Adorno and the Problem of Givenness

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In Adorno's account of the subject-object relation a series of striking and seemingly incompatible claims are made about the character of givenness. Indeed Adorno's position seems to be profoundly contradictory. His claims are: (*1*) that idealism is essentially correct about the cognitive composition of our world (so even 'the given' must bear the determinations of consciousness); (*2*) that in experience there is an epistemically significant relation to something non-conceptual; (*3*) that the very notion of the given is ideological in character in that it fails to consider the social construction of 'what there is', a construction that Adorno rejects for the reasons that are familiar to the critical theory perspective. On the face of it these are claims that do not fit easily together: (*1*) and (*2*) are mutually exclusive, and (*3*) appears to render (*2*) naïve. And should these claims be as incompatible as they appear the implications for the project of the negative dialectic are, of course, devastating. It would be a purely dogmatic diagnosis of modernity which had no philosophically sustainable account of the possibility of a post-modern experience. In this paper I want to explore these claims and suggest that Adorno provides an over-arching argument that gives them systematic coherence. But first, each claim needs to be examined in turn.

Conceptualism and Givenness

In the *Metacritique of Epistemology* Adorno writes: "Idealism was the first to make clear that the reality in which men live is not unvarying and independent of them. Its shape is human and even absolutely extra-human nature is mediated through consciousness".[1] This looks like a straightforwardly idealist commitment. An uncontroversial definition of idealism provided by Nicholas Rescher I think makes that clear:

> [Idealism is] the philosophical doctrine that reality is somehow mind-correlative or mind-co-ordinated – that the real objects comprising the 'external world' are not independent of cognizing minds, but only exist as in some way correlative to

* 'Adorno and the Problem of Givenness', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol. 63 (2004) (pp. 85-99)

the mental operations. The doctrine centres on the conception that reality as we understand it reflects the workings of minds.[2]

It is obvious enough from numerous comments and arguments that Adorno is not recommending a return to a subjective idealism, a form, that is, of ontological idealism. For example, Adorno takes issue with the constitution thesis of subjective idealism which holds that the 'subject's' activities are fundamentally unconstrained by objectivity. Against such a claim, Adorno argues that our determinations of the object "will adjust to a moment which they themselves are not... The active definition is not something purely subjective; hence the triumph of the sovereign subject which dictates its laws to nature is a hollow triumph".[3] Instead for Adorno the endorsement of idealism is to be limited to the notion of the human character of our experience, the reality in which we live. In fact, Adorno's commitment to idealism resembles that of a conceptual idealism, a key characteristic of which Rescher describes as follows: "Our knowledge of fact always reflects the circumstances of its being a human artefact. It is always formed through the use of mind-made and indeed mind-invoking conceptions and its concepts inevitably bear the traces of its man-made origins".[4]

We can see how close to this position Adorno's thoughts on the 'human' character of our experience are when we consider his idea of the meaningfulness of objects. He argues that it is only through a process of *historical sedimentation* that the objects that we experience come to have significance: "...an immanent generality of something is objective as sedimented history. This history is in the individual thing and outside it; it is something encompassing in which the individual has its place... The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects...."[5] The object then is mediated by subjectivity at various points in its history, mediations which eventually lead to its historically sedimented character: an accumulation of uses and meanings. Under the 'sedimented history' view of objects we can understand objects as somehow complexes of significances. These significances are acquired and accumulated in the history of the object's position within what Adorno terms the social totality.

It seems to follow from this that objects are meaningful in so far as they are humanly articulated. But it does not follow that phenomenologically an individual perceives or relates to an object as something humanly produced and therefore

dependent. Objects – as complexes of meanings – confront the individual as being independent of him or her. Yet, the invention of a meaning or of an idea clearly requires the activity of a subject. Indeed it is in this respect that Adorno can be understood as a materialist in the Marxist sense (of 'dialectical materialism') in that he is committed to the view that the constituents of experience – meanings – arise through human activities. (The sociality totality is, in a way, the theatre in which these activities take place.) However, these meanings are sustained independently of any given subject – even the inventor of the meaning – in the social totality. To take the example discussed by Adorno, the concept of freedom is a human invention and it has various connotations.[6] Clearly these connotations have arisen from the efforts of people – not least of philosophers – to articulate a theory of freedom: yet the notion of freedom, which comprises the complex of its various connotations, cannot be reduced to the intention of any individual or individuals. Ideas of freedom have arisen through the activities of subjects and they are sustained in the social totality as experientially independent of subjects. In this way the concept of freedom comes to have an objectivity which resists arbitrary subjective determinations (I quite simply cannot say that freedom is serfdom or capriciousness).[7] By virtue of the significance of the object in the social totality its meanings necessarily transcend the individual subject. As the individual subject confronts the object the latter contains an irreducible independence which, in the orders of experience and explanation, grant it, so Adorno's argument concludes, the status of epistemological priority.[8]

