

From Modernism to Contemporaneity: On the Magic of the False Name

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Abstract: The article argues that the notion of contemporaneity suits our time better than the notions of postmodernity, or modernism. The former desire for change, progress, and development has today become a mere instinct to maintain, in order to prevent the cataclysm before futuristic forecasts. The key turning point from modernity to contemporaneity is seen in relation to time. With the time horizon narrowed down to the present, we are witnessing a global rise in hedonism and consumerism. The author analyzes the phenomenon of leveling as one of the crucial signatures of time, following the path in which the neutralization, starting as a promise of freedom and a just community (Husserl) becomes a threat to the freedom itself and a mechanism of enslavement of the modern man (Adorno).

Keywords: modernism; postmodern; contemporaneity; Edmund Husserl; Theodor Adorno

This article argues that the concept of contemporaneity is a far more appropriate denotation of our age than modernism or postmodernism. The *terminus technicus* of literary and art theories modernism represents only a slight variation of modernity. The impression is that this label is insufficient, almost arbitrary because it indirectly suggests acceleration, breakthrough, and innovation, and all these definitions are significantly present in the register of modernity: “Modern is understood as something new and valuable, something significantly different in content and clearly

separated from what is old, less valuable, or simply obsolete.”¹ On a conceptual level, modernism is not in a position to signal complex relations to early modernity, but it is also too narrow to integrate the ideological richness of the early avant-garde movements. However, we may sketch it, the relation between modernity and modernism insufficiently points out the differences, not to mention the epochal changes of subjectivity, time, and history, according to which our time no longer follows the fundamental ideals of modernity.

As imperfect as it may be, the notion of contemporaneity more fully expresses the temporal, historical, anthropological, and ontological deviations from modernity. In the notion of contemporaneity, we will try to emphasize heterogeneous moments, epochal diversity that does not fit into the patterns of the overcoming, prevailing, or transformation, so characteristic of modernity. Even though it is often mentioned in literature that these are not temporal, but qualitative concepts, we argue that there is an unbridgeable difference in attitude towards time. The keywords of the two epochs are therefore significantly different. On the one hand, modernity is characterized by rationality, development, critique, and overcoming, while contemporaneity favors an expanded mind, catastrophe prevention, post-critical time, and leveling. Instead of a utopia of progress, there is a dystopia on the scene of preventing a cataclysm.

Unlike Wolfgang Iser, we do not consider this to be a confrontation of the “monolithic character of modernity” with the democratized, post-totalitarian forms of “pluralism of rationality” as the most notorious characteristic of postmodernism.² Modern is by no means monolithic, but it rather represents a series of intertwined ideological and historical periods. Rationalism, empiricism, enlightenment, idealism, romanticism, are all modern movements among which it is very difficult to find

¹ Slobodan Žunjić, *Modernost i filozofija. Razmatranja o duhu vremena sa razmeđa vekova* (Beograd: Plato, 2009), 109.

² Wolfgang Iser, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 7.

a single common denominator. The pluralism of the various characters of rationality is modern par excellence. Nevertheless, we agree with Welsch that the “magic of the false name” has been at work for a long time. The miracle of the wrong name is most often realized as an overlapping of heterogeneous, mutually incomparable ideas and life attitudes. Contemporaneity, above all, is characterized by that intertwining, thanks to which, at the same time, in the same place, mutual strangers live within each person. Starting from the imperative of rationality of Descartes in the 17th century, the Enlightenment ideal of freedom and autonomy, the romantic dream of a complete man living “to the fullest,” the early avant-garde call to open to the primitive, childish, and “alternative” rational, to the latest expectations of healthy eating and unpolluted environments – they all live together within the same people.

Perhaps one of the first wizards of this idea should be recognized in Charles Baudelaire, who sees modernity as a combination of the transient and the eternal. In his famous essay “Painter of the modern Life,” the French poet formulates the secret of modernity in an unusual intertwining of the temporal and the timeless. The key to modernity is in the short-lived and the unpredictable, viewed relative to eternity rather than time: “transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable.”³

Many misunderstandings have arisen with this unheard-of “Platonization” of modernity. As strange as it may sound, amid the modern paradigm, Baudelaire intervenes through the classical ancient opposite. The combination of the former ideal of eternity and the “ephemeral experience of life” was only meaningful in the wake of reevaluation, in which contingency frees itself from the stigma of lower reality and thus creates the conditions for perpetuating the transient. Plato’s opposite of the eternal, as true and more valuable, and transitional, as second-class and less valuable, practically remains in force, but the

³ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, trans. P. Charvet (London: Penguin, 2010), 31.

signs change: ephemeral and transient are recognized as lasting attention and indefinite validity. The eternal is no longer only eternal, but the contingent also receives a residence permit in the eternal. Baudelaire's "new" modernity, that is, modernism, was conceived together by adapting Plato to modern circumstances. Eternity turned out to be the first victim: once it received the symptoms of the contingent and ephemeral, it agreed to lose its former ontological status. Paradoxically, thanks to Plato's opposition, one of the most precious idealistic notions from Plato to Hegel was deconstructed.

"Sobering up" from eternity, but also disappointment in the ideology of progress are the first features of contemporaneity. As on an ontological seesaw, there has been a disturbance of the former balance. The culprit is the downfall of the future and a dramatic change in its shift of values. The utopian energy of a "better tomorrow" has given way to cataclysmic predictions of impending doom. Once a promise of more dignified and better humanity, it has become a signature of endangered life, either in overpopulation, or scarce resources, ecological endangerment, climate change, or nuclear catastrophe. Ontological and existential "fall" of the future – it prepared a gift for other time dimensions. After the ideology of future progress was exposed as an unfounded construction, the price of the present necessarily rose, but confidence in the once despised past also grew. Deprived of the horizon of the future, the modern man has put all the money on the present. The impression is that the narrowing of the temporal horizon from a synergy of the three-time dimensions to now and here could be considered responsible for modern consumerism and worldwide hedonism. The scale of spending aimed at boosting current enjoyment today is incomparable in its scale to any period of civilization: "The key word of this century is not a decision, but an experience [...] The world is a menu, which means order and do not despair."⁴

On the other hand, the current cultural heritage turns out to be too narrow for the needs of the time. To fill that gap in

⁴ Peter Sloterdijk, *Falls Europa erwacht. Gedanken zum Programm einer Weltmacht am Ende des Zeitalters am Ende des Zeitalters ihrer politischen Absence* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 20.

time, all we have to do is turn to the legacy of the past. The one who no longer believes that the future itself will be better than the present won't be inclined to nurture the view of the past as a dark specter. The one who no longer sees the support of their development in the vision of a promising future can no longer seek crucial points of reference even in the respect for the wholeness of the past. Deprived of the criteria found in the present, subjectivity remains without orientation in the shoreless sea of the past. The support, Nietzsche constantly emphasizes, is no longer in the epochal totality of a tradition, but in the chosen past. In its motives, in a careful selection of steps that we no longer intend to copy and imitate. The present and the past thus enter a complex relationship, without fixed touches and supports. Undoubtedly, the interaction takes place in the present, so possible effects should be expected in it.

The logic of modernity sees the genesis of humanity in progress, which comes about through overcoming and intellectual triumph over delusions, dogmas, and backwardness. On the contrary, contemporary genealogy reckons with the total negation of the subject, which is necessary to establish the civilization of subjectivity in general.⁵ At a time when freedom is above all legitimized by confronting the concrete forms of non-freedom, subjectivity also sees the possibility of its own emancipation only after rejecting its inauthentic forms. Hence, it is not surprising that for Marx's modernity, alienation was interpreted only as an expression of barbaric economic circumstances, and for the contemporaneity of Heidegger and Camus, it represents a quasi "natural state," an elementary confirmation of the *conditio humana*. The naturalness of human innocence is also uncorrupted, as corruption, according to modern epistemology, occurs only through unnatural, artificial, "inhuman" relations created by the economic or political order, while contemporaneity sees the man as homeless, "thrown away," as a kind of stranger in his own house.

⁵ Gerhard Gamm, *Der unbestimmte Mensch. Zur medialen konstruktion der Subjektivität* (Berlin and Wien: Philo, 2004), 227.

