

Negative Dialectics (Lectures), by T. Adorno

a. People / Organizations:

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b. Quotes:

- **"The task of philosophy, then - and I would like to finish today on this programmatic note - is to concern itself with what is different from itself, heterogeneous, and not with the attempt to import everything that exists into itself and its concepts. Its task is not to reduce the entire world to a prefabricated system of categories, but rather the opposite, viz. to hold itself open to whatever experience presents itself to the mind."** - Author (pg. 75)
 - **"...the entire trick with philosophy would be to learn how to philosophize in an open way** without becoming mollusc-like, in other words, **without becoming attached to any and every conceivable object...**" - Author (pg. 81)
 - "The fact is that philosophy does not have any particular guaranteed object of study; it is possible to think philosophically only where thinking can go awry, where it is fallible. The moment that nothing can happen to philosophical thought, that is, the moment it finds itself in the realm of repetition, mere reproduction, at that moment philosophy will have missed its mark." - Author (pg. 85)
- "...knowledge that fails to go beyond the already known is in danger of itself being declared false, untrue and obsolete - that such knowledge simply cannot be true. And this is just another way of stating - and this is something I keep returning to - that **truth content contains an element of time instead of subsisting in time and appearing as something eternal and indifferent to it.**" - Author (pg. 86)
- **"...philosophy goes beyond whatever secure knowledge that it possesses, and because it knows this, and because it is fallible, it also possesses this playful element without which it could not be philosophy in the first place.** It does not just flirt with playfulness in its motives or methods; rather playfulness is deeply embedded in it and candidly so. I would go so far as to say that without playfulness there can be no truth. And I would say further that **the element of chance inherent in play makes an essential contribution to the truth** - as the thing that under the general spell of identity thinking reminds us of the unthinkable" - Author (pg. 91)
 - **"Philosophy is the power of resistance:** I believe that a definition of philosophy other than as the intellectual power of resistance simply does not exist. The power of resistance - by not allowing itself to be fobbed off with whatever might deflect it from its true interest; it does not let itself be fobbed off with the facts, as opposed to gratifying its essential needs, even if only through a decided No, in other words, by the demonstration of the impossibility of gratifying them." - Author (pg. 101)
- "Philosophical theory points to its own end" - Author (pg. 142)
- **"the power of negative dialectics is the power of whatever is not realized in the thing itself"** - Author (pg. 178)
 - **"Truth is discovery"** - Author (pg. 180)

c. General Notes:

- Editor's Forward (pg. xi)
 - "Adorno himself referred to *Negative Dialectics* as a whole as 'a methodology of his material works' only to contradict this in the very next breath: No continuum exists between those works and it, according to the theory of negative dialectics." (pg. xi)
 - "Adorno frequently attempted to formulate the deeply unsatisfactory nature of all traditional philosophy, its inappropriateness to its subject, its repudiation by the worldly wise. He hoped to lead thought along the only critical path that remains open', by identifying such fallacies as 'thinking of a first philosophy', origin' thinking, the primacy of subjectivity, the universal rule of domination - and also as the constitution of method" (pg. xii-xiii)
 - "Abstraction is the procedure whose every method must start off by formulating concepts: it must ignore the particulars with which it is concerned at every turn; it must make its material manageable, that is to say, capable of being controlled. But the methodologists and logicians are mistaken in their belief that only by such means will they be able to gain a hold on the general as the other of the particular, the finite, the existent; just as mathematics is a gigantic tautology 'which exerts a total dominance over what it has itself prepared and formed' (ibid.; see also p. 27 below), so too **methods are always concerned with themselves, with the flimsiest, most abstract vestige of what they have reduced the world to by treating anything and everything only in terms of general concepts, while declining to engage with the object itself.** In this dire situation idealism has made a virtue of deducing every not-I from the I, of defining every object as a subject or, as they call it, of 'postulating' the former by means of the latter: each thing is like this and not otherwise and it is subject to the rule of subjectivity to which it has owed its very existence from the outset. Understood in this way, such methods come together in the societal model on which they are based: the principle of equivalence of the barter society in which use values appear only as quantities, as exchange values, as values comparable in money terms, not as distinct qualities." (pg. xiii)
 - **"Adorno advanced the idea of philosophical or, more generally, intellectual experience as a weapon with which to oppose the fetishism of method. By this he meant starting out from the concrete individual, the individuum ineffable; he insisted that it was vital to dwell on the individual thing and entrust oneself to it,** without confining oneself entirely to this trusting stance. In contrast to the abstracting method, intellectual experience is interested in differences, not in what makes things identical with other things; 'what is meant by negative dialectics - the dialectics not of identity but of non-identity' (p. 1 below)." (pg. xiii-xiv)
