

Delimiting Experience:
Aesthetics and Politics

Edited by Ryan Crawford,
Gerhard Unterthurner,
and Erik M. Vogt

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The only certainty to which philosophy can today lay claim consists in the recognition of its own utter uncertainty; nothing, not the categories it's inherited, nor any more recent concept of its own making, has shown itself capable of checking the further progress of disillusionment. Instead, the very words upon which philosophy has long relied seem to have completely withdrawn into themselves, no longer concerned with either communication or comprehension; indeed, one cannot beat back the suspicion that those scare quotes that now surround every one of philosophy's concepts are meant to signal that the sole concern of these words today lies only in dissuading others from ever taking any of these words too seriously. So too with *experience*, that watchword of modern philosophy which now, after the breakdown of all totality, unity and consistency, seems ready for right and necessary oblivion. Yet should it meet this fate, what would become of the *subject* of experience; what too of that *objectivity* which has always owed its existence to the subject this contemporary ban on experience seems to render null and void? Just how far can one push this delimitation of experience without all knowledge losing, not only its *raison d'être*, but any relation to the world whatsoever? In varying ways, the essays collected here offer a response to these questions; in each essay, the concept of experience is further delimited at the same time as a singular attempt is made to salvage something essential from what takes place at the very limit of experience.

The first section, "Pleasure and Affect," opens with Ulrich Plass' comparative reading of Adorno's and Nietzsche's respective conceptualization of intellectual experience, itself a privileged point for accessing that which both exceeds metaphysics and transgresses the propriety of concepts. Todd Kes-

selman's subtly Freudian reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* then demonstrates how the oft-misunderstood notion of disinterested pleasure might be better understood within the context of that non-cognitive synthesis characteristic of affects. Finally, James Murphy pursues Etienne Balibar's suggestion that the Lockean subject should be conceived in terms of a fundamental self-possession that is itself grounded in an economy of pain and pleasure and then proposes that both the social contract as well as the subject of natural rights are necessarily haunted by the figure of the degenerate.

The second section, "Interpellation and Disidentification," begins with Ashley Bohrer's systematic reading of Jacques Rancière's corpus and demonstrates how the proletariat might constitute the subject of limit-experience in politics. Maurice Wade then examines Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and shows that what Fanon calls "the fact of blackness" both undermines traditional accounts of experience and attends to the complexity of living under conditions determined by anti-black racism.

The third section, "Inaesthetics and Negativity," begins with Gerhard Unterthurner's analysis of Michel Foucault's concept of limit-experience in its relation to that aesthetics of negativity Foucault once regarded as subversive of knowledge but later abandoned. Erik M. Vogt then reformulates the terms of a debate between Alain Badiou and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe on questions of poetic experience and aesthetics in order to think the possibility of art after the disasters of the 20th century. Finally, Ryan Crawford questions the prevailing image of Theodor W. Adorno as fundamentally critical of limit-experiences and suggests that the latter's concept of the shudder might provide both a critique of self-preservation as well as a glimpse of what life would be like beyond self-preservation.