## FW

#### There are three different projects of accounting for normativity – justification tries to ground normativity on something independent like reason – explanatory explains how something can be normative – being skeptical claims there is no normativity

#### Prefer explanatory normativity – justification normativity fails – it delay’s action, it’s inappropriate, irrational and it leads to and undermines the evil of Auschwitz

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However, as we have seen in this chapter, Adorno rejects the need for, as well as the appropriateness and success of, ‘discursive grounding’. Trying to ground normative claims discursively or at the level of abstract principles is both unsuccessful and an outrage. It is unsuccessful, since morality, according to Adorno, can have content and practical effects only in virtue of relying on non-discursive and non-deducible elements, namely, our impulse-based reactions to suffering and injustice. To suggest that it is necessary to ground normative claims discursively is to implicitly deny that the particular situation by itself contains normativity and to claim that instead the normativity given in it derives from some deeper level of theorising or some higher principle. This idea of derivation, however, gets things terribly wrong in Adorno’s view. For example, it does not take seriously enough the evil of the events for which the name ‘Auschwitz’ stands; for to search for discursive grounding implies that it is necessary to obtain reassurance about the negative normativity of these events at a general level abstracted from them. Not only is such reassurance impossible, it is ethically wrong to ask or search for it – ‘monstrous’. Two points emerge from these views of Adorno’s. Firstly, it should now be clear why Adorno never explicitly provided what his critics asked for. We have just seen that what the critics demanded is a justificatory account of normativity. Yet, as Adorno rejected this project, this demand is (from his perspective) misconceived. While it would have been good to explicitly say so, he probably assumed that his views on the merits and demerits of the justificatory project were sufficiently well-known for him not to comment further on the matter. Secondly, we can reconstruct from Adorno’s sceptical views about ‘discursive grounding’ some constraints on how Adorno would have approached the project of accounting for the normativity of his views. The account would not be justificatory in the sense outlined. Specifically, this implies two constraints: (a) it should not commit the outrage of disregarding the normativity given in a situation by deriving it from a deeper or higher level; and (b) it needs to be sensitive to the non-deductive, impulse-based elements in Adorno’s ethics (and philosophy as a whole). Are there any further constraints on such an enterprise? It seems to me that the following considerations show that there is at least one more constraint besides the two mentioned before. One important element of Adorno’s philosophy is what we might call a kind of ‘error theory’. 40 For Adorno, most people relate wrongly to the world and each other. In fact, according to him, we all have distorted reactions and attitudes most of the time because of the way society has constituted, conditioned, and programmed us. We desire things we do not really need and do not respond fully to the neglect of what we do in fact need.41 In order to make this theory work, Adorno not only needs to have an explanation of why people behave in this way – as just indicated, he seems to think that it is determination by society which explains this – but also needs an explanation of why behaving in this way is wrong or constitutes an error. For example, one way such an explanation could go is to show how states of affairs can give us reasons for action, for believing, etc., and how in most cases people do not respond adequately to these reasons in our current social world – by overlooking them, by letting less weighty considerations override them, etc. As a matter of fact, some such account seems to be at work in Adorno’s theory, though it is often phrased more in terms of a contrast between what a few critical individuals who were lucky to escape complete programming by society think about the world and what the majority of uncritical individuals make of it.42 Admittedly, one might then need further assurance that the judgements of the critics provide the right kind of standard for assessing the judgements of the majority (I return to this soon). Still, the first point to note here is that Adorno needs some sort of account of the errors which most of us all the time and all of us most of the time are committing in relating to our (social) world and each other. Moreover, this places a third constraint on any Adornian account of normativity: it has to be suitable to explain the error(s) in question.

#### The project for accounting for normativity is only under an explanatory guide – arguments must be held up to critical scrutiny and judged in how well they explain social phenomena

Freyenhagen 2 \*Bracketed for gendered language\*

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Adorno is, as far as I can tell, relatively silent about this kind of metatheoretical issue. However, he would be sympathetic to accounts such as, for example, Taylor has provided (albeit in a slightly different context).43 Taylor argues that it is impossible to have a fully justificatory account of practical reason, since the only way such an account could go is by abstracting from all our strong evaluations and self-understanding, and doing so would deprive us of any substance with which arguments can be made. Nonetheless, this lack of justificatory account does not mean that anything goes and that nothing could be said to defeat any intellectual positions in support of, for example, the behaviour of the Nazis. In most cases of disagreement, what happens is actually that people start from shared assumptions (which are not further justified) and then justify their behaviour against this backdrop.44 Thus, according to Taylor, even intellectual support for the behaviour of the Nazis (if any such support were actually offered) accepts the ban on murder, but then goes in for special pleading in order to show that the behaviour in question is not murder after all or is required all things considered. The way to deal with special pleading is not to offer a grounding of the shared assumption, but by showing that the special pleas just do not stand up to any critical scrutiny, since they are absurd and irrational when measured against the standards everyone party to the debate accepts. In this sense, the error consists in inconsistency, or lack of clarity, and exposing that error does not require a justificatory account.45 (The game of demanding and giving reasons can be played also within an explanatory account – as noted before, the difference from a justificatory one is rather that justifications do not extend all the way down, and vindication at some point takes on an explanatory dimension instead.) Yet, what if there is a fundamental disagreement about the basic assumptions – might we not need an independent criterion or ground in this case? Again, Taylor argues that this need not be so. Different sets of assumptions or theories can be compared in terms of explanatory power, such as that the one of the two theories can explain why people might hold the other theory (and why they are, by the light of former, mistaken in doing so); or one theory might be able to explain the success of the other theory in its own terms, but the same is not true vice versa; or one of the two can be shown to be internally incoherent. Thus, error would here be cashed out in terms of lack of explanatory power. Admittedly, the story presented by Taylor is somewhat optimistic – perhaps, more than one theory is sufficiently flexible to adjust to objections that call into question their explanatory power, so that, ultimately, disagreement about which theory has the greatest explanatory power are bound to remain (and perhaps there are also problems of commensurability of the radically different frameworks). Hence, it is best to concede that even when it comes to explanatory power, there is no silver bullet available that puts all matters beyond debate; rather comparing explanatory power is an additional resource, a way of increasing the costs of rejecting a theory in favour of an alternative despite the former’s debunking explanation of this alternative and its powerful account of the phenomena at issue. What we would get here is then not an a priori or infallible defence of a proposed view, but only a comparative judgement that the view in question is the best account (in terms of explanatory power) constructed so far. Yet, unless we already believe in the possibility of a stronger, justificatory account, this fallibility should not trouble us too much. In cases of disagreement about who is in error, we either will find common ground with which we can settle this question, or invoke the greater explanatory power of one of the views. Failing either of these strategies, the individuals or groups will then have to find ways of tolerating each other, or, if this is not a viable option, to defend themselves, even if no justification or explanation acceptable to the other side can be given.46 In a similar way, an Adornian error theory could be cashed out in terms of differential explanatory power (instead of requiring an appeal to the idea of ultimate justificatory grounding). The only authority which the critical individuals can and need to claim for themselves is the authority of having a clearer and fuller grasp of the modern social reality. This also reveals how he understands ‘vindication’ – in a nutshell, if ~~his~~ [their] critical theory succeeds better than rival theories in explaining certain social phenomena and developments (such as the high incidences of paranoia and neurosis or modern anti-Semitism), then it is as redeemed as anything could be.

#### Auschwitz and our society are evil and has normative force

Freyenhagen 3 Fabian Freyenhagen [University of Essex], 2013, “ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY Living Less Wrongly” Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 978-1-107-03654-3, Pages: 255-270 <https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/philosophy/twentieth-century-philosophy/adornos-practical-philosophy-living-less-wrongly?format=HB&isbn=9781107036543> SJMS

x Radical evil and moralising As we have seen, Adorno holds the stark thesis that the systematic persecution and murder of the European Jews (and other victim groups of the Nazi regime) was not accidental to the modern social world and its thought forms, but the result of the inhuman tendency inherent in it. In his view, the worst catastrophe has already happened in Auschwitz,63 and our social world, by its very nature, is steering towards a repeat of such a catastrophe or even towards its permanent occurrence.64 Not least for this reason, it is radically evil (see Chapter 1). One might be surprised by Adorno’s use of – what seems to be – moralistic language, especially given how influenced he was by Nietzsche, who submitted talk of evil to scathing critique. ‘Evil’ is a potentially misleading or even dangerous term in that it is often used to oversimplify matters and create clear-cut oppositions when in fact there is much more complexity. In this way, pursuing even a good cause (such as alleviating suffering) under the banner of fighting evil can create – however inadvertently – greater havoc. For example, the suffering of a population can be used as a justification to wage war against its government, even if the resulting reality will predictably turn out worse, including for the population in question. ‘Evil’ is an absolutising notion and such notions suggest that no balancing of probabilities of success and failure or harm and benefit is neither necessary nor even appropriate. (Consider, for example, how Tony Blair reportedly reacted to a briefing about the likely problems for a post-invasion Iraq by simply asking ‘But Saddam is evil, isn’t he?’).65 Appeals to evil are often a form of moral blackmail – if you do not join us in this fight, then you are completely morally depraved and can be counted among the enemies. Moreover, such appeals are often used as justification for punishing or disciplining individuals. Perhaps, then we would do better not to appeal to such stark, moralising terms. Adorno is aware and wary of the moralistic tendencies just outlined, but he nonetheless continues to make use of the terms in question. This might seem puzzling, perhaps even ill-advised. I cannot hope to defuse the concerns this raises completely here, but let me at least indicate what his thinking is. For a start, Adorno’s talk of evil reflects the view that the bads we are faced with are so grave that they are beyond any relativistic questioning – they express objective bads and should be acknowledged as such.66 As little as Adorno wants to cut short debate, he thinks that everybody would and, at any rate, should acknowledge the evils of Auschwitz (delusional prejudice, oppression, genocide, and torture) – that is why the new imperative is categorical. As he says at one point, oppression and lack of freedom are ‘the evil whose malevolence requires as little philosophical proof as does its existence’. 67 In fact, thinking that these require discursive grounding or derivation from higher principles is already to misunderstand them and their normative force; thinking this is to react inappropriately (see also Chapter 7). Moreover, Adorno is not alone in taking avoidance of certain evils as the objective background presupposition of moral practice and philosophy.68 Admittedly, we should be wary to what uses people put appeals to such objective evils. Yet, if we gave up on these notions altogether, we would deprive ourselves of an important moral resource, and even get the nature of our moral situation wrong. Instead we have to make use of other strategies to avoid the moralistic tendencies identified. In particular, Adorno’s talk of evils is not meant to cut short critical scrutiny – as appeals to evil often tend to do. Just the opposite: Adorno insists on our facing up to the problem of evil much more than has happened in the past. After Auschwitz, we cannot just go on doing philosophy and living our lives as before. Instead, we have to explicate what these evils involved; to investigate how social, cultural, and moral mechanisms were powerless against them; and to adjust, even radically change, our lives and theories according to the findings. In general, he emphasises the importance of (self-)reflection and the avoidance of self-righteousness (see also next chapter); and proposes, at least in my interpretation, an explanation-based account of the ills of our social world (see Chapters 7 and 9). Indeed, Adorno’s use of the term ‘Böse’ (‘evil’) is less moralistic than it might sound. He also uses other terms – such as Übel (which could be translated as ‘evil’, but also as ‘ill’, ‘malady’, or even ‘trouble’), Unheil (‘calamity’, ‘catastrophe’), Grauen (‘dread/horror’), and ‘Horror’. These terms are equally evaluatively charged, but seem to be referring to a state of affairs rather than to properties of persons. Crucially, the predicates are primarily and mainly ascribed to our social world, not to individuals. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Adorno is wary of the urge to punish and thinks that individual responsibility is radically diminished; and that it is at the level of society that the blame lies. Indeed, he writes in Negative Dialectics: The trouble [das Übel] is not that free men do radical evil, as evil is being done beyond all measure conceivable to Kant; the trouble is that as yet there is no world in which ... men would no longer need to be evil. Evil, therefore, is the world’s own unfreedom. Whatever evil is done comes from the world. Society destines the individuals to be what they are, even by their immanent genesis.69 An analogy might help here: modern capitalist society is for Adorno like the Stanford Prison Experiment writ large, just that it is not an experiment that was intentionally initiated by anyone or that we could easily stop. The conditions, under which we grow up and live, shape us in such a way that we have a tendency to commit atrocious acts and severely negligent omissions. In fact, even mere decency is an achievement; living a right and good life (going beyond mere decency) is objectively blocked (see also Chapters 2 and 3). Adorno’s claims about the way in which modern society necessarily engenders evil are – without a doubt – controversial. Moreover, for Adorno the basic tendencies towards moral catastrophe materialised not just in the 1930s/1940s and then disappeared, but remain in place in the 1960s (or, presumably, the early 2000s too). According to him, modern society and its thought forms present a grave danger from which one should take flight, and his evaluatively charged language owes a lot to his fear that many will fail to recognise this danger. It is used to warn us, to shake us out of our complacency, to alert us to the fact that we perpetuate what ought to be changed. Instead of forgoing strongly evaluative language we need to examine its use in specific instances, to challenge it whenever it leads to more of the very evils it condemns (or, indeed, to other ones). In this way, we do not even need to know what the good or the right is to be vigilant about moralistic uses. It is enough to employ the conception of wrong life and less wrong living that is operative in Adorno’s thinking, explored in more detail in the next chapters.

