceived as part of a cooperative process of interpretation aiming at situation definitions that are intersubjectively recognized' (TCA-I 69-70). It is this notion of 'understanding', I believe, that comes the closest to an experience of 'resonance' in Habermas' works, since it refers to a form of contact between subjects that does not (yet) follow from reflexive and explicit conceptualizations of norms – 'Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld' (TCA-I 70). Instead, these norms, which refer to openness, genuineness, truthfulness and honesty, form the implicit and 'unproblematic' background of communicate contact and, therewith, of the manner in which subjects become integrated and embedded in the lifeworld. This idea is clearly formulated by Habermas in his attempt to reframe processes of rationalization:

Only with the conceptual framework of communicative action do we gain a perspective from which the process of societal rationalization appears as contradictory from the start. The contradiction arises between, on the one hand, a rationalization of everyday communication that is tied to the structures of intersubjectivity of the lifeworld, in which language counts as the genuine and irreplaceable medium of reaching understanding, and, on the other hand, the growing complexity of subsystems of purposive-rational action, in which actions are coordinated through steering media such as money and power. Thus there is a competition *not between the types of action* oriented to understanding and to success, *but between principles of societal integration* – between the mechanism of linguistic communication that is oriented to validity claims – a mechanism that emerges in increasing purity from the

rationalization of the lifeworld – and those de-linguistified steering media through which systems of success-oriented action are differentiated out. (TCA-II 342)

Protest-movements and other forms of critical action are therefore aimed, within Habermas' theory, at creating conditions that make it possible to reach understanding in an open, equal and free atmosphere: 'counterinstitutions are intended to dedifferentiate some parts of the formally organized domains of action, remove them from the clutches of the steering media, and return these "liberated areas" to the action-coordinating mechanism of reaching understanding' (TCA-II 396). Perhaps, it could therefore be possible to claim that these counterinstitutions are aimed at protecting experiences of 'communicative resonance' against the reifying influence of systematic structures.

13.3 Overview

We have seen that Habermas' theory about the evolution of society follows, mainly, from a reinterpretation of Max Weber, and that his ideas about the pathologies that endanger the project of modernity result in a reinterpretation of Lukács' notion of reification. On the one hand, Habermas argues, the fragmentation and individuation that go hand in hand with modernization may result in a fragmented consciousness that has lost grip on itself and its environment, which makes it vulnerable to colonization by the steering media of the system. On the other hand, however, these processes result in the growing importance of communicative action and the articulation of a form of reason that is aimed at reaching agreement under fair, truthful, genuine and equal conditions.

This emphasis on reason, I have argued, makes it difficult to base an understanding of 'resonance' on his texts. Only his ideas about embeddedness in the lifeworld and the communicative process of 'understanding' that structures our existence in this 'world' come close to experiences of harmony that might be associated with resonant forms of contact between people. Briefly returning to the thematic coordinate system: this contact, first of all, is based on a deeply *historical* analysis of society: it is clear that Habermas understand modernity as a historical process, and explores a form of communicative action that has formed in a specific, post-metaphysical age. Secondly, this 'reaching of understanding' is *active* in nature; it follows from an intersubjective way of relating that Habermas characterizes as communicative action. However, this 'action' is not corporeal in nature, but follows from the idea of a 'speech act', developed by Austin, Searle and others. Thirdly, Habermas does not really focus on embodiment or on corporeal and spontaneous forms of warmth between people. Instead, he clearly analyses the mind and, more specifically, its rational capacities as they manifest themselves in communicative processes.

14. Axel Honneth (1949)

Axel Honneth's approach to the world of the social is inspired by a combination of Hegel's ideas about recognition and intersubjectivity, the critique of first generation Frankfurt School authors like Adorno and Fromm, Habermas' analysis of communication, and George Herbert Mead's social psychological observations. Furthermore, in his *Tanner Lectures* of 2005, he adds Marx and Lukács' analyses of reification to this list of influences. In the following, I will provide a brief overview of his theory of recognition and that which he understands in these latter lectures as the opposite of recognition: reification. Unlike my

discussion of the authors above, I will first explore Honneth's positive understanding of inter-human contact, and then focus on his ideas about the distortion of this contact.

14.1 Recognition

In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth analyses the notion of 'recognition' as it appears in the 'Jena writings' of Hegel, observing that 'the various patterns of recognition distinguished by Hegel could be conceptualized as the intersubjective conditions under which human subjects reach various new ways of relating positively to themselves' (SR 173). Based on an interpretation of these writings, he argues that the self can only be fully developed and constituted if this process takes place in an ethical context in which it is able to form three types of relations: relations of love, of law and of ethical life. This results not only in the idea that certain intersubjective conditions are required to form personal integrity and autonomy, but also that these conditions can be approached as providing us with norms regarding the construction of a good and just social whole (SR 144): 'A formal conception of ethical life encompasses the qualitative conditions for self-realization that, insofar as they form general prerequisites for the personal integrity of subjects, can be distracted from the plurality of all particular forms of life' (SR 175).

Regarding the first sphere – love and care – Honneth explores the observation that 'for Hegel, love represents the first stage of reciprocal recognition, because in it subjects mutually confirm each other with regard to the concrete nature of their needs and thereby recognize each other as needy creatures' (SR 95). With Winnicott, Honneth then attempts to answer the following question, which reminds of the ideas of Hegel, Fromm and Marcuse, discussed above: 'how are we to conceive of the interactional process by which 'mother' and child are able to detach themselves from a state of undifferentiated oneness in such a way that, in the end, they learn to accept and love each other as independent persons?' (SR 98). When a child is born, it is like an extension of the mother's body and experiences oneness through its mother's warmth and love. When it grows up, Honneth observes, the child experiences moments when its mother is absent and explores the objects around itself, which it charges with its own emotions in an attempt to bridge the gap between itself and the outside world. Thereby, a child goes through processes of disillusion and frustration (SR 103), and becomes aware of its mother and, therewith, of itself as an *independent* entity. Through this 'refracted symbiosis' (SR 105), the child eventually learns the value of 'being oneself in another' that, in Honneth's view, 'represents the model for all more mature forms of live' (100) and that, as we have seen, plays an important role in especially Hegel, Fromm and Marcuse's ideas about self-formation.

Regarding the sphere of law, Honneth argues that if one is recognized as a person that has certain inalienable rights, 'one is able to view oneself as a person who shares with all other members of one's community the qualities that make participation in discursive will-formation possible. And we can term the possibility of relating positively to oneself in this manner 'self-respect''(SR 120).

Following Hegel and Mead, Honneth then distinguishes a third form of recognition: social esteem, which allows one to relate positively to one's concrete traits and abilities (SR 121). This third sphere refers, in modern societies, to the value that is placed on individuality and equality, and is constituted through recognition of the ability to develop oneself as a person according to one's own characteristic talents and capabilities. Honneth uses the term 'solidarity' to characterize the inter-human bonds that are constituted in this third sphere:

In modern societies ... social relations of symmetrical esteem between individualized (and autonomous) subjects represent a prerequisite for solidarity. In this sense, to esteem one another symmetrically means to view one another in light of values that allow the abilities and traits of the other to appear significant for shared praxis. Relationships of this sort can be said to be cases of 'solidarity', because they inspire not just passive tolerance but felt concern for what is individual and particular about the other person. For only to the degree to which I actively care about the development of the other's characteristics (which seem foreign to me) can our shared goals be realized. (SR 129)

It is important to understand that Honneth here does not focus on relations between already-constituted selves, but develops an analysis of the fundamental conditions that make it possible to form an autonomous self *at all*. He observes, for example, about erotic love: 'It is only because the assurance of care gives the person who is loved the strength to open up to himself or herself in a relaxed relation-to-self that he or she can become an independent subject with whom oneness can be experienced as a mutual dissolution of boundaries' (SR 105). Only through intersubjective processes in which one is recognized as a specific subject with specific qualities, is the subject able to establish boundaries between the I and the not-I, in other words. And only by way of these intersubjective processes is the subject able to develop personal integrity and autonomy. Again, these ideas clearly reflect Hegel's above-cited observation that 'self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness' (PS 110).

His analysis of the different recognitional patterns that define different spheres of life, eventually results in a definition of *Sittlichkeit* (SR 171), which Honneth characterizes as follows in contrast with Kant's thought:

Our approach departs from the Kantian tradition in that it is concerned not solely with the moral autonomy of human beings but also with the conditions for their self-realization in general. Hence, morality, understood as the point of view of universal respect, becomes one of the several protective measures that serve the general purpose of enabling a good life. But in contrast to those movements that distance themselves from Kant, this concept of the good should not be conceived as the expression of substantive values that constitute the *ethos* of a concrete tradition-based community. Rather, it has to do with the structural elements of ethical life, which, from the general point of view of the communicative enabling of self-realization, can be normatively extracted from the plurality of all particular forms of life. (SR 172)

Honneth, in other words, aims to develop a normatively binding understanding of the good life without thereby overlooking the specific nature of the particular forms of life it can be applied to, nor the idea that every form of selfhood is always part of a process; of a *becoming*.

