Prospects Beyond Ideology: Reason, Freedom and the Truth of the Subject

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Towards Political Models for the Critical Thought of Theodor W. Adorno

by

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Glenn W. Leaper, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Glenn W. Leaper

Date: July 7th, 2015

Abstract

The thesis has three objectives. First, to examine the relationship between reason and freedom, and their experience in modernity. Second, to employ Adorno's critical philosophy to address the problem of ideology from a contemporary perspective. Third, to suggest what a 'truth of the subject' can amount to: how can the experience of the subject be a source of claims to truth under the conditions of modernity? The thesis investigates forms of ideology undergirding postmodern politics and the socio-historical experience of 'instrumental' forms of rationality, such as the objective determination of experience by modern technology. Elements of Adorno's critique, such as his notion of the possibility of experience 'unreduced' by socially pervasive ideologies, are thereby introduced. The ideas of spontaneity, as related to the concept of freedom, and of causality, as related to the concept of ideology, are examined via Kant to show how contradictions between them can be reframed as a question of the epistemological relationship between nature and reason. The framework for a dialectical approach to experience is established via Adorno's criticisms of the limitations of epistemology in explaining mediation of social phenomena. The centrality of mediation to a critical rationality and critique of normativity is demonstrated concretely via the historical example of the Holocaust. Consequently, Adorno's theory of 'negative dialectics' is explained via and contra Hegel, in relation to his notion of non-identity between conceptual reflection and the objective world, and with regards to his "priority of the objective", which refuses to ground knowledge and experience in consciousness. In demonstrating tensions between objectivity of truth on one hand, and the subject as that which constitutes truth on the other, a theoretical model becomes available for the critique of contemporary socio-political issues. The thesis concludes as an account of the truth of the subject in the context of modernity.

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I. Introduction

The objective of this thesis is threefold:

1)   To examine the relationship between reason and freedom to give an account of the 'truth of the subject'. What is the relationship of the individual to modern forms of rationality, and how does that relationship determine individual experience? Can the experience of the individual be a source of claims to truth under the conditions of modernity?

2)   To resituate Theodor W. Adorno and place his thought in a contemporary context by evaluating it alongside subsequent intellectual and social developments, highlighting the merits of his theory with regards to contemporary problems and suggesting its deficits, and

3)   To use Adorno's ideas in the development of theory relevant to the problem of ideology from a contemporary perspective. The thesis uses inter-disciplinary insight and examines ways Adorno's thought has been developed by subsequent thinkers to suggest new ways of interpreting the problem of ideology germane to contemporary problems.

0.1   Introducing Adorno

Interest in Adorno ranges from recognition of his philosophy as having concrete implications for the social conditions of the early 21st Century, to a corresponding interest in the emancipatory nature of the thought with which he engaged a wide repertoire of subjects. Reasons for a simultaneous rejection of his thought range from philosophical opposition to Adorno's Hegelian ancestry - notwithstanding renewed interest in Hegel in some quarters - to the contemporary preoccupation with 'postmodernity', which sits uneasily with much of Adorno's work. Rejections of Adorno within the context of 'postmodern' thought, for example, focus on the 'mandarin'-like concern for high culture that Adorno is perceived to have exhibited, and his equally 'mandarin'-like style of writing, which tends to obstruct understanding of his thought.[1]

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[1] The caricature of Adorno as the stereotypically dour, 'ivory tower' academic is dispelled by recently published lectures (in English) from the 1960's, revealing him to be empathetic, clear in his exposition

Nevertheless, Adorno is rarely read with indifference, and one reason is that questions he addressed remain central to any investigation of the ongoing problems of modernity, and the responses he proposed are construed as equally pertinent. Whereas Adorno is read primarily as a philosopher and cultural critic, his writings extend into every major humanistic field, and his thought has had important implications in several. Adorno variously worked as a musicologist, sociologist, literary critic, composer, cultural commentator and philosopher, and there are other parallel areas in the humanities, such as psychoanalysis, which influenced Adorno and the Frankfurt School to which he belongs.

For example, although Adorno never practiced psychoanalysis, there are areas in that field (in light of recent writings suggesting as much[2]) where parallels can be drawn to Adorno's philosophy, such as in some of the theory propounded by the most well-known contemporary exponent of the Lacanian school of psychoanalytical theory, Slavoj Žižek. At a time when many ask themselves whether philosophy is a dead practice in a world absorbed in scientific progress, and at a time when the Freudian project of practicing a 'science' of humanity, e.g. through psychoanalysis is being questioned, Adorno's writings counter facile assumptions about the nature of rationality. They also reject a reliance on natural science to determine issues of meaning, whether in the context of social progress, or the relation of individuals to their social experience.

Where, however, does Adorno fit into contemporary discourse and theoretical matrices? Is there any place for Adorno's so-called 'modernist' position, still, albeit critically, in service of Enlightenment, and conceived of at a time when Adorno was well placed to observe the disappearance of bourgeois mores in society? With the replacement of these by a de-centred locus of culture lacking central symbolic authority in the so-called postmodern era, one central accusation against Adorno is that he is no longer relevant. Politically speaking, it is not clear, either, that Adorno's theories lend themselves to contemporary political movements opposing the 'totalising' effects of

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and humorous. The perception of Adorno as a 'mandarin' has to do with the sometimes extreme tone and deliberate complexity of his critical writings, something that can be attributed partly to the urgency with which he perceived social conditions. See Chapter 5.

[2] See e.g., Žižek 2001. Žižek often references Adorno, though usually in a theoretical psychoanalytical context, drawing parallels between Adorno's philosophy and how something can be interpreted in a psychoanalytical context. See also Žižek 2005, pp. 16-21.

global capitalism (although this type of politics shares with Adorno a commitment to social justice). Furthermore, social and technological developments since Adorno's time, such as the Internet, mean there is a gulf between Adorno's concrete writings and contemporary realities. This is not to suggest, however, that Adorno's diagnosis of contradictions in societies proclaiming their freedom while curtailing it through systemic mechanisms no longer applies. The problem, rather, is how to arbitrate between Adorno's philosophy and the postmodern world at a time which seems to have borne out his greatest personal fears regarding the ideological domination of modern consciousness, yet which also seems to hold out promise of individual emancipation.

For example, the global hegemony of Western culture, and the extent to which technology dominates social experience in the early 21st century are, if anything, even more extreme manifestations of Adorno's concerns with 'instrumental rationality', and its ensuing alienation and reification, than the social circumstances in which he wrote. Conversely, technology and Western culture are viewed by many as liberating factors, irrespective of the extent to which they result from socially dominant forms of 'instrumental rationality'. How does Adorno's theory of freedom *from* instrumental rationality relate to a society experiencing more material freedom than at any other point in history, in part *because* of its possibilities? Moreover, how is Adorno's thought relevant to objectives professed by today's social movements, given criticism that his views did not apply even to movements of his own time? How would Adorno's thought apply to movements targeting social injustice, e.g. cheap labour used by Western multinationals in the developing world? Or, how would it apply to institutions addressing such problems as economic imbalance between the West and the developing world, at a time when globalisation elicits heated debate over whether it helps to narrow or widen that gap?

Additionally, as Hammer (2006) suggests, political groupings that consider capitalism to be a totalising phenomenon, a precept shared by Adorno, manifest themselves by looking for new places in which to exercise their autonomy, such as the Internet, itself a product of, and vehicle for, global capitalism. What, then, would Adorno's answers be to, first, economic realities of the globalising world in the 21st century, and second, the seeking of autonomy in social arrangements that themselves contain repressive structures of domination? While Adorno's work explicitly addresses the second question, it is not immediately clear that answers to the first can be extracted

from his writings, aside from condemnation of class structures more closely reflecting social realities of the 20th century than those of the 21st. According to Hammer,

[i]t is far from obvious that Adorno's thought contains resources for conceptualising their [various groups involved in politics of emancipation] activities. What is clear… is that the dynamics of such commitment calls for a serious rethinking of contemporary culture and the way in which the experience of specific forms of injustice demands an analysis of society as a whole. If the invention of new styles of political and social intervention can be effected by the establishment of new and experimental spaces in which imaginary signification can be projected, then these should be supported and not immediately rejected as mere examples of counter-cultural production (Hammer 2006, pp. 96-97).

Such 'new and experimental spaces in which imaginary signification can be projected' abound with the introduction of new technologies revolutionising the way people relate to their social environment. It follows there is a necessity for modes of thought and political action to correspond to such new realities, and that these cannot merely be discarded as successors to previous ideologies. It is in such light that assessments may be made whether Adorno's theory remains relevant in a social context already so different to the one he reacted to. For all the ways society has changed since Adorno's time, however, the phenomenon of 'instrumental' forms of rationality, resulting from the human attempt to dominate nature that Adorno was preoccupied by, remains a serious concern in appraising modern life.

Part of the difficulty in resituating Adorno today also has to do with the alternative path to Adorno's social critique taken by the second generation of Frankfurt School thinkers. The most prominent of these, Jürgen Habermas, has largely discarded Adorno's critique of reason (mainly focusing on its earlier versions, e.g. those propounded in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*). The social role of this critique, more fully developed in *Negative Dialectics*, has been criticised as nihilistic and an unrealisable response to the discontents of modernity. Habermas, himself engaged in a normative critique of reason tailored towards specifically political ends, and in the development of a system of 'communicative reason' to counter the alienating effects of scientific and technological rationalisation, has largely moved the theoretical orientation of the Frankfurt School in his direction. Adorno, from this perspective, is left in a position of ancillary interest, and not as a central thinker relevant to today's increasingly complex

socius, where his concerns may not seem as pressing from the perspective of introducing pragmatic solutions to immediate social problems.

However, such assumptions do not pay the sheer breadth and depth of Adorno's thought its due, and the revival of interest in Adorno has happened to the extent that his thought is recognised as remaining pertinent to contemporary problems.[3] From Adorno's contributions to contemporaneous concerns with alienation and assimilation at a time where an additional 'virtual' dimension has imposed itself on social life, to his perceived contributions to postmodern celebrations of the 'exchange' of identity, Adorno's theory provides resources that can be used to reflect on continuing social and philosophical debates. This is why he remains both a contentious figure and a revered reference point for the German philosophical tradition, and central to the broader modern debate about the nature of the relationship between individuals and their social context.

My initial justification for exploring Adorno's thought with a view to examining contemporary problems is twofold:

1) Many of Adorno's concerns, such as the 'totalisation' of society, the fate of Enlightenment, the usefulness of philosophy, the threat of human standardisation, etc., remain germane to contemporary debates. Adorno's theories can be connected to contemporary debates concerning globalisation, the Internet, the hegemony of scientific discourse and, given the latter, remaining questions of the relevance of philosophy, even where connections between these debates and Adorno's theory are not explicit in his writings. What guidance can philosophy provide in the experience of modernity, and what are its limitations?

2) On a specifically philosophical level, Adorno's theory remains an alternative to theories pursued in French post-structuralism and Anglo-American postmodernism emphasising the end, or 'death', of the subject.[4] For all the advances claimed in

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[3] See e.g. Jarvis 1998 or Cook 1996.
[4] The 'death of the subject' refers to a challenge in poststructuralist thought, originating with Michel Foucault's idea of the 'death of man', to the traditional idea of the constitutive subjectivity of the individual. By this account, subjectivity as the source of human meaning is displaced from the traditional subject, as a matter of its metaphysical essence, and orientated towards a 'decentred'

conjunction with the 'break with modernity' advocated by the postmodern movement, this does not mean the broader problems of modernity have been resolved. Furthermore, considering the integration of institutional power in the early 21st century, and the widening gulf between this power and public accountability, it is not clear 'decentred' approaches to subjectivity of the postmodern school have succeeded in legitimating the fragmentation of the modern era in their celebration of it. What guidance can Adorno's philosophy provide?

0.2   Whither Modernity?

Any discussion of Adorno must investigate the notion of modernity, considering the centrality of the objective social context to his thought. Additionally, the problems of modernity are impossible to dissociate from the central problem of modern philosophy: freedom. According to Robert Pippin's *Idealism as Modernism* (1997), assessments of European modernity involve entrenched Enlightenment positions and values. Such positions include 'the conception of nature required by modern science', political standards of 'liberty, rights and equality', pragmatic views of individuals as 'self-reliant, responsible agents', and the notion of a commonly held rationality binding society together and allowing it to measure its evolution by commonly agreed-upon evaluations of progress. Equally entrenched in modernity are so-called 'anti-Enlightenment' positions, such as the positing of imagination above reason, the onus on creativity as a prerequisite for expression, and a tendency towards relativism in the celebration of diversity.

According to Pippin, these latter positions owe much, despite themselves, to the accomplishments of modernity and Enlightenment positions entailed therein, yet all these positions contain philosophically contestable claims. Considering all these positions entail orientations towards a better future, the philosophical dispute about modernity concerns the 'general claim for the universal normative superiority of distinctly modern institutions and practices' (Pippin 1997, p.3). In other words, the question of modernity becomes one of the extent to which it is assumed that the orientation towards a better future is adequately provided for by the predominant role of 'modern institutions and

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plurality of meaning(s), none of which can be accounted for fully by the individual subject. See e.g. Foucault 1991

practices'. While these often claim to exist on behalf of universal principles, they also often fail to provide for distinctly individual needs.

Modernity, at various times, has come to mean a plethora of different things. It has been interpreted, according to Pippin, as a dispute between 'modern' (19th Century onwards) and 'pre-modern' conceptions of civilization, as the 'philosophy of consciousness', as 'the technological will to power', as 'Western imperialism', and as the starting point, and bane, of postmodernity.[5] Irrespective of the dominant narrative applied to the discussion of modernity, questions as to its nature multiply in the process of their reflection. The panorama of interpretations also suggests, beyond the 'modern' nature of questions concerning identity, race, justice, equality, etc., a plethora of philosophical approaches relying on developments in the period of 'radical historical change' that modernity represents.

For example, philosophical investigations ranging from the 'linguistic turn' to the Frankfurt School's developments of Hegelian dialectics have influenced, and been influenced by, the modern period within which they developed. It is therefore possible to consider the question of modernity from philosophical perspectives as well as from historical ones. According to Pippin, an instance of the continuing relevance of philosophy, e.g., can be seen in the way modern practices such as science, law, aesthetic appreciation, socio-political practices, etc., are required to justify themselves in *normative* terms - in terms adhered to by all who participate in them - in order for these practices to be considered legitimate. The question, then, following Pippin, is *why* the problem of freedom, if assumed central to modernity, is worth pursuing. Why is the ideal of freedom held to be sacrosanct in advanced democratic, capitalist societies as a means of guaranteeing the development of other satisfactions and needs?

One reason is that if individuals do not feel 'free', or they do not feel the ends to which they labour result in something compatible with their conception of freedom, they will likely not find that their existence, or labour, is legitimate on its own terms. This identification with the concept of freedom is as central to one individual's right to religious worship as it is to another's right to challenge decision-making processes in the

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[5] With all the various intellectual groupings, such as post-structuralism and feminism, that the term implies See Pippin 1997, pp. 3-6.

workplace. In light of the *lack* of freedom that pervades so many aspects of human existence, then, '[t]he claim to be defended concerns why this ideal, human freedom, understood ultimately as being a law, a compelling norm, wholly unto oneself, in a wholly self-legislated, self-authorised way, should be touted as a supreme or absolute ideal…' (ibid. p.7)

Another reason for raising this question can be found in the identification of elements determining the experience of modernity, thereby providing benchmarks against which the experience of freedom can be judged. A social reliance on technology has historically been central to the process of modernisation, and the possibilities of technology have been widely promoted as the modern catalyst and incarnation of freedom. Technology influences most, if not all, features of modern life – many forms of communication and the production and distribution of goods and services central to economies have become unthinkable without it, and it has become central to gathering information pertaining to any human, institutional or natural entity.

Technological power has, therefore, also become central to sustaining the idea of liberal democracy. According to Pippin, it is credited with containing, within the sheer power of its reach and possibility, the impetus for a more egalitarian society, and it is thus understood that its power is justified in a manner compatible with 'democratic notions of accountability'. The collective benefits of technology are also exemplified by the levels of technical expertise that allow it to be of service to the overall commercial system of production and distribution by abetting the individual pursuit of self-interest in the free market central to Western capitalism. However, the increasing power of technology requires the *critique* of that power if it is to be legitimated, a critique extending to a swathe of political and philosophical problems central to the 'discontents of modernity'.

Certainly, the extensive reliance on technology inevitably creates specific social costs, and new ethical problems that change the context of political discourse, as technology plays its role in altering concepts by which individuals understand themselves. For example, as technology develops, the power structures it serves arguably become increasingly unaccountable to the vast majority of the global populace it affects, because individuals are susceptible to its social effects at all times. There is therefore a schism

between the increasing power of technical accomplishment, and *how* that power is allocated throughout society, particularly considering the vast majority of the global populace lacks access to many benefits the latest technology provides. Concurrently, the sway of technology over the development of modern societies demonstrates how numerous areas of life are modified to suit technical ends, rather than conversely, suggesting that the balance between human and purely technical needs - an integral centrepiece of democracy - is possibly threatened.

One example of technology threatening democratic standards is illustrated in the manner ISP's track web traffic of specific users, and subsequently sell that information to third parties. Such information can be used for a variety of purposes, e.g. to determine habits in order to target web-based advertising, or, worse, to reveal personal details that could compromise individuals. For example, as Cohen suggests, 'there is no guarantee that… information stay[s] with the company (or ISP) that collected it. It can be sold to employers or insurance companies, which have financial motives for wanting to know if their workers and policyholders are alcoholics or have AIDS.'[6] Such breach of privacy compromises the status of individuals and thereby their livelihood, posing a threat to wider democratic freedoms as it becomes a socially widespread occurrence.

Another example is how skill-sets considered relevant by contemporary social standards come to be determined by what technocratic administrative forces consider to be relevant for their own needs. A social revolution in which skill-sets are transferred to unique, specialised mediums developed through modern technology can render a labour force more systematically *de*-skilled, instead of increasingly competent, as requirements of technological automation enforce hierarchical and increasingly constraining demands on the work force. As Pippin suggests, 'job simplification, greater risks to worker safety resulting from conformity to more efficient machines, and a variety of organisational strategies, [are] all relatively inconsistent with basic post-Enlightenment ideals of self-respect, dignity and autonomy' (ibid. p.186). Job training, for example, often emphasises skills like repetition and efficiency over creativity or critical thought. Such considerations touch on preoccupations of Adorno's work, and it is by bearing these in mind that possibilities exist of reworking the kernel of his thought in correspondence with contemporary problems.

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[6] See Cohen 2008.

Even more relevant to the past half-century than the immediate post-war period during which Adorno developed his critique of the concentration of power in late capitalism, moreover, increased spheres of specialisation in the workforce and at managerial levels of decision-making arguably reduce the range of topics available for public *qua* political debate. As various areas to which technical progress contributes require specific debates between experts in those areas, debates themselves become more distant from the general public's understanding of them. This is a serious concern for the very notion of democracy, and is addressed in depth in the work of Habermas.[7]

If political debate about the validity of these areas of technical progress is limited to internecine struggles between competing experts in those fields, the notion of the schism between human and technological needs becomes clearer. If technology develops at a rate that the public cannot understand it – or its social implications - there can be no substantial political debate about the common direction that a society based on the premise of technological progress should take, thus undercutting the democratic legitimacy of that direction. Furthermore, the social power of technology is seemingly concentrated in ever fewer hands as a result of corporate competition, ensuring that the power of technology is exercised in social configurations from top to bottom, moving from the private to the public realm. This contrasts with the *ideal* associated with technology, in which social power is exercised in democratic configurations in which equal access to information and knowledge enables democratic accountability as to the direction of that power.

At the heart of these dilemmas lies the notion of *reason*. What is rational? Where it is perceived as 'rational' to correlate social progress and increasing technical efficiency as a single objective, a vital question emerges: how rational is a functional – or instrumental - rationality that becomes socially predominant to the extent that it permeates every aspect of life, to the point of becoming ideological? Without a critical account of such a phenomenon, how would such rationality justify its character without mere recourse to the ideological elements that make it predominant?

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[7] See e.g. Habermas 1992

The problem at the heart of this notion of reason, if indeed it is ideological, is that technological imperatives are often satisfied *first*, particularly because of benefits they are expected to provide to the ever-increasing demands of global economic competition. Considerations as to possible social costs or other ethical dilemmas are often only made in hindsight. The question, in that case, becomes one of separating reason from ideology. If ideology is taken to mean the pre-eminence of a given set of ideas in the social process that are automatically validated as part of the instrumentality of that process, and therefore no longer submitted to a normative process of justification, it follows these ideas are not being substantiated as a matter of continual reasoning. This question leads to a problem at the heart of 'postmodernity'.

Where 'postmodernity' refers to cultural, political and social changes during the period extending from the late 20th century through the present and beyond, the term 'postmodernism' references a variety of thought pertaining to this era, including in architecture, philosophy and the arts. Whereas 'modernity' is identified with Enlightenment and the industrial revolutions characterising Western society in the 19th and 20th centuries, 'postmodernity' addresses the post-industrial 'information age' marking the shift from the industrial age to the knowledge economy, with postmodern philosophy often concentrating on perceived shortcomings of Enlightenment rationality.

For theorists such as Jameson, postmodernity coincides with the passage to Mandel's definition of 'late capitalism'. Mandel characterised capitalism in three phases: the first, market capitalism, occurred from the mid-19th century onwards, the second, the monopoly or 'imperial' stage of capitalism, occurred from the late 19th century onwards, and the third, 'late capitalism', occurs from the mid-20th century onwards. For Jameson, late capitalism is marked by the 'completion' of modernisation and is defined by multinational corporations, the fluidity of capital, and the 'prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas':

[m]odernisation was the process of transformation: the generalisation of industrial production, the mechanisation of various spheres of social life, and generally the subsumption of society under capital. The completion of modernisation means that there is no more "nature" in the sense that nothing remains outside the forces of modernisation. All of society… indeed the entire world, have been subsumed under the rule of capital (Hardt & Weeks 2000, p.16).

According to this passage, industrialisation coterminous with modernity has been completed, and has become a feature of modern life to the extent that the sense of nature as something 'outside', and distinct from, industrial society has disappeared. Instead, forces of modernisation encompass all aspects of modern life, to the point that the 'rule of capital' has become perceived as 'natural' in its own right. Such a claim can be illustrated by e.g., the extent to which the marketplace has entered the private sphere of the home through the possibility of financial transactions of any kind, to and from anywhere, at any given time.

Furthermore, technology as a ubiquitous feature of late capitalism both facilitates and encourages market transaction: technology destined for the marketplace is increasingly easy to use and continually updated to remain competitive, ensuring the permanence of technology itself as a feature of modern life. Finally, the claim that 'nothing remains outside the forces of modernisation' becomes clearer if it is considered how, at times, indiscernibly, technology becomes an extension of the self, often to the degree that behavioural patterns are determined or profoundly influenced by the quotidian interaction with it. 'Postmodernity', then, is defined, in part, by the social power exerted by capitalism, the ubiquity of technology as the most powerful and persuasive component of capitalism, and the notion that all aspects of modern life are co-determined by capital and technology.

Postmodernity is also understood in the context of 'breaking' with modernity, and as such, according to its theoreticians, with the Enlightenment project central to it. According to Baghramian,

Postmodernism scorns the quest for universal values, cognitive and moral, as a manifestation of the will to power masquerading as objectivity. The Enlightenment is seen as a monolithic, authoritarian movement closely allied with Western imperialism and colonialism, while postmodernism is an ally in the fight for emancipation from tyrannies of all sorts (Baghramian 2004, p.106).

It follows for its proponents, postmodernity, with its scope of consumer choice, personal possibility and free information, presents the opportunity to eradicate repressive narratives of reason, borne from Enlightenment thinking, that have served authoritarian objectives. Such objectives, according to these opponents of Enlightenment rationality,

routinely include Western economic and military domination of the rest of the world, European colonisation, racial and minority subjugation by powerful elites and deliberate urban segregation, among other things.

From this perspective, the universal values and rationality associated with Enlightenment are understood to be means for serving interests of specific identities by facilitating the subjugation of other identities, particularly according to hierarchical conceptions of identity along racial lines. By this account, in what Gilroy calls 'European particularism dressed up as universal'[8], the conception of Western civilization as 'rational' because of its espousal of 'universal values' facilitated the designation of other cultures and peoples as 'unenlightened'. This, so this narrative goes, provided moral justification for economic expansionism, colonialism, and the hierarchical structuring of society, under the guise of spreading universal values and Western rationality beyond Western civilization.

Western power, by this account, was in large measure cemented through its emphasis on identification, and attribution of identity according to racial and cultural stereotypes - a repressive measure to ensure that the hierarchy of power would remain unchallenged. The 'break with modernity', therefore, is seen as the opportunity for emancipation from these repressive structures of reason and for empowering individuals. It follows that the 'postmodern condition' of high social mobility, globalisation, technological egalitarianism, etc. serves to challenge and overthrow narrow conceptions of identity, and the hierarchical structuring of social power, by redefining social objectives in terms of subjective needs and interests.

Habermas, however, points out Enlightenment thought cannot simply be identified with the Western 'will to power', that challenging repressive structures of thought is a central Enlightenment objective, and that, contrarily, postmodern ambitions of doing away with Enlightenment thinking as the source of those structures only serves to further consolidate them. 'The idea of postmodernism,' he writes, 'appears among theoreticians who do not see that any uncoupling of modernity and rationality has set in'. In postmodernity, he explains, 'reason makes known its true identity – it becomes

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[8] Quoted in Murphy & Choi 1997, p.41

unmasked as the subordinating and [simultaneously] the subjugated subjectivity, as the will to instrumental mastery' (Habermas 1990, p.4).

From this perspective, abandoning the Enlightenment search for objective rationality culminates in a dangerous subjectivism because it relies on the immediacy of the given world, where reason is reduced to instrumental processes through which the subjective will is exercised. Without a continual search for objective measures, reason is reduced to being 'the will to instrumental mastery', and, as such, is both victim and aggressor – the source of both subjective suffering and of subjective primacy. Subjective primacy, it follows, is a source of suffering in two ways: First, individuals cause suffering if, in their will to satisfy subjective needs, they do so in ways harming others. Second, if 'the will to instrumental mastery' is, at least partly, a means to achieving subjective primacy, individuals become oblivious to ways they harm others and (especially) themselves, as a consequence of the social emphasis on instrumental mastery and disregard of objective measures to judge this mastery *by*.

The culture of postmodernity is rife with conditions emphasising subjectivity over objectivity, illustrated by how technology often serves to reinforce subjectivity, rather than encourage objectivity, considering e.g. that for all available information on any topic on the Internet, individuals are likely to go to sources already conforming to pre-existing beliefs or ideological inclinations. We may also consider how technology facilitates consumption of products in conformity with pre-existing ideas of self, in the sense that technology facilitates satisfaction of subjective desires while blurring distinctions between legitimate and socially engineered needs. Without objective measures to judge by, subjective primacy can easily be interpreted as a 'legitimate' form of reason, particularly if it dominates everyday social practices.

Certainly, postmodern thinking considers itself emancipatory, and stakes its own claims to objectivity, examined below. The question is *how* a form of reason, whatever its emphasis, comes to be legitimated in the social realm. This thesis submits there is cause to think that 'instrumental' types of rationality subtending the predominance of technology in modern society are *self*-legitimating and have limited recourse to standards of objectivity outside themselves and indeed, that forms of subject-centred reasoning determine the dominant practices of modern society.

Conversely, *pace* Pippin, a Hegelian conception of the 'rational' in modern social reality should be considered. This notion holds that social reality is sustained and reproduced by recourse to the legitimacy of the 'rational' and 'free agency' arising from it. This means a social reality becomes as such as a result of the legitimacy of the process that created it. That legitimacy hinges on a form of reason that has been consented to by participating members of society, and consented to *because* it is mutually beneficial to all. As suggested, a measure of how individuals evaluate their existence is the extent to which they consider themselves to be free; a form of reason consented to because it buttresses individual conceptions of freedom is therefore legitimated in social reality. From this perspective, then, how is it claimed that technology is self-legitimating when it has the consent of most members of society, precisely because of the perception that it helps to increase their individual freedom?

Thus arise competing conceptions of reason: one in which reason essentially derives its legitimacy from itself and the manner in which it is used to pursue subjective ends, and one in which its perpetuation depends on a mutual consent of all and is thereby legitimated. While these conceptions seem complementary, however, they are equally at odds. For example, mutual consent of all members of society to modern forms of rationality enables individuals to pursue subjectively chosen ends. However, *consequences* of the pursuit of individual ends can conflict with the mutual, democratic consent of all, and may be realised only by undermining that consent.

Conflicting interpretations of what reason is, characteristic of attempts to explain postmodernity, thus raise central questions concerning *which* elements of reason dominate postmodern life. Has the Western intellectual tradition surrendered to its own internal contradictions, ultimately accepting what Pippin calls a culmination in 'nihilism, a technological will to power or a thoughtless hegemonic subjectivism' (Pippin 1997, p.8)? Or, as Pippin suggests, is the tradition of Enlightenment still upheld by '[the] defensible moral aspiration: to live freely' (ibid.)? Contradictions between freedom, legitimacy and subjectivity begotten by modern rationality suggest the question of whether the aspiration to 'live freely' is complemented in *ideological* fashion by technological progress, the prerogative of subjectivism accompanying it, and nihilistic social attitudes resulting from it.

Indeed, each of these elements depends on the concept of freedom to justify variations of rationality they claim to pursue. Perceptions of reason encompassing these competing factors, then, have done little to quell the question, stretching back to Kant, about the relationship between reason and freedom. The potential for arguments in favour of an irresolvable, contradictory relationship between reason and freedom is as old as questions concerning civilization itself. As Freud remarked:

It is remarkable that, little as men are able to exist in isolation, they should nevertheless feel as a heavy burden the sacrifices which civilization expects of them in order to make a communal life possible. Thus civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and commands are directed to that task… human creations are easily destroyed, and science and technology, which have built them up, can also be used for their annihilation (Freud 1995, p.687).

Or perhaps Eagleton put it best: '…the drive to regulate Nature is madly in excess of necessity. There is also something pathological about this rage for order: it conceals a ferocious inner compulsion which is the very opposite of freedom. In the name of a desire for absolute security, cities are shattered, blameless civilians burnt and dismembered…' (Eagleton 2005, p. 12). This idea that civilization must be defended against individuals, and is willing to go so far as to destroy itself in order to do so, for example, takes on particular significance in view of the contemporary 'Global War on Terror', a recurring discussion in this thesis.

A central problem, then, is the aporia of the subjective instinct of freedom posited against an objective reality over which individuals have limited control. It could be suggested that ideological undertones associated with modern experience have enabled the institutionalisation, or social acceptance, of this state of affairs. In the sense discussed above, with diminishing public deliberation as to what technological development should imply, it would seem that technological power, vindicated in the court of scientific reason, has become self-legitimating, with no democratic recourse to the public it is supposed to serve. It could further be suggested that technology, by acting as an intermediary between individuals, actually does more to divide them through their dependence on it for their communication with one another, than it does to unite them. This would indicate conflicting demands of freedom and reason have been 'resolved' by

making the impetus of technological progress inseparable from the freedom touted ideologically in democratic societies. It would suggest that the claim that reason and freedom are the *same* is little more than an ideological statement supported by a social reality of 'exchange-value pragmatism'.[9] The notion that freedom amounts to nothing more than modern forms of rationality driven by pragmatic and economic concerns is clearly problematic. What, then, is the positive essence of postmodernity, and what are the claims made on its behalf?

0.3   A Postmodern Intervention

According to Jean-François Lyotard, the 'postmodern' is the 'unpresentable in presentation itself'. At the historical moment where transmission of knowledge 'suppl[ies] the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by their institutions', the 'old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training (*Bildung*) of minds, or even of individuals is becoming obsolete and will become ever more so' (Lyotard 2001, p.4). This suggests how the new scientific-technological system of information-sharing has replaced the traditional manner of knowledge sharing between individuals, and that the speed with which information is developed, shared and discarded is compromising the 'traditional', 'verified' system of training minds.

Lyotard also maintains that 'scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge' (ibid. p.7), offering as the alternative a form of 'narrative' knowledge – knowledge communicated between individuals where its *transfer* is the object of the narrative. For example, Kant's assumption that things cannot be known in themselves, and therefore that objects of knowledge conform to human faculties of representation, is an example of 'narrative' knowledge. At the time of publishing *The Postmodern Condition* (1973), Lyotard couldn't be expected to foresee how, under auspices of social progress, the labour of science has since fused with a near-universally employed technological vehicle to communicate narrative forms of knowledge: the Internet. The Internet, with

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[9] 'Exchange-value pragmatism' refers to Marxian distinctions between the use-value and exchange-value of commodities. For Adorno, 'society has come to be organised around the production of exchange values for the sake of producing exchange values, which, of course, always already requires a silent appropriation of surplus value' (Zuidervaart, 2011). Baudrillard has argued the concept of use-value no longer exists in 'the system of objects', exchange-value having replaced use-value as the only relevant idea in that system. See Baudrillard 2001.

its technical and communicative possibilities, has become the staple of progressive society and the vehicle for the postmodern *civitas maxima*: The release of obligation from traditional bourgeois mores of identity, and its replacement by a free exchange of subjective choice.

Implicit in this exchange is the desire for release from the constraints of identity in determining *knowledge*. What Castells defines as specific to the informational mode of development as 'the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself as the main source of productivity' (Castells 2000, p.17), is precisely how science converges with narrative flows of information to create knowledge. This facilitates access to knowledge for all members of society, provided they have access to means of obtaining information. Leaving the issue of discrepancies between first and developing world access to such means aside, the problem with this dominant form of utilitarianism is it leaves unresolved issues of legitimacy, and, specifically, those of its own legitimation.

Legitimation, according to Lyotard, is, first, 'the process by which a legislator is authorised to promulgate… law as a norm' (Lyotard 2001, p.8), and, emphasising scientific legitimation, the process by which 'a legislator dealing with scientific discourse is authorised to prescribe the stated conditions… determining whether a statement is to be included in that discourse for consideration by the scientific community' (ibid.). Second, legitimation refers to the problem of legitimating narratives as 'the quintessential form of customary knowledge' (ibid, p.19), presumably in the sphere of the public *agora*. For precisely, as he asks, 'who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided' (ibid, p.9)?

Accordingly, this process finds its parallel in what Lyotard terms 'language-games', and the essence of these is that 'the observable social bond is composed of language "moves"' (ibid, p.10), which are ever-changing even within the strictures of social strata. The interchange of dialogue in the social context is guided by what Lyotard calls agonistics - literally meaning conflict between members of a species - and in this case referring to differences in opinion held by individuals, as a result of which language games are played. It follows that agonistics give rise to 'paralogisms of *newness*' – new situations and paradigms of knowledge that then compete between themselves, ensuring a constant renewal of understanding.

Knowledge is a process that 'goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth, extending to the determination and application of criteria of efficiency (technical qualification), of justice and/or happiness (ethical wisdom), of the beauty of a sound or colour (auditory and visual sensibility), etc.' (ibid, p.18). According to Lyotard, the problem of legitimation can be determined as follows:

There is, then… incommensurability between popular narrative pragmatics, which provides immediate legitimation, and the language game known to the West as the question of legitimacy - or rather, legitimacy as a referent in the game of inquiry. Narratives… determine criteria of competence and/or illustrate how they are to be applied. They thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do (ibid., p.23).

It follows that traditional institutional bodies, such as religion, are no longer in a position to exercise conventional roles of embodying fixed social meanings, accounting in part for the 'loss of meaning' or 'disenchantment' accompanying (post)modernity. In place of such traditional social frameworks, a constant uprooting, transformation and displacing of knowledge and understanding has become a staple of modern life – in part due to the technology made possible by science – thereby changing social frameworks of understanding continuously, making it near-impossible to ascribe fixed and commonly recognisable meanings to them.

The same applies to the realm of 'narrative knowledge', where the narrative chain of knowledge is changed by each individual in that chain so there is no longer a unified 'narrative' by which people, as individuals or collectively, identify themselves. As such, Lyotard holds that '[l]amenting the "loss of meaning" in postmodernity boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative. Such a reaction does not necessarily follow. Neither does an attempt to derive or engender… scientific knowledge from narrative knowledge, as if the former contained the latter in an embryonic state' (ibid., pp. 26-27). In other words, the notion that narrative knowledge no longer provides fixed meanings with which individuals traditionally identified should not be cause for concern that meaning has disappeared entirely. For example, scientific knowledge relies on a continuous process of refuting hypotheses that *doesn't* rely on fixed narratives, and where 'meaning' is in constant flux.

Conversely, Lyotard suggests attempts to preserve a narrative – such as, e.g., the 'meta-narrative' of Enlightenment – is a false response to the supposed freedom offered by this revolutionary state of affairs: the freedom, e.g., *from* fixed identities or concepts of knowledge. What then, however, happens to reflection on standards of truth by which individuals understand themselves, if social concepts of knowledge and understanding are forever changing? How, if standards of truth are to be gathered from awareness of the ever-changing nature of meaning itself, can individuals develop reliable concepts according to which they may judge and legitimate those standards?

The idea central to postmodernism is that the 'self-conscious, self-identical subject' is subjected to 'coercive unification' (ibid). Such 'coercive unification' of individuals is, accordingly, provided by meta-narratives such as the Enlightenment, which strictly defines and measures parameters of human behaviour according to allegedly rigid conceptions of reason. Conversely, Lyotard argues that individuals' conceptual representations of worldly intuitions cannot be monopolised by a single narrative claiming to account for them all, instead suggesting an 'irreducible plurality' of views where no one particular narrative takes precedence. This idea appears to mirror one sense of modern science, which is not to achieve absolute knowledge but to judge hypotheses against experience in the interests of advancing objective understanding. By this token, competition between the 'irreducible plurality' of narratives would fulfil a corresponding function to the objective process of science in the modern world, in the continual displacement of narratives by temporarily stronger ones that help liberate individuals from the 'coercive unification' of any particular 'meta-narrative'.

It follows that the postmodern project designates the overall Western concept of Enlightenment as just one narrative among others, and one whose precepts of universality have come to be over-represented within the overall narrative of modernity – so much so that it is a popular claim in postmodern thought that Enlightenment itself is 'totalitarian' (or a variation thereof).[10] To this accusation, Habermas has responded that

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[10] The accusation that 'Enlightenment is totalitarian' was initially made by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002, p.4). The claim will receive due treatment, but suffice to say presently that their version referenced the idea that Enlightenment indirectly led to the fascism they witnessed in Germany in the 1930's primarily because of its 'instrumental' rationality. In Lyotard's context, the 'totalitarian' charge applies to the extent that the meta-narrative of Enlightenment 'crowds out' alternative narrative strands of history, society and philosophy.

postmodern movements find themselves trapped in 'the possibility that neo-conservatism and aesthetically inspired anarchism, in the name of a farewell to modernity, are merely trying to revolt against [modernity] once again. It could be', he suggests, 'that they are merely cloaking their complicity with the venerable tradition of counter-Enlightenment in the garb of post-Enlightenment' (Habermas 1990, p.6).

Habermas' point about 'neo-conservatism' alludes to a conflicting interpretation of the effects of science and technology on the public sphere to the more hopeful interpretation implicit in Lyotard's theory, namely the notion of the 'subjectification' of meaning, also treated by Adorno as the 'complement of reification', and continued in some of Habermas' work. The premise of 'subjectification' is that individuals become 'secondary to and dependent upon the societal process' (Pickford 2002, p.316) because of the 'totalisation' of factors such as the economy, bureaucratic administration, culture and technology in social life, and thereby in the lives of individuals.

Rather than acting as 'irreducible and democratic determinant[s] of society' (ibid.), purposefully contributing to each of those social endeavours, individuals by this account have little choice but to accept the extent to which these elements determine their lives. One consequence of this powerlessness is that individuals internalise dominant ideological narratives about, e.g., the economy, popular culture, modern technology and science, as their *own* benchmarks for evaluating truth of competing narratives. For example, individual preferences pertaining to economic doctrine are more likely to reflect background, social experience and traditional political allegiance than analyses of competing economic theories, including their demonstrable social effects. By a similar token, the social consensus that technology reflects progress likely has more to do with the fact that most people in industrialised societies depend on technology in their daily lives, than it does with reflection on the meaning of 'social progress'.

In these ways, the modern world encourages individuals to rely on subjective intuitions derived from 'immediate' experience, as opposed to encouraging the search for objective points of reference beyond this immanent experience from which to conduct inquiry. From this perspective of the 'subjectification' of experience, then, the postmodern 'revolt' against modernity and, by extension, Enlightenment, is based on dogmatic, 'conservative' assumptions that the 'immediacy' of the modern world to

individual intuition is an adequate philosophical measure by which to conduct objective inquiry. Similarly, where postmodern thought attacks Enlightenment as out-dated ideology, the extent to which it relies on the immediacy of social experience as it is 'given' to individuals suggests how it neglects to consider its own reliance on a form of ideology.

Zygmunt Bauman has characterised a problem with the postmodern attitude as follows:

The threats related to postmodernity are highly familiar: they are… thoroughly *modern* in nature. Now, as before, they stem from that *horror vacui* that modernity made into the principle of social organisation and personality formation…The sin of postmodernity is to abandon the effort and to deny the belief (the modern mentality that "the job can be done"); this double act appears to be indeed a sin, once one remembers that abandoning effort and denying belief does not, by itself, neutralise the awesome propelling of the fear of the void; and postmodernity has done next to nothing to support its defiance of past pretence with a new practical antidote for old poison (Bauman 2001, p.198).

Bauman suggests how postmodern attempts to move beyond their nemeses of 'coercive unification', 'social organisation' and 'personality formation' by attributing them to modernity rely on a false assumption: That freedom from fixed social concepts of meaning in the post-industrial information age no longer relies on the same axiom of social organisation that modernity did: the *horror vacui.*

This 'fear of the void' is essentially the search for meaning and comfort in the face of the indifference of nature that characterises human behaviour. Postmodernity offers criticism of previous attempts at filling this void, *pace* Bauman, without providing its own solutions. Instead, it 'abandons effort' and 'denies belief', a reference to the insouciance with which postmodern thought sometimes fails to recognise how freedom from fixed concepts of meaning can *itself* be an instance of coercive unification, and how postmodern thought often attacks beliefs arrived at through tried and tested reasoning out of a contrarian impulse, as opposed to presenting demonstrable alternatives. The reaction against Enlightenment, and by extension, Enlightenment *rationality* that is itself central to being able to articulate the tenets of postmodernism, begs questions as to what, precisely, its own delineation of rationality is supposed to be.

If the central tenets of postmodernity are an 'irreducible plurality' of narratives, combined with an exalted position for 'alterity', or 'otherness', which are not accountable to any singular narrative of reason, and if it is then assumed that the idea of postmodernity relies to large degrees on possibilities created by the technological determination of society, then it isn't clear how postmodernity has avoided the perils of falling prey to ideology that it claims the Enlightenment did. What, then, might function as the 'practical antidote for old poison', or, put differently, as a form of reasoning that might avoid succumbing to ideology? What choices remain available to individuals when confronted by the 'fear of the void' – the fear, that is, of the emptiness and lack of meaning in modern life and, more broadly, of the relative insignificance of single lives against the larger indifference of nature?

0.4   The Ideology of Technology

To the end of confronting this *horror vacui*, is technology just another form of ideology? The faith in technology could well be rooted in the *possibilities* of technology, rather than in weighting its *experience*. Pippin suggests that 'ironically, an energetic technological optimism is required precisely because of a kind of philosophical pessimism, a great reduction in expectation about what sort of "guidance" philosophy might provide' (Pippin 1997, p. 199). *Pace* Pippin, the critical concept of technology as a form of ideology is made possible by the central claim in Kantian philosophy that there can be conditions of experience not derived *from* experience, but constitutive of the *possibility* of experience.

Kant's 'transcendental unity of apperception' concerns the necessary conditions of experience, and the principles giving rise to consciousness. It follows that the necessary condition for individuals to have conscious experience is to recognise experiences as their *own*, where the act of reflecting upon experience is what Kant calls 'apperception'. The 'transcendental unity of apperception' is the unity of individual subjectivity brought about by recognition that experience of the world is through a single consciousness, which is the individual's own. This unity is 'transcendental' because it also denotes the limitation of cognition: individuals cannot experience beyond their own cognition. This single consciousness – the unity of the self - is the continuous process of

self-recognition as an object of experience, which also allows for the possibility of making judgements and regarding oneself as a free agent. However, this unity of the self relies on acts of synthesis between the self and its objects of experience *that are not themselves experienced.*

According to Kant's transcendental logic, these acts of synthesis are conditions of consciousness and experience, but cannot themselves be experienced because they are already universally necessary for experience to take place: they are the *a priori* elements making thought possible in the first place. *A priori* knowledge, therefore, is that which is known not through experience of the world but *independently* of experience, through synthesis with standards of thought which must be universal and necessary, such as time and causality. Kant calls these 'forms of intuition'. These *a priori* forms are constitutive of subjectivity in as far as they are among elements necessary for experience to take place. However, this notion of *a priori* knowledge that is not experienced also enables the idea of *a priori* <u>constraints</u> on experience, or on the formation of beliefs. This idea suggests that sensuous experience of an object must always already conform to *a priori* cognitive faculties of the subject, meaning it cannot be known purely in and of itself. Experience of the world must, in this case, first submit to the cognitive faculties and consciousness of individuals, meaning there is an *a priori* constraint on experience itself.

The idea that things cannot be known purely in themselves also means that a large part of cognition takes place on the basis of belief formation – meaning, experience of something either reinforces or diminishes belief pertaining to it. This belief formation, and therefore consciousness itself, can be ideological in any number of ways, precisely because cognition relies on beliefs that exclude other beliefs. If there are *a priori* constraints on belief formation and consciousness in general, then it also becomes possible to criticise consciousness as potentially 'false', which is the task of ideology critique (*Ideologiekritik*). To claim an outlook is ideological is to claim this consciousness does not allow for contrary evidence, where contrary argument is vital in order to make claims about the *truth* of the experience given to the consciousness in question.

Ideology critique has historically been central to debunking religious, moral or political beliefs. In the case of religious practices, ideology critique has been able to show that propositions subtending these practices have consisted of claims falling short of

objective corroboration, in the sense of offering tangible proof of the existence of God. Instead, ideology critique shows that postulating the existence of God relies instead on a community of 'believers' in the claim that a real entity in the world (God) guides their beliefs. The reinforcement of the claim that God exists by communities favouring such beliefs reveals how the notion of 'God' can be an ideology in fact tying those believers and their belief-systems together. Similar emphases on ideological undercurrents of shared belief systems can equally be applied to political movements based on core sets of moral or pragmatic belief. They especially extend to daily life at its most basic, whether in how family structures and concomitant values develop at given historical epochs, or how social norms are internalised and obeyed without individuals really asking the question why they are as they are.

More recently, ideology critique has been instrumental in challenging claims that the technological drive represents progress, or whether it merely presents itself as such to ensure its perpetuation as part of a broader economic ideology. It would, however, be difficult to make generalising claims that technology is *only* the vehicle for ideological conceptions of progress on behalf of *all* forms of technology. Many technologies, e.g., developments in medicine such as improved cancer or AIDS treatments, are to the benefit of individual welfare and universal alleviation of human suffering. The question concerning technology and ideology is therefore not simply one of either/or - *either* technology serves an ideology of progress tying its believers in the community together in an uncritical manner befitting the overall structure of capital, *or* technology is a force for the human good. For example, an important degree of the social power of technological forces can be attributed to the extent to which their continual innovation allows individuals to discover novel contexts and parameters of experience, and express these in hitherto unchartered ways: the productive powers of these forces themselves can therefore not only be attributed to a broad, uncritical acceptance of technology as social progress. Conversely, the question from a critical standpoint is *also* to show, however, that technological rationality *itself* becomes overwhelmingly powerful because of the degree to which it is integrated into material life, which also results in its political and democratic unaccountability. The question, then, is also whether the ability to assess and challenge the way technology alters human relations to the natural world has been compromised.

Have the social effects of technology resulted in experience of social, political, and personal life as taking place predominantly, and increasingly only, through filters created by technological imperatives? If so, does this reflect the emergence of a dominant form of rationality ideologically dependent on perpetuation of technology for its own sake, and is that rationality detrimental to the critical and reflective abilities of individuals? Ideology critique often bears upon what remains unexpressed in the experience of technology and its underlying rationale, and what technology, often ideologized as value-neutral, mediates, hides, and distorts. Accordingly, what is mediated 'automatically' through technology, but accepted as self-evident by individuals, can be understood as being constitutive of 'false consciousness', where what serves particular interests is portrayed as having universal benefits, and what in fact is contingent, historical experience is assumed to be 'natural'.

Such concerns originated in Marxist thought, in which claims of capitalist rationality are designated as ideological. In Marxist criticism, the truth of the statement that capitalist efficiency dependent on technology is factually efficient, is only temporary. Following initial phases of capitalist development, the effectiveness of technological progress diminishes into a socially necessary illusion in order to stabilise forces of domination arising as a consequence, also to obscure them from public view. In classical Marxism, the 'base' represents the productive forces of society, where social consciousness of those productive forces would translate into dominant social ideas, eventually giving rise to an economic, social, political and legal 'superstructure'. In this 'base-superstructure' relationship, conflicts in relations between productive forces could foment social revolutions leading to reorganisation and change at the level of the superstructure.

However, social consciousness of the productive forces is itself transformed by ideology at this level. The idea of social progress as complementary to technological development, however, combined with the realities of state interventionist ('welfare') capitalism and the broadening middle classes characterising many Western social democracies in the 20th century, forced changes in the Marxist critique of political economy. Instead, another acute way of assessing the problem of technology became suggesting that the stimulus for growing the forces of production comes not from the workforce as such, but from vested interests in technology and the sciences themselves.

The social system – the superstructure - based on doctrines of technological progress thereby becomes *self-legitimating* because of how productive forces – the base - become *dependent* on the equally self-legitimating imperative of technological efficiency.

Marx himself held science and technology to be thoroughly progressive, and saw solutions to contradictions immanent to capitalism as being in the hands of the workforce itself. His doctrine of the productive forces, according to Adorno, was rooted in the idea that 'society should be understood from the standpoint of technology and that technology should, up to a certain point, be made the key category for understanding society in general' (Adorno 2002, p.13). Developments subsequent to Marx's time suggest that even as technology became more available to the workforce and improved social conditions, it also had far-reaching social consequences that would call for re-evaluations of the relationship itself between individuals and technology as the means of production.

Adorno's dialectical theory of society, for example, suggests the balance between 'relationships of production… changes according to the state of the conflicts within society' (ibid.). One endeavour reassessing the social role of technology was Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (henceforth *DoE*), in which the problem of technology, and the mastery of individuals they associated it with, was related to the overall attempt to control nature. This attempt to master nature, purportedly for the human good, in turn legitimised gross abuses, such as human domination and psychological repression, factors readily observable in the Nazi period during which they wrote *DoE*. The overall line of reasoning in *DoE* is that what appears in modernity as rational attacks on myth and superstition, and on religion and pre-modern ways of life, *also* encourages forms of thinking simultaneously incapable of, and resistant to, critical thought. The same thinking which identifies itself with the universalising of scientific rationality results in, among other things, the control of human consciousness. As consciousness 'narrows' according to imperatives of instrumental rationality, and reflection upon social life and its Enlightenment currents is curtailed, Enlightenment itself becomes a myth and an ideology.

While Adorno criticises Enlightenment, however, it is not the same attack made by postmodernists. Adorno attacks the *a priori* belief in Enlightenment rationality at the

expense of its actual *experience* - which, Adorno claims, is what reveals it to be a myth, particularly in the context of e.g., Auschwitz, but also in terms of daily life and what he calls the 'Culture Industry'. Adorno does not, however, target the *ideal* of Enlightenment, meaning the search for reason neither dogmatic nor ideological, and he stays true to that search by turning that ideal of Enlightenment on Enlightenment itself. This is not the same as arguing for de-centred and relative approaches to truth and legitimation, even if these arguments do often also coincide with postmodernist Enlightenment critiques.

The problem with this account of the relationship between modernity and nature, however, is that it presupposes there is an alternative account of that relationship in the human or natural sciences. Such an account could purport to satisfy the same criteria of scientific and humanistic inquiry, but would not embody the relations of domination that Adorno suggests are characteristic of modern life, and which would not have as its ultimate objective the subjugation of nature. It is not clear, however, that there can be such an alternative account, and Adorno's philosophy of 'negative dialectics' is the attempt to think *through* the problem of domination in the endeavour of articulating a rationality which does not 'dominate' its object, as opposed to just creating another alternative, systemic account. More is made of this later.

The wider problem with this kind of ideology critique, however, is that, as Pippin suggests, '(*w*)*hoever* is in charge of the design and implementation of technology will be an agent deeply socialised in a modern ethos… it is still not clear that such an ethos possesses the resources to sustain a political and ethical appeal to reform that may result in a system just as efficient, but more humane and just' (Pippin 1997, p.195). Pippin suggests, in contrast to Adorno's 'totalising' account, that the proper kind of doubt to have about modernisation and its ever-intensifying dependence on technology, alongside the others about domination, metaphysical orientation etc., is that of 'the uniquely modern understanding of the *necessity for* an ever *expanding* control over the forces of nature' (ibid. p.197). It is not merely the case that technology reflects the human attempt to control nature; it is also the case that humanity provides for itself a *reason* to continue *extending* that control. The question then becomes how that form of rationality is legitimated, particularly when measured against the fundamental human imperative of freedom. To what extent does rationality extending control over nature coincide with human freedom, and to what degree does it compromise it?

If, moreover, as Adorno claims, control over nature is a matter of ideology, then it should be distinguished where that control is rationally legitimated, and where it is a matter of ideology. One way of approaching the problem is acknowledging that technological power is politically and socially legitimate when it is *contingently* necessary, requiring continuous distinction between legitimate technological power in the sense that it satisfies human needs, and technological power for its own sake. For example, it would be impossible to argue that 'controlling nature' in the form of benefiting from MRI's, pacemakers or arterial stents in order to prolong life as opposed to dying 'naturally' is an abuse of the power of modern technology (unless one simply no longer wishes to live).

Such examples, however, can be expanded to suggest scenarios in which advancements are made available only to certain social groups, be it for lack of health insurance, finances, accessibility or the social will to extend such possibilities to all. In this case it could be argued that technology is used to serve elements already possessing social power to the detriment of others, but what then does this say about technology itself? The question concerning the mastery over nature needs to be considered, therefore, in the context of the social relation of individuals to modernisation and technology. If technology is a manifestation of the human will, then the question becomes the extent to which the human will itself can be understood in terms of the desire to master nature, and the extent to which the social world as it is experienced is representative of that desire.

For example, attempts to comprehend reason itself would be incomplete without considering how human passions have historically influenced its labour. To what extent can reason be understood as something which has arisen instinctually, especially where it is invoked in the sense of satisfying desires, where these coincide in some way with the mastery of nature? Further, if one of humanity's 'passions' has been to master nature, does the predominant role of technology in modern society serve to shape and reinforce this understanding of the human will – as 'reason' – at the expense of alternative approaches to understanding both nature and reason?[11] Any evaluation of what modern

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[11] In 'The Question Concerning Technology', Heidegger observes that regardless of the extent to which humanity becomes capable of controlling nature due to technological advances - to the point of possessing enough power to submit nature to large-scale destruction - nature's mode of 'revealing' itself happens on its own terms, and not as a result of human control. This means the aspect of human control over nature has to do with 'enframing' nature according to possibilities afforded by technology,

democracy means has to take into account these conflicting interpretations of human relations to nature, what is understood as 'reason', and the predominant social role of forces such as technology in how modern rationality comes to be understood.

According to Pippin, the 'possibility of modern democracy, under the assumption that human beings are egoistic, passion-satisfying engines, would… depend *essentially* on a qualitatively improved, "world-historical" leap in technological power' (ibid. p. 198) seeking to remedy existing political and socio-economic imbalances. Pippin suggests the kind of technical power which would permit new kinds of politics depends on a new *social* ethos – one in which all links of the process of modernisation are considered simultaneously. For example, he suggests that modern hopes of coordination between different sectors of the workforce (an element emphasised heavily in globalisation) are connected to, as well as being a break from, pre-existing conceptions of the relationship between individual ethics and public life. These aspirations, in turn, are connected to the expanding powers of technology, which depends for its progress on the process of increased socialisation and integration, and the factors of supply and demand inherent to that process.

If the rejection of older forms of politics is understood as being provoked by social and intellectual crises, the manner in which technology is employed to provide solutions becomes a clearer framework for understanding those crises. Consequently, it can be evaluated how well technology succeeds in *addressing* those crises. It is therefore, *pace* Pippin, impossible to dissociate the question of technology from the question of modernity. If there has been a complete break with the 'pre-modern', traditional world, and if technology is so prevalent that it has reversed the values of that pre-modern world, then it would be legitimate to speak of an authentically 'modern', or even a 'postmodern', era. However, as seems a valid proposition in light of global socio-political developments at the dawn of the 21st century, the drive to technological power has, at least partially, resulted in a 'dialectical antithesis' in the form of a harkening *back* to pre-modern standards.

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but not according to nature itself. The danger of such 'enframing' is ultimately that humanity blinds itself to ways in which nature continuously reveals *itself*. See Heidegger 1977, pp. 287-317.

This is evident in the manner in which respective agents in the so-called 'Global War on Terror' seek to legitimate often violent agendas by appeal to a 'higher authority' (usually in the form of 'God'), whose 'will' is to be institutionalised on earth through an exalted position for religion in the socio-political, public sphere. As this is widely understood to be a backlash at specifically Western modernity, this is a development that potentially collapses distinctions between 'modern' and 'pre-modern' designations of history. In light of such considerations, the question of technology and its ideology should be measured once again as a matter of *contingency*, as opposed to merely considering it in a historical context marking a radical break with the past. Where does this leave the question of the relationship between technology and ideology?

According to Habermas' account, the problem of technological modernisation concerns the scope of its influence on society, in turn legitimating predominantly 'instrumental' appeals to rationality, and concomitantly de-legitimating practical and political solutions to problems posed by that understanding of rationality. In short, the specific form of rationality central to communicative action has been distorted by the demands of technical efficiency. If there are 'categorically distinct' forms of communicative rationality, then science and technology, by 'instrumentalising' that rationality, can be considered to be, in part, ideological processes. The development of 'purposive rationality' is, in this instance, restricted to a kind of power that is exercised hierarchically, which in turn is legitimated in cultural terms and because culture comes to depend on it.

As capitalism seeks rationality in its own perpetual expansion and assumes the task of being the provider of basic human needs, traditional worldviews such as religion and other traditional cultural mores of the pre-modern era are forced into the *private* sphere of belief, where they can no longer aspire to the universal appeal central to their beliefs. Social power is thus claimed through the seeming legitimacy of capitalist assertions of having provided universal satisfaction of interests – or at least as close to this as any political system has ever come. Measured against the pre-modern era, where communication is taken to have been 'systematically distorted' and beholden to the 'fateful causality of dissociated symbols and suppressed motives' (Habermas 1992, p.127), the success of the claims of capitalism is cast into doubt when it prevents the

'reestablishment of a genuinely interactive life among modern subjects' (ibid.) and thereby becomes an ideology, rather than prevailing as a liberating force.

For Habermas, the question of technology is not that it represents some new historical era dissociated from the past, but that it is an extension of the 'rational action' central to purposive human behaviour – in other words, to continually improve upon what humanity has already achieved by improving tools available to it. The question eluding this formulation is, *pace* Pippin, why the 'imperatives of purposive-rational action' became so much more important in the modern age, and why humanity would go to such lengths to ensure the mastery of nature. If the technically efficient mastery of nature is taken to be consistent with the highest human good, and thereby *rational*, then an appeal should be made to the elements that *constitute* modernity in order to understand *why* this conception of mastery as rational is narrow, and why it excludes other possible forms of rationality. Such an appeal involves Habermas' claim that there *is* an alternative, based on 'freeing communication from arbitrarily imposed limits and distortions caused by the interests of money and power, and so promoting an "ideal speech situation"' (ibid.).

Where do such developments leave Adorno's 'totalising' perspectives on modern rationality and subjectivity? Adorno's difficult claim that the 'whole is untrue' is an assumption subtending much of his theory, and refers to the idea that consciousness in modern life is under the constant strain of an instrumental rationality threatening individuality and, thereby, the possibility of critical thought. This claim is a prime source of objection to Adorno for many commentators, including Habermas. The question is whether that claim unequivocally must be accepted in order to work through Adorno's theory of 'negative dialectics', or whether it is possible to justify Adorno's position in a manner acknowledging the problem of 'totalising' claims, without undermining his theory. One of the problems this thesis seeks to address, therefore, is how to pursue the critique of technology without 'totalising' it, on one hand (e.g. allowing for claims of its experience as both innovative and potentially democratic), *while* demonstrating how these claims simultaneously lead to the integration of technological rationality into material life to the extent that it becomes politically and democratically unaccountable, on the other.

