

Protocol, Graduate Seminar – Adorno and Heidegger

**Class Session: 2 - Date: September 9, 2010**

**Minute taker: Christian Lotz**

**Topic: Adorno's *The Actuality of Philosophy*; Heidegger+Adorno on Thinking**

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“Had he but remained in the desert, and far from the good and just! Then, perhaps, would he have learned to live, and love the earth - and laughter also!”

(Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*)

### **Abbreviations**

ND = Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*; AP = Adorno, *The Actuality of Philosophy*; TH = Heidegger, *The Thing*; NPT = Adorno, *Notes on Philosophical Thinking*; EF = Adorno, *The Essay as Form*; IM = Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*; LH = *Letter on Humanism*

### **Note**

The minute taker found himself in a very depressed state after experiencing totally “lame” – almost non-existent – class contributions and such low intellectual energy in the classroom. Indeed, Lotz briefly considered driving his Saab against a brick wall at a speed of 140mph. He is not sure whether he sucked as a teacher, whether participants came unprepared to class, or whether the material is simply too overwhelming for most of his beloved students.<sup>1</sup> He would be shocked if no one except himself would find this stuff interesting, since he believes that we are discussing one of the most basic concepts in philosophy which, not incidentally, determines (or at least determines) many philosophical conceptions in general. After becoming aware that the only real question in class that seemed to be of interest for the participants was whether Heidegger had additional love affairs besides the one with Hannah Arendt, Lotz briefly considered leaving academic philosophy and starting a brewery. Having now overcome his deep crisis and sorrow with the help of Oberon's Pale Ale, Lotz respectfully requests that participants let him know how to proceed further. He is certainly willing to take one step back and to talk more about the basics of Heidegger and Adorno, if students would find this helpful. He also requests that this time everyone should **carefully** read this protocol (perhaps this did not happen last time?) and prepare the assigned readings, for the master has put some energy into writing this paper, which is a mixture of protocol and further explanations.

### **Announcements**

Lotz announced that “What is called Thinking” on the syllabus refers to part II of Heidegger's lecture course delivered in 1956. It does not refer to the brief excerpt available in “Basic Writings” (ed., Krell). He also asked everyone to bring \$20 in cash or a check on Sep 16 since he will send in the deposit for the retreat this weekend. In addition, Lotz recommended the following book as an introduction to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*: O'Connor, Brian, *Philosophy and the Possibility of Critical Rationality*, Boston: MIT Press, 2005.

### **The Actuality of Philosophy**

We proceeded with our discussion of Adorno's inaugural lecture from 1931. Lotz pointed out that Adorno presents a “postmodern” conception of what philosophy can achieve. The two central concepts in this context are “interpretation” (AP 31) and “constellation” (AP 32). As Lotz explained, for Adorno interpretation is the best expression of his own conception of dialectics, insofar as interpretations always have to accomplish two things: [1] they must get out of the object what is already in it, and [2]

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<sup>1</sup> Even if the material is overwhelming, Lotz was astonished that no one had at least some basic thoughts or questions about “Notes on Philosophical Thinking,” which is not a very difficult essay.

they are forced to construct the elements in a new way, so that a constellation and “image” of what the object is can appear. Lotz gave the example of looking at the stars in the night sky: at first, one cannot see anything, except light points, which then *suddenly* turn into a gestalt.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the interpretation of a text needs to reveal what is in the text, but at the same time, the interpretation – paradoxically – has to construct what is interpreted, since symbolic entities are neither self-explanatory nor immediately accessible. Accordingly, a text does and does not say what it says. The issue of “interpretation” is also important for another reason: whereas most contemporary philosophers claim that philosophy is strictly based on arguing for a position, philosophers such as Arendt, Gadamer, and Adorno claim that philosophy is the activity of *understanding* its object (of which arguments are a part). By “constellation” Adorno refers to a specific and unique way of connecting concepts, once we give up the idea that philosophical presentation and philosophical writing can proceed hierarchically, either from the “top down” or from the “bottom up.” In his essay *The Essay as Form*, Adorno rejects the idea that dialectical thought can present its issues either in a methodological way or in a positivist and naïve, empiricist way. Both methodological thinking, such as Descartes’s thought, as well as empiricist thinking, such as Popper’s, disconnect concepts from the issues that these concepts try to determine and understand. Adorno rejects both of these forms of philosophy, since both remain ultimately abstract and fail to see that both sides are a part of a process. Positivist and formalist approaches to philosophy either operate with an abstract method or they assume that reality is self-explanatory and can simply be “mirrored.” Alternatively, social theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School must contain both empirical research and critical reflection. Critical Theory, accordingly, realizes that [1] philosophical thinking is part of the reality (and not opposed to it), [2] the reality is socially constituted, but [3] that theory nevertheless *negates* the social reality as soon as it reflects this reality (see the last remarks in the last protocol on Hegel). Philosophical thinking does not *invent* its issues and problems; it always *finds* its issues. In this sense the reality (i.e. experience) is always prior to reflection, though there is no experience without reflection and concepts. As such, the priority of experience<sup>3</sup> appears for philosophical thought as an “impulse” that remains remembered throughout the reflection (and expression):

