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The Problems of a ‘Meta-Dialectical’ Approach to World Politics

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Abstract

This article is a reply to Steven C. Roach’s attempt to formulate a “meta-dialectical” approach to IR which appeared in a previous edition of *Millennium* (Vol 35(2), 2007). Though Roach’s ambitious undertaking is commended, it is argued that there are considerable conceptual difficulties arising from Roach’s attempt to counterpose negative dialectics to positive dialectics and particularly in his interpretation of Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*. In this article, these two key problem areas are addressed to offer a more robust understanding of Adorno’s thought and to secure a more adequate foundation for dialectics in IR. It is posited that the skilled dialectician should possess a relational understanding of the categories of positivity and negativity within the dialectical process rather than the dualistic conception presented by Roach. This paper is intended to act as a ground-clearing exercise from which to base a further study that will seek to establish the groundwork for an open-ended, social-relational dialectical methodology for the study of world politics.

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It is unfortunate that the dialectical method remains overlooked and under-utilised in IR theory. This is despite the ground-breaking piece by Hayward Alker and Thomas Biersteker² and the work, over a decade later, by Christian Heine and Benno Teschke.³ Due to this lack of engagement with dialectics across the discipline, any application of the dialectical method is, for this writer at least, a welcome addition to IR literature. As such, Steven C. Roach deserves commendation for taking the dialectical method seriously, and for seeking to add to it through what he terms a “meta-dialectical” approach.⁴ However, in its current formulation Roach’s meta-dialectics falls short of its aspiration to be accepted as the “next”, “advanced stage” in dialectical theory.⁵ This is because such a bold enterprise as pioneering a meta-dialectical approach to IR theory - regardless of whether this initial promise is considered dubious or not - warrants far more rigorous deliberation and systematic analysis than provided in Roach’s paper. Ultimately, it is the danger of further mystifying the complex and highly misunderstood concept of dialectics that outweighs any benefit that may accrue from Roach’s meta-dialectical formula. However, I wish to make it clear that there is considerable promise in Roach’s thesis, the central hindrance being that it is so laden with complexity that the subject deserves far more reflection to demonstrate its significance than that provided.

In this reply, I contend that Roach’s argument is an unsuccessful attempt to formulate a meta-dialectical theory of IR because of the problems emanating from its central premise, namely, the counterposing of negative to positive dialectics.⁶ The problem lies in Roach’s misappropriation of Adorno’s negative dialectics and the false juxtaposition between this and positive dialectics that follows, which I argue, fails both the formation of a meta-dialectical theory of IR, and Adorno. And it is the numerous reservations concerning this duality that Roach firmly wedges between the dialectical categories of positivity/negativity that propels this criticism. I begin first with a number of general criticisms of Roach’s article including the lack of definitional rigour - its desultory development of key concepts and the problematic nature of a number of Roach’s declarations concerning meta-dialectics. Secondly, I argue that Roach’s determined separation between positive and negative dialectics creates a *false* duality that does not adequately grasp the interconnectedness, the unity, of these dialectical categories and offers a far too unsophisticated rendering of the poles of negativity and positivity that simply cannot support the weight of Roach’s purported meta-dialectical theory. It is suggested that a more thorough interpretation of Adorno’s thought, particularly a more accurate account of negative dialectics, is necessary before one can – *if ever* – begin to appropriate this method to assist in the construction of a meta-dialectical theory of IR. Overall, I counsel caution in adopting

² Alker and Biersteker identified that 10% of IR scholars worked in the dialectical tradition in the 1980’s. No subsequent study has been made to see if these numbers have increased or decreased in recent years. See Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, “The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire (1984)”, *International Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (June 1984): 121-142.

³ See Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1996): 399-423. See also Christian Heine, Benno Teshke, “On Dialectic and International Relations: A Reply to Our Critics”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 26, no. 2 (1997): 455-470.

⁴ Steven C. Roach, “Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 321 and 322-323.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 322-323.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 321.

meta-dialectics as a “fifth”⁷ mode of IR theorizing based at is on a rudimentary grasp of negative dialectics.

Some Conceptual Problems of Meta-Dialectics

The initial problem of the Roach thesis is that one is left to guess at the definition of the term “meta-dialectics” between the three conflicting meaning clusters given in the article. At some instances Roach seems to mean a movement in IR theory beyond dialectics (which would ultimately lead to a *new* paradox and a resultant host of new issues that Roach would have to grapple with),⁸ in other passages the term appears to indicate an attempt to counterpose positive and negative dialectics,⁹ and in others passages meta-dialectics is held as an alternative research programme that has its own “empirical tasks”.¹⁰ It can only be inferred through sub-textual analysis that the term “meta-dialectics” is intended to signify a movement *beyond* or *above*, dialectics.¹¹ However, passages in the “*Empirical Agenda*” section show that the prefix “meta” is also used inconsistently with its Greek root (beyond/above) and instead is used to denote an advancement on dialectics that somehow pushes the method to new heights. As such, Roach’s meta-dialectics is to represent a significant extension on dialectics but one which does not go *above* or *beyond* the dialectic itself.¹² Unfortunately, without a satisfactory definition Roach’s intended meaning behind meta-dialectics is left ambiguous.

Yet, assuming that Roach’s meta-dialectics has the objective to extend dialectics, this intention is not coupled with an engagement with the question of the plausibility of formulating such a “meta-dialectical” theory of IR. To suggest the possibility of formulating a meta-dialectical position that somehow goes *beyond* dialectics appears theoretically spurious on the precepts of the dialectical method itself. Within the critical tradition (which Roach identifies himself with),¹³ the concept of dialectics forms a significant part of the ontological basis of the theory - the interplay of social tensions or contradictions, the movement of struggle, and the inevitable continuation of this dialectical process. To seek to move beyond this process of contradiction would warrant the question of what is there, behind, above, or beyond the dialectic that one could appeal to whilst maintaining a critical dialectical position? After all, if something were beyond dialectics then it would be separate or unrelated to it, and hence the title “meta-dialectics” would have little purchase. Alternatively, if Roach is meaning that we can go beyond the dialectic in the sense of going beyond the analysis of *social contradiction*, then what he is proposing is not a meta-dialectical theory but an *un*-dialectical one.