Thus the object, as a sedimented history, is mediated through consciousness. To achieve the recognition of particularity – non-identity thinking, as Adorno calls it – means, under the 'sedimented history' theory of objects, to think through the coherence of one's concepts as they are applied to a complex conceptualizable entity. There can be no simple leap into the sheer particularity of the object since, as Adorno notes, to "think is to identify".[9] The object, then, is always something marked as 'mind-made' and by 'mind-invoking conceptions' and to understand the object involves articulating it in the determinate terms of concepts. Objects are not raw matter: to specify them with concepts is to make sense of their 'mind-made' characteristics. As Adorno writes: "Because entity (*Seiende*) is not immediate, because it is only through the concept, we should begin with the concept, not with the mere given (*bloßen Gegebenheit*)".[10] We see here, then, Adorno's appropriation of an idealist thesis: what is given in our experience is given in a form which already

contains the activities of consciousness. It is the task of philosophy to investigate the conceptual shapes of given experience, and it is therefore a mistake to begin with 'the mere given'.

The Non-Conceptual Character of the Given

However, there is another aspect of Adorno's account of our epistemic activities, and this aspect apparently excludes the conceptualist thesis that we have just seen. In addition to the claim examined above that objects are "sedimented history" Adorno also claims that our concepts refer to non-conceptuality. For instance:

> In truth, all concepts, even the philosophical ones, refer to non-conceptualities...[11]

> That a concept is a concept even when dealing with things in being does not change the fact that on its part it is entwined with a non-conceptual whole. Its only insulation from the whole is its reification – that which establishes it as a concept.[12]

> The concept is an element in dialectical logic, like any other. What survives in it is the fact that non-conceptuality has mediated it by way of its meaning, which in turn establishes its conceptuality. To refer to non-conceptualities... is characteristic of the concept, and so is the contrary: that as the abstract unit of the noumenon subsumed thereunder it will depart from the noumenal. To change this direction of conceptuality, to give it a turn toward non-identity, is the hinge of negative dialectics. Insight into the non-conceptual in the concept would end the compulsive identification which the concept brings unless halted by such reflection.[13]

Clearly these passages represent an unexpected commitment to the notion of non-conceptuality, considering the conceptualist remark above that "we should begin with the concept" since the object is not a pure given. But perhaps Adorno is not addressing the same issue in these thoughts as that which we saw in the previous section. It might be argued that, with regard to the conceptual nature of our experience, Adorno is discussing the *character* of what confronts us, whereas in his thoughts on the non-conceptual he simply wants to posit an anti-idealist *source* of our

experience. Indeed we might see at work here the same motivation as that which led Kant to his doctrine of the thing-in-itself. Kant approaches this issue in a number of ways: "...though we cannot know these objects as things-in-themselves, we must yet be in a position at least to think them as things-in-themselves, otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears".[14] Now that claim for the idea of the thing-in-itself as put this way sets up an ambiguity in the word appearance that is unwarranted since it invokes the extraordinary idea that objects are *mere* appearances of something else (i.e. things-in-themselves). Another way in which Kant sets this up is by the argument that something underlies the data we receive through sensibility and, as such, it is logically the negation of what we can know: it is non-representational and, *a fortiori*, non-conceptual: "The true correlate of sensibility, the thing-in-itself, is not known, and cannot be known, through these representations; and in experience no question is ever asked in regard to it".[15] So our capacity for non-representational thinking leads us to think outside the conceptuality of experience. Of course we assume that there is some relation between what is identified as non-representational and the representations of objects. A relationship of 'underlyingness' (for former underlying the latter) seems intuitively plausible. This may indeed parallel the lines of thought behind Adorno's discussion of the relation of concepts to non-conceptuality. But Kant's position here goes too far for Adorno's purposes. Whilst Kant's idea is to mark the limits of agency, and thus to posit the unknowable, Adorno wants to establish some philosophical expression of non-identity – what it is about the object that undermines its identity with the 'subjective' concept. In this case non-identity is, simply enough, the lack of identity between concepts which are one thing and objects (non-conceptual wholes) which are another. Adorno therefore cannot be talking simply about the source of the objects of our experience, as the source need not be experienced, but merely thought, in Kant's sense. Kant's position then cannot be appropriated for a discussion of non-identity since the reality it posits through non-representational thinking – the thing-in-itself – would serve as no limitation to conceptual activity whatsoever: if the object – *qua* thing-in-itself – really is the other of concepts then it simply cannot determine the application of concepts any way. (This is a well known problem in discussions of the thing-in-itself in Kant.) So Adorno unlike Kant tries to explain the availability in experience of objects in their non-conceptuality.[16]