This is also crucial in terms of accounting for Adorno's notion of 'non-identity' and relating it to theory about the nature of the relationship between subjectivity and reason. Adorno's theory is addressed in the following chapters. For now, I direct attention to the overall theoretical task of this thesis. The question was asked above: what possibilities are available to individuals when confronted with the 'fear of the void', the fear, that is, of the disappearance of what Bauman calls the 'universality-claiming truths' that successive incarnations of reason, from the era of religious dominance through the Enlightenment conception of scientific rationality and beyond, have attempted to provide?

0.5   Theoretical possibilities

How might an account of the 'truth of the subject' be possible? I have outlined some modern forms of rationality and ways they influence individual experience. A substantial part of this thesis is devoted to examining the experience of modernity, and the influence of instrumental forms of rationality on individuals. The question of the impact of technology on experience as one of the prevalent conditions of modernity has been introduced, as has the question of the relationship between reason and ideology. Under these conditions of modernity, and its contradictory conceptions of rationality, what happens to notions of truth, and how do individuals relate to them?

Has ideology become predominant in modern society to the degree that it has become impossible to think in ways that don't involve ideology, for lack of accessibility to reference points outside the manifold areas of modern life influenced by it? *Pace* Adorno, is the domination of nature such a prevalence of human activity that it underscores all normative standards of thought and action? In raising such questions, it is imperative to distinguish reason and ideology, and to consider each in its own right: Not all reason is ideology, and not all ideology aspires to reason. Moreover, when critically considering such categories, it is important to keep in perspective how critiques of reason or ideology themselves become ideological, particularly when they 'totalise' their object of critique and, thereby, also their theoretical response.

Peter Dews has advanced an argument why Adorno's theory offers conceptual tools with which to progress beyond increasingly 'self-destructively indiscriminate and

politically ambiguous assault[s] on the structures of rationality and modernity *in toto*' (Dews 1995, p.20). He suggests Adorno's critique of modern identity cannot simply be incorporated in deconstructionist or postmodern attacks on reason, irrespective of how Adorno totalises his own critique of instrumental rationality. Echoing Pippin, the point is to move *beyond* such destructive critiques of reason, so as not to succumb to increasingly narrow strictures within which they operate, simultaneously avoiding entrapment in equally instrumental variations of rational thought.

The problem confronting postmodern theory, according to Dews, is the problem of how 'to reject simultaneously both the repressive rigidities of self-consciousness and conceptual thought, *and* the available dialectical alternatives' (ibid, p.23.). This problem may be considered by proposing a philosophy that does *not* reject conceptual or dialectical thought, but rather works its way through both, each using the other to overcome the respective 'rigidity' of their positions. Adorno's theory does precisely this, and can be used to contribute to contemporary discussions beyond the historical context of his own writings. An effort to extend Adorno's philosophy to contemporary theory without falling prey to 'totalising' attacks on reason, while not providing a 'definitive' essence of 'post-postmodern' rationality, can help elucidate strictures within which modern reason operates, and, importantly, suggest ways of overcoming them.

According to Žižek (2001), Adorno's principle of 'negative dialectics' is an 'inconsistent' process of thought, in the sense that it is not a doctrine purporting to definitively explain a system of thought, but instead emphasises a *process* of thought. In order to understand what Žižek means by 'inconsistent', I address why Adorno considers subjectivity itself to be 'inconsistent', and why claims purporting to standards of truth and meaning are similarly so. Such a claim may appear surprising, considering Adorno's emphasis on how instrumental rationality limits the scope of individual experience and, thereby, possibilities for subjective development, and on how modern culture encourages a narrow sense of identity formation. However, such assertions relate to structures of rationality, rather than to subjectivity itself.

'Constitutive subjectivity' is a central term in Adorno's philosophy. Constitutive subjectivity is, first, part of how Adorno characterises Idealism: the domination of the object by the subject, meaning the domination of conceptual reflection over its object of

knowledge and, more broadly, the attempt to control the objective world and nature. History may thereby, from an Idealist perspective, be understood as a process infused with meaning, which unfolds according to an objectively meaningful course. This idea is exemplified in the notion that individual activities help to improve society, and that history reflects that purpose.

Second, constitutive subjectivity is the concept that individuals become 'reconciled' with history as a result of their growing consciousness of their place in it, where individuals are both the subjective force with regards to the objective world, *and* the objective force that creates history. Third, this growing self-consciousness as actors in history – their 'constitutive subjectivity' – enables individuals to act *upon* the world and things in it, where they either create new objects or try to dominate objects already of the world, or in nature. The 'constitutive' nature of the subject then comes to depend on individuals mastering objects with which they engage in the course of their experience, whether the object is something created through labour, an object of knowledge in the natural world, the conceptualisation of history, or other individuals. Adorno writes in the preface to *Negative Dialectics* that he wants to 'use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity' (Adorno 1973, p. xx). Why, then, for Adorno, is 'constitutive subjectivity' a fallacy, and how does he want to use the 'strength of the subject' to break through it?

Constitutive subjectivity is a fallacy because it ignores what Adorno calls the 'priority of the objective'. This 'priority' means that nature, society and history always *already* precede the individual: individuals derive cognition of the world and their understanding of it from nature, and from already existing social frameworks and inherited ways of thinking. The problem with constitutive subjectivity, therefore, is that it prioritises subject over object. In constitutive subjectivity, the subject is considered from perspectives of how it acts upon the world, but not of how it has been, and is being, *acted* upon *by* the world. One consequence of privileging subjectivity in this manner is the idea that history is attributed an objectively meaningful course that is dependent on individual actions, *ergo* that history is meaningful because individual actions are meaningful, and that history therefore objectively represents progress as some absolute idea. This 'absolute' idea is the cornerstone of Hegel's account of history as a dialectical process of inter-subjective mediation in which social rules, norms and conceptual practices become

progressively legitimated in the course of history as a matter of the self-determination of human thought. Adorno objects to Hegel's 'totalisation' of this dialectical process on the side of history, human activity and the *subject*, on the grounds that it occurs only as a function of the human attempt to control nature, as a matter of self-preservation and subjective attempts to identify the objective world. Adorno's conception of self-determining thought, by contrast, depends on a dialectical relationship between history *and* nature where the objective world is *not* reduced to consciousness or conceptual practices.

It follows that while *concepts* of history, progress and meaning depend on individuals, they are concepts limited by the extent to which they are defined in consciousness. Furthermore, these concepts, no matter how developed, can never capture the entire reality of what they seek to identify. Individuals derive meaning from their experiences in specific historical contexts, and are therefore dependent on those experiences in terms of accounting for that meaning. This means any conceptualisation, be it of meaning, truth, subjectivity, etc., depends on both cognitive faculties derived from nature, and networks of socialisation already carrying meaning-bearing properties, both of which form a given objective historical context individuals are dependent on. The fallacy of constitutive subjectivity, therefore, is threefold. First, it is the deception that history has an *objectively* meaningful course: 'Progress' is a concept attributed to history by individuals and does not exist 'for-itself' in a purely objective sense. This means individuals mistakenly impute concepts of meaning to the objective world that in fact remain *subjective* concepts.

Second, it is the deception that individuals are 'reconciled' with history through growing consciousness of themselves and history as intertwining elements. Because individuals are dependent on the objective world for their ability to conceptualise it, and because individuals are limited to and by concrete historical circumstances, it follows there are always elements of the objective world inaccessible to individuals, *ergo* that the ability to conceptualise the world is always limited in some way. This means individuals make the mistake of reconciling themselves with history at the expense of what their conceptualisation of history and the objective world *fails* to take into account.

Third, individuals deceive themselves when they assume their subjectivity is 'constituted' by their ability to master elements in and of the world, conceptually and otherwise. Individuals achieving identity through concepts of the world do so by imposing their *own* concepts onto objects of knowledge, at the expense of differences remaining between their conceptualisation of these objects, and the objects themselves. This means concepts by which individuals define their subjectivity, including categories of 'truth' and 'meaning' in relation to objects external to them, are always incomplete *because* they are always (ideologically) limited to conceptual identifications, achieved at the expense of what always *remains* 'non-identical' between individuals and their objects of thought.

If the notion of constitutive subjectivity suggests arrays of shortcomings regarding the relationship between reflection and the objective world, what kind of role does Adorno envisage for subjectivity, assuming that concepts such as meaning or truth can be evaluated in ways that don't, one way or another, prioritise subjective concepts individuals use to make sense of the world? Rather than suggesting subjectivity is somehow nullified by its dependence on the objective world, Adorno's fundamental point is that subjectivity and objectivity cannot be thought of *independently* of each other in some non-contradictory manner. Instead, they must always be thought *together*, taking into account all antagonisms consequently arising. This is the essence of what Adorno calls the 'priority of the objective', which is the key term of his *negative* dialectics, and is outlined as follows by Habermas:

First of all, objectivity denotes the coercive character of a world-historical complex that stands under the causality of fate, can be interrupted by self-reflection, and is contingent as a whole. Next, the primacy of the objective means suffering from that which weighs upon subjects. Knowledge of the objective context thus arises out of an interest in warding off suffering. Further, the phrase means the priority of nature in relation to all subjectivity it establishes outside itself. The pure I, in Kantian terms, is mediated by the empirical I. Finally, this materialist primacy of the objective is incompatible with any absolutist claims to knowledge. Self-reflection, and precisely self-reflection, is a finite power, for it itself pertains to the objective context that penetrates it. (Habermas 2000, p.193)

By this description, the priority of the objective is a process of self-reflection pertaining to truth in the context of the relationship between reflection and the objective world

comprising successive stages of awareness. First, individuals are pitted against an objective world they are dependent on. Their existence is conditional on structures already inherent in that world, and they are thus determined in ways beyond their control. Awareness of this lack of control leads to suffering, and therefore also to attempts to reduce suffering, among other things by attempting to validate individual identity.

However, in attempting to reduce suffering, individuals also inherit structures of rational thinking prevalent in their immediate social context, and reproduce them as part of their subjectivity. Individuals try to understand the objective context of the world they have been thrust into by trying to *master* aspects of that context in order to alleviate suffering, using 'given' structures of rationality in their immediate social context to that end. Further understanding their objective context, however, requires individuals to separate relations to their immediate social context from relations to nature itself. Individuals are dependent on both their immediate social context *and* on nature, which also means that society, and its structures of rationality, are ultimately dependent on nature. This means individuals must consider how they, their social context, and their structures of rationality, are all equally dependent on *nature*.

Finally, individuals must recognise that *because* they are dependent on their objective social context, and ultimately on nature, their reflection is *finite* in the sense that while thought can challenge rational structures in the objective social context, it ultimately cannot transcend nature. This means the inability to transcend nature extends to larger structures of rationality as well. The priority of the objective, then, is the priority of nature in all reflection as that which cannot be transcended. Emphasising this priority is indispensable to Adorno's theory that reason, and particularly 'instrumental' forms of rationality common to modernity, validate themselves by dominating their objects of knowledge, and by impressing themselves *upon* nature, often failing to recognise how they always remain a part of nature, and therefore cannot transcend it. The priority of the objective therefore reveals a crucial contradiction that cannot be resolved by simply prioritising subjectivity or objectivity: rational thought isolates its object of knowledge from nature in order to understand it, and ultimately to identify it. However, in reality, both the object of knowledge and the reflecting individual remain subject to *nature*.

It follows that identifying the object of knowledge according to conceptualisation and its categorisation, to the extent that the object is identified and 'known', creates the illusion that how this object comes to be known – its identity – is how it is in nature, whereas in reality this identity is the result of finite reflection. This identity attributed to the object creates the additional misconception that relationships between the reflecting subject and the object of knowledge, and between this object and the rest of nature, can be 'resolved' in the 'positive' identification of the object, where in reality these relationships must be continuous precisely because reflection is finite.

This means there is a contradictory relationship between the finite reflection of the subject and the infinitude of an object of knowledge that not only changes according to the socio-historical context in which it is identified, but is also subject to the finite thought of other individuals, and its mediation between individuals. Reflection, particularly self-reflection pertaining to issues of meaning and truth, is therefore limited in three ways: First, it is dependent on both objective social conditions and on nature, and therefore cannot be reduced to immediate subjectivity if it is to pursue standards of truth. Second, reflection is limited because it can never encompass the totality of either its objective social conditions, partly because these are always interpreted according to a specific historical contingency, or of nature, because nature cannot be encapsulated by any form of rationality, regardless of how powerful that rationality may be socially. Third, the relationship between nature, rationality and the individual is forever evolving, often in ways initially imperceptible to cognition, not least because the manner in which objects are identified obscures what remains unaccounted for in this identification.

This means, not only that reflection is finite, but also that claims to truth must always take into account ways in which they are finite, not least because they are subject to evolving objective conditions to some extent beyond the grasp of individuals. In effect, the 'priority of the objective' entails all these elements of self-reflection be thought of concurrently: if there is a 'truth' of the subject, it can only be pursued by referring to activity of thought that does not become ensnared in a non-contradictory subjective or objectifying conceptions of the world. Instead of attempting to eliminate contradictions between reason, nature and subjectivity, the 'priority of the objective' signals the attempt to continue thinking through divergent elements *constituting* these contradictions, such that reflection does not foreclose itself to these elements by simply accounting for them

with recourse to non-contradictory categories - such as elementary conceptualisations of 'true' or 'false'.

The 'strength of the subject' Adorno wants to use to break through constitutive subjectivity, then, refers to the self-determination he ascribes to individuals in the context of their relationship to their objective conditions. The subject is neither *entirely* determined by the objective world, given its capacity to make judgements through experience, or in the position to *entirely* master the objective world, due to limitations imposed by the objective world and constraints on attempts to conceptualise it. It therefore follows there is an *active* role for the subject to play in its self-determination that does not merely rely on reproducing structures of domination in thought as encountered in the social world, while also acknowledging subjective dependence on the objective world - without ceding its own particularity to it.

This means Adorno's theory designates a place for subjectivity neither irrational, in the sense that it is prioritised over the objective world, nor completely dependent on rational structures predominant in the objective world, in the sense that individual judgement is *required* to determine issues of truth and meaning. The 'strength of the subject', then, is the individual's ability to experience *spontaneous* thought, by breaking its determination by ideological structures of rationality, while simultaneously pursuing objective truth without reducing it to its own subjective concepts and categories. Experience for Adorno can only be *free* if it is freed from constraints on thought and sensibility by both the individual's own constitutive subjectivity, and the ideological shortcomings of all forms of rationality: 'unreduced' experience, as he calls it, depends, therefore, on a continual process of reflecting on what *exceeds* thought and sensibility.

It follows that because it is impossible for sensuous intuition, concepts, language, and other tools of thought to grasp an object of knowledge independently of itself, and because individuals express themselves and knowledge conceptually, there must always be something about an object of knowledge that remains 'non-conceptual'. For Adorno, this 'non-conceptuality' is the particularity of the object that both guides its experience, yet escapes the subject's ability to identify it in any absolute sense. This means it is impossible to conceptualise objects in a manner accounting for all the ways they are experienced, and that for as long as they remain elements in the objective world, they will

always be experienced differently because of the changing objective socio-historical circumstances in which they are experienced.

The object of knowledge therefore guides its experience because its experience is finite. Furthermore, every attempt to identify the object reveals elements entirely particular to that object, which, in guiding its experience, elicits novel subjective responses transforming the *subject*, thus creating moments of spontaneous experience. The active role subjectivity can play in Adorno's thought, therefore, is of continually attempting to conceptualise what remains non-conceptual and particular to the object of knowledge - *without*, however, reducing it to a prescribed conceptual scheme. Recognising there is always conflict between how an object is identified and the particularity of the object that escapes that conceptualisation, means the subject's attempt to conceptualise the object must be continuous in order for experience to remain *truthful*. In so doing, the subject recognises that every attempt to reach the ideal conceptualisation fails, because conceptualisation fails to grasp the particularity of the object independent of human perception, but the subject also recognises that each such failure changes the subject *itself*. The subject's *own* categories of conceptualisation are thereby changed through its experience of the object.

It follows the subject cannot subsume the non-conceptuality of the object to its own predominant conceptualisation while remaining true to its experience, because experience of the object has already *changed* that conceptual system. A further implication of the priority of the objective is that the subject's own *identity* is changed, meaning, it no longer conforms to its previous conceptualisation, by itself or others. This has implications for self-determination, and the broader relationship between freedom and reason. Adorno's notions of the 'non-conceptual' and 'non-identical' are central to his theory of negative dialectics and are examined in depth in this thesis. At present, it is important to recall these essential tenets of Adorno's theory, and suggest how they may relate to the notion of a 'truth of the subject'.

How are we to go about investigating this truth of the subject, if the subject is always precluded from some measure of objective reality? In Lacan's words, the hinge of this thesis could be said to be as follows:

…Freud was exploring a line of research which is not characterised by the same style as other sciences. Its domain is that of *the truth of the subject*. The quest for truth is not entirely reducible to the objective, and indeed objectifying, research of the normal scientific method. It is a matter of the realisation of the truth of the subject, as a specific dimension which must be detached in its originality from the notion of reality [italics mine]. (Lacan 1995, pp. 20-21)

This suggests there may be ways of thinking about truth relating specifically to the experience of the subject, and not only the study of the subject from objectifying or scientific perspectives that, sometimes despite themselves, minimise the subject's experience itself. Subjectivity itself is an area of inquiry that cannot simply be reduced to either objectifying or purely subjective perspectives.

Rather, inquiry into subjectivity itself must involve continuous mediation between the subject and the objective context to which it belongs. How does this mediation relate to truth, and how can the truth of the subject be investigated in ways not presupposing pre-determined methodologies? First, if Adorno's objections to constitutive subjectivity are granted, truth is not found strictly in subjectivity or in the objective world, but in continual mediation of the interrelationship between the two. This means there can be no seamless standard, or identity, of truth pertaining to any object of knowledge, including individuals themselves. However, this does not mean there is no truth at all because of the '[notion of the] wholly ideological character of all society-related consciousness' (Adorno 2002, p.11). If there is such a thing as false consciousness, there must also be a form of consciousness that can make legitimate claims to truth.

Second, in order to pursue the concept of truth in the first place, the subject must become aware, not only of the primacy of the objective social world and nature to reflection, but also of the ways subjective concepts of these can be distorted. This, as we will see, involves the centrality of *Ideologiekritik* to Adorno's notion of being 'against' epistemology, suggesting the ideology critique of epistemology itself. Third, Adorno locates notions of truth in continuous contradictions embodied in objects of knowledge and by what *resists* conceptualisation of their experience, and not in the subject's immediate experience of them. Adorno is apprehensive about how individuals experience modern society and the determination of this experience by instrumental forms of rationality. He is equally apprehensive that questions about the relationship

between individuals and how they experience objects of inquiry are compromised by the experience of modernity as a whole. This means he doesn't consider immediate experience of the objective world to be an adequate benchmark for questions pertaining to the truth of experience, albeit nevertheless remaining an ineluctable element of experience.

Fourth, while notions of truth are ultimately dependent on the nature of the subject's relationship with the objective world, the notion of a 'truth of the subject' is also dependent on the individual's ability to consider its own notion of truth as an object of knowledge. This means not only that truth evolves through the subject's engagement with it, but also that its conceptualisation is, by necessity, finite. In essence, then, any notion of truth has its own particular qualities that remain non-identical to it, by virtue of the inquiring subject *also* changing as a result of its engagement.

'It is a standard argument against Adorno's "negative dialectics,"' writes Žižek,

to reproach it for its inherent inconsistency; Adorno's answer is appropriate: stated as a definitive doctrine, as a result, "negative dialectics" effectively IS "inconsistent" – the way to grasp it correctly is to conceive of it as the description of a *process* of thought…. "Negative Dialectics" designates a position which includes its own failure, i.e. which produces the truth-effect through its very failure. To put it succinctly: one tries to grasp the object of thought; one fails, missing it, and through these very failures the place of the targeted object is encircled, its contours become discernible" (Žižek 2001, p.88).

By producing a 'truth-effect through its very failure', Žižek means that because no concept can circumscribe an object of knowledge, each successive attempt to grasp it fails, but nevertheless creates a 'truth-effect' because the misidentification of the object of knowledge has been articulated in clearer fashion than previously, paving the way for subsequent attempts to identify it truthfully.

Such a process is also what Hegel calls 'determinate negation' - the ability to show what is lacking in an explanation is the condition of the possibility of a better explanation. This mediation of the object consequently creates better conditions for the possibility of conceptual claims concerning the truth of its experience. For Adorno, however, the truth of this experience cannot be *reduced* to its conceptual identification but

is a matter of re-orientating experience towards the object itself, so as to determine ways in which its identification comes up short. It is important to emphasise that Adorno does not *deny* the necessity of conceptual identification. Instead, he suggests that thought can only criticise existing concepts to recognise areas in which these identifications come up short, or are made at the expense of eliminating contradictions. It follows that any identification of any object is incomplete and that constraints on conceptual reflection ensure identification of the object always *remains* incomplete.

We now have a clearer conception of why Žižek describes Adorno's thought as 'inconsistent', and why Adorno's conception of subjectivity is similarly 'inconsistent'. 'Consistent' thought refers to reflection that has come to a standstill, and which assumes its concepts to be absolutes, relies on ideological conceptions of truth and reason, and equates objects of knowledge with the limits of subjective perception. Similarly, a 'consistent' conception of subjectivity would be one stabilising its identity according to predominant concepts and reducing its experience to pre-existing, instrumental procedures common to its social context. It follows, therefore, that 'truth-effects' can be created through the *failure* to harmonise subjectivity with the instrumental rationalities it is determined by.

At first glance, such a 'truth-effect' suggests there are possibilities for subjectivity beyond its determination by ideology and instrumental rationality, even to the extent that Adorno's critique claims these have become 'total', the reasons for which are elucidated throughout this thesis. We now have a point of departure for giving an account of the 'truth of the subject' through Adorno's philosophy. What follows is an examination of elements that make such an account possible: Chapter 1 examines the concept of ideology with relation to critical categories of alienation and false consciousness. Chapter 2 continues this investigation by analysing instrumental and subject-centred forms of reason, and introduces categories of Adorno's thought. Chapter 3 explores the relationship between reason and freedom, some forms of immediacy in the modern world, and the question of the relationship between reason and nature, following elements in Kant adopted by Adorno. Chapter 4 considers Adorno's approach to these questions from beyond what he considers to be the limitations of epistemology. Chapter 5 addresses problems of locating critical perspectives from which to tackle concerns explored in previous chapters that account for their own place in the social space they

criticise, particularly with regard to Adorno's 'totalising' claims. Chapter 6 explains Adorno's dialectical method with relation to Hegel's, and Chapter 7 provides a thought model of Adorno's negative dialectics 'in praxis'. Finally, to conclude, an account of the 'truth of the subject' from considerations undertaken in this thesis is given, before concluding with a brief suggestion for a theoretical continuation of Adorno's philosophy.

The thesis employs Adorno's theoretical tools to investigate the following questions: First, to suggest that 'the quest for truth is not reducible' to purely objective research, but must also include subjectivity itself as a part of the nature objective research seeks to account for. Second, it is a question of explaining why objective reality is always in some measure unattainable and how the failure to recognise this leads to dominant ideological discourses which themselves prevent further access to objective reality. Third, the question is one of continually finding new forms of self-reflection that can attempt to justify claims to truth. The point, then, is not to suggest an infallible theory of the 'truth of the subject', but to investigate the very paradoxes and inconsistencies that might constitute the *possibility* of such truth. Aspects of explicating Adorno's thought will include discussions of how it relates to problems of freedom, reason and ideology in the contemporary world. What follows is an exposition of Adorno's key concepts, elaborated in central works such as *Negative Dialectics* (*ND*), *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (*DoE*), in his lectures and overall body of work, considerations of the criticisms of these ideas, and suggestions as to how his work can be continued and why his thought remains relevant to discussing the problems of modernity. The thesis is, by necessity, limited to the objectives outlined in 0.1 above, considering the expansive scope of Adorno's writings and vast areas of experience his philosophy can be employed to complement. For example, while the thesis emphasises contemporary socio-political circumstances and phenomena that can be mediated through Adorno's philosophy, it generally does not venture into Adorno's many other concerns, such as literature or aesthetics more broadly (or as political acts in themselves), and touches only lightly on certain psychoanalytical implications of his thought. The reasons for this are practical, yet I hope that the thesis provides sufficient basis for further exploration in such areas for the reader - and for this author's research. Additionally, the thesis does not claim to have achieved a definitive extraction of possible political models from Adorno's oeuvre; it only claims to demonstrate that working through his philosophy and concerns may well yield such models through the kind of continuous intellectual effort he entreated. The thought

model in Chapter 7 is a suggestion of how such a model might function. Finally, where secondary literature on Adorno (or other thinkers) is employed, it is with a view towards clarifying central points that can sometimes be difficult to extract with brevity from Adorno's own rather dense prose. It is not intended as a comment either on the secondary literature itself or on Adorno's work, but was rather assessed to play an adequate explanatory role while remaining faithful to (my interpretation of) the original intent.

In summary, then, the thesis elucidates what the seemingly ideological notion of a 'strength of the subject' amounts to with relation to Adorno's critical theory *in toto*, and particularly with regards to contradictions arising, on the surface, from such a phrase in connection with Adorno's stringent criticism of 'constitutive subjectivity' and subject-centred forms of rationality more broadly. It will be suggested how Adorno's particular conception of this 'subjective strength' becomes an ineluctable component of the truth of subjective freedom when considering the political and cultural ramifications of the objective determination of social experience by dominant forms of instrumental reason, and indeed forms a critical element of the critique of ideology necessary to mediate the philosophical foundations underpinning such forms of reasoning, several of which are examined throughout the thesis. The investigation undertaken in this thesis, then, will lead to ways of articulating and thinking about paradoxes experienced by the subject in its relationship with rationality and the objective world, and to ways of thinking about how acknowledgement of the limits of reason can serve as illumination for the possibilities of subjectivity. In order for this to be explored, I first discuss what freedom in the context of modernity may amount to, some of the philosophical deliberation concerning the relationship between freedom and reason and their intersection with ideology, and some of the key concepts permitting such a discussion in the first place. This is what concerns us next.

II. CHAPTER 1: IDEOLOGY, AND ITS OTHER

The following two chapters discuss the concept of ideology by considering it, in this chapter, in the context of problems raised by ideology and critical responses to it, and in the following chapter, by considering its social effects and introducing elements of Adorno's theory. This chapter gives a working definition of the concept of ideology, and discusses some contexts in which it can be identified. Critical categories of ideology critique, such as reification, alienation, and false consciousness are then introduced, and I consider how these might affect experience. Briefly, the notion of the 'truth of the subject' is elaborated upon.

1.1   The Concept of Ideology

What is ideology? Ideology is a term used to refer to 'a kind of obstacle to rational thought and clear perception… ideology is regarded not just as a set of errors of reasoning, but rather as a systematically distorting factor that causes errors in the thought of its victims' (Mautner 1996, p.266). The term is often used to indicate shortcomings in the thought of political opponents, but it is also used descriptively, in terms of designating beliefs that broadly constitute perspectives on the world, such as characterisations of 'liberalism', 'socialism', or 'conservatism'. The more individuals subscribe to a particular ideology, the more that ideology consists of a variation of - often conflicting - beliefs and interests, tied together by a unifying strand expressing the actual common ground individuals share. In the U.S., the political label of 'Republican' might unite socially conservative, religious voters with secular-minded, fiscally conservative proponents of small government, just as the label of 'Democrat' might unite progressive advocates of state intervention in the economy with liberal civil rights activists.

In its more pejorative sense, designating perspectives as ideological is to imply the reasoning behind them is flawed, and that such flawed reasoning goes unnoticed by individuals holding those perspectives. As an 'obstacle to rational thought', ideology is assumed to hinder clear thinking and 'distort' accounts of the world, because of how it reduces experience to its own central concepts, and prioritises explanations aspiring to be all-encompassing, as opposed to accurately reflecting a set of conditions in the world,

and paying attention to how these change over time. This characteristic lays ideologies open to charges they are 'irrational', in the sense that they rely more on subjective belief than on engagement with objective conditions.

Ideology is a central concept in any critical account of modernity. Historian Eric Hobsbawm, for instance, labelled the 20th Century the 'Age of Extremes', characterised as it was by struggles between competing ideologies of capitalism, communism, and fascism.[12] Modern societies have also emerged as a consequence of the development of, and competition between, conflicting political ideas in response to both previously dominant ideas, and emerging social needs. While these ideas culminate in the broad designation of a society as governed under the auspices of a particular ideology ('social democracy' in Sweden, 'state socialism' in Cuba, etc.), there are also broader ideological currents extending beyond the borders of nation-states in the form of economic doctrine and political currency ('neo-liberalisation', 'free trade', 'the single market'). Ideology can also be religion enshrined in state doctrine (the Shi'ite theocracy in Iran), or inscribed as broad currents of personal persuasion (Judaism, Christianity, etc.).

In Western society specifically, the exchange of competing political ideas serves to characterise modernity as 'democratic', and the competition between these ideas accounts for the overall political process. However, when one of these ideas becomes predominant, and accepted as near-universal 'truth'[13], it is likely to become ideological, as opposed to comprising a rational response to objective conditions. Whenever theoretical ideas concerning *anything* are taken for granted, irrespective of whether relation is borne to objective conditions, they can become a source of ideological distortion. If ideology is a term used to describe 'a distorted or illusory form of thought which departs from a criterion of objectivity… also used to describe, usually in negative terms, the world-view of collective beliefs and attitudes of a class or social group' (Macey 2000, p. 198), then it becomes clearer how ideology is connected to subjectivity. Any perspective on the world, or any set of ideas subscribed to by individuals, is indispensable to the notion of identity, tying together shared beliefs via which a collective of individuals define themselves.

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[12] See Hobsbawm 1998.
[13] The misinterpretation of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' of the market as an irrefutable argument for de-regulation of the economy is a common example of such a phenomenon.

The very idea of 'being' something, e.g. 'being English', presupposes a whole set of beliefs as to what it means to be 'English', such as: being born in England or of English parents, practicing a set of customs traditionally regarded as being part of English culture, being fluent in that language, etc. Consequently, it becomes clear how *any* identity, even prior to lending itself to political perspective, depends, to some degree, on ideological precepts of inheriting a national or religious identity (purely, it should be said, by chance). This dependence is not to mention the inheritance of genetic traits shaping inclinations of behaviour and thought. How, then, would such seemingly normal, everyday facts, square with the notion of ideology as 'illusory' and departing from a 'criterion of objectivity', especially if individuals aren't responsible for the initial set of beliefs with which they are equipped upon entering the world, and with which they go about developing their consciousness?

Part of the answer may be the extent to which individuals engage critically on two separate, yet related, levels: individuals engage both with the world *and* themselves as sources of ideology. The extent to which they do determines the degrees to which they are influenced ideologically by the objective world, and the extent to which they place themselves in a position to recognise where their actions or thoughts are products of ideology. It follows that as a result of critically challenging ideology, individuals conceivably have more freedom to exercise self-determination, as opposed to being determined by the immediate world, or the randomness of being born with a set of biological characteristics, or by being thrust into social circumstances promoting specific behavioural characteristics.

However, it is not evident that it is possible to step 'outside' of ideology entirely, to the extent that one is not affected by prejudice at all - or indeed, that it would be desirable to do so. We may consider Gadamer's evaluation of prejudice as something necessarily involved in the process of understanding. Prejudice can have both positive and negative value, in the sense that individuals inevitably possess prejudices according to objective socio-historical conditions in which they find themselves. Individuals would be incapable of developing their understanding of the world without reference to their prejudices, just as it would be impossible to change those prejudices in view of developing their understanding, without reference to them in the first place.

Gadamer notes the negative connotation of prejudice was something born with Enlightenment, which 'takes tradition as an object of critique', whereas 'prejudice' as a positive value simply means 'a judgement that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined' (Gadamer 2004, p.273). It follows Enlightenment attacks on all forms of prejudice result in their own form of prejudice: the continuous attack on tradition and authority culminates in its own prejudice of the pre-eminence of reason:

The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will prove itself to be a prejudice, and removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which dominates not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness. Does being situated within traditions really mean being subject to prejudices and limited in one's freedom? Is not, rather, all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways? If this is true, the idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms – i.e., it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates…. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being* (ibid, pp. 277-78).

The awareness that individuals inevitably form prejudices, therefore – whether grounded in tradition *or* in the belief of the perfectibility of reason – in relation to their *historical* context allows for the insight that neither tradition nor reason can become absolute. Similarly, to assume prejudice as something uniquely 'negative' masks the extent to which individuals depend on their historical context. It follows that prejudice is *necessary* for understanding one's historical context, but the problem arises when prejudice becomes *ideology*. This idea of prejudice *as* ideology is specifically relevant to criticism of structures of thought that take themselves as absolute. In the contemporary historical context of the dominance of social experience by science and technology, the question becomes: what happens when understanding of reason upon which science and technology is based determines social experience to the extent that it is assumed by individuals to be their own *subjective* rationality?

It may be suggested how modern individuals are divided by two sets of prejudices: those inherited 'traditionally', and those derived from predominant forms of reasoning in the individual's historical context. The problem arises when predominant

forms of rationality become subjective prejudices by default because of the degree of social power they exert. They become prejudices that the individual does not challenge, indeed, *cannot* challenge, because of the extent to which i) the individual is dependent on them, and ii) *there is no competing form of rationality* available in the pragmatic structures of the world experienced by the individual. Stating the problem in this way presupposes the hypothetical context of a rationality that indeed acts as if it were absolute – and thus inevitably exerts itself ideologically - which suggests the problem of 'instrumental rationality'.

What, then, can critical engagement with the problem of ideology amount to, if one accepts that individuals will always, to some degree, be bound up in it? If the endeavour of critical engagement with ideology is not undertaken, conditions are germane for individuals to embrace identity as naturally 'given', and thus to depend on ideology in order to sustain it. While there may be nothing wrong in taking measured pride in one's nation, heritage or religion, relying on what one assumes one knows as a result of any one of those factors easily leads to the kind of ideological outlook that can undermine an objective evaluation of a social state of affairs.

Similarly, when it is felt that a 'basic identity' is under threat by external forces, as in the case of any war, or in political battle between ideological antagonists, there is a tendency to fall back on the ideological premises of that 'basic identity' by default. It follows that irrational responses to problems between different agents, which can result in loss of life, have their roots in the over-reliance on shared beliefs that come to define ideas of community and belonging. The seeking of true resolutions, however, to problems between individuals with varying beliefs requires both the objective evaluation of prevalent conditions, *and* enough distance from subjective positions in order to overcome the roots of conflict between them. How might such conflict be reflected in light of contemporary experience?

In the Introduction, a contemporary problem related to ideology was briefly identified. The 'Global War on Terror', in its regressive appeal to pre-modern standards on both sides of its divide, is a contemporary global chasm collapsing distinctions between 'pre-modern' and 'modern', in terms of evaluating social progress according to historical standards - particularly if it is held that the label of 'modernity' had any such

useful distinction previously. For Weber, for example, modernity is the 'disenchantment of the world as traditional beliefs and the unified complex of religion, metaphysics and superstition collapse under the impact of a substantive reason or the instrumental rationality which subordinates means to ends. Politics, public life, private life and religion become separate spheres of existence as reason itself divides into the distinct realms of science, morality and art' (Macey 2000, p. 260). For Bauman, conversely, modernity 'is a project, and not only a period, and it is, or was, a project of control, the rational mastery over nature, the planning, designing and plotting which led to planomania and technocracy' (Beilharz 2001, p.6). Both designations of modernity mark the departure from 'pre-modern' conditions in which religious influence was prevalent in the conduct of social affairs.

In the West, appeals to moral righteousness couched in increasingly religious vocabulary made by elected politicians in the years immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, combined with resorts to military force, appear incompatible with progressive, liberal goals officially espoused by modern democracies. On the other end of the spectrum, the war of attrition waged against Western power is by and large grounded in deep-seated animosity towards modernity and is a desired reversion to de-secularised forms of polity in which religious law would be paramount and where, similarly, religion is invoked as justification for force. Both, explicitly or not, subscribe to the notion that their vision of human society is *morally* superior to the other, and that, implicitly or explicitly, they have the blessing of 'God'. We may consider the following quotation from former U.K. Prime Minister Blair to get a sense of how the appeal to 'God' also permeates some of contemporary Western political discourse in light of global developments:

When you're faced with a decision like that [whether or not to invade Iraq], and some of those decisions have been very, very difficult, most of all because you know... there are people's lives... and, in some cases, their death... I think if you have faith about these things, then you realise that that judgement is made by other people... and if you believe in God, it's made by God as well.[14]

While such invocation of the divine has always been part of quasi-political discourse in the U.S., and while the same cannot be said of political discourse in, say, France, which

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[14] See Blair 2006.

remains secular, the September 11 attacks and the subsequent declaration of the 'War on Terror' strengthened beliefs that political actions are undertaken with the blessing of God. Conversely - the extent to which this contributes to actual policy-making notwithstanding - the invocation of God as justification for action has long figured prominently in the political discourse of Islamic leaders.[15] In such instances, there is often distance between what is *literally* said in ideological invocations of God and the reasons *why* that invocation is made, which is grounded in a specific set of social circumstances. In the Arab world, e.g., the rise of fundamentalist Islam is partly a response to the demise of Marxist and other responses to longstanding social problems. As such, invocations of God serve to appeal to a unifying form of identity in order to generate political support.

'Globally' speaking, however, it may be suggested how religion has re-emerged as a reaction to Enlightenment values and corresponding notions of progress in scientific and technological development, or the liberal prerogatives of Western societies, as opposed to being 'swept away' by Enlightenment in a 'higher synthesis' of human development. It follows the scientific 'disenchantment of nature' resulted in a 'loss of meaning', forcing the traditional sphere of influence of meaning-providing institutions such as the church into a more private realm, and making it off-limits to the realm of deliberation concerning understanding and implementation of social 'progress'.[16] The re-appearance of the search for meaning within religious strictures on a global scale as *reaction* to modernity seems to have provoked a *counter-reaction* in many Western societies that is sometimes also dependent on faith, dealing what appears to be a blow to Enlightenment values.

Among the consequences of this development, there is the resort to terror in the name of Islamic fundamentalism, often personalised in the example of the suicide bomber, and usually justified both in the name of God and resisting Western influence. Conversely, the Western reaction following the September 11 terrorist attacks has been a resort to large scale warfare, politically justified initially in vague terms of a struggle

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[15] To reference just one diatribe against the West by Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the terrorist organisation Hezbollah ("Party of God"),"the… effort was spreading the word [of God] among the people, first, in a bid to raise their morale, and second to instil in them a sense of animosity towards the enemy, coupled with a spirit of resistance... this required us to use the language of indoctrination rather than Realpolitik. People then were not in need of political analysis, they were in need of being incited and goaded." See Jaber 1997, pp.49-50.

[16] Former Pope Benedict XVI sought to address this trend: see Ratzinger 2006.

between good and evil[17], and which, in the U.S. at least, implicitly relies on a conception of Western progress and freedom as depending on the grace of God. Such reactions, however interpreted, imply those partaking in or glorifying either terrorism or wars of choice in the name of belief systems are at least partially *alienated* from their interests, if the argument is made that the preservation of life, and human rights pertaining to it, should be the most fundamental normative issue at stake in any collective politics.

This has not historically been the case, although it *has* been in the belief in the interests of polity or nation that wars have been launched and casualties counted. The (relatively recent) political phenomenon of universal human rights notwithstanding, the general preservation of life and its possible fulfilment is the governing idea and political impetus of most human communities. There are exceptions: certain religious societies determine matters of life and death according to selective interpretations of religious laws. However, the idea that life is preferable to death, for its own sake and for its potential contribution to society, is at the root of all modern, democratic political thought. Ideological distortions of this premise arise when it is assumed that the preservation of one form of life, or identity, implies the destruction of another, although admittedly the idea that there can be 'ideological distortion' in the first place applies to human, as opposed to animal, consciousness.

However, if acts intended to kill or harm others presuppose the presence of a form of alienation in perpetrators from their victims, what is a source of this alienation, and why would it arise in the first place? One source of the devaluation of life is the elevation of ideological beliefs over the actual experience of and between fellow individuals: consider, briefly, the millions slaughtered as a result of totalitarian political belief systems, such as fascism and communism, in the 20th century, or the rate at which life is still lost due to religious differences. In such cases, the value of life is supplanted by the value attributed to the belief system itself, alienating individuals from each other, from themselves, and placing them at the mercy of social forces beyond their control.

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[17] E.g., President Bush's declaration of an 'Axis of Evil' in his 2002 State of the Union address: See Bush 2002.

1.2   The Subject: Alienation and False Consciousness

Alienation is not only present at the root of violence. It is equally present in the relation of individuals to their society and its institutions, between individuals, and between individuals and their conceptions of self. Excessive measures are taken, for example, in the name of desperation or faith, or driven by short term interests or sentiments of powerlessness (often a combination of these), suggesting alienation today is as real as it ever was. Far from being some discredited notion from the annals of Marxist theory, it is an explicitly contemporary concern.

Honneth, for example, has written of the Marxist concept of reification (*Verdinglichung*), which means to treat an abstraction (e.g. the idea of a higher being) literally as if it had *material* existence - as if an idea had living properties of its own. In Marxism, reification is a form of alienation in which human relations come to be identified with the physical properties of things, e.g. in the way properties existing in human relationships are attributed to inanimate objects, or, vice versa, in the way relationships are objectified and individuals are treated as if they were objects. Honneth suggests reification remains a significant concept in understanding experience of the contemporary world, where it occurs, among other things, as a form of alienation resulting from estrangement induced by modern capitalism. According to this account, reification is present in three spheres of modern experience: in relations with the objective world, in relations with other individuals, and in individual relations with themselves.[18] For our purposes, alienation giving rise to reification can similarly be classified according to these categories.

What exactly, then, is 'alienation'? Is it a condition that can be ascribed to a correlation of subjective symptoms dependent on the individual, or is it a general term for symptoms arising in individuals as a result of their relationships with the objective world? A notion often employed in relation to alienation, which helps explain it, is the term 'false consciousness'. Being alienated can presuppose being affected, in various measures, by false consciousness, which, in its most basic form, according to Rosen, is a

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[18] Honneth suggests the essential character of reification is in the notion of 'forgotten recognition' (*Anerkennungsvergessenheit*), through which he explains the three categories of reification. He develops this idea from Adorno and Horkheimer's argument in *DoE* that 'all reification is a forgetting.' See Honneth 2005.

form of consciousness that 'prevents the members of a society from behaving as their interests would otherwise dictate' (Rosen 1996, p.1). It follows false consciousness originates immanently to society and its structures, and that individuals are enticed to do things that, while often in the interests of maintaining various social conventions, are against their interests.

It follows that by internalising objective demands for society's stability and chances of perpetuation, individuals may become alienated from their 'true' selves - meaning, from what they perceive to be integral to themselves, but which they are prevented, in various ways, from pursuing. While what can be taken to be the best interests of individuals are themselves socially conditioned, it is in the relationship between individuals and society that the relative alienation of individuals may be estimated. One condition of alienation is when individuals are powerless vis-à-vis the manner in which they are objectively determined by social conditions they are thrust into. Where such powerlessness is accepted as fact - or, worse, as something to be celebrated - it can equally be suggested that individuals suffer from false consciousness.

Adorno's essay on the 'Culture Industry' in *DoE*, for example, is a critique of how individuals embrace powerlessness through injunctions by modern culture to accept what is presented in an easily accessible and non-critical manner, in the media and elsewhere. Accepting such powerlessness through, among other methods of persuasion, the continual injunction to consume and to 'enjoy' oneself (following Žižek[19]) is, accordingly, tantamount to resigning one's responsibility - to oneself and to one's social environment - and, ultimately, self-determination itself. From such a perspective, the elements of alienation and ideology are clearly related, in the sense that individuals may internalise objective ideological demands as their own (temporary) personal desires, without being aware of how – or why - they have been influenced so. However, for a consciousness to be 'false', it must be inquired whether there can be a 'true' consciousness. Labelling consciousness as 'false' has theoretically been easier than ascertaining consciousness as 'true'. It is thus imperative that grounds be established first to discuss consciousness at all, bearing in mind that alienation or false consciousness are thought to be sub- or unconscious, as opposed to being conscious.

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[19] See Žižek 2001.

An outline of what might constitute a quintessentially modern form of consciousness is one uncertain about its basic identity. Modern individuals are told they are free, yet cannot exist independently of modern society - a society that uproots, disorientates and disperses its members by making its collective identity dependent on constant renewal and change. The effects of this deracination are especially felt in the workforce, where individuals increasingly feel too insecure in the long term due to technological upheavals, economic downturns, etc., to form a stable identity in relation to their labour. This insecurity, in turn, undermines foundations for the stability of a given polity, placing it in a paradoxical situation: Western societies depend on their own constant renewal, but depend equally on the allegiance of their members to provide them with such renewal. How, then, is it in the interest of labouring individuals to contribute to something that may eventually undermine them or their conceptions of stable identity?

The 'crisis of uncertainty' engendered by the endlessness of expectations in modern life is at least partially responsible for the reversion to faith in some Western societies, but perhaps the more interesting point to note is that while faith is turned to in order to counter crises of identity, it is also appealed to by forces engendering that very crisis. For example, religion plays a major socio-political role in a highly technically and economically advanced society such as the U.S., not to mention having a substantial industry devoted to it, and American politicians advocating the free market rarely do so without also invoking faith. The constant upheaval in capitalism, however, is effectuated in the name of the individualistic profit motive, which is intimately connected to the idea of freedom. In considering the extent to which the idea of freedom is used to justify such motives, a case can be made that the *idea* of freedom itself becomes ideological when it is assumed to be a 'given' in society. The notion of freedom is in particular danger of becoming ideological when it is used as justification for unilateral motives, as opposed to being practiced with reference to interests of combined social elements likely to be affected by their practical implementation.

Similarly, a society defining itself and its interests by its freedom does not guarantee it is 'free'; it suggests only that the idea of freedom is used, in its presentation as an indefeasible norm, to politically secure the support of enough people for motives

pursued under the aegis of the freedom to act of *particular* agents.[20] Moreover, the constant upheaval provoked by capitalist practices depends, to a large extent, on the very Enlightenment values – scientific progress, technological development, consumerist logic, etc. – that reversions to faith may be a reaction *to*. It could thus be speculated that, in the West at least, the modern emphasis on religion actually subtends the Enlightenment 'drive', or at least its interests – and that the two opposites co-exist in the consciousness of the modern individual, each outwardly hostile to the other but inwardly complementary (albeit perhaps not consciously so).

Conversely, hostility towards the West and its Enlightenment values in certain regions of the world is very much directed at Enlightenment itself. Here, the imperative of faith unifies individuals with their identities in a manner that does not measure itself with regard to 'social progress', as would be in the case in, say, measuring increases in GDP. Instead, the imperative of faith here defines social progress by the extent to which it can be submitted to the will and identity of the society in question, which is sometimes ideologically coterminous with how the will of God is interpreted. From this perspective, the more de-secularised the social sphere, the more 'progress' is essentially achieved. Such examples are at either extreme of the reaction to modernity, but regardless of degree, speaking of alienation in the context of some of the problems of modernity remains valid. It is as difficult to see why faith in some divine power - or in social progress - should be necessary in order to go to work and earn an income, as it is to see why a similar belief should justify a suicide bombing. From the perspective of behaving according to one's interests, neither of these configurations makes much sense if indeed a philosophical goal common to mankind is conceivably to live, and as well as possible. A factor underpinning modernity from every perspective, and which goes far in explaining why people become alienated in the first place, then, is ideology.

As ideology is indispensable to the notion of identity, it is also central to the idea of subjectivity, tying together shared beliefs via which collectives define themselves.

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[20] The re-definition of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, for instance, as a project to spread democracy throughout the Arab world, from its originally stated purposes of liberating Iraq, fighting terror and preventing the spread of WMD, was a consequence of worsening conditions as a result of the occupation. As public awareness of these grew, culminating in the 2005-07 Iraqi civil war, the invasion in the first place was increasingly questioned. It therefore became politically necessary to make another *ideological* supplement to the original arguments for invasion, namely that spreading freedom in the Middle East via Iraq's example was a noble cause demanding additional sacrifice. See Woodward 2006 for a historical account of how the stated purpose for the occupation changed over time, and Bush 2005 for the declaration of the new, wider objective of 'spreading freedom'.

Overt reliance on such shared assumptions, in contradistinction to rational, objective evaluations of given states of affairs is generally, then, what is meant by 'false consciousness', but then, as Rosen inquires, what conditions 'must be met for a form of false consciousness to count as "ideological"' (Rosen 1996, p.28)? Discerning what is and isn't ideological may seem easier, at present, than distinguishing between whether consciousness is 'true' or 'false'. If 'false consciousness' is bound up in ideology and is inherent to potentially irrational shared beliefs that are nevertheless necessary for the rational ends of sustaining a collective, then what is rational? If modern society holds itself to be guided by precepts of a commonly agreed-upon rationality, and substantiates its claim to being 'enlightened' as a result, we are compelled back towards the historical association between reason and Enlightenment.

The original Enlightenment rationality purports to be critical of traditional authority, in particular that associated with religion, and has as its aim to establish a social order based on reason and natural law by replacing the fear and superstition of pre-modern times with objective consensus and the search for truth. According to Pinkard,

Common to a wide body of thought in the Enlightenment was a very widespread and imprecise consensus that the seemingly different ideas of reason, happiness (sometimes identified as "utility"), sentiment (and later emotion) were all in fact in harmony with each other, and that only the vagaries and prejudices of tradition and (particularly priestly) authority had prevented this harmony from establishing itself. Part of the Enlightenment's faith was that the use of *reason*, unfettered by such tradition and authority and accompanied by a proper attention to "sentiment," would be enough to put things right. What had only been a *project* for the early modern period – that reason and reality are one – seemed to come to self-conscious fruition in the Enlightenment, which produced an account of itself that took reason, in Hegel's words, to be "certain of itself as being all reality." Its various accounts led to the conclusion that taking an impersonal, observational point of view (which many Enlightenment figures identified as following the dictates of reason) would eventuate in some kind of overall social and even personal "harmony" (Pinkard 1996, p.125).

It was thought that this drive towards 'social harmony' would reveal the universality common to humanity, and that its discovery would provide humanity with the conditions in which it could ameliorate itself. The source of this universality was to be reason itself.

For Kant, this reason was 'the faculty which tried to think the whole, as against understanding which operated in the immediate context' (Taylor 1975, p.116). Reason would liberate individuals from the 'determining influence of the world of sense', allowing them 'to act according to principles… independent of nature', and encouraging them to 'make inferences about the world which exceed the limits of the understanding' (Caygill 1995, p.347). It follows for individuals to recognise themselves as capable of being responsible for their actions, they would cease to see themselves as the result of the causality of nature, and would instead employ reason towards self-determining ends and, consequently, social legislation. Social harmony would thus become possible to the extent that the social realm would reflect a community of beings acting simultaneously in their own best interests, and in the interests of the community.

These are standards by which modern societies still evaluate themselves, but the way reason is understood changes in different historical contexts. It can never be assumed that the manner in which reason is identified intellectually or employed socially at a specific point in time is available to all members of a community. As understandings of reason change to meet criteria compelled by objective social conditions, they can entail a radical divide between those capable of employing such reason towards their own wellbeing, and those for whom that reason becomes an obstacle – indeed, an alienating factor – in the pursuit of their interests. This paradox, alongside empirical conditions, such as the radical economic imbalance between different parts of the world or the maligned predominance of Western culture, can account for why huge swathes of mankind find themselves out of harmony with the Enlightenment conception of reason.

There is also the notion that what individuals perceive to be crucial elements of experience, in terms of how they account for their perception of the world, is not accounted for in the manner that reason comes to be employed socially. Where reason, by traditional accounts, is supposed to liberate individuals from the causality of nature, the modern notion of reason seems to impose a causality of its own – one leaving diminishing space for distinctively spiritual and subjective needs. Social antagonism can be traced to both objectively empirical conditions *and* this perceived 'lack' in reason – and if it is claimed that a social order is based on reason, that reason has to account for what it can be accused of lacking. If such claims are ignored, then the rationality in

question can be accused of being ideological – meaning, it depends, for its coherence, on excluding thoughts and sentiments that might challenge its claims to 'universal' validity.

From the industrial revolution to today's information revolution, for example, the submission of individual needs to the overarching needs of industry provided the stage upon which recent history has played out. One significant pan-global development in recent history, emerging from the ashes of the Cold War logic of 'mutually assured destruction', represents a dialectical development of sorts. This development moves from a rationalised bipolarity, in which both superpowers staked respective social progress partially on the threat of the destruction of the other, to the rational consciousness embodied and espoused by a sole hegemon (or more precisely, with exceptions only of degree, a hegemonic *Weltanschauung*), to which large portions of the globe take exception, be it in the guise of religion, nationalism or other beliefs. Where the Cold War provided a semblance of parity between competing ideologies, and therefore a perception of ideological choice, the near-total victory of one ideology has created even greater distance between those immanently experiencing that form of rational consciousness, and those left outside of it. In addition, a gulf between rich and poor has since been revealed which is much wider in terms of power-relations and geopolitical bargaining between first and developing worlds than was perceived during the Cold War.

This gulf hitherto shows limited potential for reconciliation, and it may be suggested that the lack of a rational meeting ground between the dominant pragmatist rationalism governing the West and the economic and existential desperation characterising much of the rest of the world, is part of what leads to respective resumptions of faith. A measure of such 'existential desperation' is exemplified by how developing countries are enjoined to 'catch up' with the West by importing economic and political systems more harmonised with those first-world systems powering the global economy than they are with local conditions. The forced choice between global and local in many instances drives a wedge of misunderstanding between those operating locally who, consequently, are forced to compete globally, and those operating globally with limited concern for local conditions and traditions. Existential desperation is thus experienced by individuals forced to trade tradition and local know-how for the

uncertainties of globalisation and a low place on the globally competitive food chain.[21] Simply put, the locus of conflict has shifted from an ideological balance of power to a radical imbalance of global power, and the explicitness of this imbalance highlights one root cause of contemporary alienation.

Contemporary alienation, in this constellation, could indeed be considered threefold: Alienation from 'the other' - from other individuals experiencing conditions one has no understanding of; alienation from objective conditions in which individuals struggle to find meaning, and alienation from oneself – the conflict between how individuals wish to perceive themselves, and how they are determined by objective factors beyond their control. The Hegelian formulation of the concept of alienation as being the 'unhappy consciousness' (*unglückliches Bewusstsein*), in which individuals are conscious of themselves as divided, and for whom the aspiration towards 'universality' has been compromised, is germane to this discussion. In this formulation, individuals are divided *because* they are not part of, or on the way to, 'universality'. It follows divided individuals are alienated from the universality of the world – the individual's consciousness is not 'one' with how it is objectively determined, although it still depends on the objective world.

This concept of alienation found vivid expression in its Marxist characterisation as a feature of the modern world intrinsic to capitalism and the social mobility it engenders. In this characterisation, alienation from labour proper divides individuals from the labour of their own bodies, thus compromising their potentially universal essence. The product of labour, it follows, becomes independent and potentially more powerful in terms of exchange value than labourers themselves. By this account, the process of labour is alienating because it is experienced, not as a relationship between workers and their labour, but as a loss of the worker's own reality. What, then, can be understood as an individual's reality, and how does 'universality' feature in such reality?

If the truth of individuals' consciousness depends on the nature of their relationship to reality, how can an adequate framework for reality itself be provided, considering no one single individual encompasses the scope of reality? To some degree, the appeal to the 'universal' seeks to answer the notion of a reality shared by all. The

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[21] See Stiglitz 2002.

notion of the universal, however, cannot count as more than a *belief*, and as such is a 'non-rational determinant' (Rosen) on par with religion, or with the notion of the existence of a 'spiritual essence' of a community. However, the Enlightenment drive towards the universal is precisely where non-rational beliefs about the nature of reality and their continuous critique in the drive towards justification are supposed to meet. This dialectic between belief and rational justification has been present in the ebb and flow of any of the major beliefs that have characterised the Western mind.

By the account of the emphasis on justification in Enlightenment rationality, the idea of false consciousness and its relationship to society has been carried by rationalist assumptions that human nature is constant, such as Hume's judgement, in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, that the purpose of history is the discovery of 'the constant and universal principles of human nature'. Assuming that 'human nature' is 'the part of nature that is human' and is bound up in the objective conditions of the world (leaving aside essentialist notions of 'inner human nature'), it could well be said to be constant. It follows while the specific form of false consciousness may change according to the social conditions it pertains to, its subject matter – human nature - changes only by degree, and not in substance.

However, it does not follow that because some form of repression of human nature has been inherent in every historical stage of experience, that human nature has remained essentially unchanged. This assumption may be correct, but it does not follow from the *point* that repression of human nature is characteristic of a society assumed to be rational in the manner that it weighs its ends and the means used to achieve them. If we accept, however, that some form of repression *is* characteristic of rational society – if rational society entails at least the partial repression of human nature, even to the extent that it provides the greatest possible benefits for the greatest number of people, then, *pace* Pippin, the *justification* for its control and ensuing repression should be addressed. Here, then, the question must be asked: how, or where, can modern subjectivity be situated, and examined?

So far, we have seen that the modern subject moves between a dualism of belief and rational justification; that the subject always exists in relation to the objective world – both society and nature - outside itself, and that it experiences contradictions between

freedom and fulfilment, and repression and alienation, in its experience of the modern world. How does the individual, 'susceptible to suffering', find meaning 'in a world that – however much he and his kind may have transformed it – ultimately, he has not made' (Rosen 1996, p.22)?

The notion of false consciousness provides a useful starting point for inquiring into ideology and the ways it distorts individuals' ideas of their interests, and the extent to which this distortion can be repressive. Rosen divides approaches to false consciousness into three categories: Cognitive false consciousness (disorders of belief, attitude, and perception), practical false consciousness (disorders of desire/will, values, ends and norms, emotions) and 'distortions of identity' (disorders of individuality, the collective, or the metaphysical). Any of these approaches offers something to an overall conception of false consciousness and its relationship with reality, and the element tying each possible 'deficiency' to the other is ideology. False belief easily fits as a category in the rubric of ideology, as does false desire or the misinterpretation of identity as being entirely dependent on a particular collective consciousness or metaphysical belief. If ideology is the manner in which a form of consciousness is shaped so as to support a given social structure, then it is relevant to any conceivable human realm that implies social activity – religion, politics, science, business, etc. For an ideology to successfully take hold, therefore, it must ensure individuals in its sway act proficiently under its assumptions. Most importantly, the competence of individuals in executing objectives based on those assumptions contributes to perpetuation of the ideology in question.

As such, the more powerful an ideology, the more it is capable of inducing agents to act in the service of interests not necessarily their own. The more it harmonises its own criteria for right and wrong with the general and substantive beliefs held by individuals operating within it, the greater its chances of continuing in a dominant form. Marx, in *The German Ideology*, alleges that '[i]f in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process' (Marx 2001, p.253). This, following Rosen, means ideological beliefs both reproduce structures of reality *and* invert them at the same time, presumably to the point where they become barely perceptible. This, then, would be a condition in which 'false consciousness' arises – a consciousness both true in terms of the reality that

it is perpetuating, and false in the sense that its contribution eventually becomes ideological.

It follows that false consciousness resulting from ideology compromises human experience, undermining its unity. Yet, another example of false consciousness would be the claim that unity and continuity, whether of experience or the ego, are themselves 'false' notions, and that the very search for a unified ego or self is itself ideological, alienating individuals from comprehension that there may be no such thing. Accordingly, the idea of the 'unified subject' itself would be a source of false consciousness. Any approach to ideology has a problem in common, however. Where does one stand with relation to the critique of, and emancipation from, ideology, if one can never really stand outside it?

This problem is a feature of modern subjectivity, in terms of the global power of one particular form of political economy, the kinds of ideology it gives rise to, and the paucity of reasonable alternatives to it. However, the problem is not only modern: regardless of particular historical contingency, ideology is a prerequisite for creating common belief systems and the ideological forms consciousness takes in relation to its needs. On one hand, the social experience of individuals is guided by language, and specifically by distinctions between true and false propositions. The submission of claims to a commonly held 'space of reasons' between individuals thus acts as a rational constraint on potentially false propositions, and on individuals making them.

This suggests while ideological forms are dependent on language in order to become dominant among a given collective, they can also be challenged by language. If, conversely, subjectivity is always determined in ways individuals may not be aware of, or have the possibility of being aware of, this presupposes a degree of false consciousness in the ideological conception of anything particular in the world irrespective of language, because of the numerous ways experience can be constrained. What, then, can a 'truth' of the subject itself amount to? Any such conception depends on conscious experience, and any 'truth of the subject' depends, therefore, on the truth of the subject's *experience* of something, as opposed to ideological assumptions or expression of what, e.g., something *is*. This suggests the nature of individual consciousness is indispensable to establishing truth about both the object it is conscious of, and the subject itself. While consciousness

is not a necessary feature for, say, the heart to pump blood, or knowledge of the arteries a necessary feature for the survival of the organism, distinction should be made between biological facts pertaining to established scientific truths or frameworks, and the social, environmental factors which, in principle, should be accessible to the mediation of all individuals.