#### Thus, the standard is consistency with the new categorical imperative

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5 A NEW CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE So far we have considered why Adorno thinks that there is no right living and how he handles a number of objections to this thesis. Now, it is time to consider Adorno’s views of how we can live less wrongly. The first piece in this puzzle is the new categorical imperative – an in-depth examination of which is the topic of this chapter. i To arrange our thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself Adorno introduces the ‘new categorical imperative’ towards the end of Negative Dialectics, in the second of twelve ‘Meditations on Metaphysics’. This meditation, entitled ‘Metaphysics and Culture’, concerns the failure of culture, which the occurrence of Auschwitz is meant to have proved – instead of having made people immune to behaving brutally, culture is implicated in the unprecedented brutality of Auschwitz, which happened in the midst of Western society and despite ‘all of the tradition of philosophy, art and enlightened science’. 1 Adorno also refers to the new categorical imperative, or the basic ideas it contains, in some of his lectures and writings.2 Adorno states the new categorical imperative at the beginning of the meditation: A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon human beings in the state of their unfreedom: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen.3 1 ND, 6: 359/366. 2 See MCP, 181–2/116; HF, 278–9/202; EA, 10.2: 674, 690/CM, 191, 203. 3 ND, 6: 358/365; translation amended. 133 The new categorical imperative consists in the moral demand not to let Auschwitz or something similar repeat itself. Immediately following this statement, Adorno comments further on this imperative: This imperative is as refractory to being grounded as the givenness [Gegebenheit] of the Kantian imperative once was. Dealing discursively with it would be an outrage, for the new imperative gives us a bodily sensation of the moral addendum – bodily, because it is the now practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony to which individuals are abandoned, even after individuality, as a form of mental reflection, has begun to vanish. It is only in the unvarnished materialistic motive that morality survives.4 The new categorical imperative cannot be discursively grounded, but then again this is no different from the case of the Kantian categorical imperative – or so Adorno claims (see Chapter 4). In fact, one suspects that Adorno thinks that the purported failure of Kant’s attempts to provide discursive grounding for morality is emblematic of the general impossibility of such a project (see also Chapter 7). Moreover, discursive grounding is not just impossible; attempting to undertake it is also inappropriate (an ‘outrage’). Finally, Adorno highlights the importance of a physical element to morality (‘the now practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony’), and claims that it is thanks only to this element that morality continues to exist at all (after Auschwitz). This passage contains a number of noteworthy points, especially if one compares Adorno’s new categorical imperative to Kant’s original one. In what follows, this comparison provides an important foil for the discussion. ii Historically indexed To speak of a new categorical imperative is somewhat paradoxical. According to Kant, there can be only one such imperative, albeit in different formulations.5 Adorno must have been well aware of this, but it is unlikely that he means to offer just a new formulation of the same single imperative. Admittedly, it is possible to read the new categorical imperative merely as a new formulation of the ‘old’ Kantian one. After all, one would hope that Kant’s categorical imperative also commanded us to 4 ND, 6: 358/365; translation amended. 5 See G, 4: 421, 436. 134 adorno’s practical philosophy stop another Auschwitz from happening.6 In this sense, the new categorical imperative might just be a more particularised formulation of what morality, and thereby the categorical imperative, demands of us all along. However, this reading is misleading. Firstly, it is not clear that Kant’s categorical imperative could be as particularised as Adorno’s new categorical imperative is. Kant’s categorical imperative is meant to be a formal principle, not a substantive norm which refers to a particular event and demands that such an event, or events like it, should never be repeated. Admittedly, for Kantians, any genuine moral duty is a categorical imperative in a (secondary) sense, but even so, it is highly unlikely that any such duty could be particularised in quite the way the new categorical imperative is (on which more shortly). Secondly, the idea that Adorno merely offers another formulation or a more specific variant is also implausible on textual grounds and does not fit well with Adorno’s overall argument in the passage under consideration. The quoted passage lives off the contrast between the new categorical imperative and the Kantian one – its rhetorical and argumentative force would be diminished if Adorno just offered another formulation. This becomes clearer still if we take the wider textual context into account. Adorno’s concern in the ‘Meditations on Metaphysics’ is that we need to break with modern thought forms and culture because they failed to prevent Auschwitz. Hence, it would be surprising if he then suggested the categorical imperative could basically remain the same, but just needed to be formulated or specified differently. The fact that the new categorical imperative is substantive and particularised down to the mentioning of a name is not accidental. It is an implicit critique of the formal ethics of Kant – such an ethics is, after all, for Adorno an instance of failed culture, of the fact that ‘spirit [Geist] lacked the power to take hold of human beings and work a change in them’. 7 In other words, even if Kant’s ethics also condemned what happened in Auschwitz in principle, one of Adorno’s points here is that Kantian ethics nonetheless failed to get a foothold for this condemnation in people and, if anything, contributed to the 6 One would hope this, but if Adorno is right in his criticisms of Kant’s moral philosophy (see previous chapter, especially Adorno’s Empty Formalism Objection), Kant’s categorical imperative might actually fail to command this (not because it commands us to the contrary, but just because it is unsuitable to command anything). 7 ND, 6: 359/366; translation amended. a new categorical imperative 135 fact that morality lost this foothold.8 As such a critique, the new categorical imperative is best read as a replacement for, not a variant of, Kant’s categorical imperative. This point is reinforced by the following consideration. The difference between Kant’s categorical imperative and Adorno’s new categorical imperative is not just that the former is a formal principle and the latter is a substantive norm. Rather, along with this change, there is another difference: Adorno brings a historical anchoring (or indexing) into play – both by mentioning a particular event (and, in fact, a particular place, Auschwitz) and by his formulation that Hitler has imposed this imperative. In particular, one might say that the new categorical imperative is true as a reaction to a particular historical experience – the genocide of the European Jews and Roma and Sinti, the murder and mistreatment of homosexuals, political opponents, civilians, and prisoners of war.9 This reading fits well with what Adorno says elsewhere about moral demands. For example, he claims that demands, such as that there should be no torture or concentration camps, are ‘true as an impulse, as a reaction to the news that torture is going on somewhere’. 10 Adorno thinks of moral demands as dependent on the ethical features of situations and as expressive of our reactions to these features – I come back to this point later in the chapter (and in Chapter 7). For now, the key point is that Adorno’s indexing of his imperative (and moral demands generally) stands in contrast to Kant’s ahistorical conception of the categorical imperative. This historical indexing is also the acknowledgement of the fact ‘that the content of the moral principle, the categorical imperative, constantly changes as history changes’. 11 If there is a historical, even experience-based index to particular events, then the paradigmatic experiences to which the categorical imperative refers and which it commands us to prevent vary over time – the command to prevent 8 One way Kantian moral philosophy contributed to the failure of culture is its denial of the materialistic element of morality, the addendum (discussed in Appendix). Generally, by making morality too abstract and empty, Kantians opened the door, however inadvertently, to people’s dressing up their abhorrent behaviour as morally required – famously, Eichmann claimed to have always acted according to Kant’s categorical imperative (see Arendt [1963] 1994: Ch. 8; see also MacIntyre 1998: 197–8; and Chapters 1 and 5 here). 9 For a similar interpretation of this aspect of the new categorical imperative, see Bernstein 2001: Ch. 8; and Schweppenhäuser 2004: 344–5. 10 ND, 281/285; see also PMP 1963, 144–5/97. 11 HF, 285/206. 136 adorno’s practical philosophy another Auschwitz might still have a foothold in us (one would hope), but the command to prevent another Rwanda might have a more immediate pull on us still. Interestingly, Adorno does not think that such a historical (or situational) index takes away the categorical character of the demand not to let Auschwitz repeat itself. As with Kant’s categorical imperative, this demand is meant to hold for agents independently of any other ends, motives, or inclinations they might have. In fact, one reason why Adorno uses Kantian terminology here is to indicate and endorse this categorical aspect of moral demands. Thus, Adorno is not just subverting an aspect of the miscarried culture – Kant’s ethics – in proposing a new categorical imperative that is historically specific and impulse-based, but he also wants to preserve something of the Kantian idea. To wit, that certain requirements have an unavoidable, categorical nature; that the experience of Auschwitz demands a certain reaction of everyone, irrespective of what other purposes they might be pursuing. As Adorno puts it in one of his lectures: In other words, it might be said that in view of what we have experienced – and let me say that it is also experienced by those on whom it was not directly perpetrated – there can be no one, whose organ of experience has not entirely atrophied, for whom the world after Auschwitz, that is, the world in which Auschwitz was possible, is the same world as before. And I believe that if one observes and analyses oneself closely, one will find that the awareness of living in a world in which that is possible – is possible again and is possible for the first time – plays a quite crucial role even in one’s most secret reaction. / I would say, therefore, that these experiences have a compelling universality, and that one would indeed have to be blind to the world’s course if one were to wish not to have these experiences.12 One difficulty with this passage is that we are given two not quite identical accounts of the compelling universality of the experiences in question – first Adorno says we cannot but have them unless our ‘organ of experience has entirely atrophied’, then he talks about the ~~blindness~~ of which one would be guilty if one wished not to have these experiences. Still, the two accounts can be rendered compatible: unless one cannot have experiences at all any more, one undergoes the experience that post-Auschwitz the world is no longer the same (and that nothing similar should happen again); and unless one ~~blinds~~ oneself to the 12 MCP, 162/104; original emphasis; see also 170/109. a new categorical imperative 137 world completely, one does not wish that one could avoid having these experiences, since – as painful as they may be – they tell us something true and important about the state of the world, including that it should be overcome. The main point, in any case, is that the experiences connected to the new categorical imperative have ‘compelling universality’, and, hence, although the character of the imperative has changed from formal to substantive, its status as categorical remains. (Whether the change has implications for the way to underwrite the categorical status is a question which I take up later.) iii Imposed on humankind in its state of unfreedom Adorno informs us that the categorical imperative is imposed on humankind in its (current) state of unfreedom. This is again unusual, not least because according to Kant the categorical imperative is directed at transcendentally free, but not fully rational beings.13 Indeed, for Kant, it is the principle and expression of our autonomy.14 While it might seem odd to have a categorical imperative that is imposed on unfree human beings, it actually ties in well with Adorno’s pessimistic views about the possibility of individual moral practice and (positive) freedom (see Chapters 2–3). It brings out one more time how the badness of the current world can lead to moral demands, even if individuals are not actually fully capable of meeting them – the reason why there can be no right living within this world. In a sense, Adorno reverses the order of how the principle ‘ought implies can’ is customarily understood – the ought comes first, even when we cannot yet fulfil it; and the ability to discharge it then may historically develop, first as the negative freedom of resistance (which we can muster nowadays to some extent) and, hopefully one day, as the positive freedom of actively determining our lives. It also highlights how moral demands are objective for Adorno, not a matter of contracting into morality or self-legislating its commands (see also Chapter 7).15 The actions of others change the moral fabric of the world, and whether we endorse this or not, this imposes duties on 13 See especially G, 4: 454. 14 See, for example, G, 4: 440. 15 Moral realist readings of Kant’s ethics could accommodate the objective element to which I point here to some extent – for them, self-legislation concerns only the obligatoriness of moral demands, not their content (see, for example, Stern 2009: §III.1, with further references). Still, some disagreement remains: for Adorno, even the obligatoriness arises from the situation itself. 138 adorno’s practical philosophy us, and does so often not because others acted legitimately (say by helping us in need, so that we have a duty of gratitude to them), but in morally problematic ways (as Hitler and his followers did). At this point, it might be helpful to briefly discuss an objection to the picture presented by Adorno. It seems that his claim that there exist moral demands without the guarantee of the corresponding freedom is objectionably over-demanding. For it is often thought that we can only be obliged to do what we are able to carry out.16 Thus, one could argue on the basis of the commonly accepted principle ‘ought implies can’ that Adorno faces a dilemma:17 either his moral demands are over-demanding and should be rejected as such; or they are not overdemanding because Adorno has to weaken his thesis about our degree of unfreedom and allow for the possibility of right living. The first thing to note in this context is that there is a sense in which Adorno would admit that it is problematic to have moral demands without the guarantee that they could be fulfilled: he would be the first to lament that right living is blocked while being so desperately required. However, Adorno would insist that the problematic nature of morality is our actual predicament. Thus, we cannot just infer from the over-demanding nature of moral demands that they are not binding on us. Ought, so to speak, ought to imply can, but it does not always actually imply it. This is something which gives us cause to be unsatisfied with the current state of morality, but it is not something which we can simply argue away. To recall an earlier point, moral demands have for Adorno an objective status – it is the nature of our social world, of the bads it cannot but produce, that demands its abolition. The capacity to address these matters is a derivative consideration – even if this capacity were lost, there would be reason to lament the badness, to demand that the world be different. One way to think about this is in terms of moral dilemmas (a pertinent comparison, given Adorno’s views that our lives are structured by 16 As Kant puts it at one point: ‘duty commands nothing but what we can do’ (R, 6: 47). 17 To be precise, the commonly accepted ‘ought implies can’-principle is that we cannot be (morally) obliged to do what we cannot do. What we can do restricts what we are (morally) obliged to do. Sometimes, ‘ought implies can’ is understood differently – here the knowledge that we (morally) ought to do something enables us to see (or even know) that we can do it. Surprisingly perhaps, Kant mainly uses the latter (enabling) version, not the former (restrictive) one (see Timmermann 2003; see also Stern 2004; Martin 2009: esp. 111–12). a new categorical imperative 139 practical antinomies in the modern social world; see Chapter 2). If there are genuine moral dilemmas, then it is not possible to act in a morally right way, whichever option we eventually take. What is not always recognised is that this makes genuine dilemmas incompatible with the ‘ought implies can’-principle (restrictively understood). For on this principle, if we cannot but act in a morally problematic way, then the moral demands in question ought to be revised so that we can avoid this – either by privileging one option or by accepting that whichever option we take we act in a morally right way. Yet, this seems unconvincing, for genuine moral dilemmas are part of the moral fabric of (at least) our social world; and to say that choosing one or either horn is morally right (rather than excusable but tragic) is to do injustice to the idea of dilemma. It is to not acknowledge properly the fact that both sides exert a pull on us, so that taking only one cannot be morally right and should leave us with regret. Moreover, in one sense it is not true that Adorno’s view violates the principle in question: for as a global subject, as humanity, we have the capacity to transcend the social world (and its thought forms) and as individuals we have (sometimes) the negative freedom to discharge our indirect duty to help humanity to exercise this capacity – I come back to this later in this chapter.18 Indeed, one reason to be sceptical whenever someone insists that something is impossible for them to do and that therefore it is problematic to even ask it of them, is that we are often mistaken about what we can do – for example, our social context has led us to have a constricted sense of opportunities and possibilities. Adorno suggests that something like this is true at the collective level for us – as seen, he thinks we wrongly think of our social world as immutable, whereas in fact we could, collectively, change it (see Chapter 3). In this sense, denying that we are morally required to change this world because we (purportedly) could not, can be ideological and pernicious by cementing the illusion that this world is inescapable. It can also be a self-fulfilling prophecy – for the more we believe that we cannot do it, the less we might actually be able to do it. Finally, even if something is impossible to achieve, it might still serve as an ideal for our practice and as such have normative pull on us, even 18 Adorno is not saying that it is logically impossible to discharge our moral demands. It might be true that moral demands cannot require logically impossible things, but this implies nothing of substance for historical situations like ours that limit our ability to discharge these demands. See also Martin 2009: esp. 122. 140 adorno’s practical philosophy moral bindingness. For many Christians, a life without sin is both an unreachable ideal for finite, embodied beings, but nonetheless strictly demanded of them.19 For others, such a life was merely a regulative ideal it was demanded that they should approximate and yet it thereby still served a practical, normative role. Similarly, many moral and political theories propose ideals that their proponents full well know that we can, at best, realise in sub-optimal ways.20 While it is an interesting question whether this means that we should nonetheless aim for them (or rather for the second best),21 this often depends on the specific context, and, at any rate, a lot of our moral experience and landscape would be lost if we simply gave up on all oughts that we cannot (fully) realise. iv Not maxim-centred Another striking feature of the new categorical imperative is that it focuses on thoughts, actions, and outcomes, not on maxims. This again puts it in contrast to Kant’s categorical imperative and his ‘ethics of disposition’. However, this shift away from an ethics of disposition makes good sense in the context of Adorno’s worries about such an ethics (some of which we discussed in the previous chapter). Admittedly, it is not that dispositions are dropped completely. After all, the categorical imperative commands us to also arrange our thoughts in a certain way, and this might reasonably be interpreted to include the demand to adopt the right kind of dispositions, although it probably extends wider than (ethical) dispositions are often understood (for example, it might also involve a change to our cognitive engagement with the world around us). It is unclear whether arranging our thoughts so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself is a matter of adopting the right kind of maxims for Adorno. Given his disparaging comments about acting on maxims (‘a person acting in this way would be more of a monster than a human being’),22 having the right kind of dispositions might not be best understood in this way. Be that as it may, the main focus of the categorical imperative is on consequences and outcomes: the prevention of a particular event of a certain sort. 19 See also Martin 2009. 20 For example, on Sangiovanni’s reading, Rawls views justice as a regulative ideal (2010: 221). 21 See, for example, Goodin 1995 for the argument that in political contexts the second best is (often) to be preferred as guiding policies and action. 22 PMP 1963, 232/156. a new categorical imperative 141 In a way, the categorical imperative can be more easily compared with Kant’s conception of external right than the categorical imperative and the demands of virtue. According to Kant, duties of right enjoin us to behave in a certain way (to keep contracts, not to murder or steal, etc.), but leave it open on which incentive we act; whereas duties of virtue require not just that we try to do the right thing, but also that we do it for the right reasons (i.e., in Kant’s case for moral reasons, specifically respect for the moral law).23 Just as with duties of right, the new categorical imperative has its focus on actions and their outcomes, not on what motivates these actions. Admittedly, it is plausible to think that not any incentive or motive would do to prevent another Auschwitz from happening and that the most reliable and suitable motives would be such that they include a direct reference to the evil of Auschwitz. Still, the new categorical imperative does not in principle restrict the range of motives on which we can act to straightforwardly Kantian moral reasons. As in Dietrich Niemöller’s famous poem, we might be afraid that we are next in line to be persecuted and that fear would be reason enough to adopt the new categorical imperative.24 Consider also the comparison to Utilitarianism, which demands of us to secure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Although the new categorical imperative is consequentialist in the sense of being outcome-orientated, it is not a maximising principle. Admittedly, we should do our utmost to stop another Auschwitz from happening, but the goal is about not crossing a certain threshold and functions more like a side constraint than a requirement to maximise.