“While even traditional thought draws its impulses from such experience, such thought by its form eliminates the remembrance of these impulses. The essay, on the other hand, takes them as its models, without imitating them as reflected form; it mediates them through its own conceptual organization; it proceeds, so to speak, methodically unmethodically” (EF 101).<sup>4</sup>

For example, the unbearable suffering of innumerable individuals who died in German concentration camps remains an important impulse for philosophy after 1945. The injustice and failure of rationality is here the motivation for thought itself, which in turn must lead to a re-orientation of thought. With this motive of his philosophy, Adorno is much closer to Rousseau’s and Schopenhauer’s thinking than he is to deontological ethicists (even despite the fact that he mainly addresses Kant in his lectures on moral philosophy); for he is aware that rationality (even in the form of philosophy) has the tendency [1] to *disconnect* itself from its sources in experience and [2] to become a mere cold spectator within which the impulse is denied and suppressed. Consequently, philosophical thought is forced to “think against itself.” Though abstract reflection is necessary, Adorno tries to avoid suppressing the motives from which his philosophizing emerges:

The guilt of life, which as pure factum already robs another life of breath, according to a statistics, which complements an overwhelming number of murdered with a minimal number of rescued, as if this were foreshadowed in the calculation of probability, is no longer to be reconciled with life. That guilt reproduces itself unceasingly, because it cannot be completely present to the consciousness at any

<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge that “Gestalt” is probably not the best word to use for what Adorno has in mind here, given that he rejects the idea of *Gestalten* in the sense of mere psychological constructions (see AP 31).

<sup>3</sup> For Adorno’s concept of experience, also see NPT 132.

<sup>4</sup> I recommend reading a section of Adorno’s *Minima Moralia* in order to see how he realizes these ideas.

moment. This, and nothing else, compels one to philosophy. This latter experiences therein the shock that the deeper, the more powerfully it penetrates, the greater the suspicion that it would be distancing itself from how things are; that the most superficial and trivial intuitions would like, were the essence once revealed, to be in the right against those which aim at the essence. Therein a harsh ray of light falls on truth itself. Speculation feels a certain duty to concede the position of the corrective to its opponent, "common sense" [*in English*]. Life feeds the horror of the apprehension, that which must be cognized would resemble what is found to be "down to earth" [*in English*], rather than what raises itself up; it could be, that this apprehension is confirmed even beyond the pedestrian, while nonetheless the thought has its happiness, the promise of its truth, solely in the elevation. If the pedestrian had the last word, if it were the truth, then truth would be debased. The trivial consciousness, as it is theoretically expressed in positivism and unreflective nominalism, may be nearer to the *adaequatio rei atque cogitationis* [Latin: making the thing equal with what is thought] than the sublime one, truer in its grotesque mockery of the truth than the august one, unless a concept of truth different from that of the *adaequatio* is supposed to succeed. The innervation, that metaphysics would like to win solely by throwing itself away, applies to such a different truth. It is not the least of the motivations of the transition to materialism. The tendency to do this can be followed from the Hegelian Marx down to the Benjaminic rescue of the induction; the work of Kafka might form its apotheosis. If negative dialectics demands the self-reflection of thinking, then this implies, in tangible terms, that thinking must, nowadays at any rate, in order to be true, also think against itself. (ND 365)

Accordingly, as Adorno outlines in this quote, his philosophy must satisfy both sides of the concept – experience relation: it is forced to be highly conceptual and abstract (speculation in the Hegelian sense), as well as to be “down to earth” and pedestrian. The *Minima Moralia* is a beautiful example for this mix, insofar as in it, Adorno reflects on abstract issues through very concrete experiences. In addition, the intertwinement of concept and experience in the form of negative dialectics leads to a playful and “childlike” (EF 93) conception of philosophical writing and thinking in this text.