Curiously, however, Adorno does occasionally valorize the notion of the thing-in-itself:

> By the retreat to formalism, for which Hegel and then the phenomenologists reproached Kant, he did honour to the non-identical. He did not deign to involve it in the identity of the subject without residue.[17]

> Kant still refused to be talked out of the moment of objective priority (*Vorrang*). He used an objective intention to direct the objective analysis of the cognitive faculty in his *Critique of Pure Reason,* and he stubbornly defended the transcendent thing-in-itself. To him it was evident that being in itself did not run directly counter to the concept of an object, that the subjective mediation of that concept is to be laid less to the object's idea than to the subject's insufficiency. The object cannot get beyond itself for Kant either, but he does not sacrifice the idea of otherness.[18]

There is clearly something rather troubling about these remarks given that the thing-in-itself, as a noumenal 'entity', falls outside the compass of mediation, the compass of knowability. But what is important here needs to be noted: the non-conceptuality of the object resists the possibility of identity. This non-conceptuality of the object is indeed its 'otherness'. However Adorno is fully aware of the implications of adopting Kant's thesis and ultimately criticizes the very notion of the thing-in-itself. At one point he accuses Kant of "degrading... the thing [in-itself] to a chaotic abstraction"[19] and, similarly, of attributing dynamics to the categories but not to things as they are in-themselves.[20] In opposition to a thing-in-itself lacking all characteristics, Adorno needs to establish that the object determines, in some way, the kind of predicates we ascribe to it. He writes: "Essence can no longer be hypostatized as the pure, spiritual being-in-itself. Rather, essence passes into that which lies beneath the façade of immediacy, of the supposed facts, which makes the facts what they are".[21] Furthermore, Adorno stipulates, at one point, that if we are going to establish the priority of the object then the object cannot be understood as the thing-in-itself: "Priority of the object can be discussed legitimately only when that priority – over the subject in the broadest sense of the term – is somehow determinable (*bestimmbar*), when it is more than the Kantian thing-in-itself as the unknown cause of the

phenomenon".[22] This final rejection of Kant – written incidentally in one of the last papers published by Adorno on the subject-object problem (1969) – makes it clear that Adorno is demanding an epistemologically relevant account of the otherness of the object, and from an earlier passage we see that this otherness lies in the non-conceptuality of the object. This, *prima facie*, sets up an entirely different account of givenness to that which we have seen in the previous section. For Adorno there is here an irreducible givenness – the non-conceptuality to which our concepts refer – which stands against the claims for total conceptualization within idealism.

The Ideology of the Given

Adorno's views about the character of the given (as conceptual or non-conceptual) may seem to contain an epistemological and potentially fatal oscillation. But before we attempt to decide on the matter a further complication arises. Adorno's critical theory commitments lead him to the view that the very notion of 'the given' is suspect: for him to appeal to the given as something authoritative for our knowledge is to affirm as 'simply there' what has, in fact, been constructed already. In this section I want to consider this third aspect Adorno's thoughts on the given.