⁷ Ibid., 324.

⁸ Ibid., 325.

⁹ Ibid., 321 and 323.

¹⁰ Ibid., 340.

¹¹ Typically, where a term is left undefined, one could come to an understanding of it through a thorough engagement with the sub-text but in this case the paper simply does not offer an indisputable indication of meaning behind ‘meta-dialectics’. It can only be assumed that the underlying theme of the piece is meant to indicate the formulation a new, meta-dialectical, theory of IR. Ibid., 342. Note also in the abstract where Roach makes a similar statement that meta-dialectics is to be understood as an “alternative critical IR theory research programme”. Ibid., 321.

¹² Ibid., 340ff.

¹³ Note how Roach seems to position himself within the work of Hegel, Marx, Habermas and most of all Adorno. Ibid., 322-324.

Another problem with Roach's meta-dialectics regards its claim to expand dialectical inquiry from "method" towards "grand theory".¹⁴ On the one hand, dialectics is not usually couched at just the abstract/conceptual level as the pejorative of "grand theory" refers but is enmeshed with real-life processes of change. On the other hand, to render dialectics as grand theory risks mistaking method *for* theory, that is, wrongly elevating what is essentially a methodological device appropriate for the analysis of social change, to a theoretical construction of the world itself.¹⁵ The dialectical approach focuses on the social *totality* or *wholeness*¹⁶ and carries with it the methodological prescription that one component of social life cannot be studied in isolation from the rest.¹⁷ In this sense, dialectics is not a theory but a way of proceeding, for you cannot deduce a theory of the world *a priori* through dialectics – the dialectical forces are those that exist at a particular point in time and space. A theory is concerned with explanation; a method is concerned of how to derive, construct and justify such a theory. Dialectics can certainly help illuminate immanent tendencies in social contradiction and, if the dialectician is skilled enough, these deductions can assist in the construction of social theory. In such a view, dialectics does not assume the role of theory (unless one seeks to study dialectics *in* the world, for example the seemingly now implausible ontological dialectics of Engel's *Anti-Duhring*¹⁸) but rather augments its claims. Whilst it is indeed possible to conceive of dialectics as a set of laws or principles that governs a sector or the whole of reality, Roach does not use dialectics in this manner and hence his claim of moving towards 'grand theory', an ontological dialectics, is misplaced. The objective of his article, despite some isolated misstatements to the contrary, is patently not in constructing a grand theory of either dialectics, or of IR, but in "positioning" meta-dialectics in IR theory.¹⁹ That is, Roach is instancing a methodological use of dialectics that somehow goes *beyond* other dialectical approaches but is not, of itself, an attempt to elevate dialectics to "grand theory".

Another problem concerns Roach's assumption of the compatibility between dialectics and "reflexive" thought.²⁰ Though the specific meaning Roach attaches to 'reflexive' thought is left unstated, he repeatedly equates these two modes as if dialectics and reflexivity were both the "basis" and "limit" on which the other rests.²¹ However, contrary to this purported correlation, there should be a sharp distinction made between a dialectical and a reflexive mode of analysis precisely because dialectical thought grasps at forms in their interconnection not *just* determinate

¹⁴ Ibid., 329.

¹⁵ This should not be taken as advocating a minimalist conception of dialectics i.e: that it is valid only as a methodological tool. The detail necessary to address such an issue adequately is far beyond the scope of this reply. Rather, my point here is merely to remind readers of the distinction between the dialectics as a method and the concept of dialectics as a theory of the world. On the question of ontological dialectics and the dialectics of nature/cosmology, see in particular Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 27ff. Kaku provides a more recent attempt, see Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 213.

¹⁶ See Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukacs to Habermas*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹⁷ See George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 5th Edition, (New York: McGraw-Hill International Editions, 2000).

¹⁸ Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 148.

¹⁹ Roach, "Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics", 323.

²⁰ Roach insinuates this in a number of passages, see Ibid., 321, 325, 322.

²¹ Ibid., 321-323.

differences.²² Dialectics, in the words of Sciabarra, perceives the myriad of social relations not as an ineffable organism, but as a complex nexus of *interrelated* institutions and processes, of volitionally conscious and acting individuals and their dynamic relations.²³ That is, a dialectical perspective would contest the view of a reflexive relation of a ‘being equal to itself’ without its placement within innumerable interconnections with the whole and with the ‘other.’²⁴

Equally problematic is Roach’s attempt to set up meta-dialectics as an advanced stage of dialectical theory and his application of its method to an issue in world politics.²⁵ Firstly, Roach triumphantly declares that his meta-dialectics represents the “next” and “advanced” stage of IR theory that overcomes the “open-ended” dialectics of Heine and Teschke.²⁶ Yet just how his approach is to achieve this lofty objective is left unstated within the piece.²⁷ Moreover, why Roach maintains an aversion to “open-ended” dialectical analysis is not clearly presented and is a highly contestable position.²⁸ The benefit of the open-ended nature of dialectical analysis lies specifically in its ability to not confine itself to one causal explanation or specific abstraction of social change. Roach’s desire to refine the scope of dialectics therefore risks stultifying the dynamic nature of the dialectical method and may have the unintended consequence of arbitrarily excluding relevant causal factors and objects of analysis, and/or, of abstracting and reifying certain causal factors and objects of analysis.²⁹ Secondly, Roach, seeks to wield the meta-dialectical methodology toward a substantive issue in world politics, namely, “the expanding roles and/or development of global institutional arrangements”.³⁰ Yet, such a purposive

²² See Tom Bottomore, L. Harris, V.G. Kiernan, Ralph Miliband (Eds), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1985), 122.

²³ Christopher M. Sciabarra, “Reply to Roderick Long: Dialectical Libertarianism: All benefits, No Hazards”, *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 3, no. 2, (Spring 2002), 383.

²⁴ I am not positing here that reflexive and dialectical thought are mutually exclusive, rather that their analytical relation is far more complex and in need of more clear delineation than provided by Roach.

²⁵ Roach, “Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics”, 325.

