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Adorno, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Critical Theory: Negative Dialectics and Non-identity Thinking

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Adorno, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Critical Theory: Negative Dialectics and Non-identity Thinking

This paper explores the relationship between the thought of Theodor W. Adorno and Jiddu Krishnamurti. It focuses upon how both thinkers employ a determinately negative epistemology and revise Hegelian dialectics as a manner of ratiocination to resolve socio-political problems. It is argued that Krishnamurti's negative epistemology is rendered more robust when read along with Adorno's critical theory, aesthetic theory and notions of negative dialectics and non-identity thinking. It is hoped that this synthesis of thought raises the possibility for ongoing creative responses to contemporary socio-political challenges over and above either political demonstration or intellectual retreat.

Keywords: Adorno; Krishnamurti; Critical Theory; negative dialectics; non-identity thinking.

Context

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895 – 1986) is best known for his dictum: 'the observer is the observed'. This pithy quote demonstrates a shadow of the thought of Friedrich W. Nietzsche (1844 – 1900), whose works Krishnamurti was well versed in. Theodor W. Adorno (1903 – 1969) and fellow neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory read Marx after Nietzsche and Freud (Ricoeur's three masters of suspicion). Whilst they did not explicitly engage with the thought of Krishnamurti, they were, like him, concerned with exposing the liberal fiction of freedom under late capitalism.

Krishnamurti and Adorno both lived and developed their theories of what it meant to be a socio-culturally embodied subject during the socio-political turmoil of the qualitatively long twentieth century. Krishnamurti spent his middle to mature years in California. Adorno resided in the United States in exile during National Socialism in his native Germany, before returning to West Germany in 1949. It is not known whether they were at all familiar with each other's critical projects. Given the similarities of the post-structuralism of Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) and neo-Marxism of Adorno, that even this pair did not know of each other's works during their mutual lifetimes suggests

that it is highly unlikely that Adorno would have been familiar with the thought of Krishnamurti, or vice-a-versa.

A literature review to source works which compared the thought of these two important thinkers of the twentieth century revealed only two prior manuscripts: a 2007 dissertation from The University of Buffalo by Ashutosh Kalsi entitled 'The ending of nihilism: from Nietzsche to Krishnamurti', and a 2012 piece by Dudley A. Schreiber at The University of South Africa entitled 'On the epistemology of postmodern spirituality'. Even within these two pieces, whilst Adorno and Krishnamurti are referenced, their thought is not explicitly discussed in conjunction. This is surprising, given the clear affinity that key tenets of their respective critical tasks share. This piece will thus elucidate how these two thinkers relate to each other, and how combining their thoughts proves a fruitful exercise that strengthens the critical efficacy of the key tenet of both thinkers; namely, that determinate negation is needed amidst a culture of reified thought.

The piece will continue by briefly introducing the both thinkers under discussion. This will serve to justify the case for comparing their thoughts. The next section will focus upon how both thinkers employ a determinatively negative epistemology to articulate their ideas; in effect, how both respond to their predominant intellectual climate of Positivism. This leads on to analysis of Adorno's project of negative dialectics, as a reworking of the Hegelian dialectic. The argument then develops by exploring Adorno's notion of non-identity thinking as a manner of non-violent conceptual elaboration.[1] This enables me to demonstrate how both Adorno and Krishnamurti highlight contingency over necessity, and reject positive identity thinking

[1] Adorno's non-identity thesis is a response to György Lukács's (1885 – 1971) conception of reification.

and orthodox Hegelian dialectics as commensurate with reified thought. As such, the argument develops by exploring how for both central thinkers political demonstration and the possibility of the socialised subject thinking their way out of a problem via ratiocination is rendered complicit in the very conditions it responds to. The paper concludes by highlighting how reading Krishnamurti through an Adornian lens may concretise the abstract elements in the former's critical task.