 - **"For negative dialectics the thing itself is by no means a thought product. It is non-identity through identity"** (Negative Dialectics, p. 189). **What is needed to achieve the objective specificity of a thing is a greater effort on the part of the subject, not a smaller one; what is needed is 'a more sustained subjective reflection** than the identifications of which Kant taught that consciousness performs them, as it were, unconsciously and automatically. That the activity of the mind, and even more the activity which Kant ascribes to the problem of constitution, is something other than the automatism he equates it with - this, specifically, constitutes the mental experience which the idealists discovered, albeit only in order to castrate it on the spot' (ibid., p. 188f.)." (pg. xv)
 - ◆ "Such reflection does not aim to step outside discourse, but would like 'to prise open the aspect of its objects that cannot be accommodated by concepts' ('The Essay as Form', Notes on Literature, vol. 1, p. 23)." (pg. xvi)
 - **"...the dialectic strives to prise open the categories that have classified and pacified the real once and for all, and to open them up once more to what is new.** The non-identical cannot be unlocked by a particular concept in isolation - that would have led readers to criticize Adorno's 'mere conceptualizing' - but at most by a plurality, a constellation of discrete individual concepts..." (pg. xvi)
 - ◆ **in this way, negative dialectics might simply represent a denial / dissatisfaction with the status quo (which Adorno openly admits to). But, this should be treated from a psychoanalytic perspective - that is, why is Adorno so avid about searching for what's new? And, how might this behavior mask what's true of what already exists?*
 - **"Negative dialectics is to be the dialectics of non-identity:** that is to say, the truth content of the intellectual experience that that dialectics produces is a negative one. It registers not only the fact that **the concept never does justice to the thing it refers to** - does not yet do so. 'In the unreconciled condition, non-identity is experienced as negativity' (Negative Dialectics, p. 31). This constitutes the philosophical signature of Negative Dialectics and the nature of its intellectual experience." (pg. xviii)
 - Lecture 1 (pg. 1)
 - **"What is meant by neg[ative] dial[ectics] - the dialectics not of identity but of non-identity.** Not the triadic form, too superficial. In particular, the

- emphasis on the so-called synthesis is absent. Dialectics refers to the fibre of thought, the inner structure, not an architectonic pattern." (pg. 1)
- "Basic conception: structure of contradiction, in a twofold sense: (1) the contradictory nature of the concept, i.e. the concept in contradiction to the thing to which it refers (explain: what is missing in the concept and in what respect it is something more. Contradiction = discrepancy. But with the emphatic sense of concept this becomes contradiction. Contradiction in the concept, not merely between concepts. (2) the contradictory character of reality: model: antagonistic society. (Explain, life + catastrophe; today society survives by means of what tears it apart.) This twofold character is no miracle. It shall have to be shown that **the elements that shape reality in an antagonistic fashion are those that predispose the mind, the concept, to a state of antagonism**. The principle of the mastery of nature intellectualized to the point of identity." (pg. 1-2)
 - "All dialectics are negative" (pg. 2)
 - "...as Hegel, the great founder of dialectics, has pointed out, **in philosophy the process is as important as the result**; that, as he asserts in the famous passage in the *Phenomenology*, process and result are actually one and the same thing. Moreover, I believe that what characterizes philosophical thinking is an element of the tentative, experimental and inconclusive, and this is what distinguishes it from the positive sciences." (pg. 5)
 - "Now I should probably start by anticipating my entire enterprise and telling you what I mean by the concept of negative dialectics, and I should do so in a manner that calls for a resolution of the issues it raises. A rather meagre, formal definition is that it sets out to be a dialectics not of identity but of non-identity. **We are concerned here with a philosophical project that does not presuppose the identity of being and thought, nor does it culminate in that identity. Instead it will attempt to articulate the very opposite, namely the divergence of concept and thing, subject and object, and their unreconciled state.**" (pg. 6)
 - "...the concept of contradiction will play a central role here, more particularly, **the contradiction in things themselves, contradiction in the concept, not contradiction between concepts**. At the same time...the concept of contradiction has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, as I have already intimated, we shall be concerned with the contradictory nature of the concept. What this means is that the concept enters into contradiction with the thing to which it refers." (pg. 7)
 - "For even **though I believe that thinking involves raising oneself above primitive things, an essential part of thought is that it should remain in touch with immediate experience.**" (pg. 7)