²⁶ Roach expresses the hope that meta-dialectics may “compete” and “complement” the Habermasian framework of the “fourth debate” as an “alternative research programme”. Though he does not argue for the replacement of the Habermasian/dialogical approach, Roach’s dissatisfaction with it is implicit in his call for a re-examination of certain points in Habermas’ communicative action theory and by his emphasis on the danger of proceduralism within the Habermasian approach. Yet, it must be questioned whether these problems actually warrant the creation of an entirely new dialectical approach and specifically how meta-dialectics is to overcome these same problems is not explained. *Ibid.*, 323, 325, 334, 339, 340.

²⁷ For Roach, the work of previous IR dialecticians such as Heine and Teschke only offered a “highly conceptual” and “open-ended” analysis of dialectics that did not properly serve as the “theoretical basis of an advanced stage of dialectical theory”. He claims that dialectics is yet to evolve into an IR research programme precisely because theorists have yet to structure an adequate, “overarching” dialectical theory of IR. *Ibid.*, 322-323, Note 4.

²⁸ Roach’s tacit assumption regarding the benefit of a closed dialectic is made without any examination of the costs and benefits of such a ‘closed’ method. Furthermore, Roach seems to later contradict his position against open-ended dialectics when he lauds his own meta-dialectics as possessing an “open-ended nature” in the third empirical tasks and requirements section of his meta-dialectics. *Ibid.*, 341.

²⁹ The benefit of the open-ended nature of dialectical analysis lies specifically in its ability to not confine itself to one causal explanation or specific abstraction of social change. The danger of seeking to reduce the open-ended nature of dialectics is that it may render enquiry vulnerable to subjective, arbitrary exclusions of relevant factors in the dialectical equation of social change.

³⁰ The final purpose of Roach’s work, the application of meta-dialectics to an issue in world politics, flows from his belief in the methods capacity to provide a “holistic and reflexive mode of analysis”. Roach contends that meta-dialectics can understand the expansion/development of global institutions

motivation threatens to transform the dynamic ontology of dialectics regarding social contradiction into a mere tool for what Cox would call problem-solving theory.³¹ As Alker and Biersteker have identified, dialectical theorists have typically valued emancipatory change and have challenged existing world orders with emergent alternatives that may supersede it.³² In contradistinction, Roach employs meta-dialectics toward the expansion/development of global institutions, thus reducing dialectics to serve for the enhancement of the operational imperatives of liberal institutionalism. The motivation behind Roach's approach evinces a commitment to system reproduction rather than critical social transformation to which dialectics is usually purposed towards. Such a position must be interrogated as to whose *interest's* dialectic would be made to serve?

Negativity and Positivity in Meta-Dialectics

As intimated in the introduction, the major concern with Roach's work centers on the duality that he sets up between the dialectical categories of positivity and negativity. Negative dialectics is the central feature of Roach's approach because it acts as an important "functional (and reflexive) limit" of his meta-dialectical theory.³³ For Roach, it is the negative dialectical themes of non-identity and resistance to positive knowledge that constitutes the tension within meta-dialectics and it is for these reasons that he remains so heavily reliant on a particular reading of negativity in Adorno's thought.³⁴ Yet Roach's atypical interpretation of Adorno fails to properly grasp the category of negativity in the highly complex *Negative Dialectics* which therefore calls into question the basis of meta-dialectics whose theoretical veracity is dependent on the adequacy of Roach's interpretation. In this part, I will explore Roach's counterposing of positive and negative dialectics and the myriad problems that arise from his vigorous, yet seemingly extemporaneous, separation of these dialectical poles.

In Roach's estimation, the paradigmatic example of positive dialectics is that of Hegel and Marx who both emphasise that new social practices are deemed to result from the inherent contradictions/tensions in socio-political structures.³⁵ In this conception of dialectics, the realisation of new ideals in society registers new forms of positive knowledge and hence the negativity of dialectics is seen to drive the

through its unique ability to link such growth through the institutions capacity to mediate the tensions between positive and negative dialectics. *Ibid.*, 325.

³¹ Robert.W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981), 128.

³² Unfortunately, I find little evidence to indicate an affinity with these emancipatory goals identified by Alker and Biersteker, usual to the dialectical method, in Roach's work. Indicating, in the most general terms, that NGO's and grassroots groups may influence the development of global institutions is as far as Roach goes in advocating progressive change. See Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, "The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire (1984)", 248-249 and Roach, "Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics", 341.

³³ He heralds Adorno's negative dialectics as an overlooked "fifth" mode of critical IR theorizing - the methodological implications of which, he claims, have been largely ignored. However, this claim fails to recognize that many critical scholars have been utilising the method of immanent critique within IR for many years. This method is heavily embedded in Adorno's negative dialectics, and in a manner that is, arguably, more consistent with Adorno's thought than Roach's meta-dialectical approach. *Ibid.*, 329, 321 and 322-323.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 324.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 323, 325, 32.

positivity of knowledge.³⁶ In other words, social contradiction and the sublation of these tensions ultimately *leads* to greater human freedom, which in Roach's account is considered a positive outcome, a "teleological or deterministic path towards freedom".³⁷ In distinction, Adorno's dialectics is deemed as negative because, in Roach's interpretation, there is no positive knowledge of social transformation resulting from the dialectical process which instead expresses a "form of complete self-enclosure".³⁸

