

## **La nouvelle conception de la “totalité” chez Adorno et une comparaison avec la pensée de Lukács**

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**Résumé:** Le concept de “totalité” n'est pas l'objet que la “critique de l'identité” philosophique d'Adorno tente de déconstruire, mais le “véhicule” à travers lequel sa logique théorique existe et se déploie. Sur la question de la “totalité”, Adorno est à la fois d'accord avec la construction de la “totalité” dans la vision de Lukács de la “société civile” et à la fois essaie de démanteler Lukács au nom de la “non-identité”. Au nom de la “non-identité”, Adorno cherche à dissoudre la logique obligatoire de l'Histoire et la conscience de classe de Lukács. La position idéale de la “totalité” d'Adorno est de réaliser un état d'“expérience” dans lequel l'individu et la société ne sont pas intégrés dans le cadre antagoniste de la société civile et de réaliser un éveil épistémologique et une rébellion contre la logique obligatoire de la société civile à travers le renforcement de la subjectivité individuelle.

**Mots clés:** Adorno , Totalité , Subjectivité

# Adorno's New Understanding of "Totality" and a Comparison with Lukács's Thought

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**Abstract:** The concept of "totality" is not the object that Adorno's philosophical "critique of identity" tries to deconstruct, but the "vehicle" through which his theoretical logic exists and unfolds. On the issue of "totality," Adorno both agrees with the construction of "totality" in Lukács's vision of "civil society" and tries to dismantle Lukács in the name of "nonidentity." In the name of "nonidentity," Adorno tries to dissolve the compulsory logic of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. Adorno's ideal position of "totality" is to realize a state of "experience" in which the individual and society are not integrated within the antagonistic framework of civil society and to achieve an epistemological awakening and rebellion against the compulsory logic of civil society through the strengthening of individual subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Adorno, Totality, Subjectivity

Overall, Adorno's philosophy always adheres to and pursues a logic of "absolute negativity," trying to find the "incompatibility" between reason and reality in the interaction between experience and concept so as to reveal the paradoxical situation of "freedom" and the possibility of freedom to transcend the existing order. In this context, "totality" is always a "stabilized" key issue. In contrast to the Hegelian "totality" in Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, Adorno's philosophy provides a "new understanding" of the concept of "totality." It goes into the theoretical systems of "totality" in which "identity" is embedded, and it relies on the deconstruction of "identity" in "totality" to gain its theoretical legitimacy and critical vitality. In this sense, "totality" is not an ideal state that can be achieved through "methodological revision" or "theoretical reconstruction," but a "vehicle" or "container" for the existence of Adorno's philosophy in its entirety, that in the opposite sense constitutes the premise of legitimacy for the existence of Adorno's philosophy.

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## 1. Adorno's Tracing and Determination of "Totality"

Adorno's discussion of "totality" revolves around two concepts, "subjectivity" and "identity." In his philosophy, "subjectivity" is expressed in the modern construction of "man" and the definition of his rights, while "totality" focuses on the interpretation of "man" as a construct within the framework of social logic. The relationship between them characterizes the freedom of man and its limits. The exploration of the relationship between "subjectivity" and "identity" is not unique to Adorno's philosophy but is closely integrated with Western Marxism as a whole. The majority of Western Marxists after Lukács and Gramsci have focused not on the "social revolution" in the sense of Marx and Engels, but on the "social critique of capitalism." This requires clarifying the "subject of social criticism" and the related issue of "subjectivity." This transition has led many Western Marxists to focus more on revealing modern society's control over the "ideal man" than on transcending capitalist society in its entirety, as Marx and Engels did, on the basis of historical stages of development. Lukács's theoretical exposition of the relationship between "totality" and "subjectivity" in *History and Class Consciousness* becomes the common starting context for later Western Marxists and the crucial place where Adorno's philosophy and Lukács's philosophy meet.

