

Adorno's Marx and philosophical terminology

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Adorno's Marx is to be found in his legacy. This is because, despite being present everywhere, Marx appears only indirectly throughout Adorno's work. Adorno alludes often to Marx – in 'The Actuality of Philosophy', *Minima Moralia*, *Negative Dialectics*, *Aesthetic Theory* – but the most sustained attention he gave to Marx appears in transcripts of seminars and lectures. Unfortunately, as he makes clear, Adorno would have hated for these transcripts to become authoritative:

While a text has to provide exact references, lectures are necessarily restricted to the dogmatic assertion of their conclusions. Therefore, the author cannot take responsibility for what is printed here and regards it merely as an aide-mémoire for those who were present at his improvisation and would, of course, like to continue reflecting on the matters examined, based on the modest suggestions conveyed to them. To the author, the fact that there is a universal tendency to record off-the-cuff speeches on tape and then disseminate them is itself a behavioural symptom of the administered world, which seeks to pin down even that ephemeral word whose truth lies in its transience in order to commit the speaker to it. A tape recording is something akin to the fingerprint of the living spirit.¹

Nevertheless, Adorno's lectures have played an integral role in shaping his legacy. Most notably, perhaps, Hans-Georg Backhaus's transcriptions from Adorno's seminar in 1962 – published under the title 'Marx and the Basic Concepts of Sociological Theory' – are credited as a source text for the *Neue Marx Lektüre*, or New Marx Reading, that would emerge from Adorno's doctoral students and would go on to shape large parts of the West German left.² Around the same time, from May 1962 to February 1963, Adorno was giving a lecture course titled 'Philosophical Terminology', where he again addressed Marx's work. In particular, in a lecture on February 7,

1963, he dealt directly with the categories of Marx's critique and unfolded what he called 'Marx's System'. This essay introduces the first English translation of that lecture.

It discusses one of the philosophically idiosyncratic aspects of Adorno's reading of Marx. Namely, Adorno describes the two factors of the commodity, 'use-value' and 'exchange-value' as the 'system-transcendent concept of value' and 'system-immanent concept of value', respectively.³ What follows will note the lecture's significance for the New Reading of Marx that emerged among Adorno's doctoral students, as well as its place in Adorno's Anglophone reception. The bulk of this introduction, however, is dedicated to contextualising how the various terms in the phrase 'system-transcendent concept of value' are constituted in Adorno's own thought. The reading of Marx's value theory, which surfaces in this lecture, emerges from Adorno's fundamental philosophical precepts and method of inquiry. While, of course, essential to understanding the West German Marxist traditions and Western Marxism more broadly, re-examining Adorno's Marx may prove useful for a contemporary Left, as it re-examines its relationship to traditional and critical theories alike.

The Whole is the False

In this lecture, Adorno writes, 'If Marx offers us no "philosophy of nature", so to speak, then this itself, I would think, has a philosophical significance'. Certainly, the same holds true for Adorno's reading of Marx. Precisely how that significance is to be understood has, however, together with the entire legacy of critical theory, become a matter of debate. Two landmark compendiums on Frankfurt School critical theory were re-

cently published within a year of each other. If we allow ourselves to be a bit schematic, we might say that these two companions represent the two main camps of Adorno interpretation: what Chris O’Kane calls the ‘Western–Marxist Interpretation’ and the ‘Habermasian Interpretation’.⁴ Respectively, *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, edited by Werner Bonefeld, Beverley Best and O’Kane himself, was published in 2018; *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, edited by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Axel Honneth, followed in 2019. Perhaps the greatest point of contention between these two critical approaches to the Frankfurt School lies in their relationship to Marx and Marxism.

The Habermasian camp consists of prominent scholars who have played a role in shaping critical theory institutionally, both in Frankfurt and abroad, at least since the 1970s. As opposed to the Routledge collection, edited by figures associated with this tradition, the SAGE editors argue that what the Frankfurt School has to offer, they develop, above all, through reading Marx: ‘At its best, and with reference to Marx, [critical theory] makes the petrified relations dance by uncovering the sheer unrest of life that endows society as a real abstraction with a dynamic, a consciousness and a will, however perverted, in the form of the social object and the social actions that it entails’.⁵ Following the first generation of Adorno and Horkheimer, this tradition was shaped not by Habermas, as Bonefeld, Best and O’Kane argue, but by the ‘New Reading of Marx’ developed by doctoral students of Adorno, most notably Hans-Georg Backhaus, Helmut Reichelt, Hans-Jürgen Krahel and Alfred Schmidt.⁶

In the 1960s, the rise of the New Left brought about several new approaches to Marx. Broadly speaking, in Europe, three major readings arose. In Italy, *Operaismo*, or ‘Workerism’, took hold under the intellectual leadership of Mario Tronti and Raniero Panzieri. Texts like *Workers and Capital* and the journal *Quaderni Rossi* articulated a reading of Marx that viewed labour as taking on a more active role in the dialectic of the capital-relation, to which capital then reacts and recombines. Essential to this tradition is the idea that labour possesses *potenza*, a ‘fructifying vitality’ and ‘form-giving fire’⁷ which must precede capitalist social relations (and, indeed, all social relations).⁸ In France, Althusser and his students developed so-called ‘structural Marxism’, which

interrogated not just the order of the dialectical movement of the capital-relation, but indeed, disassembled more fundamental aspects of Marx’s philosophy – notably, his Hegelianism, his humanism and his materialism. Whereas *operaismo* lead to an emphasis on workers’ autonomy from capital, in effect, structuralist Marxism emphasised the autonomy of intellectual labour from the machinations of history. This reading facilitated an odd marriage between cultural movements in Europe and the U.S., and Maoist party politics not just in France but through the burgeoning Third World.⁹

The students of Adorno and Horkheimer, by contrast, read *Capital* as a critique of political economy, rather than a prescription for alternative systems of social relations.¹⁰ Peter Hudis usefully describes the German New Reading as a kind of ‘objectivist Marxism ... best understood as an analysis of objective forms that assume complete self-determination and automaticity’, in opposition to the ‘subjectivist Marxisms’ coming out of France and Italy.¹¹ The New German Reading, in short, centred Marx’s theory of value and its determination of social forms. All European New Left readings of Marx re-approach *Capital* through the *Grundrisse*, but as Moishe Postone and Helmut Reinecke note in their introduction to the *Grundrisse*’s first English edition, ‘Marx repeatedly points out in the Grundriss[e] that the origins and grounds of class relationships are to be searched for in the germ-form of the commodity’.¹² This reading uniquely insists on the unity of all political and economic forms, as proceeding from the commodity form.¹³ In that way, as Riccardo Bellofiore and Tommaso Redolfi Riva note in their guide to the *Neue Marx-Lektüre* in the pages of this journal, *NML* can also be seen as ‘a long footnote’ to Adorno’s aphorism, its own inversion of Hegel, ‘The whole is the false’.¹⁴ The critique of political economy finds ideology everywhere and its self-image ‘nowhere’.¹⁵