### “Play” and Mimesis

We should understand this as a reference to Aristotle’s conception of mimesis. According to Adorno, thought, cognition, and art depend upon a *mimetic impulse* within which we try to merge with and express the object. In regard to the main topic of our seminar, Adorno puts it this way:

“The ideal of the distinction [*Differenzierten*] and the nuanced, which cognition never completely forgot down to the latest developments in spite of all "science is measurement" [*in English*] theses, does not solely refer to an individual capacity, which objectivity can dispense with. It receives its impulse from the thing. Differentiation means that someone is capable of discerning in this and in its concept even that which is smallest and which escapes the concept; solely distinction encompasses the smallest. In its postulate, that of the capability to experience the object - and distinction is the subjective reaction-form of this becoming experience - the mimetic moment of cognition finds refuge, that of the elective affinity of the cognizer and that which is to be cognized. In the entire process of the Enlightenment this moment gradually crumbled. But it does not completely remove it, lest it annul itself. Even in the concept of rational cognition, devoid of all affinity, the grasping for this concordance lives on, which was once kept free of doubt by the magical illusion. Were this moment wholly extirpated, the possibility of the subject cognizing the object would be utterly incomprehensible, the jettisoned rationality thereby irrational. The mimetic moment for its part however blends in with the rational in the course of its secularization” (ND 45).

Every conceptual complexity, in other words, every attempt to be *truthful* to the object of thought and to be *appropriate* to its object, is a “magical” element in thought given that we try to “reproduce” the object in thought. In a certain sense, we *have to become the object* when we are thinking about it. Play – seen from the perspective of the player – is based on *merging* with the played (for example, the child playing “riding a horse” *is* the horse rider). As Adorno clearly sees, all philosophies that focus on intuition, such as Bergson’s philosophy as well as phenomenology, push this mimetic impulse into the

center. Lotz would like to point out, however, that we should be aware that the mimetic impulse is only one side of the picture. For, as we already know, dialectics is based on the going back and forth between concept and issue, the consequence of which is that the mimetic impulse can only be carried out if we remain in distance to the object (through conceptions, reflection, and thought). According to Adorno, this interplay of distancing (constructing the object) and merging (becoming the object) has two aspects: [1] on the one hand, negative dialectics is *normative*, which explains why Adorno criticizes other conceptions of philosophy for their one-sidedness. In this respect, what Adorno asks us to do is to think dialectically, if we want “to get it right.” Moreover, the call for an “appropriate” way of thinking reveals the utopian core of Adorno’s philosophy, which is extremely sensitive to one-sidedness and suppressions, as well as to negations of what remains foreign to the grip of conception and rationality. Indeed, Adorno’s whole philosophy is extremely aware of and sensitive to *any kind of suffering* and suppression that occurs through making everything ‘the same.’ The utopian (and perhaps theological) core is indicated by a word that appears in Adorno’s writings like a sudden flash in the night, namely: *happiness*. As he puts it in *Negative Dialectics*,

“[t]he reconciled condition would not annex the alien [*Fremde*] by means of a philosophical imperialism, but would find its happiness in the fact that the latter remains what is distant and divergent in the given nearness, as far beyond the heterogenous as what is its own” (ND 191).

This core is also clearly laid out in the introduction to *Negative Dialectics*: “Reconciliation would be the meditation on the no-longer-hostile plurality, something which is a subjective anathema to reason” (ND 6). Difference and plurality, not identity, are the new catchwords. [2] On the other hand, negative dialectics is *descriptive*: for Adorno claims that what he thinks in *Negative Dialectics* is “appropriate” to rationality itself. Thus Adorno not only writes and thinks *about* dialectics; rather, he also presents its philosophy *in* a dialectical form. If Adorno wants to be true to his motives, he must *apply what he calls for* (whether he is always successful, remains an open question).