Unlike Lukács's concept of subjectivity construction under the vision of totality, Adorno's philosophy does not recognize the legitimacy of the vision of totality based on the logic of "identity," but instead takes a radical and thorough "nonidentity" stance and attempts to carry out a new interpretation of "individual subjectivity" on this basis. According to Adorno, the "total" form of social interpretation constructed by "enlightened reason" has never been able to escape the logic of "rational identity" - instead of realizing "subjectivity" ("individual subjectivity") in the true sense, it has subjected "individual subjectivity" to the logic of "identity." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno links "enlightened reason" back to mankind's early mythical history, and examines the "identity" of human thought in the direct passage from the mythological age to the "age of enlightenment." In this analysis, Adorno puts forward the idea that "myth becomes enlightenment and nature mere objectivity."<sup>2</sup> Adorno believes that oppression of "identity" is inherent in human beings since the age of civilization, while, on the other hand, his analysis of this pattern of oppression and its roots diverges significantly from Marx's historical materialism. In short, unlike Marx's perspective based on the practice of production, Adorno's "tracing" of how people think about "identity"

<sup>2</sup> Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p.6.

aims to highlight the fact that western civilization as a whole has never truly escaped the epistemology of “the fiction of individual subjectivity by totality,” but has instead gradually formed an omnipresent and increasingly heavy “social control of identity.” Accordingly, Adorno argues that the primary goal of social-critical theory is no longer ideological revolution in Lukács’s sense, but “freedom” - in contemporary society, “the more important thing is to defend freedom, to spread freedom, to achieve freedom.”<sup>3</sup>

In order to realize the “freedom” of “individual subjectivity,” Adorno reinterpreted the “totality” in Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness*. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács follows the “totality” of Hegel’s philosophy, on the basis of the extreme emphasis on “orthodoxy refers exclusively to method.”<sup>4</sup> The “class subjectivity” of the proletariat as a “totality” is highlighted, making the “proletariat” as a “totality” the subject of “self-redemption” and self-actualization. In this sense, the “self-realization” of the modern proletariat is given the mediating status of the “self-realization” of human history - the modern industrial proletariat becomes the “subject-object” of historical development in the context of “total class-consciousness self-consciousness.” Unlike Marx’s class in the perspective of productive forces and relations of production, Lukács’s “class subjectivity” of the proletariat forms an inward vision of the “total subject” - focusing on the self-realization and self-actualization of the proletariat’s class consciousness. In contrast to Lukács, Adorno endorses his critique of capitalist ideology, especially instrumental rationality, and similarly argues that modern ideology (including science and technology) is embedded in capitalist dominance, but at the same time it goes further: All existing philosophies, including Lukács’s (and also Marx’s philosophy and post-Marxian “Marxism”), are the objects of critique. In Adorno’s view, the entire human civilization so far has been permeated with ideological “enforced identity” and has formed an “anti-individual subjectivity” social cage barred with different forms of “totality.”

In general, although Adorno’s “dialectic of negation” and Lukács’s “dialectic of totality” are identical in terms of the “initial steps of emancipation” (which must be preceded by an “ideological revolution”), the key difference between them is whether the subject of this “ideological revolution” is the “class consciousness of the proletariat as a whole” or the “independent individual subjectivity.” It is also at this level that in his book *Minima Moralia*, Adorno focuses on revealing and analyzing the paradoxical nature of social existence from the concrete human empirical state, thus contrasting with the systemic philosophy of grand narratives. Based on “nonidentity,” Adorno’s trace and critique of “totality” focuses on the epistemological reflection on the way of thinking and

<sup>3</sup> Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Jingdong Qu, Weidong Cao. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2006, p.2. The translation is the translator’s own.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Lukács. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972, p.1.

applies this epistemological reflection directly to social critique. In this case, the “total” reflection has the dual character of epistemological and social criticism. And its conclusion is that “individual subjectivity” in human society (especially in modern society) is always subject to “identity”; individual subjectivity cannot achieve true “liberation” until it achieves true independence and freedom; the real obstacle to independence of individual subjectivity is precisely the epistemology of “identity” which is comprehensively wrapped by “totality.”