The Marx that emerges from the Frankfurt School and from the New Marx Reading has had a major impact on the recent, post-2008 return to Marx. As opposed to French ‘structuralist’ readings that had bled into post-structuralism, postmodernism and ultimately ‘postmarxism’, West German Marxisms seemed to offer a more philological approach to *Capital* that centred Marx’s theory of value.¹⁶ While scholarly, these readings often did not carry a similar institutional weight to those of the Habermasian camp: many were to be found outside the

academy in the works of independent leftist publishers, collectives and journals like *krisis*, *endnotes*, *Initiative Sozialistisches Forum* and *ça ira-Verlag*, among others. *The SAGE Handbook* crystalises, in this way, an institutional return to Marx as much as it does a reassessment of the Frankfurt School by way of this more Marxological tradition. Western Marxism's influence in academia has grown as postmodern post-Marxism has become less influential. Today's academic Marxism increasingly descends not from Althusser but from Adorno and the New Reading. One reason for this may be that, because the political interpretations of value theory are still being debated, and despite some grotesque attempts to use Marx's theory of value to defend American and Israeli militarism, the West German readings of Marx seem to have a somewhat ecumenical character.¹⁷

In that context, the moments in which Adorno addresses Marx directly take on a special gravity. For example, in his introduction to Backhaus's transcript of Adorno's 1962 summer seminar, O'Kane argues that these notes serve not only as a '*germinus*' of Marxist critical theory, but also as proof that Marxist critical theory is the more faithful and richer interpretation of Adorno's work, contra its institutional 'Habermasian' lineage. The *terminus* of that project, however, is using Adorno to read Marx better, not the other way around. In other words, continuing this project will be a process of finding the edges of Adorno's Marx – where he and other Frankfurt theorists depart not only from 'Traditional Marxism' but indeed from Marxism as a tradition. Part of this effort is already underway in scholarship that interrogates the forms of critique that arose from their activist students as a rebellion against Adorno's and Horkheimer's own political analyses in the 1960s and 1970s, most importantly regarding the Vietnam War and Third World movements.¹⁸

Crucially, historicising the Frankfurt School as a Marxist tradition entails a systematic, immanent critique of Adorno's Marx, rather than treating his interpretation as a kind of sublime absence. Most of that work must happen by grappling with the contradictions within Adorno's own legacy. For example, how do the tensions between, say, Postone's and Bonefeld's 'anti-nationalist' and Angela Davis's and Hans-Jürgen Krahls's 'anti-authoritarian' Marx advance and unfold the historical contradictions within Adorno's work? Why was Adorno's thought, which

so effectively absorbed its own era, then able to be ushered towards Habermasian international liberalism, which in effect argues for an even greater hegemony of Western liberalism, while at the same time giving rise to council communist traditions like Open Marxism and the anti-deutsche movement? Such an undertaking may prove vital to any continuation of critical theory, as the intellectual's role as a 'critical promotive factor' to the proletariat changes once again, to borrow a phrase from Horkheimer.¹⁹ Adorno's scant writings on Marx can help orient our place in the wide-ranging legacy of critical theory.



Some observations about Adorno and Marx have become matters of consensus. Contra the Habermasian reading, Adorno's study of Marx reveals his focus on 'economic objectivity'. Indeed, it is a central premise of the 'Western Marxist' reading of Adorno that critical theory offers a critique of society as an 'economic object'. Commodity fetishism blocks the theorisation of a human 'social subject' as relations between people become objectified, reified.²⁰ Peter Osborne argues that the refusal to theorise a social subject led to a 'liberal' emphasis on aesthetic and individual subjectivity:

This historically contradictory liberalism would become

the baseline of Adorno's political thought, and the political rationale for his enduring defense of the philosophy of the subject as a philosophy of consciousness, despite an increasing emphasis on the structural constitution of social experience – with value acting as a kind of transcendental social subject–function – in his reading of Marx's critique of political economy in the early 1960s.²¹

The new translation of Adorno's lecture confirms a defining contradiction of Adorno's reception, 'despite' his ruthless ideology criticism. A negative-dialectical interpretation of Marx (as opposed, perhaps, to a 'dialectical' interpretation) calls for a political subjectivity that is not immanent to but transcendent of value. Adorno wants to preserve in his work some semblance of normativity, in the face of wrong life – of the economic objectivity of value and its historical particularities under 'late capitalism'. For the Habermasians, that normativity means resuscitating the Enlightenment project of reasoned debate,²² while for the more Marxian critical theorists, that normativity refers to a concealed humanism of 'communist individuals', sustained through material suffering and critical thought that can be realised only when liberated from the rule of abstractions.²³

Adorno's newly translated lecture on Marx helps us understand how these many political interpretations of Adorno happen not just 'despite' his interest in Marx's materialism, but indeed *through* his interpretations of Marx. In the lecture, Adorno uses Marx (and particularly his concepts of 'utility' and 'productivity') to separate the concept of economic objectivity from human subjectivity. Adorno accomplishes this by revising core philosophical concepts in Kant and Hegel, which his reading of Marx brings into sharp relief. In short, Adorno encourages us to be Hegelian in our study of value and Kantians in our rebellion against it. The rest of this essay argues this point by contextualising the newly translated lecture. I offer an extended gloss of perhaps the lecture's most interesting terms: that is, Adorno's description of use-value and exchange-value as the 'system-transcendent concept of value' and 'system-immanent concept of value', respectively. While the lecture will not upend our understanding of Adorno, his analysis of Marx – and these descriptors in particular – provide valuable insight into how critical theory has been driven in such contradictory directions, both of which define themselves in opposition to the

imperfect and heterogenous history of Marxist struggle.

System

Adorno's lecture clarifies that his rejection of 'Marxism' (or 'DIAMAT', Adorno's term for Dialectical Materialism as an official party ideology) as an orthodoxy is inseparable from his rejection of readings that consider 'Marxism' or dialectical materialism a *closed philosophical 'system'*. In the very first lecture of *Philosophical Terminology*, on May 8, 1962 at the Goethe University Frankfurt, Adorno clarified that his approach in these lectures would be characteristically constellatory:

The philosophical approach, with which I would like to familiarize you, is to be found in the thinking that is not bound to systematics in the conventional sense – because when one gives an introduction to philosophy by taking on single words and concepts, one obviously also accepts as part of the deal the randomness and isolation of these words or concepts.²⁴

The method of this lecture course, he explains, would be to work through the 'appearance' of the isolation and randomness of these concepts and philosophies to illuminate their essential connections – without attempting to comprehend completely those essences in a static or total sense. Attempting to comprehend 'totality', Adorno considers a form of closed-off identity-thinking, which he associates with idealism.