## Plan

#### I affirm resolved: The culture industry’s appropriation of outer space as an object of conspiracy theory is unjust

#### Appropriation is defined as

Merriam-Webster https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/appropriation?fbclid=IwAR2mMLcn\_Wms24qA4v3WiOUJZ0c5DQEhdetkCDZtJL5XvFJ2h4mGsBhpCG4

the act of taking or using something especially in a way that is illegal, unfair, etc.

#### Thousands of spinoff movies, branded advertisements, CNN and Fox materially proves the cultural industry effects everyone. It alienates consumption from life erasing the real human into an active producer and passive consumer that’s not even free to consume anything which challenges the system. That replaces culture with commodity and makes everything into fungible objects of exchange. Catharsis, like Wall-E and Cap Ks, make us feel rebellious which reinforces capitalism which means we’re a prereq for non-commodified Kritik.

Ahmed 08 Saladdin Said Ahmed (Department of Philosophy, Brock University, Canada <https://philpeople.org/profiles/saladdin-ahmed>), "Culture Industry, Fascism." Kritike Volume Two Number One, June 2008. <http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_3/ahmed_june2008> SJMS

According to Adorno, the “industry” in the “culture industry” should not be taken literally. The term refers more to the standardization and techniques of distribution than to the process of production and actual creation.1 However, he seems to focus more on the manipulative character of culture industry as a system run by dominant groups. In fact, he says, “the culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above.”2 He rejects the idea that masses are the only source of mass culture and that is why the term “culture industry” is so crucial for him.3 This common interpretation of culture industry has been taken too far. This interpretation of the culture industry has become more like a kind of conspiracy theory that claims the masses as victims of a minority that dominates them from above through controlling the media and monopolizing all other canals of mass culture and ideology. Adorno himself is aware of this possible misunderstanding. For example, he and Horkheimer state, “the mentality of the public, which allegedly and actually favors the system of culture industry, is a part of the system not an excuse for it.”4 Culture is an embodiment of mentality in its collective form. It cannot simply be a product created by elites. Dominant groups can modify elements of popular culture, but they cannot determine its boundaries and content because the popular mentality has its own filters and internal processes. Mass media can observe the conditions of what becomes a part of popular culture and accordingly put their own agenda to work within the culture industry, but they cannot alone be held responsible for the “production” of the culture. Mass media can make a philosopher relatively popular, but they cannot make philosophy a popular field. The mass mentality is attracted to certain things and distracted by others, and the culture industry functions accordingly. In a consumer society, happiness is sought in commodities. There is always at least one more thing claiming to bring a consumer happiness, and since, of course, this is a psychological obsession, the chain of alienations and frustrations increases continually, which makes the consumer more submissive to the addictive system of consumption. Commercials have one major message for their obsessed subjects: this new item in particular is the key to your lost happiness; this item is unlike anything we have offered you before. Commercialism and commodity fetishism turn the mass individual into an apolitical individual who serves the system of advanced capitalism even in his or her “free time”. In “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” Adorno writes, “the masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry, even though the culture industry itself could scarcely exist without adapting to the masses.”5 He also says, “the entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms.”6 Culture industry makes every cultural item just another commodity that subscribes to the principles of the capitalist market. The masses play a crucial role in the system of culture industry though that role is passive. Masses are the target and medium of commercialism. They sustain the system of culture industry with their passive apolitical role just as they sustain the bigger capitalist system of domination. Masses attract more masses and are used for that purpose in the capitalist society that is shaped by the dynamics of the market. Mass culture is market-based, fetishism is its driving power, and it is a major venue for commercials that persuade the mass individual to become a submissive consumer of endless commodities. Culture industry does not have a specific agenda to stupidize the mass individual; rather, it invests in the mass individual’s fetishistic attitude towards commodities.