Brief biographies

Born in India into a lower middle-class Hindu family – his father was a clerk for firstly the British Colonial government, and later the Theosophy society – through a chance encounter with Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854 – 1934), Krishnamurti was groomed for twenty years (1909 – 1929) to become a prophetic 'World Teacher'. Schooled in Theosophy, and through a classically British education, Krishnamurti nonetheless rejected the indoctrination he had undergone during his youth.[2] At an event held for him to demonstrate his legitimacy as 'World Teacher', Krishnamurti (2019) instead remarked: ''I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally.'' He dissolved the order which he had been groomed to be the head of and embarked on speaking tours across the world, eventually settling in Ojai, California. From 1940 – 1944 he did not speak publicly, as he had come under FBI surveillance for his anti-nationalist and pacifist thought amidst a jingoist

[2] The Theosophy organization was founded in New York, USA, in 1875 by Russian émigré Helena P. Blavastsky (1831-91). Combining tenets of Eastern and Western religious and philosophical traditions, as of 2019, Theosophy's mission statement is: "To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation, and the Unity of all Life.'' ''Mission Statement,'' Theosophical Society in England, accessed October 8, 2019, https://theosophicalsociety.org.uk/.

atmosphere. From the end of World War Two until his death in 1986, Krishnamurti continued to speak across the globe, and held discussions with numerous leaders of state. His discourse with physicist David Bohm (1917 – 1992) from the 1960s – 1980s, has been collated into a text entitled *The limits of thought*, and is an excellent introduction to Krishnamurti's critical task. In sum, with a clear link to Quantum Theory and the observer effect in Physics, Krishnamurti argues that, as noted above, the observer is the observed.[3] Therefore, to philosophise, or aim to correlate observation with material fact in positivist fashion, is rendered problematic.[4] The best a social subject can do is to realize the impossibility of corresponding knowledge with lived experience in its unfathomable totality.[5] What Krishnamurti's critical task results in is a different manner of learning; one that is driven by an ethos of wonder, as opposed to instrumental knowledge acquisition that adheres to the norms of a metric-based education system.

Similar to his contemporary, Adorno's critical task is a response to a culture of instrumentalism. Adorno was born into a mixed household. His mother was a devout Catholic, and his father had converted from Judaism to Protestantism. An intellectual nonconformist and polymath, Adorno was a precocious child who could play Beethoven on the piano by age 12 (Müller-Doohm 2005, 28). He later formally studied philosophy, psychology and sociology, eventually completing a doctorate on the hermeneutical

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[3] The Observer Effect dictates that observing a phenomenon necessarily changes that phenomenon.

[4] I am reading Positivism after the system of Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857), which recognised only empirical facts and scientifically observable phenomena, and rejected metaphysics and theology.

[5] I read the 'subject' after Stuart Hall (1932 – 2014), who argued that under modern social norms, individuation could not occur. Rather, the individual is subject to myriad forces, which seek to shape and control it. See Stuart Hall, ''The Question of Cultural Identity,'' in *Modernity and its Futures*, eds. Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 285.

phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. Adorno was thus schooled in the classic post-Enlightenment, Western European intellectual tradition.

It may strike the reader as odd to compare the esoteric thought of Krishnamurti, who in the culturally Western paradigm, would be deemed an Eastern mystic, with that of the neo-Marxism of a sociologist, philosopher and musicologist such as Adorno. What connects the two thinkers in an essential way is their aversion to first philosophy after Descartes; in effect, that knowledge can be constructed through ratiocination. Krishnamurti, after Nietzsche, was eager to demonstrate the limits of thought, and as noted above deemed truth 'a pathless land'. Adorno essentially agrees with this anti-positivist perspective. However, he sharpens its articulation in a performative and ironic fashion by using reasoned arguments, vis-à-vis the study of aesthetics, to demonstrate how such arguments fail to satisfy their demands.

Determinate negation

Adorno considers it facetious to posit notions of the best set of affairs in which to live. Rather, his determinately negative reading of social existence requires that the conditioned social subject must realize that they are wed to a set of contingent criteria that they have been accepting as sacrosanct. For Adorno, this realization is a painstaking and humble endeavour, which is in sharp contrast to the – as he sees it – unwarranted self-assuredness of his cultural peers (Adorno 1997, 115-116).

This epistemological negation in Adorno is to be juxtaposed with colloquial connotations of emancipatory action such as direct protest, demonstrations and revolutionary upheavals. For Adorno the moment for Philosophy to be able to qualify such action has passed. By engaging in such modes of praxis, the subject will, according

to Adorno, merely reinforce the very ideological violence that has created existing problems. On that note, Adorno (1973) observes:

> We like to present alternatives to choose from, to be marked True or False. The decisions of a bureaucracy are frequently reduced to Yes or No answers to drafts submitted to it; the bureaucratic way of thinking has become the secret model for a thought allegedly still free. But the responsibility of philosophical thought in its essential situations is not to play this game (32).