'Systems' and 'systematic thought' are keys to understanding how, for Adorno, Marxism betrayed Marx's philosophy. As Adorno put it in *Negative Dialectics*, 'The system is the belly turned mind, and rage is the mark of each and every idealism'.²⁵ For Adorno, systematic thinking is the way the ego insists on its identity with the 'not-I', such that nothing eludes its grasp; he compares system-thinking to a predator stalking and devouring its prey. At the same time, Adorno notes, systems are necessary for philosophy's effort to elude human hegemony and domination; Adorno credits Benjamin with pointing out that philosophy without a system is not possible and that those 'existentialist' philosophies claiming to be anti-systemic merely disguise their even hungrier, even more rageful systematics.²⁶ And so in his *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, Adorno calls his own philosophy a 'secularised system',²⁷ which he revises into an 'anti-system' in the final text of *Negative Dialectics* – but an

‘anti-system’ in the sense that an anti-hero is still a hero.²⁸ There he clarifies:

The systematic trend lives on in negation alone. The categories of a critique of systems are at the same time the categories in which the particular is understood. What has once legitimately transcended particularity in the system has its place outside the system. The interpretive eye which sees more in a phenomenon than it is – and solely because of what it is – secularizes metaphysics. Only a philosophy in fragment form would give their proper place to the monads, those illusory idealistic drafts. They would be conceptions, in the particular, of the totality that is inconceivable as such.²⁹

Adorno seeks to transform the concept of the system and thus to unleash from within its generative power to connect particulars without consuming them.

Despite being such an important concept in his work, ‘system’ does not appear as one of the terms in *Philosophical Terminology* until the very end of the sequence, when Adorno arrives at Marx. For Adorno, Marx originates the ‘anti-system’ and models a philosophy of negation. In his February 1, 1963 lecture, the one immediately preceding the translated text, he finally addresses ‘system’ as a term, after having used it throughout the course. Adorno argues that ‘the philosophical system first and foremost aims to be a *deductive system*. It wants to be derived from a single point and not just understood as the ordering, however logically structured and complete in itself, of a given material’.³⁰ Adorno goes on to say that Kant’s is a possible exception here: for, while everything in the Kantian system can be said to emanate out of the Transcendental Aesthetic, at least Kant attempted to impose limits, a ‘block’, on what could be known. It is not until Marx that such apt philosophical modesty reappears, for Adorno, transformed into a kind of audacity. Marx’s system, he argues, has a ‘peculiarly ironic and fractured character’.³¹ Marx uses the Kantian ‘limit’ which refuses to pursue things in themselves as a barrier insulating critical thought from the wrongness of the actually existing world. Thus, for Adorno, Marx’s immanent critique of political economy was simultaneously an immanent critique of idealist systems, ‘especially that last and greatest, the Hegelian system’.³²

What we get then on 7 February, in the 42nd lecture of this series, is an astounding and idiosyncratic reading of Marx’s theory of value. Here, Adorno describes

the ‘two factors’ of the commodity, which begin Marx’s critique of political economy and from which his entire analysis of capitalism proceeds, as a ‘system immanent concept of value’ and a ‘system transcendent concept of value’. Adorno calls the ‘system immanent concept of value’ what Marx terms ‘exchange-value’ or ‘the value-form’. He explains, ‘Marx’s entire analysis of modern society proceeds from the analysis of the commodity form of the exchange-object’. That is, from the perspective of the commodity not as an object of use but as an object of exchange, Marx is able to deduce the rest of the categories of his critique, the remainder of his system as presented in *Capital*. ‘Value’ is the category out of which all other categories and concepts emerge, the single point from which the *completed bourgeois system*³³ – rather than a transcendent system of thought – is ‘derived’. And yet, for Adorno, Marx presents a ‘peculiarly ironic and fractured’ system insofar as that starting point is not just ‘doubled’ in a Hegelian sense,³⁴ but is itself a moment of lasting non-identity.