#### Critical thought is being undermined by a lack of historical memory exemplified in Greene's Jewish Space Lasers conspiracy – that leads to fascism

Giroux 21 Henry A. Giroux [Henry Armand Giroux is an American-Canadian scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy, cultural studies, youth studies, higher education, media studies, and critical theory.] “The public imagination and the dictatorship of ignorance” , Social Identities, DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2021.1931089 Published online: 14 Jun 2021. URL: https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2021.1931089

The scourge of historical amnesia As the boundaries of the unthinkable become normalized, historical consciousness is replaced by manufactured forms of historical amnesia. Not only have history’s civic lessons been forgotten, but history is also being rewritten, especially in the ideology of Trumpism, through an affirmation of the legacy of slavery, American exceptionalism, and the mainstreaming of an updated form of fascist politics (Churchwell, 2020; Gessen, 2020; Street, 2021). Theodor Adorno’s insights on historical memory are more relevant than ever. He once argued that as much as repressive governments would like to break free from the past, especially the legacy of fascism, ‘it is still very much alive.’ Moreover, there is a price to be paid with ‘the destruction of memory.’ In this case, ‘the murdered are … cheated out of the single remaining thing that our powerlessness can offer them: remembrance’ (Adorno, 2010, p. 15). Adorno’s warning rings particularly true at a time when two-thirds of young American youth are so impoverished in their historical knowledge that they are unaware that six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust (Sherwood, 2020). On top of this shocking level of ignorance is the fact that ‘more than one in 10 believe Jews caused the Holocaust’ (ibid). Historical amnesia takes a particularly dangerous turn in this case and prompts the question of how young people and adults can you even recognize fascism if they have no recollection or knowledge of its historical legacy. The genocide inflicted on Native Americans, slavery, the horrors of Jim Crow, the incarceration of Japanese Americans, the rise of the carceral state, the My Lai massacre, torture chambers, black sites, among other historical events now disappear into a disavowal of past events made even more unethical with the emergence of a right-wing political language and culture. Bolstered by a former president and a slew of Vichy-type politicians, right-wing ideologues, intellectuals, and media pundits deny and erase events from a fascist past that shed light on emerging right-wing, neo-Nazi, and extremist policies, ideas, and symbols. As Coco Das points out given that 73 million people voted to reelect Trump, it is clear that Americans ‘have a Nazi problem’ (Das, 2020). This was also evident in the words and actions of former president Trump who defended Confederate monuments and their noxious past, the waving of Confederate flags and the display of Nazi images during the attempted coup on the Capital on January 6th, and ongoing attempts by Republican Party legislators to engage in expansive efforts at enabling a minority government. America’s Nazi problem is also visible in the growing acts of domestic terrorism aimed at Asians, undocumented immigrants, and people of colour. Historical amnesia also finds expression in the right-wing press and among media pundits such as Fox News commentators Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity whose addiction to lying exceeds the boundaries of reason and creates an echo chamber of misinformation that normalizes the unspeakable, if not the unthinkable. Rational responses now give way to emotional reactions fuelled by lies whose power is expanded through their endless repetition. How else to explain the baseless claim made by them, along with a number of Republican lawmakers, right-wing pundits, and Trump’s supporters who baselessly lay the blame for the storming of the US Capitol on ‘AntiFa’. These lies were circulated despite of the fact that ‘subsequent arrests and investigations have found no evidence that people who identify with Antifa, a loose collective of antifascist activists, were involved in the insurrection’ (Grynbaum et al., 2021). In this case, I think it is fair to re-examine Theodor W. Adorno’s (2020) claim that ‘Propaganda actually constitutes the substance of politics’ (Adorno, 2020, p. 213) and that the right-wing embrace of and production of an endless stream of lies and denigration of the truth are not merely delusional but are endemic to a fascist cult that does not answer to reason, but only to power while legitimizing a past in which white nationalism and racial cleansing become the organizing principles of social order and governance (Adorno ibid). In the era of post-truth, right-wing disimagination machines are not only hostile to those who assert facts and evidence, but also supportive of a mix of lethal ignorance and the scourge of civic illiteracy. The latter requires no effort to assess the truth and erases everything necessary for the life of a robust democracy. The pedagogical workstations depoliticization have reached new and dangerous levels amid emerging right-wing populisms (Giroux, 2021). It is not surprising that we live at a time when politics is largely disconnected from echoes of the past and justified on the grounds that direct comparisons are not viable, as if only direct comparisons can offer insights into the lessons that can be learned from the past. We have entered an age in which thoughtful reasoning, informed judgments, and critical thought are under attack. This is a historical moment that resembles a dictatorship of ignorance, which Joshua Sperling rightly argues entails: The blunting of the senses; the hollowing out of language; the erasure of connection with the past, the dead, place, the land, the soil; possibly, too, the erasure even of certain emotions, whether pity, compassion, consoling, mourning or hoping. (Sperling cited in Appignanesi, 2019) What is clear is that we live in a historical period in which the conditions that produced white supremacist politics are intensifying once again. How else to explain Trump’s use of the term ‘America First’, his labelling immigrants as vermin, his call to ‘Make America Great Again’ – signalling his white nationalist ideology–his labelling of the press as ‘enemies of the people’, his numerous incitements to violence while addressing his followers. Moreover, Trump’s bid for patriotic education and his attack on the New York Times’s 1619 Project served as both an overt expression of his racism and his alignment with rightwing white supremacists and neo-Nazi mobs. Historical amnesia has become racialized. In the rewriting of history in the age of Trump, the larger legacy of ‘colonial violence and the violence of slavery inflicted on Africans’ are resurrected as a badge of honour (Davis, 2016, p. 81–82). America’s long history of fascist ideologies and the racist actions of a slave state, the racial cleansing espoused by the Ku Klux Klan, and an historical era that constitutes what Alberto Toscano calls ‘the long shadow of racial fascism’ in America are no longer forgotten or repressed but celebrated in the Age of Trump (Toscano, 2020; cf. Roberto, 2018). What is to be made of a President who awarded the prestigious Medal of Freedom to a blubbering white supremacist, ultra-nationalist, conspiracy theorist, and virulent racist who labelled feminists as ‘Feminazis’. In this case, one of the nation’s highest honours went to a man who took pride in relentlessly disparaging Muslims, referred to undocumented immigrants as ‘an invading force’ and an ‘invasive species’, demonized people of colour, and recycled Nazi tropes about racial purity while celebrating the mob that attacked the Capitol as ‘Revolutionary War era rebels and patriots’. Under the banner of Trumpism, those individuals who reproduce the rhetoric of political and social death have become, symbols of a fascist politics that feeds off the destruction of the collective public and civic imagination. Depoliticizing machines in the age of the spectacle What these events in capsule-form suggest is that an updated right-wing pedagogical machine has become a bullhorn for revitalizing the coma of depoliticization while resuscitating an erasure of historical consciousness about former fascist regimes and their underlying powers of persuasion and repression. Anthony DiMaggio is right in stating that right-wing pundits have succeeded in not only embracing neo-fascist political rhetoric but have also produced and rely on ‘a staggering historical ignorance of their audiences, whom they correctly believe know little about classical fascism, and will not notice that they’re smuggling into programs extremist discourse, even as their followers come to embrace neofascistic political ideology’. When not rewritten in the interests of the powerful, history becomes a workstation of repression, a tool of power to further what Marc Auge calls, in another context, forms of oblivion that erase ‘memory traces’ (Auge, 2004). In the age of fascist politics, memory loses its potential for remembrance, vigilance, and moral witnessing. Americans are now urged to forget history in order to remain loyal, happy members of a cult that celebrate demigods and embrace a politics that is as violent as it is racist. White supremacy, overt racism, and shocking instances of nativism were on full display during the January 6th insurrection. Racist code words and dog whistles gave way to supporters carrying the Confederate Flag while others supported sweatshirts emblazoned with the words ‘Camp Auschwitz’. In spite of this horrifying expression of white supremacy, support for the bigoted lies that informed the Trump regime was reminiscent of an older racist spirit demonstrated in the film, ‘Birth of a Nation’. This overt display of white supremacy was further illustrated and defended most dramatically by a larger number of Republican Party Congressional representatives and, without hesitation, just hours after the January 6th assault on the Capitol and the ensuing deaths and injury to numerous police officers. More than half of the House GOP voted to challenge Biden’s electoral victory endorsing their support for a minority party rule at any cost. In addition, House Republicans refused to censor Marjorie Taylor Greene, an avowed QAnon believer, inane advocate of conspiracy theories, and shockingly ignorant anti-Semite who peddled the foolish claim, among others, that the 2018 California Camp wildfires were caused by Jewish Space lasers and that Democrats traffic, cannibalize children, and drink the blood of babies. Soon afterward, Rush Limbaugh’s death, and the endless praise he received by right-wing pundits and members of the conservative media brought into focus the proto-fascist educational and racist ideological rot at the core of most of America’s media outlets. There is more at stake here than simply the tired mainstream argument that the GOP has ‘surrendered to extremism’ (Brownstein, 2021). What Americans may be facing is a choice between a fascist theocracy or social democracy (Chnomas, 2021). Ignorance has become lethal in the United States. Millions are infected with the Covid19 virus and over 500,000 people have died because of the Republican Party and conservative media’s disdain for science, evidence, experts and the public good. Moreover, while the pandemic revealed the utter failure of neoliberal capitalism in the United States in dealing with public health policies, such failures were rarely connected to ‘decades of neoliberal austerity [and] cuts in health and education’ (Frederick, 2021). At the same time, under the Trump regime, children were separated from their parents and put into cages modelled after prison. Black people were increasingly subject to police violence and the police enacted such violence on the assumption that they could act with both encouragement and impunity. Blood drips from the death-dealing institutions of the punishing state as historical analogies to an era of racial lynching and systemic racial terror are dismissed. The mainstream media in the face of increasingly visible assaults by the police on Black Americans is more than willing to report that since 2003 there have been more than 1,000 people killed by the police (Eligon & Hubler, 2021). Yet, there is no attempt to understand this scourge of racial violence within the historical framework of slavery and mass lynchings.

#### Conspiracy theories emerge from a consumptive-capitalist attitude toward knowledge in a socially alienated culture.

Heins 07 Volker Heins (Volker Heins is Senior Fellow at the Institute for Social Research, Frankfurt University, and a Visiting Professor of Political Science at McGill University in Montreal.) “Critical theory and the traps of conspiracy thinking,” Philosophy Social Criticism 2007; 33; 787, DOI: 10.1177/0191453707081675. <http://psc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/7/787> SJMS

Here we touch upon a crucial intermediate condition for the acceptance of unwarranted conspiracy theories. These theories are marketed and coveted as cultural products that promise rare states of emotional intensity and excitement, something that is sought by individuals who want to distinguish themselves from society instead of renewing it.47 Like other theories, conspiracy theories are sometimes seen as ‘interesting’,48 because they reject widely accepted accounts of crises and offer fantastic catch-all explanations of the world’s travails and woes instead. A consumptive attitude towards intensity-enhancing theories may be paired with the kind of ‘disbelief’ and ‘suspicion of phoniness’ that Adorno noted many years ago among the readers of the astrology columns of the Los Angeles Times. 49 I think it is fair to assume that this kind of sensation-seeking individualism can nurture an attitude of political cynicism which is different from the apathy analyzed by Neumann. Lack of generalized trust leads to the rejection of the rules of the democratic system, whereas cynicism often favors a strategy of ‘playing’ the system, although with low expectations and no real respect for the rules.50 Important proximate conditions for the spread and acceptability of conspiracy theories is the massive growth in free expression facilitated by online forums and weblogs combined with the erosion of trust in social authorities as the guarantors of legitimate knowledge. Neither governments nor universities, churches, committees of experts or the media enjoy this privilege nowadays. Conspiracy thinking flourishes at the intersection of two major trends: first, the restricted opportunities for the meaningful participation of individuals in a technocratically reduced democracy, and second, the unlimited possibilities of communication that are symbolized by, and available through, the Internet. When sections of the population believe that there is nothing to be gained from political engagement because ‘things don’t change’ anyway; when at the same time more and more can be known, while less and less knowledge seems to be reliable and indisputable, then we have a situation that is conducive to, among other things, conspiracy thinking.