Building upon a Nietzschean theme that knowledge that is not dangerous is not worth thinking about (Adorno 2008, 85), Adorno argues against the prevalent positivist canon of his time, which attempts to qualify philosophy along the lines of a scientific method. For Adorno, positivism represents instrumental identity thinking in that it attempts to reduce the social life-world to a series of 'yes or no' answers in disingenuous manner. In other words, positivism is a reductionist model that does not account for the complexity of human experience. In response to this, Adorno (2008) argues that the task of philosophy ''is not to reduce the entire world to a prefabricated system of categories, but rather the opposite, viz. to hold itself open to whatever *experience* presents itself to the mind.'' (75).

Krishnamurti's perspective is notably similar to that of Adorno's. Throughout his mature speeches,[6] Krishnamurti (1973, 358) repeatedly articulates the following in a variety of guises: ''Through negation come to the positive; do not seek the positive, but come to it by understanding what it is not.'' Moreover, Krishnamurti (2005) argues that

> order can be brought about only when you understand the disorder in which you live. If you create order then it will be a blueprint, won't it? Whereas if one

[6] Like the forefather of Western Philosophy, Socrates, Krishnamurti never formally penned his thoughts.

> begins to understand the nature of disorder in one's life then in understanding disorder, order naturally comes in (51).

Krishnamurti's analysis is similar to Adorno in his advocacy of determinate negation in lieu of positive ratiocination. However, whilst Adornian in his aversion to blueprint or bureaucratic thinking, Krishnamurti's thought lacks nuance insofar as it deems order to naturally arise by understanding disorder. This is where Adorno's 'negative dialectics' help to sharpen the thought of Krishnamurti. What negative dialectics consists of and how it operates for Adorno will be spelled out in the next section. In doing so, clearer links between the critical tasks of Adorno and Krishnamurti will be elucidated.

Negative dialectics

A simultaneous homage to, and reworking of, Hegel's 'positive' dialectical method, negative dialectics is a manner of conceptual engagement that refuses to promise a redemptive moment of affirmation. Adorno (1973) argues that ''it lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total. This is its form of hope'' (406). For Adorno, this constitutes the 'hope' in thinking in a world of horror, when the moment for philosophy's realization through the ostensible power of reason, is no longer viable. More exacting than Krishnamurti's advocacy of understanding disorder to arrive at order, Adorno's (1973) negative dialectics staunchly refuses to provide palatable logical conclusions drawn from apparently fixed first principles:

> negativity *in itself*, if such a concept were not nonsensical – since by virtue of its being in itself, a concept that exists essentially only in context, i.e. *for others*, turns into its own opposite – negativity in itself is not a good to be defended. If it were, it would be transformed into bad positivity (25).

Adorno argues that concepts only make sense when understood in context. Therefore, to regard negativity as the mere inverse of positivity, or in Krishnamurti's terms, disorder as the mere inverse of order, is too simplistic. Rather, negative dialectics does not 'come to rest in itself'. More nuanced than Krishnamurti's analysis, instead of converting disorder into order, Adorno (2005) argues that ''the false, once determinately known and precisely expressed, is already an index of what is right and better'' (288). Crucially, the false is not then rendered true, but is rather only an 'index' of what is 'right and better'. Gillian Rose (1978) helps shed light on the exacting nature of Adorno's negative dialectics in observing that

> negation is criticism of society which is positive (determinate) in that it aims to attain and present knowledge of society insofar as that is possible, but not positive in the sense that it confirms or sanctions [or reproduces] what it criticises (150).