Accounting for perceptions of the world with language is essential to the ability of individuals to determine the truth of their propositions. The conceptualisation of these perceptions, however, may itself be reified or ideological, or the product of a false consciousness originating from ideological norms of the immediate social environment, suggesting an *active* role of the subject in making propositions aspiring to the status of truth. Where the notion of false consciousness raises larger questions pertaining to the status of the mind within reality - questions investigated below – the notion of the 'truth of the subject' can presently be delineated as a question of the extent to which the subject reflects simultaneously on its relationship to its subject matter (the object of knowledge), and on itself. This also means that the question of the truth of the subject can be re-framed as a question of the subject's *experience*, where the 'false consciousness' of something reflects the extent to which the experience of something is, or has been, restricted, whether by (ideological) social structures and norms, by individuals themselves, or both.

First, for individuals to make any claim to truth at all, and for there to be any chance of guaranteeing that what individuals experience as meaningful is grounded in verifiable relations with the objective world, they must engage in discourse and gain perceptions contrary to their own, without which any claim is worthless. Such inter-subjective discourse acts correctively – normatively - in revealing shortcomings in subjective perceptions of the world, as well as providing new experiences that can be the source of evolving truths pertaining to respective individuals. Clearly, conflicting perspectives between what the subject-for-itself considers to be legitimate and what the social realm holds as being so, not to mention what different social realms hold, are the source of constant conflict within which any truth of the subject may be examined. But what is a recognisable locus of such conflict? I address this in Chapter 2, where I consider the objective determination of ideology in the notion of 'instrumental' forms of

rationality, alongside introducing some of Adorno's key concepts in order to establish their validity in relation to discussing the problem of ideology.

III. CHAPTER 2: PRIORITISING THE OBJECTIVE

This chapter continues the cross-examination of the concept of ideology, now in relation to categories of instrumental and subject-centred forms of reason. To this end, I examine contradictions inherent to various kinds of instrumental rationality to suggest how modern society is in need of a continuing critique of ideology, and to submit a position from which ideology critique itself can be rationally validated. These objectives involve a discussion of the problem of 'rational constraints'. Additionally, the question of how experience of modern society can be a source of claims to truth is introduced. Some of Adorno's theoretical responses to the problems of ideology and truth are introduced with a view to establishing their validity. The objectives of this chapter are, first, to continue discussing ideology in contexts that resurface throughout this thesis, and second, to establish basic elements of Adorno's theory, and to suggest their relevance to contemporary problems, and structures of thought associated with them.

2.1   The Object: Modern Society and Instrumental Reason

One way of examining conflicts of perception discussed is the evaluation of specific ideas pertaining to the functions of ideology in contemporary society. Certainly, understanding how various ideological forms impact individuals helps to account for their perceptions of the world. A standard critique of ideology is that it passes for, and is sanctioned as, *reason* in modern societies. This critique suggests modern rationality has no court of appeal outside itself, and therefore that the kind of rationality whose objective is to subject the objective world to the human will becomes an incontrovertible ideology in its own right. In critical theory, the type of rationality resulting from the drive towards quantification and control over nature is typically called 'instrumental reason'.

This reason is 'instrumental' in the sense that it becomes self-sustaining while evolving into evermore powerful forms, in that it exerts itself upon the social realm to the point where it is accepted as naturally 'given', and in that it operates predominantly according to a logic of means to ends. Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a classic critique of instrumental reason, in which they argue that scientific theory guides what is deemed in the service of knowledge and progress by constructing objects of knowledge with a view to manipulating the natural world. Their criticism questions

how theories pertaining to these objects are developed, suggesting they are often developed in isolation from actual social, historical and natural circumstances in which they are elaborated. As opposed to treating nature itself as a true object of knowledge, they claim many such theories treat their objects partially in (attempted) isolation *from* nature, and therefore potentially ignore ways in which elements accounted for in these theories change in the course of their experience.

In as far as such theories contribute to common understandings of reason, reason becomes 'instrumental' in the following ways: First, in the sense that theories are *imposed* on the natural world. Second, theories manipulate those elements of the natural world best serving the theories themselves, at the expense of inconvenient or contradictory evidence. Third, these theories often legitimate themselves independently of recurring reference to the natural world as a whole, and specifically to the *social* experience of these theories in the context of society within the natural whole. Further, the threat posed by instrumental reason, irrespective of the purely scientific validity underpinning it, is that a form of reasoning that has achieved a limited form of scientific success becomes the de facto standard of rationality applied throughout society, and across manifold levels of social and individual experience.

Habermas, for example, distinguishes between attempts to understand nature and natural laws with a view towards manipulating them technically towards pragmatic ends as a neutral and necessary form of instrumental reasoning, and the critical questioning of how this instrumental rationality can function in socially oppressive ways.[22] Such critical questioning can amount to reasoning that, conversely, is not 'instrumental', but remains continuously wedded to the changing social experience itself of instrumental rationalities.

It follows instrumental rationality may result in forms of 'subject-centred' reason which define rationality in terms of needs that are arguably not real. Consider, e.g., the extensive contribution of science to the manufacture and commercial promotion of products destined for the marketplace that are not real necessities, and which do little to address genuine needs or individual suffering. While this involves questioning subjective positions from which one judges 'genuine' needs, one predominant feature of modern life is the overpowering extent to which commercial products are forced upon individual

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[22] See Habermas 1968.

consciousness through the immediacy of advertising, technology and a plethora of different, often manipulative, methods.

This exemplifies how a form of instrumental reason – the overwhelming supply of products to satisfy objectives of economic growth (itself an ideological measure of social health) – can lead to subject-centred reasoning. In this instance, subject-centred reasoning is the consumption of products due to their availability and satisfaction they induce, but often not due to reflection on their actual necessity.[23] Subject-centred reasoning is encouraged, therefore, by a dependence on objectives and a social reality predetermined by instrumental forms of reason. This form of subjective reasoning can be characterised e.g. as understanding the social realm predominantly as a marketplace that exists to satisfy desire, or as a wholesale ideological concurrence with the determination of modern society by the objective of economic growth.

This contrasts with objective perspectives of society as, say, the expression of untold types of behaviour that cannot simply be classified according to the mechanisms of the marketplace. Or, e.g. contrasts with the perspective, as Jackson suggests, that the determination of social experience predominantly by objectives of economic growth – the default reaction of governments even in the face of grave socio-economic mismanagement arising from ideological dependence on this very objective – cannot be sustained indefinitely if prosperity and the ecology are to be preserved, due to finite resources.[24] The sheer social dominance of instrumental forms of rationality increases, therefore, likelihood of its subjective acceptance as naturally 'given' – 'the way things are' – where individuals may 'subjectivize' this form of reason as their own.

Additionally, instrumental forms of rationality are prevalent in the administration of modern society to the extent that innermost individual desires and thoughts may become indistinguishable from prevalent social ideas of, e.g., happiness or beauty, to the point where these can no longer be dissociated from their representation through the lens of instrumental reason. If instrumental reason were all-pervasive, however, it entails the *only* form of reason with which individuals can identify is instrumental, in that they'd

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[23] See Bauman 2001.

[24] Jackson argues the idea of prosperity cannot be limited to GDP, high median incomes or financial wellbeing, but is a combination of all factors contributing to material wellbeing, such as psychology, social safety or a healthy eco-system. See Jackson 2009.

be deprived of both objective responses to the stimuli of the immediate world *and* the critical ability to develop such responses. Is this truly the case?

According to Honneth, '…Adorno and Horkheimer presuppose [in *DoE*], for the sake of labour, individuals must forcibly constrict their capacity for sensory experience as well as their organic instinctual potential in order to realise the discipline of instrumental functions' (Honneth 1996, p.48). Intensification of the means of domination encroaching on 'sensory experience' and 'organic instinctual potential', legitimated by rational means of mechanisation and numerical administration as facts of modern life and work, is in fact, according to Adorno, a *lack* of rationality. This lack of rationality, masquerading as reason, compromises possibilities of rational approaches to social and human problems - meaning, approaches taking all forms of experience into account.

For Adorno, the potential for 'non-instrumental' forms of reasoning in modern society does exist, despite how social relations are objectively and ideologically determined. This potential, however, has to do with the capacity of reflection itself to surpass what is perceived as 'given' and realise 'moments' of freedom in reflection which has not already been circumscribed, either by the individual, or in socially fixed identifications of an object of knowledge. To realise such moments, Adorno emphasises the necessity of the continuous immanent critique of ideological forms, where one objective of such critique is to salvage the 'speculative moment' of concepts that gets lost or obscured in the social reality determined by instrumental rationality.

Cook provides exemplifications of such concepts. For example, the '"self-evident" truth that all men are created equal' enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence contains 'an idea of equality which has not yet been realised and which can be used as the basis for a critique of existing inequalities'. Another such concept is '[t]he idea of freedom, derived from Enlightenment… whose ideational content transcends particular economic interests' (Cook 1996, p.82). The 'speculative moment' in these examples refers to the potential for experiencing the freedom in these ideas that has not been universally realised, or which is threatened by existing circumstances. Extracting the speculative moment in such concepts can be a source of reflection liberated from constraints on experience imposed by instrumental reason, and, intimating the kind of reason Adorno develops, salvaging such moments is a basis for proceeding

with ideology critique. It follows contradictions between socially expressed ideals – e.g., democracies as societies based on free speech - and their experience in material reality – e.g., how securing one's livelihood often includes having to circumscribe public statements (and potentially, private thoughts) - is the starting point of both ideology critique, and for reflection striving to overcome ideology. While our ideology critique continues, therefore, it is simultaneously necessary to develop arguments suggesting how instrumental rationality comes to exert such power over the social sphere that Adorno conceives of the ideological determination of social relations as 'total'.

One of the philosophical preoccupations of modernity is the problem of 'rational constraints', which is also a problem lending itself to questions concerning the role played by science and technology. The idea of rational constraints is as follows: In order for a form of reason to remain rational, as opposed to becoming 'instrumental', self-legitimating and therefore, a form of ideology, it must seek legitimation according to criteria external to itself, and must continually justify itself according to claims contradicting it. In this way there would be an external, rational 'constraint' on that form of reasoning which would, by acting as a mode of checks and balances, increase its validity and social legitimacy, as opposed to allowing it to develop irrespective of, e.g., verifiably harmful social consequences.

For example, technology legitimates itself socially with appeals to the inventiveness and playfulness of human spontaneity (e.g., software programming is an area where creativity is appreciated professionally). The domination of social experience by technology creates its own aporia, however. Technology can also encourage the limitation of spontaneous thought and creativity to the purely technical realm – consider, e.g., the social and financial premium placed on things like web design or advanced programming skills, or how much easier it is for laboratories dedicated to technological advances to secure private and public funding for research and development than, say, research departments in the humanities.

A relentless ideological emphasis on technical accomplishment as the supreme contemporary achievement of human spontaneity, to the neglect of most other areas of social activity and reflection to which spontaneity contributes, suggests one key way technology itself has become self-legitimating. It also concentrates freedom in one area

of potential human activity in society more broadly, promoting ideological judgements in the process – e.g., the social value of financial or professional investment in technology considered superior to investment in most other areas of social activity - that become social norms onto themselves. Additionally, it leads to long-term consequences, such as the limitation of individual and social skill sets, and the workforce in general, to technological manipulation alone, or behavioural changes as a result of the technological mediation of so much human communication.[25]

One reason for the domination of social experience by technology, then, is because of the lack of rational constraints on it. It follows that the creation of technology itself or the social consequences of its use are rarely challenged, partly because no other area of social thought or activity can compete with technological mediums themselves in terms of the immediacy with which they relay their messages. The rationality and logic immanent to the development of technology in the first place can become a source of social *ir*rationality, therefore, when the extent of its social monopoly is such that it does not have to justify, politically or otherwise, its near-total social dominance beyond its own rationalising forms, while still clearly impacting on so many other areas of social and individual experience. The lack of rational constraints on technology has implications for the ideas of freedom and self-determination, and how these come to be conceptualised dominantly in the social context. Technology is designated as a central expression of democratic freedom, in that its development is a testament to human ingenuity and that its use is liberating, democratic and spurs innovation. For example, the fact that a new piece of software or the latest in the endless stream of applications and updates allows individuals to do previously unimaginable things with their computers may be considered progress in the literal sense that the software itself has improved.

The ideological undercurrent of the notion of software or Internet as 'liberating', however, is the celebration of the increased personal freedom to do previously unimagined things, which does not take into account all the ways in which this freedom may be abused, may curtail the freedom of others, or may lead to unintended and irreversible social consequences. Consider e.g. the phenomenon of 'cyber-bullying', where bullying amongst children perpetrated anonymously over the Internet can take on

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[25] Examples of this are given throughout the thesis.

previously unimaginable proportions merely because it is *possible*[26], not to mention the proliferation of practices such as sharing of child pornography, or the effect of pornography on children themselves, etc. Or, consider the broader social effects of potentially decreasing levels of literacy due partly to overexposure to often false, fragmented information and incoherent reading on the Internet[27], the strain on attention spans due to the social pressure of constant interconnection, or breakdowns in civility due to anonymity afforded by web-based communication.

These brief examples demonstrate some contradictions in the identification of the concept of freedom with technological progress. The problem with technological progress in the context of ideology critique is that individual conceptions of freedom come to be identified predominantly with the kinds of freedoms afforded by technological development, where the socially dominant form of instrumental rationality is adopted as subject-centred reasoning. The lack of rational constraints on this form of instrumental rationality, resulting in its near-total social dominance, however, suggests there are substantial elements of self-determination, and what can be conceptualised as freedom, unaccounted for within the strictures of merely technical progress. Where do individuals stand with regards to their self-determination *from* the influence of technology, and do they even have a democratic choice in the matter, if they are to survive under conditions of postmodernity?

Furthermore, the social experience of the kind of freedom promoted by technological progress as a *modus operandi* of the increasing ability, e.g., of individuals to do as they please online (which has real repercussions for social attitudes *off*line) suggests urgent consideration of rational constraints on that form of subject-centred freedom, alongside the technology encouraging it. One problem with subject-centred reason, however, based on the perceived freedom to act in accordance with whatever is possible and what the individual desires, is that among its governing precepts is that it should not submit itself to external critique or socio-political mediation. What, then, can rational constraints amount to, if they must issue from the judgement of individuals themselves - judgement, moreover, that may be increasingly difficult to separate from the technological domination of social experience?

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[26] See Cowie 2012.
[27] See Rich 2008.

Conversely, how is the charge sustained that instrumental rationality does not submit itself sufficiently to the court of human judgement, when individuals presumably make judgements about how responsibly to exercise their creativity and freedom through possibilities afforded by technology, and the possible consequences thereof? The problem can be considered by reflecting on how the direction of modern society is determined without recourse to *political* accountability for technological progress. This suggests the identification of social progress with technology is taken to be another natural, self-explanatory given, enabling the forces of production behind the technological drive to operate freely without this idea of progress being debated politically, or submitted to an informed popular vote. The political process in the West, as a whole, operates from *within* the paradigm of technological progress. It partially stakes its claim to being democratic on the extent to which technology facilitates the democratic process of making information available to prospective voters through various media.

However, it also operates from an *a priori* position that, consequently, technological progress is *sui generis* democratic, and therefore doesn't require submission to political discourse or popular plebiscite. Consider, e.g., how public political discourse is reduced to media-friendly sound-bites, ostensibly appealing to the shrinking attention spans and spare time of potential voters. Partly a consequence of how individuals become accustomed to digesting information with the immediacy with which it is dispatched, it is also a consequence of the overall technological obsession with speed. Political discourse is unquestionably affected. For example, Bauman observes how, in their successful 1997 and 2001 campaigns, Blair and the Labour Party

wisely abstained from expounding on… political programmes and philosophies: were they to behave differently, they could perhaps alienate some of the voters by opposing their preferences, but they would lose many, many more by demanding a mental effort they would neither wish nor be able to make, risking boredom and fading interest. Knowing… that the absence of guidelines to be trusted is a most vulnerable and painful aspect of life in our increasingly fluid social setting, Blair preferred to dwell on the appeal to trust him, leaving sorely under-discussed the policies electors were supposed to trust him to promote. The other constant motif of Blair's electoral speeches was that of "modernisation", a term as vacuous by itself as it is useful in implying a gloss of scientific seriousness and expertise on the universal and perpetual desire to make things

better. After electoral victory there was of course no reason to abandon the victorious strategy (Bauman 2002, p.164).

This example illustrates how political leadership is both absolved of having to go into detail to promote its agenda *because* of the effects of modern technology (the immediacy of information manifested in sound-bites, shortening attention spans), *and* how it uses this state of affairs to promote agendas of 'modernisation' (technological and scientific development, etc.) while generally avoiding serious questions being asked about it. While there is no doubt that technology also plays a positive role involving citizens in the political process, the fact that the technological determination of social reality itself was, until recently, rarely the topic of political debate reflects the extent to which it is positively accepted as a natural given of modern life. In other words, the form of instrumental rationality ideologically identifying social improvement (and health) with technological progress as a given currently has few external, social or political rational constraints to which it must submit.

The obvious candidate for such rational constraints is the electorate itself, but the fact that electorates are rarely exposed to such discussions in the course of political campaigns, or that individuals rarely make a political issue of this aspect of the objective determination of their social experience, suggests a social encouragement of the potentially *un*democratic aspects of this instrumental form of rationality. The rationality sustaining the overall technological drive must be held accountable if it is to properly legitimate itself as part of the constitution of the democratic order, and if it is not merely to be self-legitimating on the pure basis of its possibilities as opposed to, say, democratically legitimated - or not - as a consequence of its social experience. Who other than the individuals sustaining that rationality themselves can act as rational constraints and demand accountability?

The contradiction arising is therefore between an instrumental form of rationality determining manifold levels of social and individual experience in potentially undemocratic ways because of its ideological influence over individual reasoning, and the fact that individuals *themselves* are the *source* of this instrumental reasoning, partly in the belief that it increases their democratic freedoms. If instrumental forms of rationality must be accountable to something other than – something *outside* – the social conditions they objectively determine, and if they are to be subject to rational constraints and not

merely considered to be naturally given, it is far from evident that rational constraints exist objectively in the natural world. It follows that rational constraints must issue from individuals themselves, and from the mediation occurring between them at the level of their social engagement.

The precise problem of instrumental rationality is that it cannot only be considered to be rational if it does not submit itself to critiques where it can account for the extent of its influence. That it does not do so is a source of contemporary alienation: First, the unaccountability of technology and other manifestations of instrumental rationality add to sentiments of powerlessness because of the ways they objectively determine individual lives. Second, individuals have limited recourse to action because their ability to arbitrate the direction of society through the political process is constrained both by narrowing scopes of political discourse, and the increasing reliance of that discourse on ideological elements sustaining instrumental rationalities. In this state of affairs, it may be tempting for individuals to accept their world 'as is' and to act in accordance with prevailing norms and expectations – perhaps despite themselves or critical reservations they may have - increasing the potential for accepting the social state of affairs as 'naturally' given.

Modern individuals could thus be said to be doubly alienated – first, from aspects of their nature and subjectivity that simply don't identify with the forms of instrumental rationality they are compelled to act in accordance with, and second, by having that alienation reinforced by the latter's unaccountability. The technocratic determination of society, therefore, can in part be characterised as the domination of elements of external nature required for the development of technology itself as a product of scientific reasoning, and the repression of elements of (inner) nature as a consequence of the social power exerted by this form of rationality. Ensuing alienation, consequently, can be taken to be the problem of the extent to which self-determining action is possible under social circumstances both determining the immediate experience of individuals, and dominating elements of their inner nature. How, moreover, if the ability to understand and do the science that eventually - despite itself - results at least partly in a potentially undemocratic domination of social experience, is as much a feature of human nature as any other aspect of human experience, does it result in the domination of competing aspects of human nature and understanding?

The 'disenchantment of nature' made possible by the rise of modern science is central to understanding the experience of alienation in modernity. Scientific theory, broadly speaking, offers insight into the natural world while making predictions about its structure. One of its central philosophical tenets is the idea that something's way of being 'natural' is the position it is ascribed in the realm of law, a stance attributed to Kant by thinkers like Sellars and McDowell. This means phenomena in natural science become intelligible in terms of the position they are attributed according to laws of nature, resulting in the 'disenchantment' of nature as a *historical* process in which natural things become increasingly intelligible and, therefore, lose the meanings they had in traditional cultures.

This 'loss of meaning' could partially account for the experience of alienation, where tradition ascribed fixed meanings to experiences to which individuals, in previous eras, tethered their sense of identity, but this doesn't suggest the scientific quest to make natural things more intelligible is itself irrational or somehow repressive of human nature. It *does* suggest, however, that if the laws of nature natural science seeks to comprehend are themselves 'self-legitimating', then natural science itself, in its pursuit of the objective understanding of natural phenomena, also becomes 'self-legitimating' to the degree that it attempts to identify phenomena as they are, objectively, *in themselves*.

Scientific theory, however, relies on concepts – for example, the concept of falsifiability, e.g., whereby science over time disproves theories that were previously commonly accepted – and these *concepts* themselves cannot be inscribed into natural law. The question of how scientific theory uses concepts, therefore, is a matter of *judgement* that cannot be *entirely* self-legitimating. Scientific theory, e.g., often attempts to isolate its object of knowledge and subjects it to tests yielding data independently of the *rest* of nature, in the effort to comprehend it. Following Adorno, this suggests, first, that judgements are made about scientific method that reduce understanding of the phenomena to the *concept* of the method itself – effectively identifying the particular natural phenomenon with the *concept*. Second, it suggests the conceptual method is potentially imposed on the natural phenomenon in isolation from social, historical and natural circumstances in which it has been developed. Where, then, does this leave the status of reason itself in *nature*?

Sellars and McDowell also suggest, therefore, that conceptual abilities needed to reason or make judgements cannot be accounted for by natural science or the laws of nature alone. For McDowell, following Sellars, judgement and justification in the search for rational validity takes place in what they call the 'space of reasons'. This space exists beyond what is purely nature or law, does not rely on naturalistic causal explanations characteristic of modern science, and is therefore *not* self-legitimating. Thornton characterises McDowell's position in his influential work *Mind and World* as the

attempt… to reconcile the idea that perception serves to justify our beliefs – it is part of what Sellars called the 'space of reasons' – and yet it is at the same time a perfectly natural phenomenon. The problem is that natural events do not seem to be suited to play a justificatory role. Reason and nature seem to be distinct. The solution, McDowell suggests, is a proper understanding of experience. (Thornton 2009)[28]

This means, for McDowell, that reason, or the justification of beliefs in the 'space of reasons,' is a *part* of nature – individuals with perceptions and the capacity to conceptualise are natural phenomena like anything else in the natural world. Reason, however, simultaneously appears to stand 'outside' nature, to the degree that nature itself doesn't need justification for its naturally given laws, while human reasoning to understand these laws *does* require (necessarily a form of social) legitimation. This suggests a divide between reason and nature that, *pace* McDowell, can only be bridged by an adequate understanding of human experience, a position coinciding with Adorno's notion of experience.

At present, it could simply be asked where the identification of nature with law leaves the reasoning within which judgement takes place. A contradiction that could be evaluated in the space of reasons, for example, is one arising in the relationship between nature and modern society. It could be argued that modern life, with its plethora of seemingly spontaneous activity, automatically supplements the notion of natural law with the idea that there are no 'natural' external constraints on the knowledge arising from this activity. What becomes understood as the 'natural' element of this activity becomes a 'law' of existence onto itself, and rational constraints on this activity would therefore be an attempt to dominate (human) nature.

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[28] See Thornton 2009.

Is what critics call instrumental rationality, then, simply a reflection of nature, with humans performing natural, spontaneous tasks of survival and improvement at higher levels of consciousness than animals? Or, *pace* Adorno, are self-legitimating, instrumental forms of rationality themselves expressions of attempts to dominate nature that can be conceived as illegitimate in as far as they seek to dominate both human nature *and* the natural world according to singular conceptions of reason, without submitting to rational constraints of their own? Where does this contradiction leave the status of reason, and freedom? This thesis is devoted to considering this question.

If the social development of technology - as a wider aspect of scientific progress - is assumed to be a natural and necessary component of human activity, subtended by ideological assumptions about its contributions to progress and knowledge, then questions arise as to how the legitimacy of this process is guaranteed. If it *cannot* be legitimated other than through its perpetuation as part of a 'natural' human process, then it must still be an ideological process, irrespective of benefits it provides, and the extent to which ideological reasoning itself is part of (human) nature.

Marx's analogy of the *camera obscura* applies to this instance of social reality that is both true and false: true to the extent that the structure of modern reality is perpetuated through a broadly consented-to method, but false to the extent that there is a reality *outside* the realm of social and technological power that can increasingly only be viewed through prisms created by the encompassing 'totality' of that structure. Bauman provides a historical example of this *camera obscura*:

As… Marx discovered, the ideas of the dominant classes tend to be the dominant ideas… For at least two hundred years it was the managers of capitalist enterprises who dominated the world – that is, set the feasible apart from the implausible, the rational apart from the irrational, the sensible apart from the insane, and otherwise determined… the range of alternatives inside which human life trajectories were to be confined. It was therefore their vision of the world, in conjunction with the world itself, shaped and reshaped in the likeness of that vision, that fed into and gave substance to the dominant discourse (Bauman 2000, p.55).

This suggests how, in the age of industrialisation, the *power* dominant classes held over society was itself the source of legitimacy eventually attributed to their ideas, and of how these ideas characterised the rest of society - as opposed to legitimacy of the ideas

themselves. In terms of the *camera obscura* analogy, social reality thereby became simultaneously true and false. It became true in the sense that the social reality dominant classes sought to create *was* created, and perpetuated by all those not members of these classes but whose powerlessness vis-à-vis their capital and influence ensured the creation of that social reality by default. This reality was false, however, in the sense that it reflected the vision of an interest-driven minority and not the experiences of the social majority, who, in the Marxist reading, became further alienated from their own interests, potentials and labour. By this example, *power* becomes the prime determinant of legitimacy, and is an instance of particular forms of reasoning - reflecting specific interests - that become socially legitimated in reality by virtue of a concentration of power. This stands in contrast to rational constraints on this power that could shape concepts of social legitimation by taking all kinds of social experience into account, including, e.g., the alienation of the majority of individuals from their labour during this period of industrialisation.

Additionally, there is the notion of legitimacy ascribed to the social process by law developed in conjunction with social experience. As social conditions change, laws are developed in relation to them, concretising them and thereby grounding the kind of development in question within the institutional structures of society. Considering the extent to which establishing legality is supposed to take place independently of vested interests, it may therefore be suggested that the perpetuation of social reality cannot *only* be an ideological matter. However, the extent to which law grants legitimacy to social conditions in its need to legislate according to social realities can obscure ways in which the perpetuation of such conditions are also assumed to be naturally 'given' as a result. Consider, e.g. the development of the idea of the modern nation-state in the 19th and 20th centuries and its grounding in social reality. In this context, the new tasks of the modern state, according to Bauman,

…involved standardisation of law and legal institutions across the state; unification, and often direct administration, of the process of popular education; and securing priority of unified legal discipline over all other, particularistic loyalties… It is for the same reason that the modern state… [demanded] discipline to its own commands solely on formal, legal grounds: that is, referring to the fact that the commands have been issued by duly appointed incumbents of offices entitled to make rulings related to the given area (Bauman 2000, pp.165-66).

It follows the submission of social conditions to legal structures is effectuated with the aim of stabilising ideas that lead to those conditions in the first place, as evidenced in the period of the legal establishment of nation-states. It may therefore be suggested that the legal process itself is not necessarily ideological in the sense that its outcomes are controlled by private interests, which they aren't - or shouldn't be.

Conversely, the manner in which legal processes contribute to the stabilisation of social reality - and therefore to impressions that such social reality is a natural development, and not an interest-driven one - *is* an ideological factor, if it is assumed that a social reality always reflects a dominant perspective of the world – dominant, that is, to the extent that it excludes competing conceptions to its own. If the technological phase of development is also subject to the creation of laws related to it, and these contribute to impressions of its legitimacy, then a similar problem arises with relation to distinctions between real and perceived legitimacy. For example, legislation in relation to technology primarily takes place reactively to the social consequences of the transformation of the increasingly, *pace* Bauman, 'liquid' public sphere and relations, often predominantly in relation to protection of commercial interests.[29] The notion that legislation eventually arises in relation to the social effects of technology does not mean the scope of technological power *itself* has been legitimated, although it may help sustain the perception that it has. What, then, is 'real' legitimacy, in this context?

One way of thinking about legitimacy is to consider Habermas' principle that knowledge should be 'grounded' in the interests and needs of human beings. The drive behind such a principle is emancipatory, in terms of overcoming social distortions inflicted by unaccountable structures of power. The extent to which something might be considered legitimate could be considered in terms of how it seeks to further the aim of freedom and the manner it answers, or not, to genuine human needs. Such legitimacy would be 'real', then, in terms of how it is judged according to real needs, something only determinable in a *social* context between agents with contrary perceptions and experiences. In this light, if we accept the premise that part of the ideological power of technology depends on its *perceived* legitimacy – in terms of how it comes to be understood as naturally given with no further need for justification – then it can be inquired how the social *power* of technology can be justified. It would then have to place its claim to legitimacy in a

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[29] See Chapters 6 and 7.

space of reasons extensive enough to incorporate all questions - socio-political, philosophical or otherwise, that can be raised about it.

As previously suggested, the technological drive and its social impact is increasingly a discussion and policy execution limited to competing experts, and to those with access to both development of technology and education necessary to understand it - precluding in some measure the properly public sphere from political deliberation concerning its impact on the social realm. As Habermas suggests,

The quasiautonomous progress of science and technology… appears as an independent variable on which the most important single system variable, namely economic growth, depends. Thus arises a perspective in which the development of the social system *seems* to be determined by the logic of scientific-technical progress. The immanent law of this progress seems to produce objective exigencies, which must be obeyed by any politics oriented toward functional needs. But when this semblance has taken root effectively, then propaganda can refer to the role of technology and science in order to explain and legitimate why in modern societies the process of democratic decision-making about practical problems loses its function and "must" be replaced by plebiscitary decisions about alternative sets of leaders of administrative personnel (Habermas 1992, p.133).

Habermas here suggests how political representatives are presented to the public and elected on the basis of how well they will continue to observe the 'functional needs' served by science and technology – namely, their contribution to economic growth. These 'functional needs' become paramount concerns according to which democratic referendums are held, overshadowing consideration of practical problems arising from these 'functional needs' and affecting the electorate in manifold ways.

Additionally, the appearance that the social system is determined by the 'logic of scientific-technical progress' suffices for it to be reinforced politically and through propagandistic means, creating the impression it has already been legitimated. This process typically takes place under ideological assumptions that 'functional needs' themselves are the solution to all social problems. Such approaches ignore the fundamentally political issue of the considerable effect of technology on the daily lives of individuals in a modern polity, again to the extent that they are enjoined to propagate its methods professionally and privately. On the receiving end of the social spectrum, the

assumption of legitimacy of the process - not to mention lack of interest in the political process often accompanying it - suggests how individuals may be discouraged from reflecting upon its long-term effects on the spontaneity and self-determination of their public and private activities.[30]

It is not clear whether spontaneous activity in modern life can be dissociated from the learned pragmatism induced by instrumental rationality, considering the average person's work day will consist of media and technology-driven interaction. The question of what spontaneity *is*, and its relation to the concept of reason, including instrumental rationality, is explored in Chapter 3. What appears clear is that in the space where spontaneous activity and instrumental rationality combine, rational constraints may be developed from *within* the technological paradigm - measures improving the functioning of the system - but there are no clear rational constraints *outside* that space, where reason is practiced autonomously. Habermas' account of 'communicative reason' addresses this problem. For Habermas, subject-centred reason 'finds its criteria in standards of truth and success that govern relationships of knowing and purposively acting subjects to the world of possible objects or states of affairs'. This means subject-centred reason is reactive in nature - reactive to states of affairs that already exist, and pragmatically accepting of them. In the communicative reason he proposes, however,

…rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to inter-subjective recognition. Communicative reason finds its criteria in the argumentation procedures for directly or indirectly redeeming claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness and aesthetic harmony' (Habermas 1992, p.314).

From this perspective, individuals submitting claims and themselves to *each other* for verification of the truth and normativity of their propositions are in a position to develop reasoning that can provide rational constraints in a continuously *evolving* space of reasons. Such a space is, in principle, never self-enclosed and, as a result of the on-going procedure of submitting validity claims for scrutiny by other individuals - other individuals being the

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[30] The immediacy with which technology renders information accessible arguably obscures its verification, not to mention how it is divulged with diminished reflection because it was obtained with such ease in the first place. The speed with which information dissemination occurs conceivably affects the extent to which individuals are able to make informed decisions about political issues and express them at the ballot box. For a radical critique of the information society, see Virilio 2000.

source of rational constraints – can expose disproportional power and claims rooted in ideology, helping to circumvent the 'instrumentalisation' of validity claims.

2.2   Introducing Adorno's Priorities

Such a 'communicative reason', however, does not by itself settle the problem of instrumental rationality. As I have suggested, the problem arises when the overall social system appears to individuals as naturally 'given', as opposed to being considered the product of specific social agendas perpetrated by powerful interests, increasing potential for the critical categories of false consciousness, alienation and subject-centred reasoning. Two of the most straightforward types of alienation that can be identified in such a complex of social power, then, are a) failure to identify sources of power, and b) failure of overwhelmingly identifying *with* such sources of power. The combination of an unaccountable complex of power with enormous social influence and a social realm caught between these two types of alienation raises questions concerning the shaping of individual identity in modernity, evoking the notion of *Bildung*, and what it might mean in the context of modernity.

Bildung means, roughly, 'formation', in the sense of shaping individual identity. As a precept of Enlightenment, *Bildung* was central to the idea of a rational society, and was supposed to be achievable by virtue of the existence of communities within which individuals pursue their activities. By engaging in those communities, individuals would be in a position to partake in their development, learning from previously established resources, contributing to their development in turn. This engagement would provide access to reason 'as such', as individuals gained increasing understanding of society, themselves and the relationship between them, and could consequently contribute to a mutually shared conception of reason in turn. A community of individuals thus engaged would therefore be responsible for their own *Bildung*, and for that of the community as a whole. How does this Enlightenment conception of reason square with the modern social realm, dependent on self-sustaining forms of rationality precluding large segments of society from influencing their development, while ideologically determining their social experience? This outline of what *Bildung* was 'supposed' to mean is not to suggest a reactionary ideal of a 'superior' pre-modern society, but to suggest that if *Bildung* is a means by which access to reason is to be possible, it must be re-evaluated under objective

modern conditions. Prevalent conditions suggest that the totalising effect of technology creates anxiety, not only about always having to 'catch up' with the endless stream of products and injunctions from the techno-industry, but also about being left out of touch with the 'rest' of reality.

The 'rest' of reality can be a plethora of things, whether access to a reality unencumbered by technological immediacy, or the unfulfilled potential of subjective or inter-subjective expression as a result of pressures inherent to the frenetic pace of modern life. A form of rationality potentially precluding the opportunity to *experience* other aspects of reality due to its influence and practical requirements blocks both experience of different aspects of reality and the diversity of new experiences they can give rise to. Additionally, the totalising drive is complemented by the dominant cultural ethos of economically driven supply – commercial stimulation blurring distinctions between real and manufactured needs - in areas often obscuring problems of economic imbalance, social injustice or basic needs. The danger that social concerns may be overlooked beyond political lip-service also suggests such concerns may come to be seen as the unfortunate, but 'necessary' price to pay for the standards of advanced societies and ultimately, therefore, also comprise a naturally given state of affairs that cannot be remedied - and consequently ignored.

Moreover, the way individuals are exposed to social affairs is often a matter less of their direct experience of them than of their predetermined mediation through a plethora of mediums – consider e.g. how exposure to news outlets, often far from communicating the objectivity they claim to aspire to, necessarily involves exposure to predetermined social agendas, irrespective of the part of the political spectrum being promoted (not to mention the proliferation of often very deliberately subjective punditry). The inevitably ideological distortions of social experience, therefore, and the distortions these potentially reproduce in the individual mind, redoubles in complexity questions concerning the relationship between subjectivity and the objective world, an issue sufficiently complex even prior to consideration of elements in modernity that distort perceptions of the world.

The question arising in this context, then, is *what kind* of *Bildung* is presupposed in the modern conception of reason. If we accept the premise that the modern conception of reason is aligned with the ubiquitous paradigm of social progress technology is said to

represent, what can aspects of experience – and conceptualisations of rationality that follow - that do *not* find themselves validated within this paradigm appeal to? Can there be a corrective mechanism outside the 'life-world'[31] dominated by instrumental rationality? Is it possible, under modern conditions, to create the space for an 'other' of utilitarian reason? There may be no concrete answer to the purely epistemological problem of arbitration between the subjective mind and the objective world raised by imperfect and competing forms of rationality. Indeed, any such concretised answer could itself amount, *pace* Adorno, to ideology. One approach to dealing with the question, however, may be to reframe it as a socio-political problem. If it is recognised that the unaccountability of instrumental forms of rationality contradicts democratic ideas of individual and social freedom, then an appeal can be made to submit the forces contributing to the predominance of instrumental rationality to a normative process of legitimation, dependent on evaluations of its experience across all sectors of society.

A normative relationship between technology, the natural sciences and the humanistic sciences, for example, within which they legitimate themselves respectively with regards to the aspiration of satisfying human needs, could be made precisely with the intention of letting each camp of enquiry act as a rational constraint on the other. This entails how technology and natural science should be developed in conjunction with serious social and empirical research predicting social effects of their development. For example, the notion of the preservation of the ecosystem is an area where the interests of both social and scientific research necessarily coincide. Scientific research establishing which activities are responsible for threats to the environment, and how, can be combined with empirical research of factors helping to explain why individuals develop norms resulting in the downgrading of the ecosystem.

This has precisely been the case in recent years on environmental issues: The combination of both types of research then helps explain what alternatives might exist to such actions in the socio-economic context (green vehicles, etc.), and act as the basis for developing such alternatives politically. In the context of the social effects of technology itself, a similar process would ideally provide scrutiny to ensure that technologies are developed with the additional legitimacy of independent intellectual oversight - not least of its possible social effects - that could be submitted to public debate and plebiscitary

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[31] Habermas' term, developed from Husserl.

oversight. This could help ensure a rational process to help safeguard the socio-political realm from unaccountable complexes of power, focus social research to develop serious findings to compete with scientific claims in the space of reasons, *and* provide rational constraints by submitting research to the social context in which its findings are consequential. Such an environment could be legitimated in advance by its public accountability, ensuring its democratic legitimation at each stage of its development, at least in terms of agreement and compromise on possible impacts on the social realm.

In the absence of such quasi-utopian resolutions, however - short of *everyone* practicing Habermas' theory of communicative reason, who or what would arbitrate such a process without dominant factions emerging? - there is a further, philosophical problem. At the level of the supposed separation of reason and nature, disjunction exists where reason is employed to understand nature, but innumerable aspects of nature are overlooked in the evaluation of specific forms of reason. Adorno and Habermas each suggest ways of approaching this problem.

For Habermas, the objective is to move towards the communicative form of reason in which 'rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to inter-subjective recognition' (Habermas 1992, p. 314). From this perspective, making validity claims in a space of inter-subjective recognition enables evaluations of rationality that take into account conflicting conceptualisations of nature, because, as individuals are themselves elements of nature, broader nature itself cannot be excluded from the process of inter-subjective recognition.

For Adorno, however, it is also a matter of *retrieving* what has been lost or damaged in the domination of nature by reason – without sliding into subjectivism - as a manner of attempting to establish objective truths about the imbalanced relationship between individuals and instrumental rationality, through which individuals would ideally enjoy uncorrupted relations with each other. Such relations would be dependent on individuals accounting for how they both affect, and are affected by, the objective world, emphasising the types of alienation they experience and the factors inducing them - 'the need to let suffering speak is a condition of all truth', as Adorno maintains, '[f]or suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject' (Adorno 1973, pp.17-18).

Emphasising alienation is therefore crucial because, just as it allows individuals to recognise ways in which they have been dominated, or their experience distorted, it also allows recognition of ways they reproduce those structures of domination in their own thought. In order for individuals to have the possibility of experiencing 'undistorted' relations with each other, they must be in a position to articulate what has been 'lost' or repressed in their nature.

For Adorno, instrumental rationality is the culmination of the 'homogeneous flow' of history that he wants to 'interrupt' by unmasking the barbarism behind forms of rationality by which social constellations concretise, in the exposure of the suffering - past, present and likely future - inflicted on individuals in the name of reason. It follows that any claim to rationality that ignores or engenders human suffering is undermined by its own irrationality. For Habermas, though, Adorno's view of a 'total' instrumental rationality as set forth in the *DoE* does not allow for a workable praxis of reason and demonstrates an 'uninhibited scepticism regarding reason, instead of weighing grounds that cast doubt on this scepticism itself' (Habermas 1992, p.129). On this reading, Adorno undermines his own claim to reason by 'totalising' his critique of instrumental rationality.

For Adorno, conversely, one surmises that 'validity claims geared to inter-subjective recognition' would be impossible without always first challenging the concretion of social reality from which such validity claims arise. Adorno never escaped the shadow of his experiences with totalitarianism in Germany and, consequently, the adoption of information and propaganda dissemination techniques similar to those practiced by the Nazis elsewhere in the Western world, a constellation of circumstances that shaped the 'negativity' of his thought. Habermas shared these experiences and was similarly affected, but has been more concerned with developing his critique of reason according to possibilities for *practical* freedom, as opposed to Adorno's more severe emphasis on its limitations. For Adorno, freedom - and therefore the possibility of non-instrumental forms of reasoning - is primarily a principle of the possibilities of reflection, and specifically reflection attempting to overcome its domination of its object; for Habermas, freedom must be feasible in the world through *practical* reason. The critique of instrumental rationality in *DoE*, then, is a defining point for both thinkers: for Habermas, to the extent that he doesn't fully reject it, but sees it as missing the component of

communicative rationality; for Adorno, to the extent he remained broadly faithful to its precepts, through his centrepiece of *Negative Dialectics* and other final writings.[32]

The dialectic of Enlightenment then, as Bowie explains, is the idea that 'the subject both dominates nature by its separation from it in technological manipulation, and is most subjected to nature precisely when it seems to be most separate from it' (Bowie 1997, p.258). This means the more the subject tries to manipulate nature, the more it tries to separate itself from nature as something somehow 'transcending' nature. It follows that, as itself a natural phenomenon, the subject can never, however, 'transcend' nature and subjugate it to its will entirely, and consequently subjects *itself* to nature the more it tries to dominate it. This suggests that while individuals may, in the subconscious or unreflective practice of 'instrumental' rationality, partake in dominating nature, they may fail to recognise the extent to which they are still, or perhaps especially, determined by, and subject to, the objective world.

The objective world, however, is not just the various forms of reason prevalent in society, but *also* nature – meaning, reason, like individuals, is a *part* of nature. Equally, concerning the relationship between reason and nature, Adorno suggests '[i]nstead of either positing rationality or negating it as an absolute, reason must try to determine it as a moment within the whole, which has admittedly made itself independent in relation to the whole. Reason must become aware of its own naturalistic character (*ihres eigenen naturhaften Wesens*)' (Adorno 1969, pp.22-23).[33] This means Adorno is committed to a relationship between reason and nature in which nature is *not* separated from reason, as opposed to how, e.g. material nature and the intelligible are separated in the Kantian conception of the relationship.

If the mutual manipulation between instrumental rationality and the individual depends on a separation of reason from nature as something *other* than nature, and of nature from reason as something 'non'-rational by way of its not being humanly conceived, then Adorno's point is that to legitimate itself, reason *cannot* step outside the boundary of nature. Although it has come to operate independently of nature, it is still

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[32] However, the radical thesis of *DoE* was continually revised and moderated in Adorno's subsequent work, something only fully apparent with the recent publication of his university lectures, which make these arguments in a more accessible manner than some of his 'canonical' texts.

[33] Quoted in Bowie 1997, pp.267-268.

just a 'moment' within the whole made up of more than just particular variations of rationality, irrespective of how many areas of experience they come to determine. Among these areas is the individual's 'inner world', in which spontaneity and the conceptual thought it engenders touch on a decidedly broader spectrum of experience than the immediate 'instrumental' requisites of the social life-world.

The idea of spontaneity and its relation to conceptual development, and thus, the capacity to reason, is explored below, not least in relation to Adorno's critique of epistemology. One preliminary outline of what spontaneity is, though, according to Kant, is the 'natural capacity to reflectively control judgement by rational evaluation of sensory inputs, existing knowledge and beliefs of the situation at hand' (Longuenesse 2000). This suggests spontaneity giving rise to conceptual development, and thus to sense-making properties involved in making judgements, is necessarily affected by boundless experiences of the world that cannot only be limited to the influence of the social realm and the experience of self-legitimating forms of reason.

Adorno, however, suggests spontaneity can *itself* become ideological, and thereby alienated from its reason-bearing capacities: according to Bowie, 'Adorno's critique of the idea that truth is generated by the subject's spontaneity interprets this spontaneity merely as the subject's capacity for domination of the object' (Bowie 1997, p.258). This means that spontaneity engendering conceptual thought making truth-claims possible is subjected, under modern conditions, to the same limitations as thought. In instrumental rationality, thought is an instrument of domination identifying objects in the world predominantly with its own dominant concepts, e.g. with how objects have been identified, whether by individuals, or as they already appear to be identified in the objective world. Instrumental rationality in thought thereby discards concepts not already dominant in the sense of how an object is already identified. For Adorno, instrumental rationality is 'total' to the extent that even sense-making integral to spontaneous experience has no point of reference outside of instrumental rationality, and is therefore determined, possibly in its entirety, by pre-existing procedures of identification. This is an issue at the heart of this thesis: has spontaneity itself become ideological, and, if so, what could be done about it?

The problem at the core of this dilemma is the disparity between how reality is accounted for in the relationship between subject and the objective world, particularly if both the objective world and the mind are sources of ideology. If individuals depend on the objective world for their experience of broader reality, this experience depends on: the natural world, of which the individual is part, the social world, of which it is also part but which is the cluster product of ideological forms of reasoning, and the ways these structures coexist with, and influence, subjective responses to the world. Reflection, then, is simultaneously the origin of ideological forms of rationality reproduced in the social world, *and* the 'location' for reception of spontaneous impulses *to* experience capable of challenging conceptual concretions of experience into ideology. For Adorno, then, the possibility that spontaneity itself has become ideological is predicated on conceptualisation of social relations being determined by instrumental forms of rationality, where experience is forcibly constrained and reproduced within these structures of thought because of the immediacy of social experience to the individual. At present, therefore, this characterisation, which is not immune to criticism, suggests that the question of the 'truth of the subject' depends on the extent to which it can challenge the already spontaneous conceptual determination of its own thought through its *experience*. This raises the question of what Adorno's conception of 'truth' is.

Adorno, whose resources are drawn upon to work through the problem of accounting for the 'truth' of the subject, develops his thought from an array of resources, most notably Kant and Hegel, from whom he develops his own specific dialectic of experience. Adorno's 'immanent' dialectical problem of experience is what he calls *'mediation'* (*Vermittlung*) between particular and universal. By 'universal', Adorno means, first, the totality of elements comprising the objective world. More specifically, the 'universal' means how a *particular* object comes to be identified in universal terms. By 'particular', Adorno means what *remains* unique to each object, meaning, what is *not* accounted for by how the object has become identified in the universal.

The mediation between particular and universal, then, is, first, how each particular object relates to all other objects. Second, it refers to continuous inconsistencies between how the particular object has been identified in the universal sense, and what remains unaccounted for in the universal classification of the object, and therefore deserving of further reflection. Third, it refers to the continuous relationship between the object of

knowledge and the reflecting subject: the subject is *also* an object of knowledge identified in universal terms, and in constant danger of losing its particularity. However, as the subject reflects on objects of knowledge outside itself, both subject and its object of knowledge change in ways unaccounted for by how it has already been identified in, or mediated by, the 'universal'.

The fundamental point to consider is: *Any* classification of objects in universal terms necessarily includes an ideological component. By definition, classification potentially restricts further reflection pertaining to objects, making it more likely the classification itself becomes ideological. This means an important element of Adorno's conception of truth is that reflection pertaining to any object must be continuous if it is to avoid becoming ideological. An outline of Adorno's analysis, then, is that it focuses on, first: *How* the particular is subsumed under the universal: the particular object is universally identified in a certain way, losing its uniqueness. Second, it focuses on retrieving what is unique to the particular: the particular object is extracted from its ideological designation in the universal, and continually considered in its own right as an object of knowledge, *without* the objective of any *definitive* re-classification. The mediation of the object – the manner in which it comes to be defined culturally so as to gain an identity by which it is recognised – is understood by Adorno as a historical process by which that ascription of identity, be it to things, persons or institutions, is an ideological process. In terms of the 'immanent dialectical problem of the mediation between the particular and universal', then, Adorno purports to show that mediation of particular and universal, and subject and object, is transitory and continually in question, and hence the place where the truth or untruth of the object of knowledge – including the truth of the subject - is formed.

This mediation occurs, then, both at the level of the object *and* the subject. If the thesis is correct that instrumental rationality engenders a subject-centred reason that identifies objects with its own categories and concepts, then the subject is also in danger of losing sight of objective social conditions determining those concepts. Without an appraisal of objective social conditions, the subject loses a key element in its ability to critically evaluate both itself and other objects of knowledge. By this account, the subject judging an object without continually invoking the critical appraisal of its own relationship to it, itself remains mired in falsehood when that critical element is lost, or 'sublated', in

the universal. In Hegelian terms, sublation (*Aufhebung*) refers to changes undergone by a concept or entity reaching more sophisticated stages in the course of its development.[34] In this process, the concept is both cancelled in its original form, and preserved as part of a more developed, 'universal' form.

In Adorno's sense, however, sublation does not lead to higher levels of development, but potentially to inferior degrees of comprehension: the 'original' form of the concept was a reaction to concrete social circumstances, which, by being sublated in the universal, is no longer critically evaluated in its particularity. Instead, the concept in its new 'universal' form becomes its dominant form, with diminishing reference to the original circumstances in which it originated. Consequently, experience becomes 'fragmented' because one of the critical elements permitting evaluation of the subject's relationship with the object of knowledge is lost. The subject therefore has to contend with two potential sources of falsehood – that of its relationship with the object it judges, and that of its relationship to itself, where each component reinforces the other.

This leads to Adorno's 'universal context of delusion', in which individuals become one with the 'total' society of exchange, and exchange critical awareness for the safety of representing, and being represented by, the 'universal' whole as it appears to them in its immediacy, thus ceasing to engage critically with their objects of knowledge, and with themselves. The key to Adorno's dialectic, hence, is that mediation of subject and object *itself* must constantly be challenged in ways simultaneously revealing both the true and false in reflection by being juxtaposed with the *experience* giving rise to it in the first place, and through which it is continuously mediated. For Adorno, the context of mediation is always assumed to be, *a priori*, the structure of domination, oppression and self-preservation inherent to advanced industrialised societies. It follows that the expression of resistance to this on behalf of the particular – the subject – already takes place from a position of 'false' experience, and that the alternative to it cannot be found in a pure form within that context.

A *negative* dialectic is the intention, therefore, to search for a dialectical 'non-identity' of the ideological entity that the subject becomes through its social mediation. Breaking with the 'myth of the subject' – the myth there is a 'core' subjective identity

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[34] See Chapter 6.

impervious to influence of the objective world – entails breaking with what is always already 'distorted' by the necessity of self-preservation. The drive to dominate nature in instrumental rationality is an expression of that self-preservation, but actual self-preservation is thereby itself undermined because human nature, and not just external nature, becomes dominated as a result of ideological constraints on the scope of possible experience. If this is the 'falsehood' of the relationship in which the particular is subsumed by the universal and of distorted experience resulting of it, what then is 'true' experience?

In terms of Adorno's search for the 'adequate organon of knowledge', both a truthful approach to historical developments and frankness about the human condition in each historical configuration must be considered in light of suffering inflicted on humanity *by* humanity. 'The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth,' as Adorno suggests, as the expression of suffering is also an expression of the objective conditions causing it – it is the 'objectivity that weighs upon the subject… [which] is objectively conveyed' (Adorno 1973, pp.17-18). But if suffering is an inherent component of the truth of the subject, so is the untruth of uncritical approaches to the self and reflection:

The *thema probandum* is just as much the truth and untruth of thinking. It relinquishes its untruth insofar as it attempts, through negation, to follow its experience. An adequate philosophical thinking is not only critical of the status quo and its reified replica in consciousness but is equally critical of itself. It does justice to the experience animating it not through compliant codification, but rather by means of objectification. Whoever thinks philosophically hardens intellectual experience by the same logical consistency whose antithesis he wields (Adorno 1998, p. 133).

As this passage suggests, reflection itself is the 'location' in the objective social conditions of modernity containing the potential for freedom. That potential is only realisable by thought remaining true to experience, by refusing to consign experience to ideology in the sense of allowing its particularity to become subsumed in the 'universal', thereby negating ideological claims on the experience. By being critical of itself, thought objectifies itself in the attempt to follow the essence of the experience that changes it, preventing it from sliding into the untruth of what it is ideologically designated to be. The constant attention paid to experience itself would negate the ideological 'codification' threatening to neutralise it into the 'universal', or social totality.

The fundamental point, then, is to avoid classification of experience into something 'natural' and hence unremarkable - and to remain true to engagement with the reality of experience as far as the critical element in thought can carry it. This suggests, for Adorno's own variation of (anti-)epistemology, the crucial aspect emphasising the social in any inquiry into knowledge. It also suggests the primacy of ideology critique in the establishment of claims to knowledge. While Adorno certainly does not deny the validity of scientific knowledge, epistemological accounts - particularly in philosophy - that pay no attention to social circumstances in which they are developed are tantamount to quasi-ideology relying on subject-centred forms of reasoning merely purporting to be objective.

From this introduction to Adorno's theory, it becomes clearer how, when concepts of reason, freedom and subjectivity are suggested as a 'given', intertwined whole, as is often the case in ideological formulations of the achievements of the modern Western world, it can obstruct speculative moments of freedom suggesting contradictions in the social experience of these concepts. It follows the claim to freedom *becomes* ideological when it is assumed to have been 'achieved', particularly as a result of binding adherence to singular conceptions of reason, rather than consisting of a continuous process that does not culminate in ideological formulation. Similarly, where freedom and instrumental rationality become mutually complementary ideologies, subject-centred reason is perceived as personal freedom, where, from Adorno's perspective, it is quite the opposite.

Thus far, I have considered the concept of ideology and some of its ramifications in the context of modernity. I have suggested the concepts of freedom and reason in the modern world can both be elements of ideology, and similarly, that individuals themselves are the source of ideology. Consequently, the subject's claim to truth depends greatly on active engagement with elements both in the world and in the mind that compromise this claim. To that end, the centrality of ideology critique to Adorno's contention that freedom can be realised in reflection has been established. Part of making Adorno's case below involves a continuing evaluation of his assessment that instrumental rationality is 'total', and his philosophical position will be considered in light of its development from the original thought of Kant and Hegel. Additionally, the notion of the truth of the subject is further considered in light of continuing assessments of the

extent to which freedom and rational self-determination are possible in the modern world. The question of whether they are provides the setting for Chapter 3.

IV. CHAPTER 3: THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

The following chapters investigate the question of whether conditions of modernity fulfil the democratic promise of freedom and rational self-determination, or whether, *pace* Adorno, these conditions result in predominantly ideological notions of freedom, and a form of reason amounting to instrumental rationality. In this chapter, the question whether claims to truth are undermined by the interrelationship between ideology and instrumental rationality, and the impact of this on consciousness, is further considered with reference to the possibility of normative standards in thought and the development of social norms. Moreover, the question of the relationship between freedom and reason is pursued with the objective of explaining how this relationship allows Adorno to conclude instrumental rationality is a perversion of rational thought, and therefore a threat to freedom. This question is considered by developing Adorno's theory in conjunction with exploration of ideas related to the concept of ideology, such as causality, and the concept of freedom, such as spontaneity. The friction between ideology and freedom is re-framed as a question about the relationship between reason and nature. Understanding this relationship, in turn, is crucial to comprehending how forms of inquiry can become compromised.

3.1   The Idea of Subjective Freedom: An Introduction

It was suggested above how subject-centred reason, the source of domination of social structures by instrumental rationality, conflicts with the kind of rational constraints that would enable some form of emancipation from instrumental rationality. If Adorno's premise is correct that individuals are unfree to various degrees due to their determination by instrumental forms of rationality, what can the freedom of the subject amount to?

The idea that freedom should be central to subjectivity is a modern concern that gained importance in the Enlightenment, and via democratic ideals accompanying it. This notion broke with pre-modern assumptions that subjectivity was determined by an objective order of reason external to the individual, often understood in pre-Enlightenment times to be a larger reality involving the idea of God. Accordingly, pre-modern subjectivity can be understood to have been restricted by the randomness of the

place it was assigned in the social or natural order, the specific context of which was understood to be pre-ordained, and therefore not freely determined.[35]

From the perspective of Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, by contrast, the modern subject regards itself as a 'simple-being-for-self', a being aware of itself primarily as having a subjective point of view on the world. This perspective, according to Pinkard, emerged from the

dialectic of "Consciousness", in which the subject went from an understanding of himself as simply *apprehending* objects (pure singularities or perceptual objects), to an understanding of himself as knowing objects only by being engaged in conceptualising *activity*. In taking himself as an essentially self-conscious agent, the subject developed a view of knowledge as being primarily an elaboration of more practical endeavours – namely, the satisfaction of desire (Pinkard 1996, p.55).

This means consciousness reached a point where it ceased to regard itself as distinct from the objective world - as something with a narrow scope for self-determination merely shaped by unseen objective forces, and instead recognised the ability to conceptualise the world primarily via its own subjectivity. This acknowledgement of an evolving relationship between consciousness and the objective world led individuals to recognise they could shape the objective world in ways benefiting them, e.g., by increasing their standards of living and broadening their possibilities, enabling them to satisfy their desires.

These satisfactions, in turn, enabled people to become individualised, in the sense that they were now acting primarily on their own imperatives, *and* connected them to the objective world, in the sense that their endeavours contributed to shaping their wider social circumstances. It follows that for individuals to act on their desires, there must be a standard of self-determination with which they can plot their satisfaction. This notion of freedom, consequently, was eventually institutionalised in modernity as the political ideal of democracy, supposed to guarantee the pursuit of subjective desires, and, thereby, individual rights.

The Idealist claim regarding freedom, however, was about *why* the ideal of freedom should be considered legitimate in the first place. The argument, following Pippin, was that human values such as love, security, living standards and other personal interests

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[35] See Hall 2004 for a discussion of pre-modern conceptions of identity.

wouldn't be worth pursuing if they remained abstractions pre-determined by perceived objective conditions, as opposed to being realisable objectives individuals freely choose to pursue. Self-determining individuals, by this account, would *create* conditions in which such objectives could be pursued by breaking with the idea of their objective determination, thereby legitimising their pursuits by assuming responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

The Idealists' case was for the 'reality' of such self-determination that 'such a reflexive self-grounding could be realised systematically and in practical life' (Pippin 1997, p.7), as modern society already depended on the feasibility of such an ideal. This means 'reality' came to refer to something more than just the objective world outside the individual; instead, self-determination suggested not only that reality was made up of a relationship between individuals and the objective world, but also that social reality was a consequence of self-determining actions. According to Hegel, this meant modern society had already become rational, because even pre-modern society contained seeds of what could later be deemed rational legitimacy.

The pre-modern order of reason was already the consequence of a perception of the objective world individuals had attempted to rationalise in ways also attributing a structure to social reality. It follows, therefore, that social reality was already being shaped by the judgement of individuals, albeit in ways not predominantly emphasising the idea of their rational *self*-determination. Where modern society became rational for Hegel, then, was with the recognition that society had the duty to perpetuate itself by appealing to 'rational legitimacy and so to the capacities for free agency presupposed in such appeals' (ibid.). This 'free agency' is *self-determination*, and its possibility depends on a self-legislating reason, the further implication of which is a practical rationality in which a social collective of individuals exercise freedom.

This form of reason was self-legitimating precisely because structures and enterprises shaping modern society, such as education or commerce, were *already* the product of the free agency of individuals. This account of rationality depends on a speculative and non-empirical conception of human activity as *spontaneous*, which, Pippin suggests, creates the possibility of an account of human thought based on the 'judgings and intendings supposed to be the prior conditions for the possibility of any cognitive

claim or intentional deed, a "critical" or a non-metaphysical account of mentality itself' (ibid, p.8).