#### That reproduces Auschwitz

Freyenhagen 5 Fabian Freyenhagen [University of Essex], 2013, “ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY Living Less Wrongly” Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 978-1-107-03654-3, <https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/philosophy/twentieth-century-philosophy/adornos-practical-philosophy-living-less-wrongly?format=HB&isbn=9781107036543> SJMS Bracketed for gendered language.

However, for Adorno, Auschwitz was not a unique set of events, standing out from history and unlike anything which came before or after. In many ways, almost the opposite is the case for him: Auschwitz is an exemplification of the general tendencies of the age.3 In particular, it is an extreme example of two (interrelated) central tendencies of modern social reality: (a) the elimination of all individuality to the point of indifference towards individual life (which includes the objectification and depersonalisation of human beings); and (b) the inversion of means and ends (which includes the subordination of human beings to their own creations). The victims of Auschwitz were not just murdered but the perpetrators also attempted to erase any sense of being a unique, irreplaceable individual in them. In Primo Levi’s words, the aim was ‘to annihilate us first as men in order to kill us more slowly afterwards’. 4 The actions of the perpetrators thereby mirrored something fundamental in the workings of modern society and rationality (according to Adorno): the elimination of particularity, such that everything and everyone becomes fungible – just another instance of a general category; one which can easily be expended or discarded, since others could take its place. Those actions foreshadowed a tendency, according to which differences matter, if at all, as inefficiencies or stopgaps to be eliminated. Auschwitz expresses also the inversion of means and ends typical of modern society (and thought forms), albeit in an extreme form: the modern means of industrialisation, transport, and bureaucratic administration (as well as technical-instrumental rationality) are not just decoupled from human ends, but actually turned against the most basic of such ends, survival. Notably, capitalism has replaced human ends and needs with its own telos – production for production’s sake or (what comes to the same thing for Adorno) the maximisation of profit – and satisfies these ends and needs, if at all, incidentally and even then in a distorted and incomplete manner. In this way, the events for which the name ‘Auschwitz’ stands were not something which went against the trend of civilisation. Rather, these events were intimately connected to some of the main tendencies of the path which civilisation has taken and to the structure of modern society and thinking in particular. The lesson of Auschwitz – at least, according to Adorno – is not that culture was replaced by a momentary fallback into a barbaric state; the lesson is that culture itself failed.5 If Auschwitz was possible in a country with an advanced economy and high culture (‘a land of poets and thinkers’, as Germany is known); if it happened despite the fact that moral theories reached into the minds of perpetrators (in the way Eichmann claimed that he had lived his whole life according to Kant’s categorical imperative of which he seemed to have a decent grasp);6 if it was carried out not so much by monsters, but ordinary men (and women) [people];7 if they thought of themselves not as acting against morality and civilisation, but as men of integrity who have taken on a heavy burden to protect them, remaining in their own eyes, with few exceptions, decent and respectful of human life (as Himmler described the work of the SS in his October 1943 speeches at Posen); and if it was not the act of a small group of people, but if a whole society contributed, in one way or another, to it;8 then it seems not altogether far-fetched to come to Adorno’s pessimistic conclusion that Auschwitz was not an accident, but an indication of a deep-seated problem of modern society, civilisation, and culture. If this view is defensible,9 then it suggests also another conclusion: as long as our modern culture – its thought forms and the social world underpinning it – continues unchanged, the reoccurrence of events such as Auschwitz remains a real possibility.

#### Enlightenment is not merely a period in 18th century Europe – because of fear of the unknown, through identity thinking, enlightenment is a process of radicalizing mythical fear in the name of demythologiziation. This all-consuming fear of the unknown maintains global systems of exploitation and oppression.

Zuidervaart 15 Zuidervaart, Lambert (Lambert Zuidervaart is Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. He is the author of Adorno's Aesthetic Theory (MIT Press), Artistic Truth, Social Philosophy after Adorno, Religion, Truth, and Social Transformation, and other books.), "Theodor W. Adorno", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/adorno/>. SJMS Ellipses in original.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the source of today's disaster is a pattern of ~~blind~~ domination, domination in a triple sense: the domination of nature by human beings, the domination of nature within human beings, and, in both of these forms of domination, the domination of some human beings by others. What motivates such triple domination is an irrational fear of the unknown: “Humans believe themselves free of fear when there is no longer anything unknown. This has determined the path of demythologization … Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized” (DE 11). In an unfree society whose culture pursues so-called progress no matter what the cost, that which is “other,” whether human or nonhuman, gets shoved aside, exploited, or destroyed. The means of destruction may be more sophisticated in the modern West, and the exploitation may be less direct than outright slavery, but ~~blind~~, fear-driven domination continues, with ever greater global consequences. The all-consuming engine driving this process is an ever-expanding capitalist economy, fed by scientific research and the latest technologies. Contrary to some interpretations, Horkheimer and Adorno do not reject the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Nor do they provide a negative “metanarrative” of universal historical decline. Rather, through a highly unusual combination of philosophical argument, sociological reflection, and literary and cultural commentary, they construct a “double perspective” on the modern West as a historical formation (Jarvis 1998, 23). They summarize this double perspective in two interlinked theses: “Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology” (DE xviii). The first thesis allows them to suggest that, despite being declared mythical and outmoded by the forces of secularization, older rituals, religions, and philosophies may have contributed to the process of enlightenment and may still have something worthwhile to contribute. The second thesis allows them to expose ideological and destructive tendencies within modern forces of secularization, but without denying either that these forces are progressive and enlightening or that the older conceptions they displace were themselves ideological and destructive.

#### The cultural industry creates racism to sustain its fascism – only we can explain your ontology

Ahmed 3 Saladdin Said Ahmed (Department of Philosophy, Brock University, Canada <https://philpeople.org/profiles/saladdin-ahmed>), "Culture Industry, Fascism." Kritike Volume Two Number One, June 2008. <http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_3/ahmed_june2008> SJMS

Mass culture cannot live without the image of an enemy. If there is no enemy, mass culture creates one. Fighting the “internal enemies” never satisfies mass culture’s fascist need for enmity, so it looks for enemies and their images outside in order to feel a real threat. Mass culture is paranoiac by virtue of its collective submission to an irrational perspective of the world. What forms the core of the fascist unity in mass culture is the alleged threat from the outside world. This image of the other, the different, as the enemy is what sustains mass culture. Mass culture depicts the minorities as sleeping threats who have suspicious loyalties. The mentality that demonized the Jews in Nazi Germany is the same mentality that demonizes certain ethnic and cultural minorities in today’s West. It is easy now for the mass media to point at the Nazi Devil and speak of the injustice that was done to the Jews, but at the same time mass culture reproduces other images of imaginary enemies out of defenseless minorities whose members are seen more like timed bombs rather than individual human beings. If a white man shoots at his schoolmates in the US, it is a case of an abnormal individual, but if a non-white commits such crime, everyone in his or her ethnic group is responsible. If numerous members of a minority prove to be excellent citizens, they are assumed to be people who learnt “our way of life,” but if one member of the same minority commits a crime, the whole minority is guilty by association. In capitalist society, there is nothing humane enough to unite the masses, so the reproduction of the image of an enemy is the only force that is powerful enough to make the masses feel like one. For that reason, the fascists on one side of the world serve the fascists on the other side of the world in the best possible way: each side embodies the perfect enemy to the other. How else the minorities can be accused of dangerous external loyalty? For the mass mentality, a member of x-minority is already unable to be anything but an x, so to create the image of internal enemies all what is needed is to find an ethnic or a cultural link between the minority and the external enemy. Once Japan entered the Second World War, the American and Canadian citizens who happened to have Japanese ancestors were viewed as nothing but an extension of the enemy. A citizen whose last name happened to be Mohammad, is counted as a Muslim regardless of his or her religion, and as a Muslim he or she is seen as a potential Islamist/terrorist regardless of his or her individuality, basically because he or she has been deprived of individuality. A white person’s identity is driven from his or her personal discourse; whereas, a nonwhite person’s identity is fixed because he or she is not seen as somebody who could have a personal discourse. An Asian is nothing but an Asian. A Mohammad is nothing but a Muslim. A black person is a black and nothing besides. Minority members are projects for potential images of potential enemies. There is nothing that can hold together the society that has been torn apart by antagonistic conflicts of capitalism but the hate of an enemy. Minorities are the stimuli of the fascist passion. Fascism of the majority desperately needs minorities to prove the constancy of a threat. The first piece of “information” that the president of the Virginia Tech University gave to the media following the shooting at the university on April 17, 2007 was about the race of the shooter: “an Asian.” The message was “the bad guy is from somewhere else; he is not one of us.” If the shooter, who actually grew up in America, had won a Nobel Prize, he would have been referred to as an American. Populist Western fascism multiplied the image of fascist Islamism because without such an image it would die off. Fascist forces provide each other with excuses for more violence and to persuade more people to join them. The soldier does not provoke the image of “a murderer” in mass mentality. Instead, it is a poetic word. A “soldier” is someone who dies for “us” in a war against “them.” Popular culture gives rise to every possible form of fascism because it takes root in the myth of collective identity, of the identity that enables the weakest person to say “us,” and take pride from that, which is the psychological escaping gate from banality. At the same time, every minority member is easily stereotyped, which is just the first step towards dehumanizing and then demonizing him or her. The stereotyped is thrown out of the area of individual consideration, and the stereotyping mind is addicted to the typical fascist stupidity. Stereotyping, as an intellectual disorder, is the substitute for the chore of thinking for the minds that minimize the act of thinking. The fascist definition of “us” is one and the same process of the classifying and stereotyping the other. Only through the exclusion of the other can a notion of a collective identity be constructed. Hence, mass culture is fascist from the moment of its formation.

## Method

#### The Role of the Ballot is to vote for the debater who best embraces Adorno’s education after Auschwitz – this means using the debate space as an educational space to instill distance of violence and atrocities

Freyenhagen 6 (Quoting Adorno) Fabian Freyenhagen [University of Essex], 2013, “ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY Living Less Wrongly” Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 978-1-107-03654-3, <https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/philosophy/twentieth-century-philosophy/adornos-practical-philosophy-living-less-wrongly?format=HB&isbn=9781107036543> SJMS Quotes from Adorno marked by bracketed inserts.

In his essay ‘Education after Auschwitz’, Adorno draws a distinction between the subjective conditions that made Auschwitz possible and could contribute to its reoccurrence, on the one hand, and the objective conditions, on the other: [Quote] Since the possibility of changing the objective – namely, societal and political – conditions is extremely limited today, attempts to work against the repetition of Auschwitz are necessarily restricted to the subjective dimension. By this I also mean essentially the psychology of people who do such things. I do not believe it would help much to appeal to eternal values, at which the very people who are prone to commit such atrocities would merely shrug their shoulders. I also do not believe that enlightenment about the positive qualities possessed by persecuted minorities would be of much use. The roots must be sought in the persecutors, not in the victims, who are murdered under the paltriest of pretences. What is necessary is what I once called the turn to the subject. One must know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds, must reveal the mechanisms to them, and strive, by general awareness of those mechanisms, to prevent people from becoming so again. 86 [End Quote] With changes to the objective conditions highly unlikely, Adorno here concludes that we should concentrate on understanding the (psychological) mechanisms which make people commit atrocities. In this sense, he wants education as ‘an education toward critical self-reflection’. 87 This should proceed both via encouraging reflection and criticism from early childhood onwards, and by fostering it via public awareness campaigns about the (psychological) mechanisms in question.88 Adorno also thinks that instilling a sense of distaste for, or shame about, violence into children (and, if possible, adults) would be important to prevent Auschwitz repeating itself.89 He even makes a few suggestions about the form and content a post-Auschwitz education could have, such as recommending a focus on the concrete forms of resistance against the social horrors committed under Nazism or the opposition to parts thereof (for example, the euthanasia programme) among the German population.90 On a social level, he also suggests reminding people of the catastrophic results – authoritarianism, war, suffering – which the fascist regimes had for their own populations and reminding them that fascist revivals would come at similar costs, something which might present more of a counterweight than reminders about the (even worse) suffering of others.91 What is most important is Adorno’s insistence that this subjective dimension can at best improve the chances of people refraining from participating in such atrocities and thereby reduce the number of those carrying out the murders (though not necessarily the number of the people working in the bureaucratic machine behind the atrocities who Adorno calls ‘desktop murderers’).92 Encouraging reflection from early on and public awareness campaigns will not transform the objective conditions. Still, it might influence the ease with which people might be led by these conditions to the most barbaric excesses. As Adorno puts it in his conclusion of the essay: [Quote] Even if rational enlightenment, as psychology well knows, does not straightaway eliminate the unconscious mechanisms, then it at least reinforces in the preconscious certain counter-impulses and helps prepare a climate that does not favour the uttermost extreme. If the entire culture really became permeated with the idea of the pathogenic character of the tendencies that came into their own in Auschwitz, then perhaps people would better control those tendencies.93 [End Quote] The mere knowledge of how things go wrong may not be sufficient to stop them from going wrong, but it may, so to speak, strengthen the immune system of individuals or even whole societies against the objective tendencies towards depersonalisation, means-end reversal, and disregard of individuals.