This observation by Rose is applicable to Krishnamurti's critical task when his speeches are looked at in longitudinal fashion. However, Krishnamurti falls foul of not articulating this notion in as meticulous a fashion as Adorno. Krishnamurti (1973) argues, in only a slight variant of what was presented above concerning (dis)order: ''if you merely observe actually what is, then what is, *is* order. It is only when you try to change 'what is' that there is disorder; because you want to change according to the knowledge which you have acquired'' (63). It is politically impotent to argue against attempting to change 'what is' (Brahme 2022, 120). For example, in the case of apartheid South Africa (to think of only one socio-political example of injustice prevalent within Krishnamurti and Adorno's lifetimes), it appears that 'what is' was highly discriminatory ('disordered' by any vantage point), especially from the perspective of a South African subject considered either black or 'colored'. How order would arise from such subjects' acceptance of 'what is' is rendered at best questionable, and at worst tacitly complicit with an iniquitous

organization of society in need of redress. It is at this junction that Adorno's critical analysis of what he deems 'identity thinking' may helpfully complement Krishnamurti's thought, or at the very least clarify the hermeneutics of the latter.

Identity thinking

Adorno's thesis deems post-Enlightenment thought as emblematic of identity thinking, which is commensurate with a positivist canon that aims to irrefutably correlate conceptual analysis with lived, experiential, fact. The problem with this for Adorno (1984) is unequivocal:

> Just as little as a simple fact can be thought without a concept, because to think it always already means to conceptualize it, it is equally impossible to think the purest concept without reference to the factual. Even the creations of fantasy that are supposedly independent of space and time, point toward individual existence - however far they may be removed from it (158).

Adorno's thesis leaves little space for conceptual analysis as understood in the Western philosophical tradition as one of either inductive or deductive reasoning, and ratiocination.

Adorno builds upon the Marxist theory of his predecessor Lukács, and in particular the latter's concept of 'reification' (the false necessitation of particular contingent social factors) to articulate how instrumental identity thinking seeks to render unlike things alike. Identity thinking is necessarily instrumental because it involves the teleological use of concepts to achieve ends through normative discourse. This predicament of reified thought leads Adorno (1997) to remark that ''the more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to

degenerate into idle chatter'' (34). This leads on to his oft quoted dictum that ''to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'' (Adorno 1997, 34). By this, Adorno means that instrumental identity thinking is all pervasive such that creative attempts to circumnavigate it only serve to strengthen it.

Whilst not articulating a thesis concerning reified thought in a manner after Lukács and Adorno, Krishnamurti's reading concerning what he perceives to be the limits of thought is similar. Throughout his discourses are excerpts like the below:

> Thought is everlastingly conditioned, because it is the response of the past as memory. Thought is always mechanical; it falls very easily into a pattern, into a groove, and then you consider you are being tremendously active, whether you are confined to the communist groove, the Catholic groove, or whatever it is. It is the easiest, the most mechanical thing to do – and we think we are living (Krishnamurti 2003, 65).

In Krishnamurti's and Adorno's analyses it is not possible for the subject to conceptually think their way to a palatable solution for what they perceive to be a problem. Such an apparently constructive manner of thinking is, for the aforementioned thinkers, fragmentary and duplicitous (Krishnamurti 2003, 140); it is the subject's desire to achieve logical, clear and consistent outcomes that results in an instrumental mode of thinking. For example, to articulate 'freedom' requires a conceptual framework in which its antonym 'constraint' is dialectically enmeshed, thereby rendering palatable outcomes as merely negotiations of competing narratives. This leads Krishnamurti (1999, 122) to lament, asking in dialogue with Bohm in 1980: ''why haven't the intellectuals seen the simple fact that where there is accumulation there must be more?'' Considering the image of the ouroboros, for Krishnamurti and Adorno positive knowledge acquisition is merely the arrangement of conceptual taxonomies that are

adapted to fit particular contexts to glean desired (instrumental) outcomes. Consequently, it will not suffice to conceptually elaborate a positive solution to a predicament, for that would be to fall foul to instrumental identity thinking. Instead, what is required is a thesis of non-identity thinking. Once more indirectly doing much intellectual work on behalf of Krishnamurti, Adorno provides precisely such a thesis.

Non-identity thinking

Negative dialectics attempts to enact a mode of non-identity thinking. That is, a way of reading the relationship between Subject and Object such that the latter does not identify the former in a manner that subsumes it within itself. Likewise, the Subject does not subsume itself within the Object. Similarly, a concept always contains more than is realized in its object, whilst an object is always more than can be grasped by a concept. Non-identity thinking is therefore a move from necessity to contingency. An example of typical identity thinking is exemplified in a case whereby an individual (subject) claims herself to be 'free' (concept onto object), thus subsuming an element of the latter into the former. For Adorno, and implicitly Krishnamurti, this subsumption represents an act of regressive, and even violent, thinking whereby the ''subject identifies a particular concept with the conceptual system as a whole'' (Rose 1978, 131). Instead, non-identity thinking replaces necessity with contingency by

> negating identity thinking, so preventing its decline to myth. Adorno captures the nature of this 'force' of non-identity thinking when he writes ''the force that liberates the dialectical movement in cognition is the very same that rebels against the system'' (Rose 1978, 141; Adorno 1973, 31).