3.2   A Speculative Moment: Between Causality and Normativity
A) A Normative Conception of Experience

The notion of such a critical account of reason raises the question of how to understand the normative dimensions of human thought. The normative dimensions of thought are the 'standard[s], rule[s], [or] principle[s] used to judge or direct human conduct as something to be complied with' (Honderich 2005, p.662). Norms, therefore, are standards by which claims are evaluated, such as standards used to assess the notion of an inherently social rationality. If spontaneous activity is taken to be both the source of self-determination *and* of norms used to evaluate judgements arising from self-determination, however, what provides the necessary normative *constraints* if spontaneous actions are to be thought of as rational, and how does thought account for these constraints? How do norms arise, and how do they accommodate normative constraints, if they are to be rationally legitimated?

Disregarding empirical observations and metaphysical explanations presently, the question of *determinacy* and its role in explaining why humans do certain things arises, such as *why* humans create rational institutions and modes of thought and being in the first place. The appeal in pursuing such a trajectory of thought over purely empiricist and rationalist accounts was, Pippin suggests, born with Kant's 'transcendental philosophy' in the 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant argued that

…prior to attempting to answer any question, philosophical or empirical, about the world, or the mind, or the good, the original question on which all others depended must be that concerning the "possibility" of the mind's knowledge of anything. When that question is pursued rigorously, it turns out that the possibility of any objective representation must presuppose the active role of the subject in establishing its relation to the world (Pippin 1997, p.9).

The priority of empiricist and rationalist traditions was accounting for the mind's relation to the world, the former in its hypothesis that knowledge is derived from sensory experience, the latter in its assumption of reason as a natural intuitive faculty. The Kantian perspective, however, demanded these traditions 'inadvertently do more to ask,

rather than to resolve, the question of the possibility of an epistemic (and so normative) mind-world relation in the first place' (ibid.).

Kant's notion of *a priori* constraints on knowledge, in the sense that the objective world or objects cannot be known as they are 'in-themselves' independently of cognition, entails, then, that neither the empiricist emphasis on experience nor rationalist accounts of spontaneity contain the resources, taken by themselves, to answer the question of a normative relationship between mind and world. For such a relationship to be truly normative, it would have to continually account for standards by which knowledge of anything in the world is evaluated, and what constitutes 'knowledge' in the first place. Moreover, there is the problem of *how* to *ask* the question of the possibility of such a relationship. The only thing that can initially be assumed, therefore, is that asking such questions 'presuppose[s] the active role of the subject in establishing its relation to the world' (ibid.).

How does the active involvement of individuals contribute to determining their normative relationship with the objective world? For Adorno, making the question accessible in the first place depends on refusing to resolve it simply through recourse to detached empirical observations of the world, accentuating instead the confrontation arising in thought *itself* in its engagement with the world. This suggests empirical observations or metaphysical explanations, taken by themselves, do not suffice. Rather, to the extent each provides insight into an object of knowledge, they should be thought simultaneously together and against each other continuously alongside other competing claims, such that the object is not known according to a single dominant methodology. In this way, competing claims act as normative constraints on *each other*. For Adorno, *freedom* is the objective of involvement of the mind in acts of cognition.

First, this means freedom from lines of inquiry with inadequate normative constraints, which are in danger of becoming self-legitimating, 'instrumental', and therefore ideological. Such freedom is what Adorno calls 'the indefeasible norm of self-evidence' (Adorno 1998, p.12). This 'indefeasible norm' refers to the concept of '*Dabeisein*', and Pickford's note accompanying the citation ascribes Adorno's use of it to an allusion to a passage from Hegel:

The principle of experience contains the infinitely important determination that, for a content to be accepted and... held true, man must himself be actively involved *with it (dabei sein)*, more precisely, that he must find any such content to be at one and in unity with *the certainty of his own self*. He must himself be involved with it, whether only with his external senses, or with his deeper spirit, with his essential consciousness of self as well (Pickford 1998, p.318).

The idea is that individuals cannot be sure of their self-determination unless they are actively involved (*dabei*) with the *content* of their experiences. It follows thought should apply itself to objects with freedom *from* organised, doctrinal attempts to understand the world - albeit without ignoring them - turning the 'quintessence of the experience accumulated in thought' (ibid. p.13) onto objects themselves, and consequently perceiving them in new ways. The necessity of this continuous reflection arises from internal contradictions of social reality itself. For example, without reference to antagonisms between different social elements, there can be no genuine observation if it is not related to how objects of knowledge are changed in light of how social practices affect *each other* in the course of experience.

Consider, e.g., how economics plays a role in how culture is understood, and how this simple realisation raises further questions about how an object is evaluated. For example, the status of a cultural artefact is often reduced to its exchange-value on the marketplace, although the artefact may be a source of spiritual value through what it may represent. Additionally, the artefact may have aesthetic value irrespective of its exchange value or cultural status. Furthermore, the artefact is likely to have represented different things to different people in different economic contexts, not to mention the where's, why's and how's of the original historical context in which the artefact was created. The dominant prism through which the artefact is evaluated at any given time, however, likely reflects the individual's immediate subjective interests, as opposed to objective evaluations attempting to take all these factors into account. The point, therefore, is that these realms of understanding both change for themselves over time and experience, and change *each other* as they influence each other in non-linear ways not necessarily conforming to the chronology of history and recorded experience. For Adorno, the process of searching for the 'truth-content' (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) of the experience of such an object of knowledge suggests, therefore, not only are there ongoing antagonisms between distinctive realms of evaluation, but also continuous oppositions *within* them that cannot be overcome by prioritising one form of evaluation over another.

For Adorno, a critical judgement about the truth of the conception of an object depends on evaluations of the object's own 'complex internal dynamics and the dynamics of the socio-historical totality to which the [object] belongs' (Zuidervaart 2011). This means the truth-content of the object cannot be evaluated according to a dominant epistemological principle without also potentially losing access to other aspects of the object's truth-content. This suggests the necessity of the active involvement of individuals with their experiences if critical judgements about any kind of truth-content are to be possible.

In turn, the ability to make such critical judgements is an integral characteristic of self-determination. For Adorno, the objective is not to ground epistemological procedure and thereby 'resolve' the relationship between subject and object according to a dominant methodology, irrespective of how coherent a system of thought may appear. The problem is, rather, a question of overcoming restrictions that 'grounded' epistemological thought – thought systematised according to a predominating methodology - can *impose* on experience, by keeping antagonisms that make up the social process, and in which experience is gained, in focus. Adorno's point is to keep conceptual thought open to the *effects* of experience, as opposed to imposing concepts or pre-established ideas of what constitutes knowledge on experience itself. He does not thereby deny the need to consult existing methodologies – the 'quintessence of the experience accumulated in thought' – given what has already been conceptualised is incorporated by necessity in engagement with the object of knowledge. Rather, it is a question of how continuous experience of the object *changes* concepts by which it is experienced, and therefore potentially ways of identifying it. Adorno's approach, then, involves the activity of thought in its engagement with the world, but more precisely, involves the influence, first, of experience upon thought, and second, of the spontaneity of new thought arising upon existing thought.

What provides the individual's 'indefeasible norm of self-evidence', then, is spontaneous activity of thought upon thought, or *reflection*: the measure of whether standards or normativity involving claims to truth can be achieved is ultimately the extent of the individual's experience of, and reflection upon, the object of knowledge. A normative constraint on spontaneous activity itself, therefore, is the extent to which

thought *remains* engaged with its objects of knowledge. Put simply, it is impossible for individuals to provide norms by which the truth of the experience is judged if they are not themselves actively engaged with the content, gained from continual experience, of the conceptual claims pertaining to its object. What, then, can this 'continual' experience amount to?

Adorno's conception of experience is that it should strive to be a form of 'un-regimented' or 'unreduced' experience (*unrestringierte Erfahrung*) – experience by default involving, but not *reduced* to, socially dominant norms or pre-existing strictures of reasoning in thought itself. It follows thought cannot avoid experience of these forms in the modern world or in thought itself, and must by necessity engage with them, but has the capacity to overcome them by not allowing itself to become reduced to them. According to Adorno,

[t]he concept of experience… has… taken on such an extraordinarily normative significance: on one hand, genuine experience, that is, experience of something new which has not existed before, is hardly possible in the world in which we live, while, on the other, science, by the system of rules it imposes on knowledge, no longer permits such experience. I would not hesitate to define the idea of a dialectical theory of society as something like the restoration of, or – to put it more modestly – the effort to restore, the experience which is denied us both by the social system and by the rules of science… I would reiterate that the kind of experience I [have in mind] is not some random exercise of thought, but is guided, and imposed on us, by existing problems… Unless one expressly forbids oneself such experience, one cannot really escape it. (Adorno 2002, p.51)

By 'the system of rules [science] imposes on knowledge', Adorno is not challenging science itself, but rather how legitimacy is often bestowed on knowledge *socially* only to the degree that it conforms to scientific findings, thereby prioritising epistemological methods sustaining these. Unreduced experience is partly a matter, therefore, of overcoming scient*ism* – 'the belief that knowledge must be identified with science and that natural sciences are the only valid mode of knowledge' (Macey 2000, p.343) – and the ways this belief determines social experience such that it can hardly be understood, or legitimated, any other way.

It is crucial to emphasise, as Adorno underlines, that 'un-regimented experience' does not amount to random thought merely unempirical for its own sake, or judgemental to the extent that it expresses opinions unconcerned with legitimating themselves. Rather, it is thought arising from experience of the objective world, or of something in it, not constrained to the multifarious ways its conceptualisation has already been determined, scientifically or otherwise. How can objective reality be experienced in ways occurring to thought in ways thought itself has not already circumscribed, whether by individuals or the immediate ways the objective world appears to them?

As Hullot-Kentor suggests, '[w]hat Adorno wanted to comprehend was the capacity of thought – of identity itself – to cause reality to break in on the mind that masters it. This concept of emancipatory reason can calmly be stated as the most important idea in Adorno's philosophy' (Hullot-Kentor 2006, p.15). The need for unrestricted experience, then, is pertinent in light of a social realm determined by instrumental forms of rationality relying on an underlying scientism which, taken by itself, does not provide an adequately normative conception of experience, and of social experience in particular. Moreover, where this scientism contributes to a complex of social problems of its own, the 'unreduced' experience of these problems forces efforts of a better conception of normativity rather than reduction of all problem-solving to science and its methods. Adorno's 'dialectical theory of society' is the effort to 'restore' the kind of experience that has all but been made impossible by how the social system has already been structured and the kinds of reasoning sustaining it, and is the practical component of his concept of 'emancipatory reason'.

However, this conception of experience raises the question of how the free determination of individuals, conditional on specific desires brought about through sensation and contact with their immediate context of the objective world, relates to the notion of rational relations. It was Kant's 'Copernican revolution' in metaphysics that reversed the theory of cognition by postulating that objects conform to *ways* of knowing them, and not to analyses of how they exist 'in themselves'. For example, the principle of causality – the notion that every event has a cause, which is a leading organisational principle of experience - is a central element of the individual's conceptual apparatus, as opposed to something existing objectively in the world, because the world cannot be known 'in itself' independently of cognition.

If Kant's paradigm shift is followed, according to Pippin, then the issue is how the mind takes an active role in its determination within the world, if consciousness is not to be merely a product of the mind's causal arrangement of experiences which itself can be assumed to be 'rational'. In terms of what Kant calls 'intuitions', following Pippin, in order to explain how rational relations with the world come about, it does not suffice to claim such intuitions enact psychological or causal roles in the individual's judgement. It is not enough to assume, therefore, that intuitions automatically become part of the psychological or causal chains in thought, and that individuals proceed to reason their way through the world based on how these intuitions are embedded in their overall train of thought.

Rather, he suggests, there is *already* a normative relation in the 'direct presence' of the objective world to the mind in sensation, within what Sellars and others termed the 'space of reasons'. The 'space of reasons' is a term differentiating between acts of reasoning and justification, and the justification of schemas of cause and effect as employed in natural scientific inquiry. According to Sellars, the ultimate validity of epistemic claims depends on whether they can be proposed normatively – in terms of whether value (e.g. 'right' or 'wrong') can be ascribed to a claim – and this normative status is essential for a claim to be a candidate for knowledge. The problem, however, as Pippin suggests, is *accounting* for those normative dimensions of sense-making practices, which is crucial to claiming there are rational relations between consciousness and the objective world in the first place. In other words,

[n]either the given content of experience nor some sequence of events in nature can be said to be responsible for our believing anything or acting in some way. We are responsible for what we take experience to constrain, and these constraints are rational, normative, [and] not psychological or (in the modern sense of law-governed) natural…What is the nature of normativity itself apart from how the mind actually works…? (Pippin 1997, p.11)

The key to this passage relates to the *responsibility* 'for what we take experience to constrain': Individuals are capable of determining the extent of their experiences *beyond* how they are causally or psychologically arranged in consciousness. This responsibility to delineate parameters of experience, in turn, is part of what enables there to be rational relations between subject and object. Part of having rational relations with the world is

being responsive to experiences, as opposed to how they appear 'given' to us - whether causally or otherwise - for *what* they can reveal, suggesting some form of normativity embedded in how the mind develops its understanding of the world.

If thought is considered as an activity – the activity of submitting justifiable norms and being submitted to them in turn, engaging other subjectivities with regards to the external world normatively – then the claim can be made there can be rational relations not purely instrumental in Adorno's sense. However, this raises the question of how rational norms relate to the plethora of beliefs and reasons not subject to seemingly given causal laws. Part of normative activity is to try to answer that question, in part, following Pippin, by finding the *right way* to state the insufficiency of causal explanations.

3.3   B) A Causal Turn of Events

For Adorno, one such insufficiency is causal explanations can be reduced to *themselves*, in what he calls their 'empirical ambiguity', without considering how experience, and social antagonisms comprising it, undermine such explanations. This means causal explanations can easily become self-circumscribed, in the sense that causal chains of reasoning potentially continue forever in the regressive search for causes of causes, without taking into account the impact of new experience upon previous experience every time a causal chain is established. For example, an explanation of something [*c*] being traced back to its cause [*b*], itself assumed to be caused by a third effect, [*a*], and so on, does not account for either the totality of experience bringing about [*a*] [*b*] or [*c*] respectively, nor for the experience – the specific socio-historic context - from which respective causal explanations are made.

For Kant, however, causality amounts to more than simply cause and effect. Causality is when 'all experience obeys the law of succession according to cause and effect. This… is then justified by aligning the irreversibility of causal succession with the irreversibility of time. With such arguments Kant attempted to prove that causality was a *condition* of experience and could not be derived from it' (Caygill 1995, p.108). For Kant, then, one condition of relations with the objective world is that individuals arrange perception of objects according to how it is gained over time, which Kant maintains is one of the main conditions for experience to be possible. Conversely, causal explanations,

taken on their own as the impulse Adorno attributes to Kant to 'trace every condition back to "its" cause', ignore the 'awareness of all the causal sequences that intersect in every phenomenon – instead of its being unequivocally determined by causality in the sequence of time' (Adorno 1973, p.266). This means causality does not occur *only* according to linear conceptions of time, but rather across innumerable boundaries of experience. How, then, can Kant's claim that causality is a necessary condition of experience be mediated by Adorno's claim of the insufficiency of purely causal explanations?

In his lectures on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Adorno notes how causality is central to Kant's conception of how individuals gain experience, understanding and ultimately knowledge:

In Kant causality is a category that follows from unity of personal consciousness. It is nothing but the general conformity to law which compels me to synthesise the different phenomenal aspects of the same thing that succeed each other in time. He agrees here with Hume in not ascribing causality to things-in-themselves, that is, he does not conceive of causes naturalistically. In contrast to Hume, however, he believes that an ordered knowledge, a lawful succession of events, is only possible in the context of this form. Thus, whereas Hume would say that causality is merely *subjective*, Kant would reply, indeed, it is merely subjective, but this supposedly subjective element is the necessary precondition without which *objectivity* cannot come into being (Adorno 2001, p.91).

For Kant, like Hume, causality is not something of the phenomenal world in the naturalistic sense, but what allows for the subjective ordering of experience over time. Unlike Hume, Kant also claims it would be impossible to conceive of the objective world without the *a priori* ordering of experience into the 'unity of personal consciousness': causality, while not the only way the mind makes sense of the world, is nevertheless essential to the mind's ability to make sense of the world at all.

However, for Adorno this assumption about the causal ordering of experience over time is a root cause of ideological thought. If the 'unity of personal consciousness' depends on causal ordering of experience, then maintaining this unity, as a central element in individuals' desire to identify themselves - both regarding their subjectivity and in wider terms of their social orbit - involves projecting causal structures of thought onto other elements of experience. Causality is a *subjective* resource for the ordering of experience,

irrespective of the extent to which it can be established to be part of nature *outside* subjectivity. However, when it is assumed what is experienced in nature *in itself* follows the same causal patterns at the root of cognition, and of how individuals organise experience and identify themselves, then causal reasoning becomes ideological. It follows for Adorno that the very notion of a 'unity of personal consciousness' is an ideological construct, in the sense that consciousness is 'unified' and identity achieved at the expense of what is *kept* from entering them, whether deliberately, subconsciously, unconsciously, or as a result of forms of subject-centred reasoning perpetuated by such a 'unity'.

Moreover, Adorno takes issue with Kant and German Idealism as a whole, on the charge that German Idealism is the 'most developed expression of the self-understanding and attempted legitimation of bourgeois society' (Pippin 2005, p.100). By this reckoning, the kind of 'philosophy of identity' which, Adorno claims, is buttressed by principles like Kant's 'unity of personal consciousness', is how society grounds and legitimates itself, while simultaneously legitimising the kind of ideologically procedural thought, such as the preponderance of causal reasoning, he charges such a 'unity' depends on. It follows for Adorno that '[p]redominant patterns of thought (*herrschende Denkformen*)' such as causality, identitarian reasoning and instrumental rationality, 'have hardened into a system of domination – involving all levels of societal practice, and reaching all the way down into the constitution of the subject itself' (Wellmer 2006, p.4). Consequently, '[t]he falseness of bourgeois society is supposed to be paradigmatically on view in the Idealist defence of its [and society's] most sacred ideal: freedom' (Pippin 2005, p.100).

We need not remain within Adorno's mid-20th century paradigm of 'bourgeois' society to extract the fundamental point, *pace* Wellmer, about instrumental rationality reaching into the constitution of the subject itself, and its implications for the *social* concept of freedom. For Adorno, the point is that the 'sacred ideal of freedom' amounts to little more than the 'freedom' to reproduce causal structures of thought comprising the 'unity of personal consciousness.' The conceptual content of the claim of 'freedom' held sacrosanct by modern society is thereby exposed, he suggests, as a fraudulent imposition of ideology, the notion of freedom in this case being little more than an ideological construct 'legitimated' by subject-centred reasoning.

What Adorno disputes in terms of causal assumptions is therefore projection of the mind's ordering of experience onto the objective world. Methodology relying primarily on this projection is in danger of foreclosing spontaneous responses to experience. Adorno is thereby concerned with the standard explanation of causality as something traceable back to a 'root cause' in a linear conception of time, and how this view distorts how the root cause is *itself* dependent on multiple other elements, not a unique social constellation consisting of its own innumerable causes and effects. These cannot only be understood by referring back to what is *assumed* to be the root cause. Consequently, the danger is purely causal explanations are translated into disinterested methodological procedures relying to varying degrees on analyses of cause and effect, obscuring how such procedures become factors in sustaining ideological structures.

For example, causal explanations may be attributed to development of social structures in terms of attempting to account scientifically for elements contributing, among other things, to the degree of power these structures exert over society. The scientific realism school of political thought, e.g., advances claims based on the assumption that 'the aim of explanation in the natural and social sciences is essentially the same. The study of social power is analogous to the study of causal powers in the natural world. Its purpose is to explain political outcomes in terms of the causal powers of agents' (Hayward 2000, p.23). Such explanations do not suffice to account, however, for specific intentions, perceptions or activities of individuals comprising such structures, and a purely causal account of power exerted by them in society can ideologically obscure the contingent historical experience of individuals determining their actions in ways irreducible to purely causal processes.[36]

Adorno postulates that while the natural sciences 'are content to handle causality with operational definitions that are inherent in their modes of proceeding' (Adorno 2001, p.91), philosophy pays insufficient attention to how causal explanations are central to the seeming determinacy of social conditions as they appear (at the risk, he says, of undermining the supposed independence of philosophy from the sciences). Not adequately analysing how '[e]very state of things is horizontally and vertically tied to all others, touches upon all others, is touched by all others' (ibid., p.267) is tantamount, for Adorno, to subject-centred reasoning 'instrumentally' encouraging the totality of its

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[36] See Joseph 2004.

influence over the development of social conditions. It follows critical thought *must* engage with causal explanations precisely because these are intimately connected to the idea of a dominated nature – connected, that is, to aspects of experience suppressed in efforts to establish coherent views of the world, in which causal reasoning plays a predominating role.

Recognising, therefore, that experience is partly dependent on causality, Adorno suggests attention should instead be focused on the projection of causal structures on the objective world:

Objectively and subjectively, causality is the spell of dominated nature. It has its *fundamentum in re* in identity, which as a mental principle simply mirrors the real control of nature. In reflecting upon causality, reason – which finds causality in nature wherever it controls nature – also grows aware of its own natural origin as the spellbinding principle… Causality… is nothing but man's natural origin, which he continues as control of nature (ibid. p.269).

Adorno emphasises how causality is connected to the imposition of identity on objects of knowledge as a reflection of man's attempt to control nature. Maintaining a 'cognitively critical sense of causality' reveals how the identity by which objects come to be known by way of their causal explanation is imposed at the expense of experience not reduced to this attempt. By this account, causal reasoning is projected by individuals onto nature. When causal explanations thereby become socially legitimated as a 'given' or 'natural' form – or a socially accepted norm – of perceiving the world, individuals may lose sight that what they perceive as causal structures in the world are at least partly their own projections.

For Adorno, these causal structures thereby also become a source of ideological distortion grounded in the imperative to control nature. This imperative, however, is ineluctable: the subject's attempt to control nature – its natural origin - is in the name of *self-preservation*. It is due to self-preservation that individuals identify nature and themselves with causal chains of reasoning with which they organise their thought. This self-preservation is made ineluctable by the powe*rlessness* experienced vis-à-vis the objective world. Adorno, therefore, does not *deny* this imperative of self-preservation, expressed in identity and as identification of the objective world. Rather, he is interested in elements of experience this drive to identification as the dominant organisational principle of

subjectivity *misses*. It also follows causal explanations potentially contain speculative moments of freedom, considering their examination can reveal things those explanations fail to account for. Paying *in*sufficient attention to causal explanations, therefore, whether disputing them without adequately analysing them, or assuming them to be given forms correlative with natural laws, can amount to acting in concert with instrumental rationality.

As outlined, speculative moments of freedom for Adorno occur in engagement with a claim pertaining to an object of knowledge, to see *what* that claim was originally made in relation to, where and how the claim may have changed over time, the unfulfilled potential in its content, and therefore how it may have been distorted over time, including in its present form. The reason for doing this is locating interstices at which claims are formed and modified provides opportunities to, first, free conceptual content of the claim from dominant methodological procedures that may have distorted it – without overlooking the accumulation of experience contained in these. Second, it provides opportunities to reassess potential of the original claim in a contemporary light, taking into consideration both this accumulation of experience *and* the conceptual content of the claim as distinct from subsequent experience, keeping mediation of the object of knowledge alive and possibly effecting changes in how it can be known.

Searching for speculative moments of freedom in thought, then, is a thoroughly normative procedure for Adorno, in the sense that norms by which claims are made are themselves continuously reassessed and submitted for justification. With regard to causal explanations, that speculative moment could occur when it is apprehended *how* man's attempt to dominate nature could be at the origin of causal reasoning, and how causal reasoning in turn reinforces attempts to dominate nature. Consequently, it could be understood how this form of circular reasoning dominates other claims pertaining to nature or other objects, thus liberating individuals to consider such claims in contexts not relying solely on causal reasoning, or which aren't non-consciously underpinned by the impulse to dominate nature.

It follows that, in acting as normative constraints on each other as far as causal reasoning in a given context can be justified, individuals help each other recognise instances in which they are non-consciously projecting such reasoning onto the objective world, as opposed to reflecting on experience in ways not reducing it to causal reasoning

alone. At first glance, it appears modern society offers ample examples, from the harvesting of natural resources to the implications of man-made climate change, of man's drive to dominate nature, and that such a claim is therefore an obvious observation pertaining to the nature of modern society. However, what may not be as obvious is how Adorno suggests this drive is replicated in the smallest of individual gestures, particularly in the context of functioning within strictures of modern society, where the principle of self-preservation cannot be anything other than fully conscious.

For example, individuals are often required to repress features of their subjectivity – and therefore, elements of nature - as the necessary sacrifice in order to belong to the larger social whole, particularly in as far as qualifying for socially acceptable identities is concerned – 'acceptable', that is, within parameters of necessarily limited experience. For Adorno, this kind of 'false' socialisation is virtually total while producing equally false norms regulating social activity, in the sense that socialisation involves domination of both nature and the subjectivity that is part of it, and therefore that norms determining socialisation are to some extent complicit in suppressing elements both in subjectivity and in objective nature. The question arises, therefore, whether a different kind of normativity is even possible, not least from Adorno's own perspective.

For Adorno, however, causality amounts to more than the simple claim of its subjective projection. For example, he claims the 'integration' of modern society has to some extent made searching for causal relations futile, because causality has become indistinguishable from social structures in which it is reproduced, leaving him with the conclusion that '[o]nly… society itself remains the cause' (Adorno 1973, p.267). Accordingly, causality 'disappears', in what he calls the 'crisis of causality', because it becomes increasingly impossible to trace a condition 'with evidentiality to another single condition' (ibid.).

It follows social structures are permeated by causal reasoning to the degree that experience of society is unavoidably affected – and structured – predominantly by the causality inherent to these structures ('networks of causality'), to the point that it becomes difficult to distinguish experience *itself* from how it has been 'caused', or structured, by society. This also means *particular* causal social structures become increasingly difficult to trace, not least historically, because of how they practically become indistinguishable from

the experience of society as a whole. This implies opportunities to mediate social relations in ways not depending mainly on causal reasoning in social *modus operandi* such as 'means and ends' are diminished, and therefore that the ability to experience social reality beyond its causal determination is confined, simultaneously restricting the ability to reconsider social experience differently from how it already appears 'given'.

It also follows, then, that instrumental rationality relies on causal structures to such an extent that most individuals come to re-enact these structures as part of the thoughts and activities they take to be constitutive of the 'unity' of their identities and, consequently, their possibilities for self-determination. The preservation of social identity, on this reading, depends on the conceptual unity individuals ascribe to themselves, a unity depending disproportionately on causal structures, whereas for Adorno this kind of unity *undermines* independence, and specifically the individuality of *experience*, as opposed to strengthening it. This notion extends to the idea that pursuing freedom in democratic society amounts to little more than the liberty to reproduce causal chains of thought and action already given to individuals merely by virtue of immediate experience, and is at the heart of Adorno's conception of how the experience of modern democracies is ideologically determined.

This conception also suggests, not only that there may be nothing outside causal structures in modern society to which a non-instrumental form of reason can appeal, but also that the more an ideology of causal thinking girds the fabric of social relations, particularly under the guise of 'freedom', the less perceptible it becomes. The crux of this argument for Adorno is that, as awareness of causal pressure is a vital component of individuals' ability to reflect on experience, the 'disappearance' of causality therefore entails the disappearance of the possibility that 'causality points to the idea of freedom as the possibility of non-identity' (ibid. p.269). In this instance, 'non-identity' would be all those forms of experience that cannot be identified purely in causal terms, or the conceptual content *remaining* in an object of knowledge undermining identifications made through causal reasoning.

Specifically, if that object of knowledge is the idea of freedom, then the non-identity of this notion of freedom would be that resisting its determination by causal reasoning, such as other aspects of inner and outer nature unaccounted for by the latter. If

there is to be a possibility of experience emancipated from ideological thought, it is imperative for Adorno that individuals attempt to comprehend nature in ways that cannot be reduced to the 'unity of personal consciousness', the causal structures inherent to this unity, or identitarian conceptions of the world resulting from it. The potential loss of the possibility of non-identitarian, non-ideological thought is at the heart of Adorno's concerns for possibilities of social change, and thereby for the very possibility of truly democratic claims to autonomy and self-realisation at individual and social levels.

3.4   Between Spontaneity and Determinacy:

A) A Fork in the Road: Adorno *contra* Kant

There are strong objections to Adorno's notion of the interrelationship between causality and instrumental rationality through his prism of preserving 'non-identity', particularly at the level of the *content* of experience. Pippin rejects Adorno's prioritisation of non-identity of the conceptual articulation of an object of knowledge on grounds that this prioritisation of the objective world over immediate experience undermines the possibility of self-determination and the free adoption of norms.[37] This criticism suggests prioritising hitherto unknown 'otherness' over *actual* experience *undermines* experience in favour of what individuals simply do not know, weakening their autonomy and ability to generate self-determining norms, in which causality, e.g., plays a crucial role. Further, as Pippin suggests, if Adorno's claims of the 'falseness' of modern experience in are to stand, then the issue of truth would have to be 'a function of the *content* of the claim, not with the attempted identification itself' (Pippin 2005, p.102). While claims can be true or false, therefore, attempts to know something is what generates claims in the first place. This attempt to *identify* is what could be undermined in the prioritisation of non-identity, following Adorno's already dubious distinction, according to Pippin, between 'true' and 'false' experience.

What, however, of normative relations Adorno suggests are *already* available in experience, before conceptualisation takes place? If individuals are determined by an array of external and internal factors besides spontaneity, then awareness of their determination by these factors, and judgements made in response, still result at least partly from their *spontaneity*. The fact that individuals react to ways they are determined at all suggests that

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[37] See Pippin 2005.

spontaneity – their freedom to reject or embrace how they perceive their determination – is at least in part the source of their normative relations with the objective world.

The notion of the 'space of reasons' is crucial to any account of normativity. If the claim that *any* position must be understood from within this space is correct, then adoption of a position must be continuous with 'the self-reflection about such normativity constitutive of how we inescapably and interminably' (Pippin 1997, p.15.) continue our activities. Following Pippin, an account of normativity avoiding trappings of metaphysics or psychologism leads to Hegel's theory of historical rationality and sociality 'and the kind of historical justification of norms that requires' (ibid.). To remain within the space of reasons, hence, requires a development from within the Kantian position that objects conform to *ways* of knowing them, and not to how they exist 'in themselves'.

For Hegel, it was Kant's characterisation of the subject as 'spontaneously apperceptive' that 'convinced him that Kant… had begun a new kind of "philosophy of subjectivity"' (ibid. p.32). Central to such a philosophy are '*a priori* restrictions set by such an apperceiving subject for what could count as an object of knowledge' (ibid.). Hegel, known for rejecting the Kantian hope for a 'transcendental' account of human subjectivity, turned towards the problem of accounting for historical change with attention to relations between intellectual and social practices - 'shapes of spirit' – over predominating realist or empiricist approaches. Adorno shares this imperative: his analyses of social phenomena are made from the perspective of possibilities for social transformation.

Critiques of the 'Culture Industry' and the wider paradigm of instrumental rationality, for example, are undertaken to understand how they impede social amelioration. Adorno views social change through the prism of possibilities for freedom; it follows that social practice in the 'Culture Industry' is connected to analyses of the kinds of rationality supporting that practice, and to how their practical application encumbers freedom. Hegel's and Adorno's approaches could thus be said to appeal to political thought acknowledging need for '"pre-deliberative involvement," considering the notion of "wholly self-defining individuals" as impossible and yet which doesn't rely on "traditionalism"'. It follows for Hegel, 'basic elements of modern ethical life could be shown to be "rational" [and] not merely "our community's way of going on"' (ibid. p.18.).

In Hegel's Idealist version of modernity, *pace* Pippin, the agenda is of prioritising spontaneity that can be realised as a rational, universal norm containing some determinate content.

This is a controversial position, as Pippin concedes, not least because it is difficult to both keep Kant's Idealist premises of spontaneity and autonomy *and* resolve the problem of determinacy. For example, the ability to autonomously self-legislate is constrained by what is 'always already' there – what has already been determined - in the specific social context into which individuals are thrown. It follows individuals inevitably self-legislate in relation to social structures they have not contributed to and over which they have no influence, and yet which might have considerable influence over their autonomy (or their understanding of it). How do individuals exercise spontaneity in meaningful ways that both rationally take account of the influence of those social structures, *and* create rational space for individual autonomy in relation *to* them, without ignoring ways they have already been determined?

The problem of determinacy and its conflict with the premise of free spontaneity is essential to understanding Adorno's thought. If autonomy begotten through spontaneity is always subject to pre-existing determinacy, what can the claim of self-determining freedom amount to? Moreover, if the possibility of self-determination is always contingent on specific, predetermined sets of natural and socio-historical circumstances, what can Adorno's claims about instrumental rationality and its self-legitimation amount to? How would these be separated from the causality both present in pre-determined structures of the natural and social world *and* a predominant element of human conceptualisation?

First, the claim of 'instrumental rationality' depends on the claim that there is a *non-instrumental* form of reason, meaning reasoning that cannot be reduced to laws of cause and effect and predominating social *modus operandi* of means and ends. This depends on a spontaneous element of reason *not* determined by reified causal structures of the social world. That reason must be available somewhere in conceptualisation effectuated by the mind due to spontaneous engagement with the objective world. Second, following Adorno, the question becomes whether the element of spontaneity itself has been compromised by the conditions of modernity. If that is claimed, then questions arise as to

what in modernity had the power to 'co-opt' spontaneity not present in previous historical epochs.

The rise of modern science distinguishes modernity from previous eras. However, regarding the normative space of reasons in which reasoning and judgement *coexist* with purely scientific inquiry, the claim would have to be that spontaneity has been affected by the *ideology* of scien*tism* and its vast practical application, in the sense of the predominant role it plays in the cultural rationalisation of modern society, as opposed to being affected by natural science itself. Conversely, if it is held external limitations on spontaneity are no different in modernity from any other time, would the question be one of how the causal organisation of experience assumes a 'natural' predominance over spontaneous intuitions and conceptualisation in the working of the mind? What, then, in the context of the necessity of self-preservation being at the root of causal reasoning and identity thinking, does this reveal about *modernity*, where, as Adorno claims, causality is increasingly impossible to trace because it is everywhere at once?

Could it be claimed, therefore, that the scope of social *power* of instrumental rationality, as part of specifically contingent conditions of modernity, is both a consequence of this 'natural' predominance of causality over spontaneity and, in turn, an element reinforcing this imbalance? Would this amount to claiming instrumental rationality is 'natural'? Or rather, that the imperative of self-preservation is more accentuated than ever in modern society? As I suggest in Chapter 4, Adorno addresses these questions with reference to his idea of 'nature-history'. These remain significant questions, however, with consequences for both the theory of instrumental rationality and for Adorno's contention that 'the whole is untrue' as a result.

The problem of the determinacy of social conditions as an expression of causal structures of reasoning in thought lends itself to the question of the function of spontaneity. How does spontaneity contribute to relations to the objective world, and to itself as a normative constraint? Kant's philosophy of subjectivity addresses the question of how cognitive claims are possible in the account of a spontaneous apperception in which reality would be determinable by the subject. According to Pippin, Kant's designation of thought *itself* as spontaneity suggests it is logically necessary that thinking involved in knowledge is a kind of spontaneity. It follows that individuals doing the

thinking cannot be causal systems in themselves, because 'formal conditions of knowledge require that the content of cognition be *actively* conceptualised in a way that is finally… causally independent of the causally produced reception of that material, and of any initial causal-series processing of that information' (Pippin 1997, p.30).

The active process of conceptualisation, hence, is the contribution of spontaneity to knowledge formation. Even where conceptualisation contributes to further causal lines of reasoning and the overall causal structure of the unity of individual identity, and where it partially derives its original receptivity from causal structures assumed to be present in the objective world, there is a *non*-causal freedom in the capacity of spontaneity to create concepts. The introduction of spontaneity into epistemology, and the idea of the 'subject' as spontaneous activity,

was what would enable the 'political language of freedom, self-determination, even "autonomy". The Kantian principle of modernity is not Cartesian certainty, but "the autonomy of reason," the demand that reason determine for itself what it shall accept as evidence about the nature of things, and that it determine for itself the rule under which it shall evaluate actions' (ibid, p.162).

This suggests, in this 'autonomy of reason', spontaneity not only generates concepts, but also engenders the capacity to *reflect* on them in turn. This ability to reflect on conceptual content of the 'evidence of the nature of things' is how spontaneity sets its own constraints, creating rules or norms along the way 'under which it shall evaluate actions'. As spontaneity tests these evaluations over time and subjects them to evidence provided by experience, it creates norms as to *how* it evaluates, which, combined over the course of experience, become constitutive of the individual's ability to reason. Individuals thereby exercise an 'autonomy of reason', where they become self-determining because of their ability to provide norms and, in turn, normative constraints on their spontaneity through reflection. The arbitration between the two is thereby the source of their ability to reason.

The Kantian paradigm of a free subject establishing its relation to the world spontaneously does not, however, *pace* Pippin, lead to some 'measureless field' devoid of laws or normativity. On the contrary, normative relations with the objective world *only* become possible through spontaneity, and these are delimited by the extent to which individuals engage spontaneously with objects of knowledge. Kant's account of spontaneity, therefore, is made up of two central elements: freedom from external

determination, and freedom to self-legislate. In the 'Transcendental Logic', Kant's two sources of knowledge originating from spontaneity are 1) the receptivity for impressions, described as *sensibility*, and 2) the power of knowing an object through conceptual representations of these impressions (the spontaneity of concepts), described as *understanding*, where the combination of the two results in claims to knowledge.

The achievement of understanding, through conceptual determination of representations derived from sensibility, means spontaneity gives itself normative constraints that *must be conceived of as law- or norm-governed*, requiring of spontaneity that 'it give itself its laws or rules of synthesis' (Caygill 1995, p.375). This self-legislation, however, requires the supplement of the *a priori* universals of space and time in order to generate knowledge, and for reason to produce laws that, apart from being logical rules, provide *grounds* for individuals to legislate themselves *through* these *a priori* determinations of space and time. Such grounds reveal 'a spontaneity through which our reality would be determinable, independently of the conditions of empirical intuition' (Kant, CPR B 430), in which spontaneity is self-legislative.

Kant's 'transcendental subject' thereby 'transcends' the *a priori* universals of time and space - which cannot be known independently of cognition - by situating the spontaneous unification of reason and nature within the subject, consequently 'establishing' the freedom from external determination and the freedom to self-legislate by *grounding* it in the *subject*. For Adorno, however, the problem with this conception is if spontaneity *gives* itself its rules of synthesis based on how it *a priori* conceives natural laws and universals of space and time, then how can spontaneity be something merely *dependent* on these *a priori* universals, and not something which both *actively* acts upon itself *and* those universals, and is acted *upon* by them? As Adorno suggests in 'The Concept of the Transcendental (part IV)',

If the transcendental, or rather the transcendental subject, that is to say, the most general point of reference supposed to guarantee the possibility of a universally valid and necessary knowledge, is really no more than a logical unity, we could not imagine how spontaneity or activity could be ascribed to it. How something that is not in any way individuated in time and space, that is essentially no more than a factor that unifies different things – and is thus no more than a logical abstraction – is able to generate representations, remains completely obscure (Adorno 2001, p.213).

Adorno points out if the apriority of time and space are necessary conditions of cognition, and if subjectivity is simultaneously 'unified' in its 'transcendental', independent status *from* time and space in its self-determination and self-legislation by the *same* logic with which it conceives of natural laws, then it is not clear how this logical unification of sensibility and the understanding amounts to 'spontaneity'. How is spontaneity ascribed to a 'logical unity' that gives itself representations of the world and is able to conceptually determine reality *independently* of the conditions – time and space – of empirical intuition?

The problem with Kant's conception of *a priori* access to natural laws and the universals of space and time through sensibility, and their spontaneous cognition through the understanding, is that it conflates a conception of natural laws with the *causality* projected onto the world by the subject. As Adorno suggested, '[i]n Kant causality is a category that follows from unity of personal consciousness. It is nothing but *general conformity to law* which compels me to synthesise the different phenomenal aspects of the same thing that succeed each other in time' (ibid., p.91). By this account, conformity to what is perceived *a priori* to be natural law creates the 'logical unity' of personal consciousness, from which causality follows. It follows, however, that subjective projection of causal reasoning *as* natural law, and onto universals of space and time themselves, is the *identification* of these with the *subject*, as opposed to spontaneous reorientation of the understanding towards the *object* – e.g. the objective world, space and time, nature and natural laws, etc.

This suggests if normative constraints on spontaneity are to be found anywhere, then it is not in the *a priori* dependence on the spontaneity of the subject, but in the active *mediation* between spontaneity and the prioritisation, *pace* Adorno, of the objective world to which it reacts. Consequently, Kant's 'transcendental subject' is still rooted in the subjective principle of self-preservation resulting in the domination of nature, and identifies both nature and itself in terms of its own causal structures of reasoning. It follows freedom of self-legislation in spontaneity must necessarily be a matter precisely of *not* ascribing to subjectivity a transcendental status 'beyond' time and space – beyond, that is, the *objective*, if spontaneity is to be a source of *reason*.

Adorno's conception of reason is thereby one of the principal *dependence* of the mind on nature, where we begin to delineate the *objective* itself as the *normative* property of spontaneous experience. What does this mean when society appears as part of the individual's immediate objective context? I raised the question of whether conditions of *modernity* can affect spontaneity at either the level of receptivity of impressions or the spontaneity of conceptual development. If so, what does it mean for the possibility of normative relations between subject and the objective world, and between individuals themselves? Can spontaneity be 'unnatural' in the sense that it is distorted by existing forms of instrumental rationality present in the objective social world, and therefore not as it might be under conditions in which these forms of instrumental rationality were not predominant?

For Kant, the notion that spontaneity could be thus affected is impossible, as spontaneity gives itself its laws of synthesis operating independently of how experience of specific conditions in the world may *subsequently* be conceptualised. Given necessary conditions of cognition of space and time, this does not, however, mean, *contra* Kant, space and time do not exist independently of cognition. The identification of space and time, then, can only remain a subjective identification, which, however, cannot itself *circumscribe* space and time. As Adorno suggests in part II of *ND*,

[t]hat the definitions which make the object concrete are merely imposed on it – this rule applies only where the faith in the primacy of subjectivity remains unshaken. But the forms of subjectivity are not cognitive ultimates, as Kant taught; as its experience progresses, cognition can break through them. If philosophy, fatally split off from natural sciences, may refer to physics at all without causing a short circuit, it may do so in this context. With theoretical stringency, the evolution of physics since Einstein burst the visual prison as well as the subjective apriority of time, space and causality. In teaching the possibility of such a prison break, experience – subjective, according to the Newtonian principle of observation – argues for the primacy of the object, and against its own omnipotence (Adorno 1973, pp.187-188).

Beyond referring to how discoveries about the physical world contradict the 'subjective apriority of time, space and causality', this passage suggests the following: because subjectivity cannot take itself as a cognitive 'absolute', the subject's experience of the objective world must prioritise the objective world itself as part of any normative conception of experience. As Adorno writes, 'as experience progresses… cognition can

break through [forms of subjectivity]', suggesting, rather than being found in the subject's spontaneity alone, normative, and therefore *rational*, constraints on spontaneity exist in the *experience* of mediation of the objective world and the objects within it – including society.

Adorno's 'dialectical theory of society' is the effort to understand normative dimensions of experience available to cognition without reducing them to the subject or spontaneity alone. Instead, he insists normative dimensions of experience of the objective world depend on the *content* of this experience, which cannot be determined by the subject or its spontaneity *independently* of its *dependence* on the objective world. Irrespective of the extent to which a social force as pervasive as instrumental rationality may affect spontaneity and conceptualisation, this suggests experience still contains normative constraints on the causal elements of this form of rationality. Such normative constraints are supposed to be revealed, paradigmatically, through experience of social *contradiction*.

For example, spontaneous experience of social phenomena developed as a result of a succession of events throughout history may be experienced in multitudes of ways not accounted for, and perhaps contradictory to, purely causal explanation of the phenomena. Assuming, then, *pace* Adorno, that if instrumental rationality is indeed 'total' at the social level, it is still a *social* element grounded in causal reasoning and, consequently, a form of subject-centred reason, as opposed to being an *a priori* given, 'universal' component for the organisation of experience. The social *experience* of instrumental rationality, however, cannot be *reduced* to either the mind's causal arrangement, or the reproduction of causal reasoning in the creation of social structures.

What, then, does the normative component of spontaneous experience suggest in the concrete context of Adorno's designation of the 'totalisation' of experience in modern society by instrumental rationality? As Pippin describes Adorno's perspective, '[t]he criticism is that concrete and particular sensuous impulses are not allowed any standing in anyone's motivational economy except *as* permitted, "incorporated into a maxim" by a self-authorising practical reason' (Pippin 2005, p.103). This means the totalisation of experience occurs to the extent that sensuous impulses that do not conform to the demands of instrumental rationality are barred from entering consciousness altogether, by virtue of possible experiences corresponding to such impulses simply no longer existing in

modern society, having been stamped out from 'acceptable' parameters of experience altogether.

Without necessarily adhering to Adorno's 'extreme' position, it could be suggested that sensibility is 'affected' if the predominant experience of individuals is social, *ergo* that the spontaneous ability to conceptualise is limited by individuals' immediate social experience, thereby predominating over any other form of experience. It would follow the sway held over society by instrumental rationality is explained by its 'appropriation' of reflective spontaneity by virtue of monopolising possible experience. However, the objection then arises that even if it can be suggested that spontaneity can be dominated in this way, this does not explain the *persistence* of the kinds of sensuous impulses Adorno claims have all but disappeared. Developments in categories of e.g., music, literature and philosophy have not ceased just because a degree of validity can be attributed to the claim of 'totalising' forms of rationality in modern society.

It may be that *exposure* to such categories is constrained because instrumental rationality foremost promotes the easily accessible, e.g. unsubstantial popular music or crime novels, but this is not the same as proposing reflection on experience has been compromised altogether. I maintain there *is* validity to the claim that reflection is constrained to some extent by instrumental rationality, but by referencing the idea that Adorno's overall concept of 'totalisation' can help to illuminate some of the specific *contexts* in which that claim can be made. This means making such a claim is contingent on specific analyses of particular social phenomena, and does not amount to a wholesale endorsement of the projection of the concept of totalisation onto society, or spontaneity.

I have introduced how normative constraints supposed to be available in Adorno's conception of unrestricted experience may still be accessible in Adorno's own context of the totalised society, despite itself. What does this suggest, then, about the determinacy of social conditions and the possibility of individual, rational self-determination? On one hand, constitutive features of instrumental rationality - of causal and subject-centred reasoning - must be the product of spontaneity in the first place, considering this form of reasoning is grounded in the self-preservation of individuals vis-à-vis the objective world, and is a response to real needs and wants at some stage before it can be considered to have become socially 'instrumentalised'.

Where reason becomes 'instrumental', then, it is also a matter of searching for pragmatic solutions, not only in the name of self-preservation, but also the collective preservation of society. There is little doubt, for instance, that mass production of malaria vaccine is a pragmatic solution to a pressing universal problem, even though it is still a product of instrumental rationality. The question, then, becomes one of the distinction between how instrumental forms of rationality are legitimated to the extent they answer real needs rooted in imperatives of self-preservation, and where these become self-legitimating to the degree they no longer answer concrete needs, but rather, *manufacture* needs in turn and consequently, potentially *threaten* self-preservation. This manipulation of needs – consider the 'capitalisation' of human emotion in the manner human frailty becomes the targeted revenue of a nation's broadsheets, or the proliferation of 'reality' shows designed to humiliate unsuspecting individuals – creates an additional imperative of self-preservation vis-à-vis society *itself*.

That is to suggest, self-preservation is no longer solely the original impulse of individuals sheltering themselves from an objective world over which they exercise a limited form of control, but also becomes an imperative of survival from the very structures of rationality supposed to guarantee this 'shelter'. Adorno refers to this dialectical reversal as the 'second nature' of self-preservation, which he accounts for with his idea of 'nature-history', examined below. This 'second nature' of self-preservation concretely results, among other things and in the grand, self-replicating scheme of capital as a whole, in entire industries, pharmaceutical and otherwise, dedicated to what one might call 'mental adjustment' to social norms that themselves have not been normatively legitimated at the socio-political level by any stretch of the imagination - beyond their conformity to the logic of capital.

The consequent identification of individuals with these norms – consider how media humiliation of its victims often leads to the 'voluntary', wholesale embrace by the latter of the very norms depriving them of self-determination in the first place in the desperate effort, perhaps, to survive – underscores that rational self-determination of individuals cannot simply be equated with 'instrumental' determinacy of social conditions. Daily interaction between individuals and their technological accessories, and the extent to which this interaction influences other areas of their lives – e.g., how individuals relate to

each other in real life - raises questions as to whether the spontaneous understanding of 'others' as objects of knowledge is affected by the ways individuals become accustomed to interacting through technology.

As Turkle suggests, '[f]ace-to-face conversation unfolds slowly. It teaches patience. When we communicate on our digital devices, we learn different habits. As we ramp up the volume and velocity of online connections, we start to expect faster answers. To get these, we ask one another simpler questions; we dumb down our communications, even on the most important matters'.[38] If empirical studies determine over time that inter-subjective communication is impoverished the more social media dominates interaction, would that be an example of the spontaneous understanding being rendered 'unnatural' per se? Moreover, if it could be determined that spontaneity is affected by environmental circumstances, and if Adorno's conception of overpowering forms of instrumental rationality is acknowledged, where does this leave the idea of free will?

3.5   B) *Causa Sui* and the 'Free' Adoption of Social Norms

The notion of free will is indispensable to any understanding of democracy, law, individual rights and self-determination, not least because individuals could not be held responsible for their actions if they could not be said to possess the element of free will. Nietzsche nevertheless takes issue with this idea, in the sense that something possessing a wholly free will would have to be entirely *causa sui*, its own cause, if its will is to be unencumbered by other elements in the world. As nothing can be entirely its own cause, there can be no such thing as a truly free will: all will is determined to some extent by objective circumstances, and is therefore not 'free' in the way so imagined. There is consequently a contradiction at the level of individuals assuming 'full' responsibility for their actions, be it in a democratic, moral or religious sense, because doing so implies that one is *causa sui*:

The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction hitherto imagined, a kind of logical rape and unnaturalness: but mankind's extravagant pride has managed to get itself frightfully entangled with precisely this piece of nonsense. For the desire for 'freedom of will' in that metaphysical superlative sense… the desire to bear the whole and sole responsibility for one's actions and to

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absolve God, world, ancestors, chance, society from responsibility for them, is nothing less than the desire to be precisely that *causa sui* and, with more than Münchhausen temerity, to pull oneself into existence out of the swamp of nothingness by one's own hair (Nietzsche 1990, pp.50-51).

Nietzsche's attack is directed at the idea of using causality as the explanation for everything in the material world – the 'desire to bear the whole and sole responsibility for one's actions' resting on the assumption that one can be one's own cause, and therefore rooted in the hypothesis of the causal arrangement of all experience. Rather, causality should be regarded as an inadequate subjective conception seeking to explain everything from observable phenomena to psychology.

From Nietzsche's perspective, the problem with this conjecture is it suggests something tangible must have been the original cause of everything else *and* itself, when causal reasoning itself, first, hasn't been able to provide an adequate characterisation of what the original cause must be, and second, logically assumes this still intangible 'tangible' element must have been its own cause as well. It follows the notion of a wholly free will unwittingly legitimises causal explanations by setting into motion its *own* chain of cause and effect, without considering how it is a subjective concept which, taken alone, inadequately explains all intersecting objective phenomena impacting the individual will, and grounds it in the 'logical unity' of the subject as its own *causa sui*.

Consequently, believing in this – a notion subtended by the cultural experience of modernity as an appendage to the idea that living in a democracy guarantees such a form of 'absolute' freedom - reinforces causal structures of thought at the *socially* objective level. This also suggests how causal reasoning becomes *reified* at the objective social level. Because instrumental forms of rationality determine vast elements of experience, they may be assumed to exist 'objectively' even though they may be self-legitimating as *causa sui*, consequently avoiding normative constraints that individuals should provide.

Conversely, the danger of considering instrumental rationality purely in the context of causal reasoning is that it leaves no space for evaluating the role spontaneity plays in bringing about instrumental rationality, and no consideration of the degree to which spontaneity is affected by it in turn. Simply ascribing instrumental rationality to a process of cause and effect, without considering how both can be evaluated as outgrowths of the impulse of self-preservation, would be equivalent to having limited spontaneous

reaction to the concept of instrumental rationality itself, suggesting a lack of self-determination. Rather, the question becomes understanding *how* modern consciousness becomes inextricable from instrumental rationality, and investigating how spontaneity both conforms to these conditions *and* is capable of resisting them.

How is spontaneity generated independently of something as objectively pervasive as instrumental rationality *and* the source of normative constraints on that rationality? Adorno's dialectical theory of society is partially the attempt to answer this question. I explain below how the theory of *negative* dialectics is an attempt to salvage spontaneity from its social determination by instrumental rationality by re-orientating it from the subject and towards experience of the objective world *itself.* For now, the assumption that spontaneity *can* operate independently of instrumental rationality leads to the idea that as *part* of nature, spontaneity is still connected to the rest of nature in ways not mediated by pre-determined systems of thought and correlative subject-centred reasoning.

Different ways of observing nature lead to differing conceptions of nature and reason that need *not* be mutually exclusive or accounted for by singular meta-narratives, scientific, philosophical or otherwise. According to Adorno's critique of modern conditions, if elements of nature can only ever be partially identified, but are *only* identified with what natural science attempts to make comprehensible, they are in danger of being perceived as identical to what has been made comprehensible. The point that whereas reason ascribes laws to nature, natural events *themselves* do not seem suited to provide any justificatory role bears repeating here, in the sense of how this suggests how individuals are then primarily justifying and identifying themselves through the parts of nature they manage to identify – and control.

Additionally, Adorno suggests the ability to identify *characteristics* of nature and master them *mimetically* recreates itself within the nature of individuals themselves. For example, the excursus on Homer's *Odyssey* in *DoE* shows how, in order to vanquish Polyphemus, the ability to control nature results in Ulysses' understanding of himself only through this power over 'nature'. Consequently, Ulysses loses what is *particular* to himself – he gains control over nature at the expense of his own self:

Ulysses emerges from the struggle a self-identical, invariable, force of nature as the power of self-preservation, a second immanence, that does to itself and first nature, by self-control, what it once feared from first nature: it destroys particularity… External mimicry of the natural force of the Cyclops becomes internal self-identical mimesis… which is itself a structure of the self-sacrifice of particularity to universality. Thus, in its conscious control of nature, the self has triumphed by becoming opaque to its self-reproduction as second nature (Hullot-Kentor 2006, p. 237).

Where individuals understand nature by isolating parts of it and gaining mastery over them, control *is* gained, but at the expense of their understanding of the *rest* of nature, and, consequently, of their understanding of themselves and how they now act in the interests of that control *itself*. The 'particularity' of individuals, consequently, as that part of nature immanent to them, is sacrificed for their 'universality' – identification that binds individuals to others and consequently becomes their 'second nature'. I treat the notion of 'external mimicry [becoming] internal self-identical mimesis' in Chapter 4. Presently, the parable of Ulysses demonstrates how identification of outer nature, and consequently of inner nature with this *identification itself* comes at the expense of the particularity and self-determination of the individual, resulting in this process of identification becoming its own 'universalising' *causa sui*.

The central question, then, is: how can what is held to be true be legitimated in ways not relying purely on scientific explanation? The reduction of epistemological questions to, broadly speaking, questions about cognitive science from a naturalistic impetus, has, following Bowie, made this a contemporary concern, primarily because 'the reduction of epistemological questions to natural science does not answer important metaphysical questions about subjectivity and its relationship with the rest of nature' (Bowie 1996, p.7). The question resonates in Kant's contrast between the realm of freedom and the realm of nature and, following Bowie, points towards distinctions between how a 'space of reasons' might be organised internally as a 'moment' of reason *within* nature, and how nature might be organised on conceptions assumed by natural science.

This question reiterates the problem of ideology: if the internal organisation of the space of reasons is subsumed within how nature is conceived by natural science, then the exercise of reason within such a space can become ideological. As science depends on disinterested methodological procedures controlling given environments in order to prove

theories pertaining specifically *to* those environments, it clearly cannot take all characteristics of nature into account when testing for the particularity of just one of them. Moreover, science has developed such methodological procedures over time, based on obtaining the types of results being searched for in the first place.

This means science tests hypotheses with pre-conceived ideas of what tests may show, by virtue of how methodologies are designed. By that token, however, if questions about normativity within the space of reasons were judged uniquely according to dominant methodological procedures, these procedures would clearly limit the spontaneity playing a part in developing norms in the first place, reducing experience of the objective world to themselves. Furthermore, such methodology isolates the epistemological conception of the relationship between mind and objective world to areas methodology has hitherto succeeded in controlling. As epistemology seeks to answer questions which include, but are not limited to, natural science, it follows disinterested scientific procedure cannot simply be transplanted to questions concerning the provision of norms precisely because it is itself unlikely to remain disinterested, and is therefore in danger of becoming ideological.

In Adorno's terms, then, scientific method enables access to understanding only of those aspects of nature it can control, '[f]or our knowledge of nature is really so performed by the demand that we dominate nature (exemplified by the chief method of finding out about nature, namely the scientific experiment) that we end up understanding only those aspects of nature that we can control' (Adorno 2001, p.176). The space of reasons is, therefore, in danger of becoming ideological because it often takes place from contexts already defined by the control of nature. An example of how the conception of nature by science affects how reasons are made can be found in the way scientific inquiry, however disinterested and earnest it seeks to be, is quasi-instrumentally employed to buttress policy implementation deeply impacting the social realm.

The problem arising, then, is when, as a result of the influence of such policy, the conception of nature understood through the prism of scientific method becomes socially legitimated as a given way of thinking about both nature *and* society as a dominant social norm onto itself. The point in finding places outside of *ideology* in which to submit claims

to a space of reasons is to suggest, as Wellmer does[39], there is 'space' *within* nature that cannot be understood by scientific method alone, therefore requiring other aspects of understanding. How, then, should normative dimensions of thought, and the 'rules or normative constraints characteristic of free activity' be understood in this context?

This remains a necessary question in the context of modernity, and from a philosophical perspective is crucial to pursue if the problem of scientism is to be confronted. If individuals are to stake autonomous claims vis-à-vis the objective determination of social experience, then the question of *determinacy* and its role in explaining why humans construct modes of thoughts and being, culminating in social structures, and consequently social norms accepted as given, must be considered. We have seen how the impulse of self-preservation must be one central source of such determinacy. In this light, human activity should be considered, not necessarily from either extreme of empirical or metaphysical philosophy, but from an account of normativity accounting for cognitive claims *and* rational constraints normativity could provide in light of individuals' social activities and their relation to the notion of self-preservation. This does not mean normativity should *only* contribute to social conceptions of reason eventually shared by everyone, such as basic democratic standards of free speech or inter-subjective respect for the value of life inscribed into social law, in order to guarantee their preservation.

Rather, Adorno's idea that normativity depends on experience of the objective world suggests aspects of normativity that become socially concretised need to be continually mediated in light of the experience *itself* of these norms. Certainly, while a number of norms are agreed upon socially because they enable standards of life, it does not follow all norms are equal for everyone. Where it can be assumed that the development of self-determining norms remains rational - in the sense e.g. these norms don't infringe on the quality of life of others - individuals still develop norms specific to their own subjectivity, needs, desires and social context, which cannot be accounted for by a singular conception of reason. This suggests another 'indefeasible norm of self-evidence' must be the free adoption of norms in general: there could be no conception of an independent 'will' at all if individuals were unable to develop norms suited specifically to

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[39] See Wellmer 2009.

themselves, nor could there be an overall conception of 'reason' had these norms not developed in relation to specifically individual needs.

However, if norms constituting a given understanding of reason are determined through spontaneous conceptualisation, this raises the question of how this conceptualisation results in Adorno's quandary of reason and freedom as mutually compatible, governing *ideologies*. If it can be claimed that the concept of freedom is employed towards ideological ends in modernity, such that it is routinely equated with the means and ends of instrumental rationality, to which extent can it be claimed that self-determination is undermined?

We may consider the oft-invoked ideological complement of the notion of 'freedom' with consumerism in Western society. The precept of consumerism is that the free choice of consumers determines the economic structure of society. Conversely, the logic of consumerism, with its ubiquitous promotion of goods and services and deliberate linkage of these with arbitrary notions of social status and identification, creates, in practice, desires – as opposed to needs - that cannot properly be considered to be the result of self-determining reason. This means while individuals are free to consume whatever they want within means, it doesn't follow that what they want is necessarily the product of spontaneous reactions to objective circumstances, but is often reflected by what they are enjoined to desire according to dominant conceptualisations of social identification promoted by instrumental rationality.