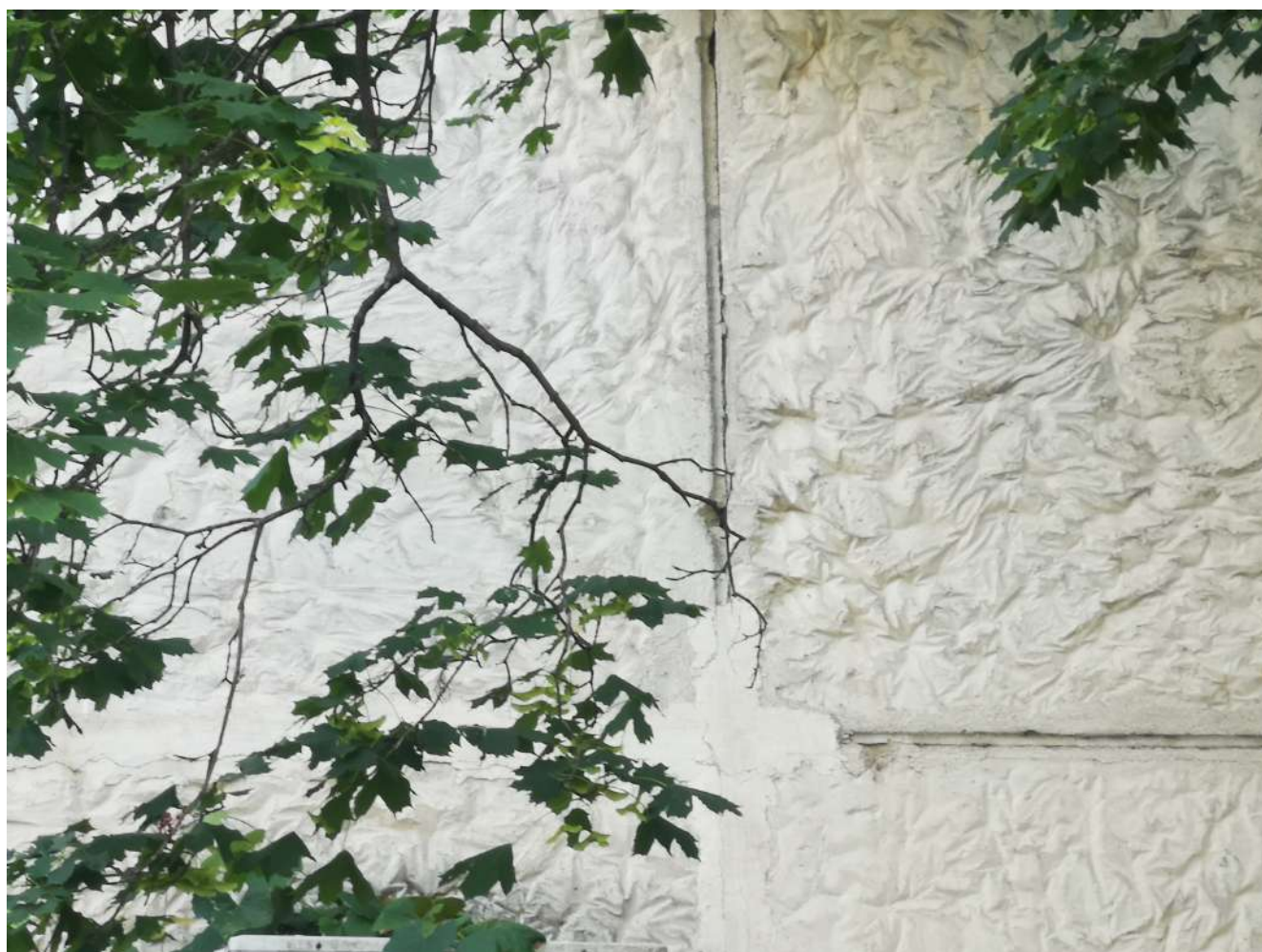
Concept

Throughout the lecture, Adorno points out that Marx’s core concepts often bear a double meaning: one ‘according to the rules of society’ and a second, more general, even romantic meaning, where the latter enables the critique of the former. For example, ‘productivity’ has a technical meaning with respect to commodity production and the valorisation process. Many workers are not ‘productive’ in this strict sense, as their labour belongs properly to the sphere of circulation and not production. And yet, Adorno notes, Marx understands that Milton was ‘productive’ in a higher sense in producing *Paradise Lost*. Marx’s ‘materialism’, for Adorno, bears a similar double meaning. On the one hand, ‘materialism’ refers to various materialist traditions, which Adorno’s *Philosophical Terminology* lectures trace back to the presocratic philosophers, those who believe in either the animacy of material things or who reduce all intellectual and social life to material processes. On the other hand, for Adorno, dialectical materialism understands material reality as something ‘mediated in itself, as something mediated through society’. Marx’s materialism is a critique of materialism: it recognises the materiality of ideas, and as such calls for the ‘end of materialism’.

It is certainly not idiosyncratic to recognise the doubling of Marxian concepts, as Adorno does in this lecture. Marx explicitly foregrounds the doubleness of his concept of value: the first chapter of *Capital* centres on the 'two factors of the commodity', 'use-value' and 'exchange-value'. It is, however, unique to map that doubling onto the relationship between immanent and transcendental critique, as is the case with Adorno's description of the two factors of the commodity as the 'system transcendent concept of value' and 'system immanent concept of value', respectively.³⁵ For example, by contrast, in his influential essay 'From the Commodity to Capital: Hegel's Dialectic in Marx's *Capital*', Jairus Banaji notes that through its analysis of the commodity form, 'the beginning [of *Capital*] is a movement between two points of departure'.³⁶ For Banaji, value is, on the one hand, the ground from which Marx will develop the rest of his critique; on the other hand, value is also the 'abstract essence' of the entire presentation. It is both the first 'moment' of capital and the 'totality reflected-into-itself'

– mirroring 'becoming' and 'being' in Hegel's opening to the *Science of Logic*.

Unlike Banaji, Adorno reads the dual character of Marx's concept of value in a decidedly Kantian way. Indeed, here and throughout his lectures, Adorno's understanding of conceptual doubling recalls Horkheimer's, from his 1937 essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory'.³⁷ For Adorno, as for the early Horkheimer, Marx's concepts are 'doubled' not in terms of a concrete and abstract purposiveness, but rather in terms of 'purposiveness' and 'obscurity'. For Adorno, Marx's dialectics are negative insofar as his theory of value provides not just two conceptual 'points of departure', but in fact, a mechanism of conceptual capture and a suggestion of what lies beyond conceptual capture. 'Use value', for Adorno, is 'system transcendent' insofar as it is a concept, but while still suggesting an outside to value's conceptual reach. The difference is subtle but crucial: Adorno's reading of value as a 'concept' centres on this tendentious reading of conceptual 'doubleness' or 'brokenness'.



A few months earlier, in Lecture 21, Adorno had pointed out that Marx's so-called system, like Hegel's, stems from the doubleness of concepts. However, Adorno argues that Marx, unlike Hegel, observed that this brokenness entailed a limit to what philosophy can 'know'. Adorno argues – controversially – that Hegel places at the centre of his system the contradiction between the transcendental subject of post-Kantian idealism and an 'I-ness' (*Ichheit*) that cannot be derived from pure spirit. Marx, by contrast, centres the brokenness of social objectivity, Adorno claims:

Exchange-value – indeed, exchange in general – exists only insofar as concepts exist. In this respect, the moment of the concept, i.e., the non-material [*nichtstoffliche*] moment, inheres not only in the construction of concepts nor simply in the observer, but equally in the matter of the social objectivity itself, which Marx seeks to analyze.³⁸

'Exchange-value' is 'system immanent' insofar as it describes a mode of social objectivity immanent to capital. Similarly, to understand use-value as the 'system-transcendent concept of value', we first have to understand that it is a concept, contra 'DIAMAT', which misunderstands 'use-value' as something 'material' or 'natural', and so beyond concepts altogether. Adorno refers to these sorts of materialism as 'vulgar', 'hedonistic' or 'anthropological'. Instead, in Marx's broken system, 'use-value' or the 'natural form' of the commodity negates both the bourgeois idealism of value and the nominalistic, conceptless, or one-size-fits-all materialism by gesturing toward a concept of nature and a mode of social objectivity that cannot be finalised. To this end, Adorno cites Marx's repudiation of Lassalle in *Critique of the Gotha Program* and even ends his lecture with an uncited reference to Lenin's 'Conspectus of Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy': 'Intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism'.³⁹

If this analysis – which Adorno substantiates with a discussion of 'productive and unproductive labour', and Marx's famous discussion of Milton's as a silkworm producing silk – seems rudimentary for readers of *Radical Philosophy*, it is no doubt because Adorno's reading of Marx has so profoundly influenced our tradition. This reading is clearly present in the first chapter of *Capital*: 'The value of the linen as a congealed mass of human labour can be expressed only as an 'objectivity' [*Ge-*

genständlichkeit] a thing which is materially different from the linen, itself and yet common to the linen and all other commodities'.⁴⁰ However, it remains controversial even within Western Marxism, probably because it cannot be immediately politicised. Adorno's reading refuses to take any political mandate from what ecosocialists would call the 'metabolic rift' with nature.⁴¹ In Lecture 41, from which the quotation above is excerpted and which immediately precedes the translated lecture included in this issue, Adorno alludes to his student Alfred Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (1962). Schmidt's argument that Marx calls for a mastery of the mastery of nature certainly seems to influence Adorno's analysis.⁴² Rather than mandating a politics of ecosocialism or politics centred around the supposedly vital, form-giving power of labour, Adorno's Marx – particularly through the concept of use-value – articulates anti-capitalist politics as a problem, not a solution.