The different recognition relationships that Honneth describes, especially the bonds developed in the sphere of love, can be characterized as 'resonant', I believe: they constitute oneness and connectedness, while also enabling the subject to become an autonomous being. At the same time, however, it is important to realize that Honneth here refers to relations in which subjects recognize each other 'as subjects' and therefore as entities that are different from them – as 'other'. This ability to distinguish between oneself and another subject requires a certain cognitive stance – how undeveloped this stance may be – in which the direct and intuitive nature of an experience we might associate with 'resonance' might be lost.

Following this observation, I want to focus on Honneth's *Berkeley Tanner Lectures* of 2005, in which he comes closer to descriptions of an experience that could be characterized as 'resonant'. In these lectures, he explores the notion of 'reification' by analysing the writings of Heidegger, Lukács, Dewey and Cavell, and aims to embed this term in his theory of recognition. One of the main arguments he develops follows from the above-mentioned observation that the three recognitional spheres described in *The Struggle for Recognition* contain an element of cognition. He therefore claims that a specific type of recognition *precedes* these cognitive dealings with the world. The ways in which we think about the world and develop conceptual structures to understand and grasp it, he claims, is made possible by a more fundamental or elementary form of connection that *transcends* the forms of recognition described above and is not yet normative in nature. Honneth observes:

[T]his stance itself has no normative orientation. Although it compels us to take up some sort of position, it does not determine the direction or tone of that position. Love and hate, ambivalence and coldness, can all be expressions of this elementary recognition as long as they can be seen to be modes of existential affectedness. Therefore, this type of recognition is still far from the threshold beyond which we can speak at all of norms and principles of reciprocal recognition. Normatively substantial forms of recognition such as are embodied in social institutions of traditional honor, modern love, or equal law, represent instead various manners in which the existential scheme of experience opened up by elementary recognition gets "filled out" historically. Without the experience that other individuals are fellow humans, we would be incapable of equipping this schema with moral values that guide and limit our actions. Therefore, elementary recognition must be carried out, and we must feel existential sympathy for the other, before we can learn to orient ourselves toward norms of recognition that compel us to express certain specific forms of concern or benevolence. The implication for the structure of my own theory of recognition is that I must insert a stage of recognition before the previously discussed forms, one that represents a kind of transcendental condition. The spontaneous, nonrational recognition of others as fellow human beings thus forms a necessary condition for appropriating moral values in the light of which we recognize the other in a certain normative manner. (R 152-3)

It is this form of 'existential sympathy', preceding cognition and rational reflection, even preceding norms and values, that I want to characterize as an experience of 'resonance'. After all, Honneth here describes a feeling of *warmth*; an 'empathetic stance towards the world' (R 57) that transcends *every other experience*:

[I]n human social behaviour, recognition and empathetic engagement necessarily enjoy a simultaneously genetic and categorical priority over cognition and a detached understanding of social facts. Without this antecedent act of recognition, infants could not take over the perspectives of their figures of attachment, and adults would be incapable of properly understanding the linguistic propositions of those with whom they interact. (R 52)

At several places, Honneth refers to Adorno to make his point about the form of recognition he discusses. He observes, for example:

I would like to point out in passing that Theodor W. Adorno made some similar remarks in certain places in his works – above all in *Minima Moralia* and *Negative Dialectics*. Formulations can be found again and again in these texts which indicate that Adorno, like Hobson or Tomasello, recognized that the human mind arouses out of an early imitation of a loved figure of attachment.

Indeed, he states in a well-known aphorism from *Minima Moralia* that a person doesn't become a person until he or she imitates other persons. Immediately afterward he writes that this kind of imitation constitutes the "archetype of love". (R 44-5)

And several pages later:

Adorno emphasized more than any other writer the fact that the appropriateness and quality of our conceptual thought is dependent upon the degree to which we are capable of remaining conscious of the original connection of our thought to an object of desire – a beloved person or thing. He even regarded the memory of this antecedent act of recognition as providing a kind of guarantee that a given act of cognition has not constructed its object but has grasped it in all its concrete particularity. (R 57)

To summarize, Honneth here points at a relation between human beings that is so fundamental that it transcends cognitive and linguistic forms of contact and communication; an experience that could therefore be characterized as resonant in nature and comes close to Adorno's understanding of 'warmth'.

14.2 Misrecognition and Reification

In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth shows how each of the three forms of recognition he describes has an opposite: a form of *misrecognition* that disrespects and/or harms one's existence as an individual. In line of Hegel, he argues that it is through these forms of disrespect or misrecognition that we become aware of the normative content of recognition:

It is only because human subjects are incapable of reacting in emotionally neutral ways to social injuries – as exemplified by physical abuse, the denial of rights, and denigration – that the normative patterns of mutual recognition found in the social lifeworld have any chance of being realized. For each of the negative emotional reactions that accompany the experience of having one's claims to recognition disregarded holds out the possibility that the injustice done will cognitively disclose itself and become a motive for political resistance. (SR 138)

The first form of recognition, for example, which concerns emotional support, love and friendship and which is necessary for the constitution of a self-confident individuality, finds its opposite in the damaging of the physical integrity of a person through abuse or rape (SR 129).

It is in his analysis of reification, however, that we find descriptions of an experience that comes the closest to the modernity-critique developed by most of the authors discussed above. Following Horkheimer and Adorno's statement in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that 'all reification is a forgetting', Honneth argues in his *Tanner Lectures* that reification should be understood as a 'forgetfulness' of the above-described pre-cognitive stance of recognition that transcends all other forms of recognition; a process that might perhaps be described as a *forgetfulness of resonance*:

To the extent to which in our acts of cognition we lose sight of the fact that these acts owe their existence to our having taken up an antecedent recognitional stance, we develop a tendency to perceive other persons as mere insensate objects. By speaking here of mere objects or "things," I mean that in this kind of amnesia, we lose the ability to understand immediately the behavioural expressions of other persons as making claims on us – as demanding that we react in an appropriate way. (R 58)

Honneth compares the worldview that is the result of this forgetfulness or amnesia with that of ‘the autistic child’s world of perception, as a totality of merely observable objects lacking all psychic impulse or emotion’ (R 58). Reification, in other words, consists of a turning away from our pre-cognitive ways of experiencing others and results in a denial of the other subject’s existence *as human* (R 76). In line of authors like Hegel, but also Beckett and Camus, this reifying process could be characterized as reducing this world to a silent whole, even a ‘corpsed’ whole, in which emotional bonds of warmth and connection have dissolved and are replaced by mere death-like structures that alienate us from the contexts in which we live.

In the *Tanner Lectures*, Honneth also discusses the phenomenon of ‘self-reification’. Again following the claim that reification means forgetfulness, he argues that self-reification should be understood as a forgetfulness of the fact that we have always recognized our *own* needs and desires and feelings as *worthy* of recognition. This means that self-reification is based on the inability to understand our emotional dimension as part of our personalities: ‘To know what it is to have desires, feelings, and intentions at all, we must already have experienced these mental states as a part of ourselves that is worthy of affirmation and should be made known to our partners in interaction’ (R 74). In other words: self-reification is the loss of the ability to understand oneself as an emphatic and feeling person and to integrate this aspect of oneself into one’s personality as a whole.

Honneth argues that these forms of reification return in different modern phenomena. He mentions human trafficking (R 78), racism, pornographic representations of women (R 81), as well as job interviews and internet dating services (R 83), and observes:

Wherever practices of pure observation, assessment, and calculation toward the lifeworld escape the established framework of legal relations and become independent, the kind of ignorance of antecedent recognition arises that we have described as the core of all intersubjective reification. The spectrum of current social developments that reflect such tendencies run from the increasing hollowing-out of the legal substance of labor contracts all the way to the first indicators of a practice in which children’s potential talents are regarded solely as an issue of genetic measurement and manipulation. (R 80)

In all of these cases, Honneth argues, human beings are approached as things, following from a forgetfulness of our initial feelings of recognition towards either ourselves or others. We will see below how this analysis returns, in an extreme form, in the writings of Michel Houellebecq.

14.3 Overview

With Axel Honneth, we arrive at the end of my discussion of philosophical forms of modernity-critique. As we have seen, several of the themes discussed above return in his works. Especially Hegel’s analysis of recognition as the process underlying the coming about of an autonomous personality that, at the same time, finds oneness and embeddedness in a social whole, plays an important role in Honneth’s thought. Furthermore, his ideas reflect the observations of Lukács, Adorno, Fromm and Marcuse on the ways in which the commercialization of sexuality and love result in a reified form of existence, and on how racism and hatred of others are caused by a forgetfulness of warmth and recognition.