#### Identity thinking generalizes objects under categories assuming it’s capturing the object in full thereby ignoring the inherent commitment of the non-identical. Therefore, all non-negative dialectical modern thinking fails.

Freyenhagen 7 Fabian Freyenhagen [University of Essex], 2013, “ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY Living Less Wrongly” Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 978-1-107-03654-3, <https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/philosophy/twentieth-century-philosophy/adornos-practical-philosophy-living-less-wrongly?format=HB&isbn=9781107036543> SJMS

iii The whole is untrue 2 (modern thought forms) However, it is not just capitalism (and its nominally socialist rivals) which are wrong for Adorno – modern thought forms are also problematic.39 Adorno paints a basically Kantian picture of modern thought forms. Thus, he suggests that empirical cognition is a composite of concepts and sensory input, such that the latter is subsumed under the former. This process of synthesis involves bringing something specific and particular (the manifold given to us via the senses) under something general (concepts). In effect, cognition becomes thereby a process of identification, of assigning the particular to a general class into which it falls. This means that we never cognise the thing in itself as such, but only how it appears to us, mediated by our spatio-temporal frame of reference (Kant calls this our‘forms of intuition’) and our conceptual scheme (that is, in Kant, the twelve categories). However, unlike Kant, Adorno does not think of this conceptual scheme as unchangeable or a priori.40 Instead, he historicises the Kantian idea (following the work of the early Lukács).41 For Adorno, as for Horkheimer, the conceptual schemes with which we operate are what might be called ‘historical a priori’ – given the historical and social setting we grow up and live in, we approach the world and think of it in certain ways.42 Society is always already inside human beings and their experiences.43 Both the object of experience and the way we experience it are shaped by the society we inhabit.44 These ways of structuring our experience take on a necessary and universal character within a social world, but, at least historically speaking, human beings have been subject to a series of incommensurable frameworks, such that Kant’s claim to a stronger form of necessity and universality comes out false. Kantians would reply that our conceptual scheme is not just a reflection of a particular society or stage in human history, but inherent in thought and experience as such. Perhaps human societies differ in terms of certain specifics – in their empirical concepts – but certain basic categories are necessarily operative in each of these variations. I cannot resolve this disagreement here, but merely note that, even if Adorno is right and our conceptual scheme is not necessary in any transhistorically strong sense, this does not mean that we could do without any conceptual scheme whatsoever. Adorno himself notes that to think is to use concepts and thereby to identify,45 and, hence, ‘identity thinking [Identitätsdenken]’, of which Adorno speaks frequently and critically, seems to be the only thinking there could be. However, what Adorno means by talking about identity thinking is more than just emphasising the inevitable fact that thinking is conceptual.46 While all thinking has this latter characteristic, only some forms of thinking – albeit the dominant ones in the modern world – are based on the assumption that the synthesis performed by subsuming the sensible manifold under concepts actually captures this manifold in full (or in its essential properties). We need to be careful here. Adorno is not just worried about which concept is used in a particular case – it might well be that we often do not use the most suitable concept in a given case and that this has to be corrected. (Perhaps Pluto is actually not a planet, but better conceptualised as an asteroid, despite a long tradition that thought otherwise.) What Adorno complains about is something more fundamental. It is the thought that any subsumption under concepts, even the most apt one, misses something about its object and if this mismatch is not reflected upon, then thought does injustice to the object.47 Instead of saying what something is, ‘identity thinking says what it falls under, what it is an example or representative of, what it consequently is not itself’. 48 What is missed in the object is called variously ‘the non-identical’ [das Nichtidentische] or ‘the non-conceptual’ [das Nichtbegriffliche] by Adorno. This central idea in Adorno’s work is difficult to make sense of. This is partly for philosophical reasons – that which escapes our conceptual schemes is inherently and unsurprisingly hard to grasp. Given that language is based on concepts, we struggle to express it. Still, some of the difficulty also stems from having to interpret Adorno’s texts and statements on this issue, which are far from easy and often give the impression of presenting a contradictory or otherwise problematic picture. The way to unlock some of these difficulties is to consider the following puzzle. If all thinking uses concepts, which are general rules, under which particulars are meant to be subsumed, then it is an open philosophical question how genuine experience of these particulars is possible. After all, the particular objects we encounter in experience are not concepts or mental entities (or at least we tend to presume that they are not) and how can something completely different in character – thought – have access to them? Call this the ‘Problem of Missing Affinity’. This problem is probably as old as philosophy and Adorno is very well aware of this and the traditional philosophical answers to it. His thesis is that these traditional answers all tend towards idealism – even where they are avowedly materialist – in the following sense: they all work on the basis of the assumption that we can capture the world in the conceptual framework we bring to it (or, at least, the best version of it, once we have worked that out). Putting it in terms of Hegel’s philosophy, traditional philosophy thinks that the world is rational, as long as we look at it in a sufficiently rational way.49 The danger in this assumption is, however, that instead of cognising the world, we cognise only what we bring to it – instead of knowledge of something other than thought and its categories, we might be settled with a big tautology. Empirical cognition would be like recognising that bachelors are unmarried men. In this sense, Kant’s talk of the inaccessible thing in itself at least acknowledged the problem, while Hegel’s absolute idealism extinguished all traces of it.50 Thus, the mistake of identity thinking is not that it involves identification and concepts – all thinking does this inevitably – but the mistake is that it rests on the assumption, whether explicitly or not, that the world is fundamentally accessible in full to thought.51 This assumption is problematic because it loses from view that there might be something in the object (or even the object as a whole) which is incompatible with, or inaccessible by conceptual thought. It does not sufficiently attend to the fact that identifying always involves disregarding what is non-identical and incommensurable in the particular object of our cognition. It thereby violates a commitment inherent in its conception of concepts itself: concepts are directed towards capturing what they are not; in Adorno’s terminology: concepts, incarnation of identity, aim at the nonconceptual, the non-identical.52

#### The Aff uses negative dialects to confront the non-identical it understands the subordinate needs of an object come before our concepts.

Freyenhagen 8 Fabian Freyenhagen [University of Essex], 2013, “ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY Living Less Wrongly” Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 978-1-107-03654-3, <https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/philosophy/twentieth-century-philosophy/adornos-practical-philosophy-living-less-wrongly?format=HB&isbn=9781107036543> SJMS

In fact, on Adorno’s view it is only through the external intervention of the subject that objects can fully unfold their potential. Whatever is contained in the objects themselves requires human subjectivity to be voiced.75 This cannot merely consist in copying the object or perceiving it. Objects require interpretation and this, in turn, requires the subject to move beyond them – not to the fixed categorisation of identity thinking, but to the more fluid forms of (the already mentioned) constellations or force fields of concepts.76 In this way, the subject can help to unlock the historical, dynamic, and relational character of the objects they cognise.77 Still, there are no guarantees here: interpretations can miss their object or fail to be illuminating; only the successful ones realise the difficult balancing act of achieving ‘bindingness [Verbindlichkeit] without system’. 78 Along with the rigid nature of identity thinking, certainty has to be given up too, and fallabilism takes its place.79 This lack of certainty is particularly acute within late modernity: within a wrong social life and against the background of the dominance of identity thinking, the objects themselves are deformed and cannot reveal their true nature.80 Instead, we have to engage in ‘negative dialectics’, that is, we have to engage in constant questioning of our thought forms and the confrontation of them with the experiences of non-identity. Such a dialectics is negative in the sense that it incorporates the denial of two assumptions: (1) the denial of the assumption that identity of our conceptual scheme with the world can be achieved; and (2) the rejection of the assumption that the conclusions of dialectics can move beyond the wrong state of the world and the wrong thought forms dominating within it.81 Negative dialectics is a reflection of this state and these thought forms, and if they were eventually overcome, then it would come to an end too.82 In that sense, it is not an eternal truth or orientation either.

#### The aff reflects freedom by not creating knowledge out of nothing, we radically break through objectivity by critiquing the cultural industry

Adorno 84 Theodor W. Adorno Bob Hullot-Kentor; Frederic Will New German Critique, No. 32. (Spring - Summer, 1984), pp. 151-171. The Essay as Form. JSTOR Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-033X%28198421%2F22%290%3A32%3C151%3ATEAF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C> Free URL: <http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/gustafson/film%20223/Adorno-The%20Essay%20As%20Form.pdf> SJMS