### “Play” and Reason

The “childlike” conception of philosophy is also a reference to Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* for whom the playful conception of reason is the major way of overcoming the suppressive structure of rationality and the will (see, for example, the beautiful section entitled *The Dance Song*) in order to learn how to *affirm* life and embrace the earth. Traditional metaphysics, according to Adorno (following Nietzsche), displays the tendency to *deny* life.

### Thing and Thinking

Lotz repeated that the seminar focus is the relation between thinking and thing. Since he received the impression that seminar participants do not yet grasp the real scope of these questions and their importance, he would like to briefly sketch the overall background for this topic: Heidegger’s and Adorno’s philosophies are based on the *experience* that we live in a world in which all attempts to liberate ourselves within the historical process have turned against nature and against ourselves. Terms, such as reification, exchange, homelessness, & etc., stand for this experience on which these philosophies are based and from which they receive their deepest motives. Lotz would like to stress, though, that Adorno’s and Heidegger’s philosophies cannot be reduced to “theories of modernity,” as sometimes is claimed; rather, both offer an authentic attempt to re-conceptualize basic epistemological and metaphysical concepts found in the philosophical tradition. Whereas Adorno’s philosophy is rooted in the Marxist tradition (broadly construed) and the Romantic tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Heidegger’s philosophy is based on the history of philosophy conceived as the history of metaphysics. In addition, whereas the central experience for Adorno seems to be *reification*, the central experience for Heidegger

is *nihilism*.<sup>5</sup> The diagnosis of a reified and nihilistic “situation” is visible in how – for us – the “relation” to the world is fixed, framed, determined and historically given. The term “world” is not really appropriate here since for Heidegger the world is the condition for the possibility of having access to (meaningful) beings and is thus not opposed to us. Therefore, we should take a step back and start thinking about things as being that which is around us in general. Moreover, to start with “things” [*Gegenstand, Ding*] is eminently phenomenological, inasmuch as it allows us to avoid speaking of abstractions, such as “entities,” “objects,” and, even, “beings.” Though Adorno remains within the subject-object paradigm, and as such seems to be opposed to Heidegger, he nevertheless also identifies the “thing” or the “thing-like” as central for philosophy; and his constant reminder of the *experience of objects* seem to have a worldly sense. Adorno is, as is Heidegger, worried that we are in the process of losing the “full sense” of the world. As he puts it in *Negative Dialectics*:

“Should any sort of harmony of subject and object have prevailed anno [Latin: in that year], then it was realized by pressure exactly like the recent ones, and fragile. The transfiguration of past conditions serves the later and superfluous renunciation, which is experienced as inexorable; only when lost do they gain their allure. Their cult – that of the pre-subjective phases – came to itself in the era of declining individuation and the regressive collective in horror. Reification and reified consciousness realized, along with the unbinding of the natural sciences, also the potential of a world without scarcity; previously the condition of humanity was already dehumanized by what was thingly; at least these went together with thingly forms of consciousness, while the indifference for things, which are appraised as pure means and reduced to the subject, helped to grind down humanity.” (ND 191).

The key word for us is Adorno’s claim that the *indifference for things* is the main indicator of reification and that only a thinking that remains in distance *and* at the same time remains close to its “objects” can overcome this indifference. The same seems to be indicated when Heidegger speaks of “releasement” [*Gelassenheit*] in one of his last writings. *Leaving something as it is – paradoxically – might turn out as the opposite of “indifference.”*<sup>6</sup> The topic of thinghood, accordingly, implies rethinking the *overall* way in which we approach the world and simultaneously affects our conceptions of philosophy. The seminar readings should lead us to become clearer about our own conceptions of philosophy, which is important once we realize that this determines everything else. “Thinking” cannot be disconnected from the topic of thinghood and objecthood, insofar as both Adorno and Heidegger claim that the distortions we find ourselves confronted with depend upon historically handed over conceptions of what thinking is, the main two aspects of which are the following: [1] thinking is conceived as *philosophical* thinking, and [2] thinking is conceived as a metaphysical/epistemological concept. Adorno and Heidegger remain heirs to the transcendental tradition (such as Kant and Husserl), according to which object-constitution is centrally tied to thinking and rationality. Remember that “transcendental logic” basically is “object logic” [*Gegenstandslogik*].<sup>7</sup> In other words, transcendental logic is about how thought is *intrinsically* letting something in-itself be there for us. Thinking *is* the difference and relationality of the thing to reason.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, both Adorno and Heidegger agree upon the following: thinking is (mainly) neither a psychological act, nor is it to be identified with “logic” (not in the formal or in the metaphysical sense)

