#### \*\*Trigger warning this K will discuss non-explicit mentions of anti-semitic violence\*\*

## 1

#### Identity thinking generalizes objects under categories assuming it’s capturing the object in full thereby ignoring the inherent commitment of the non-identical. Modern thinking fails.

Freyenhagen 13 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

#### Their prioritization of objectivity and defense of the free press legitimizes the dominant fascist point of view and undermines Kritik

Fine 16 Michelle Fine [Michelle Fine - The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, New York, USA CONTACT Michelle Fine ude.ynuc.cg@enifm, The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue, Room 6304.17, New York, NY10016, USA.] “Just methods in revolting times” PMC US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health Qualitative Research in Psychology NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information) PMCID: PMC5062036 PMID: 27812314 Qual Res Psychol. 2016 Oct 1; 13(4): 347–365. Published online 2016 Aug 2. doi: 10.1080/14780887.2016.1219800 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5062036/?fbclid=IwAR2WuM3RbdKeBQlUqGlZFK8Q9A83AbWvfQDKkBix4t6SC19W72wj2asBE6A> SJMS

I might argue that from within the gated community of academic psychology, our work may exacerbate a second instantiation of the lost cause issue. People collectively embody and experience the existential evacuation of hope of which Said spoke, but our field, social psychology in particular, has made a science out of neoliberal ideologies that systematically white-out the structural and historic causes of injustice and inequity. The mainstream media, especially The New York Times, for example, through the writings of David Brooks ([2016](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5062036/?fbclid=IwAR2WuM3RbdKeBQlUqGlZFK8Q9A83AbWvfQDKkBix4t6SC19W72wj2asBE6A#CIT0005)), amplifies and circulates the most neo-liberal of social psychological research, offering a frame for readers to “make sense” of the debris of inequality we witness. [2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5062036/?fbclid=IwAR2WuM3RbdKeBQlUqGlZFK8Q9A83AbWvfQDKkBix4t6SC19W72wj2asBE6A#EN0002) Our journals are filled with articles that interrogate, with strong philanthropic and federal funding, the personal while occluding the structural origins of social inequities. That is, we study motivation or mindset or implicit bias, all of which may be quite productive, but far less inquiry focuses on the social psychological consequences of White supremacy, evictions, school closings, high stakes testing, police violence, deportations, mass incarceration, inequality gaps, or the wide reach and differential accumulations/dispossessions attached to global capitalism. As a response to Said’s call, I would add that the doubling of these lost causes, existential and structural, may be no coincidence. Despair and self-harm may worsen when gross inequities are made to seem natural and irreversible. The New York Times reports that suicide rates have increased 24% from 1999 to 2014 in the United States; mental illness and drug use trends reflect parallel spikes (especially for Whites, which is why it is on the front page of The New York Times). Despair, like social movements dotting the globe, may rise when the mantle of scientific objectivity mimics and legitimates the perspective of those in power. Theodor Adorno warned long ago: The notions of subjective and objective have been completely reversed. Objective means the non-controversial aspect of things, their unquestioned impression, the facade made up of classified data that is, the subjective; and they call subjective anything which breaches that façade, engages the specific experience of a matter, casts off all ready-made judgments … the holders of power want subjects impotent, for fear of the objectivity that is preserved in these subjects alone. (Adorno [1951](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5062036/?fbclid=IwAR2WuM3RbdKeBQlUqGlZFK8Q9A83AbWvfQDKkBix4t6SC19W72wj2asBE6A#CIT0001), pp. 69–70) [3](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5062036/?fbclid=IwAR2WuM3RbdKeBQlUqGlZFK8Q9A83AbWvfQDKkBix4t6SC19W72wj2asBE6A#EN0003) Adorno knew that “holders of power want subjects impotent”; he valued the transgressive possibilities held in the bodies and consciousness of those who dare to challenge, those who contest the false-consensus narrated from the center, those at the radical rim. Said helps us see what is feared in these bodies made limp; stories drained of vitality; causes sent to the pasture of the unrealistic and lost.

#### That fungibility reproduces Auschwitz

Freyenhagen 2 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.

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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 Alternative is to use negative dialects to confront the non-identical - this resolves the crisis posed by your violence – it understands the subordinate needs of an object come before our concepts.

Freyenhagen 3 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.

#### They’re FW is a link – it tries to ground normative claims which delay’s action, is inappropriate, irrational and it leads to and undermines the evil of Auschwitz – also use explanatory normativity

Freyenhagen 4 Fabian Freyenhagen [University of Essex], 2013, “ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY Living Less Wrongly” Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 978-1-107-03654-3, Pages: 203-205 <https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/philosophy/twentieth-century-philosophy/adornos-practical-philosophy-living-less-wrongly?format=HB&isbn=9781107036543> SJMS

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 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 5 (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.