 - "...the concept of contradiction plays such a central role in a negative dialectics, the explanation for it is to be found in the structure of logical thought itself, which is defined by many logicians (though not in the way it operates in the various current trends in mathematical logic) by the validity of the law of contradiction. And what this means then is that everything that contradicts itself is to be excluded from logic - and, in fact, everything that does not fit in with this positing of identity does contradict itself. Thus the fact that our entire logic and hence our entire thinking is built upon this concept of contradiction or its denial is what justifies us in treating the concept of contradiction as a central concept in a dialectics, and in subjecting it to further analysis." (pg. 8)
 - "Thus for dialectical thought in the sense in which the category of contradiction is central, what is needed is the structure of the concept and the relation of the concept to the thing it stands for...The model for this is the fact that we live in an antagonistic society." (pg. 8)
 - ◆ "I shall say here only that the essence of this model of an antagonistic society is that **it is not a society with contradictions or despite its contradictions, but by virtue of its contradictions. In other words, a society based on profit necessarily contains this division in society because of the objective existence of the profit motive. This profit motive which divides society and potentially tears it apart is also the factor by means of which society reproduces its own existence.**" (pg. 8-9)
 - "I have the best of intentions about showing you that the factors that define reality as antagonistic are the same factors as those which constrain mind, i.e. the concept, and force it into its intrinsic contradictions. To put it in a nutshell, in both cases we are dealing with the principle of mastery, the mastery of nature, which spreads its influence, which continues in the mastery of men by other men and which finds its mental reflex in the principle of identity, by which I mean the intrinsic aspiration of all mind to turn every alterity that is introduced to it or that it encounters into something like itself and in this way to draw it into its own sphere of influence." (pg. 9)
 - "...thought itself - and thought is tied to subjectivity - is negativity, and to that extent negativity, and especially dialectical thinking, is negative dialectics from the outset." (pg. 11)
 - Lecture 2 (pg. 12)
 - "From what I have said up to now, you will have grasped the idea that the concept of dialectics, of negative dialectics, becomes critical - and this is a factor that should help to support the choice of the term 'negative' in a not insignificant way. Unlike the kind of dialectics that the late Hegel called for, one in which the affirmative could be discovered at the end of all the negations, this concept calls for the very opposite. And I should like here to propose in a general way the thesis that the negative dialectics I have tried to expound to you is in its essentials identical with a critical theory. I would suggest that **the two terms - critical theory and negative dialectics - have the same meaning**. Perhaps, to be more precise, with the sole difference that critical theory really signifies only the subjective side of thought, that is to say, theory, while negative dialectics signifies not only that aspect of thought but also the reality that is affected by it. In other words, **it encapsulates not just a process of thought but also**, and this is good Hegel, **a process affecting things**. This critical character of dialectics has to be dissected into a series of elements. The first of these is the one I attempted to explain last time - as you will perhaps recollect - namely the relation of concept to thing. We shall return to this question. We shall see that the thesis of the identity of concept and thing is in general the vital nerve of idealist thought, and indeed traditional thought in general. Furthermore, this assertion of the identity of concept and thing is inextricably intertwined with the structure of reality itself. And **negative dialectics as critique means above all criticism of precisely this claim to identity** - a claim that cannot of course be tested on every single object in a kind of bad infinity, but which certainly can be applied to the essential structures confronting philosophy either directly or as mediated through the themes of philosophy. Furthermore, dialectics as critique implies the criticism of any hypostasization of the mind as the primary thing, the thing that underpins everything else." (pg. 20-21)
 - "I believe furthermore that at present a true philosophical critique of the hypostasis of mind is fully justified because this hypostasis is proving irresistible to philosophy, which after all operates in the medium of the intellect, which thrives exclusively and at all times in the mind. I believe that everyone who has ever learnt to appreciate what great philosophy is will have experienced the force of this thesis of the primacy of the spirit that is to be found in every so-called first philosophy. And a form of thinking that simply retreats from this experience instead of reacting, once it has come to be thought dubious, by measuring itself against it and setting it in motion with the aid of its own power, any such thinking will be doomed to impotence. Do not forget that the very fact that thinking takes place in concepts ensures that the faculty that produces concepts, namely mind, is manoeuvred into a kind of position of priority from the very outset; and that if you concede even an inch to this priority of spirit - whether in the shape of the 'givens' that present themselves to the mind in the form of sense data or in the shape of categories - if you concede even an inch to this principle, then there is in fact no escape from it." (pg. 21)
 - Lecture 3 (pg. 22)