That in Germany the essay is decried as a hybrid; that it is lacking a convincing tradition; that its strenuous requirements have only rarely been met: all this has been often remarked upon and censured. "The essay form has not yet, today, travelled the road to independence which its sister, poetry, covered long ago; the road of development from a primitive, undifferentiated unity with science, ethics, and art."' But neither discontent with this situation, nor discontent with the mentality that reacts to the situation by fencing up art as a preserve for the irrational, identifying knowledge with organized science and excluding as impure anything that does not fit this antithesis: neither discontent has changed anything in the customary national prejudice. The bestowal of the garland "writer" still suffices to exclude from academia the person one is praising. Despite the weighty perspicacity that Simmel and the young Lukics, Kassner and Benjamin entrusted to the essay, to the speculative investigation of specific, culturally predetermined objects,' the academic guild only has patience for philosophy that dresses itself up with the nobility oft e universal, the everlasting, and today -when possible -with the primal; the cultural artifact is of interest only to the degree that it serves to exemplify universal categories, or at the very least allows them to shine through -however little the particular is thereby illuminated. The stubbornness with which this stereotypical thought survives would be as puzzling as its emotional rootedness if it were not fed by motives that are stronger than the painful recollection of how much cultivation is missing from a culture that historically scarcely recognizes the homme de letters. In Germany the essay provokes resistance because it is reminiscent of the intellectual freedom that, from the time of an unsuccessful and lukewarm Enlightenment, since Leibniz's day, all the way to the present has never really emerged, not even under the conditions of formal freedom; the German Enlightenment was always ready to proclaim, as its essential concern, subordination under whatever higher courts. The essay, however, does not permit its domain to be prescribed. Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done. The essay mirrors what is loved and hated instead of presenting the intellect, on the model of a boundless work ethic, as creatio ex nihilo. Luck and play are essential to the essay. It does not begin with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to discuss; it says what is at issue and stops where it feels itself complete -not where nothing is left to say. Therefore it is classed among the oddities. Its concepts are neither deduced from any first principle nor do they come full circle and arrive at a final principle. Its interpretations are not philologically hardened and sober, rather - according to the predictable verdict of that vigilant calculating reason that hires itself out to stupidity as a guard against intelligence -it overinterprets. Due to a fear of negativity per se, the subject's effort to break through what masks itself as objectivity is branded as idleness. Everything is supposedly much simpler. The person who interprets instead of unquestioningly accepting and categorizing is slapped with the charge of intellectualizing as if with a yellow star; his misled and decadent intelligence is said to subtilize and project meaning where there is nothing to interpret. Technician or dreamer, those are the alternatives. Once one lets oneself be terrorized by the prohibition of going beyond the intended meaning of a certain text, one becomes the dupe of the false intentionality that men and things harbor of themselves. Understanding then amounts to nothing more than unwrapping what the author wanted to say, or, if need by, tracking down the individual psychological reactions that the phenomenon indicates. But just as it is scarcely possible to figure out what someone at a certain time and place felt and thought, such insights could not hope to gain anything essential. The author's impulses are extinguished in the objective substance they grasp. The objective abundance of significations encapsulated within each spiritual phenomenon, if it is to reveal itself, requires from the person receiving them precisely that spontaneity of subjective fantasy that is chastised in the name of objective discipline. Nothing can be interpreted out of a work without at the same time being interpreted into it. The criteria of this process are the compatibility of the interpretation with the text and with itself and its power to release the object's expression in the unity of its elements. The essay thereby acquires an aesthetic autonomy that is easily criticized as simply borrowed from art, though it distinguishes itself from art through its conceptual character and its claim to truth free from aesthetic semblance. Lukscs failed to recognize this when he called the essay an art form in a letter to Leo Popper that serves as the introduction to Soul and Form.3 Neither is the positivist maxim superior to Lukscs' thesis, namely the maxim which maintains that what is written about art may claim nothing of art's mode of presentation, nothing, that is, of its autonomy of form. The positivist tendency to set up every possible examinable object in rigid opposition to the knowing subject remains -in this as in every other instance -caught up with the rigid separation of form and content: for it is scarcely possible to speak of the aesthetic unaesthetically, stripped of any similarity with its object, without becoming narrow-minded and a priori losing touch with the aesthetic object. According to a positivist procedure the content, once rigidly modelled on the protocol sentence, should be indifferent to its presentation. Presentation should be conventional, not demanded by the matter itself. Every impulse of expression -as far as the instinct of scientific purism is concerned -endangers an objectivity that is said to spring forth after the subtraction of the subject; such expression would thus endanger the authenticity of the material, which is said to prove itself all the better the less it relies on form, even though the measure of form is precisely its ability to render content purely and without addition. In its allergy to forms, as pure accidents, the scientific mind approaches the stupidly dogmatic mind. Positivism's irresponsibly bungled language fancies itself to be responsibly objective and adequate to the matter at hand; the reflection on the spiritual becomes the privilege of the spiritless. None of these offspring of resentment are simply untruth. If the essay disdains to begin by deriving cultural products from something underlying them, it embroils itself only more intently in the culture industry and it falls for the conspicuousness, success and prestige of products designed for the market place. Fictional biographies and all the related commercial writing are no mere degeneration but the permanent temptation of a form whose suspicion toward false profundity is no defense against its own turning into skillful superficiality. The essay's capitulation is already evident in Sainte-Beuve, from whom the genre of the modern essay really stems. Such works -along with products like the biographical sketches of Herbert E~lenberg,~ the German model for a flood of cultural trash-literature, all the way to the films about Rembrandt, Toulouse-Lautrec, and the Holy Bible -have promoted the neutralizing transformation of cultural artifacts into commodities, a transformation which, in recent cultural history, has irresistably seized up all that which in the eastern bloc is shamelessly called "the cultural heritage." This process is perhaps most striking in the instance of Stefan Zweig, who in his youth wrote several discerning essays, and who finally, in his book on Balzac, stooped so low as to describe the psychology of the creative artist. Such writing does not criticize basic abstract concepts, mindless dates, worn-out clichés, but implicitly and thereby with the greater complicity, it presupposes them. The detritus of an hermeneutic psychology is fused with common categories drawn from the Weltanschauung of the cultural philistines, categories like those of personality and the irrational. Such essays mistake themselves for that kind of feuilleton journalism with which mistake themselves for that kind of feuilleton journalism with which the enemies of form confuse the form of the essay. Torn itself becomes unfree and sets itself to work in the service of the socially performed needs of its customers. The moment of irresponsibility, in itself an aspect of every truth that does not exhaust itself in responsibility toward the status quo, will account for itself when faced with the needs of the established consciousness; bad essays are no less conformist than bad dissertations. Responsibility, however, respects not only authorities and committees but the object itself.

#### The aff is not arbitrary we are negative dialectics by illuminate the totality without asserting its presence. Other methods fail by assuming humans control the whole but truth is not ready-made

Adorno 2 Theodor W. Adorno Bob Hullot-Kentor; Frederic Will New German Critique, No. 32. (Spring - Summer, 1984), pp. 151-171. The Essay as Form. JSTOR Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-033X%28198421%2F22%290%3A32%3C151%3ATEAF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C> Free URL: <http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/gustafson/film%20223/Adorno-The%20Essay%20As%20Form.pdf> SJMS