I. Truth regime change

The categorical peculiarities of the notion of contemporaneity are usually recognized in the transformation of language, subject, and reality. The unavoidable result of these changes has also brought an epochal modification of the truth regime. More specifically, in modern times there has been a dramatic abandonment of the traditional constellation, according to which truth meant agreement, correspondence, non-contradiction. It is in truth that we can find one of the borderlines between the modern and the contemporary. Even truth no longer rests in the harmony of concepts and reality, words and things, *les mots et les choses*. There is no harmony between them, and it truly rests on gestures of revealing and openly showing what was originally hidden. In short, according to Kierkegaard, “direct” philosophizing is not possible, because “the method must become indirect.”⁶ The character of the transformation of the modern canon is twofold in its nature. On the one hand, it is characterized by a drastic change in the very mechanism of criticism, according to which negation has lost its creative power. In short, to deny no longer meant to change. It is as if the denied has become resistant to the pressure of negation. Instead of negation, Karl Marx opts for the critical capacities of denunciation, the revolutionary method first affirmed by Jean-Paul Marat. The old term rooted in espionage suggests that the veil should be removed from people, actions, and things. They should be demystified, their true faces should be shown by removing the false, artificial, untrue ones. Denunciation is no longer a shameful business, but the highest act of the search for truth. Consequently, the most important task of the indirect method becomes directly related to denunciation:

Criticism itself needs no further self-clarification regarding this object, for criticism already understands it. Criticism is no longer an end in itself but now

⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View from my Work as an Author*, Kierkegaard’s Writings XXII, trans. H. Hong, and E. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 52.

simply a means. Indignation is its essential pathos, denunciation its principal task.⁷

The contemporary thinker has only one task – no less and no more than to offer an alternative to their time, to sketch the contours of humanity that are yet to emerge. They are guided by the initial hypothesis that the insight into modernity is blocked in advance by those who have successfully adapted and fit into the current framework. Those who are blind to contemporaneity are precisely those who consider themselves to be closest to it and the authentic representatives of the contemporary world should be recognized in them. To that extent, the attitude of contemporaneity implies a kind of balance, even a reconciliation of the oldest and the newest. Hence, contemporaneity manages not to succumb to the dictates of the latest, fashionable, “daily fashion.” A contemporary can be in love with their time only after they have gotten rid of the clinch with it. The origin of the conflict, however, has nothing to do with forced relocation, much less with the imposition of anachronisms. The contemporary aims to meet their time by focusing on shortcomings, fighting against shortcomings, spreading a revolt around themselves against the “darkness of time.” To them, the horizon of the present does not satisfy cultural needs, so paradoxically, they need a library more than ever before, at a time when it is being visited less and less. If “something is rotten” in the present, then the reasons should be sought in the “fall in time,” in the scattered indulgence of the moment, in isolation from communication with the past, which alone can fill the scarce options of cultural modernity.⁸

Giorgio Agamben confirms and continues the Nietzschean guiding thread when he denies the connection between the effort to be contemporary and the perception of contempora-

⁷ Karl Marx, “A Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” in Karl Marx, *Early Political Writings*, eds. J. O’Malley, and R. A. Davis, 1-27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59.

⁸ Manfred Fuhrmann, *Der europäische Bildungskanon des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2000), 33.

neity. A contemporary is the one who manages to assess and understand their time only when they move away from it to a satisfactory distance. Therefore, to be contemporary, contrary to the suggestion of the word, actually means to be at a distance from time, far enough away from it to be understood. Simultaneously, the starting points of understanding are not directed towards the biggest, but towards the controversial, problematic, towards the “dark” sides, and what is most problematic in time:

A contemporary is one who perceives the darkness of his time as something that concerns him or her, and doesn't stop questioning it, something that addresses him or her directly and personally more than any light.⁹

II. Conservative spirit of technique

Paradoxically, contemporaneity above all loves what appears for the first time, what suddenly emerges, what arises without ever being seen or experienced before. However, the same contemporaneity also nurtures the spirit of technology that prevents any step forward, confirming in contrast to the new one that is rounded, stabilized, established, and defined. Far from modern sensibility is the idea that not in spite of technology, but thanks to it, what is already defined and determined acquires an incomparable advantage over everything that arises.¹⁰ The core of the technique is extremely rigid and conservative, not pro-modernization and subversive.