 - "I would take the view that the work of philosophy is concerned not so much with negativity as such - I shall have something to say on this question shortly - as that each person should keep his own thinking under surveillance and regard it with a critical eye in order to resist this reified way of thinking. And if I were to formulate in what way a negative dialectics should come to the assistance of your own thinking - and after all, such a goal is by no means contemptible in a course of lectures - I would see its benefit in bringing this tendency to your attention and preventing you from

- succumbing to it by making you aware of it." (pg. 24)
- "This tendency can of course be traced back very far both socially and in the history of philosophy. Its principal cause is undoubtedly the irrevocable loss of absolutely binding uniform categories. This means that the less the mind possesses predetermined so-called substantial, unquestioned meanings, the more it tends to compensate for this by literally fetishizing concepts of its own devising which possess nothing that transcends consciousness. In short it makes absolutes of things it has created. And it achieves this by tearing them from their context and then ceasing to think of them further." (pg. 24)
 - "For it is precisely this 'having something', having it as something fixed, given and unquestioned on which one can comfortably rely - it is this that thought should actually resist." (pg. 25)
 - "What I am attempting here and would like to show you is the possibility of philosophy in an authoritative sense without either system or ontology - that is what I am aiming at." (pg. 31)
 - Lecture 4 (pg. 33)
 - "...by systematization I understand a unified form of presentation, in other words, a scheme in which everything that belongs to the subject matter concerned or to the philosophical topic (if that can be regarded as a subject area finds its place, the proper place belonging to it. It is therefore an organization of subjective reason." (pg. 35)
 - "But even in Heidegger matters are more complex than might appear at first sight. It is undoubtedly the case that one of the reasons why Heidegger's thought was once felt to be so fascinating was the fact that it claimed to be necessary and logical without being accompanied by the clunking sounds of conceptual machinery. The fact is, however - and I am grateful to Professor Haag for pointing this out to me in conversation a few days ago - that, at the very least in Heidegger's case as well, the latent function of the system can be seen in the circumstance that his concept of Being contains what philosophical systems traditionally attempt to demonstrate: namely the identity of whatever exists with thought in so far as it is implied that this concept of Being is an undifferentiated, immediate unity of the elements from which, precisely because it is undifferentiated, we can then derive the various modes of being and the distinctions of the ontological and the ontic. In short, the concept of Being in his thought has a quite similar 'generative' function and at the same time a similarly all-encompassing function of the sort that systems possessed in the tradition of German idealism - admittedly with the qualification that the relation to such an originary principle has ceased to be transparent. In other words, such a principle is not the product of a logical deduction; nor is it a principle to which recourse may be had, a rational principle in its own right. Paradoxically, then, we might speak in Heidegger's case of an irrational system of philosophy. It combines, we might say, the claim to totality or, as he himself says in a number of places, at least of *Being and Time*, it combines the claim to totality with the renunciation of comprehension" (pg. 37-38)
 - "The reason why Heidegger has latched on to this concept is to be explained by the fact that - and I should like to make this clear to you - if philosophy does not retreat so this extreme abstractness it will run the risk of losing its way in vague, random, arbitrary postulates. And traditionally this will take the form of hypostasizing definitions that have been taken from history and have their meaning only in their historical context - and he uses such terms as if, whether they be 'dispositions' (Befindlichkeiten) of existence or even attributes of being, they simply existed as such. I believe that I do Heidegger no injustice if I say that his development from *Being and Time* to the so-called turn [Kehre] is connected with this. By this I mean that **he pursued that process of emptying his philosophy of content that ultimately led to his cult of the word 'being'** because he sensed that the material determinations of *Being and Time* - which incidentally is what made this book so influential - are not simply determinations of existence or being, but that they contain far more specificities and also, by the standards of a pure philosophy of origins, far more random, arbitrary elements than he was willing to admit at the time." (pg. 64)
 - "I believe that it is no exaggeration if I say that to this day the question of whether philosophy can exist without system has not been tackled with the seriousness and energy that it calls for." (pg. 39)
 - Lecture 5 (pg. 44)
 - See text
 - Lecture 6 (pg. 55)
 - "**Dialectics represents the attempt to incorporate into philosophy whatever is heterogeneous, philosophy's other, we might call it.**" (pg. 57)
 - "To anticipate, we might say it wishes to import the non-conceptual into philosophy. In Hegel, in the sense of the identification of the non-identical, in the sense of the questions I am describing to you, it is a matter not of incorporating the non-conceptual, but of comprehending it in its non-conceptuality." (pg. 57)