Positioning Honneth’s theory in the above-developed thematic coordinate system, it is clear that the experience that I have defined as resonance within the context of his thought – existential recognition –

forms an *entwinement of body and mind*, and follows from the idea that the autonomous subject recognizes its own bodily feelings and desires as part of itself. Furthermore, Honneth points at an experience that is *active* in nature and, as in Hegel's thought, is constituted when the subject plays an active role in the interactions it has with its environment. Lastly, his theory of recognition is *historical* in nature. Honneth's analysis of the legal system, of the individual rights that people have, and of the absence of religious or metaphysical structures that provide life with meaning, after all, is deeply modern. Furthermore, I have shown that he refers mainly to modern phenomena like internet dating or human trafficking as manifestations of reifying forms of intersubjective contact.

PART III: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS

In the following, I will briefly discuss four literary representations of alienation and resonance. Since these representations are mainly aimed at *describing* certain experiences and are not fully developed on a theoretical level, I will not position them in my thematic coordinate system. Furthermore, we will see that they mainly contain descriptions of *either* resonance (Thoreau and Emerson) *or* alienation (Sartre, Beckett, Houellebecq). Therefore, I will approach these works mainly as reflecting a certain *feeling*, even though we will see that Thoreau's ideas about resonance can be linked to a more fully fledged theory about the nature experience and the constitution of a good life.

15. The Transcendentalists: Emerson's *On Nature* and Thoreau's *Walden*

The first literary representation that I want to discuss borders on the realm of the philosophical and frequently even on that of the spiritual: *Walden*, published in 1854 by Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). In *Walden*, Thoreau describes the more than two years he spent in a cabin near Walden Pond. His reflections on the solitary life he led in this cabin, only surrounded by nature, express ideas about self-sufficiency, solitude, individualism and self-reliance; 'Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself' (W 103). Thoreau frequently describes a feeling of oneness with nature, which I want to characterize as an experience of resonance and purity:

This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me. (W 152)

This feeling of purity and resonance is contrasted by Thoreau with a critique of the kind of life that society imposes on man, in his view:

The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage, at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep, he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent in this world, and was either

threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain-tops. But lo! men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a housekeeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven. (W 41-2)

This social existence, which forces men to 'become tools of their tools', is furthermore characterized by Thoreau as a life in which man 'has no time to be anything but a machine' (W 5), reminding of the Marxist authors discussed above. In order to really appreciate what life is about, one has to escape from the influence of society and find an existence of individualism, self-sufficiency and oneness with nature, Thoreau suggests.

In order to embed Thoreau's observations in a more theoretical framework, I want to look at the writings of Thoreau's mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), on whose land Thoreau stayed in his cabin. Both authors belong to the movement of 'transcendentalism', which found its expression in Emerson's famous 1836 essay 'Nature'. In this essay, Emerson argues that social structures, organized religion and political institutions turn man away from nature and, more generally, from experiences of purity and wholeness. The essay begins as follows, reminding of Kierkegaard's observations on the reflective nature of the 'present age' and its lack of passion:

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation with the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us, by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. (N1 35)

It is this 'original relation with the universe', characterized by life flowing 'around and through us', that I want to characterize in this brief discussion of the transcendentalists as an experience of resonance. Emerson observes: 'When I behold a rich landscape, it is less to my purpose to recite correctly the order and superposition of the strata, than to know why all thought of multitude is lost in a tranquil sense of unity' (N1 75). Like Thoreau, Emerson argues that this experience of unity is lost in a world that merely revolves around empty reflection, fragmentation, passionless work and anonymous city-life: 'The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit. Love is as much its demand as perception' (N1 79).

Emerson's 'Nature' is filled with ecstatic descriptions of oneness, unity, wholeness and embeddedness in nature that, in his view, form the opposites of brokenness and alienation: 'A leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time, is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world' (N1 60).' Another characteristic passage is the following:

Standing on the bare ground, – my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, master or servant, is then a

trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature. (N1 39)

It is clear that Emerson's romantic embrace of nature follows from a concern that modern social life robs the individual of its most precious experiences and forces him to live a dull and grey life, disenchanting and devoid of beauty and purity. In his essay 'The transcendentalist', Emerson therefore characterizes 'the materialist' as follows:

Yet how easy it is to show him that he also is a phantom walking and working amid phantoms, and that he need only ask a question or two beyond his daily questions to find his solid universe dim and impalpable before his senses. The sturdy capitalist, no matter how deep and square on blocks of Quincy granite he lays the foundations of his banking-house or Exchange, must set it, at last, not on a cube corresponding to the angles of his structure, but on a mass of unknown materials and solidity, red-hot or white-hot perhaps at the core, which rounds off to an almost perfect sphericity, and lies floating in soft air, and goes spinning away, dragging bank and banker with it at a rate of thousands of miles the hour, he knows not wither, - a bit of bullet, now glimmering, now darkling through a small cubic space on the edge of an unimaginable put of emptiness. And this wild balloon, in which his whole venture is embarked, is just a symbol of his whole state and faculty. (TT 241)

This reference to materialism follows not only from a critique of the, in Emerson's view, soulless focus on material wealth that characterizes capitalism, it also forms the opposite of the philosophical doctrine of idealism. Only idealism, Emerson argues, is able to present us with a convincing idea of the foundation of unity and wholeness. He therewith develops a specific understanding of this doctrine (the notion of 'transcendentalism' is based on Kant's use of this term): 'The idealist, in speaking of events, sees them as spirits. He does not deny the sensuous fact: by no means; but he will not see that alone. He does not deny the presence of this table, this chair, and the walls of this room, but he looks at these things as the reverse side of the tapestry, as the *other end*, each being a sequel or completion of a spiritual fact which nearly concerns him. This manner of looking at things transfers every object in nature from an independent and anomalous position without there, into the consciousness' (TT 240).

The idealist idea that everything we experience forms part of our consciousness, in other words, makes it possible for Emerson to claim that the world as a whole is filled with 'spirit', and that we recognize ourselves in everything around us. Furthermore, this enables him to argue that, *essentially*, we are not alienated from the world in which we live: 'Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience. All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature' (N1 58). Idealism, in other words, obliterates any distinction between mind and reality, mind and body, or language and world: 'Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind' (N1 53). Furthermore, Emerson claims: 'The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both' (N1 67).

It is important to notice that even though Emerson criticizes modern, social life for its blindness to the purity and oneness of nature, his solution to this problem is not historical in nature; it is aimed at conceptualizing spiritual and *ahistorical* truths that revolve around the essence of what it means to be human, in his view. He indeed quotes Plato's claim that 'poetry comes nearer to the vital truth than history' to illustrate this idea (N1 77).

16. Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*

Following this analysis of resonance and oneness found in the works of Emerson and Thoreau, I will now focus on three opposite approaches to human experience: those describing alienation and atomization. The first of these is *Nausea* (1938), written by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).

Nausea tells the story of Antione Roquentin in the form of diary entries. Roquentin lives in the fictional town of Bouville, France, and is a former traveller who has settled down to write a historical study of an 18th century figure. He starts his diary at the moment he begins to experience a certain fear or angst, but does not know what he is afraid of. The first time this happens is when he holds a pebble in his hand and realizes that this feeling can best be described as *disgust* or *nausea*: 'It was a sort of sweet disgust. How unpleasant it was! And it came from the pebble, I'm sure of that, it passed from the pebble into my hands. Yes, that's it, that's exactly it: a soft nausea in the hands' (N2 22).

During the course of the novel, this feeling of disgust grows stronger and slowly permeates every aspect of Roquentin's life: he feels more and more disconnected from the objects around him – 'Nothing looked real; I felt surrounded by cardboard scenery which could suddenly be removed' (N2 113) – as well as from the people around him. He is unable to experience feelings of warmth for others, even to perceive them as embodied subjects. Instead, their being fills him with nausea, since they merely form cogs in the machine of life, follow routines, do what they have to do, but never reflect or think: 'A 'good solid town'. They aren't afraid, they feel at home. They have never seen anything but the tamed water which runs out of the taps, the light which pours from the bulbs when they turn the switch, the half-breed, bastard trees which are held up with crutches. They are given proof, a hundred times a day, that everything is done mechanically, that the world obeys fixed, unchangeable laws' (N2 225).

Roquentin also experiences alienation from his own body, which is described as follows in a passage in which he sees his own reflection in a mirror:

It is the reflection of my face. Often, during these wasted days, I stay here contemplating it. I can understand nothing about this face. Other people's faces have some significance. Not mine. I cannot even decide whether it is handsome or ugly. I think it is ugly, because I have been told so. But that doesn't strike me. At heart, I am indeed shocked that qualities of this sort can be applied to it, as if you called a piece of earth or a lump of rock beautiful or ugly. (N2 30)

And a few pages later we find the following line: 'in the mirror ... I see an inhuman face gliding along' (N2 40). At a certain moment in the novel, Roquentin even jabs a knife into the palm of his hand and observes that, essentially, nothing has changed (see N 145), and begins to doubt his existence as a whole: 'My existence was beginning to cause me serious concern. Was I a mere figment of the imagination?' (N2 127).

