NONIDENTITY, MATERIALISM AND TRUTH IN ADORNO'S *NEGATIVE DIALECTICS*

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ABSTRACT: The primary concern of the present paper is to answer the question, 'What is the relation between non-identity and truth in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*?' It employs Adorno's articulation of the 'outside' of philosophy (*á la* Aristotle's first matter), which underpins the need for conceptual constellations if we are to mimetically examine the non-conceptual thing. Following this a further question presents itself: how do these engagements inflict a critical mark on the Hegelian method of totalization – the dialectic of truth? The essay ends with an analysis of two films, *Metropolis* and *Primal Fear*, aimed at separating out Hegelian conceptions of truth from Adornian unresolved truth; the former aimed at a universal, the latter indicative of a non-identical aporia. We must conclude with the possibility that to leave the unresolved nature of non-identity unresolved *for truth* is the ontological challenge *par excellence* that presented itself to Adorno's negative dialectics as it presents itself to post-Kantian continental philosophy today.

KEYWORDS: Speculative Philosophy; Adorno; Aristotle; Hegel; Materialism; Truth; Non-identity

> Tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings
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> – Walter Benjamin
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> The difficulty of making a beginning…arises at once
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> – G.W.F Hegel

KNOWLEDGE (METHODOLOGY)

Beginning with the reflection: 'The task of philosophy…is to concern itself with what is different from itself,'[1] opens the question, 'what *is* different from philosophy?' This question activates a methodological problematic inherited from ancient philosophy by the scholastics and German idealists, subsisting into the twentieth century. It is Adorno's methodological rejoinder to this task that will structure our point of departure.

Pushing off from Adorno's recodification of Hegelian method, the self-reflection of philosophy ('philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought')[2] facilitates a process that allows it 'to hold itself open,'[3] that its 'contents can only be grasped where philosophy does not impose them.'[4] Philosophy reaches to the heterogeneous by means of dialectic,[5] yet if it implacably reaches to what transcends its reach (the outside of itself) then what counts as 'inclusive' of its domain is questionable. Further, immanent to this syntactical project of philosophical methodis an inherent contradiction, which is to be discursively opened in the following. Whilst a critical inquiry is to be made into the 'contents' of philosophy, a 'line in the sand' autopoietically draws itself between scientific knowledge and philosophical truth, which must be anticipated.[6]

To emphasize this let's take Tupinambá's essay, *Ici, au carrefour, nous énonçons* where he divides two knowledges: critical and consolidated.[7]In contradistinction to the homogenous epistemological cartographies, critical and consolidated knowledge provide a division reflective of the constellationary 'standpoints' constitutive of Adorno's 'method.' The conspicuity of this methodological division is stressed in Adorno's discussion of traditional philosophy *demanding* a frame but never including the

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[1] Adorno, 2008, p.75

[2] Adorno, 2005, p.15

[3] Adorno, 2008, p.75

[4] Adorno, 2006, p.13

[5] Adorno, 2008, p.57 and 'As the heterogeneous collides with its limit it exceeds itself.' Adorno, 2006, p.5

[6] Cf: Adorno, 2005, p.132 on the qualitative divergence between philosophical thinking and the positive sciences

[7] Tupinambá, Yao, 2013, p.27

frame itself.[8] The frame is excluded from the object of traditional philosophy in that its own kinesis is not considered; philosophy thereby fails critically. If philosophy is to maintain dialectical criticality it must draw its own movement into itself, synonymous with the Aristotelian *νους*,[9] which is the mark of critical knowledge as self-reflecting, or *νόησις νοῄόεως*, thinking about thought.[10]Preliminarily, this conforms to Tupinambá's Hegelian division, where critical knowledge is 'the field of knowledge which has itself as one of its objects of study.'[11] Differentiated from this is the other side of the division, where the 'consolidated field is concerned with the construction and articulation of concepts;'[12] it is instrumentally concerned with the subsumption of 'material'($ὕλη$)[13] heterogeneous to itself, incorporating the creative act of concept-construction into a quantified study, or positivist body of research. Counteracting both models is a methodological *aporia* between the critical 'noological' moment[14] (Adorno's Hegelianism) and the consolidated, transcendent moment (metaphysics as the 'open').[15] How are we to read this 'double standard,' this c*arrefour* in Adorno?

