

ADORNO'S NOTION OF *BEGRIFFSLOSIGKEIT*; AND ITS USE IN UNDERSTANDING MAN'S PERPLEXED RELATION TO NATURE
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Adorno's Negative dialectics can be summarized by the following four theses: (i) Nothing as such satisfies the logical norm of self-identity; formally: there is no x , such that $x=x$ (ND, pp. 156–157). Surprisingly, Adorno seems to deny (ND, p. 145) that this rejection of self-identity originates from Hegel's thesis (appearing, at least, in *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Volume One, Book Two, Chapter Two, Part C, pp. 279–290) that *everything*, i.e., every thing (*Ding*) and every subject matter (*Sache*) is contradictory (*widerspruchsvoll*). (ii) Concepts (*Begriffe*) never strictly match things and the intended subject matter (ND, p. 156). This has two different versions running in opposite directions: (iia) Every concept always represents more than what is intended, i.e., the meaning of any concept necessarily includes more than the speaker intends to say; and simultaneously, (iib) every concept represents less than what is intended, i.e., its meaning never captures all that the speaker intends to say. In other words, the intended thing is, to some extent, always conceptually inaccessible; or the subject matter is always partly ineffable. Therefore, (iii) in our thinking and experience, as well as in the subject matter, there remains a dimension which is non-conceptual (*begriffslos*; *nichtbegrifflich*; ND, p. 141; the 6th Lecture in VND, pp. 95–96: *Abhub des Begriffs*). (iv) Dialetheism: There are true contradictions which are necessary for proper thinking (ND, p. 148). Also this last one is a typically Hegelian thesis, though occasionally, Adorno seems to think that it is only reflexion ("[...]Widersprüchlichkeit ist eine Reflexionskategorie[...]", ND, p. 148), not a thing as such, that is contradictory. (Theses i-iv are derived, at least by and large, from the second Part of ND, pp. 137–207.)

Adorno's relation to wild nature, nature not yet regimented by any concrete human intervention, is interestingly (dialectically) ambivalent. He sees nature both as an enemy zone where the principle of domination has been brutally realized, and associates it to repressive mythos and to desire to return to the origins (for example, in his critic of Wagner's and Stravinsky's music; the progressive vs. regressive ambivalence of mythos is also present in Adorno's I); and as an innocent victim that the bourgeois society has unabashedly exploited, in particular, after the Industrial revolution (as in Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung*). As a solution to this dilemma (and in order to express the ineffability of the idea of 'non-human nature' in general), Adorno suggests that the exploitation of nature echoes the inter-human relations of domination (*Herrschaft*) within the bourgeois society. Therefore, in order to change the latter relations of domination, the former relation has to be changed too (VND, the 6th Lecture, pp. 89–90 in particular). Without a new relaxed relation to nature the inter-human relations of domination, the class antagonism in particular, cannot be dismantled (VND, p. 90): "[...] für eine

im Ernst befreite Vorstellung von der Gesellschaft, die ja immer auch das Verhältnis zwischen Menschen und Natur in sich begreift, eben deshalb auch das Verhältnis zur Naturbeherrschung verändert werden müßte, wenn es nicht sich wieder reproduzieren soll in innergesellschaftlichen Herrschaftsformen.” Let us call this *Adorno's utopia of natural history*.

Begriffslosigkeit is the key notion of Adorno's Negative dialectics. It is also the notion that has to be applied and developed if we try to make an effective philosophical effort toward the realization of the utopia. Adorno extends Freud's theory of neurosis and the unconscious (see, for example, Freud, 1904/1924), and especially the idea of repressed content, in order to make it cover a broad social and political field of problems. In particular, man's relation to nature can be seen as a repression relation in a sense which is analogous with Freud's original notion of *Verdrängung*. There certainly lies something hidden and non-conceptual, if not unconsciously sinister, in the man-nature relationship. According to Adorno's dialectical application of the Freudian idea, repression is a condition for a cluster of symptoms arising from the lack of successful (i.e. conscious) conceptualization (in the sense of the thesis ii above); as to Adorno's fugitive utopia in particular, the lack appears as the inability (caused by repressed desires) to properly conceptualize the man-nature relationship. This has given rise to a *new kind of social antagonism* (in a sense which satisfies the thesis iv) which hasn't been recognized within traditional Marxism.

As a coda, some reservations will be put forward as regards the power of Adorno's notion of nonconceptuality to realize his utopia of natural history. In order to intensify the kind of theorizing that Adorno's view of nonconceptuality represents, an access to genuine *aconceptuality* (of which, see Pylkkö, 1998) is proposed. Experience or thinking is genuinely aconceptual or preconceptual if it cannot, not even in principle, be conceptualized or fully translated into any conscious mode of thinking. Contrary to this, Adorno's non-conceptuality can, in principle if not always in practice, be conceptualized – with the exception, perhaps, of images (*eine unbewußte Bilderwelt*; the 7th Lecture, in VND, pp. 106–107). But it remains somewhat unclear to what extent Adorno would have been willing to commit himself to genuinely aconceptual images. The limited ability of Adorno's notion of non-conceptuality to promote his nature utopia follows mainly from the fact that Adorno formulates his view of nonconceptuality according to Freud's guidelines which are technically oriented and all too optimistic as to the ability of a psychological theory to penetrate and enlighten the area of unconsciousness. It is suggested that the only, though narrow, hope to move toward Adorno's utopia of natural history goes by replacing Adorno's nonconceptuality by genuine aconceptuality.

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