Contemporaneity is inevitably ready to destroy what it loves the most as soon as it appears. The spirit of contemporaneity extinguishes and burns everything new and fresh that is revealed in it. Much more decisively than Heidegger, and with an incomparably more

⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è il contemporaneo e altri scritti* (Milano: Nottetempo, 2010), 39.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II Unzeitgemässer Betrachtung*, Gesamtausgabe Band 46, ed. H.-J. Friedrich (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 78.

pronounced political point, Nietzsche warns of the colorless repetitiveness of the technical world, because he recognizes in it the threat of lack of freedom, and thus a valuable incentive to win future freedom. Finally, if we agree with Heidegger, the technique will act as the embodiment of the monstrosity of modern rationalism. This unusual offshoot of the weird way of thinking will surrender itself to beings, but in turn, will neglect the being. Instead of devoting oneself to the ontological difference between beings and being, the thought will exhaust itself in mastering and ruling over the objects of thought.

It is as if contemporaneity does not tolerate anything that fails to offer excitement, that does not move, that does not offer either laughter, or upset, or wit, or verbal eccentricity. No matter how much they are “operated” by admiration, the contemporary subject of empty temporality knows how to react to a stimulus, they know how to delight. Moments of delight are especially appreciated by the contemporary subject because they serve as a testimony to them that they have escaped the rule of nihilism. The pursuit of personal fulfillment has become more important than anything else, and it has become completely irrelevant whether it is sought through the most banal forms of hedonism or impressive examples of work ethic: “Romantic models of fulfillment can contribute to the self-justification of this civilization.”¹¹

Nihilism is not just one of the topics of the philosophy of reevaluation, this phenomenon is crucial for the insight into the civilizational stumble of European subjectivity. Nihilism is a historical phenomenon, a creation of time. It is unique in that it creates “empty” time. Where it triumphs, nihilism creates an unhappy awareness of time. Unhappy consciousness emerges because the subject feels their own split is, above all, characterized by an intimate distance from themselves.

Unhappy is the consciousness which lacks itself. Self-awareness, the immediate sense of self is neither acceptable nor bearable to them, while the notion of self-fulfillment seems

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 458.

unattainable and elusive. This is why, in contemporary times, we encounter nihilism more frequently than we realize. The secret of contemporary insecurity is manifested in the hesitation between the tendency towards perpetuation and the opposite renewal of contact with what is born and disappears, what is transient and fleeting. Moreover, one could speak of the originality of contemporary perpetuations in the transitory. When we have them in mind, the inconsistency of the subject with themselves becomes clear, as the first feature of contemporaneity. Max Stirner's insight is only the first in a rich series: "I always see my Self above myself and outside myself, so I can never really come to myself."¹²

III. Being under neutralization's spell

In *neutralization*, we recognize the keyword of contemporariness, the follower of the concept of negation, which marked the idealistic philosophy of the early 19th century. The concept of negation is the product of the world that still believed in the creative power of ideas. A world that perceived the movement of reality as a phenomenon inevitably leading towards self-improvement. The positivity of the negative is implied in the powers of rising towards the higher through deflation, cancelling, and the critical attacks of the lower. Such a concept of positivity was seriously questioned by the nihilist provocations, but also with the reality of the latter historical experience. They grew on the denial of all possible transcendental ideals, including the ideology of progress. Existing simply no longer means being established through the spirit. Moreover, the sheer reality of the ideas has been denied proving that they are desperately lacking embodiment (*Leibhaftigkeit*).¹³ The world whose foundations are no longer founded on reliable ideas becomes radically foreign. One no longer feels at

¹² Anselm Ruest, ed., *Stirnerbreviar. Die Stärke des Einsamen. Max Stirner's Individualismus und Egoismus mit seinen eigenen Worten wiedergegeben* (Berlin: Seemann Nachf., 1906), 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 93.

home with it. Together, the Dadaistic and Heidegger's "existential" of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) remarkably reflects such a constellation, from which the concept of neutrality branches into three different sides.

Husserl's concept of neutralization is positively marked, as it signifies the capacity of the subject not to submit to the direct contact with their everyday surroundings. As a disinterested spectator, the phenomenologist continuously experiences the adventure of the beginning, and it is enabled through the *modification of neutralization*. With the intent of reaching things themselves, phenomenology wishes to restore the unity and brilliance in our mediated relationship with reality. Neutralization helps it in that by suspending the validity we have of it. It's not about imagining that there is no reality in front and around us. It's about a suspension of everything that reality means for us, how we measure it and what meaning it has for us. It would appear that the crucial thing for that suspension is the inclusion of the heritage that, for the modern man, most commonly takes a form of a burden, unwanted load whose weight he would most gladly get rid of. The existing, the mere positivity, is coloured in striking dark colours, in a manner unheard of until then. Do we need a better illustration than Levinas' concept of *il y a*, or Sartre's *être en soi*?