He implores that however much thought perpetually reverberates in an impasse, 'one understands a philosophy by seeking its truth-content precisely at the point where it becomes entangled in so-called contradictions'[16] and these methodological reflections are no different. The distinction Adorno makes between method and content can explode this impasse: 'I maintain that so-called methodological questions are themselves dependent upon questions of content.'[17] The rubric of this remark implies a *prima facie* historical primacy of method in the history of philosophy that allows the reversal to turn. It enacts a re-focusing from foregrounding method to foregrounding content, which is instructive for opening a transformation from 'knowledge' (both

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[8] Adorno, 2006, p.32

[9]'And in apprehending its object thought thinks itself. For it too becomes an object for itself by its contact with, and thinking of, its object, so that the thought and its object are one and the same.' Aristotle, 2004, 1072b, (Fii) and Adorno, 2001, p.90

[10] Cf: Adorno, 2001, p.94

[11] Tupinambá, Yao, 2013, p.27 and '*thinking* would have to be made into the object of thinking.' Hegel, 2015, §17, p.45

[12] Tupinambá, Yao, 2013, p.28

[13]Adorno, 2001, p.61

[14] Adorno frames this in terms of criticism: 'What criticism means is…criticism *in the noological sense.*' Adorno, 2008, p.40

[15]We could also situate metaphysics in the framework of 'consolidated' knowledge, for 'Metaphysics is the form of philosophy which takes concepts as its object.' Adorno, 2001, p.4

[16]Adorno, 2001, p.53

[17] Adorno, 2008, p.5

critical and consolidated) to self-reflecting, critical truth. It does this by posing another question: how can we know whether content is peculiar to philosophy?

Adorno 'characterizes philosophical thinking' as 'an element of the tentative, experimental and inconclusive,' which 'distinguishes it from the positive sciences.'[18] The difficulty of philosophical content is that it avoids systematization by remaining inconclusive. Adorno codifies this imperative as 'going astray,'[19] or 'awry,'[20] which gives us the image of philosophy setting out to find an object only to be seduced into distraction and led out along an ulterior path; the lure of Sirens or the inherent 'risk' of truth in the quest for knowledge. A preliminary concern arises: if philosophical content (whatever this may be) remains inconclusive, how do we resist the risk of turning it into poetry[21] in light of contemporary scientific, so-called 'earnest' work? This concern can be read into Adorno's questioning of the *relevance* of philosophy in the face of positivistic science.

In his inaugural lecture given in 1931 Adorno distinguishes philosophy from 'questions, the exact articulation of which is the task of science.'[22] The confusion in which the contemporary *doxa* engages concerning the question is that it is the *haecceitas* of philosophical thinking; in the inaugural lecture we find Adorno radically challenging this position. He introduces the riddle as a 'constellation' distinguished from the quantitative linearity of questions that make up science in that it, 'does not meet up with a fixed meaning which already lies behind the question, but lights up suddenly and momentarily and consumes it at the same time.'[23] The riddle disappears in the unraveling truth of its solution; there is no latent content posited after its dissolution as is expected when posing a question.[24]

This helps us sketch a philosophical methodology that proposes real problems whose aim is the truth of the problematic itself.[25] In this problematic, the actuality of philosophy is critical in taking itself as a heterogeneous riddle-problem, so as not to

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[18] Adorno, 2008, p.5

[19] Adorno, 2008 p.89 and Adorno, 2006, p.14

[20] 'It is possible to think philosophically only where thinking can go awry.' Adorno, 2008, p.85

[21] Adorno, 1999, p.3 and Adorno, 2008, p.92

[22] Adorno, 1977, p.127

[23] Adorno, 1977, p.127

[24] The problem functions similarly in Bergson. He proposes that the true philosophical problem is one in which its answer is immanent to its proposal, that a true philosophical movement will simultaneously produce its answer 'as soon as it is properly stated.' (Bergson, 1992, p.51) This contrasts with the badly stated question, symptomatic of 'badly analyzed composites,' (Deleuze, 2006, p.17) which presents insurmountable paradoxes.

[25] Cf: Adorno, 2006, p.57

place 'things in prefabricated categories.' That is, 'things that are heterogeneous'[26] to philosophy must be thought as problematic constituents of philosophy's own movement.

There is obviously ambiguity here between the heterogeneous *qua* heterogeneous (the absolute outside) and the imposition that philosophy take *itself* as something heterogeneous, a sort of immanent-transcendence. This ambiguity continues in Adorno's aberration whereby he engages in a primacy of science: 'so philosophy has to bring its elements, *which it receives from the sciences*, into changing constellations.'[27] Adorno goes further, stating that 'philosophy always remains bound, because its power of illumination is not able to catch fire otherwise than on these solid questions,'[28] which indicates that without the question-asking peculiar to science, philosophy would have no grip on any content and would remain pure 'form.' This is a reference to the social sciences, a facet of the Frankfurt school that has become famous, yet if we transpose the problem onto the imaginary of *contemporary* science do we view the relevance of philosophy differently? Immediately referring to the constitutive set of questions peculiar to contemporary science a reversal of this 'bound' structure seems to be at stake.