## 2. “Civil Society” Vision of Adorno’s “Totality” Concept

When Lukács mentions in *History and Class Consciousness* that “this rationalization of the world appears to be complete, it seems to penetrate the very depths of man’s physical and psychic nature. It is limited, however, by its own formalism.”<sup>5</sup> In effect, he argues for the necessity of the logical sequence of “ideological revolution first”. The aim was to transform “civil society” into a society with a “proletarian ideological identity” without changing its nature, thus isolating state dominance and maximizing the power of the proletariat and its party, in the face of the major setback of the proletarian revolution in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. In this theoretical direction, Lukács argues that bourgeois social science theory is fully delegitimized in order to grab the dominant ideological discourse of the proletariat in modern capitalist society and eventually achieve a Marxist social revolution. This opened up the whole Western Marxist social-critical theory, but at the same time it confronted the existing Marxist theoretical system with a great new challenge: could “civil society,” which was removed from the perspective of political economy, especially the analysis of private ownership, be truly transformed into a “society in which the ideology of the proletariat (and its party) has the right to speak”?

In Gramsci’s case, the above-mentioned idea was highly expected and gave rise to the theory of “egemonia culturale” (or “cultural hegemony”). The issue is that, according to Marx’s own logical framework of revolutionary philosophy, the “ideological leadership of the proletariat (and its party) in civil society” can be judged as a “false problem.” Marx suggested that with the development of large capitalist industries and increased competition for capital, more and more small private individuals would be thrown into the ranks of the modern proletariat and cause a split in civil society, but this was more a polarization of class antagonism than a simple assertion of the polarization of the ideological opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Marx’s thought argues that “civil society” lacks the basic prerequisites for cultural transformation into a

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<sup>5</sup> Georg Lukács. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972, p.101.

“proletarian society.” To realize Lukács’s idea, it is necessary to separate the “logic of ideological revolution” from Marx’s “logic of productive forces and relations of production” and to give it at least the same importance as the former. Adorno’s theory, like that of Lukács and Gramsci, employs a tactic of distancing from historical materialism while not rejecting the theoretical premise of achieving ideological emancipation through civil society. The distinction is that Adorno’s philosophy employs “reverse logic” to carry out Lukács’s concept of “ideological revolution of civil society.” In the name of “nonidentity,” individual subjectivity exalts while dissolving all abstract subjectivity at the social level (including the “proletariat” in the Marxist sense). As a result, the individual can sustain a “dialectical” confrontation with civil society while achieving a “constellation” state in which the individual and civil society are mutually not submissive. According to this logic, any consensus-based overarching ideology (including Marxism) is “illegitimate.”

Adorno’s philosophy’s “reverse logic,” in contrast to Lukács’s totality dialectic, is more of a “transformation” of the latter’s logical order. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács replaces civil society with class consciousness on the basis of a high degree of individual and class identity and uses total proletarian class consciousness to confront bourgeois state power by emphasizing the self-consciousness of total proletarian class consciousness. Although several fundamental terms have been changed logically, Lukács does not dispute the logical order of “state-society-individual.” This is not the case with Adorno’s philosophy. Adorno cut off the “state-society-individual” sequence in comparison with *History and Class Consciousness*. His logical goal is to eliminate the coercive feature of the “state” regime and to place society and the individual in direct “opposition.” For this reason, on the one hand, all acts of resistance in the arena of power, including Marxist party theory, would be declared “illegal” due to their vehement antagonism to all theoretical systems imposing coercive “identity.” In this case, the substitution of one regime of compulsory homogeneity (the dictatorship of the proletariat) for another regime of compulsory homogeneity (the conversion of the bourgeoisie) is itself rejected by “absolute negation.” On the other hand, in the theoretical framework of “cultural industry,” “individual subjectivity” in modern society is firmly controlled by the principle of commodity exchange, and the unification of proletariat members in the traditional Marxist sense has been deemed unachievable. As a result, direct resistance to the capitalist social order has lost its social subject in the class sense.

For this reason, the task of Adorno’s social-critical theory, as it is presented in *Minima Moralia*, is to reveal and criticize the inherent incompatibility between the individual’s “empirical” life and the ethical principles they are accustomed to in “civil society,” and to realize the individual’s state of being in the reflection and criticism of this incompatibility, in order to preserve a critical interaction between theory and “empirical” life. This “empirical” life must be the individual’s “experience,” the individual’s cognition and feeling of his own “experience” existence, and in the continuous reflection and criticism

of the “experience” world to construct his own individual subjectivity constantly subversively. Individual resistance to the state is no longer necessary in such conditions, and individual resistance to society, particularly the maintenance of “consciously recognized” independent subjectivity in such a struggle, is the only hope for emancipation. As a result, Adorno’s philosophy avoids dealing with state power and violent revolution in the Marxian sense, and even attempts to avoid an overly radical interpretation of the “class” perspective, instead analyzing social oppression from the cultural level of “ideology,” emphasizing the dissolution and control of “individual subjectivity” by the entire human social history.