 - "...Hegel's entire philosophy acquires its identity only by conjuring away the non-conceptual from the very outset. That is the very greatest temptation for philosophy. And it is far easier to succumb to this temptation and to interpret it as the movement of philosophy than to identify the untruth it contains. For when we speak, when we philosophize, we are in fact always dealing in concepts." (pg. 62)
 - Lecture 7 (pg. 65)
 - "We might say that **the non-conceptual itself, when we approach it for the first time, when we grapple with it, is already mediated by concepts in a negative sense** - it is the neglected, the excluded; and the fact that the concept has not granted it access tells us something about the prejudice, the *parti pris* and the obstacles imposed by the concept. We see this very clearly in the group of phenomena to which Freud turned his attention, since they - for reasons that he explained very precisely - have always been subject to a very high degree of repression. There is such a thing as societal repression, and one of the organs of the philosophically inclined - if indeed we may speak of an organ in this context - is the ability to sense something of this repression, to sense what has been repressed in certain objects by the general consciousness, and to be attracted by the very things that pass unobserved or by what people prefer to regard as undeserving of scrutiny. If the method I am trying to describe to you constantly tends towards micrology, in other words to immerse itself in the minutest details, it does so not out of philosophical pedantry, but precisely so as to strike a spark, and my predilection for such matters is connected with factors such as these. For **in general the concept tends to magnify its objects**; it perceives in them only what is large enough to compare with other objects. **Whatever falls through the net is inevitably the most minute thing, but it may well contain the very thing that cries out for philosophical explanation**. This interest of philosophy in the non-conceptual about which I have been telling you at such length is not new; we can say that in the last generation of philosophers - that is to say, two generations ago in your case, while for me it is the generation I regard as my spiritual forebears - in that generation interest in this question was very much alive. And whatever products of that generation have any claim to be modern are defined by this need." (pg. 69-70)
 - "I should like to draw a lesson from this that I believe could be fruitful for the method I wish to develop further for you. It is this: this kind of breakout is not possible as an act that plunges head over heels, as it were, into a type of cognition that has not been produced by the subject; it does not plunge, then, into the alleged objectivity of the pure entities or into an allegedly trans-subjective world of images that is nevertheless located somehow in the subject. Every attempt at a breakout that is initiated by the subject, out of subjective whim - we might also say: out of subjective freedom of choice - is doomed to futility. This is because of its origins in arbitrary subjective choice, which necessarily forces it back into the sphere from which it desires to escape. **We might say that the objectivity in which it immerses itself really has a kind of mirror effect**. If a breakout is at all possible, it cannot be the product of the postulate of something alien to the subject; it cannot result from postulating a Not-I - we know of course from the history of philosophy that the subjective postulate of the Not-I was in fact the zenith of idealism. Rather, **if such a breakout exists as a possibility, the only path leading to it is that of the critical self-reflection of the subjective sphere. In the course of that self-reflection, this insight recognizes**

- itself - in a compelling, conclusive manner - as something that is not merely subjectivity, but as something that necessarily presupposes a relation to the very thing that, as idealist, it had hoped to be able to bring into being. In other words, the subject is shown that it is itself something postulated, or, at any rate, that it is also something postulated, and not simply by demonstrating that the Not-I is itself a postulate. At the same time, what survives from the attempts of these philosophers is the task of engineering a breakout." (pg. 73)
- "The task of philosophy, then - and I would like to finish today on this programmatic note - is to concern itself with what is different from itself, heterogeneous, and not with the attempt to import everything that exists into itself and its concepts. Its task is not to reduce the entire world to a prefabricated system of categories, but rather the opposite, viz. to hold itself open to whatever experience presents itself to the mind." (pg. 75)
 - Lecture 8 (pg. 76)
 - "the entire trick with philosophy - it's a trick that I keep circling round, but it looks different from different angles, depending on the categories I make use of - **the entire trick with philosophy would be to learn how to philosophize in an open way** without becoming mollusc-like, in other words, **without becoming attached to any and every conceivable object**. Instead, the aim would be to follow its inner necessity while at the same time pursuing an objective compulsion. I would venture a proposition that may seem paradoxical in the light of normal philosophical practice, but that is in fact very simple and illuminating. **This is that the more philosophy opens itself to its object, the less it misapplies the objects with which it is concerned** as instances of that finite system of coordinates that it is wont to make use of for demonstration purposes - then the more easily it will shed that mollusc-like character." (pg. 81)