The implication of Roach's categorization of positivity and negativity centers on differentiating between *bad* (negative) or *good* (positive) social practices and forms of knowledge that supposedly flow from the dialectical process. In a rather dismissive fashion, Roach pushes Marx under the banner of positivity because Marx is said to envisage a positive formulation of the worker's experience of oppression in the "self-realised" outcome of their freedom in a "new humane society".³⁹ Adorno's dialectics, in distinction, is interpreted as negative because the reification of the subject in modernity pushes them to identify with the societal objects of their own oppression.⁴⁰ Therefore, positivity is used by Roach to cluster those theorists who elicit an *optimistic* appraisal of the possibilities in the dialectical process of change and negativity is used to denote a *pessimistic* appraisal of dialectics in which change is deemed to lead to further reification. However, this heuristic creates a false juxtaposition and conflicting duality between positive and negative dialectics that results in an erroneous opposition between them on the basis of an evaluative hierarchy of good (positive) and bad (negative) social conditions and outcomes.⁴¹ This conceptualises the categories of positivity and negativity in a most unusual way, not just because it follows a dialectical determinism and consequentialism that is not found elsewhere in critical theory but because it interprets dialectics by the social conditions that are predicted to follow as a result of social contradiction rather than as the method that informs such a process. Consequently, Roach creates a rigid bifurcation between the two categories of dialectics that does not adequately reflect their interrelation. By labeling theorists through their optimistic or pessimistic belief in the outcome of dialectical social change, Roach fails to appreciate that dialectics is informed by *both* positivity and negativity. That is, in the application of the dialectical method, positivity and negativity are not viewed as an opposing duality but rather as unified aspects of the same process, two sides of the same dialectical, methodological coin. Contrary to Roach, the skillful dialectician should possess a relational understanding of the categories negativity/positivity that recognizes the interpenetration and mutuality of the two poles rather than maintaining a false opposition between them.

Exactly why Roach formulates this duality is left ambiguous and results in a host of conceptual problems. Firstly, it is a far too simplistic assertion to label Marx and Hegel as positive dialecticians by virtue of the fact much of their work was inherently *critical*, and therefore, even in Roach's parlance, negative. One might here refer to Hegel's critical reflections on the Kantian moral conscience and subjective

³⁶ Ibid., 323.

³⁷ Ibid., 328.

³⁸ Ibid., 331.

³⁹ Ibid., 327 and 329.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 331.

⁴¹ Ibid., 323.

freedom in civil society,⁴² or the critical content of Marx's *Capital* and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.⁴³ Roach's rendering of positive dialectics is also problematic through its tendency to conflate the dialectical methodologies of Kant, Hegel, Marx and Habermas as if they were seamlessly compatible and indistinct.⁴⁴ The problem deepens however when Roach goes on to claim that Marxist and Hegelian dialectical thought maintains a "teleological or deterministic path towards freedom".⁴⁵ Though the teleological and idealist underpinnings of Hegel's dialectics have been well documented,⁴⁶ the charge of teleology within Marx's dialectic is a highly dubious aspersion and seems an unfair caricature of Marx's thought. Even a cursory survey of Marx's work would reveal numerous and explicit passages in which Marx derides such readings of the dialectic – not the least in his demystification of the 'rational kernel' of dialectics from Hegel.⁴⁷ Marx's dialectical method seems diametrically opposed to any form of teleology as evidenced by his strident insistence that it is people, real, living people "that change circumstances"⁴⁸ – though of course, as so famously stated in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, not under conditions of their own choosing.⁴⁹ Marx places repeated emphasis on human agency in the dialectical process of social change to which Roach gives far too insufficient attention -

⁴² As argued by Theunissen, Hegel's criticism of abstract right reveals the meagerness of the subject that is presupposed by rational natural right, and Hegel's moral criticism drives at the lack of determinacy of individuals that conceive of themselves as moral beings. Essentially, what Hegel indicates is that both the moral subject and social contractarian are socially deficient. Here, moral self-consciousness is problematic because it "only relates to itself within itself", and likewise, the contractual basis of the state is problematic because, ultimately, contractual commonality dissolves into particularity. See Michael Theunissen, "The Repressed Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Philosophy of Right", in *Hegel and legal Theory*, (D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld, D.G. Carlson Eds., E. Watkins, F. Dallmayr Trans.), (New York, Routledge, 1991), 25-26, 33.

⁴³ See Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts", in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, (L.D. Easton, K.H. Guddat Eds and Trans.), (New York, Anchor Books, 1967), 283.

⁴⁴ The reasons why Roach represents these thinkers under the banner of positive dialectics is left unclear. Such a blanket grouping overlooks the vast differences between how each theorist conceives of the dialectical method and creates a false sense of theoretical compatibility between them. The ontological differences regarding dialectics between these writers are so fundamental that they cannot possibly be reconciled under the same *positive* typology that Roach presumes and their perspectives should be clearly distinguished. *Ibid.*, 325-328.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁴⁶ Hegel's dialectic certainly involved the teleological movement of freedom toward its ultimate expression in the Prussian State in the *Philosophy of Right* and its underlying idealism is fairly established and needs no comment here. For a discussion in regards to the differences between Marx's and Hegel's dialectics see Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, (Ben Brewster trans.), (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1969), "Contradiction and overdetermination",

⁴⁷ As Marx famously stated; "I ... openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even, here and there in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the mode of expression peculiar to him. The mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell". See Karl Marx, "Capital, Volume 1", in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 35, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), "Afterward to the Second German Edition".

⁴⁸ Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach", in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works*, Fifth Impression, Vol. II, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), 403.

⁴⁹ As famously stated by Marx; "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", (1852), 1963, 15 cited in R.C. Tucker (Ed), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, (New York: Norton), 436-525.

bordering on a grossly negligent misrepresentation. Instead of portraying the dialectic in a mechanistic fashion leading inevitably toward the *telos* of freedom, Marx posits an arena of struggle and contradiction within history with the notion of progress toward communism as anything but a definitive endpoint. Hence Ball describes Marx as a “political possibilist” rather than a “historical inevitabilist”.⁵⁰ Moreover, the fact that Marx emphasizes a continuous process of change, from socialism, to communism, *and* onward, is a clear indication of the non-deterministic nature of Marx’s dialectic.⁵¹ Finally, in some respects, Roach seems to confuse antagonism *for* contradiction. Yet, it has long been accepted within Marxian thought that the higher stages of socio-political organisation would not diffuse the dialectical process. That is, while class antagonism would almost certainly disappear in the movement from socialism to communism, it is fairly well settled that Marx maintained that wider social *contradiction* would remain, and hence the ongoing fluidity of social life⁵² - which anticipates my formulation on an open-ended, social-relational dialectic.