In short, according to Adorno’s philosophy, “society constructs inauthentic subjectivity,” every major advance in the history of human civilization has been associated with an increasingly insidious deepening of society’s overall mind control over the individual, rather than with real independence toward “individual subjectivity.” According to the reasoning outlined above, “how to live the ‘right life’” becomes the central theoretical goal of Adorno’s philosophy, and the subject of this “life” can only be the individual as an independent subjectivity. For this reason, Adorno’s philosophy intentionally moves away from the grand narrative of Marx’s historical materialism and sublation and instead roots its theory in “civil society.” Faced with the theoretical demand for epistemological clarification of the delicate, “empirical” and authentic “individual subjectivity,” Adorno’s philosophy transformed Freudian theory through a social-critical lens to construct the personality of individual subjectivity. In this sense, Adorno’s “dialectic of negation” is not a “dialectic” in the traditional sense, i.e., a logical deduction of various objective elements of human society and their interrelationships. Rather, it is a “constant negation” of the existing ethical concepts and modes of thinking of both society and individuals under the model of “dichotomy” between individuals and civil society. This is also the reason for the high priority given to ethics. In this process, if the “individual subjectivity” in the ideal sense envisaged by Adorno’s philosophy is not achieved, this “negation” will not stop, and it will manifest as “constant negation” of all modes of social control.

### **3. Reconstructing the Historical Framework of “Individual Subjectivity”**

Concerning the “emancipation of individual subjectivity,” Adorno traces the origins of “enlightenment” to the concept of the “mythical age,” incorporates the entire human civilization into the critique, and points the finger at all forms of thinking with “identity” and cultural forms that appear to be “total.” It breaks with the Marxist distinction between the primitive, slavery, feudal and capitalist societies, completely reverses the Marxist view of history, and interprets all the “enlightening functions of reason” as “ideological control,” thus equating “rational identity” with “savagery” again. In this

sense, Adorno's social-critical theory does not imply the "invalidation" of Marxism, but rather its "deactivation" in a key area. For once the object of critique is extended to the socio-historical field with the history of human spiritual civilization as the background, the Marxist viewpoint of class struggle, political economy, and even the interpretive framework of historical materialism can only exist as a theoretical resource for social critique, not as a logical structure. Here, in contrast to Lukács's marginalization of the Marxist "practical" perspective in *History and Class Consciousness*, Adorno's philosophy goes one step further: In this tracing of the "enlightenment", which does not involve the "social division of labor" and covers the entire history of human civilization, Adorno is able to avoid the objective compulsion of the productive forces and economic base on the relations of production and the superstructure in the field of social development, and finally, through his interpretation of human history, he is able to put the history of ideas above the history of production.

Within the above socio-historical reading, Adorno has further "revised" the critical scope of *History and Class Consciousness*. He transformed Lukács's critique of the "social scientific reading of bourgeois" into a critique of the "identity thinking of civil society." It is important to note that, on the surface, Adorno's tracing of the "enlightenment" extends to the mythical age, but this mythical age is not free from "private ownership." It is for this reason that Adorno, in his analysis of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* on the relationship between Odysseus and Siren, links it to the archetype of the modern bourgeoisie. Adorno's philosophy has never departed from the patriarchal framework of "civil society" in tracing the "enlightenment." Adorno's critique of "identity" is an epistemological tracing of the dominant way of thinking in "civil society." The distinguishing feature of Adorno's philosophical critique of identity is that civil society is seen as an objective product of a "cultural epistemological model." In this way, the entire western history of social development is interpreted as the history of the domination of "identity" thinking. In short, "civil society" is the prerequisite for Adorno's philosophy's development.