Because it refuses to ontologise 'nature' and 'labour', Adorno's reading of Marx has engendered a wide range of analyses of the concept of class itself. For Adorno, DIAMAT orthodoxy has a highly reductive, one-sided reading of Marx, wherein the immediate, natural form of use-value must be liberated from exchange-value. One could imagine, therefore, that a critical approach might seek to supplement Marx's dialectical, systematic analysis of capital with a dialectical, systematic analysis of 'the political economy of the working class'. Michael Lebowitz, for example, calls for exactly that in *Beyond Capital*, where he argues that *Capital* tells only half the story and that we should fill in Marx's 'missing book on wage labour' to develop a dialectical understanding of necessary and social needs.⁴³ For Adorno, however, the concept of use-value precludes systematic thinking: it 'transcends' systematicity. It performs a negative labour, hinting at but unable to realise a different, human system of form determination.

We get such a great variety in 'value-form politics' because it is so difficult to understand what it might mean to 'transcend' systems. It is clear enough that understanding the 'system immanent concept of value' requires close attention to Marx's Hegelianism.⁴⁴ To 'transcend' the Hegelian movement of the value-form, however, for Adorno, requires a moment of real fracture, a true break. As a result, the 'value-form' tradition seemingly unites a wide variety of approaches that are

Hegelian in their reading of *Capital* but more Kantian in their ‘anti-capitalism’. In effect, ‘value-form theory’ becomes portable enough to accommodate the splintering off of various tendencies according to their approach to the problem of ‘natural form’: for example, endnotes’ value-form *plus* the ‘immediate communist measures’ or ‘communisation’;⁴⁵ Robert Kurz’s value-form *plus* the ‘ontological break’ of ‘new embryonic forms’⁴⁶ Krahls’ ‘value-form *plus* propaganda of the deed’;⁴⁷ Postone’s value-form *plus* Arendt’s ‘faculty of human action’;⁴⁸ or value-form *plus* ‘council communism’ in the case of Friends of the Classless Society, Werner Bonefeld, and others. The list could go on, where ‘value-form’ describes the internal movement and historical dynamism of capital’s concept, and the ‘politics’ or ‘anti-politics’ describes the conceptual precondition we hope to make a result – non-fetishised, non-value-form-determined, social relations. ‘Transcendence’, in this context, often takes on an ‘immediate’ character because such politics reject the notion that capital could immanently mediate the dissolution of its own concept. The concept of ‘use-value’, rather, bears a particularly dangerous form of fetishism, which in this tradition is always connected to the fetishised and foreshortened forms of anti-capitalism.⁴⁹

Transcendent

‘Transcendent’ is perhaps the trickiest word in the phrase ‘system-transcendent concept of value’ because Adorno uses it somewhat idiosyncratically. Adorno gave a lecture course on Kant’s First Critique in 1959 that is illuminating to think with here. The overarching goal of that course is to ‘revise’ Kant’s concept of the ‘transcendental’.⁵⁰

Adorno begins with Kant’s definition of transcendental as a kind of thinking that investigates ‘basic concepts’ or ‘basic forms of a conceptual or intuitive kind that enables our reason’.⁵¹ Throughout his discussion, though, Adorno gives reasons for why the transcendental cannot be a static ‘realm’ conceived in purely logical, psychological or metaphysical terms. Conceiving of the transcendental as a realm in which ‘ideas have their being’, Adorno argues, sets post-Kantian philosophy on a futile search for Absolute identity. Instead, in Adorno’s revision, to transcend is to ‘acknowledge the fact of non-identity’⁵² – in other words, to achieve some awareness

and acceptance of the fact that no concept is autonomous.



Image credit: Oliver Sutherland

This is a very odd way to revise, so as to champion, Kant. Adorno uses a strange economic metaphor to illustrate what he means by non-identical: ‘We may say that the sphere of the transcendental is a no man’s land, or more precisely it is not a land at all if by that we mean something with fixed features. It is rather a gigantic credit system in which the final IOU cannot be redeemed’.⁵³ Adorno uses debt to explain his heterogeneous or ‘non-identical’ revision of the transcendental. Elsewhere, he describes this project as ‘the realization of universality in the reconciliation of differences’⁵⁴ or ‘convict[ing] totality of nonidentity with itself – of the nonidentity it denies, according to its own concept’.⁵⁵

More philosophically salient in this image of the ‘transcendental sphere’ in a non-identical sense is actually Adorno’s reading of *Hegel*. In the final lectures of *Philosophical Terminology*, Adorno ends not with Marx

but by settling accounts with Hegel and Kant. He admits that his (and Horkheimer's) Hegel is idiosyncratic:

This would, however, be one of the strongest arguments for the thesis, for which, as you know, Horkheimer and I advocate very emphatically, that Hegel is – to a much greater extent than is conceded in the usual history of philosophy, which simply adheres to the crudest theses – a Kant come into his own.⁵⁶

The Frankfurt School's Hegel is not a critique of Kant, but 'a Kant come into his own'.⁵⁷

Hegel completes Kant's project, for Adorno, in the sense that 'There is no absolute limit, no absolute contradiction between immanence and transcendence'.⁵⁸ Though Adorno had first introduced it more than a decade earlier in 'Cultural Criticism and Society',⁵⁹ and certainly it appears in his studies of Kant,⁶⁰ this insight, in fact, concludes *Philosophical Terminology*. In some ways, Adorno's analysis of Marx supports the larger project of synthesising Kant and Hegel, transcendence and immanence. Equipped with his revised image of the sphere of transcendence as a giant credit system, Adorno argues that the interdependence of concepts and the non-identity of the Absolute undergird all investigations into their 'things-in-themselves'.

'The Mask Of Truth'

We can now finally use the phrase 'system-transcendent concept of value' as a window onto Adorno's reading of Marx. Use-value is 'system-transcendent' insofar as it is a concept, yes, but it is not one that could serve as an 'emancipatory embryonic [or 'germ'] form' that so many value-form theorists seek.⁶¹ However, to remain negative and not purely fetishistic, the concept of use-value need only alert us to value's being as both real and untrue, rather than supplanting it with a new, true reality. It is here that Adorno via Kant introduces aesthetic judgement. Ultimately, for Adorno, any political interpretation of use-value would be an ephemeral instantiation of its deeper, philosophical import, as an object of aesthetic judgement.