The Problems of Roach’s ‘Negative Dialectics’

Roach counterposes this conception of positive dialectics⁵³ to the negative dialectics of Adorno⁵⁴ which, he thinks, remains resistant to all forms of positive knowledge and which, you must recall, was the problem that allegedly plagued the Hegelian/Marxian approach.⁵⁵ Under Roach’s conception, Adorno’s theory of non-identity, which he defines as the “subject’s withdrawing into itself”,⁵⁶ subverts the progressive “design of the dialectic” because the reification of experience in modernity makes the subject identify with the products of their own oppression. In this world, it is no longer possible for “self-critical reflection” to intervene which is instead driven back to non-identity.⁵⁷ For Roach, it is this “aversion to affirmation” (the aversion to positive knowledge) - the “non-redemptive” aspect of negative dialectics - that is taken up in Roach’s meta-dialectical, “holistic theory” of IR.⁵⁸ As such, Adorno’s negative dialectics is made to serve as the linchpin of meta-

⁵⁰ Terence Ball, “History: Critique and Irony”, in Terrell Carver (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 124-142.

⁵¹ See Karl Marx, *Marx’s Grundrisse*, (David McLellan Ed.), (Suffolk: Paladin, 1971), 139.

⁵² Roach further confuses the issue when he insists that the negativity associated with “workers’ consciousness” would diminish in direct relation to the practical realisation of these teleological ends of freedom (registered as new forms of positive knowledge in society). The implication is that the dialectical contradiction between the worker and society would thus be weakened and, overtime, such tensions would cease to affect societal change. Roach “Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics”, 323.

⁵³ Roach later refines positive dialectics to two strands popular in international relations; Marxist international political economy, that stresses structural forces, and the Habermasian dialectics that stresses discourse ethics. He challenges these accounts that allegedly argue “that economic and political change is a socio-reductive process” *Ibid.*, 328.

⁵⁴ Roach emphasizes the “affinity” between non-teleological and non-structuralist dialectics and his own meta-dialectics. However, there is a seeming contradiction between Roach’s desire to move toward a “more evolved and open-ended dialectical framework” and his previous statements that seemed to deride the “open-ended” nature of Heine and Teschke’s approach. *Ibid.*, 328-329.

⁵⁵ Roach alleges that this negative dialectical outlook of Adorno represents a possible “fifth” mode of critical IR theory, distinguishable from Marxist, constructivist, Habermasian, and Deconstructionist approaches. *Ibid.*, 324.

⁵⁶ Though Roach identifies three central themes in Adorno’s negative dialectics (the domination of nature, reification, and non-identity) he almost exclusively focuses on this last component. *Ibid.*, 330.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 332-333.

dialectics⁵⁹ and yet Roach makes a series of misconceptualisations regarding this concept that remain seemingly incongruent with a more thorough interpretation of Adorno's thought. These problems can only be resolved through a more adequate re-statement of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, which I shall now provide.

As Adorno states in the *Preface to Negative Dialectics*, the negative dialectical approach seeks to free dialectics from any "affirmative traits" by using an enhanced appreciation of the strength of the subject to break through the "fallacy of constitutive subjectivity". It looks to that which would be *outside* the "sway" of the unity principle⁶⁰ and finds its experiential content in the "resistance of the other against identity".⁶¹ As stated by Adorno, the non-identical is "the thing's own identity against its identifications".⁶² The primary task of negative dialectics is to criticise the claim to hegemony over the object in the idealist logic of instrumental reason.⁶³ Why Adorno calls this form of dialectics "negative" is because it does not claim to possess the truth of the "indigent", "dissonant" object but remains concerned with the moment in which the object appears as more than what its covering concept fails to cover.⁶⁴ As Bernstein notes, negative dialectics is termed "negative" because it is not *totalising*, it is not an attempt to arrive at absolute knowing, or the absolute idea. It is negative because it is moved by the negative experiences of pain and suffering and because it lives through a continual awareness of contradiction, the negative or "wrong state of things."⁶⁵ So in distinction to Roach's depiction of non-identity as the "subject's withdrawing into itself",⁶⁶ for Adorno, non-identity is that part of the subject that is resistant to its identification, that which remains non-identical. Moreover, negative dialectics is used by Adorno as the "hinge" by which he hopes to turn the direction of conceptuality toward this so-called non-identity⁶⁷ and therefore does not pertain to a negative (bad) social condition as Roach believes.

To expand on this crucial distinction further, Adorno's negative dialectics champions the dignity of the object *against* Hegel's reifying and totalising moment of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 325.

⁶⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, (E. Ashton Trans.), (New York: Continuum, 1973), "Preface", xix-xx.

⁶¹ Ibid., 163.

⁶² Adorno advocates a move from the discourse of reason and rationality to that of the concept. As Adorno writes; "Insight into the constitutive character of the non-conceptual in the concept would end the compulsive identification which the concept brings unless halted by such reflection. Reflection on its own meaning is the way out of the concept's seeming being-in-itself as a unity of meaning". Ibid., 12 and 161. See also J.M. Bernstein, "Negative Dialectic as Fate: Adorno and Hegel", in (T. Huhn Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37.

⁶³ For Bernstein the "primary task" of negative dialectics is to break with the logical element of the 'concept' (the idealist concept of the concept). Adorno's negative dialectics is intended as an element in the undoing of "concept-intuition dualism" and by extension an elaboration of the notion of "material inference or implication". The material inference is the claim that what connects two concepts is the specific content, not logical connective. Hence Adorno seeks to use negative dialectic to attempt to reveal how concept-concept relations are inextricably linked to concept-world relations. See Ibid., 37-38, 29, 42.

⁶⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 8.

⁶⁵ J.M. Bernstein, "Negative Dialectic as Fate: Adorno and Hegel", 38.

⁶⁶ Roach "Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics", 330.