Paradoxically, the "critique of identity" of Adorno's philosophy still follows an "identity" path. Because it ignores the specific forms and nature of social oppression in different times and treats "oppression" as "identity." It is also in this reading of the history of domination that the phenomenon of oppression in different social stages can be interpreted as "identity" thinking. This "identity" is not only carried out in every social behavior of every individual but is also reflected in every mode of thinking of every individual. More importantly, Adorno's philosophy argues that this situation has never been recognized by the "individual" at the cultural level and therefore "nonidentity" has never been raised to "individual consciousness." In such an interpretation, every advance in society and culture means an increase in social control over the individual. Here, it is reasonable to assume that although Adorno revised the critical horizon of *History and Class Consciousness*, the general idea of the revolutionary

logic of Lukács's book was implicitly adopted - that resistance to society manifests itself first and foremost as an ideological or cultural resistance, requiring the realization of a kind of subjective independence and self-consciousness of the subject.

Through these transformations, Adorno's revolt against social ideology and culture no longer relied on class or other forms of social collaboration but became a purely "individual subjective revolution" in civil society. Adorno's "revolution of individual subjectivity" rejects all social constructs of "identity" and pushes itself to the opposite of existing social and cultural forms. Such a position is at odds with Marx's assertion of the "essence of man" and even opposes it. To Marx, the development of society at the same time implies the expansion of the space for practice. The expansion of the practice space itself implies the enrichment of social relations, the enrichment of the development space, and the expansion of the essential meaning of human beings. To Marx, social development, including capitalist society, is structured in class oppression, so the problem is the historical renunciation of the structure of class oppression on top of the development of the productive forces of society as a whole. This is not a process that depends on the will of the person (subject). Adorno's cultural reading of the "identity" of "society" does, to some extent, reveal the social assimilation of nature to culture, but he equates this social assimilation with social oppression. This brings about the consequence that "social emancipation" cannot take place at the "social level," but only at the "individual subjectivity," which is in fierce conflict with social identity.

The immediate consequence of Adorno's transformation of historical materialism was the complete marginalization of Marxism's class perspective. In Adorno's view, capitalist ideology has penetrated the lives of all people, and capitalism creates and has become a popular culture. It is a new kind of mental exploitation, a new kind of mental slavery on top of labor slavery. In this ideology, all individuality becomes illusory. "It is not only the standardized mode of production of the culture industry... Individuals are tolerated only insofar as their wholehearted identity with the universal is beyond question."<sup>6</sup> In this capitalist popular culture, where the nobility of culture is completely dispelled and money is the only criterion, the Frankfurt School, including Adorno, argued that the Lukács approach of pouring revolutionary ideas into the proletariat from the outside was no longer viable. They believe that the only way is to carry out a critique of the "mental slavery" of capitalism, and through this critique, they try to awaken the individual's sense of subjectivity, so that these "isolated people" can be "integrated" again as "individuals" and at the level of "non-cooperation." Ultimately, in the socio-historical development framework of "identity," Adorno's philosophy completely severed the positive link between Lukács's totality and social progress, and also delegitimized the proletarian ideology, classifying it as a "totalitarian" society.

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<sup>6</sup> Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p.124.

#### 4. Re-emergence of “Individual Subjectivity” Epistemology from the Perspective of “Identity” Critique

The important approach that Adorno relied upon in his ideological critique was as follows: through the criticism and even rejection of capitalist ideology, especially the cultural industry, the social power of individual independent thinking is demanded in order to achieve a certain awakening of subjectivity at the level of self-awareness. For Adorno, the social power of individual independent thought is not political, but epistemological. The first step is to make it clear epistemologically that the difference between (individual) subject and object is absolute and irreducible. In all epistemological structures of social “totality,” it is impossible for the (individual) subject to completely overcome the difference between subject and object, and for the reason to conceptually grasp the object as the thing expressed by the concept. The problem with traditional epistemology is precisely that it tries to elevate the empirical world to a problematic conceptual world based on the principle of necessity and to grasp it as an entirety, with the parts of the system forming a complete organic whole among themselves and serving the highest compulsory ideal. Adorno believes that today this hope is only an illusion. In his view, the world has no inevitability, it is “an unconscious reality.”<sup>7</sup> This is the only way of being in the “empirical” world, which cannot presuppose an overarching logical schema. The pre-determined theoretical schema is just a synonym for the slavery of the mind – “A world that is objectively set for totality will not release the human consciousness, will ceaselessly fasten it to points it wants to get away from.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Adorno, the logical construction of philosophy can only serve as an epistemological method to “imitate” this unconscious reality, to explain it based on the differential interaction between subject and object, but not to “plan” it. For this reason, in the field of music, Adorno opposed traditional western music with a religious background and advocated for “atonality music.” In the field of culture, Adorno developed a critique of the cultural industry, suggesting that the commercial operation of culture in capitalist society is a new kind of control over the individual, “it is not only the standardized mode of production of the culture industry which makes the individual illusory in its products. Individuals are tolerated only as far as their wholehearted identity with the universal is beyond question.”<sup>9</sup> Adorno’s “empirical” position opposes science in the realm of science and technology. Science’s spirit is likewise irreconcilable