Only through aesthetic judgments can we experience the incompleteness of our basic concepts as a kind of truth. 'What is revolutionary in the *Critique of Judgment*', Adorno writes, 'is in keeping with the whole of his subjectivism, which plays a significant part in his ob-

jective effort to save objectivity through the analysis of subjective elements'.⁶² In short, through aesthetic pleasure and the liquidation of the 'I', we can come to terms with the truth of the credit system. Thus, for Adorno, art itself becomes the 'secularization of transcendence'.⁶³ Aesthetic judgments make objectivity accessible to subjectivity while maintaining the primacy of non-identity, of negativity, of the object.

Aesthetic Theory, therefore, introduces a link between the 'transcendent' concept of use-value and the artwork as an object of secular transcendence. When approached critically, for Adorno, use-value presents a relationship to appearance and fetishism that goes beyond commodity fetishism. Artworks accomplish this by being autonomous, 'useless':

The truth content of artworks, which is indeed their social truth, is predicated on their fetish character. The principle of heteronymy, apparently the counterpart of fetishism, is the principle of exchange, and in its domination is masked. Only what does not submit to that principle acts as the plenipotentiary of what is free from domination; only what is useless can stand in for the stunted use value ... In the context of total semblance, art's semblance of being-in-itself is the mask of truth ... Although the magic fetishes are one of the historical roots of art, a fetishistic element remains admixed in artworks, an element that goes beyond commodity fetishism.⁶⁴

The commodity's 'natural form' transcends value by raising questions: what makes a form 'natural' or 'unnatural'? How are forms determined? In aesthetic judgement, asking these questions through formal analysis and coming up with rules that society does not impose amounts to a form of pleasure. For Adorno, via Kant, this playful purposiveness without purpose undergirds all thinking. This is already present in Adorno's 1963 lecture when he reads Marx's analysis of Milton as discussed above. Labour that is not subsumed by the valorisation process, Adorno argues, dreams of a system of natural form production that cannot be realised – except in accordance with the lawless law of beauty.

Revisiting Adorno's Marx offers no final word on whether or not critical theory is best understood as a Marxist tradition; this newly translated lecture will not help litigate how Marx should be read. However, it may illuminate the philosophical origins of the intellectual and political histories with which this essay began. In

short, Adorno's unique concept of immanence and transcendence has fostered a philological, Hegelian reading of Marx accompanied by a more transcendental, Kantian approach to politics – often flying under the sign of 'antipolitics'. Adorno did not state a clear preference for Kant over Hegel, in the way many Adornians do.⁶⁵ In fact, in the final lecture of *Philosophical Terminology*, Adorno affirms the 'primacy of immanent criticism'.⁶⁶ And yet, it is difficult not to place Adorno's 'anti-totality' revision of Kant and Hegel within a broader context of postwar anti-Hegelianism, which equates thinking totality with totalitarian thinking.

This 'anti-totality' criticism is certainly easy to view sympathetically when historicised in the broader context of anti-Marxism and the failures of Stalinism. However, today, as crises mount and Habermasian critical theory in the academy reinterrogates its roots in Marx and Adorno, we must interrogate the limits of that surviving term. How has the critique of fetishised and foreshortened anti-capitalism been transformed into a limit, rather than a ground for solidarity? Writing against tendencies in criticism that revel in the sublimity of their objects, Colleen Lye and Chris Nealon observe, 'This is the irony of the various 'anti-critical' and affirmative turns in recent literary study: they are rhetorically anti-Marxist, but they are enabled by a Kantian turn to epistemological modesty that was worked out by Western Marxists themselves'.⁶⁷

Western Marxists have begun to reconsider this modesty, as the politics of possibility are no longer possible. Adorno and Marx are each indispensable today, but for different reasons. Adorno is not the final authority on Marx, but rather a major chapter in Marxist intellectual history. His work demonstrates the urgent task of transforming the tradition to which you belong in the face of new conditions and contradictions. The need to revise the Frankfurt School is not limited to Adorno's particular opinions on jazz, the student movement or Third World national liberation struggles.⁶⁸ It includes reckoning with 'negative dialectics' as a methodological reworking of Adorno's reading of Marx as an inheritor of German Idealism. The *Neue Marx-Lektüre* caught the imagination of Marxists over the last 15 years for good reason: compared to other New Left and post-68 strains of Western Marxism, the *NML* and 'value-form theory' more broadly has the capacity to help us think about the historical movement of Marx's economic categories, in-

cluding class, via capitalism's essential logic. Still, over time, its historical innovations may obscure more than they clarify of the broader historical materialist tradition. In other words, an interrogation of Adorno's Marx continues to serve as a crucible through which contemporary communist thought must pass.

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Notes

1. Adorno, *Fighting Antisemitism Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2025).
2. See Chris O'Kane, 'Introduction' as well as O'Kane and Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson's translation of Hans-Georg Backhaus's seminar transcript, 'Theodor W. Adorno on Marx and the basic concepts of sociological theory', in Werner Bonefeld and Chris O'Kane, eds, *Adorno and Marx* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2020), 225–252. My translation of this lecture is, in part, a complement to the Backhaus transcript.
3. In *Capital*, Marx describes the two factors as 'Use-value and Value, (Substance of Value, Magnitude of Value)'. In this lecture, Adorno only briefly notes the crucial conceptual distinction between 'value' and 'exchange-value'.
4. Bonefeld and O'Kane, eds, *Adorno and Marx*, 226.
5. Werner Bonefeld, Beverley Best and Chris O'Kane, 'Introduction' in *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, eds. Bonefeld et al. (London: SAGE, 2018), 11.
6. Frank Engster includes Hans-Jürgen Krahel as an initiator of the *Neue Marx-Lektüre*, which seems convincing. I do not include him here, as most do not, because his politics made Krahel such an outlier. However, closer readings of Krahel interest in *Capital*'s presentation as a 'logic of essence' would demand his inclusion as a progenitor of *NML* for not just historical but also philosophical reasons. See Frank Engster, 'Krisis, What's Crisis?' *Radical Philosophy* 195 (Jan/Feb 2016), 48–51.
7. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 646, 361.
8. There is, of course, much more to say about this tradition and the lineage of autonomism it engendered. Because workerism centres the moment in which workers confront capital as a moment of political possibility, it fostered a political emphasis on shop-floor organising worker inquiry, and a de-emphasising of the party apparatus. For more, see Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).
9. See Nick Nesbitt, *The Concept in Crisis: Reading*

Capital Today (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), and Colleen Lye, 'Identity Politics, Criticism, and Self-Criticism' in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 119:4 (2020), 701–14.