My conjecture is that contemporary science, specifically neuroscience, has inherited fundamental speculative stances historically originating in classical metaphysics. The questions that much of the contemporary neurosciences pose tend toward preeminent Aristotelian divisions (such as ὕλη and μορφή)[29] as well as the basic axial cartographies of ancient speculative thought. 'Who am I?' 'What is reality?' 'Who's in control?' questions posed in the popular neuroscience book, *The Brain: The Story of You* demonstrates this adequately. These questions are diluted *simpliciter*, residual problems of Appearance, Idea and Freedom. What's striking in this mitigation of content from metaphysics to neuroscience is that, although simplified, many of the problems in traditional metaphysics are residually expressed; one of these inheritances is a type of reduction, which is illuminating alongside Adorno. This reduction stringently attempts to abolish the conceptual whereby 'Our thoughts and our dreams, our memories and experiences all arise from this strange neural material,'[30] resulting in a kind of intensive, reductive materialism. This exemplifies the tendency of pre-Kantian metaphysics such as the Cartesian extrapolation of *soul* to a part of the brain

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[26] Adorno, 2006, p.13

[27] Adorno, 1977, p.127

[28] Adorno, 1977, p.127

[29] Adorno, 2001, p.81 and p.76

[30] Eagleman, 2015, p.5

(the pineal gland)[31] but originates much further back in ancient philosophy. What can Adorno tell us about reductions such as these, whether it is a material reduction or one where, 'all objectivity' is reduced 'to the thinking subject'?[32]

In Adorno's lecture, *Metaphysics*, the necessity of self-critically asserting conceptual boundaries presents itself in the contradiction of Aristotle's πρώτη ὕλη, first matter. This is a material not bound by the conceptual, thereby 'is something impoverished which needs its form.'[33] Yet the contradiction arises that by proposing such unbinding, 'by speaking of matter as an ἀρχή, a principle, I have already abstracted from the immediacy of matter itself and reduced it to its most general concept,'[34] shattering its materiality,[35] transforming it into 'knowledge.' To totalize everything as intensive material is the same Aristotlean πρώτη ὕλη and still 'results from a process of reduction through abstraction'[36] no matter how much we *think* we escape the concept. Yet for Adorno the great other of this reduction will simply not do either, that 'the reduction of all objectivity to the thinking subject, in which the idealist interpretation of philosophy later consisted'[37] also destroys all materiality.

Adorno's underlying concern is to critique idealism and by doing so reveals another register; he says 'as soon as one sets out to reduce everything that exists to the structures of consciousness, this presupposes the existence of a system.'[38] Thus, the root of the tendency to reduce is the inescapable necessity of system, that 'phenomenology and ontology' and even Nietzsche's philosophy (which stands as the anti-systematic philosophy *par excellance*) 'are latently systems nevertheless.'[39] It is this face of the system in its inescapability (its *strong form* as opposed to 'systematization')[40] that is revealed to be the motor of contemporary neuroscience, idealism and traditional metaphysics; all exemplify the latent *identification* (the abstraction of the concept) of system. They share points of concern (a common set of antinomies), continued by a coercive *elan vital*: 'The traditional conception of philosophy as it has come down to us from Plato to German idealism has set itself the task of explaining the universe'[41] and these totalizing

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[31] Cf: Adorno, 2001, p.74, Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*

[32] Adorno, 2001, p.80

[33] Adorno, 2001, p.67

[34] Adorno, 2001, p.67

[35] Cf: Adorno, 2001, p.80

[36] Adorno, 2001, p.61

[37] Adorno, 2001, p.80

[38] Adorno, 2008, p.37

[39] Adorno, 2008, p.37

[40] Cf: Adorno, 2008, p.36

[41] Adorno, 2008, p.35

intentions are really attempts 'in which nothing is left out.'[42] Reducing the thing (psychological, political, sociological and ontological) to the material of the brain or to consciousness relinquishes the irreducible χωρισμός,chorismos, between matter and form. Yet this does not take full account of the truth in the presentation of the gap, it is uncritically reduced away.