 - "...such a philosophy, which on the one hand does not presume to apprehend the infinity of objects but on the other hand does not reduce itself to the finite - such a philosophy would amount to a full, undiminished experience in the medium of conceptual reflection. We might also say, it would amount to intellectual experience. By making use here of the term experience, I note that the turn I am making here, or to which I would like to make some contribution and that I would like to make you think plausible, includes a salvaging of empiricism, albeit in a somewhat convoluted, dialectical fashion. I mean by this that cognition always proceeds in principle from below to above, and not from the top down; it is concerned with leaving things to themselves and not with a process of deduction..." (pg. 82)
 - "...knowledge that fails to go beyond the already known is in danger of itself being declared false, untrue and obsolete - that such knowledge simply cannot be true. And this is just another way of stating - and this is something I keep returning to - that **truth content contains an element of time instead of subsisting in time and appearing as something eternal and indifferent to it**. Thus far there is truth in the scepticism and pragmatism that in John Dewey, for example, has depicted with a truly magnificent open-mindedness and seriousness the possibility of a philosophy that lays itself open to falsehood. **The problem is only to make sure not to surrender philosophy's high ambition to be the knowledge of essentials but to channel this ambition towards intellectual experience.**" (pg. 86)
 - Lecture 9 (pg. 87)
 - "Last time, I drew your attention to a certain connection between the concept of negative dialectics and scepticism - and even pragmatism, in the sense that **philosophy has no guaranteed object, that in principle it can always go astray**" (pg. 88-89)
 - "This crux is that the concept of an intellectual experience - that is, a reflective mode of behaviour that is possible only in the shape of a process of sublimation taken as far as is possible, in other words, one that is not simply based on brute facts, but which sets these brute facts in their proper context and at the same time in their proper meaning - this concept of intellectual experience always contains the possibility of what might be called a spiritualization [Spiritualisierung] of the world. By this I mean the possibility that, by having intellectual experiences that go beyond mere immediate, sense experience, we may feel tempted to turn the object of experience into something spiritual [geistig] and by the same token to justify it. And if you attend closely to the idea of intellectual experience that permeates the Hegelian system you will find more than a trace of this attitude. **I would say that the kind of intellectual experience meant by negative dialectics and conceived as a self-critical, self-reflective intellectual experience has as one of its principal tasks to be particularly critical (i.e. not naïve) on this very point.** That is to say, it should constantly be on the alert to correct that built-in tendency to spiritualize its objects that accompanies its own methodology." (pg. 89)
 - "We can perhaps express this scepticism, this element of fallibility that philosophy must remain conscious of, and also of this spiritual element, by saying that, in contrast to all the methods that have been taught in the philosophical tradition, **there is an essential element of play in philosophy.**" (pg. 90)
 - **cf. Karl Popper*
 - "I would ask you **not** to think of this playful element of philosophy as something merely psychological, but, as I just said, as something essential to the discipline itself. This is because **philosophy goes beyond whatever secure knowledge that it possesses, and because it knows this, and because it is fallible, it also possesses this playful element without which it could not be philosophy in the first place. It does not just flirt with playfulness in its motives or methods; rather playfulness is deeply embedded in it and candidly so.** I would go so far as to say that without playfulness there can be no truth. And I would say further that the element of chance inherent in play makes an essential contribution to the truth - as the thing that under the general spell of identity thinking reminds us of the unthinkable. In this connection, let me remind you of a saying that I have myself applied to art in a spirit of playfulness, when I said that art is the most serious thing in the world, but then again, it is not as serious as all that. I believe that only when we face up to this paradox, that is, only when we know that philosophy is concerned with the most serious matters and that it calls for the very greatest efforts on the part of the most advanced state of mind; but that, on the other hand, we are fully aware that it is merely one activity in a society dominated by the division of labour and in the life of our society it has no more than a specialized significance - I believe that only when we face up to this strange duality of philosophy will we be able to do philosophy properly, namely, with the peculiar combination of seriousness and what can only be called playfulness, without which thinking cannot survive." (pg. 91)
 - "Thinking that is rigorously disciplined from the outset is just as incapable of engaging in philosophy as undisciplined thinking. And if we could represent the whole of philosophy as a system of countless squared circles, then this squared circle, with its insistence that thinking needs discipline as much as it needs indiscipline, would certainly not be the most worthless. Indeed, it consists essentially in a combination of the two." (pg. 91)
 - ◆ "there is no rationality without [some] intrinsic element of irrationality" (pg. 91)