This raises the question of how the economic structure of society is determined by free choice, and how it may be claimed that free choice is determined by the economic and ideological injunctions of society. From Adorno's perspective, the danger in this instance is that normative constraints supposedly available in individuals' experience, particularly in their conceptualisation of freedom, are replaced by *social* norms circumscribing this concept of freedom, which in this case is the freedom to consume. This social norm of the concept of freedom has the further consequence of promoting identity-formation through consumerism itself, such that it can be argued that the 'unity of personal consciousness' in modernity comes to depend to some extent on how people identify themselves through what they consume.

It follows at least some of norms individuals develop, particularly in relation to the spontaneous conceptualisation of freedom, depend on the direct causal pressure of the *social* norm of 'freedom', to how individuals are able to conceptualise it. While Adorno's claim that this process is near-total may be exaggerated, the truth of its content relates to how it helps illuminate ways in which spontaneity is impacted upon by instrumental rationality. It also helps expose how norms can be social constructs seemingly 'freely' adopted, but likely adopted as a consequence of the predetermination of parameters of social experience by instrumental rationality. Such forms of rationality may effectively be considered *causa sui*, in the sense they are no longer consciously mediated by individuals, as opposed to their content being reflected upon so as to constitute, despite themselves, a possible resource of self-determination.

One example of a contemporary social norm becoming *causa sui* and potentially displacing self-determination is the technologically-determined phenomenon of individuals sharing compromising pictures on cell-phones and the Internet, an occurrence known as 'sexting'. The prospect of potentially being compromised professionally – or worse[40] – because of the eternal availability of such pictures or video, once shared, is apparently often met with insouciance. While the impulse to do this may be ascribed to youth, curiosity and inexperience, and while the act of doing so is ostensibly an individual choice, to what extent could it be claimed that the all-encompassing determination of people's experience by technology is a major factor in influencing and encouraging this type of behaviour - specifically, the public broadcasting of what would ordinarily be considered to belong to the intimate private sphere?

Moreover, to what extent are individuals enjoined to participate in the phenomenon of 'sexting' or suchlike because they perceive it as a social *norm*, and therefore that the social – and causal - pressure to conform to this type of behaviour can be considered 'legitimate' by the increasing numbers of people involved in it (likely a determining factor among younger people, particularly those with no experience of social relations *sans* Internet or cell phones)? From this perspective, it may be clarified the problem Adorno has with the conception of a 'free' adoption of norms is, on one level, that subjectivity can all too easily become heteronomous as opposed to autonomous –

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[40] See Meyer 2009.

that the supposedly free adoption of norms is in fact an act of submission to socially dominant norms which are merely given, and therefore appear previously 'legitimated'.

On another level, it is that social norms, taken by themselves, express an accumulation of experience that doesn't necessarily require the individual's spontaneous involvement with it – not requiring individual reflection for the norms to be adopted, and therefore not subjected to rational constraints of its own. One example of this would be the kind of nationalism historically precipitating one country's declaration of war on another, where the social norm of the first country's superiority over the other within that country, as a part of the justification for war, is often freely adopted at face value as a *causa sui* by the majority of individuals without further reflection. The free adoption of norms at face value can thus be conceived as little more than a free adoption of ideology lacking rational constraints.

Thus far, Adorno's conception of spontaneity has been suggested as depending on an 'unreduced' experience of the objective world, a prioritisation of the objective world itself to experience, and on (inner and outer) nature in the subjective effort to exercise forms of normativity that can capture 'truth-effects', in as far as it does not reduce experience to *itself*. In the following chapter, Adorno's conception of un-regimented experience as a source of rational constraints is explored by introducing further theoretical elements, including the assertion – 'against epistemology' - central to his philosophy that epistemological approaches seeking to 'ground' knowledge in the subject are in danger of missing dimensions of experience vital to pursuing questions of truth. Furthermore, Adorno's emphasis on 'mimetic' aspects of experience is considered, and how this notion suggests a *dialectical* approach to experience opening up the possibility of a spontaneous component of reason in his context of a 'total' instrumental rationality.

V. CHAPTER 4: THE LIMITATIONS OF EPISTEMOLOGY

In this chapter, I develop Adorno's notion of experience as spontaneity of thought anchoring itself neither in apriority of the subject or objectively given structures of rationality. Instead, it is a continuous process of the *mediation* of experience – whether of society, the natural world or particular objects of knowledge therein - and the immediate ways this experience is given to the subject. This mediation attempts to account dialectically for how both object and subject are changed in the course of this experience, in the effort to express its truth.

First, the thesis of *DoE* is outlined to introduce how conceptual reflection can reveal needs forgotten or repressed when thought is restricted to reification of the impulse of self-preservation. For Adorno, it follows attempts to 'ground' thought, whether, philosophically, in the subject, or as an effect of the scientific objectification of nature, rely on misconceptions of a *prima philosophia*, a philosophy of 'absolute beginnings'. This *prima philosophia* buttresses certain epistemological conceptions of the relationship between reason and nature, but fails to account for 'contradictory senses of nature' irreducible to it. It follows such misconceptions, sometimes expressed as the 'myth of the given' in philosophy, can play a part in reinforcing the immediacy with which ideological structures of thought are received as truth. Elements of this immediacy are challenged with aspects of Adorno's 'meta-critique' of epistemology.

Second, I introduce Adorno's contention that society and its 'unreduced' experience must be a constitutive element of epistemology, and demonstrate how epistemology, taken as an absolute end onto itself without consideration of its socio-historical mediation, is liable to become ideological. Third, it follows the mediated character of knowledge lends itself to a dialectical understanding of experience, a contention examined in this chapter with reference to Adorno's central idea of the dialectical relationship between nature and history. Fourth, the notion of mimesis is expanded to suggest how elements of experience that may be regressive when restricted to the self-preserving compulsion to identify, could, as spontaneous elements of experience, contain progressive elements of *non*-identity that can be a source of normative constraints on instrumental forms of rationality. The purpose of this chapter

is to illuminate why Adorno addresses the deficiency of methods of thought ignoring the concept of the social, and to introduce how his theory redresses such shortcomings.

4.1   Myth and Enlightenment

The previous chapter concluded with the contradiction between the free adoption of norms as a necessary prerequisite of self-determination, and how this self-determination can be illusory. Self-determination may be undermined where reflection on the conceptual content of given norms is restricted, and therefore where individuals are heteronomously determined by these norms, as opposed to engaging with them autonomously. It was thereby shown what may be suggested by the notion of 'false consciousness.'

Lack of reflection on adopted norms, whether individuals are unconcerned with evidence contravening prejudices or assume 'guarantees' of self-determination in norms immediately given to them, suggests how consciousness may be 'false' in the sense that it does not mediate the conceptual content of its adopted norms. Self-determination must therefore entail engagement with conceptual content of claims regarding norms and other objects of knowledge in the world. What if, however, spontaneity becomes 'co-opted' towards ideological ends, to the degree that spontaneity conforms, by necessity, to pragmatic demands determined by instrumental forms of rationality? What distinguishes spontaneous engagement with the conceptual content of social norms from spontaneity geared towards practical forms of rationality?

Adorno's approach to this problem relies on the 'priority of the objective' - that individuals depend for cognition on the objective world and nature, in the sense they cannot think about themselves without these. Individuals depend, in the immediate sense, on the precedence of the social world in relation to them, but individuals and society both depend on the priority of nature 'in relation to all subjectivity it establishes outside itself', meaning, the ultimate priority of nature – including elements of *human* nature - over all limited attempts to conceptualise it. Consequently, the conceptual content of what is given to experience is an essential factor in mediating the objective world.

This includes the extent to which spontaneous involvement of thought does not amount only to reacting to immediate experience, but also penetrates conceptual claims sustaining that immediacy. For Adorno, any theory not addressing specific socio-historical experience in which the theory itself arises becomes instrumental, in the sense it both vitiates insights immanent to this socio-historical experience relevant to the theory, and insulates itself from accounts undermining it at the expense of aspects of its own truth. Adorno's conception of experience is dialectical and therefore not restricted to empiricist conceptions of experience – albeit dialectical thought also mediates between empirical claims. This dialectical theory of experience contrasts with the given-ness of the immediacy of sense perception empiricist accounts rely on, which cannot by themselves account for all experience of the objective world and the totality of truth claims. Adorno does not thereby deny the validity of empirical thought, but suggests, taken by itself and lacking acknowledgement of its own mediated character, that empiricism fails to conceptualise truth claims according to its own epistemological standards.

The Kantian conception of self-determining reason was based on the intention to end the pre-modern reliance on the ascription of nature and the objective world to the idea of 'God', and re-situating that determination, and obligations drawn from it, in the human will itself. Moral laws, for example, are elaborated from engagement with conceptual claims pertaining to social experience, and therefore framed with reference to specific elements of experience, and not the overall *a priori* rational framework enabling sensibility. This suggests the human will can operate *independently* of how individuals are determined by nature. It also follows for Kant, however, that if human action is to be rational, it would have to be universalised *without contradiction*: '[a] will operating on this principle would be free from any ground of determination (*Bestimmungsgrund*) in nature and hence truly free. A moral subject is thus autonomous in a radical sense. [It] obeys only the dictates of [its] own will. Reason, as rational will, is now the criterion, but in a third sense, one opposed to nature' (Taylor 1979, p. 75). A part of reason is therefore assumed to be self-determination from the presumed causality of *nature*. However, if this reason is freedom *from* nature, how is it possible to separate reason from nature without it still remaining a *part* of nature, 'a moment within the whole'?

The central problem with Kant's conception of 'universal' reason is that it remains formal: it cannot actually be grounded without 'borrowing' from nature what it seeks to exclude nature from. It also has implications for polities, in which, following Kant, objectives derived from human will would have to be unconditionally legitimate for all individuals in order to be universal. However, this raises the question of how rational action can be universalised without contradiction, if legitimacy of individual objectives is judged foremost by self-determining individuals, and not according to pre-existing 'universal' rationality. Kant's radical notion of autonomy implies all individuals seek their own ends and use their own means. However, Kant's conception of reason as *universal* simultaneously restricts pursuit of means and ends to make individuals coexist under universal laws – therefore also restricting self-determination. How, then, if freedom is essentially negative – here in the sense that the freedom to act is restricted by social necessity - could a 'universal' conception of reason be unconditionally legitimate for all individuals?

Moreover, if reason were *only* immanent, derived purely from the will and self-determination of individuals, then it must be something imposed on nature. If this reason truly aspired to universality, it would have to address the *rest* of nature without simply reducing nature to itself, as individuals cannot simply 'transcend', nature, as if they were something apart from it. It would have to do this while accounting for its own place within nature in a way not only relying on its ability to dominate nature for its own ends, but also takes into consideration its dependence on nature.

The socio-historical quandary between the universalisation of reason as one central objective of Enlightenment thinking, and practical constraints on autonomy it involves at social levels of its implementation, resonates in the concept of the 'dialectic' of Enlightenment. The central thesis of *DoE* is twofold: 'Myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology' (Horkheimer & Adorno 2002, p. xviii). This means, first, Enlightenment, as a project of rational and scientific disenchantment, has as its objective freedom of thought from mythologies and irrational beliefs buttressing pre-modern views of the world. Rational development of cognitive techniques to identify and master nature was, consequently, central to this conception of freedom from the determination of individuals by external and arbitrary forces, resulting as this did in mythologies, superstition, religious dogma and, consequently, repressive social structures.

The universalisation of these cognitive techniques in the framework of natural science, and the universalisation of their truth claims as those principally deserving social legitimation, cementing their centrality to the administrative determination of society was, however, consequently reflected in the appropriation of nature as an object of *boundless* human control. This control is uninhibited, and, at some point, *unqualified*, in as far as the extent to which it extends doesn't necessarily answer human needs, or manipulates or represses them instead. The meaning of nature is consequently restricted to how individuals identify it. For Adorno, it follows that enlightenment procured through scientific control and identification of nature is equally susceptible to generating repressive social structures. It follows that it can become a *mythological* framework for 'objectivity' or an objective 'certainty' promoting itself to be intellectually unassailable, while de-legitimising conceptions of nature – including human nature - that cannot be accounted for by its methodologies and predetermination of cognitive parameters for the understanding.

This potential undermining of reflection equally part of nature itself, hence, undercuts the project of *Enlightenment*, including possibilities of truth claims that cannot be accounted for by the framework of the scientific control of nature. Where reason becomes 'instrumental' to the extent that it reduces experience to its own universalising, yet, to some degree, foreclosed framework for reflection, it also ideologically forecloses recognition of socio-political contradictions it creates, mythologizing its own claim to universality. Furthermore, attempts to ground knowledge of the objective world primarily on the basis of identifying naturally given laws potentially reinforces mythological frameworks for the understanding itself, if these are taken to circumscribe possibilities of experience. Long-standing human assumptions about particular natural laws may in time themselves be revealed to be mythological frameworks, as has historically occurred. The seminal event of Copernicus' displacement of the idea of the earth as the centre of the universe, for example, provides a paradigmatic example of the revelation of a form of subject-centred reasoning – in this case, the reductive idea of an earth-centred conception of the universe which had subsisted for thousands of years – as myth.

While the imperative of identification does not undermine the truth-seeking endeavour of natural science itself, based as it is on theories of its own falsifiability, it does

suggest how it inadvertently produces its own potentially 'mythological' frameworks for the understanding in its quest to 'ground' conceptions of truth, particularly in perfection of its own methodologies. The assumed 'given-ness' resulting from the attempted identification of natural laws can *itself* turn out to be 'myth' which is nevertheless methodically employed to shape structures of social experience. This given-ness reinforces itself in social structures determining experience through the power of the immediacy with which that given-ness is *ideologically* reinforced, among other things by technology. It follows that subjective particularity – that which may be specific to individuals by virtue of being variegated manifestations of nature - is thereby sublated into a mythical universality of a social totality grounded in this 'given-ness', including what remains particular to them and therefore *contradictory* to this 'universality'. The potentially ideological element of the concept of universality itself, thereby, is one source of Adorno's claim that 'the whole is untrue'.

One reason for this compulsion towards universalising frameworks for the understanding, following Adorno, remains the thoroughgoing *fear* of the unknown - or nature - itself. He deems this fear a form of irrationality, where logic identifies all nature with itself and its immediate practical purposes, undermining the Enlightenment imperative of reason itself to critically engage what is immediately given to experience. This reversion of Enlightenment to myth, however, has its own dialectical contradiction in the sense of how myth can act as a *function* of Enlightenment, something overlooked in the indiscriminate Enlightenment drive to overcome all myth – including previous historical assumptions deemed to be fallacies because of their lack of scientific grounding - and to ground truth in its own positive identification of the objective world. It follows this drive to identification can obscure how ideas subsequently deemed to be myths – whether allegorically, in parables, religious or other socio-historical accounts - contain conceptual elements which *themselves* were attempts at enlightenment. These ideas are not, however, exhausted by the establishment of a framework of logical facticity as the conceptual, self-determining engine of the 'truth' of experience, not least in terms of what they can reveal about socio-historical constellations in which they arose, and mediation of concepts upon which both logic and these accounts rely.

It follows conceptions of Enlightenment determined predominantly by the impulse to identify nature in any absolute sense create potentially mythical frameworks of

their own. Additionally, Enlightenment, in its attempt to ground its legitimacy in the increasing success – 'progress' – with which it manages to control nature, succumbs to an additional 'foundational' myth Adorno broadly terms *prima philosophia*. *Prima philosophia*, is the idea that the subject-based, rational control of nature enables individuals to ground identity and subjectivity themselves in this domination and thereby 'transcend' nature, obscuring how they remain susceptible to and part of it. It follows from this attempt to ground knowledge and experience, an extension of the imperatives of subjectivity and its preservation – and the concretion of its desired-for identification - arise comprehensive systems of thought striving to achieve certainty by reducing objectivity and nature to cognitive processes. Instead, the ever-intensifying degree to which inner and outer nature are dominated by scientific rationality, and the complementary instrumental and technological control of social relations, are a reflection of repeated attempts – and inability - to overcome nature. Consequently, this compulsion irrationally leads to subjective and psychological regression due to damaged experience afflicting the subject in the cultural realm, limitations on spontaneity, and the subsequent impoverishment of reflection. Adorno does not deny the necessity of the self-preserving imperative manifest in the control of nature, but his dialectical approach suggests this control cannot be the only prism through which nature is understood.

This core outline of *DoE*, then, introduces a conception of experience as *dialectical*. How epistemological conceptions grounding themselves in isolation from social circumstances in which they are formulated – and the socio-historical mediation of this experience - can become ideologically corrupted, is suggested below. Following Bowie, Adorno's conception of experience suggests there are 'contradictory senses of "nature", as that which is objectified in scientific theories and their applications, and as that which we are motivated to respond to in expressive forms which cannot be encompassed by objectifying theories, [and] which cannot arise without each other' (Bowie 2010, p.31).

4.2   The Meta-critique of Epistemology

The Kantian notion of a separation of reason and nature, a continuing imperative in analytical traditions of philosophy, entails there is a 'gap' to be bridged by an account of nature developed from self-determining reason. The space of reasons, e.g., is brought about as a result of the necessity of accounting for experience of the objective world,

where spontaneity contributes to reason through conceptualisation within the space of reasons. However, maintaining this gap between reason and nature as if they were two sides that could be conclusively separated, to the extent that reason would be self-determining *irrespective* of nature, is a potentially ideological endeavour risking constraint of epistemological questions, however inadvertently, in the order of causality. It follows attempts to fill this gap can occur at the expense of spontaneity itself, if filling it means subsuming aspects of nature entirely to given forms of reasoning in order to understand them.

For example, if understanding nature is restricted to aspects of nature that can be controlled, e.g. through scientific method, then forms of reasoning thereby arising become inadequate to explain aspects of nature that cannot be controlled through that method. Consequently, forms of reasoning emphasising their separation from nature potentially legitimate themselves without justifying themselves normatively, to the point of understanding themselves as being objectively 'given'. The contradiction between autonomy and universality can therefore be re-framed as a question about the epistemological relationship between reason and nature.

A self-determining rationality considering itself to be 'universal' independently of nature, or theories seeking to explain parts of nature without corresponding with the rest of nature, can only be universal in the *ideological* sense. For Adorno, however, it follows such concepts, including broader concepts of reason *in toto*,

are intelligible only with reference to other concepts. For instance, universality could hardly be intelligible without particularity since it is both a definitionally contrasting concept and also, in reality, one which if effective is supposed to apply to particulars (e.g. every particular human being is mortal). To elevate the universal can therefore be exposed as a philosophical strategy deliberately excluding key mediating concepts (O'Connor 2000, p. 112).

This means elevation of the 'universal' to an absolute concept is none other than a philosophical strategy for excluding particulars that are necessarily elements of the mediation of this universality, without which there would be no conception of the universal, and yet which may conceptually contradict its logical unity, thus undermining *how* it makes its claim to universal truth.

In modern philosophy, it follows, there is a foundationalist tendency - what Adorno terms *prima philosophia*, the 'first philosophy' – prioritising certain concepts over others in the quest for this 'logical unity', yet whose conceptual development remains dependent on the mediation of concepts, but excludes mediation itself from its identification. This suggests concepts may be developed in isolation from social circumstances in which they arise and through which mediation necessarily takes place, overlooking crucial elements of the experience (socio-historical, individual, etc.) in which they are being formulated. According to Brandom, philosophical foundationalism is the claim there is a structure of particular *beliefs* such that, 'firstly, each one is non-inferentially arrived at, secondly, that these beliefs presuppose no other belief, either particular or general, and thirdly, these non-inferentially acquired beliefs constitute the ultimate court of appeal for all factual claims' (Brandom 1997, p.152). But how are such beliefs justified in the first place, if the foundationalist emphasis is on grounding beliefs, as opposed to justifying them normatively?

The foundational claim of the philosophy of Logical Positivism, for example, rejects statements lacking verificational, empirical basis, asserting 'only statements which can be verified can be truth-determinate' (Bowie 1997, pp. 253-254). This, as Bowie suggests, is itself a presupposition that cannot be verified, depending on a given notion of verification ignoring clusters of interpretations of how verification should take place, each of which would have to be continuously verified against other interpretations (e.g., normatively), in order for truth claims to be made. For Adorno, however, potentially false foundational claims contain, despite themselves, measures of truth content. The truth of such positions is they can potentially break out of self-imposed constraints and reveal central theoretical problems of the present social constellation leading to those positions in the first place. According to Bowie, e.g., the problem Adorno diagnosed with Logical Positivism was its post-WWII academic institutionalisation, in which the 'goal was the philosophical legitimation of the natural sciences' (ibid.). Consequently, Logical Positivism became an *ideological* endeavour – a means to justify ends, as opposed to a mediation *between* means and ends - and lost the critical function it had played in de-mystifying *philosophy* at that time.

For Adorno, foundational categories philosophy attempts to establish are both 'never… finally distinguishable from each other, but are also never fully identical' (ibid.

p.255). This suggests because there is social linkage between foundational claims that maintain logical independence of one another, the fact that this linkage exists means that such claims are specific to their socio-historical context, and can help to illuminate aspects of that particular constellation. For example, in some traditional forms of inquiry attempting to bridge the epistemological gap between reason and nature, reliance on the given means knowledge is assumed to be available merely by virtue of being in a state of consciousness prior to its conceptualisation. In philosophical empiricism, e.g., it is claimed sensory perception provides evidence qualifying as knowledge without our first having to actively conceptualise intuitions gained from nature. Such a claim implies reliance, however, on necessarily objective, and therefore social elements that are 'always already' assumed to be constituted, and which are therefore sources of the objective determination of experience, but which *themselves* have necessarily already been socially mediated.

Such approaches insufficiently acknowledge the extent to which they are indebted to the social realm, to the degree, e.g., that social relations of some kind are required to communicate what is revealed by sense experience in the first place, therefore presupposing a socio-historical constellation of experience from which such claims are made. Claims derived purely from assumptions about the given-ness of sense experience are therefore possible sources of ideology, where such claims ignore other elements, such as constellations of experience actually *constitutive* of such claims. However, illumination of the socio-historical constellation in which such claims become *ideological*, and why they do so, can suggest the conceptual content within them that is potentially true, or worth retaining for continuing mediation.

This is why all epistemological inquiry should depend on acknowledgement of 'the concept of society as a constitutive concept of epistemology' (Adorno 2001, p.145). It follows the 'given' much traditional epistemology relies on too easily inscribes spontaneity into the order of causality by ignoring the concept of the social. The broader point in the context of the relationship between reason and nature is one way to avoid succumbing to the imperative to fill the epistemological gap is to emphasise, as Adorno's dialectical theory urges, that spontaneity should be examined *both* in relation to socio-historical context as well as to nature. Such dual examination could have the twin effect of identifying where inquiry itself is in danger of becoming ideological, and avoiding the

danger of assuming both knowledge and social structures are merely given. This is why attempts to formulate coherent forms of reason can only be 'moments within the whole': they cannot exist in self-contained ways outside of nature, and are just one element in everything nature consists of. They also cannot exist without the prerequisite of some form of social relations in which claims become articulated and mediated in the first place.

As Adorno - following Hegel - suggests in his meta-critique of epistemology, '[t]he first and immediate is always, as a concept, mediated and thus not the first. Nothing immediate or factical, in which the philosophical thought seeks to escape mediation through itself, is allotted to thinking reflection in any other way than through thoughts' (Adorno 2000b, p.117). Those claims grounding themselves in the given-ness or immediacy of sense-perception, then, make of the sentient *subject* the foundational concept for experience to be possible, ignoring the degree to which the sentient subject is already conceptually dependent on what appears objectively given to its experience – but therefore also what has *already* been socially mediated. The notion of the dependence of experience to some degree on mimetic gestures, for example, suggests the necessarily social character of this experience – 'how else,' as Bowie inquires, 'does a child learn to understand the point, or even the meaning of communication before it grasps norms for communication' (Bowie 2010, p.14) than through mimesis?[41] Where claims are grounded in their own 'given-ness' and 'absolutized' as a form of reason or claim to knowledge, then, they ignore all the ways what appears to be immediate has already been mediated socio-historically.

Mediation, then, makes reflection dependent on its objective context, and underscores the implausibility of a 'first', 'unified' concept, whether grounded in apriority of the subject or in reduction of the subject to (necessarily human conceptualisations of) nature (as occurs, for example, in physicalist approaches to knowledge), if reflection is not to rely on infinite regresses of causes. As Adorno suggests,

[t]he most enlightened epistemology still participates in the myth of the first in the figure of a contract which is never fulfilled and therefore in itself endless, self-repeating without respite. Its metacritique presents it with its promissory note and forces from it the external insight, gained

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[41] See Chapter 6.

from society, that… [t]he real life process of society is not something sociologically smuggled into philosophy through associates. It is rather the core of the contents of logic itself (Adorno 2000b, p.132).

Adorno's 'meta-critique' of epistemology, then, instead suggests a dialectical relationship between conceptualisations of nature occurring *historically*, and conceptualisation of historical experience appearing from perspectives of the human element of *nature*. It follows this dialectic between reason and nature provides the element of experience to knowledge that attempts to conceptualise knowledge by logically referring to first grounds routinely miss.

The same point extends to Adorno's accentuation of social contexts in how theories of knowledge purporting to be rational are constructed: reasoning ignoring social contexts in which it is developed cannot legitimately aspire to provide guiding principles for future social contexts. If rationality subtending development of certain kinds of technology, for example, is impervious to the way it impacts the social sphere, and it can be shown there are harmful consequences in the way it affects the social sphere, then what legitimacy does that rationality have in continuing to shape it?

Moreover, the fact it may be logically or scientifically legitimate, in as far as something instrumental reasoning contributes to works according to natural laws – e.g. any form of modern technology - depends to some degree on exclusion of other concepts and experience to which it relates, particularly where it assumes a predominating position in social experience. For example, effects communications technologies have on inter-subjective communication suggests how these relations are increasingly determined by forms of immediacy encouraged by technology itself.[42] This consequently suggests the need for further conceptualisation of this objective determination – including appraisals allowing insight into possibilities of self-determination, or lack thereof, in the context of this increasingly dominant social norm. If conceptualisation concerning communications technology is to be at all spontaneous, then, it cannot simply be accounted for by the factual knowledge or logic enabling functionality of the technology itself.

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[42] See Chapter 7.

4.3 Society as a Constitutive Element of Epistemology

In order to comprehend Adorno's emphasis on mediation, therefore, it is necessary to show why reflection ignoring the social context in which it occurs cannot properly be considered to be self-determining. Where e.g. empirical reasoning assumes an epistemological gap between individuals and nature - between access to theoretical entities postulated by a given ontology and the 'ontology' of nature itself - then because empirical knowledge itself is acquired as a result of experience, it must still belong to the space of reasons.

One way empirical reasoning attempts to ground knowledge, however – paradigmatic of empiricism as a whole – has been to 'reduce the structure of the space of reasons [itself] to something that is already unproblematically natural on the relevant conception… ideas whose primary home is the space of reasons are depicted as, after all, serving to place things in nature in the relevant sense' (McDowell 1994, p.73). Such a claim suggests 'spontaneous' conceptual determinations are *naturally* constrained in the 'natural' order of causation, meaning while spontaneity enables justification of claims, their truth still depends on how they correspond with a 'natural' order of causality, which then acts as the natural constraint on these claims.

Accordingly, this 'natural' constraint would become intelligible once causal laws governing language and consciousness are discovered. However, as Bowie inquires, 'how can we know that this has been achieved unless the answer is *presupposed* that everything is explicable in causal terms' (Bowie 1996, p.5)? The presupposition that there are epistemological 'guarantees' in the first place is something that has been termed the 'Myth of the Given', and is essential to consider in order to grasp Adorno's challenge to traditional epistemology. The Myth of the Given, according to Brandom, is

the idea that there can be a kind of *awareness* that has two properties. First, it is or entails having a certain sort of *knowledge* – perhaps not of other things, but at least that one is in that state, or a state of that kind – knowledge that the one whose state it is possesses simply in virtue of being in that state. Second, it entails that the capacity to have that sort of awareness… does not presuppose the acquisition of any *concepts* – that one can be aware in that sense independently of, and antecedently to, grasping or mastering the use of any concepts (paradigmatically through language learning) (Brandom 2003. p.122).

The premise of 'given' forms of inquiry, then, is that simply being conscious makes some form of knowledge immediately available and, moreover, this access to knowledge can bypass conceptual determination altogether. The challenge to this 'Myth' by Sellars in his *Empiricism & the Philosophy of Mind*, however, undercuts many foundationalist motives often present in analytical philosophy, challenging the solidity of claims to epistemology. This challenge is made on the basis that the characteristic of 'having knowledge purely by being in a given state' and the claim this does not require conceptual acquisition, are mutually incompatible.

The Myth of the Given is problematic because it obscures the distinction between sensing and knowing, or between the 'given' of merely being conscious, and actually being aware in a sense involving knowledge, such as in the process of social interaction. The problem is it presupposes that knowledge exists independently of the conceptual possession, which itself is a social acquisition: without conceptual acquisition, however, there would be no possibility to understand or relate what appears given in the first place. It follows the attempt to establish a foundationalist 'given' or absolute source of *identification* for claims aspiring to the status of knowledge to conform to, whose own 'natural' law merely awaits discovery, leads to its own paradox because it excludes the mediation through which such a law would conceivably be discovered.

Consequently, claims pertaining to consciousness cannot be derived purely from the immediacy of the objective world to sense perception, as they already possess a degree of conceptual content. In order for claims to attain conceptual content, they must, according to Brandom, be 'inferentially related to other claims… one would not have one concept unless one had many others to which it is inferentially related' (Brandom 2003, p.147). This counters the empiricist claim that 'fundamental concepts pertaining to observable fact have… logical independence of one another' (ibid.). Following Brandom, conceptual claims about the logical independence of facts are themselves mediated. For Adorno, it follows that

[t]hought capitulates into empiricism too early and with too little resistance. By humbly deferring to sheer existence, thought fails to come to grips with it and thus abandons the moment of freedom and spontaneity… Logically consistent critical and self-reflective thought grasps, in the

very jurisdiction of immanence, incomparably more about essence – viz. about the life process of society – than a procedure that resigns itself to registering facts (Adorno 2000b, p. 130).

The deferring of thought to 'sheer existence' – the immediacy of the objective world to sense perception characteristic of empiricism – does not go far enough in its attempt to establish truth claims, as it relinquishes the 'moment of freedom and spontaneity' of its social mediation. Facts are thereby established at the expense of what remains conceptually 'non-identical' in their mediation as objects of knowledge.

It also follows that any concept pertaining to the objective world is mediated throughout its history in the world, often such that it no longer applies to what it initially arose as a consequence of. Adorno calls this 'historical sedimentation', where the history contained in an object of knowledge 'can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects' (Adorno 1973, p.163). This means any object is mediated continuously throughout its history, where the totality of this mediation yields its 'defining' characteristics as it becomes known in its immediate social context, giving the object its historically 'sedimented' identity.

In order, however, to reflect on conceptual content of claims related to it, the 'positional value of the object in relation to other objects' at successive points in history must be consulted to establish factors contributing to the object's conceptual determination. For example, the Enlightenment concept of liberalism, based on the equality of rights developed in reaction to foundational assumptions of the pre-modern era – e.g., religious assumptions about man's place on earth in relation to God, or the divine right of monarchies as a guiding principle of social organisation - has come to mean, in modernity, distinctly different things to different individuals. To some, (classical) liberalism means "unconstrained free enterprise"; for others it means "commitment to social democratic initiatives" e.g., government intervention to guarantee personal rights through general welfare. In either case, conflicting interpretations depend to different degrees on the original premise of individual rights, although their understanding changes from the original context in which they arose – not least because rights themselves come to be experienced and understood differently - and have been mediated continuously in subsequent contexts.

For Adorno, it therefore follows that to make claims aspiring to truth, their conceptual content must also be freed from how objects of knowledge are identified in the immediate sense in a given socio-historical context (their historically sedimented identity). Understanding why they are identified as they are also requires access to social contexts in which claims were originally made. Adorno's point is: irrespective of how claims are consequently mediated, and how their conceptual content becomes practically employed, they are in danger of becoming ideological if the historical, contingent social conditions they arose in relation to are forgotten or suppressed. It follows these conditions are crucial to revealing the historically contingent *needs* forming the conceptual content from which claims arose, and, consequently, can reveal contradictions between the extent to which those needs were satisfied by their conceptualisation and institutionalisation in the administration of society, and the degree to which this administration may have resulted in the *suppression* of these needs. This is essentially the content of Adorno's concept that 'all reification is forgetting': A conceptual claim cannot, by Adorno's account, be entirely true if not considered in the specific context it was formulated, and consequently, the concrete human needs it was formulated in relation *to*.

If the thesis that an ideology of scientism undergirds dominant forms of instrumental rationality in contemporary society is correct, then, it becomes clearer how the hegemony of self-legitimating forms of inquiry potentially leads to negligence of essential aspects of the truth of concepts inextricable from social needs from which they arose. Instrumental forms of rationality are thereby also strengthened as socially determining factors, in the sense of determining how individuals relate to themselves and their wider social context, and thereby, the kinds of self-determining judgements they make. In the 1957 *Constituens & Constitutum* lecture on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Adorno objects that

[p]eople who wish to criticise our dialectical attempts to operate with the concept of society as a constitutive concept of epistemology really never have more than one argument. This is that our efforts are illegitimate because philosophy has absolute priority over all social considerations and, on the contrary, such social questions have first to be grounded in the theory of knowledge. Consequently, so the argument goes, philosophy would relapse into pre-philosophical scepticism if it were to start talking about society (Adorno 2001, pp.145-146).

This suggests how epistemological inquiry becomes ideological in the sense it has *first* to be grounded in theories of knowledge, tainting inquiry with the underlying ideological form a given theory is susceptible to. Instead, theories should be constructed with recurring dialectical reference to social contexts in which they are formulated, retaining emphasis on the process of conceptualisation, therefore, on the influence of elements in specific contexts of their formulation.

This emphasis also helps ensure construction of theories of knowledge does not ignore the *subjective* element of mediation: As Adorno suggests, '[t]here is nothing that is not mediated, and yet, as Hegel emphasised, mediation must always refer to some mediated thing, without which there would be no mediation' (Adorno 1973, p.171). This means there cannot be any concept or claim which simply 'is' or exists in the given sense; all such claims pertaining to experience relates to other claims and concepts, meaning any theory of knowledge ignoring the subjective aspect of mediation *itself* 'grounds' itself at the expense of forsaking the crucial factor – the experience of the subject - making claims possible in the first place. It follows any such theory can also overlook how conceptual determinations sustain and 'legitimate' themselves socially as forms of instrumental rationality, irrespective of their origin or subsequent mediation.

The mediated nature of experience *itself*, however, means knowledge *also* cannot be grounded in the subject in any definitive sense. According to O'Connor, 'by virtue of the significance of the object in the social totality its meanings necessarily transcend individual subjects. As individual subjects confront the object the latter contains an irreducible independence which, in the orders of experience and explanation, grant it, the status of epistemological priority' (O'Connor 2004a, p. 2). This suggests no subject can claim definitive knowledge of an object because meanings attributed to it are continuously mediated in the social totality. It also means the object always contains irreducible *conceptual* independence vis-à-vis the subject because the subject depends on it for experience, and on the social totality to which it belongs, for explanation. The object therefore attains the status of epistemological *priority* over the subject's intuition, over ways knowledge is given to the subject in immediate relation to the objective world, but also over the subject's *active* conceptualisation of the object, considering the object always retains its independence from its experience.

For Adorno, it follows the irreducible independence of the object means it always retains 'non-conceptual' elements that cannot be reduced to the accumulation of experience in its attempted identification. Beyond how the object eventually becomes identified in the social totality and gains its historically sedimented identity, it always retains non-conceptualised aspects. This is because the activity of conceptualisation always depends on specific social constellations, which are therefore independent 'moments' of reality or the 'whole' – but yet remain *socially* connected to all other such moments. It follows because conceptualisation takes place from within any such independent moment, the historical moment itself always restricts possible experience according to what is specific to the experience of that historical moment. According to Adorno's opening statements in *Negative Dialectics* (henceforth *ND*), then,

[i]n truth, all concepts, even the philosophical ones, refer to nonconceptualities, because concepts on their part are moments of the reality that requires their formation, primarily for the control of nature. What conceptualisation appears to be from within, to one engaged in it – the predominance of its sphere, without which nothing is known – must not be mistaken for what it is in itself. Such a semblance of being-in-itself is conferred upon it by the motion that exempts it from reality, to which it is harnessed in turn (Adorno 1973, p.11).

This means there is a permanent distinction between active conceptualisation occurring from within a socio-historical context, where the objective constellation necessarily determines conceptualising activity in order for it to be possible in the first place, and the remaining 'non-conceptualised' elements of the object.

For Adorno, therefore, the fundamental epistemological error occurs when the being-in-itself of the object - its 'non-conceptuality' - is transplanted to the activity of conceptualisation, thereby grounding the object in the extent of the subjective capacity to know it, and, furthermore, creating the illusion that conceptualisation occurs for-itself, independently of its social determination. It follows it is in this notion of conceptualisation as being-in-itself – as reason separated from nature - that ideological structures of thought arise and dominate the social reality in which conceptualisation occurs, perpetuating and strengthening control of the ideological form over society. This suggests conceptualising activity is condemned to remain part of the forms of rationality whose drive is to control nature and therefore, by extension, to perpetuate conditions of social and subjective domination - if the crucial distinction between conceptualising

activity and the non-conceptual properties of the object is not upheld, and the object is dominated by its conceptualisation. By contrast, the *emancipatory* potential in the activity of conceptualisation – and thereby, of reason – depends on the prioritisation of the object and respect for its non-conceptual independence, the experience of which re-orientates the subject *towards* the object, as opposed to reducing the object to the subject's limited capacity to conceptualise it.

One consequence of conceptualisation as being-for-itself, of reason separated from nature, therefore, is it results in identitarian thinking *reducing* knowledge of objects to the conceptual identity rational thought imposes on them. This stands in contrast to Adorno's encouragement of ways of knowing objects that do not conform to how they are 'supposed' to be known in ways previously identified. As any identification is by definition limited, then, Adorno's point is to privilege the 'non-identical' in the object from the identity that reason determines in relation to it. He wants to understand, therefore, 'what it is about the object that undermines its identity with the "subjective" concept' (O'Connor 2004a, p.4). However, as all objects are connected to specific socio-historical contexts, it follows non-identity also applies to the 'identity' attributed to any given socio-historical context itself. If such an historical identity depends on 'reconciliation' of social contradictions existing within such a context (the 'synthesis' between opposing social forces), then the non-identity of that context keeps those social antagonisms and contradictions alive in order to reveal what was *repressed* in the configuration of social identity. It follows investigating experience sacrificed to identification can reveal ways of conceptualising objects unaccounted for in the identity with which subsequent socio-historic constellations are configured, effectively re-inserting those lost elements of experience into the space of reasons.

For Adorno, then, the notion of conceptualisation as 'being-in-itself' has become a 'totalised' process in modern society, to the extent that modern society has no other way of knowing itself than through the dictates of instrumental rationality. The purpose of Adorno's *negative* dialectics, hence, is '[t]o change this direction of conceptuality, to give it a turn to non-identity, [which] is the hinge of negative dialectics' (Adorno 1973, p.12). Adorno's point is that simultaneous emphasis on both the limits of conceptualisation – the non-conceptuality of the object resisting identification - and how conceptual development is wedded to social circumstances, could, taken together, change how facts

are postulated, potentially overcoming epistemological limitations. In other words, rather than re-inscribing categories of thought into the causal order, they should remain part of spontaneous activity. These categories should be differentiated in terms of what spontaneity at the root of conceptualisation is a reaction to in social terms, and the socialising forms of identity conceptualisation assumes at the expense of access to what remains non-identical to the concept. According to Bowie, 'for a theory concerned with unmasking the ideological functions of cultural forms in a commodified world, things which appear negative and in need of criticism should not just be rejected, but "salvaged", there always being ways in which re-contextualising something can render it meaningful' (Bowie 1997, p.246).

The non-identity of ideological forms, therefore, is how they may be conceptualised, not constrained ideologically by identity, but spontaneously re-thought to allow reinsertion into the space of reasons. This also suggests *all* experience should be considered valid to some degree, as experience always reveals new ways of comprehending objects - a notion with concrete and profound implications for Adorno's conception of a new categorical imperative after Auschwitz.

4.4   The Idea of Nature-History and the Recovery of Spontaneity

For Adorno, therefore, the *truth* of subjective experience cannot be 'grounded', either in the apriority of this experience *of* the subject (as it might be in subject-centred forms of reasoning) *or* in objectifying, yet mediated structures of thought 'given' *to* the subject's immediate experience (as through dominant forms of instrumental rationality). Rather than 'grounding' experience at all in the search for objective truth, then, the claim of the potential truth of experience depends on how experience itself is accounted for in its continuous dialectical mediation *between* subject and object of knowledge. In Adorno's challenge to the Hegelian dialectical 'resolution' of nature and reason into the 'identity of identity and non-identity', in which 'all [oppositions] become intelligible as aspects of a self-related and self-grounding totality' (ibid. p.255), however, this mediation also tries to account for how the *subject* changes through its experience.

Against Hegel's resolution of the dialectic between nature and reason into a self-grounding 'totality', for Adorno there is no 'resolution' to this process of mediation,

where instead his 'negative' dialectic emphasises what *remains* non-identical in the mediation between nature and reason.[43] For example, reason, as an expression of its historical development, cannot be accounted for only by the historical nature of the subject – how human nature may have been conceptualised as a matter of a particular historical contingency – and nature cannot be accounted for solely by the subject's historical ability to rationally control it. Instead, the conception of a continuous, unresolved mediation between nature and history, first expressed by Adorno in his lecture the 'Idea of Nature-History' in 1932, which informs his work through *DoE* and including *ND*, is to

comprehend an object as natural where it appears most historical, and as historical where it appears most natural. The idea of natural-history, then… [is] [t]he history of nature [where] nature [is] grasped as historical; [and] natural history is the historical grasped as natural' (Hullot-Kentor 2006, p.239).

The idea of 'nature-history' is the attempt to dialectically conceptualise an object of knowledge, simultaneously in ways it has been possible to identify it rationally ('historical where it appears most natural') and in how this identification has failed in ways the object retains non-conceptual independence from its conceptual determination ('natural where is appears most historical). Adorno's anti-foundationalist approach leads him to deconstruct 'the supposedly a priori differences between the idea that "history" is the realm in which "the qualitatively new appears" and the idea that "nature" is the realm of "pre-given being"' (Bowie 1997, p.254). This means, first, nature cannot be accounted for only in a 'given' sense, as if nature itself were 'ready-made', but should also be considered as transient as the history it is bound up in, and therefore should not be definitively grounded in any historical or epistemological sense.

Conversely, history as the record of human activity and development of reason cannot be 'grounded' as a foundational concept in which the 'qualitatively new appears' without reference to the equally transient nature of which it is a part, without which nothing 'qualitatively new' could appear in the first place. Adorno's deconstruction collapses the attempted *a priori* distinction between nature and reason into a dialectical mediation *between* them which, rather than grounding itself conceptually either in nature (as

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[43] See Chapter 6, dedicated to how Adorno's dialectic differs from Hegel's.

object) or history (as subject), or in conceptual 'reconciliation' between them (Hegel), is a continuous effort to generate new insights into how nature and history change *each other*. This mediation occurs *both* where history is viewed as the object of knowledge from the subjective perspective of human nature, and where nature is viewed as the object of knowledge from the objectivising perspective of human history, *and between them.*

The idea of nature-history suggests, second, how Adorno considers the history of human activity through the prism of the increasingly rational control of nature - where both natural science and broader, purpose-oriented conceptualising activity may be considered aspects of this control – as a form of 'second nature'. This 'second nature' is the self-preserving imperative to identify and control nature, dominating both the 'primitive' nature of the subject itself, and spurring the attempted domination of the objective world through its reduction to the subject's ability to conceptualise it. The problem with the conceptualisation of historical experience remaining solely within this prism of 'second' nature – the subject's rational control of the object – given its outgrowth from the imperative of self-preservation in what Adorno considers the irrational fear of the unknown, is it doesn't account for ways in which the primitive, 'first' nature of the subject – including its spontaneity - is repressed in potentially irrational ways. Nor does it account for *contradictory* senses of nature arising from experience that cannot be encompassed by objectifying theories.

As Bowie (2010) suggests, individuals may be motivated to respond to nature in *expressive* forms which cannot be reduced to the 'second' nature of rational control, but which are spontaneous responses to the natural world arising in works of art, or in the role mimesis plays in learning norms of communication. It follows individuals may be motivated to such expressive forms by memory of elements of their inner nature that have been repressed or forgotten, but which nonetheless remain a (non-conceptual) part of that nature. Additionally, as Bowie claims, the sense of ('second') nature accounted for by objectifying theories and the sense of nature responded to in expressive forms cannot, as he says, 'arise without each other' (Bowie 2010, p.31). This suggests the need for their continuous mediation: objectifying theories couldn't arise without themselves initially being some form of spontaneous expression of experience of the natural world. Conversely, expressive forms relating to the objective world, and intuitions about inner and outer nature, cannot take place without reference to how the rational control of

nature affects mediation of objects of knowledge, including the subject *itself* as the object of knowledge and how it is determined by these circumstances.

This means the dialectic between nature and history is the attempt to conceptualise the object that also take place *between* these conceptions of first and second nature. The object is conceptualised immanently to the historical, rational control of nature ('second nature'), but is also mediated by the subject's spontaneity from non-conceptual perspectives from nature (the subject's 'primordial nature'). *Simultaneously*, it means where the object is conceptualised as natural, as in the objective of natural sciences, this conceptualisation should not take place solely from the isolated scientific objectification of nature, but also with reference to the historical process of conceptualisation ('historical where it appears most natural') – and to the social *effects* of this objectification of nature. The concept of these dual characteristics of experience is developed in the next chapter. The idea of nature-history, then, is the continuous – 'negative' - dialectic between the *non*-identity of the object as it has been identified historically – its non-identity in *nature* – and non-identity of the object as it has been identified 'naturally', or in nature – its historical and social non-identity, in the sense of how identification of nature fails to grasp elements of spontaneity in the social mediation making it possible.

The notion of mimesis provides the paradigmatic example of Adorno's distinction between 'primordial' and 'second' nature, as well as the idea central to his aesthetic theory that the mimetic element in works of art suggests the possibility of a non-repressive form of reason. According to Miller,

Adorno argues that mimesis was the means by which humanity first individuated itself from a nature constantly threatening to engulf it, nature conceived as the site of unnamed, terrifying forces. Mimesis was the basis of the mythologization of nature, the "name's breaking into the chaos of the unnamed" (in Rosenzweig's phrase): the first appearance of human rationality, at the heart of the mythic world (Miller 1994, p. 46).

The primordial act of reason, it follows, is the subject's spontaneous act of self-identification vis-à-vis nature in its 'mythologization' of the part of nature that it is in *itself*, in the act of giving itself its name – its *identity*.

Simultaneously, the individual mimetically imitates the nature *external* to it in order to understand and preserve itself from it. As we saw, the excursus devoted to Homer's *Odyssey* in *DoE* interprets Ulysses' voyage in the *Odyssey* as the development of reason 'in which history becomes second nature, unconscious of itself as nature as a result of the repression of mimesis in its metamorphosis into the *ratio*' (Hullot-Kentor 2006, p. 245). Where Ulysses initially mimics obstacles confronting him in nature to develop the understanding to overcome them, this *ratio* of control as 'second' nature overtakes his *identity* – and thereby that of history as a whole – in which the mimetic impulse, as the primordial and natural element of spontaneity, becomes repressed.

In other words, the price of knowledge, reason, and identification – is the spontaneity of the subject's ('first') *nature* required for thought *itself* to arise. As Hullot-Kentor inquires, the question for Adorno is 'if mimesis as a process of identification with the aggressor results in the repression of mimesis that knowledge to be knowledge requires, how is it possible to recuperate mimesis without simply re-enacting the dialectic of enlightenment' (ibid.)? If history as Enlightenment is not permanently to revert to the 'myth' of its own enlightenment allotting diminishing role to the spontaneity indispensable to establishing knowledge, facts or identity in the first place, the question for Adorno is how mimesis, as an element of this spontaneity, occurs in ways not reduced to the identification of nature with the imperative of self-preservation.

How, then, can mimesis be recovered in a way corresponding with its 'natural' spontaneity – or, its hitherto *non*-conceptuality, from a place in *nature* – restoring the rational element of mimesis that the domination of nature, or the conceptual domination of the object of knowledge, attempt to sublate? According to Hullot-Kentor,

the recovery of mimesis is… thought that follows its objects to the point that "the inherent consequence of the object is transformed into its own criticism" – to the point, that is, that the object destroys its own illusion. By immanent critique the object names itself. This is rational mimesis, the recovery of the name from the course of domination (ibid. p. 247).

Paradigmatically of the objective of critical thought as a whole, and originating as Adorno's friend Benjamin's idea, this means 'rational mimesis' amounts to spontaneous reflection critically overcoming conceptual identification of the object of knowledge. This critical transcendence simultaneously liberates the object to be re-contextualised in ways

providing new meaning, and emancipates the *subject* to experience it in ways not confined to its own self-preserving imperative to identify.

The 'recovery of the name from the course of domination', then, is recovery both of the object from how it has been dominated conceptually (its *non*-conceptuality), and of the identity of the subject in its recovery of spontaneity from the singular imperative of self-preservation, and socio-historical structures of domination that follow. Adorno's effort to recuperate mimesis can also be considered, therefore, as the intention to reinsert spontaneity into any attempted normativity in the space of reasons, where spontaneity, via recuperation of rational, non-dominant mimesis, effectively acts as a rational *constraint* on dominating forms of instrumental rationality.

Adorno's theory thereby leaves one potential way to suggest a continuing relevance for philosophy in an age when its necessity is disputed. The difference between philosophy and the natural sciences, as Adorno suggests, is that 'the idea of science is research, that of philosophy interpretation (*Deutung*)… philosophy must always interpret with the claim to truth, without ever having an assured key for the interpretation' (Adorno 1966, p.334).[44] The idea of nature-history, and Adorno's wider, non-systemic 'method' of negative dialectics, therefore, is an attempt at interpretation simultaneously not regarding itself as such an 'assured key' that it incorporates the possibility and necessity of its own 'failure'.

Bowie suggests the figure to which Adorno immediately refers in the experience of Western society is the commodity form, which 'establishes a world of identities that are constituted by… chains of conditions, and it creates the realm of illusion which historical materialist philosophy wishes to unmask' (Bowie 1997, p.252). Consequently, one aspect of Adorno's philosophy consists of locating problems bound up in analyses of the commodity form, as that constituting the immediacy of experience in the modern world, in a constellation providing and revealing the 'historical truth-content' of social problems at hand. Adorno, Bowie continues, wants to

change the very nature of theoretical arguments, in order to escape the structures of regress and the false totalisations entailed in attempts finally to ground theoretical claims. He… suggests that

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[44] Translation Bowie 1997.

by contextualising [such arguments] in a particular manner, the apparently supra-temporal philosophical problem can be revealed as the mystification of a soluble social problem (ibid, p.253).

The success of such a model, as Adorno expands upon in his essay, 'The Actuality of Philosophy', depends on its capacity to reveal theoretical dilemmas immanent to real historical problems. Natural sciences are necessarily bound up with the socio-historical contexts giving rise to the scientific structures within which they operate, 'but they are not merely reducible to such structures, because truth claims of any kind rely on transcendence of context' (ibid. p.263).

In the context of natural science and a social realm dominated by instrumental forms of rationality, then, Adorno's question should be asked from the context of how science relates to the rest of culture - and this is clearly not to be undertaken from objectifying theories proposed by science. It follows that the question may be raised that if scientific method has the means, at least theoretically, at its disposal to address problems such as economic imbalance, damage to the environment, or manifold forms of human suffering, why then is the bulk of scientific research directed either at supplementary detail for a vacuous mass culture, or sustaining that culture through overwhelmingly militaristic means? How can scientific and technological progress and their determination of historical experience be justified in this context? Rather than science itself, as we saw, it is the ideological supplement of scient*ism* as the unequivocal carrier of the supreme good for mankind that, according to Adorno, Bauman and others, should be viewed in light of the concentration camps of WWII. When considering the degree to which instrumental rationality is inherent to such a humanitarian catastrophe, and evaluating the extent to which democratic governments and social structures continue to rely on countless ideological variations of instrumental rationality, it becomes clearer why Adorno is so sceptical of 'truth claims… wholly indifferent to the forms in which they are articulated' (ibid.).

It is thus reasonable to expect that normative justification in the space of reasons should play an essential role in making truth claims. It is equally reasonable to expect this justification to contain spontaneity not reduced to the causality ascribed to the natural world, causal chains inherent in social structures, and ways causality determines individual autonomy. What, then, of Adorno's central objection, namely that the process of

justification takes place in an 'unnatural' (alienated, reified) world, reinforcing causal reasoning at the expense of spontaneity because of the stringency of its ideological demands? If Pippin's assertion is now reconsidered:

[i]f formal conditions of knowledge require that the content of cognition be actively conceptualised in a way that is finally, at some stage, causally independent of the causally produced reception of that material, and of any initial causal-series processing of that information, then a thinker cannot really be a causal system, whatever the system is made of (Pippin 1997, p.31),

we are impelled to consider that, irrespective of causal structures, there must be spontaneity at the root of conceptualisation not naturally 'co-opted' into the determinacy of nature, subjective causality, or prevalent social forms of instrumental rationality. It follows Adorno's objections to modern rationality can be considered from the context of the urgency of the social conditions he perceives, and from which his method arises. The following chapter examines a reality of this urgency.

VI. CHAPTER 5: DUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EXPERIENCE

Negative Dialectics was the philosophical culmination of Adorno's reactions to catastrophic events in the 20th century - the Holocaust, totalitarianism and devastation wrought by modern warfare among them – and to the perpetuation of forms of rationalisation sustaining these phenomena to varying degrees in the social fabric of modern societies. It was also a reaction to Hegel's philosophical system, with its emphasis on the experience of consciousness and rational necessity of self-knowing subjectivity as conduits of reason and freedom. The following two chapters continue discussion of why emancipation from ideological structures of thought is pertinent at a time when they are increasingly difficult to avoid, yet increasingly difficult to distinguish.

These two chapters are related in tackling the problem - central to criticisms of Adorno - of locating the critical perspective in the contemporary context from which to tackle Adorno's concerns, without resorting to a critique that doesn't account for its own place in the social space it criticises. This chapter pursues the task of locating that critical perspective, while the next specifically demonstrates why and how Adorno's dialectic is 'negative' in relation to Hegel's philosophy. In this chapter, first, possibilities for locating Adorno's thought in the contemporary context are introduced. Second, the Holocaust is discussed as the decisive real-world event influencing Adorno's critique of instrumental rationality. Third, expanding upon the idea of nature-history, immanent and transcendent components of Adorno's critique are examined, amounting to an introduction of negative dialectics in praxis. The remainder of the thesis is integrated to the extent that it follows a 'movement' of Adorno's thought, now from his own objective social context, through explanation of his philosophy, and back to the contemporary social constellation.

5.1   Reflective Distance: Adorno's Shadow

In the 2005 Miliband lecture, Bauman makes the case for returning to Adorno in the context of uncertainties wrought by globalisation, in what, in a series of publications exploring its themes and effects, Bauman terms 'liquid modernity'.[45] Bauman shares Adorno's concerns that emancipatory possibilities, grounded in improving social

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[45] See Bauman 2000-2011.

conditions, have diminishing political relevance beyond their immediate ideological appeal. While immediate social ills, such as crime, economic downturns or problems relating to immigration find their way to the top of political and media agendas, the scope of questions related to social freedom is constrained by somewhat doctrinaire, yet often arbitrary, determinations of its meaning.

For Bauman, as for Adorno, claims of freedom that don't take their conceptual content into account in a persistently reflective manner, yet upheld according to local standards of 'community's way of going on', do not suffice. The notion such claims result in norms perceived to have been legitimated provides a powerful incentive to try harder to realise the possibilities of freedom. As Adorno suggests in 'The Concept of Contradiction' (1965),

If… I think of 'freedom', this concept is not simply the unity of the characteristics of all individuals defined as free on the basis of a formal freedom within a given constitution. Rather, in a situation in which people are guaranteed the freedom to exercise a profession or to enjoy their basic rights, the concept of freedom contains a pointer to something that goes well beyond those specific freedoms, without our necessarily realising what this additional element amounts to (Adorno 2008, p.7).

This means the concept of freedom cannot be reduced to whatever is defined as 'freedom' within formal constraints of law in a given constitutional democracy. Rather, the concept of freedom, by definition, must be something not easily categorised in a set of socio-behavioural prescriptions. Furthermore, reflection pertaining to freedom cannot itself be truly free if circumscribed by socially objective determinations of its meaning. If such determinations include endorsements of behaviour ultimately inflicting suffering on individuals, then the concept of freedom is something individuals themselves must engage if their freedom also depends on that of others, and if they are not merely to be accessories to overriding forms of rationality in which their role is negligible.

Bauman agrees with Adorno that 'charges raised by Marx against a world unforgivably inimical to humanity have not lost any of their topicality, and no competent jury has found any proof of the unreality of the original emancipating ambitions… there is therefore no sufficient reason [Adorno insisted] to take emancipation off the agenda' (Bauman 2006, pp. 169-170). For Bauman, Adorno's philosophy also remains topical,

beyond the boundaries of the specific socio-historical constellation to which he was responding - and beyond the constraints of being considered through the prism of purely 'Marxist' thought.

How does Adorno's thought apply to contemporary circumstances so often demanding pragmatic solutions as opposed to philosophical ones, and where theoretical approaches to social problems are often spurned as at best overly ambitious and often irrelevant, where Adorno himself rarely suggests 'practical' solutions? For Adorno, such total faith in practical solutions already betrays instrumental attitudes induced by the perceived inevitability of social conditions, in the sense such pragmatism refers to immediately given sets of circumstances, and not to sustained analyses of how or why those circumstances come about. This suggests while practical responses often provide short-term solutions to immediate problems, they may not address core questions of how such circumstances come about – questions which could contribute answers and further questions to help improve circumstances in the longer run. This doesn't mean Adorno didn't offer practical solutions of his own – for example, a series of radio interviews he gave entitled 'Education to Maturity' (*Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*)[46] suggest a concise politics of education in which he stressed the importance of autonomy in the context of institutional education. His practical suggestions nevertheless always retained at their core a theoretical element devoted to overcoming unreflecting submission to instrumental forms of rationalising and their practical, social application, and, concurrently, to reintegrating the component of social experience into theory.

The value of theory, consequently, is that it is not limited by what is immediately given. Theory 'speaks for what is not narrow minded' (Adorno 1998, p.133), providing gateways to the kind of emancipatory reflection that may be achieved by looking beyond practical responses, where indeed forms of immediacy themselves are often the problem demanding a theoretical response. This is why, e.g., so much of Adorno's critique appears focused on the 'Culture Industry': far from being reducible to perceptions about Adorno's cultural 'elitism,'[47] Adorno's targeting of the culture industry predominantly addresses forms of experience within which individuals are compelled to make self-determining judgements. The culture industry is, thereby, raised in terms of the

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[46] See Adorno 1971.
[47] See Wiggershaus 1995.

possibilities - or lack thereof - for social transformation it contains, just as society itself should be judged in terms of the extent to which it tries to - and does - alleviate suffering. It is also a point of departure for the analysis of other forms of immediacy. As Bauman suggests,

[i]f "emancipation", the supreme objective of social critique, aims at "the development of the autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves," it is up against the awesome resistance of the "culture industry"; but also against the pressure of that multitude whose cravings that industry promises to gratify (and, genuinely or deceitfully, does) (Bauman 2006, pp. 171-172).

In light of the persistence of the instrumental rationality Adorno recognised over seventy years ago, in conjunction and development of Weber's original diagnosis[48], Adorno's concerns also have not lost their topicality. The confinement of modern life within immediate structures of social and cultural experience often leaves individuals isolated from reflection that does not conform to predominating forms of rationality, compromising resources with which to respond to real pressures of modern life.

This state of affairs demands a serious response that would not be an immediate practical resolution, but reflective in nature. The central issue is the concept of freedom, in the sense that without reflective freedom to consider claims to knowledge or truth, their relation to subjectivity and contexts in which they are made, individuals aren't in a position to distinguish between spontaneous reflection and the objective determination of their collective experience by instrumental forms of rationality which do not require, nor solicit, their engagement.