Everything around Roquentin now appears as alien, indifferent and absurd to him, but he does not really understand what exactly it is about the world that makes the nausea hold him 'in its grip' (N2 33). Finally, when he is sitting on a bench in a park and is looking at the root of a chestnut tree, Roquentin realizes that it is *existence itself* that fills him with disgust:

It took my breath away. Never, until these last few days, had I suspected what it means to 'exist'. I was like the others, like those who walk along the seas-shore in their spring clothes. I used to say like them: 'The sea *is* green; that white speck up there *is* a seagull', but I didn't feel that it existed, that the seagull was an 'existing seagull'; usually existence hides itself. It is there, around us, in us, it is *us*, you can't

say a couple of words without speaking of it, but finally you can't touch it. When I believed I was thinking about it, I suppose that I was thinking nothing, my head was empty, or there was just one word in my head, the word 'to be'. Or else I was thinking... how can I put it? I was thinking *appurtenances*, I was saying to myself that the sea belonged to the class of green objects, or that green formed part of the sea's qualities. Even when I looked at things, I was miles from thinking that they existed: they looked like stage scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their existence. But all that happened on the surface. If anybody had asked me what existence was, I should have replied in good faith that it was nothing, just an empty form which added itself to external things, without changing anything in their nature. And then, all of a sudden, there it was, as clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost its harmless appearance as an abstract category: it was the very stuff of things, that toot was steeped in existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass on the lawn, all that had vanished; the diversity of things, their individuality, was only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, in disorder – naked, with a frightening, obscene nakedness. (N2 182-3)

Roquentin arrives at the conclusion that 'the world of explanations and reasons is not that of existence' (N2 185), because 'existence is not necessity. To exist is simply *to be there*; what exists appears, lets itself be *encountered*, but you can never *deduce* it' (N2 188). 'Existence is not something which allows itself to be thought of from a distance; it has to invade you suddenly, pounce upon you, weigh heavily on your heart like a huge motionless animal – or else there is nothing left at all' (N2 189). There only is a present, Roquentin observes, which is 'that which exists' (N2 139).

Herewith, we arrive at the core of the philosophical doctrine of existentialism: the world has no intrinsic meaning and objects do not care about the needs of the subject. Furthermore, the relations between objects and the qualities of the things we perceive are merely added to them by the subject and therefore 'superfluous' (N2 184). The world knows no reason, the objects we perceive 'just are', existence is cold and meaningless and every form of meaning that we might think it has, is added to it by the subject. Furthermore, Roquentin realizes, the only thing that he 'is', is a consciousness in the present:

Lucid, motionless, empty, the consciousness is situated between the walls; it perpetuates itself. Nobody inhabits it any more. A little while ago somebody still said *me*, said *my* consciousness. Who? Outside there were talking streets, with familiar colours and smells. There remain anonymous walls, and anonymous consciousness. This is what there is: walls, and between the walls, a small living and impersonal transparency. The consciousness exists like a tree, like a blade of grass. It dozes, it feels bored. Little ephemeral existences populate it like birds in branches. Populate it and disappear. Forgotten consciousness, forsaken between these walls, under the grey sky. And this is the meaning of its existence: it is that it is a consciousness of being superfluous. It dilutes itself, it scatters itself, it tries to lose itself on the brown wall, up the lamp-post, or over there in the evening mist. But it *never* forgets itself; it is a consciousness of being a consciousness which forgets itself. That is its lot. (N2 241)

Herewith, everything has been completely stripped of meaning by his experience of nausea and existential angst, and Roquentin's experience of alienation is complete: 'Through layers and layers of existence, it unveils itself, slim and firm, when you try to seize it you meet nothing but existents, you run up against existents devoid of meaning. It is behind them: I can't even hear it, I hear sounds, vibrations in the air which

unveil it. It does not exist, since it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which is superfluous in relation to it. It *is*' (N2 248).

The existentialist approach that characterizes *Nausea* seems to make it impossible to defend feelings of resonance, connection or embedment, since the disgust that Roquentin experiences alienates him from all that exists. The novel even contains a passage that could be read as a critique of the kind of resonance that was praised by German Romanticism:

To think that there are idiots who derive consolation from the fine arts. Like my Aunt Bigeois: 'Chopin's *Preludes* were such a help to me when your poor uncle died.' And the concert halls are full to overflowing with humiliated, injured people who close their eyes and try to turn their pale faces into receiving aërials. They imagine that the sounds they receive flow into them, sweet and nourishing, and that their sufferings become music, like those of young Werther; they think that beauty is compassionate towards them. The mugs. (N2 246)

Surprisingly, however, *Nausea* ends on a rather positive note: Roquentin realizes that the fact that there only 'is' existence implies that the subject is completely free and responsible for its own actions. It cannot hide behind social structures or routines, or behind feelings of regret or reflections on the past. There only is the 'here and now', and the subject has to commit itself to the creation of meaning, and to the activity of constituting itself as a free person.

This realization, eventually, fills Roquentin with a certain hope, which he experiences when listening to one of his favourite songs in a café he often visits. This hope might even be understood as resulting in an understanding of resonance. Roquentin now has decided that he will stop working on his book, move to Paris and begin working on a new book that is not about the meaningless past but about an experience that might inspire others; 'It would have to be beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence' (N2 252). He realizes that the singer on the record he is listening to manages to *move* him, which has cleansed her, in his view, of her existence: 'This idea suddenly bowls me over, because I didn't even hope for that any more. I feel something timidly brushing against me and I dare not move because I am afraid it might go away. Something I didn't know any more: a sort of joy' (N2 251). It could therefore be argued that Roquentin finds resonance in this commitment to a project; to the creation of a work of art.

17. Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*

Samuel Beckett's 1957 play *Endgame* is perhaps the most extreme description of a world that is completely silent and dead; a world in which alienation characterizes every experience that the subject is able to have. Unlike Sartre's *Nausea*, furthermore, it does not contain a positive conclusion or suggestions regarding ways to better the world. *Endgame* is therefore frequently referred to by Adorno to illustrate his critical analysis of modernity. In his lectures on *Metaphysics*, for example, Adorno states that the dramas of Beckett are the 'only truly relevant metaphysical productions since the war' (M117). Like no other modern works of art, he argues, they represent the horrors of Auschwitz and the destruction of meaning that he understood as brought about by Nazi Germany. Adorno especially praises Beckett's emphasis on corporeality and pain in *Endgame*, as well as his ability to describe the state of existence to which people

were reduced in the concentration camps, consisting of a physical suffering that 'already places the living man among the corpses by reducing him to his body' (UE 273).

Endgame consists of one act and has four characters: Hamm, who is blind and cannot stand, Clov, Hamm's servant who cannot sit, and Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, who both have no legs and live in dustbins. These four characters are not able to really communicate with each other; they either utter absurdist phrases, complain, or vaguely reflect on their situation without arriving at definitive conclusions. The play is devoid of human warmth and takes place in a house that is surrounded by a post-apocalyptic world that is characterized as 'corpsed' (E 20) and as completely 'grey' (E 21). 'There's no more nature', Clov observes; the only 'nature' is found in the observation that, as Hamm exclaims, 'we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!' (E 10). Characteristic is the following statement by Hamm, in which he describes his situation to Clov:

One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck I the void, in the dark, for ever, like me. [Pause.] One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up. You'll say, I shouldn't have sat down, but since I have I'll sit on a little longer, then I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up and you won't get anything to eat. [Pause] You'll look at the wall a while, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes, perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them. And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more. [Pause.] Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe. (E 23-4)

Endgame furthermore depicts a world in which subjectivity has dissolved and in which life has been reduced to mere survival: the world has no meaning anymore, since the subject is too damaged to know what meaning is or what it can cling to in order to find a sense of belonging or unity. Beckett himself indeed observed: 'It's not even possible to talk about truth. That's part of the anguish' (McDonald 2009: xv). When a fraction of hope seems to present itself, it is therefore brushed away with indifference: 'here we're down in a hole. [Pause.] But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it's still green. Eh? [Pause.] Flora! Pomona! [Ecstatically.] Ceres! [Pause.] Perhaps you won't need to go very far. CLOV: I can't go very far' (E 25).

Herewith, *Endgame* presents us with a world in which subjects are alienated from nature, each other, the language they speak and the words they use, as well as from any kind of (metaphysical) structure that might provide this world with meaning – it is no surprise that Beckett was deeply influenced by the pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer.

This means that *Endgame* does not provide us with descriptions of a notion of resonance. Perhaps the feeling of togetherness shared by its four characters could be interpreted as sketching the contours of such an experience, but the almost complete lack of solidarity or even of basic communication in the play does not point in this direction. It is precisely this absence of warmth or of positivity that makes Adorno praise the play for its *critical* value, on which I briefly want to focus because this value will be mentioned in the conclusion to this paper in the context of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*.