Positive dialectics (identity thinking) entails grandiose attempts to articulate comprehensive knowledge. Negative dialectics and non-identity thinking are instead

much more modest (Adorno 2013, 15). Adorno (2008) argues in a lecture on negative dialectics that

> [B]y virtue of its own methodology philosophy bars its own way to what it wishes to achieve, namely, to be in a position to judge matters that are not itself, that are not concepts. And I would like to suggest quite simply as a programme that philosophy should reflect conceptually on this process in which it deals only with concepts and, by raising it to the level of the concept, should revise it and reverse it again, insofar as this can be achieved with conceptual methods (62-63).

Adorno's critical task is thus a humble endeavour, and at odds with the aims of the vast majority of his contemporaries who follow in the tradition of first philosophy to reach valid conclusions. Instead, Adorno, and also Krishnamurti, expose concepts as fallible. They reveal concepts solely as tools to articulate the contingency of narrative as opposed to pathways to Truth (Sherratt 2002, 188).

Owing to this conceptual bind, Adorno cannot prescribe what non-identity thinking will necessarily consist of. Instead, through his negatively dialectical non-identity thesis, Adorno reworks the Lukácsian reading of ideology as a theory of how material and economic structures are related to the way in which a socially embodied subject actually thinks. Adorno's critical lens is therefore necessarily much more exacting than instrumental identity thinking. It is thus apparent why Adorno enacts a negative dialectic, accompanied as it is with an advocacy of non-identity thinking: it is to avoid repeating, and thereby in effect strengthening, the stranglehold of the existent regressive mode of instrumental identity thinking that can only ever reify the concepts examined through it.

Echoing the central thesis of Adorno's critical task as outlined above, Krishnamurti explores the psychological problems – which manifest as material, socio-

political problems – resulting from fragmentary identity thinking and positive dialectics. In one telling excerpt, Krishnamurti (2013) remarks that contradiction, the fundamental basis of all positive dialectical thinking, provides the subject with an unhealthy impetus to live:

> [T]he very element of friction makes us feel that we are alive. The effort, the struggle of contradiction, gives us a sense of vitality. That is why we love wars, that is why we enjoy the battle of frustrations. So long as there is the desire to achieve a result, which is the desire to be psychologically secure, there must be a contradiction; and where there is contradiction, there cannot be a quiet mind (67).

For both Krishnamurti and Adorno, there is no psychological security to be gleaned through ratiocination. As outlined above, for Krishnamurti, 'truth is a pathless land'. Similarly, for Adorno (2008, 63), 'Truth' is only a remainder, or, the ''dregs of the concept'' (the non-conceptual) as opposed to the hitherto sacrosanct Platonic ideal. Taking this notion to its limit, Krishnamurti (1999, 97) pithily remarks: ''die to everything that thought has built as creation, as tradition.'' The romanticism of such counsel aside, in light of socio-political challenges, as alluded to above in relation to apartheid South Africa, it is problematic to correlate non-identity thinking with praxis as conventionally understood.

Praxis

Krishnamurti and Adorno both deem the separation of thought and action as fallacious. Similarly, they both – not insignificantly given that they lived through the crises of World War Two – disavow political activism as conventionally understood. When questioned regarding his thoughts on activism, Krishnamurti (1973, 60) responded ''you can't demonstrate, you have to live it. And when you live it; that in itself is a

demonstration.'' For Krishnamurti, building upon the problem of identity thinking as outlined above, instrumental thought cannot solve existential problems, because such thought itself *is* the problem. Krishnamurti lays out the paradox of attempts to positively articulate solutions to problems created by thought in the tradition of conventional contemporary party politics:

> I want order here in the world of reality, because order means security, safety, and protection. I must have that for everybody, and thought cannot produce that order, because thought itself has created the disorder, thought itself is fragmentary. So thought cannot bring the order which is essential for human beings (Krishnamurti 1999, 60).