What are the consequences of engaging in reductions/totalizations of 'the world' by expanding a singular side of the dichotomy? The self-reflective function of philosophy 'slips away,'[43] transforming reality into mere *Gestalten*, a risk that the Adorno of 1931 obviously anticipated. Adorno warns, we should not be persuaded so easily that 'the world in which we live'[44] is *Gestalten* as it is tantamount to conceiving of the world as though it were Parmenidean: complete and static. This is hermeneutically opposed: 'The text which philosophy has to read is incomplete, contradictory and fragmentary,'[45] and thereby discards *gestalten* as simplistic metaphors that only give the impression that the world from which they derive is whole and static, that it is only the subject that has changed. It is in contradistinction to science as a 'body of knowledge' that we can distinguish philosophy as the Adornian opening to critical, self-reflective truth without falling prey to this reductivism; that in the critique of neuroscience as the expression of a particular 'scientism' of our age, and idealism as its twin-like opposite we can activate the Adornian image of methodology.

The text of philosophy is broken, heterogeneous, sutured; 'the concept, the organon of thinking'[46] is contradictory and so its object absent in any 'whole' sense. Thus philosophical content is at best ambiguous and its objects are never 'wholly known;'[47] so much so that it does not seem to 'have' an object peculiar to it.[48] The judgment that puts philosophy into a 'prefabricated category' must be suspended in exactly this way, for truth instead of knowledge, thus defining what is different from philosophy.

It is important for us to trace the axial questions proposed in ancient times to the space of what some would consider modern, rigorous and scientific. We must also recognize the inversely 'bound' nature of metaphysics and science wherein many contemporary scientific 'answers' turn upon positions occupied in the history of

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[42] Adorno, 2008, p.35

[43] Cf: Adorno, 1977, p.127

[44] Adorno, 1977, p.126

[45] Adorno, 1977, p.126

[46] Adorno, 2006, p.15

[47] Adorno, 2006, p.14

[48] 'The fact is that philosophy does not have any particular guaranteed object of study.' Adorno, 2008, p.85

philosophy. Adorno's clarification of philosophical *νους* as thinking taking itself up as one of its objects of study – *νόησις νοήσεως* – will help philosophy 'to think beyond itself and its limits, to think itself through the walls of its glasshouse,'[49] and this, as a methodological aim, is defined as non-homologous with the instrumentalism of science, that philosophy's 'thinking beyond itself, into *openness*'[50] propels it into that which escapes the axial questions of science. It is in this contradictory interstice that philosophy will be made to emerge, not as 'wholly in possession of its objects, but that truth is crystallized in it.'[51]

CONCEPT (*DIALECTIC*)

In light of the gap between concept and thing our focus can shift from Adorno's methodological problematic to his concept of a 'changed dialectic.'

In paragraph three of *Negative Dialectics* ('Reality and Dialectics'), Adorno begins to differentiate the implacable motor of his dialectic from Hegelian dialectic by essentially shifting the logic of the identity thesis: 'the identity of identity and nonidentity'[52] is effectively transformed into 'the nonidentity of identity and nonidentity.' Thus, 'to change this direction of conceptuality, to give it a turn toward nonidentity' will be 'the hinge of negative dialectics.'[53] Only by tarrying with the revealed antagonisms immanent to concept and thing (the truth of their nonidentity) can the interstice between them and the necessity of the reversal be sustained. How does Adorno enact this procedure?

A good point of departure is *The Critique of Pure Reason* wherein a clandestine resistance – a 'block'[54] – is revealed when Kant attempts to subsume the totality of the thing under the concept. In effect we join Kant in struggling to wrest the thing from the real by attempting to 'paste the particulars into the text;'[55] they simply *do not fit*. This attempt, however, does succeed in furtively revealing a different, inherent 'mark,'[56] Adorno states, 'the concept is always less than what is subsumed under it.'[57] A residual *surplus* remains in the thing that the concept cannot transform by means of

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[49] Adorno, 2001, p.68

[50] Adorno, 2001, p.68

[51] Adorno, 2008, p.84

[52] Hegel, 2010, §112

[53] Adorno, 2006, p.12

[54] Adorno, 2001[b], p.66

[55] Adorno, 2006, p.11

[56] Adorno, 2005[b], p.247: 'any possible knowledge must not only be first unwrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked…by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape.'

[57] Adorno, 2008, p.7

identity; in other words, the thing (as a totality) *transcends* the concept, recoiling into itself by resisting the attempted abstraction. The concept – by not subsuming the overabundant thing in its objectivity – fails, leaving an unaffected, nonidentical 'remainder.'