In Adorno's view, *Endgame* mimics the falseness of a commodified whole in which the individual finds itself embedded in modern capitalist societies; a whole in which the self has lost its grip on the world completely and has disintegrated into the powerless state that Beckett's play describes; a state in which even words and concepts have lost their meaning. Adorno describes in *Aesthetic Theory* how this reflection

of meaninglessness forces the play's readers to realize something about the nature of their world, pushing 'its situation so far that it becomes the critique of this situation' (AT 260):

Beckett's oeuvre already presupposes [the] experience of the destruction of meaning as self-evident, yet also pushes it beyond meaning's abstract negation in that his plays force the traditional categories of art to undergo this experience... Beckett's plays are absurd not because of the absence of any meaning, for then they would be simply irrelevant, but because they put meaning on trial; they unfold its history. (AT 153-4)

In other words: art cannot escape reality and explicitly reflect the wrongness of capitalist societies or conceptualize critique on the mechanisms that steer this world. Like the words uttered by the protagonists of *Endgame*, concepts have lost their critical value. Art therefore has to seek refuge in absurdity and extreme distortion to be able to turn against the false whole that produced it, Adorno observes:

Art keeps itself alive through its social force of resistance Its contribution to society is not communication with it but rather something extremely mediated: It is resistance in which, by virtue of inner-aesthetic development, social development is reproduced without being imitated. At the risk of its self-alienation, radical modernity preserves art's immanence by admitting society only in an obscured form... (AT 226)

Furthermore, Adorno observes, Beckett's dramas, especially *Endgame*, force us to look at the repressed aspects of society, the 'place of carrion, stench and putrefaction', in which people 'vegetate between life and death – as they actually vegetated in the concentration camps' (M 117-18).

Beckett's play herewith forces us to realize that both philosophy and human connections have been reduced to garbage: 'philosophy, spirit itself, declares itself to be dead inventory, the dreamlike leavings of the world of experience, and the poetic process declares itself to be a process of wastage' (UE 261) and: '*Endgame* prepares us for a state of affairs in which everyone who lifts the lid of the nearest trashcan can expect to find his own parents in it. The natural connection between the living has now become organic garbage' (UE 286).

Benjamin's above-mentioned reference to the critical potential of Baudelaire's 'spleen' comes to mind here as well, which he understood as caused by the waste products of a commodified whole.

18. Michel Houellebecq's *Atomised*

The last literary representation of alienation that I want to discuss is the 1998 novel *Les Particules élémentaires*, translated as *The Elementary Particles* and as *Atomised*, written by the French author Michel Houellebecq (1958). Axel Honneth mentions Houellebecq in *Reification* as suggesting that 'we view the inhabitants of our social world as interacting with themselves and others as they would with lifeless objects – without a trace of inner sentiment or any attempt at understanding the other's points of view' (R 18).

Atomised tells the story of two French half-brothers, Bruno Clément and Michel Djerzinski, whose mother is a product of the '60s and of the ideology of 'free love'. Michel becomes a brilliant molecular biologist, whereas Bruno, after a loveless marriage, turns into a sex addict who eventually ends up in a mental hospital. The lives of both are characterized by alienation, depression, and a fundamental disdain

for the human race and for their own existence. Michel's turn to the abstract and pure realms of mathematics and the natural sciences, for example, is described as driven by the realization that human reality is 'a series of disappointments, bitterness and pain' (A 77).

Strongly influenced by the thought of Arthur Schopenhauer, Houellebecq describes a world in which nothing has real value anymore. Human relationships have been instrumentalized, commercialized and standardized, replaced by an empty longing for sexual encounters that provide no real satisfaction. The novel begins as follows:

This book is principally the story of a man who lived out the greater part of his life in Western Europe, in the latter half of the twentieth century. Though alone for much of his life, he was nonetheless closely in touch with other men. He lived through an age that was miserable and troubled. The country into which he was born was sliding slowly, ineluctably, into the ranks of the less developed countries; often haunted by misery, the men of his generation lived out their lonely, bitter lives. Feelings such as love, tenderness and human fellowship had, for the most part, disappeared; the relationships between his contemporaries at best indifferent and more often cruel. (A 3)

Houellebecq argues that the deaths of religion, overarching moral systems, meaningful art and inter-human warmth, have resulted in a society that is driven by commercialized sexuality and power, devoid of any form of meaning or sense. There are no metaphysical frameworks in which we can embed our lives and which provide our actions with purpose. There is only a constant longing for something that we will never truly experience.

Houellebecq mainly targets the individualism and ideals of boundless freedom that, in his view, were constituted in modernity and have only brought us misery and suffering. He especially understands the (sexual) liberation movements of the '60s as the main cause of this phenomenon: these movements only resulted in a nihilistic universe, he observes, in which human relationships were reduced to empty sexual encounters. This enabled the market system, in turn, to permeate and usurp these relationships and made it possible for capitalist structures to control human sexuality, turn it into a realm dominated by exchange; into a market in which looks, wealth, power and age form the main steering media:

On 14 December 1967 the government passed the Neuwirth Act on contraception at its first reading. Although not yet paid for by social security, the pill would now be freely available in pharmacies. It was this which offered a whole section of society access to the sexual revolution, which until then had been reserved for professionals, artists and senior management- and some small businessmen. It is interesting to note that the "sexual revolution" was sometimes portrayed as a communal utopia, whereas in fact it was simply another stage in the historical rise of individualism. As the lovely word "household" suggests, the couple and the family would be the last bastion of primitive communism in liberal society. The sexual revolution was to destroy these intermediary communities, the last to separate the individual from the market. The destruction continues to this day. (A 135-6)

The protagonists of *Atomised* refer to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* as providing us with a characterization of the society in which they live: 'Everyone says *Brave New World* is supposed to be a totalitarian nightmare, a vicious indictment of society, but that's hypocritical bullshit. *Brave New World* is our idea of heaven: genetic manipulation, sexual liberation, the war against aging, the leisure society. This is

precisely the world that we have tried – and so far failed – to create’ (A 187). However, it is again individualism that, in the views of the protagonists, makes it impossible to create the world described in Huxley’s book:

[Huxley] underestimated the growth of individualism brought about by an increased consciousness of death. Individualism gives rise to freedom, the sense of self, the need to distinguish oneself and to be superior to others. A rational society like the one he describes in *Brave New World* can defuse the struggle. Economic rivalry – a metaphor for mastery over space-has no more reason to exist in a society of plenty, where the economy is strictly regulated. Sexual rivalry-a metaphor for mastery over time through reproduction-has no more reason to exist in a society where the connection between sex and procreation has been broken. But Huxley forgets about individualism. He doesn’t understand that sex, even stripped of its link with reproduction, still exists – not as a pleasure principle, but as a form of narcissistic differentiation. The same is true of the desire for wealth. Why has the Swedish model of social democracy never triumphed over liberalism? Why has it never been applied to sexual satisfaction? Because the metaphysical mutation brought about by modern science leads to individuation, vanity, malice and desire. Any philosopher, not just Buddhist or Christian, but any philosopher worthy of the name, knows that, in itself, desire – unlike pleasure – is a source of suffering, pain and hatred. The utopian solution – from Plato to Huxley by way of Fourier – is to do away with desire and the suffering it causes by satisfying it immediately. The opposite is true of the sex-and-advertising society we live in, where desire is marshaled and blown up out of all proportion, while satisfaction is maintained in the private sphere. For society to function, for competition to continue, people have to want more and more, until desire fills their lives and finally devours them. (A 191)

The idea that humanity eventually ends up destroying all its bonds, connections and metaphysical frameworks, resulting in a meaningless individualism permeated with commercialized sexual desires and empty egotism, reminds of Nietzsche’s ideas about the death of God and the eventual overcoming of humanity. *Atomised* indeed ends with descriptions of a metaphysical revolution: Michel’s research in molecular biology forms the spark of a scientific program that makes it possible to clone people and thereby to overcome the human reproduction system. As described in the epilogue of the book, this metaphysical revolution is based on the idea that ‘mankind must disappear and give way to a new species which was asexual and immortal, a species which had outgrown individuality, separation and evolution’ (A 371). The only step forwards, in other words, is the abandonment of the human race

It is almost impossible to find descriptions of resonance in *Atomised*: human beings are merely atoms, disconnected and alienated from each other, unable to find meaning or connection, the novel suggests. Nevertheless, like Schopenhauer, Houellebecq describes how brief moments of happiness can be found in this dark social whole, mainly in the experience of love:

In the midst of nature’s barbarity, human beings sometimes (rarely) succeed in creating small oases warmed by love. Small, exclusive, enclosed spaces governed only by love and shared subjectivity. (A 103)

Bruno even describes families in a poem as ‘sparks of love in the pit of nausea’ (A 218). Nevertheless, like Schopenhauer’s writings, *Atomised* crushes the idea that truthful, long-lasting connections between people are possible.