This is why the concept of neutralization in Husserl's philosophy has a direct relationship with the concept of freedom. *A human world which does not have the possibility of neutralization could be likened exclusively to the world of a priori inhibition and looming non-freedom.* The difference between *freedom from* and *freedom for* turns out to be insufficient, at least when talking about their mutual cancellation. Formally speaking, neutralization is undoubtedly expressed as *freedom from*, asking independence from the existing, freedom from others, but only to enable a different, truer sense of connection, emancipated, devoted, independent, and mature till the end. Quite an appropriate version of *freedom for*.

Unlike negation, neutralization is unable to "fix" reality and raise it to its higher form. Reality by itself does not have the power of affirmation through negation. It is no longer con-

ceived on the principles of being able to overcome yourself. Still, where the world is not recognized as a friendly and hospitable place, but as the source of human corruption, the possibility of transcendence inevitably appears quite appealing. Transcendence leads us beyond the corrupt interlacing with all that we find in our immediate vicinity. The human world whose products are not the modifications of the mind, but instances of subjugation and defacement, does not deserve anything better than distance, break, or retreat. Thanks to neutralization, contemporary subjectivity presents itself as a distant individuality, which will, according to Marinetti's predictions, take the form of *magnificent anarchy* sometime in the future, while with Husserl's will remain the form of a promise of a *reasonable community founded on a newly established rationality*.

Of course, the interpretation which places neutralization before negation is not one you could consider to be a prime, usual or mainstream strategy of thinking about contemporaneity. This idea could be confronted with the fact that the concept of negation has a larger presence in contemporary philosophy, and that the concept of neutralization is quite marginal, and it does not even occupy the front seat in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. In addition to this, surely the most significant examples would be those of Sartre and Adorno, who made negation one of the most operational concepts, written in the titles of their most important works. Still, when we analyze their concepts more closely, we will note that they are not talking about 19th-century negation. For example, in Sartre's case, we can identify an excellent translation of Husserl's neutralization, in the sense of its transfer from the register of philosophy of the consciousness to the registry of practical philosophy. During this process of translation, the key role was played, understandably, by Fichte's concepts of *positing* (Setzung):

As for negation, it testifies to the capacity of the mind to de-pose what actually is, or what it has itself

judged ‘to be the case,’ in order to posit instead what is not (the possible, the future, the desirable).¹⁴

To sum it up: the spirit is positing something, that is, neutralizing the value of the existing to “posit” the absent and possible? It is hard to shake the feeling that Husserl’s *neutralization* with Sartre becomes an *engaged negation*.

Heidegger’s concept of neutralization takes us to the dynamic face of the everyday. More precisely, it is formed on the premise of the exploration of the functioning of contemporary intersubjectivity. Unlike Husserl’s concept of neutralization, which explicitly is of transcendental origin, Heidegger’s witnesses the mundane, trivial, everyday plain of the interhuman. Entwined with the present desire for the new (Neugier), neutralization shows the dark side of that desire. The will for the new, different, original, and authentic in the modern context is not governed by the insatiable need to search for a true breakthrough, but, on the contrary, led by the desire to level it. When talking about leveling, we turn our attention to the process of likening to the known, average, used, and already seen. It is unusual how in the contemporary world, the newest of the new expressly becomes old, outdated, and uninteresting.

In other words, the forced nearing of the distant, the averaging of the above average, the leveling of the extraordinary, mark what Heidegger called neutralization. Unlike the Serbian words *radoznanost* and *znatiželja* (curiosity and inquisitiveness, the construct of both words implies desire for knowledge – rado (gladly) + znanje (knowledge) and želja (desire) za znanjem (for knowledge), which are almost interchangeable, as they name the need/desire for knowledge, or knowing, Heidegger’s *Neugier* has nothing to do with knowledge. It looks as if it has information in its focus, including the larger spectrum that follows the actual information era. Neugier gives a name to the infinite modern appetite for the new. It is above all characterized by

¹⁴ Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox, and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 24.

casualness and absentmindedness, the impossibility to find refuge in anything. In the end, Heidegger confirms that Jacobi's criticism of contemporary nihilism has hit the bullseye:

The tendency to enjoy one's own existence is an absurdity, and in truth, a terrifying absurdity. The [human] existence which is not the sign of a transcendence is empty and cannot inspire anything else but disgust.¹⁵

The consequence is the lack of focus, absence of a firm idea and ideological structure. Phenomenologically speaking, the intentionality deprived of intention, mere desire deprived of the object of desire. *Modus vivendi* of desire for the new is a frivolity. To it, it is really all the same, everything is good enough, it does not even consider a permanent relationship with anything. The end result is a current business, unlimited diligence without a purpose or goal. As if Heidegger long before others anticipated the ideas of ontology and anthropology of the contemporary world of information technologies and through that concept marked the mental profile of the majority of users of social networks. It is above all defined by pleasant anxiety, lack of attention which constantly wanders in search for fulfilment but does not find it anywhere. The entertainment in forgetfulness, pleasantness in the pointless submission to indifferent contents, the passion of losing oneself in mindlessness, are the crucial existential peculiarities of the contemporariness. They have not been, however, recognized only by the experts of the informational era, but the first theoreticians of the cinema, dance halls, "light palaces" of the contemporary spectacles. Krakauer, Benjamin, and Heidegger were the first to describe the phenomena of *dispersedness* (*Zerstreuung*), which has, in the past 100 years, only become more developed, differentiated, and widespread.

¹⁵ Patric Cerutti, "Le n'ai fondé ma cause sur rien?: nihilisme et subjectivité de Jacobi à Stirner," in *Le configurations du nihilisme*, eds. M. Crépon, and M. de Launay, 11-28 (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 17.

Phenomenologically presented, *dispersedness* could be described as a desertion of immanence without transcendence. The exodus from the self which comes in touch with nothing, the escape from the inner with no permanent refuge, the experience of nothingness which does not bring discomfort, but an appealing illusion of pleasure. If the everyday human communication is presented as mere jabbering, the everyday human consciousness is presented as a pointless wandering through the world web, an appetite for novelty.¹⁶ In essence, it operates in the manner of Plato's desire and represents a bag with no bottom, which inevitably remains empty, whatever may be put in it.

For Adorno's concept of neutralization, it appears as if it is characterized by even more dramatic colours. Unlike the mundane structure of contemporary consciousness, Adorno sees the source of the problems in the conglomerate of mass media and the capitalist system. The coupling of the desire for profit and the absence of humanity creates a powerful modern mutant – the *industry of culture*. Its point is not tied to the industrial character of the production and mass distribution of modern products of culture but to a kind of a neutralization effect, that is, to the production of a *uniformed structure of contemporary consciousness*. The place of uniformity is no longer just in the systems of the communist East, but also in the metropolises of the liberal West. It's not just that the industrial way of thinking and working got to a place it does not belong. Adorno does not warn only about the breach of industrial logic into the field of cultural production. Furthermore, following the Marxist teachings of the transfer of the production system onto the world that has nothing to do with production, Adorno points out that the human consciousness gets shaped in an industrial fashion. What Husserl presents as the absolute source of being, with Adorno gets an off the peg, identic, recognizable, and predictable character:

¹⁶ Marlène Zarader, *Lire Être et Temps de Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 289.

In contrast to the Kantian, the categorical imperative of the culture industry no longer has anything in common with freedom. It proclaims: you shall conform, without instruction as to what; conform to that which exists anyway, and to that which everyone thinks anyway as a reflex of its power and omnipresence. The power of the culture industry's ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness.¹⁷

It would appear that Heidegger's conjunction of the appetite for novelty and neutralization got its invisible producer in the concept of industrial culture. The general impression is that in the field of the critique of the phenomena which make our reality is the key for seeking the lowest common denominator between the standpoints that usually one cannot bring into contact with each other. The path of neutralization seems unusual and tempting for exploration, as it originates in the necessity of the contemporary subjectivity to break free from the claws of the ordinary, to try not to be defined by it. As if in that human capacity hides a single surviving utopia in the post-utopian age. It is not, however, by chance, that this, at first, a promising phenomenon ends up as a symbol of the invisible machine of the system, media, and capital. Does this necessarily point to the necessity of the primordial subject of neutralization becoming its object, by being not the one who neutralizes, but the one neutralized?

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¹⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," in *The Culture Industry*, trans. J. M. Bernstein, 98-106 (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 104.

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