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OSMAN NEMLI Date

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

By

Osman A. Nemli

Ph.D.

Philosophy

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

John Lysaker

Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michael Sullivan

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Cynthia Willett

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dilek Huseyinzadegan

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Erik Vogt (Trinity College)

Committee Member

Accepted:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.  
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Osman Nemli

Advisor: John Lysaker, Ph.D

An abstract of

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the   
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of   
Doctor of Philosophy  
in Philosophy

2016

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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2016

Acknowledgments

I am very pleased to acknowledge those who supported my graduate education.

I would not have been able to pursue this project without the continued support, thoughtful questions, and critical responses from members of my dissertation committee: John Lysaker, Michael Sullivan, Cynthia Willett, Dilek Huseyinzadegan, and Erik M. Vogt. I benefited greatly from the encouragement of and conversations with professors at Emory University: Professors Thomas R. Flynn, Andrew J. Mitchell, Geoffrey Bennington, and Lynne Huffer. I thank Professor Drew Hyland from Trinity College, who was the first – here one could refer to the Socratic gadfly! – to introduce me to Philosophy.

I would like to thank friends and colleagues who have contributed invaluably to my educational and intellectual experience: Gerhard Unterthurner, Mukasa Mubirumusoke, Maximilian Levenson, Jessica Locke, Jared Millson, Abigail Meert, Ryan Crawford, James Murphy, and Eric Morelli.

Finally, I thank my family: my parents, Ferda and Sedat; my Hedonist and Cartesian grandfathers Faruk and Suat; Selim, Sinan, Murat. I dedicate this project to the memory of my grandmothers, Nilgün and Muazzez.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: Marx’s Critique of Political Economy and its Fetish 18

*Introduction – Critique and/of Political Economy – The Historical – Key Concepts: The Commodity, Labor-Power, and Surplus - Conclusion*

Chapter 2: The Critique of ‘Thinking Economically’ 46

*Introduction – Thinking Economically Alongside the Critique of Political Economy – The Role and Place of the Intellectual – Fragmentary Philosophical Practice*

Chapter 3: The Critique of Concept Fetishism and the Unconscious of the Concept 77

*Introduction – Concept Fetishism – (Pre-)History of the Unconscious of the Concept*

Chapter 4: Irreconcilable Hegel Amidst the Ruins of Negative Dialectics 108

*Introduction – The Economy of Negative Dialectics – Adorno and/as Unhappy Consciousness – Nonidentity, Resisting Affirmation – Absolute Negativity and Philosophy ‘after Auschwitz’ - Conclusion*

Chapter 5: The Scarred Particular (as Domination of Nature) Seen in Art’s Double 138 Character

*Introduction – Antinomies, and Art’s Endgame – The Work of Art, Nature, Beauty, and the Sublime – Extra-Aesthetic Concerns within Aesthetics – Mimesis in Response to Contradictions within (Subject and) Object - Conclusion*

Chapter 6: The Scarred Particularity from the Perspective of Totality: The Culture Industry and Exchanging Society 170

*Introduction – The Culture Industry: Anti-Enlightenment – Society: A Total Object Unlike Any Other – Exchange Society - Conclusion*

Conclusion; Or, Lessons for Education 198

Works Cited 210