CRITICAL CONCLUSION

19. Alienation and Resonance

19.1 Overview

The analyses discussed above all revolve around the notion of a disconnection between self and world. Implicitly or explicitly, their authors tie this notion to modernity and to its weakening of metaphysical and religious structures, which forces the subject to find autonomy and freedom in a world that does not provide the framework to do this. The modern subject, in other words, is thrown back onto itself and has become responsible for its own existence. Furthermore, many of the authors I have discussed argue that this phenomenon, to which Nietzsche refers as the 'death of God', transformed into modern capitalism or was even caused by the rise of capitalist structures. Whereas modern societies could have developed in such a way that they enable the subject to experience warmth in solidarity with others, thereby providing an answer – at least partly – to the question of how to find meaning in a post-metaphysical age, these authors show that modern capitalism actually affirmed the idea that the subject is responsible for its own well-being, and reduced it to a mere cog in a machine; to an atom in a nihilistic whole. This means that most of these authors therefore understand conditions of alienation and disconnection as part of a *historical process*, which suggests that the promises of modernity – freedom, autonomy, individuality – have not been lost and can be realized with the constitution of a better society. Alienation and disconnection, in other words, might be necessary conditions on the road towards resonance.

The first three authors that I have discussed – Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Camus – characterize alienation as the experience that the world has become silent, death-like, hostile or devoid of values and emptied of passion. They claim that the world does not correspond to the needs and desires of the self and therefore throws it back onto itself. Whereas Schopenhauer argues that this condition follows from the metaphysical essence of the world and of humanity, and even understands the subject as essentially alienated from its own body and other people, Nietzsche and Camus observe that it is caused by the death of overarching metaphysical systems and meaning-generating horizons. Schopenhauer therefore claims that the only way to overcome this situation is to completely deny everything that one is. Nietzsche and Camus, on the other hand, embrace the realm of the arts and the notions of passion and creation, of rebellion against this situation. For Nietzsche, this is symbolized by the phrase *Amor Fati*: the love of one's fate. And experiences of resonance are described by Camus in his reflections on Algeria, in which we find a longing for oneness with nature, with the earth and the stones; as well as in *The Plague* and *The Rebel*, in which feelings of solidarity and warmth play important roles. Nevertheless, even in the pitch-black writings of Schopenhauer we find references to the phenomenon of *Mitleid* and to the emancipating qualities of the arts as forms of connection or resonance that enable the subject to experience brief moments of peace.

In the second part of this paper, I have explored theories that approach experiences of alienation and resonance from a historical and, often, economic point of view. I began with an analysis of reflections on a movement between disconnection and oneness in the writings of Hegel. In 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', Hegel describes how the biblical stories of Abraham and Noah present us with symbolical interpretations of the origin of civilization. These stories revolve around an original and primitive oneness that is distorted once the subject develops a fear of nature and makes nature into its Other. Abraham's

willingness to sacrifice his son, and thereby to sacrifice love in favour of an abstract and external divine command, forms the embodiment of this state of alienation, in Hegel's view. Only by reconstituting oneness and togetherness, which Hegel finds in the Christian notion of 'fate' and in Jesus' emphasis on love, can humanity find peace and harmony again and develop an ethical stance that is not based on fear, hostility and separation, but instead on an experience that we might be able to define as one of resonance.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in turn, revolves around the attempt of the subject to connect itself to the objects that it seeks to grasp. It thereby goes through various stages during which it constantly collapses into itself, but eventually reaches self-consciousness, which results in the end of its journey: absolute knowledge. The subject now finds itself *in* the world, and has reached a resonating oneness in the realization that reality is reason, and that there is no distinction between the subject and its Other, both regarding the objects that it seeks to grasp and the subjects in and through whose recognition it finds itself. Hegel links the stages that spirit goes through in its attempt to appropriate its Other to actual historical epochs and events, which means that the dialectics between separation and connection, between alienation and resonance, gain a historical aura in his writings.

This historical aura becomes more concrete in Marx's theory. From Hegel's analysis of the lord and the bondsman, Marx takes the idea that the objects that the subject produces come to embody the essence of the subject, and furthermore that the relationship between these two alienates the bondsman from his product and therewith of his essence. Marx builds further upon this idea and argues in the *Early Manuscripts* that capitalism constitutes six different forms of alienation: from people, nature, labour, process of labour, consciousness and from corporeality. The opposite of this state of alienation is difficult to conceptualize within Marx's writings, but it could be understood as consisting of an existence in which the subject freely and voluntarily shapes the world according to its own ideas, and lives in a world it has itself created, in harmony with other subjects and the history of humanity.

In *Capital*, in turn, Marx focuses on the notion of 'reification', and argues that capitalism has turned relationships between human beings, between the self and nature and between the self and its body into relationships between things. This process robs human beings of their humanity, denies them their existence as individuals, and reduces them to a thing-like cog in a machine, he observes. I have shown that Lukács takes over this idea and argues that the commodified veil that covers the world under capitalism has become 'second nature' and appears as rational and necessary. Furthermore, Lukács observes that modern capitalism has permeated every dimension of experience, which makes it almost impossible to criticize the conditions under which we live. Looking for an understanding of 'resonance' in his texts, I have explored his ideas about art and, especially, the novel. Following the notion of 'transcendental homelessness', Lukács argues that novels have the power to completely absorb their readers. In this moment, readers experience resonating homeliness 'in' the text and find themselves *in* its characters. Lukács later rejected this romantic idea, however, in favour of his Marxist convictions.

It is more difficult, I have argued, to distil a notion of 'resonance' from Max Weber's writings, since he is mainly concerned with developing a sociological, critical analysis of modern capitalism than with a philosophical theory that tell us how societies *should* be organized. His analysis revolves around the Calvinistic notion of predestination, which resulted, Weber argues, in the idea that, since one does not know if one is chosen to be saved from damnation, one has to work as hard as possible and thereby show that one has faith in God. The ascetic values that, following this idea, characterize Protestantism, make

labour and the accumulation of wealth into a calling – an *ethos* – that, in turn, resulted in the form of capitalism that characterizes modernity and that goes hand in hand with a rationalization and bureaucratization of life. Weber describes the dutiful existence in this rationalized whole with the notions of an ‘iron cage’ and of ‘disenchantment’, suggesting that forms of playfulness, spontaneity, pleasure and of genuine warmth between people are repressed in favour of control, domination and labour. Especially his idea that this economic system eventually destroyed the religious horizons against which it came about, brings him close to Nietzsche’s ideas about how modern man has ‘wiped out’ its horizon. The closest we come in Weber’s writings to an understanding of resonance, I have argued, is his analysis of *charisma*; of an ‘enchantment’ of both subjects and objects that is irrational and emotional in nature, and in which the self finds itself drawn to an overpowering ‘aura’.

The ideas of Weber, together with those of Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Lukács and Freud, bring us to the first generation of *Frankfurter Schule* thinkers. I have shown that in the works of Benjamin, Adorno, Fromm and Marcuse, we find a radical critique of modern societies. All of these authors build further upon Marx and Lukács’ understanding of reification. Benjamin thereby mainly focuses on life in big cities and on masses and shopping malls, which create a *phantasmagoria* of pre-fabricated experiences, in his view. Adorno analyses the culture industry, Auschwitz, the nature of language and technology to arrive at a pitch-black picture of the status quo. Fromm, in turn, adopts a more psycho-analytical approach and argues that the cutting through of primary ties – which he connects to the evolution of humanity as a species, the origins of modernity, and the process of growing up – results in the human need to find reconciliation and to look for connection and rootedness. He therewith mainly targets fascism and capitalism as providing false forms of connection in which the subject does not reach true autonomy. Marcuse, in turn, develops an interpretation of Freud’s notion of the reality principle and argues that modern societies force the subject to incorporate norms that reduce it to a cog in a machine that only revolves around empty pleasure, money, status and the continuation of capitalism.

In the case of each, I have attempted to distil an understanding of ‘resonance’ from their texts. This was the most difficult in the case of Adorno: his extreme negativism makes it almost impossible to conceptualize a notion of warmth or an idea of how things *should* be. Nevertheless, I have attempted to show that Adorno’s works contain hints at ways to overcome the gap between subject and its other, which are mainly found in his discussion of the *addendum*. There, he points at experiences during which one opens oneself up towards objects, other people, nature or the world in general, and constitutes the possibility of being *surprised* by this world. Not only did I mention his notion of the ‘preponderance of the object’ in this context, I also discussed his analysis of *Mitleid* and of metaphysical experiences as breaching the gap between self and world and self and body, constituting a mimetic and negative dialectical relationship between subject and object.

Benjamin, I argued, comes the closest to describing experiences of resonance in his reflections on the shock value of certain forms of art, which might permeate the subject and force it to think about itself and its situation. Fromm and Marcuse, in turn, develop the most explicit understandings of resonance and oneness. Fromm explores the experience of love as a prime example of rootedness, Marcuse describes a Narcissistic sexuality in which one loves everything and everyone around oneself and therewith reaches true togetherness.