Instead of duplicitously attempting to create order through disordered thought, Krishnamurti – echoing Adorno's non-identity thesis – asks ''what is the state of your mind when it is no longer looking for an answer?'' (Jayakar 1986, 114). Krishnamurti implicitly responds to the positivist canon when asserting that a 'right' question ''will have no answer, because the question itself will open the door. But, if it is a wrong question, you will find ways and means to solve the problem and so remain in bondage. For he who asks the question is himself the bondage''(Jayakar 1986, 232). This notion of an unanswerable question being the only one worth asking is in alignment with non-identity thinking, as well as the Japanese Zen Buddhist tradition, in which Koans are issued to monks to enable them to realize the limits of rational thought (Suzuki 1926).

In Krishnamurti's thesis there is, then, a mode of praxis. It is unconventional, but is a mode of praxis that is non-identical. In effect, Krishnamurti advises the subject to (not) think in a different paradigm to that of the normative one. This, he deems, will enact a different way of living. For example, he observes that ''the clerk, when he seeks to become a manager, becomes a factor in the creation of power-politics which produce

war; so he is directly responsible for war'' (Krishnamurti 2013, 23). So, instead of political activism as normatively understood, for example placards and protests, Krishnamurti argues that it is the responsibility of the individual, socialised subject to reflect upon how their conceptual analysis and sense-making faculties are inextricably enmeshed within the structures they perhaps seek to supplant. Krishnamurti's challenge is provocative, and not mouldable into concrete guidance beyond negative argument; in effect, what the subject ought not to do.

Ironically, given that he articulated the notion of non-identity thinking, Adorno is actually more concrete in terms of proffering a better state of affairs without exclusively negating that which exists. For example, dotted throughout Adorno's corpus, there are cursory suggestions of what a better world could consist of, which somewhat refutes the charge that his critical task provides only an ''oblique reference to a qualitatively improved state of affairs'' (Cook 2001, 15-16). Whilst indicting the question of what life in a fully emancipated society may be like as falling prey to the spirit of positivism, Adorno (2005) concedes insofar as he states that ''there is tenderness only in the coarsest demand: that no one shall go hungry any more'' (156). Moreover, he argues that an emancipated society would be the ''realization of universality in the reconciliation of differences'' (Adorno 2005, 103), and a liberation from the capitalist mode of production necessitating surplus value: ''*Rien faire comme une beté*, lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky, being, nothing else, without any further definition and fulfilment'' (Adorno 2005, 157). These are remarkably simple and reductive demands. Adorno's utopia of being beyond conceptual definition or fulfilment is similar to Krishnamurti's enquiry outlined above concerning the state of mind when a subject is not searching for an answer. Accordingly, a conclusion that both Adorno and Krishnamurti appear to reach concerning praxis is that the subject ought do

away with projects and plans, and instead retreat to a place of less harm to their lived environment.[7]

Adorno's (2005) dictum that 'Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im Falschen', or that ''wrong life cannot be lived rightly'' (39), is a pithy emblem of his entire negative critical task. As Raymond Geuss points out, in Adorno's sociological analysis, ''what is at issue here is a structural feature of society, which makes a fully satisfactory life of complete consistency and sincerity impossible'' (Guess 2014, 185). The problem here, as Adorno (2005) himself notes, is that he

> who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest; the detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant; the only advantage of the former is insight into his entanglement, and the *infinitesimal freedom* that lies in knowledge as such (26).

This infinitesimal freedom as awareness of one's entrapment corresponds with negative dialectics. This vigilant mode of living may in turn be aligned with Krishnamurti's critical task. For example, Adorno (2008) could be interchanged with Krishnamurti when the former remarks that the subject ought to reject any

> preordained idea, however profound it claims to be; it means moreover that we should not accept one's own ticket, one's own slogan, one's own membership of a group as the guarantee of truth, but should place one's trust only in the ruthless power of reflection, without deciding that the truth is now fixed and that you have got hold of it once and for all. Resistance means refusing to allow the law

[7] Adorno's thesis has heavily influenced and been explicitly referenced by contemporary anarcho-primitivist John Zerzan. See for example ''Why Primitivism,'' John Zerzan, accessed November 1, 2015, http://www.johnzerzan.net/articles/why-primitivism.html.

