## 1

#### Identity thinking generalizes objects under categories assuming it’s capturing the object in full it ignores 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

#### Framing issues in terms of risks of political violence is identity thinking –

Harrington 15 Cameron Harrington (Assistant Professor - School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University), “Toward a Critical Water Security: Hydrosolidarity and Emancipation,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 21.1: 28-44. 2015 <https://dro.dur.ac.uk/23643/1/23643.pdf> SJMS

Robert Cox claims that “ontology lies at the beginning of an inquiry. We cannot define a problem in global politics without presupposing a certain basic structure consisting of the significant kinds of entities involved and the form of significant relationships among them...There is always an ontological starting point.” (Cox 1996: 144) It is true that the continued frequency of popular warnings that privilege Malthusian concerns over dwindling water supplies and increasing human needs reflect deeperrooted philosophical allegiances. When a wide range of world leaders, including the past three UN Secretary Generals, at one point or another, raise dire warnings of impending violence over water, they are reflecting long-held assumptions about the purpose and possibilities of international security, itself symptomatic of much deeper beliefs. When the United Kingdom’s Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Davey, warned an audience in 2013 that “water wars are just around the corner,” (Harvey 2013) he was not simply reporting facts, but was signalling a commitment to water security defined and held within a traditional ontological interpretation of state self-preservation, political enmity, and human control over nature. Water security is, in this regard, illustrative of what Horkheimer and Adorno referred to as a “corrosive rationality” that binds existence with repetition. In their reading, reason becomes locked in instrumental terms, in the service of domination and control, rather than in progress or emancipation. In modern terms, an idea of inevitability sets in because that which is sets the boundaries of possible experience. These boundaries work (like mythology) to reflect and replicate the essence of the existing order – characterized as cyclical motion, fate, domination of the world, and the renunciation of hope. (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2004: 20)

#### The regime of legal “neutrality” is an extension of bourgeois identity thinking.

Van Marle 04 Karin van Marle (Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria.), “"Meeting The World Halfway" - The Limits Of Legal Transformation,” Special issue on Law, Culture, and Society: LatCrit Theory and Transdisciplinary Approaches Critical Approaches to Legal Reform: Toward Social Justice? in 16 Fla. J. Int'l L. 651 Florida Journal of International Law September, 2004. <https://latcrit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/9icc4marle.pdf> SJMS

In a volume on Law and Aesthetics edited by Costas Douzinas and Lynda Nead, Martin Jay tells us that the eyes of the goddess Justitia were not always covered and that it was only at the end of the fifteenth century that a blindfold was placed over the goddess's eyes. [FN41] The initial negative implication of the blindfold, that "Justice has been robbed of her ability to get things straight" [FN42] was by 1530 transformed into a positive emblem of impartiality and equality before the law. Jay makes a connection between \*662 the blindfold of Justitia, and Reformation thought that made much of Augustine's notion of resisting the "lust of the eyes." [FN43] The author notes the connection between the impartiality portrayed by the blindfolded Justitia and the new urban, secular bourgeois culture of the early modern period. During this period a shift took place from the personalism of private, feudal justice, and the foundations of modern liberal thought were laid, "the road to the modern cult of the abstract norm in juridical positivism was opened." [FN44] The law was to be presented in language, and justice was to be achieved by applying general rules and norms. Jay refers to Horkheimer and Adorno who associated the ability to see with freedom, "a freedom that is threatened when justice is reduced to law." [FN45] He interprets this freedom as the ability of the particular, the unique, the incommensurable to escape law's universalism and the reduction of justice to the law of equivalents. [FN46]

#### 2 Impacts:

#### [1] Identity thinking reproduces Auschwitz

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 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.

#### [2] 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 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.

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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 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 13 (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.