All of the authors, I concluded, emphasize that this oneness should not go together with a loss of autonomy or individuality. Furthermore, in Marcuse and especially Fromm's works, we find a connection between the first two parts of my analysis: they both notice that authors like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Goethe struggled with similar problems – fragmentation, rationalization, loss of meaning, the role of religion, individuality, aloneness, self-reflection, disenchantment of nature – as they do, even though these struggles are embedded in their own works in a Marxist critique of economic structures.

In the texts of Habermas and Honneth, I then argued, we find more positive approaches to modernization and social evolution. Both explore the norms that are already embedded in the ways in which we, according to the former, communicate with each other and, according to the latter, develop autonomous selves through processes of recognition. Since Habermas primarily distills a normatively binding type of rationality from communicative forms of action, it is difficult to understand his texts as providing us with ideas about experiences of resonance. The closest Habermas comes to conceptualizing this notion is in his analysis of the subject's embeddedness in the lifeworld and of the goal of communicative action: reaching intersubjective *understanding*. This is less difficult in the case of Honneth, since he develops an analysis of 'existential recognition', which refers to a form of contact between subjects that precedes all other types of recognition. It is this pre-cognitive warmth between people that I have associated with the idea of 'resonance'.

In the third part of this paper, I looked at four descriptions of either resonance or alienation that are more literary in nature and are aimed at describing the *experience* of life in modernity without, necessarily, embedding this experience in a theoretical framework. Thoreau, I have shown, sketches an existence of resonance with nature that is found in self-sufficiency and a turning away from the world of the social. With help of the more theoretical observations of Emerson, I argued that the experience of resonance that Thoreau describes follows from an interpretation of idealism, according to which the subject only truly experiences the world when it makes it one with its own consciousness, and thereby overcomes the gap between itself and its Other. This idea is coupled by both Emerson and Thoreau to an aversion of modern society and its emphasis on status, technology and uniformity.

In Sartre's *Nausea*, Beckett's *Endgame* and Houellebecq's *Atomised*, lastly, we find descriptions of a life of complete alienation from everything and everyone. Sartre's protagonist experiences disgust or nausea, which forces him to realize that there is only existence, that neither objects, the world or his own body care about the subject or have the power to provide it with sense or meaning. But whereas Sartre's protagonist arrives at the conclusion that this meaninglessness provides him with absolute freedom and responsibility, Beckett's *Endgame* paints an even bleaker picture of a grey world that is characterized as 'corpsed'. The protagonists of this play are almost completely indifferent to each other's and their own existence, are unable to constitute meaningful dialogues, and live a life that is devoid of meaning, sense or structure. This brings us to *Atomised*, in which themes like the culture industry and reification implicitly return. Houellebecq sketches modern societies as completely devoid of meaning, and as only revolving around the market and commercialized sexual encounters. The only way of overcoming this situation is through the process of cloning; of creating a new race that does not have to reproduce anymore and that has overcome humanity's life of desire and suffering, *Atomised* suggests. Unlike Beckett's *Endgame*, I have shown, Houellebecq's novel *does* contain references to an experience that could be characterized as 'resonant': the feeling of love.

19.2 Suggestions for Further Analysis

All of the discussed authors argue that the metaphysical, historical, economic, social or cultural whole in which they found themselves constitutes a gap between subject and world, body, other subjects, nature, the state, death, time and/or consciousness. Apart from Schopenhauer, they all claim that this gap is caused by a specific historical situation, whether it is the death of religion, the rise of capitalism, or the commercialization of emotions and desires.

It is clear that similar themes are discussed in the works of countless other philosophers, sociologists, cultural critics and authors. Important examples are Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), whose ideas, as we have seen, are mentioned by Georg Lukács, Max Weber and Erich Fromm. In a poem like Schiller's 'The Walk' ('Der Spaziergang'), for example, we find the following description of alienation from a nature that is experienced as devoid of human values, that shows us no moral direction or goal, and that awaits *human appropriation*. One of its verses goes as follows:

But where am I? The path is now hid, declivities rugged
 Bar, with their wide-yawning gulfs, progress before and behind.
 Now far behind me is left the gardens' and hedges' sure escort,
 Every trace of man's hand also remains far behind.
 Only the matter I see piled up, whence life has its issue,
 And the raw mass of basalt waits for a fashioning hand.
 Down through its channel of rock the torrent roaringly rushes,
 Angrily forcing a path under the roots of the trees.
 All is here wild and fearfully desolate. Naught but the eagle
 Hangs in the lone realms of air, knitting the world to the clouds. (Schiller 2007: 252)

Schiller's ideas about the *Spieltrieb* are relevant as well in this context. He understood this 'play drive', influenced by Kant's aesthetic theory, as mediating between the sensuous drive and the formal drive, transcending the dualism between body and mind, sensuality and rationality. As mentioned above, this idea influenced Marcuse's understanding of the good society, as developed *Eros and Civilization*:

[T]he aesthetic reconciliation implies strengthening sensuousness as against the tyranny of reason and, ultimately, even calls for the liberation of sensuousness from the repressive domination of reason. Indeed when, on the basis of Kant's theory, the aesthetic function becomes the central theme of the philosophy of culture, it is used to demonstrate the principles of a non-repressive civilization, in which reason is sensuous and sensuousness rational. Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), written largely under the impact of the *Critique of Judgement*, aim at a remaking of civilization by virtue of the liberating force of the aesthetic function: it is envisaged as containing the possibility of a new reality principle. (EC 179-80)

When this *Spieltrieb* is given freedom, an experience Schiller associates with beauty and the realm of aesthetics, a happy form of existence can be constituted, Marcuse argues with Schiller, devoid of alienation or suffering

Georg Simmel (1858-1918) could be discussed in this context as well. In *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), Simmel argues that the particular and individual characteristics of persons disappear once they find themselves in a relationship that merely revolves around exchange. Money, in other words, *depersonalizes*

existence. Furthermore, in *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) Simmel discusses how life in big cities has a distorting influence on the individual, since the social evolution of modern societies, sparked by the division of labour and individualism, *on the one hand* resulted in individual freedom but, *on the other hand*, eradicated personal qualities in favor of the anonymity of masses and crowds. The individual, in Simmel's view, struggles not to disappear into this crowd and tries to preserve that which makes him into an individual. He opens the latter text as follows, referring to Nietzsche:

The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life. This antagonism represents the most modern form of the conflict which primitive man must carry on with nature for his own bodily existence. The eighteenth century may have called for liberation from all the ties which grew up historically in politics, in religion, in morality and in economics in order to permit the original natural virtue of man, which is equal in everyone, to develop without inhibition; the nineteenth century may have sought to promote, in addition to man's freedom, his individuality (which is connected with the division of labour) and his achievements which make him unique and indispensable but which at the same time make him so much the more dependent on the complementary activity of others; Nietzsche may have seen the relentless struggle of the individual as the prerequisite for his full development, while Socialism found the same thing in the suppression of all competition-but in each of these the same fundamental motive was at work, namely the resistance of the individual to being levelled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism. (Simmel 1971: 324)

Simmel argues that life in big cities forces the subject to adopt a certain coldness towards others, 'an antipathy which ... brings about the sort of distancing and deflection without which this type of life could not be carried on at all' (Simmel 1971: 331). Again, these observations come close to Benjamin's analyses in his writings on Baudelaire, but also to those of Adorno and Fromm.

Another author that I briefly want to mention in this context is Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966), who had an important influence on Adorno and Benjamin. Kracauer analyzed the workings of memory and argued that modern technology, especially photography, influenced the ability to form deep and meaningful memories of events. It is clear that Benjamin's differentiation between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* was deeply influenced by this theory.

Lastly, we could think of Aldous Huxley's 1931 novel *Brave New World*, which I mentioned above in the contexts of Kierkegaard, Marcuse and Houellebecq. Both Marcuse and Houellebecq understand Huxley as presenting us with a radical vision of what modern societies have become: under Western capitalism, they argue with Huxley, repression and manipulation are not based on force or on brutal totalitarian control, but instead on the creation of empty forms of pleasure and endless forms of distraction. This results in a society in which critique, profundity or truthful contact between people have disappeared – a 'one dimensional' society. Instead of experiencing this corrosion of meaningful structures as painful, furthermore, the novel's characters perceive this process as pleasurable and *desire* it.

19.3 Conclusion

Since the characterizations that the above-discussed authors develop of the *opposite* of experiences of disconnection and alienation are so diverse, it is difficult to arrive at a unifying notion of what I have called 'resonance'. Nevertheless, certain general themes can be observed. Almost all authors, for example, affirm the notions of *activity*, *creativity* and most of all *spontaneity*, and claim that the subject needs to actively shape and create the world around itself – to *appropriate* its Other – in order to find oneness.

Whereas one would perhaps associate 'resonance' with a passive subject that is 'overcome' by an experience in which it loses its autonomy and becomes part of a bigger whole, they all claim that the opposite of alienation should be understood as combining *embeddedness* with *autonomy*; *connection* with *individuality*; and *rootedness* with *spontaneity*. Perhaps the best illustration of this idea is found in Erich Fromm's argument that 'bad' forms of connection are those in which the individual loses its autonomy and becomes part of a larger whole – a process he associates with fascism and capitalism.