However, to tease out the crux of an antagonism in the concept, Adorno introduces an antinomous other: the concept 'is at the same time more than the characteristics that are subsumed under it.'[58] In this paratactical parallax, the thing is now *less* because the concept expresses a superabundance and purity. Adorno gives us the 'example' of freedom in *Negative Dialectics* yet we need not strenuously ponder an explanation to this. That the material situation is not axially harmonized with the universality of the concept of formal freedom is evidenced in a grounding terminological preposition (a particularization), 'of': freedom *of* will, freedom *of* choice etc., when material 'facts' are actualized the purity of the concept is reduced, diminishing its reality[59] and so there is no material 'freedom as such.'

There are, then, two interconnected sides, two contradictions that are eventually one and the same; 'the concept enters into contradiction with the thing to which it refers,'[60] by being 'more' and 'less' than it, leaving a 'something,'[61] which produces the second side; an immanent, disjunctive contradiction wherein the concept is simultaneously 'more' and 'less' than itself. The concept, on the first side is never particular enough, whilst on the second side is always too universal.[62]

The dialectic of the concept 'says no more' than this, 'that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder;'[63] whether it is the 'more' in the thing or the concept, it is Adorno's rejoinder to critically engage this remainder, to investigate non-reductively the difference excluded from the identifying process – what resists identification and is cast-off as surplus, contradictory and nonconceptual.

To return to Hegel's identity thesis, he attempts to move from nonidentity to identity, to subsume the nonconceptual under the concept in the name of positivity. Adorno demonstrates that this is at the expense of positing a false totality/reconciliation because the negative/nonidentical is transformed into identity. This informs the necessity of negative dialectic where 'it will attempt to articulate the very opposite, namely the divergence of concept and thing, subject and object, and

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[58] Adorno, 2008, p.7

[59] Cf: Adorno's discussion of the 'form *of* something.' Adorno, 2001, p.62

[60] Adorno, 2008, p.7

[61] Adorno, 2006, p.135

[62] Jameson emphasizes this play between particular and universal in Jameson, 2007, p.31

[63] Adorno, 2006, p.5

their unreconciled state.'[64] In this regard Adorno necessitates a critical attempt to 'say what *cannot* be said,'[65] or grasp the nonconceptual, the 'dreg' of the concept[66] but also the essentiality of the concept.[67] Negative dialectic is called upon since it gives weight to 'the neglected, the excluded'[68] without attempting to transform it *via* identity.

To make this leap into negative dialectic requires a peculiar turn on the restraint to 'thinking' the nonconceptual: 'To think is to identify,'[69] the organon of thinking is the concept, and thereby 'we are obliged to make use *of* concepts in order to talk *about* concepts;'[70] we cannot directly step outside of concepts. Thus thinking cannot *directly*'include' the nonconceptual *qua* nonconceptual since it has *a priori* 'slipped out of the reach of…thinking,'[71] thus we have no choice but to philosophically traverse the nonconceptual *by means of the conceptual.* Indicative of this, 'we cannot, so to speak, paste a piece of existing material into our philosophical texts'[72] and so we must engineer ulterior environments of the conceptual conducive to the negativity of the nonconceptual.

As a slight side step, we can align this image of 'pasting pieces of existing material' into the text (as a tendency of identity thinking) with Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-mades.' For example, 'Fountain' is abstracted from a 'natural context' and pasted into another one, obliterating the *chorismos* between the thing itself and concepts of the thing. Identity thinking similarly attempts to abstract the entirety of the thing from its supposed 'natural context,'[73] ratifying the lacuna across which the concept can overlay its phantasmatic 'totalities.'

In order to begin assembling this ulterior environment, the concept and its immanent deadlock must be exasperated. In the Adornian imaginary the *primum movens* of the concept is the abstraction indicative of identity thinking, which by force excludes the 'true' totality of the thing. That the concept is a *force* of abstraction equivalent to that of labour, that 'the strains and toils of the concept are not metaphorical,'[74] is to say that identification occurs materially, whereby 'the concept's longing to become

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[64]Adorno, 2008, p.6

[65] Adorno, 2008, p.66

[66] Adorno, 2008, p.69

[67] Adorno, 2006, p.11

[68] Adorno, 2008, p.69

[69] Adorno, 2006, p.5

[70] Adorno, 2008, p.62

[71]Adorno, 2008, p.41

[72] Adorno, 2008, p.62

[73] Cf: Adorno, 2008, p.24

[74]Adorno, 1994, p.21

identical with the thing'[75] is played out upon the mediated strata of social relations. This provides a clue to the motif of *Negative Dialectics* as escape from this *force*, or coercive falsity of the concept by means of 'constellation.'

