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Abstract_Title:

This New Yet Unapproachable Frankfurt: Philosophy 'in a negative key'?

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To the extent that philosophy inherits the role of true prophets it is tuned, Cavell writes, "in a negative key". The argument of the ordinary "must never be won", and the conversation of justice "must never be lost". (Cavell in Norris 2006) While this 'double negative' in the Cavellian skeptic's claim to community may not have the systematic negativity of a Negative Dialectics, it brings Cavell close to Adorno; in addition, both share a kindred sensitivity as readers, and a view of philosophy as inseparable from textual tradition. We can add to this, Honneth's suggestion that 'recognition', an important term for critical theory, is close to Cavell's notion of acknowledgment (Honneth 2005).

Against this background, I shall try and elaborate the connection between Cavell and Adorno mainly via Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. All knowledge, Wittgenstein says, ultimately rests on acknowledgment. But he also insists on a zone of irreducible slack between certainty and uncertainty. Philosophy, I shall argue, is usually loath to acknowledge this domain of free play, while literature isn't. It may be used to link Adorno and Cavell as both – eminently musical - readers and writers; in this indeterminate zone, the question whether "the issue of communication between philosophy and literature [is] itself a philosophical or a literary issue?" (Cavell 2003) gives rise to experiment, not to conclusive answers. The negative key thus makes sure that the music doesn't stop.