Within the context of the writings of those belonging to the first generation of the *Frankfurter Schule*, this 'spontaneity' should not be understood, in an ideological or romantic fashion, as a 'pure' force or drive that remains *unaffected* by social structures. Furthermore, they argue that it is not completely *opposed* to society either. As Marcuse's analysis of repressed libidinal energy illustrates, this is only the case under repressive and totalitarian social and economic conditions. Instead, 'spontaneity' refers in their texts to experiences of activity and playfulness that are shaped by social forms of thought that, *at the same time*, display openness towards the individual nature of each person's sensuality and creativity. Spontaneity, in other words, forms part of a dialectical relationship between self and body and between self and society, in which both poles influence and define each other without collapsing into their Other. Again, the notion of 'play' is important in this context: we have seen that Marcuse praises Schiller's understanding of the *Spieltrieb*, and in *Minima Moralia* Adorno writes that when children play games, they unconsciously 'rehearse the right life' by overcoming second nature and siding 'with use-value rather than exchange value' (MM 228). Play, in this context, refers to a way of relating to the world that is open, energetic and experimental, but that is at the same time not unstructured or devoid of individuality, thought, consciousness or social norms.

Most of the authors that I have discussed link this emphasis on spontaneity to a critique of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: they argue that the gap between subject and object, mind and body, reason and sensuality that, *in their views*, forms the core of Kant's thought, makes it impossible to think of a spontaneous subject that has the ability to act freely. More generally, in their works Kant's theory embodies the *modern* notion of *rational reflection*, which almost all of the discussed authors understand as inherent to the constitution of an alienating distance between self and world, mind and body. Furthermore, they interpret Kant's analysis of rational self-constitution and the self's submission to the categorical imperative as referring to a *social* process, during which the self incorporates social and cultural norms that repress an important dimension of its existence as an embodied subject. Herewith, they approach Kant's ideas about the rational self from a Freudian perspective and link it to processes of (social) domination, separation and self-control – Marcuse's definition of the 'performance principle' forms the most concrete example of this reading. We have seen that this interpretation of Kant also returns, in some form or another, in the writings of Schopenhauer, Hegel, Nietzsche, Lukács, Weber, Benjamin, Adorno, Fromm and Honneth.

In this sense, these authors do oppose spontaneity and what we can characterize as 'resonance' to a form of autonomy, namely 'autonomy' as defined by Kant. However, this does not mean that the notion of autonomy *itself* disappears from the notion of 'resonance', *only* that we have to arrive at a different definition of 'autonomy', and to understand it as part of a dialectical, social and intersubjective process instead of as linked to a rational, completely individualistic and atomistic process, as it is in Kant's philosophy. In this sense, these authors follow Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Kant's understanding of freedom and autonomy merely forms a step towards a richer, intersubjective and social interpretation of what freedom and autonomy entail.

This rejection of a certain kind of autonomy in favour of another conception of this notion returns as well in the ideas about rationality that these authors develop. The faculty of reason, several of the authors who emphasize the notion of spontaneity therefore argue, should not aim for suppression or domination, but should be entwined with bodily feelings and emotions, and become part of the self as an embodied subject, which would enable this subject to live in harmony with other people and nature. Furthermore, it should be used, in their views, to better the living conditions of oneself and others, and aimed at the constitution of a society in which no one suffers and the subject is enabled to develop itself freely and creatively. Whereas Fromm and Marcuse explicitly refer to a state of existence in which reason becomes 'sensitized' and part of one's being as a *whole*, Adorno is more careful, refuses to conceptualize the good life and emphasizes the critical power of rationality. His thought only contains hints to rather ungraspable feelings or 'sparks', like the *addendum*, and his negativity prohibits him from going as far as Fromm and Marcuse. The latter authors, after all, sketch an existence in which reason and body, society and self form *one fluent whole*, in which, it could be argued from an Adornian point of view, the rational self loses its critical capabilities. Adorno's emphasis on self-reflection and on the impossibility of the concept to grasp its Other, in other words, makes his analyses of alienation and separation more ambivalent in nature. This is also why he is critical of Hegel's understanding of dialectics and argues that in Hegel's texts, the subject eventually comes to usurp and overshadow the object. This critical approach to Hegel is not present in Fromm and Marcuse's writings.

In line of this latter observation, it is important to notice that many of the authors that I have discussed, mainly following Hegel and Freud, argue that experiences of alienation and separation are necessary for the formation of an individual self, which implies that the freedom that comes with modernity is necessarily based on disconnection, fragmentation and alienation. Hegel, for example, observes that the bondsman develops self-consciousness when he is separated from the products of his work and when his bodily activity is owned by the lord. Weber, in turn, describes how processes of fragmentation have resulted in individuation. Fromm claims that the cutting through of primary ties between the subject and the world around us forms a necessary step towards autonomous self-constitution, and in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno links the constitution of the modern, reflecting subject to a separation of self from body and from nature.

This constructive aspect of alienation and disconnection is also stressed in the context of social critique. Several of the above-discussed authors affirm the idea that especially the arts are able to force the subject to reflect on its situation by constituting an alienating distance between artwork and spectator or reader. We can think in this context of Bertold Brecht's notion of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, which is praised as follows by Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man*

The total character of the established society confronts the playwright with the question of whether it is still possible to “represent the contemporary world in the theatre” – that is, represent it in such a manner that the spectator recognizes the truth which the play is to convey. Brecht answers that the contemporary world can be thus represented only if it is represented as subject to change – as the state of negativity which is to be negated. This is doctrine which has to be learned, comprehended, and acted upon; but the theatre is and ought to be entertainment, pleasure. However, entertainment and learning are not opposites; entertainment may be the most effective mode of learning. To teach what the contemporary world really is behind the ideological and material veil, and how it can be changed, the theatre must break the spectator’s identification with the events on the stage. Not empathy and feeling, but distance and reflection are required. The “estrangement-effect” (*Verfremdungseffekt*) is to produce this dissociation in which the world can be recognized as what it is. “The things of everyday life are lifted out of the realm of the self-evident...” “That which is ‘natural’ must assume the features of the extraordinary. Only in this manner can the laws of cause and effect reveal themselves.” (ODM 64-5)

Another example is Adorno’s praise of the works of Kafka and Beckett and of the musical compositions of Arnold Schönberg: modernist literature and music force the reader or listener to think about his own situation, since these art forms cannot be embedded in the regular and, according to Adorno, *wrong* context in which the subject is constituted. The reader or listener is thereby confronted with the distorting nature of the world in which it lives, precisely because these artworks present the subject with an even more distorted and manipulated world. Experiences of alienation and disconnection, in other words, might have a positive influence on the subject.

Nevertheless, this latter positive understanding of alienation is only affirmed by these authors within the context of a negative understanding of social and economic conditions. Furthermore, the idea that alienation results in autonomous self-constitution leads in Hegel, Fromm and most of the other authors I have discussed *eventually* to the idea that the subject desires, needs and finds or *can find* connection and reconciliation again.

The notion of resonance that can be distilled from the writings of most of the authors that I have discussed, I want to conclude, should therefore not be based on the idea of a *passive* subject that is *overcome* by feelings or by a larger whole. Even though Nietzsche, Camus, the Transcendentalists and even Adorno, in places, come close to such an idea, they also affirm notions of self-sufficiency, autonomy, self-reflection and free self-constitution. An illustration of this negative understanding of passivity is found in Marx’s *Early Manuscripts*, which contain the following passage on the nature of music:

Just as music alone awakens in man the sense of music, and just as beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear – is no object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers and can therefore only be so for me as my essential power is present for itself as a subjective capacity, because the sense of an object for me goes only so far as *my* senses go (has only sense for a sense corresponding to that object) – for this reason the *senses* of the social man are *other* senses than those of the non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man’s essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form – in short, *senses* capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of *man*) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five

senses but also the so-called mental senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.) – in a word, *human* sense, the humanness of the senses – comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized* nature. The *forming* of the five senses is a labor of *humanized* labor. The forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present. (EM 108)

It is not enough to just analyse our biology and the physical qualities of our five senses in order to understand the ways in which we perceive the world, Marx argues. Instead, by shaping objects around itself and going through different stages, Marx observes in a Hegelian fashion, the senses become 'humanized' and we learn how to experience and appropriate the world around us. Even the beauty of music, in other words, which is often approached as completely enveloping the subject and embedding it in a larger whole in which it loses its autonomy, is understood here as the product of a *historical* consciousness that has *learned* how to *actively* appropriate this art form and therefore as constituted by a *process* that is *dialectical* in nature. It is precisely this emphasis on spontaneity and activity, I want to conclude, that implies that resonance is only truly experienced if it goes hand in hand with autonomy, individuality and active self-development; if a *dialectical* relationship is constituted between subject and object and neither of these poles collapses into its Other.

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ABBREVIATIONS

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