How, then, can Adorno's theory be translated into praxis, or the kind of practice that enriches experience without undermining it, in the sense that it often appears forbiddingly complex and suggests a fair amount of distance from everyday life? A first step, proper to Adorno's pronouncements, is to consider the validity of *all* experience, including Adorno's – and perhaps especially, the experience of those whose voices have never been heard, or experience that dares not speak its name. Adorno's dialectical theory is the attempt to restore unreduced experience of the object of knowledge, including all the ways its conceptualisation contradicts itself. Where the object is

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[48] See Weber's accounts of purposive and instrumental rationality, Weber 2007.

necessarily social in nature, it follows the individual's experience and sensibility is also continually shaped accordingly by what is experienced, but also, conversely, by what is not. Individuals are also influenced by default, and in ways beyond their control, because they are *not* exposed to elements of social experience, often because of standards of experience considered the norm in a locality, a form of employment or a set of personal circumstances. But how can the relevance of this, and of Adorno's theory *in toto*, be translated to the modern world, where it is increasingly assumed that freedom of communication and the wider political tenet of free speech *a priori* guarantee the validity of most forms of experience?

Furthermore, where political procedures tailored in response to immediate pressures of a globalising world contrast with Adorno's emphasis on reflective distance, Adorno's thought often appears intentionally to do its utmost to distance itself from modern ideas of practicality. I suggest below how some modern forms of rationality and the kind of reflective distance from these structures Adorno advocates are not mutually exclusive, despite appearing so. As Bauman suggests, the reflective distance and consequent quasi-seclusion that may be interpreted as being intrinsic to a rigorous enactment of Adorno's theory is not, in Adorno's own view,

an act of treachery – neither a sign of withdrawal, nor a gesture of condescension, nor both ("condescension and thinking oneself no better, are the same", as he himself points out). Keeping a distance, paradoxically, is an act of engagement – in the only form which engagement on the side of unfulfilled or betrayed hopes may sensibly take: "The detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant; the only advantage of the former is insight into his entanglement, and the infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such" (Bauman 2006, pp. 172-173).

The conception of reflective distance as 'an act of treachery' is a reference to perceptions among leftist critics, among them students of Adorno's in the late 1960's, that his theory, and critical theory at large, ultimately entailed some form of active revolt. This misinterpretation (to put it mildly – nowhere in Adorno's work does he intimate violence of any form, always maintaining thought itself is the only genuine form of resistance) led to staged actions against him at the University of Frankfurt shortly before his death in

1969, on the basis that the 'inaction' of reflective distance was a 'reactionary' betrayal of the 'spirit' of critical theory.[49]

On the contrary, those who agitated against Adorno appear to have missed the point of his theory entirely. As Bauman points out, reflective distance is itself a valid act of engagement, and arguably the only such act leaving no collateral damage, other than to the fixed identity of concepts. Adorno himself rebutted critics on the issue of praxis e.g. in an article entitled 'Resignation', where he maintains '[b]eyond all specialised and particular content, thinking is actually and above all the force of resistance, alienated from resistance only with great effort' (Adorno 2001, p.202).[50] Furthermore, Adorno's philosophy is such that it cannot be claimed for any ideological position – of *any* variation – irrespective of the tradition in which one locates it, a claim this thesis strives to demonstrate.

The quote from *Minima Moralia* regarding the 'infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such' (Adorno 2000b, p.26) is, moreover, Adorno's summary reference to thought whose emancipatory potential rests in its ability to recognise its limitations. This freedom is 'infinitesimal' because it cannot be 'given', even in societies outwardly proclaiming their freedom; it is, rather, first, a function of the extent to which individuals self-determine by scrutinising the content of desires, norms and values by which they navigate their lives. Second, crucially, that freedom is 'infinitesimal' because it can only be momentary if it is truly to be free. The revelation of 'knowledge as such' – claims that remain accurate in as far as they succeed in recognising their conceptual limitations - can only be experienced as freedom for the duration of reflection, and before that knowledge is sublated by dominating ideological structures in individual reflection. The 'infinitesimal freedom' is possible therefore only in relentless pursuit of thought that meets the experience of reality, without dominating that experience.

How, then, do we think *together* the distance Adorno's thought travels from the everyday world in the attempt to know the particularity of the object, and Adorno's aspiration to 'un-reified rational relations between individuals'? As such un-reified relations presuppose inter-subjectivity, and therefore active engagement with the world,

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[49] See Müller-Doohm 2003, pp.720-729, for the social context and reasons for the spirit of revolt at universities in Germany in 1969.
[50] See Adorno, 2001(a).

Adorno's theory must clearly show *how* 'detached observation', as a crucial component of experience, creates opportunities for experiencing 'infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such'. It must also, simultaneously, show how that momentary freedom helps create conditions for un-reified rational relations between individuals. It must therefore be asked, then, what perceived circumstances lead Adorno to insist with such urgency on the necessity of these.

As we saw, one of the most contested aspects of Adorno's theory, brought to fore e.g. in criticisms by Pippin and Habermas[51], is his idea of the 'total context of delusion', which also refers to problems of distinguishing reason from instrumental rationality and the relationship between reason and nature. Adorno argues possibilities for rational relations are compromised by the 'total' reach of instrumental rationality over society. However, if Adorno's idea that 'the whole is untrue' itself suggests a totalising critique grounded in overwhelming scepticism regarding modern rationality, 'instead of weighing the grounds that cast doubt on this scepticism itself' (Habermas 2002, p.129), Habermas inquires how Adorno is able to provide a critique of ideology leaving in place a rational criterion explaining 'the corruption of all [other] rational criteria' (ibid. p.127). In order to be in a position to suggest Adorno's insights remain valid for the present social constellation, the criterion of the rationality of those claims must *also* be accounted for in the space of reasons. More specifically, they must be accounted for immanently to the totality he accuses of being 'false'. The critique of the 'false' social totality is, however, the <u>transcendent</u> component of Adorno's critique, taking its position 'beyond' society in order to demonstrate the ideological corruptibility of all existing within it, but still spontaneously from the element of (human) nature *within it*.

This transcendent criticism takes place from a perspective of history – society, and the instrumental rationalities determining it - where it appears most natural, or from apprehension of ways society is objectively determined, but not reduced to them. It follows transcendent criticism is necessary because of a social context in which everyone is liable to experience reification and undermining of self-determination: 'Transcendent' criticism, then, takes place 'externally' to society, but still from the spontaneous element of human *nature*. This is to recognise how any object within the social totality is identified ideologically, and potentially, to change how objects and society are known.

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[51] See Pippin 2005 and Habermas 2002.

The claim of the potential corruptibility of all rational criteria by ideology and the infection of all consciousness as at least partially false must, however, account for the possibility of a form of consciousness immanent to the 'universal context of delusion' that stands a chance of withstanding ideological corruption. 'One cannot talk of false consciousness,' Adorno says, 'unless the possibility of a true consciousness exists' (Adorno 2002, p.11). According to Bowie,

[i]n order to find a location from which critical analysis of the production of (false) consciousness and reification is possible one must first find a way of showing that the commodity structure does not in fact wholly determine the consciousness of all the members of a society: otherwise that location is simply not available. This location must be intelligible to the subjects of real societies if reification is not to be assumed to be total (Bowie 1997, p.243).

As Adorno's critique cannot simply be 'removed' from society as the object of his criticism - as if he were only criticising it externally - it must demonstrate, first, its own rational criterion, and second, its legitimacy in social contexts mediated with his thought. The reason it must demonstrate legitimacy beyond its specific historical context is because if Adorno's dialectical theory of society is intended to demonstrate the possibility of a 'true' consciousness, or indeed the possibility of a truth of subjectivity itself, then this possibility must be available across all socio-historical constellations. His theory remains valid only insofar as it can be validated in the present and future, as well as in its original social context.

Adorno's transcendent critique is complemented by the immanent critique of society, the need for which is amplified as society becomes increasingly integrated and reified. Adorno's immanent critique, by contrast with the transcendent critique, *recognises* ideology as 'socially necessary appearance' (Bernstein 1991, p.18), in the sense that ideology is a representation of cultural production, which by itself is real and which in turn is a 'product of the interest structure of society and [reveals the] historical genesis' (ibid.) of the ideological form. This means it is not the *existence* of ideology itself which is false, because it is instantiated in cultural forms that exist materially, 'but rather its pretension to correspond to reality' (Adorno 1983, p. 32) meaning, how ideology falsely relates individual experience in the social context.

This is why Adorno's immanent critique *mediates* the transcendent critique: the more society is 'integrated' under instrumental forms of rationality, which the transcendent critique purports to show, the greater the necessity of pursuing specifically *how* these objectifying forms of rationality dominate society. This is also to determine the distance between the ideological determination of these objectifying forms of rationality and the way they are experienced by individuals, to find truth in contradictions between them. It is not a question of prioritising either the transcendent or immanent critique according to the context being evaluated, therefore. Rather, it is a question of pursuing both critiques simultaneously – dialectically in relation to each other, following the unresolved dialectic of nature-history - continuously in every context, as either critique, taken by itself, becomes inadequate in relation to the other.

In the context of Adorno's transcendent criticism, then, by 'universal context of delusion' Adorno does not, as critics charge, suggest all modern subjectivity is deluded and that every aspect of experience in modernity is *a priori* false. Rather, the idea should be interpreted as suggesting that the sheer scope of experience in the modern world determined by instrumental rationality means any conceptual determination pertaining to any object potentially suffers from ideological distortion, and consequently, such distortion affects any subjective understanding of any object ('the whole is untrue'). Individuals may depend on the objective determination of social circumstances as the source of their beliefs to the extent that both object *and* subject become reified, as opposed to self-determining in ways not relying on how the present social constellation determines experience. The object is reified to the extent that its understanding can be dominated by given, often quantitative forms of rationality, and the concurrent domination of those forms over experience. The subject is therefore also reified: not only is subjectivity restricted in its ability to experience objects beyond how they appear in their reified form, it is also restricted in ways it can know other individuals, and ultimately itself, as objects of knowledge.

It can therefore be claimed that partaking in everyday life without awareness of the construction of social reality or how social norms influence needs and desires effectively amounts to reflective *dis*engagement from the self, other people and society as a whole. In turn, such disengagement, by virtue of constraints it imposes on experience, contributes to the preponderance of instrumental rationality, leaving its practices

unchallenged and its ability to affect ever-more private spheres of life unhindered. This suggests, first, a distinction between the interpretation that Adorno merely posits the *a priori* claim that experience in modernity is false, and the interpretation that Adorno deliberately makes the claim in extreme fashion in order to achieve the following objectives: a) To draw awareness to the urgency of the situation he perceives, and b) To show how awareness of reified ways in which objects are known is necessary in order to make claims retaining truth content in relation to social reality. Second, it suggests reflective distance from immediately given experience is a closer form of engagement with conceptual claims arising from experience of social reality, as long as that distance is mediated with its immanent experience.

5.2   Critical Dialectics

How, then, can the urgency of Adorno's claims be established, and how is their frequent extremity explained? While levels of satisfaction with life vary according to the Western society in question, standards of living and health have increased dramatically over the past century due to scientific innovation, and, economic crises notwithstanding, modern society is increasingly affluent relative to the past. However, these improvements have their own social consequences, and, moreover, obscure what this level of satisfaction comes to depend on. According to Bauman, whose *Modernity and the Holocaust* discusses the Holocaust as a *consequence* of, and not an aberration from, instrumental rationality,

[t]oday more than at any other time, available technological means undermine their own applications and subordinate the evaluation of the latter to their own criteria of efficiency and effectiveness. By the same token, the authority of political and moral evaluation of action has been reduced to a minor consideration – if not discredited and rendered irrelevant. Action can hardly need any other justification than the recognition that the available technology has made it feasible (Bauman 2006, p.115).

By Bauman's reckoning, social decisions requiring reflective thinking, e.g. political and moral evaluation, are overridden by imperatives to act according to what is technologically feasible. Bauman's point is about psychological *distance* between individuals and the bureaucratisation, administration and 'rational efficiency' of which they are the integral part.

It follows instrumental rationality drives a wedge between the individual's role, professionally and otherwise, in facilitating social progress based on technological advance, the consequences of that progress, and, especially, between individual consciousness and its role in this progress. Individuals' consciousness is compromised by forced proximity to this type of progress, in the sense they have little alternative to employing technology or acting according to social norms due to the necessity of securing livelihoods and social stations. It also follows individuals don't, excepting spiritual or intellectual guidance provided by mentors in various walks of life, have a clear *social* authority to appeal to should they have ethical or other objections to being part of the overall process of rationalisation. There is no social force or body of inquiry possessing sufficient social sway to compete with this process. While religion appears such a social force in the context of globalisation, the kinds of religion represented at this political level are often organised, ideological and, mostly, dogmatic, as opposed to being an autonomous search, spiritual or otherwise, for ethical guidelines.[52]

It is under similar circumstances of the process of rationalisation curtailing reflective practices that Bauman regards the Holocaust as a direct consequence of modernity, and not an aberration. The gradual institutionalisation of value-free, scientific standards was a consequence of the *possibilities* of instrumental rationality, and ultimately, in the case of Nazi Germany, these possibilities brought about the *feasibility* of genocide. What made the Holocaust possible, Bauman suggests, wasn't racial hatred of the entire German people towards Jews, something claimed in certain studies of the Holocaust[53], but something which, as other historical scholarship[54] has indicated, was more specific to Nazi leadership than Germans as a whole.[55] Rather, it was the investiture of rationalisation at all levels of social organisation that created the *possibility* of genocide:

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[52] See the thought model in Chapter 7.

[53] See Goldhagen 1996.

[54] See Browning 2007. Browning investigates how ordinary Germans with no apparent zeal for the Nazi project nonetheless acquiesced to implementation of the 'Final Solution' in order, largely, to preserve themselves.

[55] Bauman's study investigates German attitudes towards Jews in pre-Hitler years dating back to the 19th century, highlighting their changing nature, for better and worse, as Jews became integrated in the social fabric of German society. Undeniably, Bauman finds evidence of ingrained anti-Semitism among Germans, particularly among those resentful of encroaching conditions of modernity threatening to destroy traditional understandings of the hierarchical ordering of society and of the separation between classes and social and religious groups. Nevertheless, there is a distinction between acknowledging the existence of anti-Semitism among Germans prior to Nazi rule, and maintaining *all* Germans shared the detestation of Jews exhibited by Nazi leadership; on the contrary, where ordinary

First, this possibility arose at the level of the hierarchical bureaucratic structure permeating every aspect of social life, operating on the basis of a form of rationality simply accepted as inevitable. Second, it arose at the individual level, where reflective challenges to the nature of that rationalisation and its consequences, and to their own position within that process, could result in death or sanctions and exclusion. Consequently, average individuals became complicit in crimes of the Nazi regime, *but at a distance* – meaning, through alienation in terms of individuals' relation to their labour and understanding of how that labour contributed to the greater whole of what the Nazi regime came to represent. Despite being part of the overall process of rationalisation in terms of belonging to the administrative network governing every aspect of social life - not least employment - individuals were made to feel they were not *personally* responsible, either for the social direction of the rational process (e.g., mass industrialisation as a means to war), or its ultimate consequences.

Bauman suggests one reason the Nazis proved so successful in implementing their aims – which became increasingly ambitious as technological means improved – was because of the unreflective, psychological distance between labouring individuals and the social consequences of their labour. The success in implementing that distance, or the combination of the reification of the subject with its alienation from the object (e.g., the consequences of social 'progress'), and other individuals, accounts for the success of the process of rationalisation and the implementation of Nazi objectives more than belief in actual Nazi ideology itself. Ultimately, according to Bauman, the ideological role of scientism proved more overpowering than political claims embodied in Nazi ideology, and did as much as anything to create conditions for genocide:

Indirectly (though centrally to its general social function), science cleared the way to genocide through sapping the authority, and questioning the binding force, of all normative thinking, particularly that of religion and ethics… In as far as religion and ethics could not rationally legitimise demands they made on human behaviour, they stood condemned and found their authority denied. As values and norms had been proclaimed immanently and irreparably subjective, instrumentality was left as the only field where the search for excellence was feasible. Science wanted to be value-free and took pride in being such (ibid. p.108).

Germans were accomplices of the Nazis in the sense that they by and large did not try to *prevent* the Holocaust, Bauman provides evidence they did not embrace it, or their leaders' beliefs, either. The reasons for the Holocaust are other than the presumed accumulated hatred of an entire people for another. See Bauman 2006.

It was belief in science and dislodging of other forms of inquiry as 'subjective' - and therefore flawed - which ensured the legitimation of value-free rationalisation was accepted socially as a natural given. With that belief established, normative thinking that could challenge the supremacy of the rationalisation process and the objectives toward which it laboured was sacrificed to what was *perceived*, at the immediate level, as being the greater social good.

The suppression of non-scientific norms, and their disqualification as 'irrational' and 'irreparably subjective', made impossible any substantive political challenge to the ideological fusion of belief in the supremacy of instrumental techniques with specific tenets of the Nazi political programme. Further, the suppression of non-scientific norms enabled the alienation of 'ordinary' citizens from the victims of this kind of scientism, primarily by first alienating them from themselves. Bauman's broader point about the Holocaust being a *product* of those aspects of civilization depending on rationalisation is that the ideology of scientism and the instrumental drive contributing to the reification of the subject are well and alive in contemporary society, and not specific to Nazi Germany.

The presence of instrumental rationalising in almost all elements of the modern social order – from public to private, professional to leisure, from war to building peace – suggests the kind of normative thinking pure science cannot account for is as necessary as ever if, *pace* Bauman, the political and moral evaluation of social action are to have any authority at all. How, then, if a historical event such as the Holocaust contains valuable lessons about the destructive potential of an unchecked rationality, can it be that equivalent forms of instrumental reasoning continue their domination of modern society unabated? Part of the conundrum is while ethical thinking with normative objectives is tolerated, it can be rendered *irrelevant*, in the sense that it has little social authority. It is in the context of what would almost certainly happen to individuals defying the Nazi regime, alongside those targeted by virtue of identity, that questions arise as to what could happen were ethical reflection ever perceived to be a material threat to the hegemony of the interests sustaining dominant forms of instrumental rationality, or to those individuals mostly or completely under their sway.

From Adorno's experience as a political and ethnic refugee from Nazi Germany, he witnessed what he perceived as the perseverance of essentially similar forms of rationalisation in American society during his time there as émigré, and subsequently upon his return to Germany, in the emerging 'organised' phase of capitalism. This 'organised' capitalism was grounded in the logic of consumerism, 'a system whereby conscious and unconscious inculcating of dispositions to spend and invest has become the central driving force of the economy' (Hammer 2006, p.82). This meant the structure of the economy was changing to induce mass consumerism through mass production, with consumerism in turn guaranteeing the economic determination of society was driven by continual technological improvement - irrespective of political or ethical evaluation - while simultaneously integrating society under this form of instrumental rationality. Adorno drew parallels between the rationality characterising capitalist consumerism with the instrumental rationality that produced fascism in the sense that 'the culture industry's effective integration of society mark[ed] an equivalent triumph of repressive unification in liberal democratic states to that which was achieved politically under fascism' (Bernstein 1991, p.4).

Adorno was not thereby comparing the two societies on the basis that they both result in political fascism, but on the basis that cultural unification through repression that occurred in Germany as a combination of rational efficiency and the pointed barrel of a gun occurs, in Western capitalism, through submission of normative thought to rational efficiency alone. The extremity of Adorno's claims concerning the 'totalisation' of society is thus brought into relief and affords some insight into why he conceived of the transcendent component of his critique with such urgency, and why it is impossible to dissociate from his philosophy. In the context of this urgency of responding to a social constellation still determined by forms of rationality proven capable of leading to genocide, Adorno issues what could only be considered a *practical* demand. In one of the most well-known passages from *ND*, Adorno writes: '[a] new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen' (Adorno 1973, p. 365).

This demand may appear obvious, and may therefore appear redundant as a cornerstone for an entire philosophy. What is not always obvious, however, is the

connection between forms of rationalisation that placed such a high premium on efficiency and value-free scientism that they eventually culminated in the Holocaust, and the prevalence of equivalent forms of rationalisation in many aspects of everyday activity in the current socio-historical constellation. Thought, for Adorno, must explicitly address the ways catastrophes such as the Holocaust can come about, and have the specific objective of preventing them. As he relates in his sociology lectures,

It may be that the murder of six million innocent people for a delusory reason is an epiphenomenon when measured by the standard of a theory of society, something secondary not the key to understanding. However, I would think merely the dimension of horror attached to such an event gives it an importance which justifies the pragmatic demand that in this case knowledge should be prioritised… with the aim of preventing such events' (Adorno 2002, p.18).

It also follows from Bauman's argument, then, that one predominant purpose of knowledge must be to prevent suffering. While genocide in the 20th century is certainly not limited to the Holocaust, nor to predominating forms of rationality experienced in Western societies, the urgency of Adorno's thought also relates to the – specifically modern - danger of individuals rendered irrelevant to the functioning of the social whole, consequently leading to untold forms of suffering. As Adorno suggests,

[f]ear used to be tied to the *principium individuationis* of self-preservation, and that principle, by its own consistency, abolishes itself. What the sadists in the camps foretold their victims, "Tomorrow you'll be wiggling skyward as smoke from this chimney," bespeaks the indifference of each individual life that is the direction of history. Even in his formal freedom, the individual is as fungible and replaceable as he will be under the liquidators' boots (Adorno 1973, p.362).

By the principle of the *principium individuationis* of self-preservation which, 'by its own consistency, abolishes itself', Adorno not only suggests that the impulse of self-preservation as the supreme social instinct results in the kind of reflective disconnection that enabled the massacre of an entire ethnic group. It also ultimately leads to ordinary citizens applying the devaluation of life to themselves.

The historical example of self-preservation through tacit consent in Nazi Germany, at the cost of the attempted, systematic elimination of an entire *identity*, suggests how self-preservation can amount to consenting to the kind of norm in which

any individual can become dispensable at any time. It follows the repressive unification of culture through forms of rationality trivialising the role of the individual, and therefore also inter-subjective responsibility, institutes an environment in which self-preservation becomes the only viable alternative. That this kind of norm extends beyond the specific experience of Nazi Germany – 'the indifference of each individual life that is the direction of history' – is a function of the norm of subordinating all criteria by which society judges itself in the name of self-preservation, and by extension, to the overriding demands of rationalisation and efficiency.

This perspective that submission to the administrative demands of modern technology is equivalent to submission to the kinds of norms which led to the Holocaust will need to be qualified, however, as it is not clear that such a direct parallel can be drawn. Genocide has not occurred in Western society since the Holocaust (though the extent to which it is said to have happened as a result of Western actions elsewhere in the world is a topic of perpetual debate; as Adorno suggests, 'Auschwitz is a prototype of something which has been repeated incessantly in the world since then' (Adorno 2002, p.18)). Modern political discourse centres on issues like human rights, social equality and conflict prevention to the degree that respecting these values is itself a norm. This initially suggests that value-driven or ethical thought has not been eradicated, nor subordinated to the imperatives of instrumental rationality to the degree Adorno appears to suggest. Moreover, Adorno's transcendent account of instrumental rationality initially appears to fail to take into account some ways in which science, technology and rational efficiency are used to alleviate personal suffering and, e.g. prevent humanitarian crises, suggesting self-correcting mechanisms.

The lack of emphasis on positive aspects of rationalisation, however, is a function of the *critical* element of Adorno's account of 'repressive unification'. Adorno doesn't deny forces of production are brought to bear on improving the human condition: as he makes clear in the 'Theory and Practice' lecture (1965),

…and if we fail to follow up this idea that the forces of production could satisfy human beings and enable mankind to enter into a condition worthy of human beings – if we fail to give voice to this thought, then we certainly will be in danger of giving ideology a helping hand. Such an outcome is prevented only by *relations* of production and by the extension of the forces of production into the machinery of physical and intellectual power. I believe, then, that we have to

begin by saying this, and that a possible starting-point for a correct practice is to rethink how to put a society on the right path when, on one hand, it threatens to stagnate owing to the ossified relations of production and the attitudes resulting from that situation, while, on the other, it ceaselessly produces the forces that initially promote destruction but that tomorrow or the day after, if I may put it crassly, could actually make possible a paradise on earth' (Adorno 2008, p.48).

Adorno finds problematic not forces of production themselves, which contain almost infinite potential and resources for the improvement of social conditions, but *relations* of production subordinating individuals to their practical demands. It follows diluting his critique with provisions pertaining to the obviously positive aspects of rationalisation obscure the urgency of the critique, which wouldn't be of assistance in ameliorating social circumstances. While Adorno's sense of urgency is firmly based in his experience of his own social constellation, however, differences between the particular cultural experiences of Adorno's constellation and those of subsequent generations must be emphasised. This is not least to be in a position to ascribe validity to the claim that a similar ideological process of rationalisation that brought about fascism and its consequences survives in the present social constellation.

Adorno's false generalisations and often unaccounted-for drawing of parallels for effect can undermine his philosophy, particularly on first-time readings remaining singular. It is also unhelpful, to some extent, that a rather intimate acquaintance with his work is necessary in order to understand what his central points are and why he makes them how he does. While his fragmented style is a consequence of his philosophy, and while making claims in sometimes extreme fashion is in order to force their engagement, the effect is often, unfortunately, to foreclose his thought, leading many scholars to dismiss him. For example, how Adorno often equates the manner in which perception is formed as a result of advertising in the – formally free - culture industry with fascist propaganda in a totalitarian society does not allow for sufficient degrees of differentiation between either the two cultures or the (sometimes unsubtle) differences between advertising and ideological propaganda. Comments like "[a]dvertising becomes simply the art with which Goebbels presciently equated it, *l'art pour l'art*, advertising for advertising's sake, the pure representation of social power' (Adorno 2002b, p.132), while captivating, tend to undermine Adorno's philosophical intentions in the way they reductively collapse differences between modern culture and Nazi Germany for effect,

particularly if readings do not extend beyond *DoE* (which does not mean such totalising statements, while false in their generalisation, do not contain some truth-content).

Further, as Hammer suggests, '[t]he equivocation between accounting for the commercialisation of everyday life, on one hand, and analysing mechanisms of authoritarian consensus formation in totalitarian states, on the other, makes it difficult to locate [Adorno's] claims within a sufficiently specific mode of cultural transmission' (Hammer 2006, p.74). Despite Bauman's argument for the survival of the forms of rationalisation leading to the Holocaust in the present social constellation potentially validating Adorno's transcendent criticism, it is much harder to make the case for the cultural transmission of 'authoritarian consensus formation', as it is known in dictatorships, to the commercialisation of everyday life in formally free societies.

While the urgency of Adorno's claims regarding instrumental rationality can reasonably be understood from the context of his own socio-historical 'location' with experiences of fascism, world war and the Holocaust, therefore, those insisting his claims retain at least some degree of validity today must demonstrate the location from which they are made if they are not to be dismissed as (counter-) ideology. If Adorno's thought proved unable to provide such a location beyond his own historical context, according to his own rational criterion of society as a constitutive element of epistemology, his theory would be open to the simple charge that instrumental rationality does not foreclose reflective practice to the degree that he suggests it does. This is especially important in the Western social context which guarantees free speech as human right by law, where the most obvious challenge to critics of instrumental rationality in particular is that they are perfectly free to think and say whatever they want, thereby undermining their claims. Furthermore, by the speculative logic that instrumental rationality creates a self-enclosed totality where even spontaneity conforms to ideological prerequisites of that reason, the claim that instrumental rationality is 'totalising' is itself in danger of becoming ideological. Such a claim can be construed and manipulated, e.g. as an excuse to disavow responsibility for one's actions, or, conversely, for wholeheartedly and uncritically embracing instrumental rationality, irrespective of its social consequences, because it is assumed to be inevitable.

Part of the necessity of first appreciating the transcendent context from which Adorno expresses the urgency of his claims, however, is not only that it illuminates potentially disastrous consequences of ideological thought while making practical demands about the value of each individual life and experience. Adorno's philosophy is intended to improve social circumstances, though he harbours no illusions about the impact of his thought on society at large. It is, rather, in the context of responding to the conundrum of preventing social attitudes that either actively or passively enabled the Holocaust. In his essay, 'Education after Auschwitz', Adorno makes the practical demand that individuals 'must labour against… lack of reflection, must dissuade [other] people from striking outward without reflecting upon themselves. The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward self-reflection' (Adorno 2005, p.193). In his lectures on moral philosophy, he insists philosophy 'consists in reflection on knowledge and not in the immediate transmission of information, and anyone seriously involved with philosophy… has to be prepared to submit to the process of reflection, and to reflection, moreover, conceived as free' (Adorno 2001b, p.23). These are practical suggestions that sound like common sense: indeed, to the extent that such ideas have been integrated as social norms and cornerstones of much modern education, it appears modern society has succeeded in heeding some of the lessons of the Holocaust and even some of Adorno's more straightforward proposals. However, Adorno's emphasis would be on how such reasonable suggestions themselves easily become ideological *by virtue* of their 'common sense'.

We now turn to the *immanent* component of Adorno's cultural criticism. Having criticised society as a whole from a 'bird's-eye' perspective in his transcendent critique from the spontaneous element of human *nature*, it becomes imperative to demonstrate specifically how everything becomes ideologically corrupted by reflecting on the precise 'movement' of particular cultural forms, and ascertaining why and how these become repressively integrated into the social totality. This reflection takes place *immanently* to the experience of society itself.

When, e.g., pedagogical injunctions such as 'self-reflection' or 'inter-subjective respect' become concretised as social norms – while obviously a welcome development – they easily become catchphrases for a society proclaiming its freedom or social achievements, as opposed to reflective engagement with such principles on a continuous

basis. Beyond attempting to establish distance between the ideological concretisation of a norm and its social practice, Adorno's immanent criticism reaches into contradictions both *within* the ideological concretisation of the norm *and* between this and its social practice. Adorno does not deny the rational basis for self-preservation, or how self-interest must naturally be a central subjective imperative. He is, though, concerned with demonstrating how that rational basis itself results in social contradictions. The rational impulse of self-preservation also contributes irrationally to social conditions, in the sense that it isolates individuals, pits them against each other, and overlooks how e.g. inter-subjective respect – or, prioritising objectivity outside oneself - may ultimately be a more rational way to ensure that self-preservation.

This kind of mutually enabling alienation contributes to ideology-formation and identitarian social relations further fragmenting inter-subjective relations, *simultaneously* with the repressive integration of society under dominant forms of instrumental rationality. This suggests where, e.g. Western societies identify themselves by postulating they govern themselves according to such positive norms, these may be invoked primarily as a result of the forced integration of society, and not necessarily as a result of its socio-historical memory, the real experience of its members, or their present social needs. Moreover, contradictions between experiencing norms and their ideological manifestation often occur *within* individuals. The principle that all people are created equal, e.g., as one condition of inter-subjective respect, is often accompanied by the ideological notion that 'all *experience* is equal' often buried within socio-political arguments concerning otherwise well-meaning aspirations to overcome race, class, gender or status barriers. The conflation of the principle that all people are created equal with the idea that all opinions hold equal value relativizes experience in the *name* of inter-subjective respect and does not follow from the (socially and legally mandated) right to hold opinions.

Suggesting *A*'s opinion on, say, stem-cell research is just as valid as *B*'s opinion, even though *B* has significantly more experience with, that particular subject matter, both undermines *B*'s experience *and* erroneously 'legitimates' *A*'s opinion on the basis that she couldn't learn more about stem cell research than she currently knows. Conversely, the concretion of the notion of experience as an arbiter of truth contains its own contradiction, namely that insight can still validate opinion which nonetheless contains

less hard intellectual experience of the subject matter: one can have more experience of a subject matter and still be wrong. Adorno, for example, formulates one sense between experience and spontaneity in that '…knowledge comes to us through a network of prejudices, opinions, innervations, self-corrections, presuppositions and exaggerations, in short through the dense, firmly-founded but by no means uniformly transparent medium of experience' (Adorno 2000, p.80).

This means conceptualisation of experience leading to knowledge is not only always subject to mediation, but also always finite in relation to experience itself. The immanent component of Adorno's criticism, therefore, is reflection following the particular and precise 'movement' of individual cultural forms, revealing non-identity between them at each stage of their conceptualisation and at every level of their social experience. While principles like self-reflection or inter-subjective respect shape educational principles in contemporary society, therefore, it is far from clear *how* they translate to the culture of everyday experience, not least in the 'virtual' context of the online community where people mostly spend their time, and where minimal civility is often lacking. It could be argued, e.g., that the Internet, as a form of technology enabling and promoting, anonymity online (notwithstanding the ease with which online activities are retrieved by third parties), reveals and encourages repressed human drives that become apparent in various forms of online aggression.[56] This is an example of a form of instrumental rationality provoking the irrational drive of unguarded (and often unprovoked) aggression as an acceptable behavioural and social norm incompatible with the socio-ideological notion of inter-subjective respect.

The objective of immanent criticism, then, is to reveal contradictions between the particular experience of the subject matter and the way it has been concretised into an ideological form consistent with its social determination by instrumental rationality. It follows reflective engagement with the subject matter reveals limitations of how it has come to be defined in a fixed purview. However, the fixed purview is not a definitive indication of experience, either in the sense of what it suggests in terms of its historical configuration, or the accrued experience of the subject matter through which it is assumed a fixed identity can be ascribed to it. According to Adorno,

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[56] See Chapter 7 thought model.

By gauging its subject matter and it alone, thinking becomes aware of what within the matter extends beyond what was previously thought and thereby breaks open the fixed purview of the subject matter. For its part the subject matter can also be extremely abstract and mediated: its nature should not be prejudged by a surreptitiously introduced concept of concretion. The cliché that thinking is a purely logical and rigorous development from a single proposition warrants every reservation… Thoughts that are true must incessantly renew themselves in the experience of the subject matter, which nonetheless first determines itself in those thoughts. The strength to do that, and not the measuring-out and marking-off of conclusions, is the essence of philosophical rigour. Truth is a constantly evolving constellation, not something running continuously and automatically in which the subject's role would be rendered not only easier but, indeed, dispensable (Adorno 1998, p.131).

Only the continual, unreduced *experience* of the subject matter can yield more adequate concepts, but these will always be inadequate for as long as they are concretised in ways dominating experience of the subject matter. Because the subject matter itself may have been thoroughly mediated and open to a diversification of historical interpretation, attempts to concretise it in terms of a single logical process or method both obscures its nature as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon, and wrongly 'identifies' its place in nature according to a specific socio-historical interpretation.

This prejudging of its nature in turn simultaneously impedes continued historical mediation on the subject matter *and* new experience it can give rise to. Adorno challenges thought based on 'a logical and rigorous development from a single proposition' because of its potential limitation of new experience. It follows the direction of Adorno's negative dialectic is experience that 'passes into that which lies concealed beneath the façade of immediacy, of the supposed facts, and which makes the facts what they are' (Adorno 1973, p. 166). Reflective disengagement occurs when it is assumed reflection conclusively identifies the subject matter. Immanent criticism, by contrast, is one part of the 'constantly-evolving constellation' of truth requiring continuous engagement of the subject.

It is not necessarily with respect to the objective determination of society that perspectives come to be concretised within fixed purviews. For example, when reflecting upon historical events such as the Holocaust, there are manifold ways to approach the event in order to locate it within a framework for the understanding in the effort to make

sense of it. Following Bauman, one such way would suggest regarding it as a unique event in Jewish history, the culmination of centuries of anti-Semitism made possible by technological advancement at a unique point in history. Or, the Holocaust could be understood as an aberration from the trajectory of history - one in a long line of aberrations – but one serving to demonstrate specific social and psychological conditions in which the civilizational drive was suspended.[57] However, framing a context within which the understanding attempts to make sense of an object of knowledge can have the adverse effect of *remaining* the fixed purview of understanding in reflection, resulting in the prioritisation of the subjective perspective over the object of knowledge. While contextualisation is a necessary function of the understanding, therefore, Adorno's imperative is that the subject matter is not ultimately concretised with finality. Any attempt to understand the truth of an event such as the Holocaust, therefore, would have to incorporate continuous reflection upon all such narrative contexts, and would - crucially - take into account how these contexts thought dialectically influence and change *each other.*

Irrespective of whether the subject matter relates directly to contemporary society, immanent critique cannot remain purely immanent: it must still revert to mediating its objective social conditions – the socio-economic reality in which reflection occurs, as far as it can be determined. It follows while immanent criticism immerses itself in the particularity of the object of knowledge, reflection isolated from its objective context doesn't relate the particularity of the subject matter back to society, idealising the subject matter at the expense of its objective context, and cancelling the objective context from the process of reflection. A dialectical conceptualisation of truth, then, depends on both the object, the particularity of which is mediated through immanent criticism, and on the objective social context in which the criticism is made, conceptualised in transcendent criticism. Because individuals depend on society for their immediate experience, society itself is an object of knowledge without which it would be impossible to pursue objectivity in the mediation of particulars. Society is, nevertheless, a compromised object: where society is objectively determined by instrumental rationality, individuals cannot make legitimate claims without themselves being immanently engaged with them. This is why immanent and transcendent criticism must continuously be mediated dialectically *without* being sublated in the consciousness of the subject:

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[57] See Bauman 2001 for these arguments in the context of sociological research methods.

Immanent criticism can lose sight of socio-economic reality, while transcendent criticism lacking the component of immanent criticism merely affirms the domination of society by instrumental rationality without challenging it. Prioritising or neglecting either perspective therefore leads to elimination of either the objective context or the elimination of the *subject*, in the sense that reflection becomes *irrelevant* to socio-economic reality.

The threat posed by instrumental rationality, then, is when individuals become dispensable precisely when *their mediation is no longer needed*, a threat concretely demonstrated by the Holocaust. Less perceptible is how many aspects of experience become irrelevant to cultural forms and the overall rationalisation objectively determining consciousness in modern society. Individuals may remain 'relevant' in as far as they remain economic consumers of products relating to cultural technological forms, or in as far as they contribute to their further development, but as Bauman suggests, their imperatives are limited by what is tolerated according to 'the criteria of efficiency and effectiveness'. Conversely, individuals imposing the same methodological procedure indefinitely on objects of knowledge irrespective of the socio-historical conditions of both individuals and methodological development miss important elements both in the accrued truth about the object of knowledge and the truth of the subject's relationship to it. There is, then, no simple resolution of mediation between transcendent and immanent criticism, or of contradictions arising within the specific subject matter mediated in immanent criticism, and between conceptual contradictions arising between this mediation and the subject's immediate experience of the social world.

Adorno's dialectical criticism moves between its transcendent and immanent forms continually without *a priori* looking for or finding sublation into a non-ideological, 'absolute' conceptual truth of an object of knowledge, as such would be ideological by definition, ignoring what remains non-conceptual to that identification and non-identical in how it may be experienced. Adorno's 'location' for the critical analysis of reification, then, is not properly a location at all, but a continuous evolution of reflection preventing itself from becoming ideological. 'Philosophy,' as he says, 'is thought in a perpetual state of motion' (Adorno 2008, p.5). Concretised at a fixed juncture, the critical analysis of reification would also be turned into a subjective concept dominating its subject matter by constraining it within its own fixed identification of how such analyses should

proceed. This is a significant element of Adorno's philosophy of *negative* dialectics, and this chapter has foreshadowed some reasons why Adorno's dialectic is 'negative': the following chapter explains this 'negative' dialectic in detail with reference to its philosophical genesis in Hegel's dialectic of self-determining reason.

As Hammer suggests, '[f]or Adorno, dialectical criticism responds to a specific social and historical configuration. If this configuration were to change, then the critic would also have to change' (Hammer 2006, p.92). Interpreting Adorno, therefore, must also take place in relation to the current socio-historical constellation, and must take into account the ways this experience contradicts Adorno's socio-historical context. There are significant structural differences between the industrial capitalism of Adorno's time and the contemporary post-industrial, postmodern form of capitalism, for example. The invasion of private life by the public sphere of production in the former has arguably been replaced by the determination of the public sphere of consumerism, social interaction and politics by the most powerful elements of the private sphere in the latter. Such distinctions are investigated in the following two chapters. It follows, then, that Adorno's philosophy cannot simply be 'imposed' on the contemporary socio-historical context; the contemporary constellation, rather, can be mediated through Adorno's philosophy.

VII. CHAPTER 6: NEGATIVE DIALECTICS

The following chapter explains the 'negative' turn of Adorno's dialectic, here illustrated with reference to Hegel's dialectic of the rational self-determination of thought. Adorno's dialectical turn is 'negative' because it seeks to give voice to forms of experience he claims both Hegel's dialectic and other subject-centred forms of rationality neglect. Such experience may be expressed as forms of suffering overlooked by the normative aspects of Hegel's account of reason, or to which such a 'universalising' account may inadvertently contribute. The 'negative' dialectic, therefore, may be illustrated through the distinction between Hegel's rational reconciliation of conceptual reflection with the objective world, and Adorno's prioritisation of the 'non-identity' always remaining between them, or, for Adorno, ways in which Hegel's dialectical 'reconciliation' falls short in its claims to truth. It follows demonstrating how reconciliation of the objective world to reflection *fails* can reveal dimensions of experience remaining unexplored or unaccounted for, disclose where accounts become ideological, and point towards new ways in which to conceptualise experience.

The chapter proceeds as follows: First, I provide an outline of Hegel's dialectic of 'determinate negation' and an account of the rationality and normativity of conceptual practices according to this dialectic, with some examples of self-correcting mechanisms of society's institutional structures. Second, the central objection to this account – that experience cannot only be understood through such a 'totalising' account of rationality – is explained via Adorno's reorientation of reflection towards experience remaining unexhausted by - and 'non-identical' to - attempts to conceptualise it. Third, the 'negative' dialectic is illustrated by way of this turn towards the 'non-conceptuality' in experience, and what this prioritisation could amount to at the level of social rationality and normative practices. Finally, examples are provided of ways in which negative dialectics apply in the contemporary social constellation, foreshadowing the thought model in the following chapter demonstrating how Adorno's critical approach remains relevant, despite evolutions of social circumstances from those he experienced.

6.1. The Concept of Dialectic

The Hegelian dialectic is, at its core, an evolution from the meaning Kant had attributed to 'dialectic' in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As we saw in Chapter 3, Kant thought it impossible for thought to 'transcend' the phenomenal world of sensation and empirical knowledge to the 'noumenal' world of pure reason, or the world ("thing") as it is 'in itself'. Instead, as thought strives towards this realm of 'pure understanding', it remains mired in what Kant took to be the falsehoods of self-contradiction – the 'antinomies of pure reason' governing empirical experience and the phenomenal world – and these are what, expanding on Plato's notion of the term, he called 'dialectics'.

For Kant, limits of the human understanding ('reason') and limits of truth are the same thing. Hegel, however, took the contradictions of 'dialectics' to mean Kant's antinomies themselves provided a logical starting point from which contradictions could be resolved, and thus that inroads could be made into the realm of pure reason instead *by virtue* of resolving them – therefore also leading to increasingly perfect conceptions of truth. The existence of contradiction, it followed, demonstrated the limitations of the understanding. *Overcoming* these contradictions would enable the progress of reason in comprehending the noumenal – in Hegel's terms, the 'absolute truth' - and thus simultaneously demonstrate progress of the understanding in the phenomenal world.

Contradiction, then, is the starting point of Hegel's dialectical process. A concept about the world is posited as a potential description of reality. Logically, the concept already contains its own negation (the description may be shown to be false), and the struggle between the concept and the ways it is shown to be false result in a new concept, which in the Hegelian process is the ascent, or "sublation" [*Aufhebung*], to a 'higher' stage of comprehension, itself resulting in a new concept. This new concept generates its own negation, and as such the dialectical process continuously lays bare the truth of reality through ever more sophisticated concepts. Each successive dialectical stage is a 'moment' that is itself overcome, or "sublated", into a new concept.

Hegel thus claims that the *rational* compulsion of experience is one of *negation* – the negation of inadequate judgments as consciousness of an object develops. Hegel refers to the rationality of experience as 'determinate negation'. The negation is

'determinate' because the ability to show what is lacking in an explanation is the condition of the possibility of a better explanation: the negation, as Bowie explains, is therefore 'not of the form of "false", but of the form of "false', but the necessary condition of "true".[58] Experience of the phenomenal world is therefore rational to the degree that it already possesses the element of self-correction.

But this dialectic presupposes, then, the *a priori* concept of the subject who makes the judgment. Hegel calls this *a priori* condition *Being*, the necessary condition for anything about the world to be 'known'. Dialectical logic proceeds from 'Being' and ceaselessly advances towards a conclusion that Hegel calls the 'absolute Idea', or truth itself. This 'absolute Idea' is both thought and reality simultaneously – concepts of objects in the phenomenal world reconciled with reality as *truth*. However, if 'Being' is always in the process of becoming something, how can there be an 'absolute' concept of truth? Scruton explains the basis of Hegel's thought thus:

Imagine a kind of impersonal dialectical 'thought', or thinker, attempting to understand the world. It has nothing available to it but thought and so must put forward, as its sole instrument of knowledge, the "concept" which enlightens it. Of necessity it begins from the single most indeterminate concept – that which is contained in all concepts and yet which is logically precedent to them, the concept of being. But what is being, considered as "unmediated" by reflection, and as free from extraneous determinations? It is surely, nothing... Hence, the concept of being contains within itself its own negation - nothing – and the dialectical opposition between these two concepts is resolved only in the passage to a new concept. This concept is 'becoming', which captures the truth contained in that previous opposition, the truth of the *passage* of being into nothing and nothing into being. To our impersonal thinker, the world now appears as becoming rather than as being, and this perception is 'truer' than the preceding one, although as yet far short of that absolute truth in which all such oppositions will be resolved" (Scruton 2001, p. 174).

'Becoming' is therefore a 'truer' form of the concept of 'Being' because it is a reconciliation of 'Being' and its opposite, 'Nothing'. The truth of 'Being' is *determined* by 'becoming', or the passage of nothing into something – an *identity* - but simultaneously is further determined, in the objective world, by what that identity *is not* (its non-identity). From the rational necessity of correcting this lack, further oppositions arise and the

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[58] Quoted from correspondence.

process of conceptualising reality continues. For Hegel, the 'totality' of these stages are passage to the 'absolute Idea' *itself*, which is simultaneously both the whole of reality *and* the *attempt* to know it, in all its historical forms. The metaphysics towards which Hegel's dialectic strives is therefore the Idealist attempt to abolish the distinction between thought and reality *altogether*.

Contradiction is therefore the 'moment' of becoming. Existence, taken by itself, presupposes an immediacy with which things *can* be known – such as in Kant's Transcendental Unity of Apperception – but the moment where things become known is their *active* mediation by the subject. Even the apparent immediacy of the consciousness of the "pure" subject and the 'sense-data' available to it must be mediated, as Bowie suggests, "because it cannot be made intelligible unless it is informed by concepts (hence the unboundedness of the conceptual)" (Bowie 2013, p.45). However, the subject does not merely mediate the object of knowledge and thus 'reduce' it to the subject itself – the object *continues* resisting the concept attributed to it by the subject, and thus continues engendering the becoming of the subject. As such the objective world always stands *opposed* to the subject.

We already saw in Chapter 3 how Adorno is intent on sustaining Kant's unresolved contradictions as part of his own organon of knowledge. How does this square with Hegel's dialectical resolutions? And how can Hegel's procedure plausibly expect to 'abolish' the distinction between thought and reality?

6.2. Dialectic as Normativity

The priority Adorno ascribes to the mediated character of knowledge, and the dependence of knowledge on recognising the interconnected nature of social experience – alongside his problematic reference to society as the 'totality' – is philosophically indebted to Hegel's metaphysical concept of the 'absolute Idea', or what Hegel calls *Geist*. It is also a rejection of this notion in its strictly Hegelian form. Conversely, an increasing focus of Hegelian scholarship since the 1970's has emphasised a more 'non-metaphysical' Hegel, in which the Hegelian 'Idea' can be interpreted as a process of social normativity.[59] This strand of argument is outlined in the following:

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[59] See e.g. Taylor 1979, Pinkard 1996, Pippin 1997 and Bowie 2013.

Hegel expresses *Geist* as the idea of a 'world-spirit' made up of the 'totality' of mediation occurring in the course of socio-historical experience. This world-spirit is therefore the *historical* account of the *self-determination* of human thought, in which 'the question of why we have come to think of things the way we have, to categorise our experience and activity' can be 'shown to be presupposed in any attempt to discover or justify… because of prior attempts at such categorisation' (Pippin 1997, p.165). This means historical accounts are always required to explain why rules, norms or conceptual practices come to be regarded as legitimate. The continual transformation of the 'sense-making patterns and rules' determining social experience, and by which objects are categorised, is the historical form of the self-determination of thought.

The objective of self-determining thought is its continuing attempt to overcome alienating forms of consciousness between subject and the objective world, between communities, and between, and within, individuals. This historical process of the 'whole', with its successes and failures, is the legitimate, *truthful* reconciliation between experience and reflection, also reflected in the increasingly rational conceptual practices and institutional structures of society. According to Pippin,

[*Geist* can] be understood as a kind of collective human achievement… that achievement being the establishment of normatively successful, mutually bound communities… *Geist*… [is] the achievement of… rule-following, reflectively re-assessing communities, and that process must somehow be understood (at its most basic level) as a kind of continual negotiation about normative authority (Pippin 2005, p.95).

Geist, on this reading, is the formation of communities *normatively* bound by the rules and sense-making patterns individuals give themselves historically, through inter-subjective mediation and negotiation. Simultaneously, *Geist* is the gradual fulfilment of needs and desires of individuals contributing to these rules as the expression of an increasing *subjective* freedom arising from rational possibilities of self-determining thought. The 'absolute Idea', therefore, is, following Pinkard, 'that conception of our having the world in view through our conceptual and intuitive practices, which themselves are possible only because of the normative, inferential "whole" of which they are moments' (Pinkard 2002, p.261). Conceptual practices are *both* a consequence of the objective 'whole'

through which individuals intuit the world and upon which they depend, and what makes the 'whole' normative *to begin with*.

The 'dialectical history of self-consciousness' to which Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* refers is therefore concerned with 'showing how "succeeding social spaces" [already] contained resources within themselves… able to explain and justify themselves over and against earlier alternative accounts and to demonstrate and affirm for themselves that their own accounts of themselves were satisfactory' (Pinkard 1996, p.12). These 'social spaces' include development of social institutions, such as legal and educational structures and the state, whose legitimation towards the communities they serve is provided in the political mediation and improvement of social and legal norms they develop, and legislate in the name of the communities they represent.

The same normativity extends to identity ascribed to objects in the continuous process of amending categorisation and attempting to identify what remains objectively non-identical to reflection. This attempt to unite thought with the objective world continues as long as justifications of claims can be recognised as inadequate, simultaneously amounting to the normative process of justifying and legitimating the conceptual practices of society. It follows Hegel's 'absolute Idea' is, essentially, an 'identity of identity and non-identity', which is effectively the 'practice of giving and asking for reasons' (ibid. p.200).[60] This process is understanding how things and norms that appear 'given' to experience always already rest on other conceptual premises that have been, and continue being, socially mediated.

For Hegel, it follows knowledge is 'only intelligible in terms of the way our concepts gain their determinacy via their relation to other objects, not by "immediate" grasping of irreducible fact (Bowie 2012, p.5). Concepts *only* gain their determinacy, then, not by how the world appears 'given' or accounted for as fact, but as a result of how they have been and continue being mediated, and thereby determined. This mediation eventually determines the position and legitimacy an accumulation of conceptual reflection may eventually acquire within the social 'whole', as it becomes the basis of established conceptual practices determining social experience.

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[60] Pinkard notes Hegel's Idea is „more or less the same" as Sellars' space of reasons.

The central objective of Hegel's philosophical system, therefore (and the task of the *Phenomenology*), according to Bowie, is to unite conceptual reflection and the objective world in such a way that emphasises that any truth to such a unity cannot only be derived from what is immediately *given* to experience. This is 'because any judgments about the unity divide – "mediate" – what is supposed to be immediate… It is only by carrying out the mediation of what is initially immediate that the truth of that unity can be shown' (Bowie 2003, p.83).

This distinction between i) what is immediately 'given' to reflection from experience of a specific objective context, and ii) the mediation of socio-historical process of reflection resulting in ideas, received facts or practices that may consequently *become* given, is also necessary to ascertain whether the concept in its given form corresponds truthfully with the accumulation of experience it claims to represent. If judgments concerning worldly objects are 'located within a pattern of reasoning that is not itself determined by the object but by the way in which spirit, *Geist*, has socially and historically come to determine itself as necessarily taking the object' (Pinkard 2002, p.258), then *Geist* is the social achievement normatively enabling judgements to be continuously self-correcting vis-à-vis both the objective world and its own development of social norms. This is how *Geist* can be understood as the 'space of reasons' within which individuals comprehend themselves. According to Pippin,

[o]ur own social practices – *Geist* – are best understood as the result of… continuous historical transformation. Our sanctions and ideals are not just contingent results, however, merely our way of going about things, but can be shown to be superior resolutions of internal insufficiencies in the status of norms in prior epochs of *Geist* (Pippin 1997, p.393).

There are therefore also always contradictions between how social practices are justified according to a specific historical epoch, and the changes to social experience continually instigated by historical progress (including how a given epoch, and history itself, may be understood from new vantage points of future historical points of reference). The 'superior resolutions of internal insufficiencies… in prior epochs" force re-evaluation of judgments on social practices and consequently, engender a continual transformation of 'sense-making patterns and rules'. The 'Idea' for which Hegel intends *Geist* as the vehicle, then, is reconciliation between reflection and the objective world in the successful and truthful *identity* between them. This categorisation is the basis for knowledge increasing

the scope for personal self-determination, the fulfilment of subjective needs, and thus, the objective freedom of society.

The increasing realisation of social freedom is thereby incorporated in the form of society's self-improvement and self-determination, e.g. from the contingency of nature. For example, social experience in pre-modern periods prior to the rise of modern science was to some extent determined by a contingency of the relative unpredictability of nature (relative to contemporary experience). Increasingly accurate reflection pertaining to the objective world in the natural sciences through a continuous process of categorisation and its scientific falsification – in other words, the mediation by which good science falsifies inferior methods of understanding, say, natural events, by continually proposing superior ones - has provided continually enhanced resources with which to predict and respond to natural events, and protect society from them, supplementing an increasing social self-determinacy from the contingency of natural events.

6.3 Moving beyond Hegel

As we saw in preceding chapters, Adorno shares Hegel's notion that mediation lays bare conflicts between conceptual reflection in its manifold historical manifestations, and the objective world as it appears 'given' to experience, and this is the aspect of Hegel's thought he retains in his 'negative' dialectic. Hegel's 'determinate' negation of thought does not mean, however, that dialectics is *a priori* negative: it does not mean, as Adorno says, that 'thought itself – and thought is tied to subjectivity – is negativity, and to that extent that negativity, and especially dialectical thinking, is negative dialectics from the outset' (Adorno 2008, p.11). What, then, is 'negative' dialectics?

First, the 'negativity' of Adorno's thought is the attempt to comprehend – and liberate - the spontaneity within thought itself – as we saw, 'the capacity of thought – of identity itself – to cause reality to break in on the mind that masters it' (Hullot-Kentor 2006, p.15). If thought is to challenge the identity it ascribes to the objective world, there can clearly be no 'positive' conceptual resolution or final identity in its reflection of the object. Rather, what Adorno calls the 'non-identity' of the object determines its experience such that its mediation does not come to an end, and no concept as such

circumscribes its identity with finality. 'Spontaneous' experience of the object, rather, points towards ways it has not been known or identified, leading to new concepts pertaining both to the object, and the subjectivity experiencing it.

This experience never exhausts the object itself. '[W]hen I speak… of negative dialectics,' Adorno says, 'what I mean by it is… the very fibre of thought, its inner structure, the way in which… the concept moves towards its opposite, the non-conceptual' (Adorno 2008, p. 6). This 'fibre' or 'inner structure' of thought is where spontaneity overcomes the identity imposed upon it *within thought itself.* As spontaneity can only ever partially overcome the conceptual limitations of identity, however, it results in further contradictions. And as these necessarily fall on the side of consciousness, the latter continually stands opposed to the 'non-identity' of the object it attempts to comprehend. However, the subject's mediation of the object *also* changes the *subject* and also, as we see below, gives rise to elements of experience which are 'non-conceptual' in their articulation or content, in as far as they cannot be circumscribed by attempts to identify them.

In its most elementary form, negative dialectics is mediation between subject and object attempting to think *together* 'the presence of subjectivity in the object (the idealist insight into the subject's active participation in the perception of the object) and the presence of objectivity within the subject (the materialist insight that the schemata of perception are co-constituted by society)' (Pickford 2002, p. 325). The object is invested with subjectivity in order to *be known*, and the subject is invested with objectivity in order to *know*, suggesting, *pace* Adorno, how the dialectic between subject and object cannot be resolved with any finality on the subjective side. Instead, Adorno's dialectic explores *unresolved* contradictions *between* subjective conceptualisation of the object *and* the ways the conceptualising consciousness is determined by objective social circumstances.

The Idealist side of Adorno's negative dialectic shares, nevertheless, Hegel's emphasis of conceptual 'sublation' into more developed states of consciousness: 'thoughts that are true', as he states in the passage quoted in 5.2 above, 'must incessantly renew themselves in the experience of the subject matter, which nonetheless first determines itself in those thoughts' (Adorno 1998, p.131). The fundamental exception Adorno takes to Hegel's dialectic, however, relates to *how* the object is *determined* in

conceptual reflection. Adorno's central criticism is that Hegel seeks to 'wholly dissolve the real into what can be articulated in concepts' (Bowie 2012, p.2). This means, first, Hegel 'puts all the determinacy on the side of the mediating forms of the subject' (ibid.): Hegel's dialectic 'sublates' all experience into the self-determining 'Absolute' in the historical process of the subject's active mediation, which in turn for Hegel comes to account for the totality of experience.

For Adorno, this dialectical 'sublation' remains 'positive', because it conveniently overlooks experience where, i.) the subject is not, or cannot be, self-determining, where its consciousness remains dependent on the objective world or nature beyond it; where ii.) mediation of the subject's particular, contingent experience does not occur consciously, or the subject is incapable of significantly conceptualising its experience in sufficiently 'normative' terms; or where iii.) the subject's particular experience fails to be incorporated in the normatively legitimated conceptual practices of society, but may be no less 'true' as a reflection of social circumstances for that matter. Put another way: Hegel's determinate negation prioritises the self-determination of thought by directing it towards the *identity* conceptual reflection ascribes to the object. For Adorno, this prioritisation is a symptom, as well as a cause, of Hegel's premise of the 'whole':

In Hegel, the positive nature of dialectics – in other words, the fact that the whole, the quintessence of all negations is the positive, the meaning, reason, indeed the godhead and the Absolute – is the premise that actually sets the dialectic in motion. By the same token, it is also the result that is supposed to emerge, and emerge, inexorably, from this dialectic (Adorno 2008, p.27).

Adorno's objection to the premise of the 'whole' is that it tries to be both what he refers to as the 'analytical' premise of how conceptual reflection relates to the object (the identity, or lack thereof, between them), and the 'synthetic' premise of the reconciliation between thought and the object, *simultaneously*. This means the 'analytical' premise of the problem of relating conceptual reflection to the object and reconciling them in Hegel is ultimately the same as the 'synthetic' premise that reflection (the concept) captures 'that which is *not* mind [the object], and identif[ies] with it [italics mine]' (ibid., p.28).

The first significant part of Adorno's objection to Hegel, then, is how the dialectical contradictions of experience, and eventually conceptual practices normatively

determining experience of the social whole, are 'sublated' in consciousness itself. As Pippin notes, the common criticism of this 'sublation' in the 'whole' is that it relies on a 'philosophy of consciousness.' The criticism of such a philosophy, supposed to provide the normative standards by which society's self-determination becomes possible, is that it is an account

[o]f how the opposition between subjective certainty and self-satisfaction, on the one hand, and objectivity and sociality, on the other, is finally "sublated" within some single "macrosubject"… by means, that is, of some theoretical denial of all "otherness" and so the "totalisation" of a self-conscious subject as "the whole" (Pippin 1997, p.159).

This criticism suggests how sublation of conceptual reflection into a self-grounding 'whole' determined by the (theoretically, increasingly sophisticated) consciousness of the subject may, despite the rational compulsion of determinate negation, also ultimately reduce the *object* to conceptual reflection and normative practices arising thereof. It also suggests how experience of the object may become predetermined by normative practices already determining social experience, to the degree that aspects of the object or objective world become foreclosed to the consciousness of the subject.

Hegel's prioritisation of identity that thought can ascribe the object, then, has the effect of 'totalising' the concept, and therefore subjectivity itself. We have seen how Adorno wants to retain the element undergirding Hegel's dialectic of the subject's active participation in the mediation of the object. Simultaneously, he wants to re-orientate reflection towards experience as it may be determined by the *object*, meaning experience of the objective world that precisely cannot be *reduced* to, or 'totalised' in, conceptualisation. If, as we saw, the material basis of experience is that 'schemata of perception are co-constituted by society', however, then Adorno *also* wants to retain the unsettled Kantian distinction between the object in itself, and the unresolved contradictions (dialectics) of the phenomenal world. Quoting his lectures on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bowie explains what Adorno wants to retain from the Kantian philosophy:

Adorno sees the form of the subject/object relationship as 'a relationship of tension between the moment […] that something is thought, and the something *which* is thought'; this is 'the relationship of tension in which the movement of philosophy, the movement of thought is

played out at all' [Adorno 1959-1960, p.4892]. Clearly 'these two moments in Kantian philosophy are in continual friction with each other', and Adorno's interest lies in '*How* they are in friction with each other', what constellations they enter into with each other, what difficulties result from this' [Adorno 1995, p.10] (Bowie 2013, p.38).