⁶⁷ Adorno explicitly defines his enterprise in this manner: "To change this direction of conceptuality, to give it a turn toward non-identity, is the hinge of negative dialectics". Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 24:12.

sublation (*Aufhebung*).⁶⁸ Whereas for Hegel the dialectical process ends in absolute or reconciled identity, Adorno finds that the dialectical relationship is not yet exhausted, and instead upholds the truth of the ‘non-identical’, the belief that certain aspects of the other remain irreducible. Adorno ultimately rejected both Hegel’s notion of the cognitive dialectical process that would unfold into the Absolute Idea (the complete identity of subject and object, “the identity of identity and non-identity”⁶⁹) and the conception of sublation as leading to an ultimate, harmonious reconciliation. In distinction to Hegel, Adorno suggested negativity, the idea that the difference between subject and object cannot be entirely abolished. As Adorno expresses “[d]ialectics positive element would only be determinate negation – criticism – not a final inversion, happily emerging with affirmation in its hand”.⁷⁰ Negative dialectics registers that we cannot subsume the whole, or the other, in a reconciling synthesis, and hence Adorno indicts Hegel’s philosophy as implicated in the axis of domination and reification that distorts relations of identity. That is, Adorno reacts against the conception of dialectics which has an affirmative basis within Hegel’s idealism⁷¹ and instead posits that there remains a realm, no matter how small or repressed, of the subject against totalisation (non-identity). Negative dialectics is the consistent sense of “non-identity” by virtue of the fact that it does not begin by taking a “standpoint”,⁷² and by the fact that it does not seek, nor deem it possible, to ultimately reconcile identity in sublation.

And yet despite this clear wording of Adorno – a rarity in his prose which usually consists of a dense web of aphorisms - Roach does not present negative dialectics in this manner. Rather, as we have seen, Roach appropriates positivity and negativity in an evaluative sense that seems to signify distinctions between *good* and *bad* dialectical outcomes in social practice, an account that is anathema to Adorno’s actual thesis. Rather than presenting negativity/positivity in oppositional terms, Adorno’s primary concern was to expose the “ontology of false conditions” and endangered subjectivity. With this intention, Adorno sought to use Hegel’s “thought” but not his “practice” to explode the moment of positivity (sublation) in favor of an uncompromising emphasis on negation.⁷³ However, Adorno does not accuse Hegel of therefore being a *positive dialectician*, that is, a person who believes in ‘good’ social outcomes, as Roach wrongly presumes.⁷⁴ Whereas Roach improperly appropriates the categories of positivity and negativity and constructs an antagonistic schemata between Kant, Hegel and Marx (and later Habermas) on the positive side, and Adorno on the negative,⁷⁵ this use of dialectics would be unfamiliar – even remiss - to the thinking of Adorno. Rather, we must appreciate the analytical distinction that gives the positivity/negativity dichotomy meaning in Adorno’s work by understanding these poles as devices for ordering non-identitarian (negative dialectical) thinking. Whereas

⁶⁸ *Aufhebung*, rendered as sublation or sublimate can also mean cancel, preserve and lift up and often uses these meaning interchangeable all all three at one. It also can mean to be lifted up on a different level. See Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*, (New York, Anchor Books, 1966), 25, 144.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁷¹ See Stefan Müller-Dohm, “Thinking from No-Man’s Land: The Life and Work of Theodor W. Adorno”, *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, (May 2005), 101.

⁷² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 5-6.

⁷³ Stephen E. Bronner, “Dialectics at a Standstill: A Methodological inquiry into the Philosophy of Theodor W. Adorno”, *Of Critical Theory and it’s Theorists*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 180-181.

⁷⁴ Roach, “Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics”, 323, and 325-327.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 325-329.

Adorno theorized negative dialectics to save the autonomy of the subject, Roach goes on to employ the concept in a way that can only be described as a ‘mode of refusal’ or ‘failure to engage’, citing American opposition to the ICC Treaty, or Sudan’s hostility to an international peace-keeping force in Darfur, as examples of negative dialectics in his meta-dialectical equation.⁷⁶ Negativity becomes, in Roach’s account, a vanishing point, a means of expressing rejectionism and withdrawal by states within the international community towards international institutions, which is obviously a *bad* social outcome in Roach’s account and therefore *negative*. But this is a view that commits Adorno’s negative dialectics to a position that seems incompatible with it.

Other problems also result from this (mis)reading of Adorno. According to Roach, Adorno theorised the dialectic as “intrinsically *regressive*” and “incapable of *projecting* [its own progressive realization of] the Enlightenment ideals of reason, freedom and rationality”.⁷⁷ The problem with this assertion is that most dialecticians, including Adorno, realize that dialectics itself “projects” nothing – whilst it is not confined strictly to being a methodological device dialectics does not of itself project, cause, or affect anything.⁷⁸ Neither does it contain any intrinsic property. Rather, it is better conceived of as a conceptual device of the process or movement of change/transformation used to illuminate the process of change. A similar problem in the conceptualizing of the dialectic arises when Roach later claims that money and media controls “ultimately subvert the progressive *design* of the dialectic”.⁷⁹ This notion of some sort of metaphysical “design” lying within the ‘rational kernel’ of the dialectic is highly problematic because it gives some autonomy, or volition, to the concept of dialectics itself. It becomes an entity of design and purpose. It becomes the actor. Accusations imputing an intrinsic property, design, or projection within dialectics are guilty of hypostasis, giving to the dialectical process a *telos* that subverts its inherently open-ended nature and robs the concept of its embeddedness in social action. Dialectics, properly conceived, posits no ultimate design or intrinsic character, for such assertions would themselves be *undialectical* – they would either give dialectics a power of volition that a concept merely cannot possess and likewise which forgets its embeddedness in social relations and human action, or alternatively, would impute to dialectics a timeless character that does not recognize the fundamental tenet of dialectics itself, *flux*. In distinction to Roach’s express aversion to open-ended dialectics, Adorno’s negative dialectics remained essentially open without design, intrinsic property or projection. This is most clearly evident from the ideas Adorno adopted from Nietzsche regarding the criticism of philosophical categories that failed to grasp the dynamic processes of the world. For Nietzsche and Adorno, the world is in a state of continual transition and development, and reality is viewed as a process of becoming. It cannot be explained by a final state, ultimate standpoint or as possessing an intrinsic “*design*”.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ibid., 340.

⁷⁷ My emphasis added, Ibid., 323.