Adorno's concern with the ideology of the given is a typical neo-Marxist concern about the character of so-called 'second nature'. Georg Lukács, for instance, speaks about the phenomenological naturalness of the products of exchange society. In the fourth essay of *History and Class Consciousness* – "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" – Lukács argues that a society which operates through exchange economics transforms products from being the expression of the producer's "organic necessity"[23] into abstract entities – 'things' – separated from the producer. Ideally, productive activity however should be understood as the fulfilment of human self-realization, but through the requirements of an exchange economy, a *qualitative* character of human life (production) is reduced to a fragmentation of *quantitative* realities.[24] This is nothing less than the process of reification. Reification can only be a reality for human beings, however, when the distortion involved no longer looks like a distortion, when, in fact, it comes to seem natural. In its alleged naturalness reification has, Lukács claims, objective and subjective dimensions.[25] *Objectively*, the world appears to be governed *naturally* by these reifying laws to the extent that they are apparently merely discovered by the individual, and they appear also to be unalterable. Hence society in its current form comes to seem natural in that

it is composed of discreet and disconnected individuals whose primary interaction is that of economic exchange. *Subjectively*, the individual is deformed by reification to the extent that she now perceives her proper activities determined in terms of a society governed by quantitative laws. The subject as producer reflects in herself the fragmentation of the rationally produced object. She takes on the rules of rationalized production, and must therefore deny her idiosyncrasies in order to function consistently. The result, Lukács concludes, is that the subject no longer stands – as she once did – as "the authentic master of the process", but rather as its servant.[26]

Adorno is quite influenced by this. He too is convinced that society is 'semblance' in which its mechanisms have taken on the character of something natural, something given. In this regard Adorno claims that "the hardening of bourgeois society into something impenetrably and inevitably natural is its immanent regression".[27] But society is not natural; it requires special philosophical tools with which to open up this semblance of naturalness. Adorno claims, in inverted terms, that "that with which negative dialectics penetrates its hardened objects is possibility..."[28]

The implications of according philosophical authority to the given is that one simply endorses what has been constructed. And this, indeed, makes the very concept of givenness into a tool of ideology. It is a replacement of questions about what might be – possibility – with adumbrations of what immediately appears. Adorno cites irrationalism as a position with precisely this ideological dimension: "[Irrationalism] has lost all claims to make sense out of the empirical world which presses in upon it, and becomes resigned to 'the living' as a blind and unenlightened concept of nature..."[29] Its resignation to 'the living' is its irrational – non-intellectual – acceptance of what is there. But it is not only the immoderate irrationalist position that contains this ideological dimension. In fact it is along similar lines that positivist sociology is famously criticized by Adorno. He holds that empirical sociology develops a series of concepts which it takes to be suited to a description of the phenomenon, society. But this phenomenon is taken at face value with the consequence that, Adorno alleges, purely descriptive categories end up advancing a compliance with the given, rather than a critical stance. This form of sociology, the accusation goes, is merely the manipulation of categories which 'objectify' reality as it appears – that is, support the illusion if the 'second' nature of society – without any question about the structures and forces which give rise to that reality. Clearly such a notion of social interpretation excludes the notion of critical theory. Adorno claims

that the scientist methodology adopted by empirical sociology explains its superficial procedure: "Thought assumes this constraining character through unthinking identification with formal logical processes".[30] It is thus a derogation of reason, and not the result of excessive and real enlightenment – as it might see itself – but, as Adorno puts it , "of too little".[31] But the scientization of philosophical thought, Adorno charges, develops only where the notion of the given is assumed, and this assumption leaves only the question of what method can best reflect this given:

> Since the sciences' irrevocable farewell to idealistic philosophy, the successful sciences are no longer seeking to legitimize themselves otherwise than by a statement of their method. Their self-exegesis makes a *causa sui* of science and accepts itself as given and thereby sanctions its currently existing form....[32]

> The reified nature (*Dinghaftigheit*) of the method, its inherent tendency to nail down the facts of the case, is transferred to its objects... as if they were things in themselves and not hypostatized entities.[33]

It is clear, then, that Adorno regards the notion of a 'social' given as thoroughly suspicious. But the often invoked 'givens' of philosophy are subject to critique. In even purely philosophical cases, Adorno thinks, we can expose what is allegedly given as in fact constructions. For instance, one of the most important criticisms he makes of Kant concerns the idea of intuition as the fundamental relation of the subject to the given. Intuition is supposed to be a neutral passive act, in contrast with the application of the categories. However, Adorno's complex critique is that ultimately the notion of what is given in so-called intuitions turns out to be already structured within the systematics of idealism. That is, the proposed openness of intuition to what there is is not actually permitted by actual theory of intuition because intuition is an element of transcendental idealism, a theory which, according to Adorno controversially, is ultimately a version of subjective idealism. In this way, indeed, the philosophical notion of the given coincides with the social illusion of the given: both are pre-structured[34]:

> The contradiction is linguistically indicated by the nomenclature 'pure intuition' for space and time. Intuition as immediate sense-certainty, as givenness in the

> figure of the subject, names a type of experience, which precisely as such cannot be 'pure' and independent of experience. Pure intuition is a square circle, experience without experience.[35]

So the search for a given is in this case a dogmatic division of experience into elements which are designed to suit the architecture of the philosophical system. However, it is a specious construction committed as it is to an inevitability unsustainable notion (i.e. pure intuition). The notion of purity will always be undermined by the reality that meanings are mediated: meanings do not signify anything except in so far as they are part of the process of thought which involves scrutiny and interpretation and not passive endorsement. The principle of mediation means then that any notion of givenness as what is simply there disintegrates. Adorno writes:

> There is nothing that is not mediated, and yet, as Hegel emphasized, mediation must always refer to some mediated thing, without which there would be no mediation. That there is no mediated thing without mediation, on the other hand, is a purely privative and epistemological fact, the expression of our inability to determine 'something' without mediation, and little more than the tautology that to think something is to think.[36]

And this has application obviously enough to philosophy and sociological investigations of society. Mediation specifically denies that there is anything which simply is. It entails that what is available in experience involves its relations to other things and to other concepts. But if what is allegedly given disintegrates under examination, being ultimately constructions, how are Adorno's own claims to access of something like 'the given' to be explained?

Adorno's Way Out

The difficulty that the three positions considered here – (*1*) that idealism is essentially correct about the cognitive composition of our world; (*2*) that in experience there is an epistemically significant relation to something non-conceptual; (*3*) that the very notion of the given is ideological in character in that it fails to consider the social construction of 'what there is' – seem to leave us with is that (*a*) the notion of the

given disguises the mediated character of what we experience, yet (*b*) the idea that everything is mediated excludes the notion of an experience which is non-conceptual. If Adorno has an over-arching position capable of accommodating all of the three major claims I have examined it must find some way of accounting for the given, which is non-ideological, and also of explaining the given in a way which is non-conceptual. In fact, Adorno does have an important idea which can allow these claims to work systematically, and it is found in his idea of thinking, an idea developed from Hegel.[37]

For Adorno one of the decisively influential parts of Hegel's philosophy is the account of experience set out in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit.* There Hegel attempts to explain the process in which we move away from partiality and towards conclusive knowledge. The term Hegel gives to this process is *experience*. In his own nomenclature he describes experience as the "*dialectical movement of consciousness*".[38] He argues that experience has a discernible rational structure. This means, in effect, that the process of moving from partial to conclusive knowledge is neither haphazard nor random. Each phase of experience is produced by a rational compulsion. Experience does not simply settle at any point which falls short of rationally acceptable knowledge. Rather thought adjusts itself until it is satisfied that it has grasped the object it is attempting to understand. In essence, then, experience is the process which is driven by the rational requirement that we overcome incompleteness and incoherence.

As Hegel presents it experience is a matter for consciousness. That is to say, no element of experience can be explained by realities which are allegedly independent of consciousness. In this regard he makes a further stipulation that consciousness has two elements, an idea that must at first seem extravagant. The idea is, however, simple enough. Judgment typically involves placing elements of experience together under the categories of concept and object. Since it is Hegel's view that in experience concepts and objects are in a more or less satisfactory relationship at any given point it follows that experience is a judicative process. In other words concept and object will at any given point be united in a judgment which expresses either partial or conclusive knowledge. If it is also intra-consciousness then it follows that each element of the judgment must in some way be an element of consciousness. Hegel puts it in the following way: "Consciousness simultaneously *distinguishes* itself from something [the object], and at the same time relates *itself* to it

[by concepts], or, as it is said, this something exists *for* consciousness".[39] The way in which these two elements relate is further specified: concepts are *knowledge* and the object is the *True*. So in experience we aim to develop true knowledge by application to the object of appropriate concepts. These concepts are validated by their capacity to articulate the 'true'.