In Kant, there is the unresolved dialectic, not only in contradictions of the phenomenal world, but also between these and the 'thing', or object, in itself. To clarify: 'that something is thought', for Kant, is possible because of the transcendental unity of apperception. The something *which* is thought, however, depends on the *contingent historical moment* in which it is thought. The latter, as we have seen, is accommodated in Hegel's dialectical mediation, but the reflective tension for Adorno remains between how thought may be determined or 'given' at a specific historical moment, and the spontaneity of thought ('that something is thought') of the transcendental subject, in itself. This reflective tension can only be expressed, following Hegel, by necessity via reference to a given socio-historical 'constellation' of subject and object, but, following Kant, cannot *reduce* the object of knowledge to this constellation, as the object always retains elements distinct from any particular historical attempt to conceptualise it, thus retaining elements of 'non-identity'.

Simultaneously, however, *pace* his critique of Kant, Adorno also retains a 'non-identity' of the *concept*. Kant resolves his categorical imperative, for example, in the face of contradictions of the phenomenal world with the deontological argument that moral law is necessary in its own right and does not rely on hypothetical premises, because these are dependent on subjective imperatives. Moral law, therefore, would be legitimised by individuals acting only insofar as their autonomously chosen moral actions should become universal laws – as he states in the categorical imperative: 'Act only according to the maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become universal law' (Kant 1993, p.30). Moral autonomy would thus be possible by acting in concert with universal law. Kant had thereby attempted to overcome contradictory ethical demands between individuals with a universalising injunction derived from 'pure reason' that would simultaneously guarantee autonomy, in the sense of mankind's own unique position and duty in the world, and which required no further theoretical elaboration.

For Adorno, however, the point is not that such a concept of morality needs further theoretical elaboration, but that it is not clear how it corresponds to a world

'where it is very undecided how far such a right life would touch the objectively entangled and enmeshed nature of existence today' [Adorno 1993, p.147] (Bowie 2013, p.112) and where even the finest theoretical resolution of a problem may not illuminate what 'right action' may be under a particular circumstance. Additionally, the autonomous choice involved in resolving, say, a dilemma according to one moral maxim or another obscures a chain of other (probably contradictory) factors contributing to circumstances that may yet be decisive to the situation, factors which, moreover, may by themselves impose severe constraints on autonomy.

In this way, concepts - as we also saw in Chapter 2 concerning claims whose residual truth-content resides in contradictions between what they aspire to but which has not been achieved socially – also always retain a non-identity, namely in contradictions between conceptual claims themselves and their relation to the experience of social reality. Additionally, however, such concepts may yet be emancipatory precisely in their failure to correspond truthfully to reality, in the sense that they keep experiences and ideas, and the circumstances they were a reaction to, alive in ways which may be repressed by the existing norms of a given society. The non-identity of the concept, alongside the non-identity of the object outlined above, are simultaneously targeted in Adorno's 'negative' dialectic.

Following Bowie, then, 'Adorno's concern is therefore with the "tension between the interest in the objectivity of truth, on the one hand, and reflection on the knowing subject as that which constitutes truth, on the other"' [Adorno 1959-1960, p. 4930] (ibid. p.43). 'Truth' cannot only be an epistemological matter of resolving issues of knowledge positively, as truth only gains its objectivity through reflection of the subject, the latter of which is historically contingent. Simultaneously, truth must be objective in a sense that cannot be reduced to the subject and its contingent experience, which is the kind of objectivity investigated by natural science (recall Adorno never disputes science itself, only, as Bowie says, 'what the exclusive concentration on [science] may produce' (ibid. p.46) in social terms).

Yet, natural science, for its objectivity, is still by necessity a reduction of objectivity to subjective categories, and Adorno is here interested in the 'objective' meaning that is *lost* when the objective world is 'controlled' by these subjective

categories. The 'negative' dialectical turn is therefore towards the 'truth-content' in the unresolved, 'non-identical' tension *between* the loss of objective meaning, on one hand, and the subjective interest in freedom and self-determination, on the other, within a specific historical constellation of the object under consideration demanding the attempt of its articulation. However, such articulation will also depend on the acknowledgement we investigated in Chapter 4 that, for Adorno, the objectivity sought in epistemology or science cannot be the sole standard for philosophy, because our ways of relating to the world are not only or primarily cognitive, but also *affective*.

At this point, two steps must be taken to concretise what this theory can mean in practice: first, we look at how Adorno's 'constellations' can be used to illustrate difficulties arising from tensions in contradictions between experience and its objective determination. Second, we examine the notion of subject as object, via which 'non-conceptuality' can be examined. It follows if there is also objectivity within the subject in order for the subject to know anything in the first place, then there must also be an objectivity with which the subject *can* be known which is not cognitive in the scientific or epistemological sense, but to which the subject's self-determination is nevertheless concretely bound. I expand on this point in section 6.4 below.

Excursus: Preliminary Constellations

Adorno's targeting of instrumental forms of rationality in the historical 'constellation' of Modernity that, despite degrees of their political consent is intended to reveal tensions between the subject's self-determination and the objective, contingent determination of experience. These tensions also show how the normativity of contemporary practices objectively determining much of what is conceptualised in a specific historical constellation can fail to grasp significant elements of subjective experience. Moreover, the gap between such elements and the normative game of 'giving and asking for reasons' reveals aspects of the 'truth-content' in claims made about social experience – but which cannot be exhausted in the claims themselves.

Regarding the constellation of Modernity, we may recall how Adorno 'insists on the pervasive and constitutive character of capitalist production [and simultaneously] calls attention to the role of corporeal instincts and needs, and of their repression, in the

formation of self and civilization' (Zuidervaart 2011). For example, capitalist relations of technological production and economic consumerism, where normatively 'successful', obviously shape the identities and ideologies of individuals, just as immanent systemic failures causing human suffering[61] equally determine, in very real ways, how people think and relate to their environment. But, as we have also seen, subjective identity itself is *already* determined at the cost of repressing elements of inner or outer nature, the manipulation and distortion of needs[62], and the necessary institutional and legal limitations on the scope of subjective choice.

Adorno is here interested in experience consisting *simultaneously* of i.) all the ways the subject is objectively determined, where reflection *cannot*, or only, be self-determining *and* ii.) the self-determining conceptual activity occurring on the subjective side which, however, cannot subsume the object or objective world to itself. The latter occurs on at least two levels: first, on the objective or natural level, where, e.g., individuals may be genetically predisposed to think or act in certain predetermined ways, or, second, in the sense that individuals may be constrained by social and ideological strictures, such as nationality, class, education, finances, and so forth.[63]

The initial contemporary constellation that may be suggested is the gap between the objective determination of social experience by technology as the primary determinant of capitalist economic production, and the subjective ability to conceptualise its experience in a way that captures its 'truth-content' - or fails to. Adorno's 'negative' turn from Hegel's dialectic in this context can be illustrated, initially, as follows: The determination of contemporary experience by economic imperatives of technological progress can clearly be thought of in Hegelian terms as a reconciliation of a form of conceptual reflection (e.g., technical savoir-faire developed from scientifically objective knowledge) with conceptual practices predetermining the experience of society (the compulsory quotidian use of technology). This reconciliation is 'sublated' in the consciousness of the subject (the dependence of individuals on technology to, e.g., secure their livelihoods, and their contribution to technology in turn).

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[61] See chapters 2, 3 and 5.
[62] See chapters 1 and 2.
[63] See chapter 1.

However, this objective determination of experience and the development of, e.g., socio-economic norms by technological applications in contemporary society, not least due to the ideological prioritisation of speed and immediacy, affects communication and the mediation of social norms in increasingly uncertain ways, including in terms of how individuals perceive time and are able to determine their use of it.[64] The commercial, ideological element of this speed-driven technology is the empowerment of individuals and clear appeal to their increasing opportunities for self-determination. How self-determination is possible with regard to technology *itself*, however, is a significant element of the truth-content of such claims: on one hand, individuals experience hitherto unimagined possibilities of freedom, economic and otherwise, because of what technology makes possible; conversely, self-determination vis-à-vis technology becomes increasingly difficult if we consider, e.g., its appropriation of time itself, where previous distinctions between 'private' and 'public' time are collapsed in a 24 hour cycle of consumerist ethos.

Additionally, the broader commercial claim that technology makes modern life 'universally' easier is a key element in its facile political legislation, but the claim is undermined by the ways it may leave behind large segments of the population and exclude key demographics, such as the elder, the unemployed, etc., whose possibilities to adapt may be compromised, from participation in the legislative process to other normative activities. Social norms may be adjusted over time to address such concerns, but, e.g. as Rosa suggests (2013), the 'social acceleration'[65] itself can result in the alienation of vast numbers of people from understanding of, and the ability to effectively engage, socio-economic mechanisms most determining their everyday experience. This, moreover, can also (or especially) extend to managers, experts or those charged with implementing the economic instruments which, in conjunction with technology, determine much social experience, a vivid recent example of which was the financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath, which occurred despite the forecasts and predictive models of top economic experts, even as the crisis became increasingly apparent.[66]

That this global crisis originated in the U.S. sub-prime mortgage crisis, predicated on financial instruments such as so-called 'credit default swaps' that kept the institutions

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[64] See chapters 3 and 5. See also Rosa 2013.
[65] Ibid.
[66] See Greenspan 2013.

and traders perpetrating them largely unaccountable while affecting swathes of people globally who had nothing to do with the U.S. housing market but who, among other things, were caught up in complex international financial mechanisms threatened by the crisis and targeted by severe austerity measures imposed by governments in its aftermath, underlines two things: First, this kind of objective determination of social experience both severely limits the self-determination, economic and otherwise, of individuals, rendering them incapable of responding directly in 'normative' fashion other than through limited mechanisms of the political ballot (which, for many, provides insufficient degrees of choice between economic policy). Second, the experience of suffering caused by the crisis – beyond the immediate level of foreclosures, lost jobs, life-savings and homes, etc. – suggests a truth-content of the social experience of this historical constellation that finds little or no expression in the, e.g. cognitive mechanisms of the systemic socio-economic adjustment to the crisis.

The Adornian turn toward the 'non-identical' in such a historical constellation of experience is not merely a political, intellectual or ideological opposition to the tangible injustice wrought by such events that may, or may not, provide a normative corrective to, in this instance, out-of-control financial mechanisms, however. Rather, he is here interested in elements of that particular experience that remain *unexpressed*, as part of the truth-content of its experience. It is possible e.g., that the crisis may be understood in the future in terms of economic instruments developed to address it, or lessons learned from the reactive measures of governments, or a combination of these and other factors, etc. However, cognitive ways of understanding this particular socio-historical constellation of events are not the only way to understand its experience, and as we see below, its affective dimensions may provide resources that suggest ways of self-determination in a constellation in which 'normative' responses may fail to satisfy it on many levels.

Another way of examining Adorno's emphasis on unresolved tensions in the constellation of Modernity is to consider the undisputed benefits of modern medicine as the obvious way in which increasingly accurate cognitive concepts relating to the human body contribute to an objective form of freedom and personal self-determination, in their contribution to longevity of life and prevention of human suffering. Conversely, such advances can also result in socially repressive phenomena, such as the meaningless prolongation of life in terminally ill people who desire peaceful death but where it may

be illegal by law to administer it, the sometimes wrongful prescription of medicines which may have been developed to satisfy commercial interests of pharmaceutical entities, or, more superficially, artificially created 'needs' for non-essential plastic surgery, as part of the Culture Industry's standardisation of norms of beauty (itself a source of widespread suffering). Such tensions between, first, a Hegelian view of the indisputable historical progress of a specific form of scientific rationality and second, an Adornian view that historical contradictions continue revealing how the problem of freedom cannot only be subsumed into, e.g. only explanatory laws of science and the freedoms they provide, invites consideration of Adorno's emphasis on affective elements of experience, to which we now turn.

6.4. Moving Beyond Identity: Towards the Non-Conceptual

What does Adorno's dialectical turn towards 'non-identity' amount to? We saw how his 'prioritisation' of the objective is to re-orientate experience away from the subjective *control* of nature. Where this control, inherent in conceptual forms of comprehending and categorising the world, is necessary to understand it in the first place, it is simultaneously the source of violence done to the object, whether to the world as such (e.g., in man's ability to lay waste to the environment in exploitation of its resources), or other subjectivity (domination of the other as a strategy of self-preservation as the systemic capitalist norm), and therefore also a source of suffering. Adorno's point is therefore to try to comprehend experience in ways not uniquely subsumed under the conceptual control of the object, or nature, considering the real-world, historical effects it can have. How will this be possible, if identification and control of the object is the only way to make sense of the world in the first place?

The 'priority of the objective' (unfortunately named, because the term suggests a decentred subjectivity altogether, which is not Adorno's point) is simultaneously more differentiated and targeted than a 'blind spot of objectivity' that e.g. realists such as Nagel also suggest can never fully be attained.[67] If this objective is what is non-identical to the concept, then concurrently the only way to grasp it is *through* the concept – through

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[67] [T]here will not even be a limiting point beyond which it is impossible to go. This is because each step to a new objective vantage point, while it brings more of the self under observation, also adds to the dimensions of the observer something further which is not itself immediately observed. And this becomes possible material for observation and assessment from a still later objective standpoint. The mind's work is never done' (Nagel 1989, pp.128-129).

identity, or the attempt to conceptualise it. Simultaneously, as Bowie explains, 'if the relation of thought to its object did not involve an aspect of non-identity in the object, thought would be empty, because it would not be directed at something beyond itself' (Bowie 2013, p.67). This means thought must *already* be determined by what it is *not* – and it is *this* 'spontaneity' of thought determined by what it is *not*, as opposed to the reduction of the object *only* to subjective categorisation, that Adorno wants to salvage by using 'the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity' (Adorno 1973, p. xx).

The 'fallacy of constitutive subjectivity' is how identity circumscribes the object to itself, whether conceptually, or in ways individuals ideologically exclude, dominate or persecute otherness – the other as object external to subjectivity - to safeguard (self-preserve) their sense of identity. As we saw, it is also the source of 'false' consciousness and other forms of reification, which Adorno says only 'the strength of the subject' can overcome. But identity also points towards what is conceptually lacking in it, and thus a concept always contains more than it can express. 'The primacy of the object', Adorno writes, also means 'that subject for its part is object in a qualitatively different, more radical sense than object, because object cannot be known through consciousness, hence is also subject' (Adorno 1998, p.249). This means the subject is more 'radically' object than an (inanimate) object in the world, in that it possesses consciousness, and thus a potential self-determination to overcome the identity imposed both *on* subjectivity by its objective determination, and *by* subjectivity, through 'subject-centred' forms of reasoning, on the object.

More concretely, this also means the subject itself is an object of knowledge that cannot *only* be understood by, say, objectifying methods, irrespective of how accurate these are. We need not only take the 'absolute' example of the horror of Auschwitz or other atrocities perpetrated in the name of identity in order to grasp what Adorno means by subject being more 'radically' object. For example, the ability of modern medicine to mitigate suffering does not eliminate *how* the subject has *experienced* that pain, which can be expressed in manifold ways and relative to a number of circumstances that cannot only be accounted for diagnostically. Simultaneously, however, the ability to accurately diagnose and treat malady unquestionably *also* opens up new ways of understanding its experience. Adorno's point here would be that as objectifying methods improve in their

accuracy to solve human problems, the more this conceptual refinement *also* points to what it is *not* – or elements of experience, and experience of its objectifying methods, that it has missed – or which are forgotten. The 'non-identical' in this sense are elements of experience that may have objective truth-content, but are obscured by dominating ways of determining objectivity – and which have a truth-content to contribute to the search for objectivity in turn.

On another, social, level, benefits of technology in making information available to individuals they may not otherwise have had undoubtedly liberates their conceptual powers and, in one sense, their 'ideological' identities (at least according to earlier historical notions of ideology). Conversely, the increasing demands technology places on individuals creates other ways of relating to it, and each other, which can also result in (unwelcome) constraints on subjectivity and the suffering of forms of unfreedom. The pressure to comprehend a range of issues beyond a personal profession or field of expertise, e.g. the technological injunction to integrate all personal information online which puts identity itself at risk, or in another sense, 'objectifies' identity in ways the subject can no longer control, can create immense degrees of suffering. More simply, it may be considered how online economic interactions for elderly people who may make disproportionate financial errors because of a lack of understanding of the technology that has replaced in-person contact, can place an undue burden of suffering (inadequacy, loss of basic identity/means or traditional senses of belonging, etc.) on individuals, which may not yet have been adequately understood, politically, 'cognitively' or in otherwise normative terms.[68] The objective determination of experience, hence, as an object of knowledge in its own right, means there are dimensions of experience that are also *objective*, e.g. that possess an objective truth-content in a sense that cannot only be encompassed by socially pragmatic achievements, or the objective standards employed to their ends.

In the introduction to *ND*, Adorno writes: '[t]he need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity which weighs on the subject; what it experiences as most subjective to it, its expression, is objectively mediated' (Adorno 1973, pp.17-18). This means, first, truth cannot be 'separated' (in the epistemological sense informing cognitive stances) from the contingent socio-historical constellation

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[68] See Turkle 2011.

experienced, because the conceptual identity ascribed to something at a specific point in time is objectively determined. Second, because the cognitive identification of the objective world comes to determine so much of social experience, it means truth cannot be a matter only of that identification, however successful, but must also be about what it *misses* (what is non-identical), e.g. elements of social experience not explicable only through its normative success. This includes above all 'the need to lend a voice to suffering', because suffering cannot only be measured or understood by cognitive means, and yet is the standard by which people judge their happiness, or lack thereof. Third, suffering and its expression do not have to be justified according to normative modes of rationality in order to be true. Fourth, however, the subjective attempt to *express* suffering, or other forms of affective experience, can be an *objective* form of truth missed by social norms or objectifying forms of rationality.

The claim to objectivity in this sense also depends on the argument, developed by Honneth,[69] that the notion of 'Acknowledgement' (*Anerkennung*) must be a preceding relationship of the subject to the objective world than the historically developed cognitive methodologies employed to grasp it. We saw in Chapter 4 how Adorno developed the notion throughout his work that the subject's attempt to 'control' the world was a consequence of the imperative of self-preservation, and how Adorno's 'negative' turn from this reasoning was towards an 'affective' or 'mimetic' dimension of understanding the world not only depending on its control, but also on how self-preservation must mean mutual understanding. The argument as recently developed by Honneth illustrates how consequent ways of understanding the world in cognitive terms, irrespective of their success, also means these advances would not have been possible in the first place had it not been due to mutual agreement or concern, in a particular socio-historical constellation, that these advances were necessary to pursue in the first place.

What this means for Adorno's argument at the immediate level is there cannot be a notion of truth without acknowledgement of the elements of experience, such as the suffering or inter-subjective comprehension constituting socio-historical reality on one hand, and the notion that the (philosophical or other) attempt to 'rationalise' suffering in terms of the advances of modern reason, is a failure of the understanding - and an insult to the dignity of those suffering, by attempting to give this objective 'meaning' - on the

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[69] See Honneth 1996.

other. But additionally, and crucially for Adorno's theory, is that it is a 'negative' turn away from the self-resolution of 'dialectics' as the pursuit of truth *and* the – still equally dialectical - turn towards 'mimetic' dimensions of the understanding. Mimesis, at its most basic in the Greek means 'imitation', which has been ascribed a large degree of variegated philosophical meaning and is the source of contentious debate[70], can for Adorno's purposes initially here be understood as the affective, non-repressive and non-violent reflection of human activity in its imitation.

In this view, mimesis as an attempted description of reality, is present in all forms of everyday communication. From the need to observe others to adapt to, say, pragmatic demands of a workplace, to the adoption of a particular accent within a given environment, to how couples may adopt each other's mannerisms, mimesis is a subjective way of understanding and coping with the objective world in ways that doesn't immediately demand its control or its reduction to the subjective self. Consider e.g. a young child's imitation of its parents or peers as it enters what Lacan calls the 'symbolic' realm of communication[71], before it is even capable of articulating thoughts clearly in linguistic terms. As such, we may consider how the attempt to describe the reality that is experienced in the first place in cognitive terms or more advanced concepts has to be a function of the mimetic element in human communication, without which communication itself, considering the development of shared languages, would not be possible in the first place. The 'non-identical' turn toward the mimetic in Adorno is firstly, then, the attempt to salvage the moment of experience that is not dominated by the need for self-preservation. This is, first, in the attempt to ward off suffering, but second, in the desire to salvage aspects of experience from their determination by 'instrumental' forms of rationality, and return them to a truth-content of the objectivity, or nature, beyond these.

Adorno's companion work to *ND*, the difficult *Aesthetic Theory* (*AT*), is his testament to mimesis as a central philosophical category in its interpretation of how art can embody a non-repressive form of reason. While this work is unfortunately outside the scope of this thesis due to the former's sheer magnitude, and the concentration of

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[70] See e.g. Adorno's influence on Lukács, *The History of Class Consciousness* and *The Theory of the Novel* for an influential account of a mimetic view of history and literature, and Rorty 1980 for an epistemological challenge to uses of mimesis.
[71] For an elaboration on this, see Conclusion.

this thesis on predominantly socio-political dimensions of Adorno's thought, we may briefly look at what he intends with it in the context of a 'negative dialectic'. One imperative of *AT*, for example, is to show how tensions within works of art express contradictions in the socio-historical context within which they are created. Working through the contradictions within a work of art and its interpretation, it follows, reveals tensions in social experience itself that remain un-reconciled. At the same time, he says,

Art is… able to speak in itself. This is the realisation through mimesis. Art's expression is the antithesis of 'expressing something'. Mimesis is the ideal of art, not some practical method or subjective attitude aimed at expressive values. What the artist contributes to expression is his ability to mimic, which sets him free in the expressed substance (Adorno 2002, p.164).

First, most basically, this means art contains resources of expression not 'codified' in the same sense aspects of social behaviour and communication may be determined by dominant ideological, linguistic or other expressive norms. Art 'speaks for itself', but Adorno's nuance is what it expresses is non-identity between how expression may 'objectively' be determined – e.g. 'practical method', and the subjective (or ideological) inclination of an individual's mode of expression - their 'subjective attitude aimed at expressive values' - *and* simultaneously, between these and the mimetic, 'pre-subjective' ideal towards which expression strives. Second, this means the 'non-conceptuality' between subjective expression and the mimetic ideal can *simultaneously* reveal what the subject wanted to express *beyond* what it *did* express, but failed to – and this 'ability to mimic': the process of trying to grasp the non-identical between the subject's expression and what it *wants* to express – what it wants to mimic – is what sets the subject free in attempting to express it.

Music, e.g., while expressed conceptually on many intersecting and contradictory levels, contains the mimetic dimension of its composer's experience. It contains not only the subjective, determinative content – what its composer 'wants' to say – but also the objective determination of the exact historical moment in which they say it. The accumulation of experience at a particular moment of composition results in a mimesis *of* that moment in what is expressed, while offering a way beyond conceptual boundaries within which it is expressed. It is simultaneously an expression of a constellation of non-identity between, first, the composer's self-determination and the objective determination of their experience, and second, the way the non-conceptuality in the expression suggests

truth-content beyond the experience that accumulated it. In this sense, also, the music (in this instance) becomes the object to the listening subject, but the dialectic between them can be non-dominating and non-repressive – how else to describe the joy and (for lack of a better word), freedom, when the mind is moved by something in music that is understood, but cannot be encompassed by the subject's own conceptualisation itself? It is in such a sense that art can be said to 'speak for itself'.

The vast expanse of possible expression in the arts and elsewhere, then, underlines the irreducibility of the affective dimension of the understanding. Where one does not expect a composer, writer or painter to justify their art normatively in terms of cognitive or propositional truth, what may be expressed, and the residual non-conceptuality in that expression, is still partly a matter of the objective determination of experience in a contingent historical constellation, and therefore contains truth content about the objective world. Additionally, the immediate conceptual content in a work of art – its 'identity' – also points towards what is non-conceptual in it: the identification of a work according to a dominant understanding of its historical context, or what else may be known about it, can also reveal elements of the historical experience that may have been suppressed, rejected or forgotten in that particular identification.

A *negative* dialectic, then, is the attempt to think together the ways social experience is determined, normatively or otherwise, and the ways experience remains non-identical, contradictory and objective to, the objective determination of society. The 'negative' dialectic, hence – the '*non*-identity of identity and non-identity' – is, the turn, then, first: to a non-identity between how the subject may be objectively determined, where reflection *cannot*, or only, be self-determining, and the self-determining conceptual activity occurring on the subjective side which, however, cannot subsume the objective world to itself. Second, simultaneously, it is the non-identity between truths that can be established by objective means, and the contents of experience these forms cannot account for or express, but which may be available to the understanding because of other elements of experience, such as the affective or mimetic dimensions of the understanding.

I have now outlined what a negative dialectics can mean at the theoretical level. This chapter has explained how Adorno retains the idealist element of Hegel's dialectic

of the subject's self-determination through its active participation in the perception of the object, while giving it a materialist turn by supplementing it with the objective determination of consciousness. Where for Hegel rationality is a truthful reconciliation between experience and the objective world, for Adorno, the truth of the subject depends on a *critical* rationality that any reconciliation between experience and the objective world is an insufficient measure of truth. In the next and final chapter, I consider what this critical rationality can mean in a concrete political sense, in a thought model targeting a contemporary historical constellation. This thought model is an attempt to *suggest* how political models might be extracted from Adorno's overall body of work in future research, but does not claim an absolute essence of such a model – only how Adorno's central arguments may, despite his own reservations, add up to one made necessary by contemporary social problems.

VIII. CHAPTER 7: THOUGHT MODEL – NEGATIVE DIALECTICS OF POSTMODERNITY

The following chapter is a thought model demonstrating a 'negative' dialectic in a contemporary constellation of historical experience. The model investigates objectively determined currents of social experience through a transcendent dialectical critique considering the 'Global War on Terror' (henceforth *GWOT*), and an immanent dialectical critique considering perspectives of the integration of technology into postmodern identity. The model investigates non-identities between the ideological concretion of conceptual practices and their social experience, in the attempt to express a truth of subjectivity in this 'postmodern' historical constellation. The chapter also considers some differences between the historical context Adorno addressed and elements of the contemporary one, suggesting how his theory remains relevant, and resources that may be drawn from it.

First, I introduce the thought model in terms of Fukuyama's argument of the 'End of History'. This is to show that while this argument fails in the immediate context of the *GWOT*, it retains a truth-content that can be salvaged in a demonstration of the objective determination of social experience immanent to contemporary Western societies. Second, I undertake the ideology critique of the transcendent socio-historical context of the *GWOT* to emphasise one sense of how identity politics continues to permeate attitudes and political discourse in the context of globalisation. This sets up the immanent ideology critique of the Western postmodern 'identity', where third, I investigate dual dialectical perspectives of the objective determination of social experience in the context of the loss of personal privacy through technology on one hand, and look at some critical aspects of the incorporation of technology into behaviour and what it suggests for self-determination in the 'information society', on the other. These excursuses are bridged by a discussion of the 'crisis of experience' in Modernity, and how Adorno's theory remains a resource for a recurrent (but differentiated) discussion of this 'crisis' in Postmodernity. Finally, in the negative turn of this dialectic between 'transcendent' and 'immanent' ideology critiques, I consider a political conceptualisation of the Western Postmodern identity arising from a non-conceptuality which this negative dialectical thought model has attempted to express.

7.1 Introduction: The End of History, Revisited

In the historical context of the end of the Cold War, political scientist Francis Fukuyama made the case in his work, *The End of History and the Last Man*[72], that world history had culminated in a concretising, integrating direction toward liberal parliamentary government, market freedom, and technologically driven growth. Most remaining systems of government ideologically resistant to Western liberalism, the argument followed, were incorporating by necessity, however gradually, nominally democratic principles of liberal economic activity through limited market and social reforms. Most notably, China had already instituted limited economic reforms in the late 1980's[73], and Russia, lacking democratic infrastructure, had been opened to unfettered capitalism virtually overnight following the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.[74]

For Fukuyama (at the time), developments of this early 1990's constellation appeared to confirm the Hegelian notion of an 'end of history'. Fukuyama's argument adopted the Hegelian premise of a conclusively 'truthful' reconciliation of the objective world with the concept, in this case, of liberal democracy, in the sense that following various failed social experiments of preceding centuries, no remaining ideology could credibly compete with a market system capable of integrating any idea. Liberal democracy was therefore destined to spread globally in a version of 'historical reconciliation' of the democratic system of governance with the truth of human aspirations and needs, in a 'sublation' by the free market of the expressions of these needs in previous historical configurations.

At face value, this premise of the 'end' of history was widely criticised following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and onset of the era of the *GWOT*, with its concurrent factors of hostility to the effects of globalisation and towards specifically Western values, and the resurgence of religion as an ideological battleground for hearts and minds. Fukuyama, nonetheless, had also questioned what such an 'end' of history could actually look like. Among other things, he challenged the discontents of a liberal society so integrated that human passions and ingenuity would amount to little more

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[72] See Fukuyama 1993.
[73] See Coase 2013.
[74] See Dzarasov 2013.

than the preservation of health and the material accumulation of wealth as the last great equalising, democratising factors.[75]

Would the removal of 'ideological' competition altogether, Fukuyama asked, and lack of the possibility of metaphysical satisfaction of human interests in the face of the benefits and truths of modern science and freedoms afforded by market mechanisms, paradoxically result in a populace so disenchanted or pacified that democracy itself could be 'devalued', as a function of its own normative success? The revolt against globalisation and real-world effects of economic injustice, terrorism and war laid Fukuyama's argument to rest relatively quickly in ensuing years. These may not have completely invalidated the Hegelian thrust of Fukuyama's argument from a perspective immanent to Western society, however, where he may have articulated vital elements of modern consciousness with this adoption of the Hegelian idea.

For the purposes of this thought model, I therefore identify a constellation of contemporary Western socio-historical experience between a *transcendent* perspective of the *GWOT*, as one defining element of 'universal' (global) contemporary political discourse, and then - more specifically - from the *immanent* perspective of some developments pertaining to civic identity within Western societies. The model therefore simultaneously outlines a negative dialectic immanent to Western society, highlights how some of Adorno's critical concerns remain relevant to the present historical constellation, and suggests new ways of conceptualising the truth-content of its experience, highlighting its contradictions and pointing towards ways of overcoming its ideological concretion.

7.2 The Transcendent Critique: The Global War on Terror

I therefore consider the initial inception of the *GWOT* as a transcendent critique of contemporary social experience.[76] Beyond its wars, strategic imperatives and degrees of practical success, the *GWOT* has indelibly marked experience of the current era, not least in terms of its reinforcement of identity politics and concurrent alienation of the

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[75] Fukuyama takes issue with this notion in subsequent writings. See Fukuyama 2014.

[76] I am constrained by initial events marking this historical period and cannot go into more recent events related to it, such as the Arab Spring or the plethora of other developments, for reasons of space. I maintain, however, these initial events have defined the current age on manifold political and ideological levels, and therefore serve as an adequate 'constellation' for this thought model.

'Other'. Whether domestically in Western societies, where problems related to immigration often play out in the shadow of security concerns related to the *GWOT*, or internationally, where reinvigorated religious ideologies overshadow more subtle economic undertones of globalisation and continue to culminate, on the immediate level, in terrorism and counter-terrorist measures, the *GWOT* is another no less critical side of the experience of globalisation driven by boundless free market expansion, in a world where global events have immediate local repercussions.

One initial prism through which this conflict was viewed was the supposed 'Clash of Civilizations' suggested in an influential paper[77] by political scientist Samuel Huntington, an argument which seemed prescient on September 11, 2001. The argument proposed that with the end of the great 20th Century ideological struggles, individuals would increasingly define themselves through ethnicity and religion, culminating in a 'clash' between the West and other civilizations rejecting ideals of democracy, human rights, secularism, etc. Huntington claimed the 'central and most dangerous dimension of… emerging politics would be conflicts between groups from differing civilizations' (Huntington 1998, p.13). Conceptually, however, this argument belied the historical complexity of the development of radical Islam[78] and reinforced its own dominant narrative – most evidently at the immediate political level - at the expense of factors related, but decidedly non-identical, to this interpretation.

For example, friction between the West and 'the rest' may have reached its flashpoint of antipathy in the September 11th terrorist attacks and subsequent actions, but radical splinter groups around the Muslim world urging fundamentalist views of Islam far predated this event and historically targeted, more frequently, fellow Muslims of differing religious denominations in local territories, which is not to overlook the more nationalist ambitions of radical groups in, say, Central Asian, former Soviet-controlled territories.[79] Such events *coincided* with the succession of attacks on Western interests between 1993 and 2001, in conjunction with mounting apprehension immanent to Western societies between cultural identities due partly to paradoxes between integration and a cultural homogenisation of social experience. The designation of a multifaceted complex of global power-relations in the causality of 'globalising' cultural experience as an ideological

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[77] See Huntington 2002.
[78] See Burke 2004.
[79] See Lieven 1999.

constellation of warring civilizations, as Huntington suggests, or an outright *GWOT*, as became Western policy, are therefore, *pace* Adorno, inadequate constellations for this particular dialectic of globalisation.

The *GWOT* is better characterised, initially, as an ideological confrontation between factions espousing absolutist conceptions of respective identities on multiple sides of a globally politicised divide. In this light, non-identity can be suggested both at the immediate *conceptual* level of the *GWOT*, and at the level of its *experience*. The declaration of a 'War on Terror' concretised a conceptual framework in which the notion of 'terror' came to be understood more synonymously with '*Islamic* terrorism', and where the furtive characterisation of 'war' could be interpreted as being between the predominant conceptual self-identification of the West (and its socioeconomic practices) as rational, free, and the 'other' of terror - and the conceptual identification of terrorism more specifically with the Islamic world and pre-modern, religious forms of belief.

One problem with this identification of the *GWOT*, however, is, as Burke points out, that terrorism is a *tactic* and the 'term [war on 'terrorism']… is therefore nonsensical' (Burke 2004, p.24). It is questionable, first in the sense that the term '*GWOT*' hypostatises a tactic while failing to adequately identify not only who the *perpetrators* of terror are - though it is understood implicitly - but also what this war's *objective* is. The reason is purportedly the sheer multiplicity of terrorist groups globally whose objectives cannot simply be accounted for by Al-Qaeda as the specific terror cell responsible for September 11, but perceived to be potential threats to Western interests - also beyond the responsibility of national governments to protect their citizens. This notion of a 'war on a tactic' therefore suggests its open-endedness and potential for ideological perpetuation beyond any specifically stated objective. That the designation of 'war' left the status of long-standing *nationalist* terrorist groups such as ETA, NLF or IRA in the scheme of the *GWOT* untouched, e.g., moreover reinforces the notion that the terrorism targeted is Muslim-related, characterised as motivated primarily by anti-Western sentiment and identified specifically with Islamic code. The unspecified nature of the term, moreover, was presumably also in order to cloud distinctions between terrorist networks and nation-states that could be accused, justly or not, of harbouring them.

Second, 'terrorism' is an expansive designation dependent on subjective concepts e.g. the identity of the perpetrators, the ideological nature of their cause, the nature of the act itself, and its experience by its victims. A 'war' on 'terrorism', therefore, is a simultaneously vague *and* fixed ideological identification of the objective of dealing with the actual *problem* of terrorism, not least because the conceptual concretion with which it is immediately identified and its connotations obscure deeper understanding of motivations behind it. Additionally, ensuing characterisation by senior political figures and the media of the *GWOT*, and by extension, antagonisms with the West's broader enemies, in terms of a wider metaphysical struggle between 'good' and 'evil' led to a strengthening of the *religious* undercurrents of this war, further reifying an already deeply ideological confrontation to virtually 'cosmic' status. These constellations of meaning for confronting terrorism, Islamic or otherwise, are inadequate frameworks leading both to discursive distortion and obscuring adequate assessments of the problem and causes of terror itself, not least in terms of dealing effectively with its threat. This antagonism exists, moreover, in a reified purview of globalised social experience, and this reification of its contradictions sublates experience of terrorism and its causes within a framework arguably contributing to its perpetuation.

The causes of specifically Islamic terrorism are manifold, but at least two are impossible to ignore at the immediate political level: sentiments of impotence in the face of social conditions in large parts of the Muslim world, and perceptions such conditions are objectively determined by Western global economic and political power. These two factors are simultaneously causally related and non-identical. They are related in the sense that the West could be held partially responsible, both directly and indirectly, for perpetuation of social conditions in the Muslim world due to its global influence and historically self-interested policy in predominantly Muslim countries.[80] One reason for this has been a general lack of historical consciousness of Muslim countries on behalf of Western policymakers in addressing contemporary geopolitics (I consider the relation of historical consciousness to reflective non-identity below). That such a perspective, in its ideological form, can result in underplaying the socially *immanent* responsibility of Muslims themselves for social conditions and the real contribution of some of their own traditions to the nature of these, however, suggests distinctions, *pace* Adorno, between the direct causation of identifiable phenomena and non-identical ways such causes can

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[80] See Wright 2007.

interrelate. The ideological concretion of a confluence of causes in the identification of Western influence as the prime source of grievance in the radical Islamic mind serves, nevertheless, in conjunction with appeals to Islam itself, as the basis for the purposive 'rationality' of terrorism.

Moreover, Islam is, from its inception, a *political* project of identification, beyond its specifically religious tenets.[81] The specific response of terrorism to Muslim grievances, real and imagined, is couched in religious injunctions of Islam as grounds for mutual identification between individuals and justification for the extreme nature of terrorist acts. It nonetheless remains thoroughly political; as Burke suggests, because a grievance 'is explained by an individual through reference to a religion, [it] does not make it a religious grievance. It remains a political grievance articulated with reference to a particular religious worldview' (ibid. p.25). Islam, consequently, provides a belief system, behavioural proscriptions, identity, and vocabulary to resist Western power, but it follows the specific act of *terrorism* is political, and, moreover, 'legitimated' in its religious appeal to Islam. A large part of this 'legitimation' rests on interpretations of Western influence, rationality and culture perceived as lacking in tradition, values, and diametrically at odds with Islamic codes of behaviour. Islam, thereby, provides not only assumed legitimacy for the Muslim identity, but also, for terrorists, 'legitimation' for the political act of terrorism.

Contrary to some immediate reactions to the unaccustomed realisation of 'globalised' terrorism in 2001, the conflict shouldn't, then, be viewed so much through the prism of 'religious war' between e.g. Islam and Judeo-Christianity, as through the ideological lens of political actors invoking religion to legitimate their cause. What, then, are these grievances used to 'legitimate' radical acts of violence in the name of religion, and what conditions 'justify' interpretations of Western culture as in turns oppressive and trivialising? One way to suggest why the West is characterised as lacking ethical foundations, and consequently why religion is held forth as the response, is the often sheer impudence of Western cultural and economic power. According to Habermas,

[t]he furious fundamentalist recourse to a set of beliefs, from which modernity has elicited neither any self-reflexive learning process nor any differentiation between religion, secular knowledge, and politics, gains a certain plausibility from the fact that it feeds on a substance that

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[81] See Scruton 2003.

apparently disappeared from the West. A materialist West encounters other cultures … only through the provocative and trivialising irresistibility of a levelling consumerist culture… the West presents itself in a form deprived of any normative kernel as long as its concern for human rights only concerns the attempt at opening new free markets… (Borradori 2002, p.33)

The immediate encounter with Western power is, by this account, experienced as the manifestation of a culture grounding itself in materialism. By virtue of its technological mastery and economic demands resulting in the objective determination of increasingly global spatio-temporal experience, Western rationality is perceived to sublate all culture and experience it encounters into this materialism. The regression to religion as a 'pre-modern' form of rationality on the broader global level, on this reading, is an effect both of the perception of Western rationality as normatively lacking ethical foundations of its own, and the attempt to resist sublation of traditional identity into a predatory consumerist culture.

This also suggests while political terrorism is correctly identified with Islam, there is also non-identity between the 'return to religion' as a matter of seeking conceptual resources for a normative conception of experience not sublated into materialism, and the use of Islam - or any other belief - to 'legitimate' political terrorism. The extremist conception of Islam, beyond identifying itself with reference to an 'external' object – a variation on the concept of 'God' (which, paradoxically, cannot be anything other than a subjective concept), is an ideological resource for a mode of action – terrorism – tailored to political ends. It is therefore *also* a subject-centred form of reasoning reducing experience of the material world to its own dominant conceptualisation of it. Concurrently, terrorism is a political means to 'ground' the ideological aspect of *identity* simultaneously in radical Islam and in the globalisation of social experience - irrespective of justifications it gives itself about Western 'imperialism'.

Conversely, Habermas' characterisation of a modernity which 'has elicited [no] self-reflexive learning process' from the 'furious fundamentalist recourse to a set of beliefs' in the wake of its global dominance can be reflected in the Western *response* to terrorism. Beyond the warranted reaction of outrage at attacks aimed squarely at the Western identity itself – the initial targets being the symbolic seats of political, financial and military power in the U.S. and the broader Western world, prior to subsequent attacks elsewhere – the immediate reaction was instantaneous reaffirmation of the Western identity. Beyond justified prerogatives of governments to protect their citizens,

however, this reaffirmation also amounted *conceptually* to the political perpetuation of the hegemony of its 'universalising' forms of rationality, in terms of protection and expansion of economic interests globally. This reaffirmation of identity also included the attempted revalidation of the ideological concept of *freedom* central to the Western identity, in the identification of freedom with the universalising, globalising drive of its own instrumental modes of rationality, as became evident in intonations of Western notions of democracy and freedom for subsequent occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, as Greenway suggests, '[n]eoconservative theorists, who knew nothing about Iraq, believed the transformational power of democracy could change the Middle East – make Arabs more like Americans. But what happened was Iraq became more like the Middle East…' The occupation of Iraq, e.g., beyond the immediately political identification of Hussein's Iraq with decidedly non-identical elements of Al-Qaeda and the broader *GWOT*, was partially predicated on identification of the non-identical concept of an Iraqi nation with the identity of the broader constellation of the Western concept of universalising democratic freedom. This particular 'identity of identity and non-identity' turned out to be a costly judgement not only creating demonstrable fissures in the conceptual continuity of the Western identity itself – the radicalisation and polarisation of public discourse on all sides, or the crisis of democratic legitimation in the West more broadly in the context of American unilateralism – but also reinforcing the *Iraqi* struggle to identify *itself* as *non-identical* to the Western identity by reaffirming tribal identities, as the ensuing 2005-2007 Sunni-Shi'a civil war demonstrated.

More significantly, the identitarian nature of the immediate and, politically speaking, probably inevitable response of the *GWOT* was self-contradictory to the extent that beyond revalidating the Western identity, it *also* concretised and 'validated' the conceptual framework for conflict *and* the antagonism against itself. The avowal of the *GWOT recognises* terrorism on its own terms, sublating the radicalised experience of a non-identical 'other' into the Western form of universalising rationality and 'legitimating' it, to the extent that the Western identity now positively acknowledged terror as a 'side-effect' of its own globalising forms of socio-economic rationality. The lack of a reflexive rationality in the establishment of this ideological constellation was subsequently underlined, not only in the immediate sense by a general disavowal of responsibility or historical reflection by Western governments, but also by the longer term prosecution of

the 'war', which, while successfully disposing of *agents* of terror, lags in addressing the success of its ideological appeal.

Habermas, for example, suggests affirmation of the *GWOT* was 'a serious mistake, both normatively and pragmatically. Normatively, [President Bush was] elevating these criminals to the status of war enemies, and pragmatically, one cannot lead a war against a "network" if the term "war" is to retain any definite meaning' (Borradori 2002, p.34). This suggests terrorists, specifically those like Al-Qaeda operating beyond the realm of jurisdictional or internationally binding law, were validated *within* Western and international legal frameworks by their elevation to the status of 'war enemies', entitling them - in theory - to legal representation and protections that are the right of soldiers in a military court of law (as one element of the legal self-legitimation of the Western identity). This led, e.g., to contradictions in practical terms in determining the legal status and fate of detainees apprehended in subsequent theatres, resulting in the creation of extra-legal military tribunals for the prosecution of terrorists and the institution of the practice of extraordinary rendition to interrogate terrorists beyond legal protections afforded them by domestic laws.

Additionally, the abrogation of civil liberties, e.g., in legislation of the 'Patriot Act' in the U.S. which authorised, or loosened restrictions on, wiretapping, the issue of search warrants without court orders and the withholding of basic rights under the U.S. constitution, were politically and legally justified on the pretext of fighting terrorism and the necessary price to pay, paradoxically, for preservation of the Western identity and its concept of freedom. The conflation of the *GWOT* with broader ideological interests threw into dispute definitions by which the war itself was waged, including normative and legal conceptions by which the prosecution of war could be legitimated. It may be suggested, therefore, that an even more serious consequence of the September 11 attacks, beyond aggregate loss of life, was the arguably successful assault on democratic institutions *themselves*, and therefore on the very Western identity, brought about paradoxically in part by the Western effort to *preserve* this identity. Just as unfortunately, these arguably 'successful' consequences of the logic of terrorism doubtless reinforced its legitimacy in the eyes of its perpetrators, or of those who would emulate them.

This can by necessity only be a generalised outline of the initial contours of the *GWOT*. The conflict between respective conceptions of identity at its kernel, and

competing but concurrently absolutizing forms of reasoning espoused by its factions, amounts to a socio-historical constellation of experience 'uniting' the Western identity with one form of its non-identity in a destructive form of globalising normativity which, it might be suggested, is anything but rational. The need for a 'negative' dialectical turn from this kind of normativity seems clear. Additionally, one element underlying experience through the prism of globalisation may be identified as increasingly anxious attempts to 'ground' identity itself under increasingly uncertain 'postmodern' conditions. Desired regressions to 'absolute' mythical origins implicit in the drive to identification is not strictly an Islamic phenomenon, however, and in the remainder of this model I investigate corresponding imperatives in postmodern culture and the Western identity. We will see how attempts to 'ground' identity in ideological ways to 'guarantee' subjectivity continue permeating rationalising structures at the individual and social levels, and I will show how performative contradictions arising thereof also, *pace* Adorno, point towards forms of non-identity that cannot be concretised within such efforts. In turning to the immanent critique of the Western identity, then, I ask what freedom, rationality and self-determination amount to within some recognisable forms of contemporary experience.

7.3 The Immanent Critique: The Postmodern Identity

Habermas' characterisation of the 'provocative and trivialising irresistibility of a levelling consumerist culture' presenting the West as 'deprived of any normative kernel' elsewhere in the world demands investigation of certain social conditions immanent to Western society. How e.g. do emerging social norms with relation to technology correspond with democratic standards of freedom and self-determination? To explore these questions dialectically I deploy two excursuses: The first highlights experience of the notion of privacy in postmodern society and the objective social determination of some norms relevant to it, and the second looks at some critical aspects of the incorporation of technology into behaviour, and what it may suggest for notions of *self-determination*. Some 'non-conceptual' tensions between these objective and subjective levels of two aspects of contemporary social experience suggested at the end point towards resources for conceptualising this experience in political terms.

This thesis has examined Western society's intensive integration under capitalist imperatives of technocratic rationalisation. It has also already explored how – in broader

terms of the struggle for alternative socio-political ideologies characterising the 20th century, and the relative contemporary lack thereof – political consensus exists less as a matter of consensus-seeking than from a position of consensus already reached, as pertaining to the predominance of liberal economics, and freedom as expressed through the commodity market. To recap these arguments: social relations, class distinctions and behavioural norms appear to be objectively determined predominantly according to consensus grounded in imperatives of finance, consumerism and technology, and of technological and financial access in turn. Political differences are often restricted to disagreement over the social content of capitalism, while the political right to self-determination characterising the struggles of Modernity may, in post-industrial society, to some degree have been overshadowed by the right to choose between competing products and 'life-style' choices. Many of these conform to integration of the collective social whole on determining premises of consumerism and financial freedom as conceptual standard-bearers for the idea of freedom itself.

No such generalisations should obscure the multitude of historically conflicting models for capitalist practices, and the styles practiced in countries throughout the West are by no means homogeneous in strictly economic terms. In light of national differences in economic theory and practice, therefore, it is impossible to speak of capitalism as a single, monolithic 'whole'. One characterisation of the role of capital in post-industrial society that does seem irrefutable, nevertheless, is, as Žižek suggests, that 'the fate of whole strata of the population and sometimes of whole countries can be decided by the "solipsistic" speculative dance of capital, which pursues its goal of profitability in blessed indifference to how its movement will affect social reality' (Žižek 2008, p.11). As opposed to being determined by an 'organised' form of capitalism with politically defined socio-economic objectives (irrespective of how such models hold sway in e.g. Scandinavia), a large share of social experience globally is determined by random and contradictory investment of capital into whatever is perceived to have the highest immediate rate of profitability, with national and local politics often compelled to follow suit.[82]

Two dominant elements combine, therefore, in the present determination of social experience: the pursuit of profitability ignoring its effects on social reality, and its combination with a totalising, technocratic form of rationality, evidenced by its presence

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[82] See Hutton 2002.

in simplest daily necessities or interaction. The latter may also prioritise its pragmatic and efficient adoption over socially or individually detrimental elements of its experience (most immediately the loss of privacy, as suggested below), even as it consequently corrects perceived transgressions in normative fashion (not least to preserve profit margins) (consider, e.g. struggles between multinationals like Google and the European Union, with the latter's efforts to take regulatory steps to safeguard data-protection).

This suggests, then, a frame for how society is 'organised': Vertically, by the haphazard and random investment of capital, while simultaneously determined horizontally by its unceasing integration with a technocratic form of rationality tolerating few challenges to its social power. It is in the 'positive' dialectical resolution between capital and technocratic rationality determining contemporary historical experience that we may first reconsider the notion of the 'End of History': It is obviously not that 'history' has come to a positive 'resolution', but rather that a form of historical determinism is present in the way social experience is indomitably determined by capital and technocratic rationality, even as, paradoxically, social reality becomes increasingly uncertain because of it. This frame also suggests while many elements of contemporary experience share degrees of similarity with those targeted by Adorno's cultural critiques, there has also been a marked change in the organisational structure of society between socio-historical constellations.

First, as Bauman suggests, we should note the shift from a 'society of producers' to a 'society of consumers', where consumerism is an integrated aspect of social and cultural production, and where distinctions between public and private are increasingly blurred. The 'society of producers' typifying Modernity and the constellation of historical experience in the latter part of Adorno's career was characterised by the incursion of the public sphere of production into the private lives of individuals, in the sense that production in the public sphere was destined to shape consumption in the 'private' setting of individuals' lives, and thus, partially, their identities as private citizens. Individuals laboured in a public realm of industrial production, with their activity as consumers a matter of how they chose to manage their private lives, where some normative demarcation still existed between conceptions of the public sphere of production, and private consumerist activities.

By contrast, post-industrial consumer society can be conceived of as being determined equally in the democratic sense by individual needs and desires, as by quasi-oligarchical, entrenched private interests supplying the utilities, gadgets and applications dominating the marketplace and its behaviour in the first place, and who use their share of market power to determine financial and social value. Additionally, consumerism has become a fully integrated aspect of the *public* role of individuals, in the sense not only of 'life-style' choices marketed by individuals themselves for a share of market or cultural value, but also because of the hypostatisation, online and elsewhere, of values, norms and beliefs held by them, which becomes an essential part of the cultural production and marketability of their own *identities*, both professionally and privately (and thus, in one sense, reflects a reification of identity itself).

It may therefore be suggested that individuals find themselves in supporting roles for the integration of the market with all aspects of human experience, where *private life itself* has become one of the most valuable and scarce commodities. Consider, e.g., the trade-off between privacy and access online – how, on the most basic level, access to the most popular interactive applications (Google, Facebook, etc.) often requires consent, tacit or otherwise, from users that the platform in question is entitled to compile information – sometimes including information about the user's online history *not* limited to the platform itself - ostensibly to deliver more targeted advertisements and 'facilitate' the user's life, but over which users effectively relinquish their intellectual property control.[83]

The degree to which information about individuals is gathered online and stored by third parties, and the extent to which individuals consent, and contribute, to this as a social norm in its own right, suggests a fundamental shift in attitudes over traditional values like privacy, not least considering the amount of information individuals themselves volunteer about their private lines online. The paradox between the outrage over revelations of surveillance by the NSA ostensibly in the fight against terror, and the relatively muted response to essentially similar activities by private companies, emphasises the extent to which exchanging privacy for access has become a social norm.

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[83] Top tech corporations e.g. Microsoft, Google, Facebook, etc. have gradually been compelled to provide increasing privacy features to applications and assure confidentiality vis-à-vis unsolicited third parties, though these often remain intransparent and largely inaccessible, while these corporations continually develop new ways of harvesting information unbeknownst to users.

Excursus 1: The Object: Privacy and the Postmodern: A "Public" Determination of Private Experience

The social explosion in data harvesting pertaining to everything - and everyone - also suggests it is not only that private life is becoming illusory (or at least, an increasingly valuable commodity, considering its increasing scarcity), but also that the ability of both individuals and governments to maintain confidentiality is being compromised. Combined, these developments incontrovertibly change society and social norms, without it being understood exactly what this will result in. *Pace* Adorno, it also suggests the pursuit of apparently spontaneous activities and interests can also collectively result in oppressive forms of social conformity, reflected in this instance in a freely adopted normativity (the exchange of privacy for freedoms afforded by technology) culminating in potential forms of social oppression directed at the individual (the threat against confidentiality and the public appropriation of the individual's private thoughts). How, in this instance, does the public sphere determine private experience?

First, in the private sphere: revelations concerning the systematic breadth and depth of data collection pertaining to citizens worldwide by, among others, U.S. intelligence agencies are arguably surprising only to the degree that it has been possible to ignore the extent to which 'big data' is not only collected in commercial contexts. Almost everything individuals do leaves electronic traces, which are collected and analysed so as to create evermore perfected profiles – and therefore also evermore precise 'identities' - of who they 'are'. Every time a mobile phone, credit card, GPS or computer is used, it is registered, not just as an inbuilt function of technology itself, but because information about *who* individuals are and *what* they do potentially creates revenue. It may therefore just as easily be sold, to third parties wishing to target advertising, and to others wishing to know personal details about individuals – including governments.

Second, in light of the explosion of social networks, individuals themselves supply a broad range of access to information about themselves online, which, realistically, is accessible to anyone wishing to obtain it. The snapshot of an intimate moment is only a click away from ownership by the public sphere, and where individuals are constantly equipped with recording devices registering the smallest or most consequential experiences, the 'willingness' to share these is in some measure already objectively determined, both by pressure stemming from communicative norms to do so, and by how

individuals relinquish control the moment something is shared, however innocuously, with another individual. Recordings of individual moments can be spread around the world and interpreted in contexts never dreamt of the moment recordings were made. In this light, it appears even more consequential that governments also compete with private enterprise to develop methods to further systematise, analyse and refine the collection of vast reams of information pertaining to individuals' innermost thoughts and doings.

Third, knowledge collected by information-services of nation-states can no longer be kept confidential to nation-states *themselves*. It is not solely social media, privately owned service providers or governments collecting information that have access to it: everything gathered simultaneously becomes accessible to those who understand how to hack into aforementioned entities and spread data they find. Any information is, essentially, a click away from its availability to someone else, the only real limitation being the degree to which accessible information can be absorbed. The world's most powerful governments, for example, experience a growing inability to keep their own secrets: revelations by WikiLeaks and others of large reams of highly sensitive data is seemingly only the beginning of a tsunami of spectacular, sensationalised leaks. The observation that the private sphere simply no longer 'exists' in the way individuals traditionally understood it is accompanied by the notion that confidentiality as a norm is potentially also disappearing, whatever existence it still has predicated on the (ever-diminishing) limitations of technology.

Irrespective, then, of the motives of saboteurs and political dispositions from which one considers unauthorised publicists, the fundamental normative question for democracies is whether there should simply be information the public has no business knowing about, whether at the highest diplomatic levels, or by average people concerning other average people. While the undermining of the ability of governments to function by traditional means may be applauded in some quarters, most people presumably still value their information kept confidential by public institutions, or value the confidentiality of the ballot box, or, for that matter, confidentiality of correspondence and the possibility of private communication. The guarantee of a free press as an institutional pillar of democracy, for example, depends on its duty to protect its sources, something undermined when communications are wiretapped or hacked into, and lives are put at risk.

These examples suggest ways in which democratic norms are upended by technocratic forms of rationality, and of where the democratic process itself struggles to catch up to how its 'normativity' is in fact objectively determined. We thereby have some concrete contemporary examples of *why* Adorno prioritises the 'non-identical' in social experience to its objective ideological determination, on at least three levels in this example of privacy in our specific socio-historical constellation:

First, on the immediate level, reduction of someone's experience to the identity attributed to them from information about them harvested online can clearly result in a state of deep subjective (- and social) un-freedom, particularly considering how someone's experience or reflection is far more expansive and contradictory, if unexpressed in equally immediately powerful terms, than pristine profiles that can be created from online behaviour. The loss of freedom in this instance can clearly be highlighted by how people can lose jobs, livelihoods or their self-determination from something as simple as decontextualized snippets of information they may not even have posted themselves.[84]

Second, the myriad ways in which social experience is non-identical to technocratic designations of freedom and self-determination in their ideological rationale of access, consumer and financial possibility, etc., demonstrates political contradictions immanent to democracies formally devoted to the former, but lacking political answers to new and compounding social problems emerging from this objective determination of experience, including confronting new meanings and deficits of the notion of democracy itself within existing institutional structures of government and public life (this much should be evident in governments' own lack of control over information they gather).

Third, the 'non-conceptuality' of this emerging social state of affairs – the experiences it both objectively engenders and the gamut of subjective effects and responses remaining un-conceptualised by, or non-identical to, the distinct pragmatic forms both 'neutral' technocratic rationality grounded in successful science and the more targeted rage for financial exploitation or political or other control *misses* – is a necessary *political* resource, if indeed democracy itself is not to become, as Fukuyama feared, devalued as a function of its own normative success.

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[84] See e.g. Love 2011.

Interlude: Historical Consciousness and A Crisis of Experience?

The passage from the 'society of producers' to the 'society of consumers' has also been marked, then, by a shift from the gradual integration of public and private spheres of life and dialectics between them in the former, to a conception of social experience subtended by a premise of public unification between them. This 'unification' of social experience, however, is also to a large extent objectively determined by competition between the relative strengths of private interests, which in turn come to determine public norms to various degrees. Bauman characterises this socio-historical transformation as

[r]ather than being a step towards the ultimate emancipation of the individual from multiple external coercions, that passage may be shown to be the conquest, annexation and colonisation of life by the commodity market – the most profound (even though repressed and concealed) meaning of that conquest and colonisation being the elevation of the written and unwritten laws of the market to the rank of life-precepts; the kind of precepts that can be ignored only at the rule-breaker's peril, tending to be punished by their exclusion (Bauman 2007 p.62).

Bauman suggests that as the marketplace itself becomes the arbitrator of social normativity, the 'elevation of the written and unwritten laws of the market to the rank of life-precepts' ensures an ineluctable identity between how the market determines values, needs and interests, and the possibilities of self-determining subjectivity - to the degree that self-determination is effectively equated with freedoms afforded by the marketplace. Equally significantly, such a perspective of the identification of autonomy, self-determination and rationality predominantly with market imperatives suggests how Adorno's demand for non-reified relations between individuals takes on a contemporary dimension:

The near-'total' determination of social experience by the free market and the relative paucity of political representation of concerns not subsumable to market interests or mechanisms suggest one context in which the 'negativity' of Adorno's dialectical reflection remains essential. If Adorno was concerned with what Jay calls a 'crisis of experience' in the historical constellation of the industrial era (keeping in mind, as Jay also underlines, that Adorno is deeply critical of attempts to 're-enchant' the world in ways that 'seek to recover an alleged ur-experience... somehow deeper than the mediations of

culture and society' [Jay 2004, p.131] - a stance Adorno famously attributes to Heidegger in the *Jargon of Authenticity*), then the question of whether

[t]here is, in short, an implied sense of loss of something that once existed and has been seriously damaged, if not entirely destroyed, in the present. Variously attributed to the traumas of world war, modern technologies of information, and the "atemporal, technified process of the production of material goods"… the decay of something called experience is for Adorno an index of the general crisis of modern life" (ibid).

remains equally central to contemporary experience. What this 'loss' of experience actually amounts, to, though, must relate to ways of experiencing the world eschewing its domination by rationalities by which modern wars are waged, how information technologies mediate knowledge, or the determination of experience by its relation to an overabundance of material goods.