⁷⁸ I am of course not advocating a minimalist reading of the dialectic, ie: that it is only valid as a methodological tool. Questions of epistemological, ontological and cosmological dialectics are all extremely important debates that cannot be entered into here.

⁷⁹ My emphasis added, Ibid., 330.

⁸⁰ See David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 208-209 Note 36, quoting Friedrich Nietzsche, *A Will to Power*, 278-279 and 378.

Roach's characterization of Adorno's concept of dialectics as being "intrinsically regressive" is also refuted through Adorno's idea of the realm of the *possible*.⁸¹ As Rosen points out, for Adorno the political implication of non-identity was that history had a "double character" that was "inert" at present but was "potentially dynamic". What remained outside identification (the non-identical) revealed the incompleteness of the concept, and because such identification was only partial and incomplete, the 'non-identical' itself therefore possessed a latent capacity. For Adorno, it remained possible to move beyond what was reified and incomplete and the task of his negative dialectical account was therefore to revivify history to its a vital and dynamic potentiality which pointed "*beyond* reified actuality".⁸² While Adorno posited that the capacity of dialectics to transcend opposition is limited (because the grounds for transcendence are circumscribed by history and particular conditions), negative dialectics nevertheless centered on this notion of "possibility".⁸³ In other words, though reality had cheated the object of possibility because its past was given, Adorno maintained that the "possible" is nonetheless visible.⁸⁴ By exploring this possibility Adorno could investigate the historical process stored in the object, its actualization and limitations. In a way, the dialectical horizon of open possibilities is widened rather than decreased by the theory of non-identity, and in a radically oppositional sense to the identarian thinking of the present. In regards to human freedom, Adorno emphasised the dialectical tension between societal structures and the ways in which these inhibit subjectivity and its desire for freedom.⁸⁵ Despite the seeming stifling conditions facing the subject in modernity, Adorno's explicit recognition of the unremitting tension between social structure and subject clearly reveals that for Adorno the dialectical interplay was not yet exhausted, that potentiality and possibility remained.⁸⁶ Ultimately, Roach fails to appreciate that rather than being a hostage to a supposed "intrinsically regressive" dialectic, Adorno continues to point us toward the presence of dialectical social tensions; in non-identity, the aesthetic subject, even in the confines and strictures of the one-dimensionality of modernity.⁸⁷ As such, Adorno's thought does not lead to

⁸¹ For Adorno, negative dialectics treatment of the object (through its non-identity) ultimately leads into what he called the field of tension between the possible and the real. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Sociology and empirical research", in Theodor W. Adorno et al, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, (G. Adey, D. Frisby Trans.), (London: Heinemann, 1976), 69.

⁸² Rosen posits that for Adorno "history" was the sum of the social processes constituted by alienated labour and it is this belief that ultimately gives historical experience the important "double character" of being inert but potentially dynamic. Michael Rosen, *Hegel's Dialect and its Criticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 169.

⁸³ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, 204.

⁸⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 52.

⁸⁵ Adorno, et al. *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, 35ff.

⁸⁶ It is this "intrinsic tension" between society and freedom that confirms the open-ended nature of Adorno's negative dialectics and refutes any belief that dialectics may embody an intrinsic property or design. Whilst Adorno clearly perceived that modernity acted as a form of closure on the subject, was subverting the possibilities of socio-political change, and was thus retarding the progressive potential of the dialectical process, it must be realized that the *dialectic* itself remained neither progressive nor regressive in his calculation. Moreover, Adorno has nowhere posited that the modern subject would forever remain non-conscious of social contradiction and the possibility of emancipatory change. Rather, the outcome remained dependent on social actors within existing social conditions. Adorno presents a more nuanced dialectical outlook that observes a myriad of possibilities, both progressive and regressive, in social change than that described by Roach.

⁸⁷ It can be speculated that what Roach mistakes here is Adorno's *pessimism* toward the possibility of emancipatory change for an "intrinsically regressive" conceptualisation of dialectics. However, debate on the question of Adorno's degree of resignation or postmodern fatalism must be clearly distinguished

nihilism, a ‘we can do nothing’ mentality. In many respects negative dialectics offers hope – hope of the subject against all attempts at sublation and identity – a realm of the subject safe from totalizing ideologies. Passages in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reveal that while non-identity precludes the reduction of subject and object, it is also within this reflective opposition that the utopia of reconciliation is preserved.⁸⁸ Sherratt has gone so far as to posit the existence of a utopian thesis and image that pervades all the major aspects of Adorno’s thought.⁸⁹ Similarly, Pippin reveals Adorno’s clear “utopian anticipations” of a “state of realised freedom”.⁹⁰

Even if one were to adopt a pessimistic appraisal of the potentialities for emancipation in negative dialectics, such a perspective would still not support imputing a regressive characteristic to dialectics itself, as does Roach. While Adorno views modernity as having missed its emancipatory realization,⁹¹ he upheld the necessity to project freedom in new images and forms so that “in the age of the individual’s liquidation, the question of individuality [can] be raised anew”.⁹² Consequently, negative dialectics points to what Held calls the “unfulfilled potentialities of emancipation” precisely because the ontological assumption of resistance follows the presence of the non-identical.⁹³ In this perspective, if non-identity remains despite attempts at totalisation or sublation, then resistance to forms of identity thinking is not only possible but *probable* as contradiction remains. Habermas points out that while negative dialectics becomes indeterminate, contradiction becomes that which opposes reality,⁹⁴ and it is in this light that we can appreciate Adorno’s reliance on the aesthetic realm in which he obviates an *aesthetic* subject which has a minute potential for a utopian, albeit, false life. As Adorno suggests; “art may be the only remaining medium of truth in an age of incomprehensible terror and suffering”.⁹⁵ As dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things its converse is equally true - that the right state of things would be free of it, being neither a system nor a contradiction.⁹⁶ And consequently, Adorno looked toward a time and society “that would rid men of coercion” and result in “the

from his conception of dialectics, lest the latter be wrongly imputed as *intrinsically regressive* merely because of Adorno’s seeming pessimism toward change.

⁸⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1997), 223.

⁸⁹ See Yvonne Sherratt, *Adorno’s Positive Dialectic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁹⁰ Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112 citing Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 260:263.

