

The Morality of the Sensitive in Adorno: Suffering and Recognition in the Mimesis Model

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Abstract : Adorno's critique of totality, especially in a split society marked by reification, also rests on the impossibility of generalizing normative principles. Given the unfeasibility of normative universalizations, which conditions can justify the possibility of criticism and normativity in Adorno's thought? If reason itself is still entangled in alienation from the model of the domination of nature, how could be possible a critical theory? In political terms, if the notion of totality is challenged by the critique of identity, how can Adorno maintain the ideal of liberation and reconciliation between private interests and the possibility of some sort of ethics without giving up a materialist theory of society and without betting in a necessary link between redemption and history? Faced with this complex of questions, it is intended to reflect on the sense in which the notion of 'suffering' could throw help to the epistemological problem of the foundations of criticism in Adorno's work. The idea is that, in contrast to a universalizable model of justice, Adorno mobilizes in the notion of 'suffering' a gateway to the critical reflection of society. He would thus develop an approach to moral problems through the sensual-bodily perspective, fear, pain, and somatic factors. Nevertheless, due to the attention to the damaged experience and to the constitution of subjectivity -a sense in which the concept of mimesis continues to stand out- we understand suffering as an expression of an objective reification. Following the statement of other authors, the intention is to think how the resources linked to the idea of 'suffering' in Adorno's writings are engaged in the reflection of the problem of morality and of the contradictions between universal and particular (articulated in Hegel's tradition).

Keywords : ethics, morality, sensitive, Theodor Adorno

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