 - ◇ "However, the moment this element of irrationality is postulated, or turns itself into something autonomous or even an absolute, it degenerates into illusion and lie. This feature undoubtedly represents the element of thought that Horkheimer and I in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* called 'the mimetic element': in other words, the moment at which living beings and consciousness make themselves identical with what differs from them. This is a form of response that has not simply been replaced by conceptual knowledge over a period of millennia, but has also been subjected to severe prohibitions. And we can say, if I may present you with yet another squaring of the circle, that it is **the task of philosophy to appropriate on behalf of the concept that element of identification with the thing itself - as opposed to the identification of the thing itself - that is present - non-conceptually** - in the mimetic stance and has been inherited by art." (pg. 91-92)
 - "...it is so important that you should not think of this element of intuition, or whatever you want to call it, as something qualitatively different from other modes of cognition. The insight that illuminates a thing and sometimes seems to appear like a flash of lightning - although it doesn't occur all that frequently - is not in reality a lightning bolt from above. We may say that the so-called intuitions resemble rather certain rivers or streams that flow underground for long distances and then suddenly come to the surface and are there, but owe the illusion of suddenness to the fact that we do

- not know where they have been, or, to put it in a more educated way, the so-called **intuitions are crystallizations of an unconscious knowledge.**" (pg. 94)
- **"The organ of philosophy is the concept**, and there can be no derogation from this; and, **at the same time, the concept is the wall between philosophy and that yearning which it may not relinquish.** As the container of whatever existing thing it is concerned with, **the concept negates that yearning; and philosophy can neither circumvent that negation nor submit to it** - that too is the squaring of the circle" (pg. 94-95)
 - **"...the idea at the heart of philosophy is to use the concept in order to reach beyond the concept.** This means that even after the renunciation of idealism, about which we are in agreement, **philosophy cannot escape speculation.**" (pg. 95)
 - **"[speculation] amounts to the idea that one should keep on thinking in a motivated way, not blindly, but in a motivated, consistent way, going beyond the point where one's thinking is backed up by facts."** (pg. 95)
 - ◆ "The only thing is that these speculative concepts will then be subject to that fallibility which, as I explained to you at the start of this lecture, is inseparable from the nature of philosophy." (pg. 97)
 - Lecture 10 (pg. 98)
 - "By uttering the word 'appear', I have arrived for the first time in these lectures at a distinction that cannot be taken seriously enough and that, if there is such a thing as a criterion of what is philosophy and what isn't, must certainly qualify as such. This is the distinction between essence and appearance, a distinction that has been sustained in almost every philosophy - with the exception of positivist critique and certain invectives in Nietzsche - throughout the entire philosophical tradition. I believe that it is one of the essential motifs, I almost said one of the essential legitimating elements, of philosophy - that **the distinction between essence and appearance is not simply the product of metaphysical speculation, but that it is real.**" (pg. 100)
 - "I would point out that subjective modes of behaviour in modern societies are dependent on objective social structures to a degree that is largely unsuspected by most people, and that in consequence we may think of such subjective behaviour as the mere appearances of those structures. In other words, **the sphere of immediacy** that we are all concerned with in the first instance, and which we are accordingly tempted to regard as a matter of absolute certainty, **is actually the realm of the mediated, the derived and the merely apparent, and hence of uncertainty.** On the other hand, **however, this appearance is also necessary,** that is to say, it lies in the nature of society to produce the contents of the minds of human beings, just as it is the nature of society to ensure that they are blind to the fact that they mistake what is mediated and determined for actuality or the property of their freedom, and treat them as absolutes. **It follows that since the immediate consciousness of human beings is a socially necessary illusion, it is in great measure ideology.**" (pg. 100)
 - **"...the speculative aspect should be identified with the critical, the anti-ideological element; it is whatever is not satisfied with the façade"** (pg. 101)
 - ◆ "Speculation was originally a category that created meaning, whereas now, according to what I have just been telling you, it is essentially there in order to destroy the semblance of meaning usurped by merely existing actuality. **Philosophy is the power of resistance:** I believe that a definition of philosophy other than as the intellectual power of resistance simply does not exist. The power of resistance - by not allowing itself to be fobbed off with whatever might deflect it from its true interest; it does not let itself be fobbed off with the facts, as opposed to gratifying its essential needs, even if only through a decided No, in other words, by the demonstration of the impossibility of gratifying them." (pg. 101)