With regard to scientific procedure and its philosophic grounding as method, the essay, in accordance with its idea, draws the fullest consequences from the critique of the system. Even the empiricist doctrines that grant priority to open, unanticipated experience over firm, conceptual ordering remain systematic to the extent that they investigate what they hold to be the more or less constant pre-conditions of knowledge and develop them in as continuous a context as possible. Since the time of Bacon, who was himself an essayist, empiricism -no less than rationalism -has been "method." Doubt about the unconditional priority of method was raised, in the actual process of thought, almost exclusively by the essay. It does justice to the consciousness of non-identity, without needing to say so, radically un-radical in refraining from any reduction to a principle, in accentuating the fragmentary, the partial rather then the total. "Perhaps the great Sieur de Montaigne felt something like this when he gave his writings the wonderfully elegant and apt title of Essays. The simple modesty of this word is an arrogant courtesy. The essayist dismisses his own proud hopes which sometimes lead him to believe that he has come close to the ultimate: he has, after all, no more to offer than explanations of the poems of others, or at best of his own ideas. But he ironically adapts himself to this smallness -the eternal smallness of the most profound work of the intellect in face of life -and even emphasizes it with ironic modesty." 6 The essay does not obey the rules of the game of organized science and theory that, following Spinoza's principle, the order of things is identical with that of ideas. Since the airtight order of concepts is not identical with existence, the essay does not strive for closed, deductive or inductive, construction. It revolts above all against the doctrine - deeply rooted since Plato -that the changing and ephemeral is unworthy of philosophy; against that ancient injustice toward the transitory, by which it is once more anathematized, conceptually. The essay shys away from the violence of dogma, from the notion that the result of abstraction, the temporally invariable concept indifferent to the individual phenomenon grasped by it, deserves ontological dignity. The delusion that the ordo idearum (order of ideas) should be the ordo rerum (order of things) is based on the insinuation that the mediated is unmediated. Just as little as a simple fact can be thought without a concept, because to think it always already means to conceptualize it, it is equally impossible to think the purest concept without reference to the factual. Even the creations of phantasy that are supposedly independent of space and time, point toward individual existence -however far they may be removed from it. Therefore the essay is not intimidated by the depraved profundity which claims that truth and history are incompatible. If truth has in fact a temporal core, then the full historical content becomes an integral moment in truth; the a posteriori becomes concretely the a priori, as only generally stipulated by Fichte and his followers. The relation to experience -and from it the essay takes as much substance as does traditional theory from its categories -is a relation to all of history; merely individual experience, in which consciousness begins with what is nearest to it, is itself mediated by the all encompassing experience of historical humanity; the claim that social historical contents are nevertheless supposed to be only indirectly important compared with the immediate life of the individual is a simple self-delusion of an individualistic society and ideology. The depreciation of the historically produced, as an object of theory, is therefore corrected by the essay. There is no salvaging the distinction of a first philosophy from a mere philosophy of culture that assumes the former and builds on it, a distinction with which the taboo on the essay is rationalized theoretically. The intellectual process which canonizes a distinction between the temporal and the timeless is losing its authority. Higher levels of abstraction invest thought neither with a greater sanctity nor with metaphysical content; rather, the metaphysical content evaporates with the progress of abstraction, for which the essay attempts to make reparation. The usual reproach against the essay, that it is fragmentary and random, itself assumes the giveness of totality and thereby the identity of subject and object, and it suggests that man is in control of totality. But the desire of the essay is not to seek and filter the eternal out of the transitory; it wants, rather, to make the transitory eternal. Its weakness testifies to the non-identity that it has to express, as well as to that excess of intention over its object, and thereby it points to that utopia which is blocked out by the classification of the world into the eternal and the transitory. In the emphatic essay, thought gets rid of the traditional idea of truth. The essay simultaneously suspends the traditional concept of method. Thought acquires its depth from penetrating deeply into a matter, not from referring it back to something else. In this the essay becomes polemical by treating what is normally held to be derived, without however pursuing its ultimate derivation. The essay freely associates what can be found associated in the freely chosen object. It does not insist stubbornly on a realm transcending all mediations -and they are the historical ones in which the whole of society is sedimented - rather the essay seeks truth contents as being historical in themselves. It does not concern itself with any supposed primeval condition in order to contravene society's false sociality, which, just because it tolerates nothing not stamped by it, ultimately tolerates nothing indicative of it own omnipresence and necessarily cites, as its ideological complement, that nature which its own praxis eliminates. The essay silently abandons the illusion that thought can break out of thesis into physis, out of culture into nature. Spellbound by what is fixed and admittedly deduced, by artifacts, the essay honors nature by confirming that it no longer exists for human beings. The essay's Alexandrianism replies to the fact that by their very existence the lilac and the nightingale, wherever the universal net allows them to survive, only want to delude us that life still lives. The essay abandons the main road to the origins, the road leading to the most derivative, to being, the ideology that simply doubles that which already exists; at the same time the essay does not allow the idea of immediacy, postulated by the very concept of mediation, to disappear entirely. All levels of the mediated are immediate to the essay, before its reflection begins. As the essay denies any primeval givens, so it refuses any definition of its concepts. Philosophy has completed the fullest critique of definition from the most diverse perspectives, including those of Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche. But science has never adopted this critique. While the movement beginning with Kant, a movement against the scholastic residues in modern thought, replaces verbal definition with an understanding of concepts as part of the process in which they are temporally embodied, the individual sciences insist stubbornly on the pre-critical job of definition -and do so for the sake of the undisturbed security of their operation. In this regard the neopositivists, who identify philosophy with scientific method, agree with Scholasticism. The essay, in contrast, takes the anti-systematic impulse into its own procedure, and introduces concepts directly, "immediately," as it receives them. They gain their precision only through their relation to one another. In this, however, the essay gets some support from the concepts themselves. For it is a mere superstition of a science exclusively concerned with the appropriation of raw materials to believe that concepts are in themselves undetermined, that they are first determined by their definition. Science requires the image of the concept as a tabula rasa, in order to secure its claim to domination; the claim to be the sole power at the head of the table. Actually, all concepts are already implicitly concretized through the language in which they stand. The essay begins with such meanings and, itself being essentially language, it forces these meanings on farther; it wants to help language, in its relation to concepts, to grasp these concepts reflectively in the way that they are already unconsciously named in language. That effort is already envisaged by the procedure of meaning-analysis in phenomenology; only there the relation of concepts to language is fetishized. The essay remains as skeptical of this as it is of definition. Without apology the essay draws on itself the reproach that it does not know beyond a doubt just what is to be understood as the real content of concepts. For the essay perceives that the longing for strict definitions has long offered, through fixating manipulations of the meanings of concepts, to eliminate the irritating and dangerous elements of things that live within concepts. Yet the essay can neither do without general concepts -even language that does not fetishize the concept cannot do without concepts - nor does it treat them arbitrarily. It therefore takes the matter of presentation more seriously than do those procedures that separate out method from material and are indifferent to the way they represent their objectified contents. The how of expression should rescue, in precision, what the refusal to outline sacrifices, without, however, betraying the intended matter to the arbitrariness of previously decreed significations. In this Benjamin was an unequaled master. Such precision, however, cannot remain atomistic. Not less, but more than the process of defining, the essay urges the reciprocal interaction of its concepts in the process of intellectual experience. In the essay, concepts do not build a continuum of operations, thought does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet. The fruitfulness of the thoughts depends on the density of this texture. Actually, the thinker does not think, but rather transforms himself into an arena of intellectual experience, without simplifying it. While even traditional thought draws its impulses from such experience, such thought by its form eliminates the remembrance of these impulses. The essay, on the other hand, takes them as its model, without simply imitating them as reflected form; it mediates them through its own conceptual organization; it proceeds, so to speak, methodically unmethodically. The way in which the essay appropriates concepts is most easily comparable to the behavior of a man who is obliged, in a foreign country, to speak that country's language instead of patching it together from its elements, as he did in school. He will read without a dictionary. If he has looked at the same word thirty times, in constantly changing contexts, he has a clearer grasp of it than he would if he looked up all the word's meanings; meanings that are generally too narrow, considering they change depending on the context, and too vague in view of the nuances that the context establishes in every individual case. Just as such learning remains exposed to error, so does the essay as form; it must pay for its affinity with open intellectual experience by the lack of security, a lack which the norm of established thought fears like death. It is not so much that the essay ignores indisputable certainty, as that it abrogates the ideal. The essay becomes true in its progress, which drives it beyond itself, and not in a hoarding obsession with fundamentals. Its concepts receive their light from aterminus ad quem hidden to the essay itself, and not from an obvious terminus a quo. In this the very method of the essay expresses the utopian intention. All of its concepts are presentable in such a way that they support one another, that each one articulates itself according to the configuration that it forms with the others. In the essay discreet1 separated elements enter into a readable context; it erects no scaftbl ‘?- ing, no edifice. Through their own movement the elements crystallize into a configuration. It is a force field, just as under the essay's glance every intellectual artifact must transform itself into a force field. The essay gently defies the ideals of clara et distinctaperceptio and of absolute certainty. On the whole it could be interpreted as a protest againt the four rules that Descartes' Discourse on Method sets up at the beginning of modern Western science and its theory. The second of these rules, the decomposition of the object into "as many parts as possible and as might be necessary for its adequate ~olution,"~ formulates that analysis of elements under whose sign traditional theory equates a conceptual order with the structure of being. But the object of the essay, the artifact, refuses any analysis of its elements and can only be constructed from its specific idea; it is not accidental that Kant treated art-works and organisms analogously, although at the same time he insisted, against all romantic obscurantism, on distinguishing them. The whole is to be hypostatized into a first principle just as little as is the product of analysis, the elements. In opposition to both, the essay is informed by the idea of that interaction which in fact tolerates the question of elements as little as that of the elementary. Neither are the specific elements to be developed purely out of the whole, nor vice versa. The artifact is a monad, yet it is not; its elements, as such of a conceptual kind, point beyond the specific object in which they gather themselves. But the essay does not 'follow these elements to that point where they legitimize themselves, on the far side of the specific object; otherwise it would turn into a bad kind of infinity. Rather, the essay comes so close to the here and now of the object, up to the point where that object, instead of being simply an object, dissociates itself into those elements in which it has its life. The third Cartesian rule, "to conduct my thoughts in such an order that, by commencing with the simplest and easiest to know, I might ascend by little and little, step by step, to the knowledge of the more complex,"~is sharply contravened by the form of the essay in that it begins with the most complex, not the most simple, which is in every instance the habitual. The essay as form will be a good guide for the person who is beginning to study philosophy, and before whose eyes the idea of philosophy somehow stands. He will hardly begin by reading the easiest writers, whose common sense will skim the surface where depth is called for; he will rather go for the allegedly difficult writers, who shed light on what is simple and illuminate it as a "stance of the mind toward objectivity." The naiveté of the student, to whom the difficult and formidable seems good enough, is wiser than the adult pedantry that admonishes thought with a threatening finger to understand the simple before risking that complexity which alone entices it. Such a postponement of knowledge only prevents knowledge. In opposition to the cliché of the "understandable," the notion of truth as a network of causes and effects, the essay insists that a matter be considered, from the very first, in its whole complexity; it counteracts that hardened primitiveness that always allies itself with reason's current form. Whereas science treats the difficulties and complexities of an antagonistic and monadologically split reality according to the expectation of this society by reducing them to simplifying models and then belatedly differentiates them with fabricated material, the essay shakes off the illusion of a simple, basically logical world that so perfectly suits the defense of the status quo. Its differentiation is no supplement, but its medium. Established thought readily ascribes that differentiation to the mere psychology of the author and then thinks that it has adequately dealt with it. The pompous scientific objections to over-sophistication actually do not aim at the impertinently unreliable method but at the irritating aspects of the object which the essay reveals. The fourth Cartesian rule that one "should in every case institute such exhaustive enumerations and such general surveys" that one "is sure of leaving nothing out" -this ultimate principle of systematic thought -reappears unchanged in Kant's polemic against Aristotle's "rhapsodic" thought. This rule corresponds to the particular objection to the essay that, in the words of the schoolmaster, it is not exhaustive, while it is clear that every object, and above all a cultural object, encloses endlessly many aspects, the choice among which can only be determined by the intention of the knower. The "general survey'' would only be possible if it were determined in advance that the object in question can be fully grasped by the concepts which treat it; that nothing is left over that could not be anticipated by these concepts. Following that assumption, the rule requiring the exhaustive enumeration of the individual elements claims that the object can be presented in an airtight deductive system: a supposition of a philosophy of identity. As a practical technique of thought, as for example in its insistence on definition, the Cartesian rule has outlived the rationalistic theorem on which it was founded: a comprehensive general view and a continuity of presentation is urged even upon empirically open scientific procedure. In this fashion the intellectual conscience that should, in Descartes' philosophy, keep watch over the necessity of knowledge is transformed into the arbitrariness of a "frame of reference."" In order to satisfy a methodological need and to support the plausibility of the whole, it becomes an axiomatic doctrine that is being set up as the gateway to thought while no longer being able to demonstrate its own validity or proof. Or, in the German version, it becomes a "project" (Entwurf)that, with the pathos-laden claim of reaching into being, simply suppresses its subjective conditions. The insistence on the continuity of thought's process tends to prejudice the inner coherence of the object, its own harmony. A continuous presentation would contradict material that is full of antogonisms as long as it did not simultaneously define continuity as discontinuity. Unconsciously and far from theory, the need arises in the essay as form to annul the theoretically outmoded claims of totality and continuity, and to do so in the concrete procedure of the intellect. If the essay struggles aesthetically against that narrow-minded method that will leave nothing out, it is obeying an epistemological motive. The romantic conception of the fragment as an artifact that is not complete in itself but openly striding into infinity by way of self-reflection, advocates this antiidealist motive even in the midst of idealism. Even in its manner of delivery the essay refuses to behave as though it had deduced its object and had exhausted the topic. Self-relativization is immanent in its form; it must be constructed in such a way that it could always, and at any point, break off. It thinks in fragments just as reality is fragmented and gains its unity only by moving through the fissures, rather than by smoothing them over. The unanimity of the logical order deceives us about the antagonistic nature of that on which it was jauntily imposed. Discontinuity is essential to the essay; its concern is always a conflict brought to a standstill. While the essay adjusts concepts to one another by virtue of their function in the parallelogram of the forces of the materials, it shrinks back from the over-arching concept under which particular concepts should be subordinated; what the over-arching concept merely pretends to accomplish, the essay's method recognizes as insoluble while nevertheless attempting to accomplish it. The word "essay" -in which thought's utopia of hitting the bull's eye unites with the consciousness of its own fallibility and provisional nature -indicates something, like most historically surviving terminologies, about the form, the importance of which is magnified by the fact that it results not programmatically but as a characteristic of the form's groping intention. The essay must let the totality light up in one of its chosen or haphazard features but without asserting that the whole is present. It corrects the isolated and accidental aspects of its insights by allowing them to multiply, confirm, and restrict themselves -whether in the essay's proper progress or in its mosaic-like relation to other essays; and it does so not by abstracting characteristic features from its insights. "Thus the essay distinguishes itself from a scientific treatise. He writes essayistically who writes while experimenting, who turns his object this way and that, who questions it, feels it, tests it, thoroughly reflects on it, attacks it from different angles, and in his mind's eye collects what he sees, and puts into words what the object allows to be seen under the conditions established in the course of writing."" The discontent with this procedure, the feeling that it could all go on indefinitely, has its truth and untruth. Its truth, because in fact the essay comes to no final conclusions and makes explicit its inability to do so by parodying its own a priori; it is then saddled with the guilt that is actually incurred by those forms that erase every trace of arbitrariness. Yet that discontent with the essay is at the same time untrue because, as a constellation, the essay is not arbitrary in the way that it seems to a philosophical subjectivism which translates the exigencies of the object into those of its conceptual organization. The essay is determined by the unity of its object, together with that of theory and experience which have migrated into the object. The essay's openness is not vaguely one of feeling and mood, but obtains its contour from its content. It resists the idea of the master-work that reflects the idea of creation and totality. Its form follows the critical thought that man is no creator, that nothing human is creation. The essay, always directed towards artifacts, does not present itself as a creation; nor does it long for something all-embracing, the totality of which would resemble creation. Its totality, the unity of a form thoroughly constructed in itself, is that of non-totality; one that even as form does not assert the. thesis of the identity of thought and thing, the thesis which in its own content the essay rejects. Freedom from the pressure of identity occasionally provides the essay (and this is lacking in official thought) with an aspect of ineffaceability, of inextinguishable color. In Simmel certain foreign words -cachet, attitude -betray this intention, without it being treated theoretically as such. The essay is both more open and more closed than traditional thought would like. It is more open in so far as, through its inner nature, it negates anything systematic and satisfies itself all the better the more strictly it excludes the systematic; residues of the systematic in the essay such as the infiltration of literary studies with ready-made, wide-spread philosophical commonplaces, by which these studies try to make themselves respectable, are of no morevalue than psychological banalities. On the other hand, the essay is more closed in that it labors emphatically on the form of its presentation. The consciousness of the non-identity between presentation and presented material forces the form to make unlimited efforts. In that respect alone the essay resembles art; otherwise, on account of the concepts which appear in it and which import not only their meaning but also their theoretical aspects, the essay is necessarily related to theory. To be sure, the essay relates itself to theory as cautiously as to the concept. It neither deduces itself rigidly from theory -the cardinal fault of all LukAcs' later essayistic work - nor is it a down-payment on future syntheses. Disaster threatens intellectual experience the more strenuously it ossifies into theory and acts as if it held the philosopher's stone in hand. And yet, intellectual experience itself strives by its own nature toward such objectification. This antinomy is mirrored by the essay. Just as it absorbs concepts and experiences, so it absorbs theories. However, its relation to them is not that of a standpoint. If this lack of a standpoint is no longer naive and dependent on the prominence of its objects; if the essay rather uses the relationship to its objects as a weapon against the spell of beginnings, it parodically practices the otherwise only feeble polemic of thought against mere standpoint philosophy. The essay swallows up the theories that are close by; its tendency is always toward the liquidation of opinion, even that from which it takes its own impulse. The essay remains what it always was, the critical form par excellence; specifically, it constructs the immanent criticism of cultural artifacts, and it confronts that which such artifacts are with their concept; it is the critique of ideology. "The essay is the form of the critical category of our mind. For whoever criticizes must necessarily experiment; he must create conditions under which an object is newly seen, and he must do so in a fashion different from that of a creative author. Above all the fragility of the object must be probed, tested; this is precisely the meaning of the small variation that an object undergoes in the hands of its critic."" If the essay is accused of lacking a standpoint and of tending toward relativism because it recognizes no standpoint lying outside of itself, then the accusation implicitly contains the conception of truth as something "ready-made," a hierarchy of concepts, an image of truth that Hegel destroyed in his dislike of standpoints: in this the essay touches its polar opposite, the philosophy of absolute knowledge. The essay would like to cure thought of its arbitrariness by taking arbitrariness reflectively into its own procedure instead of masking it as spontaneity.