<sup>5</sup> Though Heidegger mainly refers to “nihilism” in his lecture courses on Nietzsche, the *experience of what is* is clearly stated in 1936: “The essential happenings in this darkness are: the flight of the Gods, the destruction of the earth, the reduction of human beings to a mass, the preeminence of the mediocre” (IM 47). Heidegger identifies all four aspects as the destruction of the spiritual [*Geist*], by which he refers to the reduction of metaphysical terms to psychological or technical concepts. For example, the spiritual (=intellect) is now identified with thought in a psychological sense, as instrumentality, and as “intelligence” (IM 49). And the metaphysical dimension of spirit as the center of how all *basic* relations (social, political, divine, material) are “unsettled” has been forgotten.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is needless to say that this can be translated into environmental philosophy and that it is not by chance that Heidegger enjoys some popularity within this movement.

<sup>7</sup> This will become clearer once you have read Adorno’s and Heidegger’s Kant interpretations.

<sup>8</sup> It is clear then that Heidegger’s analysis of the “worldhood of the world” in BT moves away from an object logic to what might be called a “world logic.”

(NPT 130, IM 125-129). The topic of language is very closely tied to the relation between thinking and thing, for both Adorno and Heidegger, as each is aware that the *form of* and *how* something is said is as important as the effort to find a more *appropriate* take on the essence of thinking and the essence of thing (see the end of LH). What “appropriateness” and “fittingness” here means is, of course, an important question (in this regard Adorno is somewhat clearer than Heidegger).

### ***Thinking in the Philosophical Tradition (Examples)***

Lotz decided at 11pm on Friday that he won't pursue this topic in this protocol. He just wants to point out that we would need to look at Leibniz, Hegel, Frege, and modern cognitive scientists as good examples. Having said this, it should nonetheless be clear that even in our normal discourses we tend to identify thinking with computation, inferential claim-making, and/or abstraction (coming up with generalities), all of which are *disconnected* from content and refer only to the *form* of mental acts. However, we are talking about thinghood and thinking in this seminar, since Heidegger and Adorno offer conceptions of thinking that do not separate form from content.

### ***Thinking in Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics (1936)***

As Lotz outlined above, Adorno claims that all thinking is built on a mimetic impulse. It is interesting to see that Heidegger's attempt to be “appropriate to,” “echo,” and to “respond to” Being [=*Entsprechung*] could be read through Adorno's lenses as solely focusing on the mimetic impulse without taking into account the conceptual construction (and therefore Adorno interprets this as a “mythological” element in Heidegger's philosophy). The issue, however, is more complex, as can be seen by attending to Heidegger's carefully developed notion of *noesis*. The best example of this development is carried out in his lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which he delivered in 1936, and which was a moment at which Heidegger had not yet disconnected the question of the political from the question of Being (i.e. metaphysics). In the section entitled “Thinking and Being,” Heidegger investigates how the concept of thinking has been determined as a form of representation in modern thought and how the Greek terms of *logos* and *noein* offer a path out of the modern subjectivism. “Thinking sets itself against Being,” as Heidegger claims, “in such a way that Being is re-presented to thinking, and consequently stands against thinking like an ob-ject [*Gegen-stand*, that which stands against]” (IM 123). Accordingly, thinking is defined in *contrast to* that which it thinks, which in turn leads to the “predominance” of subjective thinking over its objects. The presupposition, however, for this schema, is that we have the object as an object “available” to us. Accordingly, the *availability* [*Verfügbarkeit*] of beings as such is prior to an object being taken as an object. Manipulation, technical rationality, and calculation are therefore based on representation [*Vorstellung*]. *Because* thinking shows up in modern metaphysics as deliberation, and instrumentality, Being becomes identical with the “calculable” (IM 207).<sup>9</sup> *To be means to be calculable*. Put differently, everything that is, is calculable. Accordingly, what is thought in thought has to be represented *first* before it can be thought. This conception as the “fundamental orientation of the spirit of the West [...] is the real target of our attack” (IM 123). According to Heidegger, this orientation can be captured in three aspects: [1] thinking is defined as a mental activity that we bring about (psychologism, having ideas, imagining something, etc.), [2] thinking is defined as a form of analysis (deliberation, instrumentality, logical connection), and [3] thinking is defined as conceptual thought (universal) (IM 126). In all cases, thinking is conceived as a “faculty” [*Vermögen*] of humans or human reason (most