10. The exception here is Hans-Jürgen Krahel, who was an activist and leader of the West German Student Movement. For that reason, Reichelt and Backhaus would not count Krahel as a serious Marx reader. See Emanuel Kapfinger, 'Die Konstitution der Naturgesetze des Kapitalismus' in *Für Hans-Jürgen Krahel*, eds. Gerber et al. (Berlin: mandelbaum verlag, 2022), 241. Still, as mentioned in note 6, Krahel belongs in this company.

11. Peter Hudis, *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 9.

12. Moishe Postone and Helmut Reinicke. 'On Nicolaus 'Introduction' to the Grundrisse' in *Telos* 22 (1974), 142. In the new lecture translation that this essay accompanies, Adorno refers to *Grundrisse* in his discussion of productive labour.

13. Another distinguishing post of this reading is its so-called 'monetary theory of value'. These theorists reread the early chapters of *Capital* to argue that Marx's theory of value departs radically from Ricardo's via his theory of money. In their view, the value-form does not merely measure labour, as if it were a natural, given substance, but rather, it asserts a system of measure and commensurability that far exceeds the shop floor. See Frederick Harry Pitts, 'Value-Form Theory, Open Marxism, and the New Reading of Marx' in *Open Marxism* 4, eds. Dinerstein et al. (London: Pluto Press, 2020): 63–75.

14. Riccardo Bellofiore and Tommaso Redolfi Riva, 'The Neue Marx-Lektüre', *Radical Philosophy* 189 (February 2015), 34. See Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978), 50.

15. Cf. Richard Gunn and Adrian Wilding, 'Recognition and Revolution' in *Open Marxism* 4, 27.

16. This focus on Marx's value theory popularised the term 'value-form theory', which refers largely to this tradition, but can be somewhat imprecise, insofar as 'value theory' has become increasingly integral to what people mean when they say Marxism.

17. Our global descent into rightwing extremism – particularly in the U.S. and Israel – has thrown a wrench into this shift in Adorno scholarship, and the internal contradictions of this more Marxological Adorno scholarship have increasingly come to light. Some of the so-called 'anti-nationalist' or 'anti-German' analyses of concrete historical situations that have emerged from this tradition have been widely criticised on the left for their immediate identification of Third World and Arab nationalisms with German National Socialism, and their support for American, European and Israeli militarism. For more, on this

see Will Stratford, 'Joachim Bruhn's Left-Wing Critique of Anti-Zionism and the Capitalist State in the 1990s: An Intellectual History of the Antideutsche' in *New German Critique* 51:3 (2024), 125–57.

18. See Cecilia Sebastian, 'Occupation as Critique' in *New German Critique* 51:3 (2024), 21–43. For a non-critical account, see Jan Kalk, Jan Sander, Justus Wertmüller and Detlef zum Winkel, 'What Were the Antideutsche?', *Platypus Review* 175 (April 2025), <https://platypus1917.org/2025/04/01/what-were-the-antideutsche/>

19. Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (London: Bloomsbury, 1975), 214. See also Theodor Adorno *Lectures on Negative Dialectics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 44–55.

20. See O'Kane, Best, and Bonefeld, *SAGE Handbook*, 8; Hans-Georg Backhaus, 'Between Philosophy and Science' in *Open Marxism 1: Dialectics and History*, ed. Bonefeld et al. (London: Pluto Press, 1992), 54–93; O'Kane and Bonefeld, 'Introduction' in *Adorno and Marx*, 17–18

21. Peter Osborne, 'Adorno and Marx' in Peter Gordon, ed. *A Companion to Adorno* (Wiley, 2020), 311.

22. For a recent example, see Peter Gordon, *A Precarious Happiness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024).

23. Werner Bonefeld. *Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy: On Subversion and Negative Reason* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–13.

24. Theodor Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteilung IV: Vorlesungen Band 9: Philosophische Terminologie* ed. Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016), 279: 'Der philosophische Ansatz, mit dem ich Sie vertraut machen möchte, liegt in einem Denken, das nicht im herkömmlichen Sinn an Systematik sich bindet; denn wenn man eine Einleitung in die Philosophie gibt, indem man sich an einzelne Worte und Begriffe anschließt, so wird offensichtlich auch die Zufälligkeit und Isoliertheit dieser Worte oder Begriffe mit in den Kauf genommen.'

25. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1983), 23.

26. Adorno, *Lectures in Negative Dialectics*, 37–38. See also 23–32.

27. Adorno, *Lectures in Negative Dialectics*, 39.

28. Adorno *Negative Dialectics*, xx.

29. Adorno *Negative Dialectics*, 28.

30. Theodor Adorno, *Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteilung IV: Vorlesungen: Band 9: Philosophische Terminologie*, eds. Theodor W. Adorno Archiv and Henri Lonitz (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016), 619: 'daß das philosophische System zunächst einmal deduktives System sein will, das heißt, daß es aus einem Punkt abgeleitet sein will, und daß es verstanden werden will nun nicht als die Ordnung, die wie immer auch in sich logisch durchgebildete und vollständige Ordnung eines vorgegebenen Stoffes.'