There are sufficient parallels in the contemporary historical constellation with Adorno's critical perspectives over 50 years ago to suggest concerns with the 'crisis of experience' continue into the post-industrial era, where in some cases similarities are pronounced by the even more extreme degree to which some of these forms of instrumental rationality Adorno criticised determine experience, firstly, as we have seen, on the immediate basis upon which the line between private and public life has been eviscerated. Additionally, experience of the present historical constellation itself points both to what needs to be expressed politically with relation to it, and to what its experience both gains and misses in relation to other historical configurations.

Adorno suggests one notion of experience in his 1959 essay 'Theory of Pseudo-Culture' as 'the continuity of consciousness in which everything not present survives, in which practice and association establish tradition in the individual' (Adorno 1993, p.33).[85] By tradition established by 'practice and association' he means not only manifold kinds of *Bildung* whose experience may be threatened by the objective social overemphasis on 'production' (or in our sense, the dominant emphasis on technology in culture and education), or the ways this form of cultural production arrogates infinitely variegated kinds of experience to its own dominant form of rationality. Adorno also means resources

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[85] See Jay 2004, p.130.

of inter-subjective experience – practice and association resulting in establishing 'tradition' – that may offer means for responding in self-determining ways to the objective determination of culture. This tradition, then, a matter of a 'continuity of consciousness in which not everything present survives', also refers to *historical consciousness* as what points towards non-identity between how the present socio-historical constellation is immediately given, and all the kinds of experience its forms fail to account for.

Historical consciousness and inter-subjective experience are thus two sides of the mediation of any contemporary experience, such that it 'survives' the objective determination of consciousness in the present, without being resolved in any ideological sense on the subjective side. If the 'continuity of consciousness' of historical experience cannot be reduced to the dominant rationality determining the immediate present, however, then the subjectivity upon which that continuity depends *also* depends on how historical experience remains contradictory *within* both any given constellation and *between* them, or e.g. between past, present and future. On the other side, '[e]xperience,' says Jay, '...comes only with an encounter with otherness in which the self no longer remains the same. Adorno would add that to be undamaged, experience must treat the other in a non-dominating, non-subsumptive, non-homogenising manner' (Jay 2004, pp.140-141). The 'crisis' of experience, then, can be understood to be how historical experience is 'lost' when i) the past is reduced to dominant ways in which the present is understood, ii) the experience of individuals is homogenised by the objective determination of experience of the present, and iii) experience loses objective points of reference by identifying differentiated historical developments, or history *in toto* itself, according to dominating 'meta'-narratives of the present.

Historical consciousness is not only a matter of preserving the past for the present, moreover; it is also a matter of being able to understand the present in terms of its relation to the past. Adorno suggests in 'The Meaning of Working through the Past' (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*) that '[t]he past will have been worked through only when the causes of what happened then have been eliminated. Only because the causes continue to exist does the captivating spell of the past remain to this day unbroken' (Adorno 1998, p.103). The concrete historical context he refers to is the post-WWII reconstruction of Germany which, in the attempt to democratise as hastily as possible and overcome the stigma of fascism, did so in part by retaining some of the instrumental forms of rationality

that had subtended the latter (e.g. capitalist-industrialised modes of production, the continuation of propaganda dissemination techniques in popular culture, etc.), and in some cases rehabilitating people who had been complicit with the previous regime.

What Adorno refers to here is, however, not only an appeal to rectify past errors, e.g. in social terms of the discrimination that causes humanitarian calamities (colonialism, the Holocaust, genocide in Rwanda, etc.). At face value, identifying such phenomena in terms of an ideological 'root cause' to be eliminated from human behaviour would appear hopelessly idealistic, yet imperative to pursue in terms of organising society such that potential for similar events is minimised. It is also an appeal to understanding how causal forms of reasoning, where objectively true as demonstrated by their normative success, but therefore often considered 'irreproachable' and beyond the mediation of culture and society, also depend for their truth on their *critical* mediation. And because they do, they cannot only be considered in terms of success in explaining positive socio-cultural developments, but must also be considered in terms of their contribution to socio-historical normative *failures*. As such, the past can *never* be worked through 'entirely' without becoming an ideological prioritisation of one interpretative apparatus over the other, but simultaneously, the determination of a present sublating all historical experience into its own 'normative' successes potentially obscures sources of suffering in the past - therefore also enabling causes of suffering in the present.

Conversely, it is also not simply a matter of looking to history for resources to, e.g., correct perceived injustices of the present, because mediation of the past by the present involves *how* specific experience of the present subsumes understandings of history to its own dominant forms of reasoning, by necessity missing elements of specific experiences of the past. As Thomson suggests, [b]ecause our idea of history is deeply bound to that of culture (we think of cultures as having histories; we understand history in terms of the progression and development of culture; our idea of what 'objective' history is must be influenced by the cultural context of our thought), we cannot simply look for a historical remedy to this situation…' (Thomson 2006, p.75). A 'continuity of consciousness', then, is also a matter, not only of 'remembering' history, but of continuing mediation of the experience constituting it that is not 'resolved' in dominant identification of it by cultures of the present (or, for that matter, that cultures of the present are conceptualised via some 'purified', ideological ideal of a specific narrative of the past).

Rather, the non-identity between how the past is understood in cultures of the present and how understanding of the present to some extent depends on repressing experiences of the past points towards the 'continuity of consciousness' of what is *missed* by dominant historical interpretations. The ways such interpretations 'lose' experience, then, contributes to the 'crisis of experience' in modernity.

Adorno is acutely aware, however, of difficulties involved in maintaining a 'continuity of consciousness' in the immediate sense of experiencing the modern world. He proceeds to suggest in the 'Theory of Pseudo-Culture' how the continuity of consciousness is 'replaced by the selective, disconnected, interchangeable and ephemeral state of being informed which, as one can already observe, will promptly be cancelled by other information' (Adorno 1993, p.33). This statement is significant: cascading volumes of random pieces of information given to individuals at the immediate level are likely to interrupt continuing mediation of a specific aspect of experience, or encourage acceptance of a 'given', dominant ideological form of its conceptual understanding. It is especially important with regards to the specific constellation of the Internet and mass media, where the most apparent continuity is the act of exchanging information itself.

Here, one aspect of information exchange can clearly be considered in the same context as commodity exchange, where we saw above how identity and personal experience are 'commodified' online. But the freedom and openness of information more generally can also be considered in the context of its ideological appeal to the individual, and individuals' conformity to information in terms of their status as consumers, which in turn is determined by socio-economic status, education, and so forth. One central point Adorno makes is that information becomes judged relative predominantly to its perceived relevance to the immediate present, obscuring historical consciousness of how the information itself has, first, been 'objectively' determined, and second, *how* it is being mediated by the *subject* – including how information is 'cancelled out' in consciousness by other information, and forgotten. This resonates in the contemporary immanent experience of modern technology, where information becomes 'fragmented' in the sense that its sheer volume and exchange challenges the ability to determine its continuity in reflection. In the second excursus, we now consider this aspect of the immanent experience of information exchange as the subjective component of this negative

dialectical outline, which, taken together with its objectively determined components above, may suggest one way to frame a 'crisis of experience' in Postmodern society.

Excursus 2: Free Information Exists Because What It Promises Does Not? The Fragmentation of Experience

How can Adorno's claim that information exchange 'cancels out' other information, and therefore potentially continuity of consciousness of a subject matter, itself be mediated in the present social constellation of contemporary media and political culture? Such a claim, as Adorno would point out, is itself impossible to totalise and requires, among others, empirical studies of interrelations between social and individual norms for processing, retaining and recalling information, and, e.g. of degrees to which thought processes may be influenced by immediacy and exchange on the Internet, or indeed by an audio-visual culture so dominant that social experience has virtually become unthinkable without it.

The explosion of the 'virtual' sphere of experience over the last 20 years, however – an unprecedented revolution in social circumstances within a short period of time in relative historical terms, and its virtually overnight appropriation and determination of social experience, means such research is in its infancy. It is also likely to remain inconclusive as experience of social reality, technological developments and scientific research all evolve. Considering the velocity of information exchange, however, a central socio-political question relates to the truth of the relationship of individuals to social reality in this context. Information exchange in postmodernity, even within familiar contours of work, interests or the inclination to critically mediate information, is one historical constellation in which to frame the question of what this incorporation of technology into behaviour to unprecedented levels suggests for notions of self-determination.

We may recall Adorno and Horkheimer's contention in *DoE* that "all reification is forgetting". By this they suggest experience becomes objectified when it is forgotten. This means while experience is conceptualised any number of ways, when individuals 'forget' (or repress, or otherwise ignore) its contradictory contents, the (necessarily) imperfect ways these have been conceptualised become concretised into ideological perspectives.

This objectification is likely, in turn, to be concurrent with dominant social norms of understanding, rather than faithful to experiences themselves, such that 'continuity of consciousness' of contradictory elements comprising these experiences is broken. There are two senses in which we may consider this idea in our postmodern constellation of information exchange:

First, on the immediate level, information pertaining to actual experience is objectified in the sense that much of it becomes eternally universally available on the Internet, which, on one hand, has the pragmatic function of a research tool making information available for reference at any future (historical) point in time. Conversely, this very eternal availability of information online suggests how individuals may not internalise or consciously mediate information available to them, in the knowledge they can always return to it later (which, when it comes to things like news analyses, can become overwhelming with the avalanche of hourly material). On the surface, this may seem no different than the 'opportunity cost' involved in dividing one's time between different tasks.

The constant flow of information by itself, however, necessarily entails there is an opportunity cost to the resources expended by consciousness – equally suggesting much of the information consumed may also promptly be forgotten, as new demands on attention spans are made. In this sense, it can be speculated how continuity of consciousness of a subject matter beyond the objective reification of its experience is further undermined by the inability of memory to retain all it has consciously registered, particularly due to constant new demands made on it by accelerating information flows, and considering the increasingly scarce resource of time. Conversely, it can also be suggested that the proliferation of information objectifies memory *itself*, in the sense that *technology* increasingly makes the retrieval of information easier online. Does this external 'hard drive' of memory, in this case, substantially affect how individuals mediate information?

Second, there is the question of how ideological variations of information relating to individual or collective experience can 'crowd out' other interpretations, which, e.g., often occurs at crossroads between newsgathering and the interests of competing news organisations. The immediacy and speed of information exchange in this sense encourages

adoption of dominant ideological views of social experience, which in turn may encourage their status as simply given objective truth. Additionally, the ways social media and other services (e.g. Facebook, Google) use algorithms to promote or crowd out information based on user profiles compiled from arbitrary information gathering can ensure individuals are most often exposed to recurring types of information, or what they are already ideologically inclined to subscribe to, thus creating a 'filter bubble' in which experience of material is constrained.[86] It can be suggested then, *pace* Adorno, how critical reflection may be imperilled by some of the already inherently normative mechanisms of the information society.

There are ways, therefore, that 'freedom of information' does not necessarily entail the freedom or self-determination of the subject, if individuals are both subject to necessary constraints and in some ways precluded from experiencing or reflecting upon subject matter by systemic mechanisms or information flows prioritising some interpretations over others, and thus do not partake in their own historical mediation of it. This also suggests elements of the *present* historical consciousness of a subject matter itself are potentially undermined, before they are mediated in any significant sense. Additionally, a subject matter or its experiential content is at risk of eventually becoming inaccessible to social experience *in toto*, and to individual mediation in particular, if it is crowded out of the information exchange in dominant mediums individuals are exposed to.

In some ways, nevertheless, the modern context of 24-hour instantaneous connectivity and media may seem to undermine Adornian notions of a crisis of experience. Considering how much of this activity relies on spontaneous choices between individuals, outlets, broadcasters or providers, and how the Internet is a forum, not just for dissemination of information, but also for free and creative expression, there are seemingly few constraints on, e.g. expression of the dissatisfactions of experience, opinions, or perceptions of experiences gone unnoticed, or indeed anything else anyone may feel (consider i.e. comments sections of online newspapers, where expression reigns freely – but also where individuals often forego traditional constraints of in-person communication and express repressed antagonisms or other negative and even violent emotions, because of the relative anonymity afforded by 'usernames').

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[86] See Pariser 2011

If, however, freedom of information is in many ways judged predominantly on the basis of its immediate use to the present, meaning, its exchange happens at such velocity that it encourages acceptance of a conceptual concretion of a subject matter in its immediately given form, and therefore in some ways discourages further mediation, then information itself and the ways it is comprehended can easily become ideological. On the subjective side, individuals often have use of information to the degree that it conforms to immediate reflections, and appropriate information - as object – accordingly (e.g., reduce it to their own 'constitutive' subjectivity), while reifying it into both an 'objective' identification, and their own identities. Combined, this can have the effect of increasing the irrelevance, or 'disposability', of both the object of knowledge (the subject matter information pertains to), *and* its mediation, e.g. the *subject*. From an Adornian perspective, the objective determination of the information-as-object as 'commodity form', as opposed to its mediation, prioritises the freedom of information over the self-determination of the subject, as *ideology*.

In turn, information itself may become de-contextualised from even its immediate context, 'fragmented', as it were, into a 'floating signifier', a term defined by Levi-Strauss as 'represent[ing] an undetermined quantity of signification, in itself void of meaning and thus apt to receive any meaning' (Levi-Strauss 1987, pp.63-64). It follows individuals become 'empowered' by its fragmentation to ascribe *any* meaning they want to information, without necessarily referencing the objective historical context either of available information, or of themselves *beyond* the immediately given, subjective context of exposure to the medium. As Eriksen suggests,

Instead of ordering knowledge in tidy rows, information society offers cascades of de-contextualized signs more or less randomly connected to each other… Put differently: when growing amounts of information are distributed at growing speed, it becomes increasingly difficult to create narratives, orders, developmental sequences. The fragments threaten to become hegemonic. This has consequences for the ways we relate to knowledge, work and lifestyle in a wide sense (Eriksen 2001, pp. 109, 113)[87]

As suggested in the Introduction, proponents of the supposed 'de-hegemonization' afforded by postmodern social conditions celebrate the end of the function of the narrative in terms of its historical contextualisation. This is taken to be liberation from

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[87] Quoted in Bauman 2007, p.46.

what they consider to be the repressive unification of subjectivity under dominant Enlightenment narratives supposedly de-emphasising individual experience. What, then, as Eriksen suggests, of the 'fragments [that] threaten to become hegemonic' themselves', and what does this mean for experience?

First, that it becomes 'increasingly difficult to create narratives, orders, developmental sequences', also suggests contradictions between the types of causality making the science subtending technology possible in the first place, and its social experience, in terms of how it becomes increasingly difficult to establish continuity between random pieces of information that may all relate to one subject matter in different ways. These arguably become increasingly difficult to locate and contextualise in any causal, 'historical' sense in terms of the immediate volume of competing narratives of a given idea, and the sheer difficulty of ordering information and its often random exposure, even on a singular topic of personal interest.

That this, following Eriksen, has 'consequences for the ways we relate to knowledge, work and lifestyle in a wide sense' may be underlined by additional contradictions between random decontextualized information and, recalling Kant, how consciousness orders experience causally in its 'unity of apperception' (in terms of memory, succession of events, etc.) to make *subjective* sense of it. The global, 24-hour reach of free information, while in one sense objectively reflecting spontaneous human productivity which does not conform to individual timelines or perceptions determined by local social realities, is simultaneously an objective determination of experience that can conflict with the self-preserving necessity of imposing causal ordering on the information flow. On one hand, there is objective meaning to information which has nothing to do with the subjectivity mediating it. On the other, how else does subjectivity mediate information that has no or little relation to immediate local experience? One way, *pace* Adorno, is prioritising the objectivity in information itself and letting it guide the subject's experience of it. The other, however, is the temptation to reduce it to the subject's own causal ordering (e.g. ideologically) in ways not reflecting objective truths of the information itself, but in which the subject ascribes the meaning it *wants* to it.

Second, assuming fragmentation allows individuals to ascribe any meaning they want to information, it suggests how the object the fragment relates to is sublated in

consciousness *in toto* in its *fragmented* form, steering experience *away* from the object of knowledge and back towards both the identity of the subject *and* the fragmented identity ascribed to the object. Lacking reference to the broader objective socio-historical context in the social determination of what fragments become 'valid' suggests how fragments themselves become hegemonic, considering the prioritisation of fragments over others by virtue primarily of the consensus of the largest group of individuals at any one given time (we may consider, e.g. how the notion of 'consensus' in the context of market consumerism is inextricably related to the determination and attribution of market value by private interests, the *perception* of which is subsequently reinforced in its promotion by technology).

In turn, this fragmentary reduction of the object to consciousness reinforces both ideological understandings of the object, and the ideological identity of the subject. This may be observed in online political discourse where, in addition to the combative nature of targeted political attacks and their frequent reduction of opponents to ideological caricature, the additional technological speed with which misinformation or wilfully fabricated myth based on fragmentary information is disseminated contributes to the adoption of myths to suit ideological predispositions. Experienced across the political spectrum, a simple example of this was concretion of the social myth on the Internet that U.S. President Obama is a Muslim.[88] That particular myth was promoted as a fragmentary piece of information hypostatised from the politician's background, compounded by his ethnic heritage, and promoted ceaselessly online to validate ideological opposition to his policies, to the point where the myth became accepted as truth for many right-of-centre-right Americans.

Additionally, where the myth, and so many others like it, originated as politically motivated insinuation on the Internet, that did not prevent political and media organisations, best considered to be private establishments in themselves and in terms of their overall accountability to the public, from propagating the myth to their own commercial and ideological benefit.[89] The public, for its part, was thereby further encouraged to believe whatever it was already ideologically predisposed to believe.

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[88] 'A growing number of Americans say that Barack Obama is a Muslim, while the proportion saying he is a Christian has declined… A new national survey by Pew Research Center finds… nearly one-in-five Americans (18%) now say Obama is a Muslim, up from 11% in March 2009.' See Pew 2010.
[89] See Uwimana 2010.

Assuming such myth-making occurs across an innumerable range of topics online, one element of the experience of postmodernity, from this perspective, appears to be rooted in an exchange of the historical 'macro-ideologies' of the past for a series of 'micro-ideologies' of the present. Indeed, one way to describe the historical shift from the 'society of producers' to the 'society of consumers', or from the relatively organised capitalism of Adorno's period to the hyper-capitalism of the present day, is describing it as a shift from the historical constellation of submission to political meta-ideologies to a mass, *voluntary* contribution to micro-ideology.

Third, if information is fragmented as a by-effect of its dissemination at speeds and frequencies to which consciousness struggles to adapt, then consciousness is forced to adapt to the fragmentation *itself*, as the default position from which it accesses the objective world, at least on the virtual level. For example, as Carr relates,

In a Science article published in early 2009, prominent developmental psychologist Patricia Greenfield reviewed more than 40 studies of the effects of various types of media on intelligence and learning ability. She concluded that "every medium develops some cognitive skills at the expense of others." Our growing use of the Net and other screen-based technologies, she wrote, has led to the "widespread and sophisticated development of visual-spatial skills." But those gains go hand in hand with a weakening of our capacity for the kind of "deep processing" that underpins "mindful knowledge acquisition, inductive analysis, critical thinking, imagination, and reflection" (Carr 2010).

Consciousness itself may by habit become fragmented into 'cascades of de-contextualised signs more or less randomly connected to each other' (Eriksen 2001), where identity is what 'binds' (however loosely) these fragments together, and where the natural, 'self-preserving' response may be to reduce these fragmented cascades of information to the existing identity and ideological predispositions of the subject – in other words, identifying information or the object of knowledge with subjectivity, in the postmodern variation of subject-centred reason.

Such a 'constitutive' form of subjectivity, then, is at least partly dependent, first, on the assumption of an objectively 'meaningful' course of its determination by the imperatives of technocratic efficiency and hyper-capitalist consumerism by which it lives. For example, if it has become an objectively determined norm to consider free

information in the context of its conceptual fragmentation and immediate exchange, then historical forces (technocratic, etc.) determining this constellation of experience are also broadly 'legitimated' socially. Second, experience of the objective world has come to depend on a near-absolute reconciliation of experience with conceptual practices determined by technology. Conceptualisation takes place from a possibility of experience predominantly within an immediate present of constant information fragmentation. The reconciliation of conceptualisation with the objective world occurs by pragmatic necessity with respect to this immediacy, and therefore often at the expense of reflection and experience that cannot be reductively collapsed into the fragmentation itself. Third, the fragmentation of information simultaneously ensures an instantaneous 'identification' of experience itself, which may further obscure what remains conceptually non-identical to the experience being related.

Fourth, the notion of the information society of one in which information 'cancels out other information', while certainly not the only way to explain experience of the virtual world, and which doesn't account for vast conceptual resources that open information makes possible, is nevertheless one way to suggest i.) an objective determination of thought that by necessity concretises concepts ideologically while potentially stymying their mediation beyond their immediate given-ness, *and* ii.) a reduction of and by subjective identity to exchanging increasingly decontextualized and 'randomly connected' fragments in ways both conforming to the pre-existing identity of individuals, and challenging their ability to be self-determining vis-à-vis the cascades of information they contend with, insofar as self-determination in this context would involve possibilities of mediating the immediacy with which so much information is received itself.

If freedom is a function of self-determination, it may thereby be considered at this historical constellation of the information society that freedom of information doesn't necessarily equate to self-determination, if freedom involves experience that isn't only objectively determined. Simultaneously, the self-determination inherent in the freedom to mediate an object of knowledge must also depend on *how* thought is determined *by* the object if its mediation is not to become reduced, ideologically, to subjective control. In the sense discussed above, technology in one sense 'mediates' the object of knowledge in terms of fragmenting it before consciousness apprehends it in its seeming immediacy; in

another sense, the subject is inclined to dominate the object of knowledge – to identify it – with the ways it itself manipulates technology (and is manipulated in turn).

In these two excursuses I have considered an objective determination of experience, in terms of how the cost of online freedom appears to be the loss of privacy, and a subjective, immanent element of experience in the information society, in which self-determination may be undermined if restricted to a consumerist ethos in mediating information and a subjective reductionism of objects of knowledge, the understanding of which is simultaneously objectively determined by the technological fragmentation of experience. I also showed how some of Adorno's more accessible observations remain relevant to the present historical constellation. What, then, from a negative dialectical perspective in the historical constellation of the *GWOT* and the information society, could a notion of the truth of its experience amount to?

7.4 The End of History and the Crisis of Experience: A Negative Dialectic of Postmodernity

A truth-content of the misleading notion of an 'End of History' can be salvaged in our historical constellation of Postmodernity. The notion can refer, first, to the objective determination of experience immanent to Western societies by twin engines of capital and technocratic rationality. Conceptual practices promoted by these determine social reality to ever-increasing degrees, reflecting lack of political alternatives to their integration. By the same token, the intensifying incertitude of this social reality underscores how such an 'absolute' integration and reconciliation between often contradictory conceptual practices (the 'free' market, democracy, technological immediacy) in a form of 'positive' historical determinism cannot only result in a reconciliation of experience with the objective world as truth, in a Hegelian sense. One aspect of the truth-content of Fukuyama's claim, therefore, is that contradictions between human needs, freedoms, and self-determination, and how these are challenged by the ways experience is objectively determined, suggest how a normative, 'positive' reconciliation of contradictory practices with the objective world can, in itself, become the source of a gamut of emerging social problems.

This is illustrated by how the reinforcement of ideologies immanent to Western social experience (as a focus of this model) at the level of its conceptual practices also

reinforces 'meta'-ideologies with which the West conducts, for example, its foreign policy at the 'transcendent' globalising level of social experience. History, self-evidently, continues to be made from present social experience, although the truth of this experience - and of history itself - is a matter of its mediation, and of the degree of critical reflection possible immanently to this mediation. As submitted, one contradiction immanent to Western experience is how historical consciousness is undermined by objective mechanisms determining social experience while the very contribution of individuals themselves to this exchange remains a central element of their scope for self-determination. Such a contradiction emphasises Adorno's point that on one hand, the objective determination individuals conform to in potentially oppressive ways is *also* a product of the free pursuit of their own interests, and conversely, that this freedom may paradoxically obstruct critical mediation of experience that would contribute to pursuing a truthful form of self-determination.

One way to substantiate the notion of a 'crisis of experience' in postmodernity, then, is to consider, dialectically, how individuals freely contribute to potentially repressive ways their social experience becomes objectively determined. Free information given to individuals may be reduced to immediate identification of its subject matter, *pace* Adorno, in the imperative of self-preservation and the subject-centred conception of 'freely' attributing meaning, as opposed to encouraging critical mediation of both subject matter and, by extension, subjectivity itself. The fragmentation of free information through mechanisms of its objective determination, however, can also make the continuity of consciousness of a specific historical object increasingly difficult to maintain in causal terms. While, therefore, individuals may seek to critically mediate objects of knowledge, they might also find it increasingly difficult to causally relate fragmentary information truthfully. Conversely, the immediacy of this fragmentation may encourage reduction of mediation to what is itself immediately given and therefore, to ideologies of subjective identification. Political perspectives and ideologies may thereby be reinforced as opposed to challenged, where mediation may be encouraged to remain within objectively determined prisms of experience. Historical consciousness of contradictory ways between how information may be immediately 'given' as a function of individuals' free expression in technological mediums, and its mediation by individuals through their concrete experience, which to some extent is objectively determined (e.g., through filter bubbles

online), may be *lost* between a subjective domination of the subject matter, and the objective determination of social experience in which its mediation takes place.

The 'non-conceptuality' of this experience comprised of both repressive and emancipatory phenomena simultaneously, then, can be lost in favour of its ideological concretion, e.g. the political invocation of democratic freedoms as absolute principles, though these also normatively perpetuate repressive anti-democratic mechanisms and practices. Such a loss remains a significant element of a 'crisis of experience' in postmodernity. For example, the excursuses in this chapter outlined, first, the loss of privacy and confidentiality as one objective determination of experience by technocratic rationality. Second, it suggested a fragmentation of consciousness in the consumption of free but technologically mediated information by individuals. One way these phenomena contend with each other is, on one hand, increasing volumes of information allow individuals to mediate any object in competing ways that can always spontaneously suggest non-identity with which knowledge or awareness is identified in the immediate sense. Conversely, the intensifying immediacy of the identification of *individuals themselves* by others that the loss of privacy and confidentiality contribute to, is also fortified by the 'fragmentation' of consciousness, in the sense that it encourages the immediate given-ness of the profiled and compiled 'identity' of individuals, therefore also suggesting how ideological conceptions of identity are reinforced at political levels.

It follows, e.g. that the loss of privacy creates identifications of individuals compiled in ways that quite deliberately manipulate them, curtailing their freedoms and impeding their avenues for self-determination. This identification, however – especially where it potentially has dire personal or political consequences – cannot possibly account for the entirety of an individual's experience (even with regards to the specific matter at hand), or intentions. Information available concerning individuals, therefore, cannot only be truthful identification, considering how much experience a particular identification fails to take into account. Simultaneously, however, the immediacy of information exchange reduces this accumulation of experience to identification normatively facilitated by the access afforded by technology, where what this categorisation *misses* neglects substantial elements of truth pertaining to the experience of individuals. In this sense, there is an institutional prioritisation of the *objective* determination of identity which falls short of the

subjective component of experience, and the ability to prioritise this experience *as* an object to be mediated.

Conversely, if the bulk of information by which individuals mediate experience is fragmented, and individuals are compelled to identify objects of knowledge – and others – according to this fragmentation, where does that leave the truth of their *own* identities, and expression thereof? Put differently, if the objective determination of experience by technology animates individuals to mediate information in ways encouraging its reduction to identity, simultaneously with how - or in more powerful ways than - objects of knowledge may spontaneously determine their experience, then an important element of the truth of modern experience is, *pace* Adorno, all the ways identification obscures the truths of its mediation. This has consequences in concrete political contexts, which, as we saw in the context of the *GWOT*, is partly dependent conceptually on identity profiling on respective sides of its divide. The question from a contemporary perspective becomes, however, do aforementioned normative mechanisms immanent to Western society, and especially in the decade hence, play a role in reinforcing this profiling, and if so, what then of contradictions arising between this systemic reinforcement of identity profiling and the prosecution of the *GWOT*?

At the immediate level, it seems clear that technological immediacy reinforces prisms of conflagration themselves. Consider, for instance, how the recent slew of beheadings of Westerners by the terrorist group ISIS and its global video broadcasting immediately determined Western policy towards a more proactive interventionism in the relevant geographical theatre than had (recently) been U.S. and Western policy, in part because of how the graphic detail of the videos influenced public perception of Western governments domestically. One intention behind this broadcasting was demonstrating the power of ISIS to influence Western policy, where Western technology itself was the medium by which the group gained its "oxygen of publicity." This, however, demonstrated contradictions not only between how the globalisation of practices immanent to Western instrumental rationality can undermine the very instruments of Western power, but also how Western policy, and more broadly, Western rationality itself, find themselves objectively determined, and in some ways, detrimentally so, by both the possibilities and dangers they have created.

Events like this, then, serve to reinforce ideological oppositions at the conceptual level of the *GWOT*. First, they are a deliberate tactic on behalf of groups like ISIS to 'legitimate' their cause, particularly the more they can involve Western retribution. Second, ideological oppositions are reinforced immanently in the West at the immediate level of the identification of Islam or the perceived Muslim mind-set with the acts of ISIS or other radical groups (considering that when Muslims are related to news items, it is often in contexts such as this). While free and accurate information abounds as to the radical imperatives of this group in its specific geographic and geopolitical context, setting it apart from so many other Muslim denominations and areas of experience, the reinforced identification of Islam with terrorism, both deliberately by e.g. ISIS, *and* by Westerners it provokes, immediately crowds out comprehension of its non-identity (much like 9/11 had done over a decade earlier). Consider, e.g., how the visual impact of the beheading footage crowds out potential competing narratives regarding traditional differences immanent to the Muslim world, the historical consciousness of conflicting traditions and their interpretations in different world regions, or, on a more immediate level, the (partially) democratising imperatives of the Arab spring just few years earlier.

One question arising in this context, then, is what wars fought ideologically by proxy through technological mediums as much as on battlefields will mean for future generations of policymakers, assuming the immediacy of events globally continue to shape ideological perspectives locally. The notion of an 'End' of History in the constellation of postmodernity can refer in a *second* sense, then, to an undermining of historical *consciousness*, consequently perpetuating ideology. Loss of awareness, or a reified 'forgetting', of contradictions between how experience and consciousness are objectively determined and the ways subject-centred self-determination also contributes to subjective and objective repression, is part of the crisis of experience subtending the perpetuation of ideology, and therefore conflict. In the context of the *GWOT*, the question arises not only of a concurrent radicalisation of the *Western* mind in some quarters due to the reduction of a complex web of global causes and effects to the immediate given-ness of (technologically mediated) events to identity, but also of how future ideological perspectives might use technological advances to perpetuate both conflict, and themselves. That terrorism should be combated and preferably defeated is incontrovertible; the political question is the means by which the issue is – and can – be mediated, which is not ineluctable, but may often appear so. *Pace* Adorno, the larger question additionally remains if science and

technology are poised to create ideal or vastly improved social conditions, and indeed often promote themselves ideologically as such, why then do many of their social consequences continue to prove themselves so harmful to universal interests?

I have here sought to demonstrate, then, the continuing relevance of Ideology critique and philosophy to a world that, where myth can serve the function of enlightenment and enlightenment often reverts to myth, often seems inimical to both. A negative dialectics, as outlined in this thought model, is the attempt to demonstrate the truth and untruth of experience simultaneously, both immanently to the objective determination of experience, and critically towards the prisms in which such experience takes place. Non-identity of the conceptual representation of experience and the prioritisation of the object of knowledge itself in the attempt to express non-conceptual elements of its experience are therefore, I maintain *pace* Adorno, crucial elements of potentially truthful mediation. In the context of this thought model, therefore, I have explored non-identities between freedom and self-determination, and between these and modern forms of rationality. I have demonstrated a negative dialectical turn from one way experience is objectively determined in postmodernity by the *GWOT*, while attempting to remain truthful to multiple elements immanent to Western experience itself. In the Conclusion that follows, I suggest a theoretical continuation of negative dialectics, and what a 'truth of the subject' can amount to.

IX. CONCLUSION

I conclude this thesis by recapping some of its central arguments and suggesting what the 'truth of the subject' can amount to. I conclude, first, that negative dialectics remains a germane approach to exploring issues of truth in the contemporary constellation of socio-historical experience. Second, I maintain ideology critique remains a crucial resource for investigating both the truth and untruth of social normativity. Third, I reaffirm that freedom must be a matter of the possibilities of self-determination in the mediation of the objective world. Finally, in 8.2, I suggest a resource for a theoretical direction for the continuation of Adorno's thought via Žižek's proposal that negative dialectics can be thought together with Lacan's psychoanalytical notion of the 'Impossible Real'.

8.1 Concluding Remarks: The Truth of the Subject

The introductory question of this thesis was twofold: Does Adorno's theory of negative dialectics remain a relevant approach to exploring issues of truth and meaning beyond the critical purview of the specific historical constellation he addressed, and does this theory remain a workable alternative to those theories suggesting, broadly speaking, a 'demise' of self-determining subjectivity in the classic Enlightenment sense? The question was asked within a wider framework of the uses of philosophy in an age of social experience determined predominantly by science and technocratic rationality, and whether 'classic' Enlightenment conceptions of reason, freedom and self-determination particular to the German tradition can still contribute resources to a historical constellation determined by decidedly transformed social conceptions of subjectivity and freedom from those these notions originally addressed.

I have answered both parts of the question in the affirmative. The need for Adorno's conception of an objective dialectical truth of social experience and subjectivity not only explained through the objectifying processes of science and technology, nor reduced to immediate imperatives of subject-centred reasoning, is not vitiated at a historical juncture that, from a critical standpoint, continues exemplifying forms of domination across all layers of social experience. Repressive phenomena remain observable, not only in the sense characterising traditional politics or international

relations in the age of information, economic globalisation and terrorism, but also occur immanently to democratic and open societies whose normative and institutional instruments also contain repressive mechanisms that may not be as instantly apparent as the immediacy of their contributions to the normative determination of social experience.

To this end, this thesis has argued that ideology critique remains an essential tool of inquiry into objective social circumstances, and potentially across multiple disciplines of inquiry, also beyond the immediately political. Ideology critique is necessary to evaluate the normative practices of society, and to investigate, among other concerns, democratic standards of freedom and postmodern conceptions of rationality to determine where, and how, these potentially fall short of the truths of social experience. In so doing, notions such as alienation and 'false consciousness' remain critical categories that can reveal forms of experience deserving of inquiry and which, conversely, need not be reduced to ideological iterations of these notions themselves. On the contrary, I hope to have shown that Adorno's philosophy offers resources to overcome ways such ideas become ideological in their own right, through to a truth-content of such postulates that attempts to remain faithful to the experience itself of specific socio-historical constellations.

As such, this thesis has emphasised Adorno's notion of experience with the view towards examining possibilities of self-determining subjectivity as central to any rational conception of the truth thereof. The 'strength of the subject' Adorno wants to use to break through the ideological trapping of constitutive subjectivity is at once the attempt to apprehend the truth of the subject's experience, and simultaneously the injunction to critically mediate the forms of rationality by which it conceptualises and expresses this experience. The question was raised, *pace* Adorno's sociocultural critiques, whether conditions of Modernity have culminated in forms of predominantly 'instrumental' rationality which, through their very normativity - or lack of adequate constraints – foster ideological notions of freedom and self-determination, or, *pace* Adorno, 'subject-centred reasoning'. I have shown what allows Adorno to make such claims about modern experience is his objection to the inevitable projection of subjective structures of ordering the world - such as the causal ordering of experience - onto the objective world as the predominating ways of understanding its experience, in the sense that the objective

world and nature cannot *only* be reduced to ways its experience may be conceptualised historically or subjectively.

Such a claim has required an account of how spontaneity must be available in conceptualisation as a result of the mind's engagement with the objective world, which cannot be reduced to, e.g., causal laws the mind gives itself. This is the *freedom* inherent in conceptualisation, which cannot be reduced to conceptualisation itself as its own ground, dependent as this remains on the objective world. Normativity only becomes possible through this spontaneity, and the extent to which normativity determines issues of truth can only adequately be measured by the extent of spontaneous engagement with the object of knowledge – meaning, ways of experiencing it that keep in perspective contradictory ways in which the truth of its experience is identified. If normative constraints on spontaneity itself are to exist, conversely, it is not in their *a priori* dependence on spontaneity, but in active mediation between spontaneity and its prioritisation of the objective world to which it reacts.

I therefore showed that the reason for this 'priority of the objective' is that what Adorno calls *prima philosophia* – or, the 'myth of the given' in philosophy grounding knowledge in consciousness - fails to account for the contradictory senses of nature Adorno claims cannot be grounded either in consciousness or the (scientific) objectification of nature. Attempts to ground experience or knowledge in any absolute sense lead to comprehensive methodologies striving to achieve certainty by reducing all objectivity to the cognitive processes of the subject. I suggested how e.g., empiricism, taken by itself as the immediacy of sense perception, can become ideological where it lacks acknowledgement of its own mediated character. Following Adorno, the immediacy of the objective world characteristic of empiricism doesn't go far enough in its attempt to establish truth-claims, as it relinquishes the 'moment of freedom and spontaneity' of its social mediation.

What has this meant for my discussion of truth? Facts regarding objects of knowledge may be established – 'identified' - at the expense of what, *pace* Adorno, remains *non-identical* in the mediation of their experience. This means an element of their truth must always pertain to what remains 'non-conceptual' in the positing of facts. 'Instrumental' forms of rationality therefore potentially posit facts as truth in ideological

ways. It also means reason cannot be 'grounded' in consciousness without remaining something forced on the objective world. Where Enlightenment rationality attempts to ground its legitimacy in the increasing success with which it controls nature, Adorno suggests it too succumbs to the foundational myth of *prima philosophia*. The rational control of nature enables individuals to ground their identities in this same control. If reason is to be universalised, however, it must address the objective world without reducing nature to itself, as subjectivity cannot simply transcend the nature of which it is part.

Such a 'gap' between reason and nature, to the extent that reasoning could be self-determining irrespective of nature, is therefore also a potentially ideological endeavour. Filling this gap can occur at the expense of spontaneity itself, if it means subsuming aspects of nature entirely to given forms of reasoning in order to understand them. Reason, therefore, must also be a matter of its *dependence* on nature. Adorno's 'negative' turn is therefore, partially, that experience should be examined in relation to both its socio-historical context and to nature. Conceptualisation pertaining to the natural world, or claims to knowledge of an object therein, cannot simply exist in a given sense, as claims pertaining to all kinds of experience always involve other socially mediated concepts. This also means reflection that doesn't take its social context into account cannot properly be considered to be self-determining. Conceptual claims must be considered in the specific socio-historical context they are formulated in, and concrete human needs they are formulated in relation *to*.

This concretely underscores the socio-political emphasis of this thesis. The truth of experience cannot simply be grounded either in the apriority of consciousness *or* in socially objectifying structures of thought given to it. Adorno suggests the socially rationalising compulsion to 'dominate' nature also irrationally leads to subjective and psychological regression due to e.g., damaged experience of the cultural realm and a concurrent impoverishment of reflective spontaneity. Revealing such is the purpose of ideology critique, and of Adorno's call to 'un-reified rational relations between individuals'. The perceived circumstances leading Adorno to insist on these - the 'total context of delusion' - refers to the reach of instrumental rationality over society and its potential reification of all social experience. The endeavor of negative dialectics, then, is to reclaim spontaneity as the *rational* criterion that also explains the potential corruption

of all other rational criteria in this 'totality'.

Adorno's *Ideologiekritik* purporting to show such corruption consists of dialectics between transcendent and immanent criticism. Transcendent criticism is made from 'beyond' the objective determination of a socio-historical constellation to demonstrate the ideological corruptibility of experience immanent to it. Immanent criticism, conversely, recognises ideology as 'socially necessary appearance', in the sense that it is a representation of real cultural production, is a reflection of the interest structures of society, and reveals the historical genesis of the ideological form. The existence of ideology, therefore, is not 'false', because it is instantiated in material cultural forms, but the target of critical theory is the pretension of ideology to correspond to the truth of experience. Immanent critique mediates transcendent critique: the more society is integrated, e.g. through capitalist and technocratic rationalities, the greater the necessity of pursuing *how* such forms of rationality dominate experience. This is to determine distance between the ideological determination of these objectifying forms of rationality and the ways they are experienced by individuals, to find elements of truth in contradictions emerging between them.

In this light, I considered Adorno's difficult claim that the cultural unification occurring in Nazi Germany as a combination of physical repression and scientism subtending rational efficiency can occur in capitalist democracies in submission of normative practices to instrumental forms of rationality alone. The practical component of this criticism - Adorno's demand of a new categorical imperative to arrange thought and action so nothing similar to Auschwitz will happen - is predicated on the notion of Auschwitz as a historical 'prototype'. Because alongside its benefits, technical progress also makes genocide and other horrors possible, it is not so much forces of production as the *relations* of production – e.g. the organisation of social experience – that subordinate individuals, and which require addressing by critical theory. This is the urgent demand relevant to the contemporary historical constellation continuously requiring rethinking of what comes to *count* as rational, but which reveals itself as irrational in as far as it becomes a source of human (or other) suffering. Among other examples, I dedicated the thought model in this thesis to demonstrating how the technocratic normativity immanent to Western societies plays a role in irrationally bolstering ideologies at the globalising level that perpetuate suffering across cultural

divides.

The critical analysis of reification, therefore, is reflective evolution preventing itself from becoming ideological by resting at a fixed purview. Concretised, such analysis would itself become a 'grounded' concept dominating its subject matter by constraining it within a fixed identification of how such analyses should proceed. This paradox is addressed by negative dialectics. Adorno's dialectical turn is 'negative' because its notion of rationality seeks to give voice to forms of experience subject-centred forms of rationality neglect. Such experience may be expressed as forms of suffering or aesthetic forms of expression obscured by normative accounts of reason, or to which such accounts inadvertently contribute. Demonstrating how successful normative practices fail to account for other dimensions of their experience discloses where accounts of these practices become ideological and points towards news ways of conceptualising their experience.

If thought is to challenge the identity which it itself ascribes to the objective world, then, there can be no positive conceptual resolution in its reflection of the object. Adorno's notion of 'non-identity' means the object determines its experience such that no concept can circumscribe its identity. Spontaneous experience of the object therefore points towards ways it has not been identified, leading to new concepts pertaining both to the object and the subjectivity experiencing it.   Spontaneity only ever partially overcomes the conceptual limitations of identity, resulting in further contradictions. As these necessarily fall on the side of consciousness, the latter continually stands opposed in non-identity with the object it attempts to comprehend. However, mediation of the object also changes the *subject*, giving rise to hitherto non-conceptual elements of experience in their attempted articulation or content, in as far as they are never fully circumscribed by these attempts to identify them.

Negative dialectics therefore explores unresolved contradictions between conceptualisation and how consciousness is determined by objective social circumstances. At the *theoretical* level of this thesis, therefore, I showed that Adorno's central objection to Hegel is how dialectical contradictions of experience, and conceptual practices normatively determining experience of the social whole, are 'sublated' in consciousness. Retaining the element undergirding Hegel's dialectic of the subject's

active participation in mediation of the object, Adorno re-orientates reflection towards experience as it is determined by the object, meaning experience that, precisely, cannot be reduced to the conceptualising consciousness. Adorno simultaneously retains the Kantian distinction between the object itself and the unresolved contradictions of the phenomenal world. Reflection for Kant is possible because of the transcendental unity of apperception. What is thought, however, depends on the contingent historical moment in which it is thought. Contradictory tensions in subjective truth, then, are between how thought is objectively determined at a specific historical moment, and the spontaneity of the transcendental subject itself. This reflective tension can only be expressed, following Hegel, via reference to a particular socio-historical constellation of subject and object, but, following Kant, cannot *reduce* the object of knowledge to this constellation, as both object and subject retain elements distinct from any particular historical attempt at conceptualisation.

Truth, therefore, cannot only be an epistemological matter of 'resolving' issues of knowledge, as truth only gains objectivity through reflection, which is historically contingent. Simultaneously, truth must be objective in a sense that cannot be reduced to the subject and its contingent experience. Adorno's chief contribution to the discussion of truth in this thesis is therefore in objective meaning that is *lost* when the objective world is dominated by subjective categories, and in elements of the experience of a particular socio-historical constellation that remain unexpressed - as part of the truth-content of its experience. The negative dialectical 'turn' is therefore towards truth-content in unresolved tensions between the loss of objective meaning, and the subjective interest in freedom and self-determination. Articulation of this truth-content also depends on the claim that the objectivity sought in epistemology or science cannot be the sole standard for philosophy, because ways of relating to the world are not only cognitive, but also *affective*.

That the problem of freedom cannot only be subsumed into, e.g. explanatory laws of science and the freedoms *they* provide therefore invites consideration of affective dimensions of experience. Adorno's prioritisation of the objective re-orientates experience away from only the subjective *control* of nature. Where this control, inherent in cognitive forms of categorising the world, is necessary to understand it in the first place, it is simultaneously the source of a violence done to the object – and other subjectivity -

and therefore also a source of suffering. Adorno's point is therefore to comprehend experience in ways not uniquely subsumed under the conceptual control of the object or nature, considering the real-world historical effects this control can have. Where Adorno paradigmatically emphasises mimetic dimensions of aesthetic experience as containing resources to resist the 'absolutizing' imperative to control the objective world, this thesis has primarily investigated contemporary political phenomena in light of ways subjectivity might overcome its ideological domination of otherness.

At the *practical* level, therefore, the thesis has also sought to investigate contemporary political contexts that demonstrate the continuing necessity of a 'negative dialectical' mediation of political experience that doesn't merely reduce its interpretation to its existing pragmatic or normative imperatives grounded in subjective control, but rather, seeks to overcome this. While the thesis has not succeeded in extracting definitive 'political models' for negative dialectics and Adorno's theory more broadly (something made difficult by Adorno's own recalcitrance to do so), it has succeeded in demonstrating contexts suggesting the continuing validity of his critiques, and has begun to point towards how such political models could be constructed. For example, in the constellation of the thought model above pertaining to the dual critique of the *GWOT* and the ideological determination of identity and experience of modern society, resources may plausibly be extracted to inform future analyses and strategies pertaining to the prosecution of simultaneously local and global political imperatives, from which still further models may be developed. This will be one of the endeavours of future research.

In concluding, truth, therefore, cannot be separated from the contingent socio-historical constellation being experienced, because conceptual identity ascribed to something at a specific point in time is partly determined by experience. As cognitive identification of the objective world comes to determine so much of social experience, however, it also means truth cannot be a matter only of identification, however successful, but must also be about what identification misses. This includes, above all, 'the need to lend a voice to suffering', because suffering cannot only be measured or understood by cognitive means, yet is the standard by which people judge happiness - or lack of it. Suffering and its expression do not have to be justified according to normative modes of rationality in order to be true. Subjective attempts to express suffering, or other forms of affective experience, can therefore also act as forms of objective truth to the

kinds of rationality sustaining social normative practices.

Attempts to control the objective world, then, are a consequence of self-preservation. Adorno's 'negative' turn from this rationality is towards affective dimensions of understanding the world depending not only on its control, but also on how self-preservation must mean mutual understanding. Mimesis is one such way of understanding and coping with the objective world in ways not immediately demanding its control and, significantly, encouraging the spontaneity of understanding towards the object. The truth of the mimetic dimension of experience, then, is the moment of mutual experience not dominated either by the necessity of self-preservation, or the subjugation of the objective world and others to ideological subjectivity. This is the rational component of the attempt to ward off suffering and of the desire to salvage experience from its determination by 'instrumental' rationalising, and return them towards truths in the contradictions between inter-subjective objectivity and the contradictions in subjective natures, beyond this.

What, then, finally, is the 'truth of the subject'? In the context of examining conceptions of truth through the possibilities of self-determining subjectivity, I have suggested key elements in this study of Adorno's thought that a truth of subjectivity is in the understanding that contradictions pertaining to any object of knowledge – including subjectivity itself - reveal more than any definitive effort to resolve any of these in isolation. I maintain that understanding this must be a key component of the possibility of self-determination. Ideological efforts to purify or otherwise 'resolve' subjectivity in reconciliation with any single objectively given truth by definition restricts access to truths arising from the contradictions immanent to such efforts. The truth of the subjectivity experiencing the objective world is therefore similarly compromised, as are possibilities for the self-determination of its experience.

Rather, failure to absolutize subjectivity itself reveals an objective truth potentially providing new avenues of reflective freedom and permitting original and creative ways of expressing and responding to these. From the perspective of this thesis, a key to the truth of freedom is where conflicting perspectives and forms of articulation contradict each other in ways revealing the shortcomings of subjective identity and personal ideology, the ramifications of which are paramount in any contemporary

politics. Simultaneously, possibilities of subjective freedom and rational self-determination remain in the notion that human self-preservation itself depends on both the immediate necessities of identification and ideology, *and* recognising the ways these fail to encompass truth. The strength of the subject with regards to Adorno's philosophy, then, pertains to overcoming identitarian thought grounded in the imperative of self-preservation to reconceptualise experience in ways that may actually complement self-preservation, but by expressing it in ways circumventing the repression of consciousness or of others as an aspect of its truth. With regards to the concrete examples given in this thesis of instrumental forms of rationality, this strength also pertains to the active mediation of those forms of social rationality that structure and determine experience, not least at the socio-political level, to strengthen the possibilities for self-determining thought, and possibly, political action. *Pace* Adorno, then, the self-determining ability to use the 'strength' of the subject to break through the fallacies of constitutive subjectivity remains an ineluctable component of any truth that can be ascribed to subjectivity. This, as I hope to have demonstrated with this thesis, is a 'fundamental' truth of the subject.

In concluding, I now turn to a brief consideration to suggest how Adorno's 'negative' dialectics may continue to be developed at the theoretical level in the future, with reference to a suggestion by Žižek that negative dialectics and the Lacanian psychoanalytical notion of the 'Impossible Real' may be thought concurrently and in tandem as theoretical tools investigating the truth of subjectivity.

8.2. A Theoretical Suggestion

In the Introduction, we saw how Žižek ascribed (critique of) the 'inconsistency' of negative dialectics to its emphasis on reflection that produces a 'truth-effect' through its failure to circumscribe experience of the objective world with any conclusive ('ideological') finality. This truth-effect is a function of conflicting attempts across historical constellations to demarcate objects of knowledge which 'fail' in claims to forms of conclusive truth, but contribute, through experience, to articulating how non-identities with how the object is known both point towards its existing conceptual and ideological misidentification, and reveal new ways of conceptualising its experience.

Such a truth-effect, however, is contingent on the subjectivity in question. What

is the truth-effect of experience on the subject, and what can the truth of this experience amount to? This thesis has emphasised ways of thinking about truth relating specifically to experience - and the ways these fall short - in contrast to the study of the subject from objectifying perspectives that often underplay social ('mediated') forms of experience altogether. However, the truth of subjectivity as an area of inquiry cannot be reduced to subject-centred perspectives either, but must be a function, simultaneously, of the subject's dependence on the objective world, and ways its experience continually changes subjectivity itself.

In this light, Žižek has suggested that the dialectical 'failure' to grasp the object of knowledge that produces the truth-effect of Adorno's negative dialectics can be thought together with Lacan's psychoanalytical notion of the 'Impossible Real'. Adorno's theory of 'constitutive subjectivity' as ideological requires explanation of the ways reflection fails to dominate its object of knowledge to account for the truth of its experience. Such accounts can correspond with what Lacan calls the 'Real' as an *internally* subjective, and not objective 'limitation of reality', as a theoretical extension of negative dialectical thought. Žižek suggests that

the Adornian distinction between immediately accessible "positive" objectivity and the objectivity targeted in the "priority of the objective" is the very Lacanian distinction between (symbolically mediated) reality and the impossible Real [of the object of knowledge]. Furthermore, does the Adornian notion that the subject retains its subjectivity only insofar it is "incompletely" subject, insofar as some kernel of objectivity resists its grasp, not point towards the subject as constitutively "barred" [$, in the Lacanian algebraic scheme] (Žižek 2001, p.88)?

Distinctions between 'immediately given "positive" objectivity' and Adorno's 'priority of the objective' have formed a substantive part of this study. 'Positive objectivity' refers to the objective world as it appears given in the immediate sense to the individual. It is 'positive' because its experience is reconciled with the predominating conceptualisation through which its properties are identified, which may in turn develop into instrumental forms of rationalising ignoring their own mediated character. The objectivity prioritised by Adorno, by contrast, is the 'negative' form of experiencing the objective world, because it grants epistemological priority to the object of knowledge and refuses to reconcile its experience with its conceptualisation in any dominant or conclusive manner.

What does this mean in terms of the Lacanian distinction between 'symbolically' mediated reality, and what Lacan calls the 'Impossible Real'? A brief outline of the Lacanian categories is required to contextualise Žižek's passage and what they mean by the 'Impossible Real': The 'Real' is one of three central categories in Lacan's psychoanalytical scheme, which stands opposed to the 'Imaginary' and the 'Symbolic'. The 'Imaginary' relates to the formation of subjectivity at the level of initial self-identification occurring earliest in life, prior to infants being able to employ language or describe concepts. The 'Imaginary' is therefore the stage where individuals-as-infants are unable to identify the objective world conceptually beyond how they immediately experience their subjectivity. It follows this self-identification remains part of the ego individuals retain into adulthood.

The 'Symbolic', by contrast, refers to the objective social 'order' of language and other aspects of existence determined *through* language, e.g. politics, law, ethics, religion, science, etc., and which provide the basis for the identity-formation of individuals. The Symbolic order is where individuals learn to distinguish between themselves and others, between subjectivity and the objective world, between concepts and objects, etc., and is the realm where they experience social reality. It is therefore the universe in which individuals experience their lives, and in which issues of meaning, truth, and subjective needs are normatively determined according to mediation between their identification in the Symbolic order (according to a specific culture, e.g., in the West, in the form of legislation protecting individual rights, and the language expressing these rights), and their subjective interpretations through experience.

The Real, however, is that which is 'outside language and inassimilable to symbolisation. It is "that which resists symbolisation absolutely"' (Evans 1996 p. 159). Lacan's distinction between the reality of the Symbolic order and the 'Real' is that '"reality' denotes subjective representations which are a product of both symbolic and imaginary articulations' (ibid. p.161), whereas the 'Real' cannot be known because it exists beyond both the imaginary aspect of the ego, *and* the symbolic realm of conscious experience of the objective world. The Real is therefore 'impossible', because it both cannot be imagined by the subject-in-itself, and its truth cannot be accounted for in any absolute sense by conceptualisation taking place in the Symbolic Order. It is therefore eternally beyond the reach of subjectivity and its conceptualisation, both of itself and of

the objective world. The Impossible Real, then, is *what always remains of the reality that cannot be conceptualised.*

Žižek suggests, then, that Lacan's distinction between the Symbolic order and the 'Impossible Real' is equivalent to the distinction Adorno draws between immediately given positive objectivity, and the 'non-conceptuality' he targets in his priority of the objective. A sense of how this is so can be drawn from the latter part of Žižek's passage. The 'Adornian notion that the subject retains its subjectivity only insofar it is "incompletely" subject, insofar as some kernel of objectivity resists its grasp', refers to two ideas suggested in this thesis:

The first is what Adorno's 'priority of the objective' means for efforts to conceptualise experience in the first place. The dependence of subjectivity on both objective nature and the immediate social world means the ability to conceptualise objects of knowledge is always already constrained, both by limitations imposed by specific socio-historical experience, and by the nature within subjectivity itself. Concurrently, the subjective formation occurring in the Lacanian dialectics between the Imaginary realm of ego formation and the Symbolic realm of language and social normativity similarly creates its own limitation of objective reality: on one hand, the subject overcomes limitations of its identity through the normativity and convention of socio-historical experience. Yet, conversely, it cannot objectively overcome its specific socio-historical experience other than by attempted recourse to the 'Imaginary' ego. *Pace* Adorno, this ego consists of elements of the subject's nature that remain un-reconciled with its socio-historical experience, such as its personal (Imaginary) proclivities, or ways it may resist dominant social norms for reasons of prejudice, tradition or genetics, and are hence equally part of its identity.

Second, it was established that the 'priority of the objective' means the ability of individuals to conceptualise identity in its own right must be constrained. As there is always objectivity that is unattainable in the conceptualisation of experience, this gap between experience and its conceptual identification is filled by what Adorno (broadly speaking) considers to be ideology. One way to consider this is how subjectivity necessarily identifies its ego formation with the symbolic universe of language, social norms, and so forth, in what becomes its identity. Individuals, however, cannot entirely

avoid the kind of constitutive subjectivity that impresses its own concepts onto the world ideologically *because* a measure of objectivity always eludes them. This means subjectivity attempts to 'close the gap' between itself and the measure of objectivity it cannot attain with its own subjective concepts. In so doing, subjectivity is 'constituted' precisely because of the objectivity it cannot attain – and for Adorno, in so doing, subjectivity becomes ideological.

For Žižek, then, this Adornian notion of an 'incomplete subject' points towards the Lacanian concept of 'the subject as constitutively "barred" [$].' The 'barred subject' in Lacanian theory is the division of the subject by language - meaning, the subject is divided, on one hand, by its access to, and identification of, social reality (the Symbolic order) *through* language, and on the other hand, by the 'Impossible Real' of the objective world that cannot be encapsulated *by* language, or reduced to ways experience may be conceptualised. This means language - the primary tool of identification - not only provides access to the wider everyday (social) reality of individuals, but also acts as one limitation on the 'Impossible Real', suggesting the idea that the constitutive subjectivity occurring through identification of the objective world is also, partially, a result of a (necessary) subconscious effort to 'limit' reality, among other things to maintain the continuity – and identity - of personal consciousness.

This subjective 'limitation' of the objective world – paradigmatically, then, due to the identification necessary to buttress the continuity of consciousness - is also in one sense what Adorno's critique of ideology is intended to attempt to overcome (without denying its necessity). This attempt reflects possibilities of self-determination in ways reflection remains open to its experience of the object, acknowledging that the truth of this experience also depends on contradictory ways its conceptualisation can be construed. The 'negative' dialectical turn toward 'non-conceptuality' addresses this in its attempt to retain the spontaneity in experience from domination of the object for the identifying purposes of constitutive subjectivity. How, then, briefly, do these theories correspond?

If the 'Impossible Real' is that which 'resists symbolisation absolutely' beyond the social reality that 'denotes subjective representations which are a product of both symbolic and imaginary articulations', it is therefore also experience which cannot be

subsumed by conceptualisation, beyond dialectics between the symbolic order and the ego, and any positive, socially objective, or subjective, resolutions of these. Similarly, Adorno's 'negative' dialectical turn is towards non-identity between how the subject is objectively determined, where reflection cannot *only* be self-determining (the Symbolic order), and the conceptual activity occurring on the subjective side which *attempts* to be self-determining (in contradictions between needs of the imaginary ego and the objective determination of experience in the symbolic order). In this sense, an aspect of the truth of the subject's self-determination could be thought to lie in what *cannot* be apprehended in its efforts to identify experience – or, in other words, the truth of the 'Impossible Real' of experience.

The additional dimension of Adorno's non-identity between truth that can be established by rational, objectifying or scientific means, and the content of the historical experience in which such forms of rationality arise, but whose truth these cannot by themselves account for, and which may be available to the understanding through other dimensions of experience and expression, may also potentially be explored in terms of the 'Impossible Real'. For example, mediation through language at the symbolic level not only allows for expression of needs and desires resulting 'positively' in social norms, but also points towards how such norms simultaneously repress other aspects of experience that cannot be expressed according to dominant symbolic norms at a specific socio-historical point in time. Attempts to express these experiences, however, e.g., in art, creative contributions to the normative or political processes of society, or other unexplored modes of expression, may themselves point towards elements of reality unaccounted for in the dominant normative discourse of the symbolic order. The notion of the 'Impossible Real' of the subject divided against itself could thus be considered in parallel to the non-conceptuality towards which Adorno orientates his conception of freedom.

The notion of parallels between these theories is too broad to examine in depth at this final stage of the thesis, particularly considering the scope necessary to take important ideas in psychoanalytical theory and Adorno's theory into simultaneous account (beyond Adorno's own psychoanalytically influenced observations). I do suggest, however, that the question of the ways and degree to which a theory in psychoanalysis such as Lacan's 'Impossible Real', and the social concerns of Adorno's negative dialectics

do correspond, however, and how they might be combined as theoretical apparatuses across multiple other fields of research – such as the political - would, at a minimum, make an adequate candidate for further inquiry in the field of Adorno's theory proper. Future research in the field of critical theory and specifically Adorno's philosophy may be pursued, therefore, i.) at the theoretical level, with reference to developments in certain areas of psychoanalytical theory, while ii.) at the practical level, socio-political models extracted from Adorno's critiques and possible political suggestions arising thereof may continue to function as important components in continuing critical mediations between the subjective self and the objective world. It is to these dual objectives that I should like to commit parts of my future investigations and research.

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