When Adorno gives us an example of constellation (*World Spirit and Natural History*) it is not an example in the traditional sense, he does not 'yield his basic positions "about" history,'[76] rather: 'It [constellation] lends objectivity to them [concepts] by the relation into which it puts the concepts, centered about a thing;'[77] no definition or meaning as such is revealed. Constellations are nonhierarchical; concepts forming a constellation relate to one another in nonlinear, non-binary, horizontal webs. The aim is not to provide meaning, rather the concept's relations to one another *per partes* 'potentially determine the object's interior.'[78] Although identity is still the engine of each *individual* concept, by positioning concepts in related assemblages, monadologically circulating around the thing, each concept expresses a negated content transmitted from another concept and *vice versa*. Reflection upon this movement unravels a mimetic topological negative of the thing; the originality of Adorno's constellation is that a multiplicity of concepts harmonize *for* negativity, *for* dissonance like 'a negative *adaquatio rei atque cogitationes* [harmony of things and ideas].'[79] The 'indissoluble something' excluded by the singular concept then 'transcends its seclusion in its own, as nonidentical'[80] divulging indissolubility *as* indissoluble rather than transforming it into a re-codified identity.

John Cage's *4'33"* illustrates this nicely, where the attempt to 'capture' silence by means of the negation of the orchestra, (what is necessary to the concept 'orchestral music') proves futile. The attempt to subsume silence as a complete, positive, singular phenomenon caves in to some multiple, contradictory remainder (here categorized as 'noise'), resisting the subsumption of the concept 'silence.' However, *apropos* constellation, the residue is allowed to remain as it is, divulging the nonconceptuality of 'silence' negatively as a kind of gesticulating τόδε τι.[81]

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[75] Adorno, 2006, p.149
[76] Jameson, 2007, p.88
[77] Adorno, 2006, p.162
[78] Adorno, 2006, p.162
[79] Adorno, 2008, p.9
[80] Adorno, 2006, p.163
[81] Cf: Adorno, 2001, p.35

The concept is, however, still a single side of dialectic, namely, the subjective side. For Adorno, the importance is to unpick the strictures forced upon the thing by the concept, mimetically revealing the *objective* as itselfcontradictory and unresolved[82] or comprising some negative, nonidentical *material* that resists identification.[83] This real contradiction in the objective is of prime importance for negative dialectic: 'the concept of contradiction will play a central role here, more particularly, the contradiction in things themselves.'[84] There is contradiction immanent to the concept (the subjective), but this is merely a mirror-image of the real contradiction in the thing (the objective) divulged negatively apropos constellation.

To give precedence to the framing of Adorno's constellation in this light, it can be read as an attempt 'to break out from philosophy, from the realm of "ready-made" concepts,'[85] maintaining the fundamental necessity of negative dialectics to experience contradiction 'in the thing.'[86] The reason for this is to philosophize *out* of the concrete, not *about* the concrete,[87] which suffices to provide an anti-idealist bent in Adorno, where the objective in (Hegelian) dialectics has been too readily surrendered to subjectivist philosophical system. Gillian Rose has connected this concept of the concrete to materiality (*á la* Benjamin), 'the concrete is whatever is irreducibly material, that which resists any assimilation to our concepts and our consciousness'[88] and so Adorno's negative dialectic can be phrased as an attempt to think from concretion (materiality) but not directly about it, attributing contradiction to reality itself without reducing it to constitutive subjectivity.

Adorno is not alone in this pursuit to 'break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity;'[89] 'attempted breakouts' litter the history of philosophy and the constellation is no different. Yet, it differs precisely in its refusal to give way to a reduction to constitutive subjectivity, which would jeopardize its operation as breakout (as happens in both Husserl and Bergson). It is here the idealist method of presenting 'existing reality in the form of concepts,' which 'enormously facilitates this act of identification'[90] and the Adornian constellation-as-breakout, or an indirect determination of the nonidentical are most distinguished.

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[82]Adorno, 2006, p.153

[83]Žižek points out a similar operation in Žižek, 2008, p.xxv

[84]Adorno, 2008, p.7

[85]Adorno, 2008, p.72

[86]Adorno, 2006, p.153

[87] Adorno, 2006, p.33

[88]Rose, 2014, p.78

[89] Adorno, 2006, p.xx

[90]Adorno, 2008, p.68

'Dialectic emerges and exists in the gap between thought and thing so long as that gap persists'[91] and this is why foregrounding nonidentity in negative dialectic is paramount to not reducing this gap, to experiencing the contradictory in the thing. Yet, in so far as Adorno is materialist in this regard, the question looms as to whether truth can coincide with the nonidentical, this real contradiction in reality? Bowie suggests, 'Above all, truth-content is not something which is identified via the constellation'[92] yet is this not a case of defining a particular parallax of truth, that depending on whether one adopts the Hegelian *Vorstellung* or Adornian *Darstellung* one will encounter varying 'views' of the truth of nonidentity?