> governing your own behaviour to be prescribed by the ostensible or actual facts (107).

For Adorno, the 'ostensible facts' have been necessarily agreed upon through the power of reified, instrumental identity thinking. Resistance in the Adornian programme thus involves a determinate refusal to ''remain satisfied with the surface,'' and instead insists upon ''breaking through the façade'' (Adorno 2008, 107). Herein lies the importance of the individual subject in terms of affecting breakthroughs, as opposed to a social collective. The importance of the individual for Adorno is because, in its potential eccentricity, it may rupture the homogenized and totally administered objectivity of the collective mass (Adorno 1973, 46). This also applies to Krishnamurti, who argues that collectivization and socio-political movements can only ever regurgitate existing violence unless there is a paradigmatic shift in the way each individual subject seeks to navigate their existence (Krishnamurti 2013, 154). This links back to Krishnamurti's criticism of political demonstration, arguing instead that living 'it', in effect a different way of being, is itself a better demonstration than protesting against that which the subject rejects.

Aesthetics

Despite the similarities that have been discussed above regarding their respective determinately negative critical tasks, Adorno and Krishnamurti differ in one fundamental respect: aesthetics. As a neo-Marxist, Adorno deems artistic creation at the level of a Marxist superstructure as reflective of inherent contradictions in the material base of society. Such aesthetic creation embodies Adorno's negative dialectic in a way that discursive logic, necessarily, cannot. It is when aesthetic creations attempt to imitate discursive, reified and instrumental thinking that they fail – for Adorno – as works of art. In imitation, art falls prey to easy communicability and thereby the capitalist mode of production, which renders creations commodified.

Instead, aesthetic creativity may, through concepts, enact Adornian non-identity thinking. In such creation, ‘‘identity and non-identity incessantly fulminate’’ (Coole 2000, 182-183). Discursive, logical reasoning results in a paradox, whereby upon recognizing the non-identical, the subject necessarily renders it identical. Through aesthetic creation there remains a non-conceptual surplus that has a genuinely critical function. Adorno (1997) argues that:

> Art is the intuition of what is not intuitable; it is akin to the conceptual without the concept. It is by way of concepts, however, that art sets free its mimetic, non-conceptual layer […] that which in art is not exhausted by discursive logic, the *sine qua non* of all manifestations of art. Art militates against the concept as much as it does against domination, but for this opposition it, like philosophy, requires concepts (96).

For Adorno, aesthetic creations emblematise the ‘‘Kantian principle of *purposiveness without purpose* and thus they resist, by their form alone’’ (Hellings 2012, 89). This substantiates Adorno’s materialism. Namely, that critical aesthetic expression plays with existent cultural material in terms of its intrinsic value and qualities, rather than attempting to align with the dominant purposes of the capitalist mode of production in which it is enmeshed, and which demands the realization of surplus value. In an age of contemporary neoliberal governance, this reading of art is unpalatable, thus corroborating Adorno’s argument in favour of the need of non-conventionally engaged art. This need is evidenced in his Krishnamurti-esque claim that ‘‘it is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men’s [sic] heads’’ (Taylor 1977, 180).

Art is then crucial in the Adornian programme insofar as it affords the possibility of aesthetic expression that does not fall prey to the charge of a false sense of permanence

in the manner of societal, contingent myths that he criticises. In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno (1997, 45) argues that aesthetic expression is marked by its inability to coherently articulate truth content. Instead, art may unsettle the subject's sense of how things are. In doing so, art may disrupt 'second nature'. Borrowing from Lukács, Adorno stipulates that second nature is the world of cultural material, produced by social and historical subjects embedded in 'first nature', which is necessarily entirely unknowable by the individual subject. In other words, the subject is rendered ever alienated from its object, as first nature ''can only be defined as the embodiment of well-known yet meaningless necessities, and is therefore ungraspable and unknowable in its actual substance'' (Adorno 1984, 118).

