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Enduring Crisis and Critique: Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* and Sites for a Critique of Political Economy

By

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By

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An abstract of

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Abstract

Enduring Crisis and Critique: Adorno’s Negative Dialectics and Sites for a Critique of Political Economy

By Osman Nemli

My dissertation constructs a critique of political economy from the negative dialectical philosophy of Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno’s critique of political economy is a *prismatic* approach to the issue of political economy, and shows the two-way, dialectical relationship between the non-economic sphere and the economic sphere. It is *site-based* and presents the interrelations between those two spheres. The first chapter offers a historical and philosophical account of Marx’s critique of political economy; it sees how such a critique functions, what the main concepts and methods used by Marx are, and what thus constitutes the object of inquiry for one critiquing political economy. My second chapter looks at the ways in which ‘thinking economically’ has changed the conditions for critique. ‘Thinking economically’, as Adorno calls it, no longer operates as critique, but rather is an apology for the very system that it attempts to show the limits of. The third chapter examines what Adorno calls the ‘unconscious of the concept’ – that is, assumptions and hidden tendencies operative in thought – that a critique must make conscious. The fourth chapters addresses the differences between Adorno’s negative dialectical philosophy and Hegel’s dialectical philosophy, responding to problems operating in Adorno’s approach. These problems include: Adorno’s making conscious what is unconscious in the concept; that his way of thinking not fall prey to being a Hegelian ‘unhappy consciousness’; that he not fetishize and hypostatize the priority of the object; and that his negative dialectics not lead to a bad infinity. The fifth chapter examines Adorno’s aesthetics. In particular, it looks at the work of art as a particular object scarred by totality. This scarred totality, however, continues society’s domination of nature via the idea of the beautiful. Adorno’s aesthetics of the sublime offers a corrective to the violence of the idea of the beautiful upon natural beauty. The sixth chapter focuses on Adorno’s critique of exchange society, more generally, and how one might change or exchange a society for which exchange is its *raison d’être*.

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