Without accepting Hegel's idea that experience can lead to conclusive knowledge – the type of knowledge entailed in Hegel's thesis of absolute knowing – Adorno nevertheless endorses Hegel's account of the dynamics of our epistemic activities. An important section of *Negative Dialectics* both bears this out and reveals to us how Adorno uses the Hegelian position to generate a sophisticated account of givenness. In the section "The Object is not a Given" Adorno alludes to Hegel's thought that the "the subject might yield purely, unreservedly to the object, to the thing itself" as containing "a truth about the thinking behaviour-modes of the subject".[40] What Adorno is positing here is that a particular act of thinking – the subject's 'thinking behaviour-modes' – can produce knowledge of the object. Furthermore, this knowledge is knowledge of the object itself. So to follow through with the implications of the Hegelian notion of thinking means that something given is not at the same time transparent, or self-evident. And this dramatically transforms that which is to be considered 'given': its meaning becomes clear only through our acts of conceptualization, through our judgement. Hence Adorno writes:

> What we may call the thing itself (*Sache selbst*) is not positively and immediately at hand. He who wants to know it must think more, not less, than the point of reference of the synthesis of the manifold, which is the same, at bottom, as not to think at all. And yet the thing itself is no thought product. It is non-identity through identity. Such non-identity is not an idea but an adjunct. The experiencing subject strives to disappear in it.[41]

The object, to use Hegel's terminology, is the 'true': it is what is available for thought, but it is not conceptual: conceptuality is the level of determination, of knowledge. Adorno clearly follows this pattern. And in so doing he offers us a model of givenness which is non-conceptual. The task of thinking is to determine this object, to make it part of our knowledge. The process of conceptualization achieves just that. Indeed this later point addresses the question of ideology, and the constraints it places

on our ability to understand: its tendency to fix the given at a point which makes it a feature of nature, a 'second nature'. Adorno's idea is that the given must be thought through, even the given of our somatic experience.[42] And thinking it through, following it by a rational employment of the subject's concepts, is not equivalent to the notion of the underived givens which, as we have seen, Adorno criticizes in the philosophical tradition.

The model of thinking provided by Hegel then about the 'thinking behaviour-modes' of the subject is redeployed by Adorno as his overarching theory and it brings together the three aspects of Adorno's thoughts on givenness. (*1*) The conceptual activity of the subject alone yields knowledge (hence 'we must start with the concept'); (*2*) the object as that which is to be determined though judgement must in a logical sense be non-conceptual (hence to 'refer to non-conceptualities... is characteristic of the concept'). It is non-conceptual yet bears 'mind-invoking' characteristics: the business of our epistemic activities is to determine what these actually are; and (*3*) the problem of ideology arises only when what is given is not subjected to thought, only when, that is, it is taken as authoritative (hence "the thing itself is not positively and immediately at hand. He who wants to know it must think more..."). As Adorno puts this conclusion: "Thought as such, before all particular contents, is an act of negation, of resistance to that which is forced upon it."[43] The given is never given in final form: thought alone determines what the given comprises.

Notes

[1] Theodor W. Adorno, *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 5 (1970) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag), p.35; English translation by Willis Domingo, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p.28.

[2] Nicholas Rescher, "Idealism", in *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford/Malden MA: Blackwells, 1992), p. 187, eds. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa.

[3] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 6 (1973), p.142; English translation by E. B Ashton, *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1973), p.139.

[4] Rescher, "Idealism", p.188.

[5] *Negative Dialektik*, 165; English translation, p.163.

[6] *Negative Dialektik*, 153-4; English translation, pp.150-1.

[7] Interestingly, Adorno seems sometimes to assume that objects have integrity, an idea not suggested by their being the sum total of their parts. They are therefore not contingent bundles, the sum total of what *a subject* happens to think of them. In "The Essay as Form" ["Der Essay als Form", *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 11 (1974), p.11; English translation by B. Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, "The Essay as Form" in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor (Oxford/Malden, Mass.: Blackwells, 2000), p.94] Adorno refers to the "object's expression in the unity of its elements", suggesting, again, the idea of the 'substantiality' of the object.

[8] Norbert Rath brings some of these ideas together rather nicely. He writes: "The negative dialectic remains materialist in that it couples the concept of mediation to the "priority of the object"; mediating thought has not to supply an external communication between object and recipient, but has to

demonstrate the mediations in themselves. Adorno sees in this the possibility of a connection of the idealistic critique of knowledge with a materialist theory of society: a dialectical materialism must conceive the moment of mediation as constitutive for knowledge in general": *Adornos Kritische Theorie: Vermittlungen und Vermittlungsschwierigkeiten* (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zurich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1982], pp.137-8.