- 31.** Adorno *Philosophische Terminologie*, 620: 'daß in- folgedessen das Systemcharakter von Marx eben jenen eigentümlich ironischen und gebrochenen Charakter hat.'
- 32.** Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie*, 621: 'zwar eben jenes letzte und großartigste System, das Hegelsche Sys- tem'.
- 33.** Cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 278: 'In the completed bourgeois system every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system'.
- 34.** For an insightful reading of this kind, see Jairus Banaji, 'From Commodity to Capital: Hegel's Dialectic in Marx's *Capital*' in *Value: The Representation of Labour in Capitalism*, ed. Diane Elson (London: Verso, 2015), 14–45.
- 35.** In *Capital*, Marx describes the two factors as 'Use- value and Value, (Substance of Value, Magnitude of Value)'. In this lecture, Adorno does not attend to the crucial con- ceptual distinction between 'value' and 'exchange-value'.
- 36.** Banaji, 'From the Commodity to Capital', 39.
- 37.** 'The two-sidedness of these Kantian concepts, that is, their supreme unity and purposefulness, on the one hand, and their obscurity, unknownness, and impenetrability, on the other, reflects exactly the contradiction filled form of human activity in the modern period', Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 202–203.
- 38.** Adorno *Philosophische Terminologie*, 315–316: 'Tauschwert, Tausch überhaupt gibt es eigentlich nur inso- weit, wie es Begriff gibt, und insofern liegt das Moment des Begriffs, also, wenn Sie wollen, das gerade nichtstoff- liche Moment, nicht nur in der Konstruktion der Begriffe und nicht bloß im Betrachter, sondern ebenso auch in der Sache selbst, in der gesellschaftlichen Objektivität, die Marx zu analysieren sucht'.
- 39.** V. I. Lenin 'Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures On the History of Philosophy: Volume XIV. Volume II of the History of Philosophy', Marxists.org, Accessed 15 December 2025, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/len- in/works/1915/cons-lect/ch03.htm>
- 40.** Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 142.
- 41.** John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 245, see also 141–178. For more on the debate between 'value theory' and ecosocialism, see John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, 'Value Isn't Everything' in *Monthly Review* 70:6 (2018), 1–17.
- 42.** Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1971), 13.
- 43.** Lebowitz, *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- 44.** Adorno directs our attention repeatedly to the *Phenomenology*, but his students correct course and show that *Capital* owes as much if not far more to the *Logic*. See Hans-Georg Backhaus *Dialektik der Wertform: Un- tersuchungen zur Marxschen Ökonomiekritik* (Freiburg, ça- ira, 1997), and Hans-Jürgen Krah, 'Zur Wesenslogik der Marxschen Warenanalyse', in *Konstitution und Klassen- kampf* (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1971), 31–57.
- 45.** See endnotes, 'Communisation and Value-Form The- ory' in Endnotes 2, (April 2010): 'The critical import of value-form theory is that it calls into question any polit- ical conception based on the affirmation of the prolet- ariat as producer of value. It recognises Marx's work as an essentially negative critique of capitalist society. In re- constructing the Marxian dialectic of the value-form, it demonstrates how the social life process is subsumed un- der – or "form-determined" by – the value-form. What characterises such "form-determination" is a perverse pri- ority of the form over its content. Labour does not simply pre-exist its objectification in the capitalist commodity as a positive ground to be liberated in socialism or com- munism through the alteration of its formal expression. Rather, in a fundamental sense value – as the primary so- cial mediation – pre-exists and thus has a priority over labour'.
- 46.** See Robert Kurz, 'The Ontological Break' in *Medi- ations: Journal of the Marxist Literary Group* 27:1-2 (Fall/S- pring 2013–2014), and Robert Kurz, 'Antiökonomie und Antipolitik. Zur Reformulierung der sozialen Emanzip- ation nach dem Ende des "Marxismus"', *Krisis* 19 (January 1997).
- 47.** See Rudi Dutschke and Hans-Jürgen Krah, 'Refusal Requires a Guerilla Mentality', trans. Jacob Blumenfeld, *Ill Will* (March 2023), Accessed 8 July, 2026, <https://ill- will.com/refusal>
- 48.** See Moishe Postone, 'History and Helplessness: Mass Mobilization and Contemporary Forms of Anticapitalism' in *Public Culture* 18:1 (2006): 93–110.
- 49.** See Kornelia Hafner, 'Gebrauchswertfetischismus' in *Gesellschaft und Erkenntnis: zur materialistischen Erkenntnis- und Ökonomiekritik*, ed. Diethard Behrens (Freiburg: ça- ira Verlag, 1993), pp. 59–88, and Moishe Postone, 'Anti- Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the Ger- man Reaction to "Holocaust"', *New German Critique* 19:19 (1980): 97–115.
- 50.** Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Stanford: Stan- ford University Press, 2001), 210. Hereafter KCPR. See also the four lectures on the concept of the transcen- dental, and the final lecture, on the Transcendental Aes- thetic, which serves as a conclusion.
- 51.** Adorno, KCPR, 19.
- 52.** Adorno, KCPR, 234.

- 53.** Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 219.
- 54.** Adorno *Minima Moralia*, 103.
- 55.** Adorno *Negative Dialectics*, 147. Further research might investigate the historical dimension of Adorno's choice of a 'gigantic credit system' to describe the transcendental. It is a loaded term in 1959, given the ongoing reparations that the West German government had been paying, the so-called 'economic miracle', the moral and economic valences of the German word *Schuld* (guilt), and so on. Adorno uses *Schuld* to describe the relationship between concepts in Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 330–332.
- 56.** Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie*, 664. 'Es wäre das allerdings dann eines der stärksten Argumente für die These, die, wie Sie wissen, von Horkheimer und mir ja sehr nachdrücklich vertreten wird, daß nämlich der Hegel in einem viel strengeren Maß der zu sich selbst gekommene Kant sei, als es im Sinn der üblichen Philosophiegeschichte, die sich einfach so an die krudesten Thesen hält, konzidiert wird'.
- 57.** Adorno also mentions this in his monograph on Hegel: 'Hegel, who in many respects is a Kant come into his own, is driven by the idea that knowledge, if there is such a thing, is by its very idea total knowledge'. Theodor Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 6.
- 58.** Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie*, 685–787.
- 59.** See Adorno, *KCPR*, 220. See also Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 31: 'To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel's polemic against Kant. As Hegel argued, every method which sets limits and restricts itself to the limits of its object thereby goes beyond them. The position transcending culture is in a sense presupposed by dialectics as the consciousness which does succumb in advance to the fetishization of the intellectual sphere'.
- 60.** Adorno *KCPR*, 220: 'This is done in such a way that if you dig deeply enough within immanence, into its innermost core, there you will discover transcendence as the condition of its existence'.
- 61.** The term 'Keimform' gets translated as both 'embryonic form' and 'germ' or 'germ form' in the Vintage edition of *Capital*. See Kurz, 'Antiökonomie und Antipolitik'.
- 62.** Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 10.
- 63.** Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*, 29.
- 64.** Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 226–7.
- 65.** See, for example, Kosmas Psychopedis, 'Dialectical Theory: Problems of Reconstruction' in *Open Marxism* 1, 1–54, Rob Kaufman, 'Red Kant, or the Persistence of the Third "Critique" in Adorno and Jameson', *Critical Inquiry* 26:4 (2000), 682–724, and Fred Moten, 'Knowledge of Freedom' in *Stolen Life* (Durham: Duke University Press 2018), 2–114.
- 66.** Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie*, 683.
- 67.** Colleen Lye and Christopher Nealon, 'Introduction' in *After Marx*, eds. Lye and Nealon (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2022), 13. See also Christopher Nealon, 'Modernism, Critical Theory, and the Desire for Objecthood' in *Infinity for Marxists: Essays on Poetry and Capital* (Leiden: Brill, 2024) 174–194.
- 68.** See Cecilia Sebastian, 'Adorno and Activism' in *The Oxford Handbook of Adorno*, eds. Henry Pickford and Martin Shuster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), and Cecilia Sebastian, 'Critical Theory after Frankfurt: Angela Davis, the West German SDS, and the Critique of Fascism' in *Der Blog des Kulturwissenschaftliche Institut Essen* (2023). Accessed 15 December 2025, <https://blog.kulturwissenschaften.de/critical-theory-after-frankfurt/>.