TRUTH (IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION)

The real problem that we are left with is how to 'concretize' (materialize) truth without pushing/reducing it through/to conceptual identity? In Hegelian dialectic '*the "truth" is on the side of universality*;'[93] yet the expression of this process as a 'whole' ('The True is the whole,')[94] is what Adorno takes issue with in two movements: the foregrounding of nonidentity[95] – dialectics 'indicates the untruth of identity;'[96] and the falsification of the whole – 'the whole is the false.'[97] As indicated above, what is lost in identity thinking is the materialityof the thing, which is its *truth* as nonidentically unresolved, yet by revealing it as unresolved in this way, does Adorno indirectly equate nonidentity with the universal by turning it into a principle of truth? On the one hand Adorno attempts to refute Hegel's 'whole,' on the other he seems to have no choice but to affirm it. How can we make sense of this seeming contradiction?

I will depart from Žižek's Lacanian formula that truth is effectively a register of *fiction*, 'the truth as the most effective form of a lie.'[98] On this account the dialectic activates a process in which it particularizes in falsity, returning as a re-established universal. Adorno's contention is that when truth is universalized in this way it is stripped of its temporality/transcendentalism (it is severed from the historical circumstances that are its conditions of possibility) transforming it into a static totality.

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[91]Wilson, 2007, p.76

[92]Bowie, 2013, p.35

[93] Žižek, 2009, p.41

[94] Hegel, 1977, §20

[95]Cf: 'the dialectics of Hegel, who wanted his dialectics to be all things, including *prima philosophia*, and in fact made it that in his principle of identity.' Adorno, 2006, p.34

[96]Adorno, 2006, p.5

[97]Adorno, 2005[b], p.50

[98] Žižek, 2008, p.26

For this reason, Adorno emphasizes truth as a particularizing[99]*temporally* mediated process in both negative[100] and Hegelian dialectic: 'The dialectic is a process in terms of the immanence of truth…process, that is, is truth itself.'[101] Thus due to this 'temporal substance'[102] truth is 'suspended and frail.'

An insightful example of truth as process is the 1927 film *Metropolis*. In it Maria is presented as a catalyst for universal truth; she engenders a hope for the worker's liberation, which is antithetical to the automation of the city. The naturalized religious ideal congealed in Maria (the worker's liberation as a prophecy akin to the 'Tower of Babel') is put into direct antagonism with the automated, secularization of the city (all religion is relinquished in favour of the science of automation) and so she is substituted for all that is machine, the 'maschinenmensch': her binary opposite.

The 'maschinenmensch' is presented as the bourgeois, non-workers ('thinkers') truth, actualized (in Freder's vision) as mesmerizing seduction, enacting the mythology of the *Book of Revelation* (the 'whore of Babylon' riding the seven-headed beast. When she dances she is mechanical, merely engaging in a process, but the 'thinkers' do not care, for 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it.'[103] The naturalized religious ideal is transformed into the mythological lie, yet it is fetishization of the lie that the 'thinkers' desire. This is the first moment, from truth to lie.

In the second moment Maria's substitution for the lie of the 'maschinenmensh' proves to enact her original, religious ideal of liberation, her *universal* truth. It is only through this substitution (or 'mediation') that her original truth can materialize as a truth; the workers are liberated and the city falls *because* of the lie. The 'maschinenmensh,' the particular untruth of Maria, is immanent to the universal 'whole' truth of Maria.

We would be inclined to apply this Hegelian analysis to nonidentity in Adorno so as it doesn't eternally fly away into the silent, bottomless void.[104] In other words, only in nonidentity's escapade into a particular identification will 'nonidentity-as-true' be true as a concept. For this reason 'Hegel rejected the equation of philosophical substance – truth – with the highest abstractions, and located truth in the very specificities with

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[99] 'we are constrained to take our point of departure from the particular' Adorno, 2006, p.47

[100]Cf: Adorno, 2006, p.40

[101] Adorno, 1994, p.37

[102]Adorno, 2006, p.34

[103]Žižek, 2008, p.25

[104]This is Wittgenstein's solution to the problem: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' Wittgenstein, 2010, p.89 and 'A dialectics no longer "glued" to identity will provoke either the charge that it is bottomless…or the objection that it is dizzying.' Adorno, 2006, p.31

which traditional metaphysics was too refined to dirty its hands.'[105] Truth is crystallized in specificities in so far as these specificities are frozen 'moments'[106] of a universalizing whole: they are particular falsities participating in larger, universal movements of truth. However, at this juncture the Adornian nonidentical bears its full weight: the question of nonidentity – or more precisely the truth of nonidentity's primacy – is to be conceived as a loss, a mediated gesticulation; unutterable since 'the concept is fused with untruth.'[107]