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<sup>7</sup> Kazuyuki Hosomi, *Adorno: Philosophy of Non-identity*, translated by Haijing Xie and Haoyuan Li, Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Press, 2002, pp. 52-54. The translation is the translator’s own.

<sup>8</sup> Theodor W. Adorno. *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E.B. Ashton, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p.17.

<sup>9</sup> Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p.124.

with Adorno's "empirical" viewpoint as harmonious subject-object interaction, and science is, to be sure, a rigorous theoretical system. Experience is only a hypothetical "standpoint" for science, a utilitarian attitude. "Experience lives by consuming the standpoint; not until the standpoint is submerged in it would there be philosophy."<sup>10</sup>

In *Aesthetic Theory*, the idea of "non-identity" is more fully expressed. Through his critique of the commercialization of art, Adorno goes on to develop a critique of the capitalist culture industry as a whole. In his view, art and culture as an entirety have abandoned the function of "self-discipline" and become a kind of slavish "other-discipline" due to the adoption of a commercialized mode and are obsessed with catering to the market and pleasing the readers, their cultural consumers. The cognitive ability to stimulate the subject, especially the cognitive ability to judge impartially, that artworks and even all cultural works should have, has been erased and eventually turned into a cultural deception, a false ideology. This cultural deception maximizes the negative effects with the help of mechanical reproduction. In this way, the whole society is caught up in a false satisfaction – "Trust in the needs of those who with heightened productive powers were to raise the whole to a higher form no longer makes sense, now that these needs have been integrated by a false society and transformed into false ones. Those needs do, just as was prognosticated, find satisfaction, but this satisfaction is itself false and robs humans of their human rights."<sup>11</sup>

In epistemology, "absolute negation" was almost the only weapon Adorno used to break this false ideology of "identity." It implies Adorno's critique and rejection of all "meta" theoretical thinking about identity. Adorno refuses to set up a philosophical and sociological metatheory that synthesizes everything and becomes the center of all other theories - "If society could be seen through as a closed system, a system accordingly unreconciled to the subjects, it would become too embarrassing for the subjects as long as they remain subjects in any sense."<sup>12</sup> In Adorno's view, society "ought" to be a "free," differentiated subject-object relationship without "domination," and it is because of the great difference between the real society and his own "empirical" ideal that Adorno develops a fierce and comprehensive critique - "Being critical meant even undercutting the timeless validity of such dialectical categories as totality, however necessary they were now as a corrective to naive empiricism. In fact, it was the ultimate hope of a negative dialectics to jettison that specific category as an appropriate reflection of social reality."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Theodor W. Adorno. *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E.B. Ashton, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p.30.

<sup>11</sup> Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. *Aesthetic Theory*. London: Continuum, 2002, p.18.

<sup>12</sup> Theodor W. Adorno. *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E.B. Ashton, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p.24.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Jay. *Adorno*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984, pp.99-100.

In summary, Adorno's new understanding of the concept of "totality" runs through the logical framework of the "absolute negation" of his entire social-critical theory, which constitutes the premise of legitimacy for the development of Adorno's philosophy, forming a vision of emancipation in which pessimism and hope go hand in hand, and social negation and "individual salvation" coexist. In contrast to Lukács's philosophy, he takes a stance of absolute negation of all forms of organized social movements (identity) and theoretically cuts off the connection between civil society and the ruling regime, thus showing a stance of despair towards all previous forms of social revolutionary movements. Besides, he holds the only hope for the (different) individual in civil society and tries to restore the critical ability of thought (at the level of individual subjectivity) through the exaltation of individual subjectivity, in order to realize the freedom based on individual difference in the confrontation between individual subjectivity and society and finally get out of the maze of modern ideological control.