[9] *Negative Dialektik*, p.17; English translation, p.5.

[10] *Negative Dialektik*, p.156; English translation, p.153.

[11] *Negative Dialektik*, p.23; English translation, p.11.

[12] *Negative Dialektik*, p.24; English translation, p.12.

[13] *Negative Dialektik*, p.24; English translation, p.12.

[14] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1927), Bxxvi.

[15] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A30/B45.

[16] Anke Thyen notes quite rightly that "non-identity is not simply the opposite of identity, the other of identity" (*Negative Dialektik und Erfahrung: Zur Rationalität des Nichtidentischen bei Adorno* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), p.198), but then goes on to remark that for Adorno "every experience in the medium of reflection encounters something irreducible which cannot be taken in by concepts alone" (p.218). To speak about something not available to concepts, however, is simply to suppose "the opposite of identity".

[17] *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, p.38; English translation, p.30.

[18] *Negative Dialektik*, p.185; English translation, p.184.

[19] *Negative Dialektik*, p.142; English translation, p.139.

[20] *Negative Dialektik*, p.98; English translation, p.91.

[21] *Negative Dialektik*, p.169; English translation, p.167.

[22] Theodor W. Adorno, "Zu Subjekt und Objekt", *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 10.2 (1977), p. 478; English translation by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, "Subject and Object", in *The Adorno Reader*. p.143.

[23] Georg Lukács, trans. Rodney Livingston, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.88.

[24] In *Capital* Marx had also remarked upon this reduction of the social dynamic to a quantitative comparison: "It is nothing but a social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things." Karl Marx, trans. Ernest Mandel, *Capital I* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) p.165.

[25] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p.87.

[26] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p.89.

[27] Theodor W. Adorno, "Einleitung zum *Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*", *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 8 (1972), p.306; English translation by Glyn Adey and David Frisby, "Introduction" in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p.25.

[28] *Negative Dialektik*, p.62; English translation, p.52.

[29] Theodor W. Adorno, "Die Aktualität der Philosophie", *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), p.326; translated by Benjamin Snow, "The Actuality of Philosophy", in *The Adorno Reader*, p.25.

[30] "Einleitung zum *Positivismusstreit*", p.281; English translation, p.2.

[31] Theodor W. Adorno, *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft, Gesammelte Schriften* , Band 10.1 (1977), p.17; English translation by Samuel and Shierry Weber, *Prisms* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass; 1981), p.24.

[32] *Negative Dialektik*, p.81; English translation, p.72.

[33] Theodor W. Adorno, "Soziologie und empirische Forschung", *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 8 (1972), pp.200-201; English translation by Glyn Adey and David Frisby, "Sociology and Empirical Research", in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, p.72.

[34] However Adorno also sees in Kant's critical philosophy an important precedent for the philosophical rejection of the given. He writes: "*Prima philosophia* came to awareness of this in the doctrine of the antinomies in the *Critique of Pure Reason.* The search for the utterly first, the absolute cause, results in infinite regress. Infinity cannot be posited as given with a conclusion, even though this positing seems unavoidable to total spirit. The concept of the given, the last refuge of the irreducible in idealism, collides with the concept of spirit as complete reducibility, viz. with idealism itself. Antinomy explodes the system, whose only idea is the attained identity, which as anticipated identity, as finitude of the infinite, is not at one with itself" [*Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, p.37; English translation, pp.29-30].

[35] *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, p.151; English translation, p.146.
[36] *Negative Dialektik*, p.175; English translation, p.171.
[37] Simon Jarvis draws out further dimensions of Adorno's notion of thinking, specifically 'speculative' thinking in "What is speculative thinking?" (in this collection).
[38] G. W. F. Hegel, trans. A. V. Miller, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.55.
[39] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.52.
[40] *Negative Dialektik*, p.189; English translation, p.188 emended.
[41] *Negative Dialektik*, pp.189-190; English translation, p.189.
[42] See Yvonne Sherratt, "Adorno's Concept of the Self: A Marriage of Freud and Hegelian Marxism" (in this collection) where the relation between the sociality and naturalness of somatic experience is examined.
[43] *Negative Dialektik*, p.30; English translation, p.19.