 - ◇ "But when I say that philosophy is resistance you must not misunderstand me. Resistance is in the first instance a category of impulse, a category of immediate reaction. If philosophy remains no more than this, that is to say, if philosophy can do no more than shake its head and say 'I'm against it' or 'I don't like this' - it will remain in the realm of chance, of subjective reaction that has yet to be fully penetrated by thought. I would say that while this element of resistance yields the idea or the impulse behind philosophy, resistance must not only reflect on itself, if it is not to be irrational and hence ephemeral or even false, it must develop within a theoretical framework. If it fails to do this it will amount to no more than a paltry, abstract decision-ism, a purely arbitrary mode of decision-making." (pg. 102)
 - "There is something very striking about the idea that philosophy stands in need of such a thing or approach or dimension (or however you wish to describe it) as depth. **An approach that is not deep, that contents itself with the nearest available facts without digging any deeper, without insisting on the what? The whys? And what is the meaning of that? - Such an approach may be all sorts of things, but it is not philosophical.** In this sense, we cannot afford to ignore the criterion of depth in philosophy, even though it is seldom made explicit, although it is frequently referred to. And anyone who has the quality of asking awkward questions, insisting on them and refusing to be fobbed off, is no stranger to the spirit of philosophy." (pg. 102-103)
 - "One is oneself the deep thinker, and other people, those who do not think deeply, are superficial minds" (pg. 103)
 - **"Depth means to refuse resolutely to remain satisfied with the surface, and to insist on breaking through the façade. This means refusing to accept a preordained idea, however profound it claims to be;** it means moreover that we should not accept one's own ticket, one's own slogan, one's own membership of a group as the guarantee of truth, but should place one's trust only in the ruthless power of reflection, without deciding that the truth is now fixed and that you have got hold of it once and for all. Where such attitudes survive, particularly in the tendency to identify with groups, I would say that they bear the marks of totalitarianism, however opposed to totalitarianism they may seem to be in their publicly declared views. Resistance means refusing to allow the law governing your own behaviour to be prescribed by the ostensible or actual facts. In that sense **resistance transcends the objects while remaining closely in touch with them.** Thus **the concept of depth always implies the distinction between essence and appearance, today more than ever** - and this explains why I have linked my comments on depth to that distinction. **That concept of depth is undoubtedly connected to what I described to you last time as the speculative element. I believe that without speculation there is no such thing as depth.** The fact that **in its absence philosophy really does degenerate into mere description** may well seem quite plausible to you. **This speculative surplus that goes beyond whatever is the case, beyond mere existence, is the element of freedom in thought,** and because it is, because it alone does stand for freedom, because it represents the tiny quantum of freedom we possess, it also represents the happiness of thought. It is the element of freedom because it is the point at which the expressive need of the subject breaks through the conventional and canalized ideas in which he moves, and asserts himself. And this breakthrough of the limits set on expression from within together with the smashing of the façade of life in which one happens to find oneself - these two elements may well be one and the same thing. What I am describing to you is philosophical depth regarded subjectively - namely, not as the justification or amelioration of suffering, but as the expression of suffering, something which understands the necessity of suffering in the very act of expression." (pg. 107-108)
 - The Theory of Intellectual Experience (pg. 110)
 - "For **suffering is the weight of objective realities bearing down on the individual. Whatever he experiences as his innermost subjectivity, its expression, is mediated objectively.**" (pg. 110)
 - **"The forms of thought aspire to more than what merely exists, is merely 'given'. Synthesis is negation.** The resistance of thought to its material is not only the control of nature given a spiritual inflection. While its syntheses do violence to the object, they simultaneously follow the lead of the potential contained in that material." (pg. 113)
 - "The task of philosophy [is] to reflect about objects without shaping them from the outset in accordance with rules that have long since been set

- in stone and whose validity is mistakenly taken for granted." (pg. 116)
 - "a second stage of reflection would have the task of uncovering the abstractions hidden in the concrete..." (pg. 116)
- "Again: **the idea of a negative dialectics: to shed light on the non-conceptual through a constellation of concepts**" (pg. 117)
 - "It [i.e., **negative dialectics**] binds thinking to what it is not, against the illusion of its own self-sufficiency" (pg. 151)
- "relativism itself is based on the bourgeois model of individualism" (pg. 149)
- "**thought contains coercion within itself**" (pg. 164)
- Appendix - Towards a Theory of Intellectual Experience (pg. 183)
 - "thought that rules out the notion of dialectics lapses into random talk about world-views..." (pg. 184)
 - "unlike science, philosophy does not set out to explore its object exhaustively; it does not aim to reduce phenomena to a number of propositions" (pg. 186)
 - "**depth itself...is an aspect of dialectics, not an isolated trait**" (pg. 189)

d. Further Readings:

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