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<sup>9</sup> This does not imply that we calculate all the time; rather, it means that everything we can think of in an individual way *already* – before we think as individuals – stands in front of us as something that *can be calculated*. For example, the idea that we can transform and remake nature presupposes that nature and humans already have appeared and have been given to us *as something that is “creatable”* (= ultimately this means that nature is itself rational+logical+virtual).

prominently visible in Kant).<sup>10</sup> Heidegger proposes that – due to [1] to [3] – we need to reinvestigate the concept of logic and *logos* again, given that the modern conceptions of thought brought with them inappropriate conceptions of the *logos*. In addition, as H. claims, *logos* in Greek thought does not refer to “thinking;” rather *legein* goes back to “gathering” (IM 131) as a form in which that which shows up somehow comes together.<sup>11</sup> Instead of conceiving of thinking as an activity of the mind or as “assertions,” Heidegger proposes the following:

“*Noein* means to apprehend, *nous* means apprehension, in a double sense that intrinsically belongs together. On the one hand, to apprehend [*vernehmen*] means to take in [*hin-nehmen*], to let something come to oneself – namely what shows itself, what appears” (IM 146).

This paragraph is of central importance for understanding how Heidegger tries to overcome the idea that thinking is something “in us” that we bring about and that we initiate, construct, create, or make. What he has in mind is a kind of “passivity.” “Passivity,” in a sense, though, is not really the right term, since passivity ultimately is a form of activity (rest = not moving). So, perhaps the better term would be “receptivity” or “listening.” When we listen to someone and try to understand *what* someone is saying, we certainly do not bring about that which we listen to. What we need to do is be concentrated on what is being said, but this also implies a radical openness to what is being said. In addition, we need a “sympathy” – a liking – for what we hear, as well as a “letting go” and “giving over” to what we hear. We will not listen “better” or improve our understanding if we “want” to hear only certain things; rather, real listening is so open that it is able *to receive* without desire. It is, as Heidegger puts it, a “receptive bringing-to-a-stand” (IM 147). Lotz stressed that it is important that everyone tries to reflect on this, especially since it cannot really be demonstrated. Instead, everyone must intuit this for him/herself. Moreover, we must take into account that Heidegger does not have something in mind that is “in us;” rather, the opening up of Being somehow must be “beyond” or “above” what we define as “in us;” for “us,” “humans,” thinking as mental activity must itself be, in order to be conceived as being opposed to Being. Accordingly, as Heidegger argues, it must rather be the case that we find ourselves *in* the opening and we should conceive of ourselves as participating in the *logos* (the belonging-together). Since for Heidegger humanity (here understood as the essence of being human) is not fixed (see IM 149), the “event” and “occurring” of the belonging-together of Being and thinking must include what it means to be human:

“Apprehension and what Parmenides’ statement says about it is not a faculty of the human being, who is otherwise already defined; instead, apprehension is a happening [*Geschehen*] in which humanity itself happens, and in which humanity itself thus first enters history [*Geschichte*] as being, first appears – that is, [in the literal sense] itself comes to Being” (IM 159).

What Heidegger has in mind here is not very difficult: the “opening up” of Being (as that which ultimately also makes beings accessible) is an event in which *all relations* are “determined,” since the event brings to a stand how the “is” in general will be understood and comes about (this is what he calls in LH the “advent” of Being). Though later Heidegger seems to change his position, in 1936 he still assumes that there are “occurrences” that set everything else in motion in a metaphysical sense:<sup>12</sup>

“Only where Being opens itself up in questioning does history happen, and with it that Being of *the human beings* by virtue of which the human being ventures the confrontation with beings as such” (IM 153).