⁹¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 3.

⁹² Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, (E. Jephcott Trans.), (London: New Left Books, 1974), 129.

⁹³ Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, 221.

⁹⁴ Jurgen Habermas, “Motive nachmetaphysischen Denkins”, in *Nachmetaphysisches Denken*, page 45 cited in Stephen E. Bronner, “Dialectics at a Standstill: A Methodological inquiry into the Philosophy of Theodor W. Adorno”, 190.

⁹⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, (Robert Hullot-Kentor’s Trans.) (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27. However, Pippin believes that except for the negativity in art, Adorno did not show an inclination for the “aestheticizing and ethicizing” of “all of human experience” in the re-enchancement project. See Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, 106. Moreover, Honneth indicates the hopeless vacillation in Adorno’s writings between philosophical reflection and aesthetic experience. Hence, assessing the emancipatory potential in Adorno’s thought is a highly contested area. See Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Theory of Society*, K. Naynes Trans., (Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991), 69.

⁹⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 10-11.

objectivity of a reconciled life of the free”.⁹⁷ The best picture of such a reconciled life is evident in the Adorno’s depiction of negative dialectics as a “no-man’s land between the border posts of being and nothingness”⁹⁸ in which non-identity could exist untrammelled in the unbounded existence between borders that “belonged to no-one”.⁹⁹

For some postmodernists, following a similar logic to Adorno, Hegel’s dialectic reduces all oppositional knowledge to a form of reflection or self-knowledge from the higher position of Spirit¹⁰⁰. In opposition to this, the postmodernist steadfastly disallows any “reconstitution, sublimation, or synthesis (any Hegelian *Aufhebung*) of opposing terms”¹⁰¹ and thus hopes to overcome the “monolithic dreams of Hegel” to “give way to the linguistic plurality of Babel”.¹⁰² In this way, postmodernists generally charge that Hegel failed to conceive of Otherness as anything but reflection and therefore charge that he failed to reach the postmodern utopia of the ‘land of alterity’, a concept similar to Adorno’s ‘no-man’s land’. Yet as against variants of postmodernism’s skeptical nihilism, Adorno ultimately sought to use negative dialectics in a manner that did not issue in positivity or ultimate reconciliation (sublation) but instead urges that dialectics must “take place in the tension between insight into the whole impossible depiction of the right life and the consciousness of how things could be.”¹⁰³

Conclusion

Overall, the premise of Roach’s piece did not provide the necessary level of analysis to carry the weight of his intention to offer a new methodology for IR. Some aspects, particularly the bifurcation between the dialectical poles of positivity and negativity, were considerably problematic as was his reading of Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*. To condone such a misapplication, while admitting that it is readily apparent that the work is not fully adequate to satisfy these objections, seems to constitute too greater a concession to those inclined to misuse the dialectical method than is advisable for anyone else to make.¹⁰⁴ The central question affecting the Roach thesis is whether Adorno’s negative dialectics can be pressed into the service of meta-dialectics as he desires.¹⁰⁵ To ‘lift and apply’ Adorno without

⁹⁷ Ibid., 271-275.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 374: 381.

⁹⁹ Stefan Müller-Dohm, “Thinking from No-Man’s Land: The Life and Work of Theodor W. Adorno”, 102 quoting Theodor W. Adorno, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I, Gesammelte Schriften*, Volume 10.1, (R. Tiedemann et al ds.), (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997), 305.

¹⁰⁰ As stated by Smith for example, Hegel’s “epistemological utopia is thus a universalized Ithaka, a grounding of all individual difference in the point of the Spirit’s return to itself”. See John H. Smith, “U-Topian Hegel: Dialectic and Its Other in Poststructuralism”, *The German Quarterly*, Vol 60, No. 2, Spring 1987, 242.

¹⁰¹ See Vincent Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction*, Columbia UP, New York, 1983., 180.

¹⁰² John H. Smith, “U-Topian Hegel: Dialectic and Its Other in Poststructuralism”, *The German Quarterly*, Vol 60, No. 2, Spring 1987, 244.

¹⁰³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie*, Volume 1, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 133.

¹⁰⁴ This criticism is based on Kant’s expression in Perpetual Peace. See I. Kant, *Kant: Political Writings*, (H.S. Reiss Ed., H.B. Nisbet Trans), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2005, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Roach should have first explored the conditions under which Adorno’s work could be employed in a meta-dialectical theory before he attempted to construct such a theory. Moreover, Roach should have explored the theoretical compatibility between Adorno’s thought (which largely centered on aesthetics

adequate reflection leaves Roach unsuspecting of the charge of theoretical incompatibility between “meta” and “negative” dialectics – and hence I have expended much thought in detailing a more robust account of Adorno’s work. I would suggest that the “sensitivity”¹⁰⁶ intrinsic to the synthetic dialectics of Alker and Biersteker may provide the analytical benefits that Roach desires without the limitations and problems incurred through meta-dialectics.¹⁰⁷ In my follow-on article, I will begin to tentatively outline an open-ended, social-relational dialectical account which will build on the work of Heine and Teschke. This piece will stress the indeterminateness and ongoing nature of social change in world politics and will also emphasise the intersubjectivity of the dialectic of world politics, that is, its embeddedness in social relations. A dialectical methodology of the social world is, and must be, thoroughly intersubjectivist as it is only through interaction that conflict and contradiction is generated. Dialectics, in this view, is *inherently* social - it is the encounter of intersubjectivities, the engagement with the Other.

and culture) and the potential problems in applying his thought in the field of international relations. Yet Roach seems oblivious to these concerns. I, of course, am not saying that we cannot use Adorno’s negative dialectics in IR but rather urge that such an attempt should be done in a more thorough manner.

¹⁰⁶ Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, “The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire (1984)”, 125.

¹⁰⁷ The Alker and Biersteker model concerns the “dialectical heuristic” that looks deeply within being for contradictions in the essence of things and the study of the principle contradictions within and among them. In this way it searches for the “paradoxical claim” of the unity of opposites that interpenetrate and sometimes turn into each other. See *Ibid.*, 121-142.