Adorno deems it problematic that in the age of modernity the 'enlightened' bourgeois subject, partaking in second nature through reason, has a reified consciousness, which considers nothing to be outside of its potential grasp. As he diagnoses: ''the more relentlessly socialization commands all moments of human and interhuman immediacy, the smaller the capacity of men to recall that this web has evolved, and the more irresistible its natural appearance'' (Adorno 1973, 357-58). In doing so, the subject unwittingly further divorces itself from the object, which it mistakenly believes to have fully encapsulated through conceptual reason. This second nature is thus unable to see itself in its entrapment, because the tool of reified conceptual reason that it uses is complicit in the very predicament it claims transcendence from (Adorno 1984, 105). In other words, ''in its conscious control of nature the self becomes opaque to its self-reproduction as second nature'' (Hullot-Kentor 1984, 99). Adorno's second nature thesis echoes Krishnamurti's pithy dictum that the observer is the observed. Where Adorno critically differs from Krishnamurti is in ascribing a valuable function to art. Adorno's aesthetic theory provides the alienated subject a means by which to reveal their

predicament, and is therefore positive; F. H. Bradley's assertion that ''when things are bad, it is good to know the worst'' (Adorno 2005, 83) is very much expressed through Adorno's aesthetic theory.

Therefore, the best an individual can do is to use their aesthetic creativity through prevalent cultural material to reveal its contingency. This in itself is a hallmark of a humble memory of nature in the subject that may lead to mimesis; that is, a way by which the subject may create art, inevitably using reason, but in a manner that is non-instrumental and thus non-violent (Adorno 1997, 187). Amidst dominant, scientific, Enlightenment discourse, Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1895 – 1973) assert that the status quo involving the domination of nature results in socialised beings who are opaque to themselves (Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, 42-43). In response to this domination, Adorno and Horkheimer deem that mimesis entails emancipatory potential insofar as it provides the socialized subject with an opportunity for an alternative mode of cultural engagement with nature. In so doing, alternative possibilities may become apparent. Art therefore serves a critical function through affording a paradigmatic shift for the individual willing to engage in non-dominating mimetic expression.

In opposition to Adorno's aesthetic theory that champions artistic expression insofar as it may highlight existing ideological violence, Krishnamurti argues that receptivity to such art is partly a sign of modern malaise:

> Someone writes great music, someone plays it, interpreting it in his own way and we listen to it, enjoying it or criticizing it. We are the audience watching the actors, football players, or watching the cinescreen. Others write poems and we read; others paint and we gape at them. We have nothing, so we turn to others to entertain us, to inspire us, to guide us or save us. More and more, modern civilization is destroying us, emptying us of all creativeness**.** We ourselves are

> empty inwardly and we look to others to be enriched and so our neighbour takes advantage of this to exploit, or we take advantage of him [sic] (Jayakar 1986, 268).

Whilst the above demonstrates Krishnamurti's aversion to art and entertainment as potentially fulfilling a critical function, he does not disavow the value of aesthetic creation absolutely. Rather, he is against dull passivity and receptivity. Paradoxically, and intrinsic to the discipline, music is based upon repetition and practice of particular structures such that the artist may then be able to transgress them. That notwithstanding, Krishnamurti (2013) muses: ''have you noticed that in moments of creativeness, those rather happy moments of vital interest, there is no sense of repetition, no sense of copying?'' (27) So, whilst aesthetic creation is not ruled out completely in Krishnamurti's oeuvre, he does not proffer an aesthetic theory in any way comparable to the exacting one found in Adorno. Once again, Adorno helps to flesh out musings that Krishnamurti shares somewhat cryptically. There is a clear pattern that has been distilled by comparing the oeuvres of Adorno and Krishnamurti: the former continually helps sharpen the musings of the latter.

Conclusion

In sum, Krishnamurti's thesis that the observing subject is the observed, and that political demonstration and the possibility of the socialised subject thinking their way out of a problem via ratiocination is rendered complicit in the very conditions it responds to, withstands scrutiny. Krishnamurti's thesis is strengthened and rendered more robust when read along with Adorno's critical theory, and in particular the latter's notions of negative dialectic and non-identity thinking. As the first published piece to explicitly explore the relationship between Krishnamurti and Adorno, I hope that this

paper contributes to responses that develop upon the themes articulated here. This may lead to further research about the coincidental links between the thought of Krishnamurti and his peers from different intellectual traditions, not least of all the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School. This meeting of ideas raises the possibility for creative responses to contemporary socio-political challenges over and above either political demonstration or intellectual retreat.

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