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to see that Heidegger somehow recognizes that Hegel is one of the few thinkers who deviate from [1] to [3]. Though Heidegger does not explicitly admit it, he acknowledges that “logic” in Hegel is a metaphysical concept by which Hegel tries to overcome Kant’s theory of faculties. Indeed, Hegel does not oppose Being and thinking (though he still understands Being differently than Heidegger).

<sup>11</sup> The German term for gathering is “Lesen,” which means “reading,” “collecting,” and “harvesting.”

<sup>12</sup> These thoughts are not as weird as they might first seem: even in our everyday talk we constantly refer to “beginnings,” “epochs,” “revolutions,” etc.

Lotz proposed that we not investigate further how Heidegger tries to rethink the “openness” of the human being through his interpretation of the *Antigone* and the “uncanniness” and *deinon* of humans (IM 156-176).<sup>13</sup> He instead proposed that we try to determine whether Heidegger’s attempt to break out of the modern paradigm finds its echo in Adorno [remember: a different conception of thought would redefine *everything*, including praxis, which will lead us to the *Letter on Humanism* and to *Marginalia on Theory and Praxis*].

### **Adorno’s Notes on Philosophical Thinking**

Lotz masterfully explained that in this little, quite beautiful piece, which was originally delivered as a national public radio lecture in 1964, Adorno, rather astonishingly, tries to move away from the “activity” paradigm of thinking, too. As we now know, Adorno is suspicious of all “formalisms” in philosophy, which includes his suspicion of defining thinking as a purely logical activity. Though he remarks that the attempt to define thinking in logical terms demonstrates the “autonomy of thought” (NPT 127), insofar as thinking brings itself in distance to what it thinks<sup>14</sup>, he makes a point to similar to Heidegger: the total separation of thought from its object (=formalism) would lead to conceiving thinking as a computer thinks (“cybernetic machine,” NPT 127) and ends up in the total mathematization of cognition (so, here we find the hidden connection between formalization, instrumentality, and domination). Thought frees itself *towards* the phenomena, and therefore it contains a passive side. In this connection, Adorno writes (referring to Kant):

“Defined by its mere affiliation, the ‘I think’ itself becomes a passive entity, completely distinct from the active reflection upon a ‘my.’ Kant thus captured the passive moment in the activity of thinking faithfully, just as even in his most precarious propositions his impressive honesty constantly attends to what presents itself in the phenomena” (NPT 128)

Here, one can see that thinking remains dependent upon its subject matter since, as in Kant, the transcendental apperception is itself bound to something that *it thinks*.<sup>15</sup> This “surrendering” to the object lays Adorno out in the following way: [1] thinking is a form of patience [*Geduld*]. But what is the nature of patience, if not the *overcoming* of all activity? Patience is openness and the surrender of *all* subjective activity (= releasement); [2] thinking depends upon a “long and uncoercive gaze upon the object” (NPT 130). But again, doesn’t this imply that the gaze turns into its opposite and “merges” with the object? And finally; indeed, [3] real thinking vanishes in the subject matter (NPT 130). Accordingly, although Adorno does not go as far as Heidegger (who gives a phenomenological interpretation of *noesis*), from his perspective, he deals with the same issue, namely, the question of how to think thinking as a form of meditation: “Without a contemplative moment,” as Adorno puts it “praxis degenerates into conceptless activity, but mediation as a carefully tended special sphere, severed from possible praxis, would hardly be better” (NPT 131).

*To be continued next week*

### **Questions**

Nope. Lotz refuses to destroy the beauty of this protocol.

<sup>13</sup> For this, also see the appropriate section in his lecture course on Hölderlin’s *The Ister*.

<sup>14</sup> Adorno takes this from Hegel. For example, see Hegel’s *Encyclopedia Logic*, §20+23, where Hegel claims that the ‘I’ and reflection are only forms of abstract freedom.

<sup>15</sup> Adorno repeats here one of the main Hegelian arguments against Kant.