The solace of truth must be overcome for Adorno: 'Philosophy must do without the consolation that truth cannot be lost;'[108] it is an imperative that truth *must* be lost, that there is no *re-established* universal if nonidentity is foregrounded in a negative dialectic. The truth of the primacy of nonidentity is a divisive current that drives a wedge between Adorno and Hegel, but we can perhaps salvage a link to another Hegelian lineage. Žižek's remark that, 'the dialectical path toward the "Truth" of an object therefore implies the experience of its *loss*,'[109] is to be read, not as the loss of the object, but the loss of truth *qua* falsity: 'that the true and the false can both be directly read off from the true, is a proposition we cannot accept; but that the false, that which should not be the case, is *in fact* the standard of itself.'[110]

To conceive of this loss we may ascribe it to the register of reversed 'misrecognition': 'we overlook the way our act is already part of the state of things we are looking at, the way our error is part of the Truth itself.'[111] Although this is formulated in the sense of an identifying, positive Hegelian trope (reading the false off from the true), it can also be read another way, namely, misrecognition is immanent to the primacy of nonidentity, so its truth is unresolved and 'suspended' that, 'where ontology…hits upon bottomlessness – there is the place of truth.'[112]

I'd like to draw a conclusion of this in the 1996 film *Primal Fear*. In it Martin Vail, a criminal lawyer famous for defending the guilty, opts to defend Aaron Stampler who is found fleeing a murder scene covered in blood. When Vail meets Aaron he finds that he exemplifies innocence: stuttering, vulnerable and simple. A psychologist observes Aaron have a psychotic episode whereby he transforms into a 'different person,' his antithesis: aggressive, self-assured and volatile. She determines that he has multiple-

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[105] Adorno, 1994, p.35
[106] Adorno, 2006, p.40
[107] Adorno, 2006, p.48
[108] Adorno, 2008, p.34
[109] Žižek, 2014, p.19
[110] Adorno, 2008, p.28
[111] Žižek, 2008, p.62
[112] Adorno, 2006, p.34

personality disorder, that he has absolutely no recollection of what happened when having an episode. When having an episode Aaron reveals that his name is 'Roy' and that he is the one who committed the murder.

Vail begins to see himself as truly fighting to save the innocent, helpless and vulnerable Aaron from the crime 'Roy' committed. In the final courtroom scene 'Roy' attacks the prosecuting lawyer, attempting to strangle her and is declared insane, unfit to stand trial and is to be spared the death penalty in favour of a mental institution. Vail goes to see Aaron finding him stutteringly apologetic for causing such a commotion, and that he 'didn't mean to hurt that lady's neck.' As Vail walks away something dawns on him, how did Aaron know that he had strangled the lady if it was actually 'Roy'? He presents Aaron with this question; Aaron starts clapping and smirking, 'You got me!' He explains in detail how he enjoyed killing, that there never was an 'Aaron,' that he was 'Roy' all along. Vail, shocked, walks out to the street and the film ends.

There are two concurrent movements: Aaron-Roy and Vail. Aaron-Roy is the obvious one: where we took Aaron to be 'true' and Roy to be 'false,' we misrecognized that it was precisely the inverse, Aaron was the act. The second movement demonstrates 'misrecognition' as the fundament of truth more deeply. Vail genuinely believes he is defending the innocent Aaron, that he is distinguishing himself against his past by doing something good. Yet it unravels that he is doing exactly the same as he has always done, defending someone guilty; the difference occurred in his misrecognition of falsity as truth. Vail's original truth (a twisted lawyer defending the guilty) is barred universal re-establishment (unlike Maria in *Metropolis*) and is left unreconciled, unresolved and contradictorily suspended in falsity.

The 'fact' of the truth of nonidentity – its actualization – escapes all register; it can only be *represented* 'plunging into the abyss'[113] and this is precisely the problem, or an outline of it: a philosophy in which the primacy of nonidentity is taken into account as a real deadlock – a contradiction in the real – but also where a concept of truth can be retained. We can summarize by incurring the Epimenidian paradox turned on dialectic, 'All dialectics tell the truth,' yet the lie is immanent to dialectics and is actually a condition of its negativity; the truth – the universal – is precisely what dialectics cannot say without a lie.

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[113] Adorno, 2008, p.34

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