

ENGL 300 Introduction to Theory of Literature  
Professor Paul H. Fry

**Passages from Adorno, “On the Fetish Character in Music and Regression in Listening” (1938)**

The delight in the moment and the gay façade become an excuse for absolving the listener from the thought of the whole, whose claim is comprised in proper listening. The listener is converted, along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser. No longer do the partial moments serve as a critique of the whole; instead, they suspend the critique which the successful esthetic totality exerts against the flawed one of society.

[Great modernist composers like Berg, Schönberg, and Webern] are called individualists [by other Marxists], and yet their work is nothing but a single dialogue with the powers that destroy individuality—powers whose “formless shadows” fall gigantically on their music. In music, too, collective powers are liquidating an individuality past saving, but against them only individuals are capable of consciously representing the aims of collectivity.